



Empowering Women of Faith as Agents of Social Transformation

Report April 1, 2005 through March 31, 2006

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INTRODUCTION

Women of faith are organized in groups within religious communities all over the world. These groups are already providing care on the frontlines of conflict, working to heal war-torn communities, and struggling to advance development. However, these women often carry out their work in isolation and do not have access to training or assistance in building strategic partnerships. Multi-religious cooperation provides an efficient way to further mobilize and help equip religious women's groups for peace and sustainable development. *Religions for Peace* builds the capacity of religious women's groups to work together in multi-religious collaboration to transform conflict, build peace, and advance sustainable development and networks them at national, regional, and global levels.

The Women's Mobilization Program was initiated in 1998, with the support of the Ford Foundation. In 2001, the Program launched the Global Network of Religious Women's Organizations. At present, this global women's network includes nearly 1000 religious women's organizations as well as national and regional *Religions for Peace* women of faith networks. Over the past three years the program inaugurated four regional women of faith networks in Africa, South East Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and initiated a process of building national women of faith networks that are linked to affiliated national IRCs in the *Religions for Peace* family.

Working through its global network, the Women's Mobilization Program utilizes multi-religious cooperation to efficiently advance the capacity of women of faith to transform conflict, build peace, and advance sustainable development; networks women of faith for collaboration at the local, regional and international levels; ensures that women's active participation and perspectives are included in actions, structures, and strategies of its affiliated inter-religious councils; and creates opportunities for women of faith networks to act in strategic partnerships with other agencies.

The Women's Mobilization Program also works in partnership with other *Religions for Peace* programs to develop toolkits and training workshops for its constituencies that address gender as part of trainings and actions around other issues. *Religions for Peace's* strategy is to include women and gender-focused components in all trainings on issues ranging from conflict transformation to health and development. For example, the Women's Mobilization Program and Conflict Transformation program facilitated trauma healing workshops in the Great Lakes region for religious men and women that addressed the needs of the community recovering from conflict and the specific concerns and roles of women in that process. In 2006 the Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) and HIV/AIDS program will coordinate with the African Women of Faith Network to hold leadership training for women leaders involved in HIV/AIDS advocacy.

Objective 1: To Build the Global Network of Religious Women's Organizations

Expanding Membership and Building the Network

The third year of the grant was a unique year for the Women's Program because of the upcoming *Religions for Peace* Women's Assembly scheduled to take place prior to the VIII *Religions for Peace* World Assembly being held in Kyoto in August 2006. *Religions for Peace* continued to expand the network through consultations and trainings, and at the same time use these venues in preparation for the Women's Assembly; an event that provides a crucial platform for reflection, discussion and mobilization regarding the role of religious women in multi-religious cooperation.

Religions for Peace will convene a large meeting of the Global Network of Religious Women's Organizations and religious women leaders in Kyoto, Japan, from 24-25 August 2006, which promises to be the most representative gathering ever of women religious leaders from the world's major faith traditions. This event also serves as a forum to develop strategic relationships between the members of the global women's network, IRCs, and other key stakeholders including UN agencies, foundations, and bilateral and religious development agencies. The Women's Assembly is an ideal opportunity to further build and strengthen the national, regional and global women of faith networks to transform conflict, build peace and advance sustainable development.

In 2005, *Religions for Peace's* African Women of Faith Network (AWFN) as the first regional women of faith network with currently more than 500 members, continued to expand and advocate for women's inclusion in multi-religious initiatives. Members of the rapidly growing Latin American and Caribbean Women of Faith Network (LACWFN) identified forming national women of faith networks as a priority to further equip women of faith in the region for collaborative actions on poverty eradication, elimination of violence against women and sustainable

development. LACWFN has now more than 100 women of faith members with three sub-regional networks (Andean, Southern Cone and Central America region), expanding the Global Network of Religious Women's Organizations to nearly 1000 organizations. The South East Europe Women of Faith Network (SEEFN) is committed to building and strengthening relationships among religious women in the region and promoting their role as advocates for peace. Members of the South and South East Asia Women of Faith Network in India have organized themselves around issues of HIV/AIDS, conflict transformation and peace building and are jointly working on a program funded by UNICEF.

Objective 2: To Equip and Empower Women of Faith Leaders

Consultations and Trainings to Mainstream *Religions for Peace's* Action Agenda

In addition to improved building and networking efforts, *Religions for Peace* continued to expand the network by gathering members of the global women's network at face-to-face meetings at regional and global levels for experience sharing and strategy development. The following section describes various events that the Women's Program was involved in during this grant period.

Training of Trainers for Advocacy and Media Relations Training - West Africa, July 25 -29, 2005

Religions for Peace Women's Program in collaboration with Action and Advocacy on Children's Program organized a Training of Trainers workshop for religious women and men from Ghana, Senegal and Cameroon on HIV and AIDS advocacy, media relations and stigma, denial and discrimination.

The objectives of the training was to enhance their skills as well as to review the advocacy and media relations (AMR) and stigma, denial and discrimination (SDD) manuals. The training provided an opportunity for the Women's Program to emphasize on the importance of gender mainstreaming in all programs and receive information and updates on country level progress in mainstreaming women into multi-religious collaboration to mitigate the impacts of HIV and AIDS.

Capacity Building Training on Leadership for Transformation and Reconstruction for the Women and Youth of Liberia, August 1 – 5, 2005

Liberia has experienced one of the most horrendous violence during years of a most intractable conflict. Having had a ceasefire and an interim president for a couple of months, the Liberian people were in the process of preparing for elections in October 2005. The women of faith and the youth of Liberia Inter- religious Council felt the need to have a capacity building training on leadership for transformation and reconstruction. The goals were to build capacities, further develop collaborations and enhance dialogues among women and youth of different faiths for lasting peace in Liberia. The objectives of this training were two-fold:

- 1) To enhance skills on effective leadership for transformation and peaceful reconstruction
- 2) To put in place actions and strategies for multi-religious cooperation for the reconstruction and transformation of Liberia for durable peace

The training provided an opportunity for religious women and youth of Liberia to formulate a vision for transformative leadership for reconstruction of Liberia based on past experiences of violent conflict, and assisted them to prepare action plans to successfully meet future challenges.

Objective 3: To Link and Engage Women's Organizations in Networks and Programming

The capacity of individual women of faith and their organizations to take concrete action in their communities and to take advantage of the global network's communications and opportunities for collaboration can be greatly increased by linking them at national and regional levels.

Strategic Policy and Program Development

Meeting of Latin American and Caribbean Women of Faith Network (LACWFN)

Religions for Peace has found that Latin American and Caribbean women of faith have accumulated significant experience in their work on education, social action and human rights issues. However, they lack opportunities to network, or share knowledge and best practices. To address this situation, *Religions for Peace* created the Latin American and Caribbean Women of Faith Network (LACWFN) in 2003. The LACWFN convenes representatives in a multi-religious context to address the central themes of rural women's poverty, domestic violence, maternal mortality, and leadership development.

Over the past six months, *Religions for Peace* successfully launched three sub-regional women of faith networks in Latin America. Representing the Andean, Southern Cone and the Central America regions, they were launched in Peru (September 2005), Argentina (November 2005) and Guatemala (January 2006) respectively. The Peru and Guatemala meetings were supported by the Lutheran World Relief (LWR), while the women's meeting in Argentina was supported by Ford Foundation. (See Attachment 1, 2 and 3 for the Declaration of these meetings).

Through these sub-regional seminars, the Women's Program at *Religions for Peace* also aims to provide a venue for faith-based organizations to share experiences and best practices on issues relevant to their sub-region, partner with international agencies for multi-religious projects, and encourage a multi-religious approach in tackling the most pertinent challenges facing Latin America. Each of the conferences also offered the opportunity for these representatives to interact with international development agencies and better understand the benefits of a multi-religious approach to the challenges facing Latin America. In addition, once included in the Network, the members become the main recipients and beneficiaries of the Women's Program and of the various projects and affiliates of *Religions for Peace* Global Network of Religious Women's Organizations.

Indian Women of Faith Network Preparatory Meeting, India – May 16-17, 2005

Forty-five Indian women of faith met in Bangalore, India, on May 16 and 17, 2005 to affirm their role in peace building and sustainable development. This meeting was a follow-up of the religious women's meeting held in New Delhi, India on November 22, 2004, where a five-member Women's Coordinating Committee (WCC) was nominated to bring together women of faith in India and facilitate the formation of Indian Women of Faith Network. The women addressed the challenges of HIV/AIDS and peace building and the critical role women of faith can play in overcoming this challenge.

The meeting was organized by Dr. Deepali Bhanot, Co-coordinator of the International Women's Coordinating Committee (IWCC), Dr. Vinu Aram, Shanti Ashram, India, and Mr. Paul Sherbow, Senior Research Analyst at *Religions for Peace* International. The Women's Program, *Religions for Peace* International and Pujya Swamiji Sugunendra of Puthige Math sponsored and supported the meeting.

At the end, a statement was drafted and the women were committed to forming women of faith network, creating a national website and identifying an action plan in areas of HIV/AIDS, conflict transformation and peace building. The action plan was later developed into a proposal by the Women's Coordinating Committee that successfully received a grant for approximately US\$ 65,000 from UNICEF.

Youth Assembly Preparatory Meeting, Indonesia – July 4-6, 2005

Sixty-nine male and female youth religious leaders, representing Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and Shinto from 14 countries met in Indonesia this July at *Religions for Peace's* Summit of Asian Religious Youth Leaders entitled "Religious Youth for Peace: Confronting Violence and Advancing Shared Security." They gathered in Ambon, Indonesia, the site of violent Christian-Muslim conflict, which have led to segregated Christian and Muslim communities in Ambon. The meeting was coordinated by Ms. Madiha Awais, Women's Program Associate at *Religions for Peace* and hosted by our local partners, the Inter-Fidei Institute for Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia, based in Jogjakarta, and the Maluku Interfaith Institution for Humanitarian, based in Ambon.

The summit included interactive panel discussions and working groups which made it possible for participants to analyze country specific cases of conflict, and identify the root causes of violence. Then the participants discussed the unique roles of religious youth in overcoming the challenges in Asia. Visits were made to a local church, a mosque, and a border village between segregated Christian and Muslim communities, where a youth camp was launched to promote and exhibit inter-religious solidarity. During the three day gathering, local Indonesian youths performed dances and sang songs, bringing together youths from segregated Muslim and Christian communities.

During the meeting, an Asian Inter-religious Youth Network was launched, which adopted a draft plan of action and established a program sub-committee. The sub-committee, consisting of five members of the Asian Inter-religious Youth Network, was designated to develop a multi-religious pilot projects in the fields of conflict resolution, peace-building and sustainable development with due consideration to religious youth's unique assets in advocacy, education and confidence building.

Currently, the members of the Asian Inter-religious Youth Network are communicating via e-group and developing a proposal to be submitted to various donor agencies.

Consultative Meeting of Ghana Women of Faith - July 30, 2005

Religions for Peace Women's Mobilization Program convened a national consultative meeting of 20 women of faith of Ghana. Present in this important national consultation were representatives from The Veil, Women of the Organization of African Instituted Churches of Ghana, National Council of Catholic Women of Ghana, Amadiha Muslim Women of Ghana, Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Ghana, and women of the Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches of Ghana (NACCC & CIC). The objectives of this meeting included:

- 1) To network and share information and updates on *Religions for Peace* programs and the activities of national religious women's associations of Ghana
- 2) To highlight opportunities, gains, challenges and constraints in mainstreaming women of faith of Ghana to the Inter-religious Council of Ghana.
- 3) To brainstorm and assess needs for the formation of a multi-religious national network of women of faith of Ghana

Participants shared information and updates and affirmed the need to form a strong national network of religious women of Ghana. An Ad Hoc Committee of representatives of all faiths was formed to draft the constitution and communiqué for women of faith national network of Ghana and brainstorm on the possible areas for action. The Ad Hoc Committee met on Thursday, 4 August 2005 at the Ghana Council of Religions for Peace (G.C.R.P) office, where the draft constitution was formulated and some of the priority areas for advocacy identified. The key advocacy identified was on three categories of disadvantaged women and girls of Ghana listed below:

1. The Kayayei (porters), young women and girls between the ages of 8- 40 years, who due to chronic poverty, migrate to the city in search of livelihoods from rural Ghana.
2. The Trokoshi (shrine slaves), very young women who are married off to a shrine as a form of worship
3. The Gambaga (alleged witches), women living in Gambaga, in Northern Ghana, who are accused of witchcraft and excommunicated from the community

The women of faith of Ghana brainstormed on some of the activities they would engage in with Kayayei girls including:

- Advocacy to governments and civil societies including faith-based organizations to support these women for vocational training
- Provide skills training and spiritual, psychosocial and psychological counseling and support

Plans are underway for women of faith to collaborate with other women's organizations of Ghana to advocate for the elimination of these culturally and religiously sanctioned forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

South East Europe Inter-religious Network Meeting – November 16-19, 2005

The women of faith of South East Europe participated in the second conference of the South East Europe Inter-religious Network (SEEN) entitled: "Advancing Peace and Stability through Regional Cooperation" on November 16-19, 2005 in Tirana, Albania. Over fifty senior religious leaders and representatives from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia attended the gathering which provided a forum for all participants to share experiences, learn more about the struggles of the other communities and to develop joint strategies for strengthening the role of religious communities in building peace and stability in the region. An additional 64 participants from local Albanian religious communities, representatives of local and international political institutions and international agencies including heads of Albanian parliamentary commissions, Ambassador's and representatives from local Embassies and members of the European Council of Religions Leaders/Religions for Peace (ECRL) attended the conference. The participants issued a joint Communiqué at the close of the conference (see Attachment 4), which clearly outlines their commitments and actions to advancing peace and stability through regional cooperation.

Consultative Meeting of Tanzania Women of Faith Network (TWIN) - February 2, 2006

Religions for Peace Women's Mobilization Program convened a national consultative meeting for the women of faith of Tanzania. The objectives of this meeting included:

- 1) To network and share information and updates on *Religions for Peace* programs and on the activities of national religious women's associations of Tanzania
- 2) To highlight opportunities, gains, challenges and constraints facing the women of faith in Tanzania

Participants shared information and updates and affirmed the need to form a strong national network of religious women of Tanzania. The Tanzania women of faith expressed their wish to continue to give voice to the voiceless and effectively become an advocacy and lobby group for women whose rights are continually violated. They also called for African Women of Faith Network to have an observer's status at the African Union and other regional bodies so that women of faith become a collective voice against all forms of violence against girls and women. During the consultative meeting, a press conference was organized for TV and Radio stations to highlight the work of women of faith.

The meeting came up with the following recommendations:

- *Religion for Peace* African Women of Faith Network provide tools on faith-based gender mainstreaming, networking and multi-religious collaboration to TWIN.
- Coordinate and facilitate advocacy against violence against women and girls
- Support Tanzania women of faith representatives to attend Religions for Peace World Assembly.

Pan-African Youth Assembly Information Sharing and Networking - February 24-25, 2006

The African Women of Faith also participated in the African Youth Assembly convened by *Religions for Peace* in Tanzania from 24-25 of February 2006 to discuss the manifestations of violence in Africa.

Key highlights of the African Women of Faith Network were presented to the Youth Delegates, and recommendations were made to enhance gender representation in youth networking. Two young women from Africa were chosen as the co-conveners of the African Youth Network.

Information Day - 15 March 2006

Religions for Peace African Women of Faith Network, in collaboration with United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) held an **Information Day** on 15th March 2006 at the Lenana House Conference Centre, Nairobi, Kenya. The theme of the Information Day was "**African Women of Faith – Confronting Violence & Advancing Shared Security.**" The consultation mainly brought together UN Agencies, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and faith-based organizations. The main objectives of the Information Day were:

- To network and share information, materials, motivations and experiences.
- To enhance information and communication capacity of the African Women of Faith Network
- To enhance partnerships and networking, offering a forum to exchange ideas and build partnerships.

The consultation raised the visibility of the critical work of *Religions for Peace* African Women of Faith Network. Participants at Information Day recommended that similar consultative information days be convened by *Religions for Peace* African Women of Faith Network and UNIFEM on a monthly basis to enhance collaboration, communication and networking among faith-based organizations, UN agencies and other non-faith-based organizations on specific thematic areas identified by participants

Development of a Toolkit for Building and Operating Women of Faith Network

The *Religions for Peace* Women's Program is developing a toolkit for women of faith to assist them in building and equipping multi-religious women of faith networks in their region. The toolkit outlines the program strategy and methodology to assist women of faith in building and operating women of faith networks in their region. It also provides gender mainstreaming guidelines for Inter-religious Councils and encourages them to include women in their programs and activities.

Faith in Action: Working Towards the Millennium Development Goals - An Action Toolkit for Religious Leaders and Communities

Religions for Peace, with the support of The Millennium Campaign has developed a toolkit to engage and equip religious leaders and their communities in developing countries around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This multi-religious resource introduces the MDGs and the key role of faith communities in advocacy and action for the attainment of the goals. The toolkit presents religious principles and warrants related to the MDGs from various faith traditions, and provides concrete steps for action to engage all members of religious communities in advocating with and monitoring governments, linking to other civil society actors and campaigns, and making use of the media. It also highlights the importance of including women's perspectives and participation in advocacy and actions for the MDGs.

Also included are replicable "handouts" for use in educational outreach and inter-religious settings. The *Faith in Action: Working towards the Millennium Development Goals Toolkit* is currently undergoing review in Africa and should be available for wide release in Spring 2006.

Operating the Global Network and Facilitating Communication

Whether it is convening representatives of global women's network at the Women's Assembly and World Assembly, providing mechanisms for joint advocacy at the regional level, or facilitating communication between two national women of faith networks that face common challenges, the networking carried out by the *Religions for Peace* Women's Mobilization Program adds great value to the work of individual women of faith networks and IRCs.

The Women's Program Newsletter

Religions for Peace's Women's Program continues to highlight the tremendous work of women of faith in the field through its biannual newsletter. *Religions for Peace's* Women's Program Spring 2005 and Fall 2005 newsletter draws attention to the ongoing work in the field in Africa and South East Europe. The Spring issue features contributions from India and Honduras on challenges of HIV/AIDS, a report on Latin American and Caribbean women of faith network meeting on peace and sustainable development in the region and the preparatory meeting of the International Women's Coordinating Committee (IWCC) for the Women's Assembly in August 2006. The Fall 2005 issue introduces the *Religions for Peace* Women's Assembly and features articles related to the theme of the Assembly – "The Role of Women of Faith in Confronting Violence and Advancing Shared Security." The interesting stories of the newsletter offer inspiration to other activists and allow them to be recognized by the international community, increasing their potential to access resources and funding.

Publication on Women and Israel-Palestine Conflict – "Women of the Book: A Jerusalem Collage"

Religion for Peace affiliate, the Inter-religious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI), through the financial support of the Women's Program recently published a book of women's reflections entitled "Women of the Book: A Jerusalem Collage." The project is a creation of ICCI Jerusalem Women's Dialogue Group, a circle of Israeli and Palestinian Jewish, Christian, and Muslim women formed in October 2001, who met monthly over three years to reflect upon topics of mutual interests and to get to know one another on personal and ideological levels in the interest of promoting interfaith understanding, interaction and friendship.

2006 Women's Program Calendar

This year, Ms. Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate contributed a few words to the Women's Program multi-faith calendar that inspired women of faith around the world. Additional quotations were featured from other notable women to highlight their role in peace building and development. The multi-faith calendar will continue to be produced yearly and distributed to network members and other *Religions for Peace* affiliates and partners. It is an important tool for increasing awareness about the work of women of faith. The Calendar notes holidays from religious traditions throughout the world and includes quotes from women's network members about their perspectives and involvement in multi-religious collaboration.

E-groups and Website

Religions for Peace facilitates the global e-group and regional-groups of Latin America and Africa to include more region-specific and issue-specific communications and more frequent updates of information. Through the Secretary General's update and other communications, as well as narrative reports of key events that include

outcomes, future plans and lessons learned along with news of events and policy changes that affect women of faith globally are shared.

Women of Faith Profiles

The Women's Program continues to honor the work of women of faith in the field by compiling, publishing and disseminating their achievements to the global network and international agencies through quarterly newsletters and program updates.

Uganda Film-making Mission: The Women's Program worked in collaboration with the Conflict Transformation Program and the Inter-religious Councils Development Program in a film-making mission in Uganda for information sharing during the World Assembly.

Founded in 2001, the Inter-religious Council of Uganda has become the first representative and action-oriented multi-religious structure in the country. Under the leadership of the country's senior-most religious leaders, it has established two standing commissions, one on HIV/AIDS and children, and another on conflict transformation. Nonetheless, there is little progress made in the Inter-religious Council of Uganda in mainstreaming gender. The film-making mission provided a good opportunity for dialogue with the Secretariat, the Secretary General of the Inter-religious Council of Uganda, women of faith and other Project Staff and stakeholders to discuss strategies for gender mainstreaming in IRC Uganda. Establishment of a national gender desk to coordinate multi-religious development initiatives was identified as a priority action.

Program Challenges and Lessons Learned

One of the biggest challenges the program encountered was the religious communities' lack of participation in including religious women in leadership and decision-making structures. This has presented both a challenge and an opportunity for *Religions for Peace* in seeking to put in place effective institutional and programmatic mechanisms that ensure that women of faith are placed at the forefront of multi-religious collaborations for peace.

Women's Desks or Groups were established to guarantee effective gender mainstreaming in leadership position within the Inter-religious Councils. However, due to limited authority, resources and support given, the Women's Desks or Groups have not been able to engage effectively in IRC projects and programs. It is expected that the trainings on mainstreaming and gender sensitization for both male and female that are being planned would ensure the inclusion of at least 30% of women at all levels of organizational structures of the Inter-religious Councils, particularly in the leadership position. Learning lessons from the formation of the Women's Desk and Groups, a new national strategy to bring together women leaders, representing all religions, is in the process. This would entail further strengthening the existing National Women of Faith Networks and facilitating the formation of new ones. A strong link would be forged between these networks and the Inter-religious Councils.

The new strategy also acknowledges the importance of cross-border collaboration to effectively address the root causes of poverty and conflict, disease control and sustainable development. The Women's Program would continue to provide support and assistance to the Regional and Sub-regional Women of Faith Networks. To further strengthen these networks, *Religions for Peace* plans on facilitating regular meetings among the members to network, share experiences and resources as well as to develop strategies. However, shortage of funds places limitation on the capacity of the Women's Program to consolidate regional and national women of faith sub networks.

Drawing on the lessons learned and needs identified by the nascent women of faith networks, *Religions for Peace* developed and disseminated guidelines and materials that address the technical aspects of outreach to women of faith organizations, network structuring, strategy development, resources mobilization, and leadership skills necessary for network development. However, to ensure the broadest possible dissemination of these materials, it often requires *Religions for Peace* to adapt the material content and language to suite local conditions. As part of its new networking strategy, *Religions for Peace* will adapt and translate these materials. Resources are needed, however, for this to materialize.

Quarterly newsletter, website, e-group and Secretary General's updates continue to play a major role in effective networking and information sharing. However, many network members have little or no access to communication technologies. To counter this, technical assistance would be provided to the members.

The process of mainstreaming women and their perspectives into multi-religious initiatives will, of necessity, take place over time as attitudes and perspectives of religious communities towards women's empowerment evolve and change. The development of institutional and programmatic mechanisms that ensure gender mainstreaming will require substantial investment in human, financial and time resources from faith communities as well as from global partners. In view of these challenges and lessons learned, *Religions for Peace* is committed to not only intensifying efforts to build the capacity and participation of women of faith into the leadership of its affiliated Inter-religious Councils and their projects, but also to establishing and further strengthening the regional, sub-regional and national Women of Faith Networks to increase the capacity of individual women of faith and their organizations to take concrete action in their communities and to take advantage of the global network's communications and opportunities for collaboration.

ATTACHMENT 1

Declaration at the Andean Sub-Regional Conference on Issues Relating to Domestic Violence, Women's Poverty in Rural Areas and Maternal Mortality

Lima, Peru. September 8 – 9, 2005

Under the auspices of the World Conference of Religions for Peace / *Religions for Peace* and with the support of the Lutheran World Relief (LWR), we, women of faith in the Supreme Creator, from Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, representing different spiritual expressions and religions, have met here in Lima, Peru from September 8-9, 2005 to participate in the Andean Sub-Regional Conference on issues relating to domestic violence, women's poverty in rural areas and maternal mortality in the region, to affirm the active role of women of faith in building peaceful societies and sustainable development in our respective countries, and seek ways of multi-religious cooperation for peace.

We recognize the strength of our faith and commitment in overcoming the challenges caused by various forms of violence and abuse against women: high rates of domestic violence, poverty, failure to exercise the laws to protect women's right, the lack of adequate health services, lack of opportunities and access to education, the limited participation of women in politics and key decision making positions and lack of acknowledgement of the important role played by women in various areas of our society.

Therefore, in order to overcome these challenges, we confirm our membership and our will to launch *Religions for Peace* Andean sub-regional women of faith network, as part of *Religions for Peace* Latin American and Caribbean regional women of faith network and *Religious for Peace* Global Network of Religious Women's Organization.

We call upon all actors of our society - religious, socio-cultural, political or economic - whether local, regional or international to recognize the critical role of various religious traditions in building sustainable and lasting peace.

1. We appeal to the religious leaders, both men and women, to support multi-religious women's groups and initiatives for peace.

2. We appeal to the governments to:

- a) Reinforce respect for and application of the laws which support non violence towards women.
- b) Engage women, including women of faith, at all levels of decision making.
- c) Ensure equal opportunity and provision of education, health and employment for women without any form of discrimination.
- d) Support initiatives for development proposed by women of different religious expressions.

- e) Implement/exercise existing national and international policies and agreements on peace and violence against women. (e.g. Beijing platform for action)

3. We all upon local civil society and international agencies to:

- a) Partner and create alliances to provide training for religious leaders, men and women, for greater participation of religious community in the process of building and strengthening the society.
- b) Support women of faith in their activities and initiatives to eliminate the root causes and manifestations of violence against women.

After our reflection as women of faith we commit ourselves to assume a more active leadership role at every level of civil society and within our faith communities; establish national women of faith networks to mobilize ourselves to work on specific projects that will promote the development of their communities in their respective countries, and continue to create relationships of friendship and solidarity in the region and in the world.

ATTACHMENT 2

DECLARATION OF THE WOMEN OF FAITH MEETING IN THE SUBREGIONAL SEMINAR OF THE SOUTHERN CONE

Under the auspice of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, We, women from Argentina, Uruguay, Brasil, representatives of different faiths and spiritualities have gathered a meeting in Mariapolis Lía, Buenos Aires-Argentina on November 7th and 8th, 2005. We have participated in this encounter with the objective of discussing the following topics: domestic violence, poverty of rural women and conflict transformation. Our main objective is reaffirming the active role of women of faith in the process of building up a peaceful world, justice and sustainable development through multirreligious cooperation.

We recognize in our faith a motivation that guides us to commit into the search of solutions for the different problems we have to deal with. We are conscious of the high levels of direct and structural violence, in the same way, we have recognized other ways how violence is expressed, for example, in the lack of attention, in physical sexual and psychological violence, etc.

We are aware of the high levels of disadvantages in opportunities of women in general and individually of indigenous and African American ones, deeply and more affected in certain situations. We have showed our concern specially for rural women affected by poverty.

Expressing our concerns, we want to motivate our communities of faith particularly and society in general, to:

- Assume violence against women as a central topic in governmental and non governmental institutions' agendas.
- Impulse sensitivity in personal and institutional levels to promote remarkable changes into the transformation of our societies; having as a goal the eradication of all ways of discrimination and the development of equity.
- Support the creation of a real sustainable development in our societies along with an attitude of solidarity and compassion, both guiding us to build a real culture of Peace.
- Gather and undertake actions with civil society's networks that also bet for a change in societies in the Southern Cone.

Concretely we will promote:

- Having a meeting of leaders of the women's network along with religious male leaders, with the support and presence of UNIFEM and CLAI, with the objective of discussing about the topic "violence against women".

- With the support of UNIFEM and CLAI develop a publication where the work of women of faith in the fight against rural poverty is shown from a genre perspective. This publication must have methodological directions to discuss about the topic and to show experiences of good practices. A partnership with CEPAL, FAO and IICA would be useful to develop this initiative. Also, this publication would make special emphasis on the fight against extreme rural poverty, situation where factors such as poverty, genre race and ethnic identity converge.
- Impel the promotion of distance learning courses that United Nations system develops, specially the ones related to topics already discussed by our network. One example is distance learning technologies course, urgently needed by us.
- Creemos en la importancia de generar espacios para que las mujeres de fe líderes puedan dialogar con mujeres de fe líderes de los países desarrollados en un diálogo donde se hagan presentes líderes religiosos tanto del Norte como del Sur. En dicho encuentro se buscaría tratar las temáticas de los problemas de la justicia económica y la del medio ambiente. Este encuentro permitiría conducir nuevas inquietudes que tanto líderes religiosos del Norte como del Sur tuviesen, de manera que estas puedan llevarse a la Asamblea Mundial.
- We believe in the importance of developing spaces where women of faith can dialog with their pairs from developed countries in a meeting with the presence of religious leaders of North and South America. In this encounter we would discuss topics such as economic justice and the environment. This encounter would allow leading new concerns that religious leaders of the North and South have, so that these can be taken to the World Assembly.

Due to this reason and looking for revert these situations; we confirm our participation in the Southern Cone Women of faith network of the World Conference of Religions for Peace

Buenos Aires, November 8, 2005

ATTACHMENT 3

DECLARATION OF THE WOMEN OF FAITH MEETING IN THE SUBREGIONAL SEMINAR FOR MEXICO, CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE HISPANIC CARIBBEAN

As women of faith involved with universal values of justice and kindness inherent to the spirituality of a diversity of sacred traditions represented in the regions of Mesoamerica and the Hispanic Caribbean. We all show our concern dealing with:

- The increase of cases of intrafamiliar violence and women's murder (femicide) dramatically accentuated in the latest years.
- Feminization of poverty like a persistent phenomenon that limits development of towns.
- The importance of public policies with a real impact to obtain transformations in genre relations.
- The barriers of genre in the opportunities of access to the economic and social development.
- Discrimination and invisibility of diverse ethnic groups and cultures, and their spiritual expressions.
- The indolence of governments and organisms responsible for the increase of HIV and AIDS in the region.

Thus also, we confirm that resolution no. 1325 of the Security Council of the United Nations must be part of our work looking for Peace, since it promotes women's integration at all levels: prevention, resolution and conflict transformation.

By the previous thing, we exhort our communities of faith individually and society in general to,

- Retake the practice of values that promote the dignity of people and towns; specially values that illuminate us to choose and to fight, like women of faith, for a life's ethic.
- Assume violence against women like a priority in the institutional, governmental and nongovernmental agendas, by its strong incidence in the social decomposition of our region.
- Denounce impunity of the cases of women's murder; demand to the corresponding authorities its expeditious elucidation and the correct application of justice; thus also, intensify actions of solidarity with the victims and their families.
- Promote mechanisms of social audit in the application of justice, denouncing and penalizing the authorities who don't apply pertinent sanctions.
- Motivate organisms and religious institutions to put in evidence the actions executed in the fight against women's violence.
- Impulse the sensitivity, in the individual and institutional levels, to promote changes that affect the transformation of our societies, with the purpose of eradicating all forms of discrimination and to obtain a development with equity.
- Promote among us processes to learn how to deconstruct and then rebuilt together meetings with the purpose of interest men of faith into making their own reflections on their masculinity, maintaining the perspective that only altogether, women and men, are going to build up the social weave for a humanized society.

As women committed into creating a more humanized society, we commit ourselves to integrate the Sub regional Network of Women of Faith of Mexico, Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean. For the effect, we designated a provisional coordinating commission, integrated by: Amine al Jerrahi, Maria Eugenia Aguilar, Beatriz Schulthess and Ana Victoria Peláez.

Antigua Guatemala, January 18th, 2006.



COMMUNIQUÉ **South East Europe Interfaith Conference** **Advancing Peace and Stability through Regional Cooperation**

Tirana, Albania
November 16 - 19, 2005

We, participants in the second meeting of the South East Europe Inter-religious Network (SEEN), express our commitment to advancing peace and stability through regional cooperation. Following last year's meeting in Leuven, Belgium, we today meet in Albania, a country that symbolizes for us the collaboration among religions in building an open and stable society. We support and encourage one another in promoting multi-faith dialogue and building Inter-religious Councils in order to overcome conflicts in society for establishing peace, pursuing justice and advancing sustainable development.

At this second historic gathering we commit ourselves to draw from the deepest and most genuine layers of our teachings and traditions to build free and just societies that respect the religious freedom and particularity of the other. We recognize our duty as religious leaders to break down stereotypes and foster understanding of the other. We all speak from a position of pain and a position of truth and recognize our interconnectedness.

Our discussion was framed by sessions on religion and the state, religion and conflict transformation, religion and education and the role of religious women in civil society. We recognize the need to support each other in addressing these issues.

As religious leaders and representatives, we commit ourselves to the following:

- ❖ Calling on ourselves to develop together a transparent language that is understood by the societies in which we live;
- ❖ Contributing our religious forums and institutions to advancing dialogue towards overcoming stereotypes and towards promotion of multi-religious and multi-cultural understanding and collaboration;
- ❖ Pledging to work towards just and equal treatment by the law for all communities and their religious leadership;
- ❖ Continuing to strengthen and build the South East Europe Inter-religious Network (SEEN) and developing our partnership with The World Conference of Religions for Peace, specifically Religions for Peace/Europe, the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL) and other international bodies;
- ❖ Recognizing the necessary and substantial contribution and impact that women have in our religious communities;
- ❖ Supporting the development of the South East Europe Women of Faith Network (WOFN) and working to promote the role of women within our respective communities;
- ❖ Standing in solidarity in supporting the religious leaders of Kosovo as they move forward in inter-religious dialogue and cooperation and supporting their joint initiative to convene in Kosovo early in 2006;

- ❖ Affirming the religious leaders of Albania as they commit themselves to continue inter-religious cooperation and move towards the establishment of an Inter-religious Council;
- ❖ Calling on our governments to acknowledge the constructive role of religious communities in building stable civil societies;
- ❖ Recognizing the need to support each other to encourage our governments to take action as soon as possible on the restitution of real and movable property including confiscated religious items of all religious communities;
- ❖ Calling on our governments to stop the confiscation of and to return all holy places (mosques, churches, monasteries, synagogues, teqes etc.) to their intended religious use;
- ❖ Calling our governments to promote and protect religious theological institutions and religious education;
- ❖ Appealing for the new or continued collaboration of governments with religious communities in introducing the teachings of religious values in the public school systems;
- ❖ Standing in solidarity in the promotion of religious values in the public arena;
- ❖ Recognizing that the wearing of prescribed religious attire is a personal right and should not be seen as opposing or compromising the secular principles of any state;
- ❖ Calling on local and international political factors in Bosnia-Herzegovina and other states in the region to create a legal system in the state that will enable every ethnic group to be equal and for every citizen to enjoy equal rights and live with full and protected national, religious and cultural identity.

We further affirm the need for multi-religious engagement in South East Europe, and will work together to this end.

We thank the religious communities and people of Albania for receiving us in their beautiful country. We also thank the organizers, the World Conference of Religions for Peace and World Learning for convening this meeting and acknowledge the generous support from the United States Agency for International Development, the German Government, the Embassy of the United Kingdom, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Greek Embassy.

This communiqué is fully endorsed by all participants and agreed upon on this day, 18 November 2005 in Tirana, Albania.