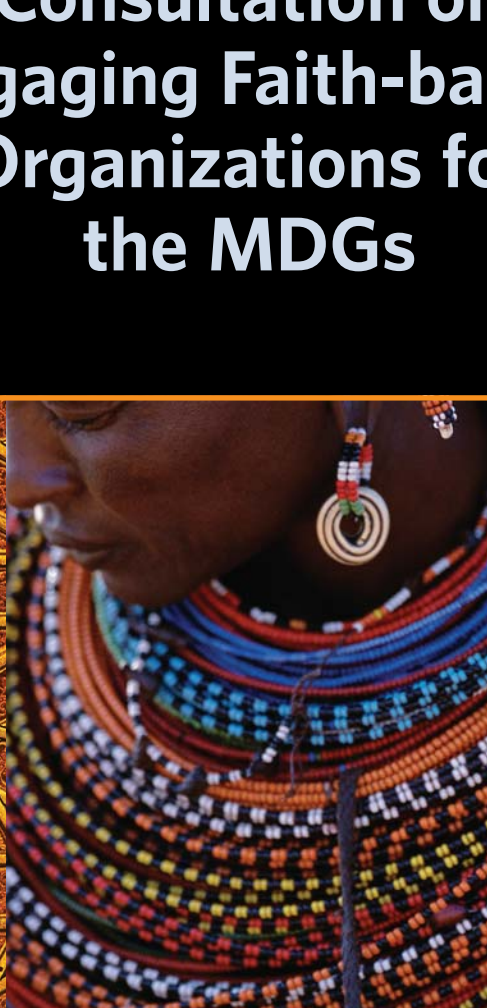
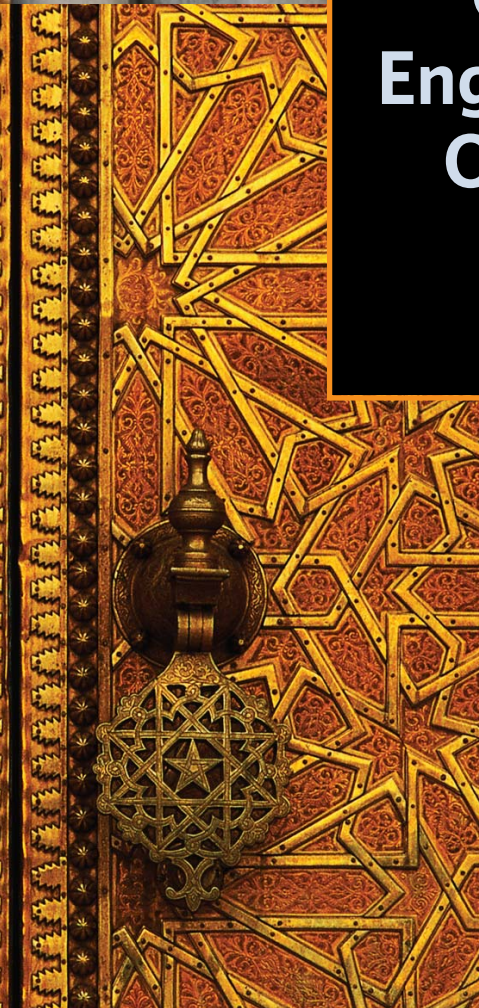




**Second
United Nations
Inter-agency
Consultation on
Engaging Faith-based
Organizations for
the MDGs**



Acknowledgments:

A sincere thank you to representatives from United Nations agencies and international development bodies including Alliance of Civilizations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), International Labour Organization (ILO), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Development Group (UNDG), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Foundation, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS), World Bank and World Health Organization (WHO) for their valuable contribution and insight at the Second Inter-agency Consultation.

We would like to express our gratitude to fellow UNFPA colleagues for their guidance and leadership, especially UNFPA's Executive Director Thoraya Obaid as well as Werner Haug and Aminata Toure.

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Second United Nations Inter-agency Consultation on Engaging Faith-based Organizations for the MDGs

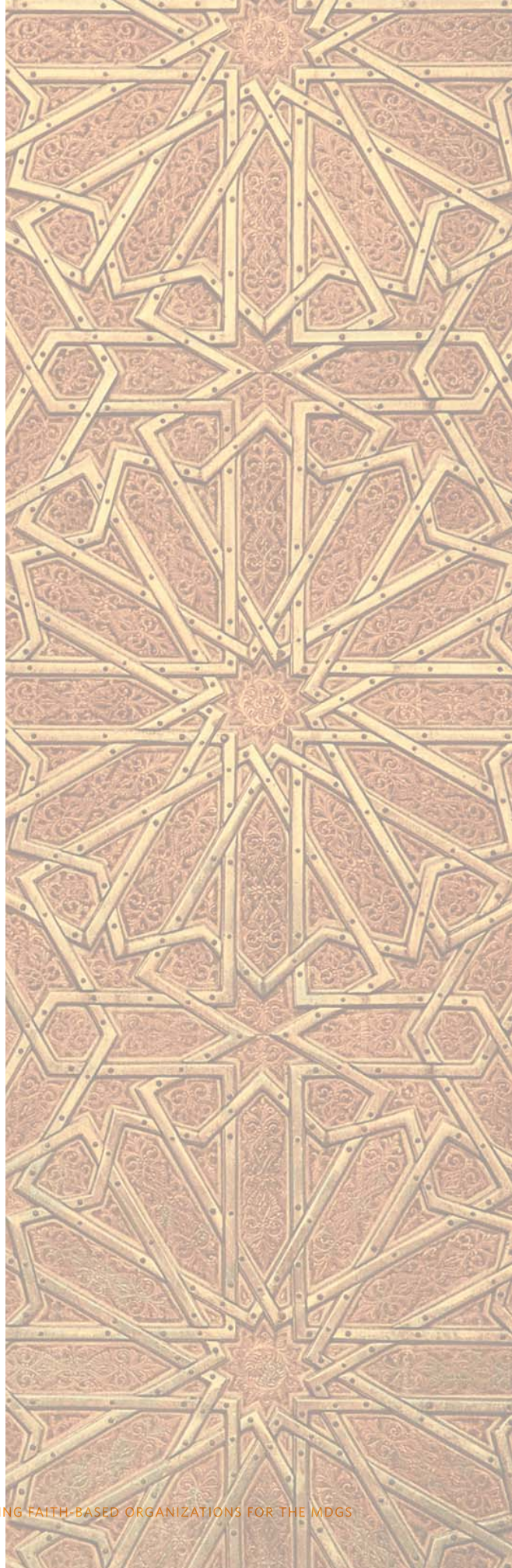
5 AUGUST 2009
PROCEEDINGS REPORT

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I.

Executive Summary

The second Inter-agency Task Force Meeting on FBO Engagement took place at UNFPA headquarters on Wednesday, 5 August 2009.¹ The meeting comprised representatives from United Nations agencies and international development bodies (WB and WHO) working and/or liaising with faith-based organizations (FBOs) in different capacities.²

UNFPA hosted this second meeting, given its long-standing commitment to engaging FBOs, UN reform and 'delivering as one' dynamics. Also underlying UNFPA's outreach to the faith-based sectors, is its emerging concern with security developments globally, and subsequent impact on issues of legitimacy of certain faith-based representation and operations. UNFPA's belief in the importance of a coordinated approach among international development actors, and in the simultaneous sensitivity and necessity of engaging with faith-based service deliverers, underscores its constant attempts to rally its United Nations

counterparts in systematizing and safeguarding the efficacy of these kinds of partnerships.

Most participants had attended the preceding two-day Policy Roundtable with Faith-based Organizations (hosted by UNFPA on 3 and 4 August 2009), and expressed their pleasure at the active participation and interaction from both the FBO representatives as well as the various UN agencies.

The objectives of the meeting were:

- To reflect on the results of the UNFPA Policy Roundtable with FBOs.
- To discuss the future and possible working modalities of the Inter-agency Task Force.

The representatives of the assembled United Nations agencies and bodies updated each other on respective developments with faith-based partnerships since the first Inter-agency Consultation in July 2008,

"A studied, informed and tactical approach to engaging faith-based organizations, where we critically re-examine the way we do culturally sensitive development, how we can better reach the poorest and most vulnerable, and especially the way we assess and evaluate qualitative impact, is an opportunity to enhance results-based partnerships. It is also an opportunity to ensure the achievement of human rights."

—Thoraya Ahmed Obaid
August, 2009

¹ Appendix 1. Meeting agenda.

² Appendix 2. List of meeting participants.



While several UN agencies now officially encourage and seek FBO engagement, many are comfortable working at the regional and country levels with FBOs as one subset of NGOs.

reflected on the preceding two-day policy roundtable with international FBOs and discussed future scenarios of inter-agency collaboration.

Participants agreed to formalize the Inter-agency Task Force on FBO Engagement, which would be under the broad aegis of the MDGs. They also discussed the feasibility of doing this through the UN Development Group (UNDG) Advisory Group. They discussed the possible modality of having issue-based teams, which could provide a practical means of developing common priorities for action and policy.

Participants emphasised the importance, in principle, of integrating FBOs within existing UN programmes, networks and organizations. In that regard, they agreed on the vital importance of sustained commitment and systematic outreach by the highest levels of UN agency leadership on behalf of FBO engagement.

There was preliminary discussion around the feasibility of developing joint inter-agency guidelines on FBO engagement, and an acknowledgement made of the *UNAIDS*

*Strategic Framework for Engaging with faith-based organizations on HIV/AIDS*³, as well as *UNFPA's Guidelines for Engaging Faith-based Organizations as Cultural Agents of Change*⁴. The importance of UNAIDS's co-sponsors discussing the Strategy and roll-out thereof, in the relevant fora, was also noted.

Reference was made to the importance of providing training for staff at all levels in UN agencies on the role of religion in society, cultural sensitivity, and FBO engagement. The exact modality of this training would be worked out in subsequent consultations.

The meeting agreed that the proposed formalization of the Inter-agency Task Force could contribute to facilitating outreach to FBOs as part of the broader integration of culture work in the UN system, as well as providing a record of such engagements for interested international development counterparts. The mandate, modalities, focal points and resources of the Task Force could be decided by the current members of the Task Force, pending advice and approval from the UNDG-related members.

³ Forthcoming, UNAIDS December 2009.

⁴ http://www.unfpa.org/culture/docs/fbo_engagement.pdf



II.

Background

In October 2007, a High-Level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace took place at the United Nations General Assembly that included a half-day informal Civil Society Hearing. In July 2008 UNFPA organised the first Inter-agency Consultation on FBO Engagement, which reviewed United Nations engagement with faith-based communities, raised a number of issues and challenges, and provided many examples both for effective FBO engagement and lessons learned.

The objectives of the *first* Inter-agency Consultation were:

- To share the status of respective outreach and engagement with FBOs.
- To reflect on lessons, challenges and best practices learned.
- To consider action towards parameters and strategies of engagement with FBOs.

Recommendations of the first Inter-agency Consultation included:

- Form an unofficial Task Force on FBO Engagement to be expanded to include additional representatives from other UN bodies.
- Each UN agency provide a mapping of FBO engagement that includes an overview of outcomes, initiatives, challenges and limitations.
- Develop an inter-agency calendar of faith-based events which could be distributed to

UN agencies, FBOs, CSOs and other development organizations.

- Develop a clear and common understanding of the kinds of FBOs with which the United Nations would like to engage.
- Develop inter-agency guidelines on FBO engagement by consensus and in consultation with faith-based representatives themselves.

A series of four regional interfaith consultations between December 2007 and October 2008, in addition to an eventual launch of the Global Interfaith Network for Population and Development in Istanbul on October 2008, were then hosted by UNFPA.

On August 3-4 of 2009, 42 representatives from faith-based organizations and representatives from over 10 United Nations agencies and international bodies met at UNFPA Headquarters. This meeting, in the form of a policy roundtable with Faith-based Organizations on "Strengthening Partnerships for Population and Development", directly preceded the second Inter-Agency Task Force Consultation and was attended by the same members who later grouped, on August 5, to assess the progress in reaching out to FBOs thus far, as well as the future of the Inter-agency Task Force on FBOs.⁵ This report provides a brief overview of the Inter-agency consultation's objectives, proceedings, and outcomes⁶.

⁵ See Appendix 3 for a brief note on the agreements reached at the FBO Policy Roundtable.

⁶ This report documents the most salient discussions that took place, but is not intended as a statement of commitment, nor a noting of obligations on behalf of any agency or participant.



III.

The Second Inter-agency Task Force Consultation on FBOs

The second Inter-agency Task Force meeting took place at UNFPA Headquarters in New York on the following day, Wednesday, 5 August 2009.

UNFPA hosted this second meeting, given its long-standing commitment to engaging FBOs, UN reform and 'delivering as one' dynamics. Also underlying UNFPA's outreach to the faith-based sectors, is its emerging concern with security developments globally, and subsequent impact on issues of legitimacy of certain faith-based representation and operations. UNFPA's belief in the importance of a coordinated approach among international development actors, and in the simultaneous sensitivity and necessity of engaging with faith-based service deliverers, underscores its constant attempts to rally its United Nations counterparts in systematizing and safeguarding the efficacy of these kinds of partnerships.

The meeting comprised representatives from United Nations agencies and international development bodies, as follows:

- Alliance of Civilizations
- Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
- United Nations Development Group (UNDG)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Foundation
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
- United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- World Bank and the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD)⁷
- World Health Organization (WHO)

The objectives of this second Inter-agency Task Force consultation were:

- To reflect on the results of the UNFPA Policy Roundtable with FBOs and implications for wider FBO cooperation.
- To discuss the future of the Inter-agency Task Force.

The subsequent sections will provide a brief overview of the main elements of the discussions.

⁷ Housed in Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs



IV.

Reflections on the Preceding Two-day Policy Roundtable with International FBOs

The meeting reflected upon the results of the preceding two-day roundtable with FBOs. This section highlights participants' views on the challenges and management of expectations resulting from their respective general outreach to and partnership efforts with FBOs.

IV. 1 Continued Challenges around UN-FBO Engagement

The UN representatives discussed the remaining sense of reluctance within the United Nations system, particularly at headquarters level, to engage faith-based organizations and communities. While several UN agencies now officially encourage and seek FBO engagement, representatives noted that many are still more comfortable working with FBOs at the regional and country levels where they are recognized as one subset of NGOs engaged mainly in service delivery and human rights advocacy.

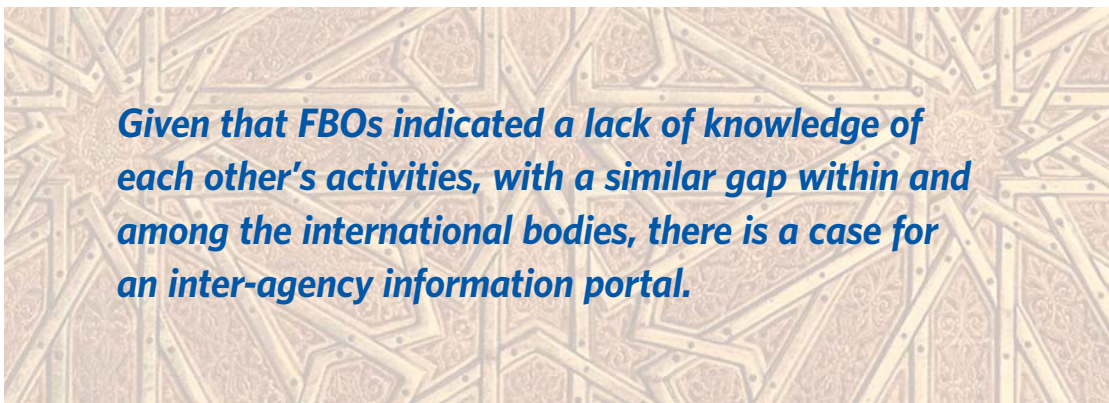
Many agencies have a history of engagement with FBOs, but there is still some confusion, not only among but within agencies, about the wisdom, modalities and value-added of such partnerships. Many UN agencies remain focused on more traditional 'secular' NGOs, and most have no official policy that guides engagement with the faith-based sectors. Indeed, there appears to be some debate remaining as to the value of specific guidelines.

Inter-Agency participants noted a point made at the preceding Policy Roundtable, wherein FBOs indicated lack of knowledge regarding each other's activities, and a similar gap within and among the international bodies. Participants highlighted the value therefore, of an inter-agency information portal, and for the mapping of FBO activities (including best practices and lessons learned), by both UN agencies and FBOs. It was also suggested that this information portal could include a database or library of organizational policies, programmes and activities.

IV. 2 Managing Expectations of UN-FBO Partnerships

United Nations agency representatives noted the appreciation expressed by FBO participants (at the Policy Roundtable) for the opportunity to partner with the United Nations. The practical need to manage expectations of all partners, including mobilising resources required to achieve the agreements made at the FBO Policy Roundtable, was also noted.

A number of representatives commented that the multi-religious approach offers a fair way to engage faith-based communities without discrimination, but the diversity and complexity of religious communities makes it difficult for some UN agencies to decide with



Given that FBOs indicated a lack of knowledge of each other's activities, with a similar gap within and among the international bodies, there is a case for an inter-agency information portal.

whom to partner. Having in place working definitions, guidelines, and a strategy for FBO engagement was noted by some to have proved helpful.

The distinction was made between engagement with religious leaders and faith-based organizations. In that regard, UNFPA and UNAIDS shared their understandings and working definitions, as well as the respective attempts to partner with human rights-oriented religious leaders and FBOs.



IV.

Reflections on the Future of Inter-agency Cooperation around FBOs

IV. 1 Formalization of the Inter-agency Task Force: Principles, Outcomes and Modality

Building on the successful momentum and record established by the thus-far unofficial UN task force on FBOs, over the last couple of years, which included consultations among different agencies, joint meetings and events with the faith-based sector, and the spirit of working together across agencies, representatives agreed on the importance of formalizing this group, to **focus on the MDGs**. Recognizing the links between the ICPD goals and the MDGs, participants stressed that the (formal) Inter-agency Task Force should focus more broadly on the MDGs, in order to include all agencies. They confirmed that their respective experiences pointed to the need for sustained commitment and systematic outreach to relevant FBOs, by the highest levels of UN agency leadership. They noted the significance of the attendance of the Secretary-General at the Policy Roundtable reception, commending his continued advocacy on behalf of outreach with faith-based civil society counterparts.

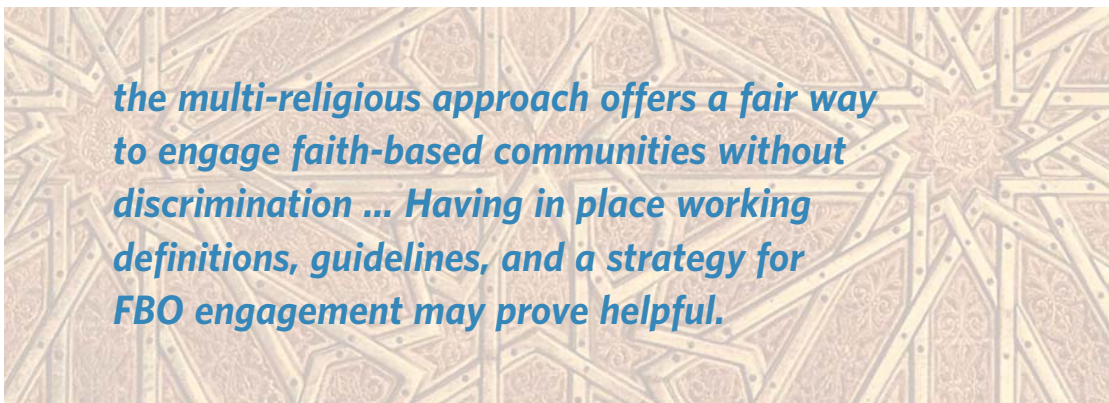
The UN representatives endorsed the idea of the formalization (of the UN-FBO Task Force) be raised at UNDG Advisory Group meeting. The principals of the UN agencies that comprise the UNDG Advisory Group will

ultimately decide the mandate, modalities, focal points, and resources of the Task Force.

It was stressed that the formalization and the working modalities of the Inter-Agency Task Force be built on the principle of maintaining a level of **flexibility** within the Task Force itself, in line with the respective mandates, priorities and resources of the various UN agencies.

It was suggested that the Task Force operate as a cluster, with a **rotating chair**, comprised of focal points mandated by their principals to participate as part of their respective work programmes, and be considered accordingly. It was suggested that Task Force agency representatives be at the technical and/or operational level.

There were discussions about the formation of **issue-based teams** within the Task Force. Discussion ensued as to whether these teams could be composed of UN agency and FBO representatives (such as the two working groups on maternal health and violence against women within the context of the MDGs spearheaded by UNFPA), as one modality to develop common priorities for action and policy. The exact formation and working modality of these issue-based teams however, was not decided. It was stressed that it was essential for issue-based discussions to be integrated within broader existing inter-agency structures and networks.



the multi-religious approach offers a fair way to engage faith-based communities without discrimination ... Having in place working definitions, guidelines, and a strategy for FBO engagement may prove helpful.

The value of the Task Force would be to continue to provide connections (information, experiences, resources) among practitioners both in the UN and in FBOs. The Task Force could provide the information-sharing and background necessary to facilitate the assessment and integration of FBOs within existing UN programmes, networks and organizations; while also creating a 'safe space' within the UN system where important debates around such engagement(s) may be discussed.

There was consensus that the first outputs of the Task Force include **criteria** around which the UN-FBO outreach, and mutual expectations thereof, could be structured. In addition to such criteria for outreach, there was unanimity also as to the need to consider the development of some **common indicators** to assess these partnerships as they relate to the achievement of the MDGs in general, and as per the respective agency mandates. For instance, UNFPA is developing its own socio-cultural indicators and UNAIDS is seeking to develop monitoring and evaluation indicators based upon issues identified in the *UNAIDS Strategic Framework*.


Another important mandate would be to establish a **joint database** or a **shared portal** for each agency to share information about their FBO partners and projects. As agreed at the first Inter-agency consultation in

July 2008, representatives reaffirmed the importance of each agency undertaking its own 'mapping' of FBO engagement. This would provide more information on FBO partners, types of partnerships, assessments of impact and ongoing challenges. This information, in turn, could be shared through the joint Task Force database.

Other suggestions made included building FBO engagement into the agenda of the **annual meeting organized by UN-NGLS**, of NGO/CSO focal points. This meeting has already established a portal through which NGO/CSO focal points may continue to share resources and best practices with each other throughout the year.

Participants also highlighted the importance of establishing purposeful **links with academia**: first to assist in the provision of training for both UN agencies and FBOs; and second to initiate specific studies and assessments on the UN-FBO partnership. Resources include the UNESCO chairs on interreligious dialogue for intercultural understanding. The Task Force would thus provide opportunities for the systematic mainstreaming of cultural sensitivity within the United Nations system at all levels as a capacity-building measure.

The discussions also targeted the importance of such a Task Force assisting in **leveraging**



Building on the successful momentum and record, there was agreement on the importance of formalizing the inter-agency team with a focus on the MDGs.

existing resources to conduct its joint work. One model shared was the “H4” group (an attempt to harmonize health-related efforts to scale up support for MDGs 4 and 5 and include a related division of labour amongst 4 agencies: WHO, UNFPA, WB and UNICEF). Existing potential resource pools could include UNFPA’s Maternal Health Trust Fund as well as the joint UNFPA-UNICEF FGM Trust Fund, which are open to joint programmes implemented through and with UNFPA at the national level; in addition to the UNDG Civil Society Trust Fund, which is mandated to strengthen UN-CSO engagement also at the country level.

It was also suggested to link up FBOs with the process of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF). This could take the shape of integrating FBO outreach as part of CSO focal point activities, or designating a specific FBO focal point. This may in turn, encourage the incorporation of FBOs into the partnerships within strategies and programmes of UN country teams (UNCTs). Another suggestion that the Task Force could endorse would be supporting systematic reporting on FBO partnerships in Country Office Annual Reports, where possible.

V. 2 Guidelines for FBO Engagement

Representatives acknowledged UNFPA’s *Guidelines for Engaging Faith-based Organizations as Cultural Agents of Change* and UNAIDS’s *Strategic Framework for Partnership with Faith-based Organizations*. It was noted that both documents provide working definitions, principles and modalities for FBO engagement.

It was also agreed to recommend to the Principals of the gathered agencies, the integration of the UNAIDS’s Strategic Framework within the co-sponsors’ own action plans, at the upcoming relevant meeting.



VI.

Conclusion

Although the United Nations has been engaged with faith-based communities since its founding, the purpose, type and outcomes of the engagement vary. The Inter-agency meeting arrived at a consensus around the need to build on successful UN-FBO partnerships, and to consider existing guidelines and strategies in that regard.

In particular, it was agreed to attempt to work together to share related information, resources and strategies. There was unanimity that to attempt this in a systematized and studied manner and several concrete recommendations were made which effectively provide a list of tasks — and outcomes — for the joint efforts of group.

There was strong endorsement that the principles and the activities could be achieved through formalizing the current Inter-agency modality, which has already been tried and tested since 2007, and which would be focused around partnerships with FBOs on the range of MDGs. The decision to formalize the Inter-agency Task Force, possibly through the undg Advisory Group, could provide a structured framework of reference to strengthen the respective agencies in their deliberations, planning and outreach with the faith-based world.

APPENDIX 1:

Agenda: UN Inter-agency Task Force Meeting

Wednesday 5 August, 2009

09:30 - 10:30 SHARE REFLECTIONS/FEEDBACK ON MEETING + DISCUSSIONS FROM VARIOUS AGENCY PERSPECTIVES

Moderator: Werner Haug, Director, Technical Division

10:30 - 10:45 COFFEE/TEA BREAK

10:45 - 11:45 FOLLOW UP ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM LAST INTER-AGENCY MEETING

Moderator: Ted Karpft, WHO

- *UNAIDS FBO strategy?*
- *Other Agency FBO strategies/modalities (e.g. UNESCO's role in the Tri-Partite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace?)*
- *Code of Conduct?*

11:45 - 12:50 Discuss future on 'INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE'

Moderator: Aminata Toure, Chief, Gender, Human Rights, Culture Branch

- *Challenges of Task Force? (resources/commitment from different agencies)*
- *Continue informally?*
- *Ideas for formalization?*

12:50 - 13:00 Concluding Words

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director, UNFPA

13:00 - LUNCH and FAREWELL

APPENDIX 2:

List of Meeting Participants

Organization	Contact Name
Alliance of Civilizations <i>New York, USA</i>	Thomas Uthup
DESA <i>New York, USA</i>	Marc-Andre DOREL
UN-Habitat <i>New York, USA</i>	Yamina Djacta Katarzyna Romanwicz
ILO <i>Geneva, Switzerland</i>	Pierre Martinot-Lagarde
The World Bank; Georgetown's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs <i>Washington DC, USA</i>	Katherine Marshall
UNDG <i>New York, USA</i>	Debbie Landey
UN Foundation <i>New York, USA</i>	Tieneke vanLonkhuyzen
UN (Non-Governmental Liaison Service) <i>New York, USA</i>	Elisa Peter
UNAIDS <i>New York, USA</i>	Eric Sawyer
UNESCO <i>New York, USA</i>	Rochelle Roca-Hachem
UNICEF <i>New York, USA</i>	Stephen Hanmer
WHO <i>Geneva, Switzerland</i>	Ted Karpft
UNFPA	Thoraya Obaid Werner Haug Aminata Toure Azza Karam Dawn Minot Madiha Awais Razan Nazer

APPENDIX 3:

Policy Roundtable with International Faith-based Organizations— Strengthening Partnerships for Population and Development

AUGUST 3 AND 4, 2009
NEW YORK

Brief Overview of Key Outcomes

Following a series of four interfaith consultations between December 2007 and October 2008 and the launch of the Global Interfaith Network for Population and Development, 42 representatives from faith-based organizations and representatives from 12 United Nations agencies met at UNFPA Headquarters.

The Policy Roundtable with FBOs, hosted by UNFPA, was entitled “Strengthening Partnerships for Population and Development”, and was attended by representatives from over 10 United Nations⁸ and international development bodies.

There were several general outcomes which reiterated the importance of this kind of consultative bridge building between the United Nations, international development counterparts and the faith-based sector at the global, regional and national levels. There was also broad based consensus on the need for systematic inclusion of FBO perspectives and experiences in policy-making around the range of issues discussed and the importance of

ensuring the transparency and accountability of each partner towards the other. In that regard, the FBOs present expressed their appreciation for the UNFPA Guidelines, together with the UNAIDS Strategic Framework, which they considered as important milestones for ongoing collaboration.

In addition, there were specific outcomes which detailed an agreement to focus joint efforts, over the period from 2010-2013⁹, on two issues: violence against women and maternal health. There were concrete recommendations around advocacy, capacity building and knowledge-related interventions, for which a fuller report will be dedicated. Herein is a synopsis of some of the main actionable agreements reached:

- The need for common standards for mapping the partnerships, the indicators as well as the overall monitoring and evaluation tools which would be/are used to assess the joint UN and FBO participation. To that end, participants:
 - Recommended the commissioning of key research that would develop evidence of the efficacy of faith-based organizations.

⁸ These included the Alliance of Civilizations, UNAIDS, UNDESA, UNDG, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNGLS, UNICEF, HABITAT, ILO, WB, WHO.

⁹ Leading up to the current MDG 2015 time-line, and within UNFPA’s Strategic Plan period.

- Recommended further focused deliberation and shared knowledge between FBOs and research and academic institutions, around religion, culture and development issues.
- Convene two working groups, each comprised of engaged partners from both the United Nations and FBOs, around the two themes of *maternal health* and *violence against women*.
 - Recommended the creation of an effective communication strategy on the themes of maternal health and violence against women that would focus on both advocacy and media.
 - Recommended the facilitation of 'safe spaces' for difficult discussions (around violence against women, HIV and AIDS, intercultural approaches to maternal health and gender based violence, and the role of religious institutions more generally).
- Collate and disseminate user-friendly, evidence-based educational and informational materials around these issues specifically to FBOs.
 - Recommended that a portal be established where UN agencies and FBOs could upload on-line information materials, programmes and best practices related to maternal health and violence against women.

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV and AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

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