

Draft Concept Note

World Religions and Development –

Contribution of Religious Values and Actors to the Sustainable Development Goals

Background

At the international conference *Religion & Sustainable Development* at the World Bank premises in Washington DC in July 2015, sufficient evidence on the relevance of religion and religious actors for development and humanitarian assistance was provided. Donors as well as religious development and emergency aid organisations RDEOs (also known as FBOs or FIOs) agreed to take concrete steps for the conceptual development and institutionalization of the subject during the *Religion, Development and International Relations [post 2015] - Donor UN FBO - Consultations II* in New York. During the consultations participants agreed that in addition to technical and structural issues, theology has to be involved in the discourse ("theology matters"). The proposal to publish a paper on the perspectives and the contribution of world religions to development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with international participation was well received and communally approved. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has subsequently offered to facilitate the preparation of such a document and commissioned the GIZ Sector Programme Values, Religion and Development with the implementation. The publication shall be presented during the next international conference on Religion and Sustainable Development in February 17th-18th, 2016 in Berlin.

Target

The overall objective is to elaborate the multi-religious rationale for a better inclusion of religious communities in the new global development agenda and highlight what religions and RDEOs can contribute to its implementation. At the same time, the paper could stimulate an inter-religious discourse on universal values and means of innovative interpretation around the SDGs. Moreover, it could be used as a resource by policy makers and practitioners in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance (to raise "religious literacy") as well as by religious authorities (to raise "developmental literacy").

The paper should allow experienced and authentic voices from the world religions to share their perspectives and discourses. However, the paper neither aims at reflecting a comprehensive commentary on each of the 17 SDGs and each of its 169 subtargets nor a complete theological view of the religions. It therefore is not intended to be a "theological authority". Nevertheless, a high degree of credibility and ownership ought to be sought by including renowned theologians and/or development experts from the world religions.

Added value and target group

The time frame for the paper is favorable due to the dynamics of the adoption of the new global development agenda. The publication would provide a good opportunity to raise awareness about the potentials of religions for development and the USP of RDEOs amongst (new) donors / policy makers, practitioners and religious followers. It would also enhance interreligious international dialogue amongst diverse stakeholders. In this sense, the key target groups of the papers are not only policy

makers, developmental experts and members of RDEOs but also people already willing to engage in development and human rights work.

Participants

The paper aims at including the perspectives of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, the Sikh Religion, Judaism and Baha'i (and if suitable from a traditional religion). A sensitive approach will be required with regards to identifying the authors due to possible different perspectives and interpretations within the religions themselves and internal rivalries. Based on the existing diverse international contacts with religious actors, RDEOs and theologians, an initial screening of appropriate theological authorities of the world religions, who have a high credibility due to their comprehensive knowledge of their religion and an understanding of issues related to development and global challenges, is necessary. In the final process, up to two appropriate authors per religion have to be selected, who are able to contribute to the paper in the given time-frame and who represent forms of religious traditions which are open and favorable for the advancement of core development goals and human rights and explicitly distance themselves from any form of terror in the name of religion.

In collaboration especially with multilateral, bilateral and RDEOs' participants from the *Donor UN FBO - Consultations*, GIZ will facilitate the process of identifying the authors, overlook the editing process based on high quality standards and the translation of the paper into relevant languages. This inclusive approach will assure a high ownership of the paper and could serve as a port of call to create a first common product of enhanced international donor coordination. It is proposed that the UN Interagency Task Force for Relating to Faith Based Organizations (IATF) serves as co-editor of the paper since it can rely on many years of experience in working with RDEOs and enjoys a high degree of credibility. The question who will be the formal publisher of the paper has to be discussed.

Content

The following elements for the paper could be useful:

- Preface: It could include two short high-level prefaces on the relevance of shared values for sustainable development and how and why religion matters. In addition to a foreword from the political field, it could be helpful to engage a prestigious and well-known person as ambassador for the subject who writes a second preface.
- Introduction: The introduction shows: a) how religious traditions have been involved in development and emergency assistance, b) theologically derives core values that are found in all religions and c) highlights how the consideration of these values in politics, economy and in the lives of people can contribute to the solution of the global challenges. A short reflection on the abuse of religion for political purposes and terror and the dangers of proselytizing and politicisation of religion should be included.
- Content: The chapters could be arranged along the five key clusters of the SDGS: Planet, People, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. Each religion shares its perspectives per key cluster. If suitable, inspiration for applying religious values for development and the implementation of sustainable projects and initiatives could be added. Each religion is explained briefly including a key historical date and numbers regarding the followers (i.e. PEW stats).
- Recommended reading and links

- Short information about the authors
- Sources / Literature
- Publisher / Logos

The content of the paper should be theologically grounded. However, the language should be easily understandable, potential-oriented and moral undertones should be avoided.

Layout

An appealing yet simple design is proposed.

- Length of paper: Approximately 50 pages
- Languages : Arabic, English, German (and if needed Spanish and French)
- Cover: An abstract painting or a collage by artists from different religions could serve as a cover picture.
- Images from the religions should be included as well as calligraphies of suitable quotations from the Holy Scriptures.

Process

The concept note will be shared among relevant DUF II participants for feedback until mid of September 2015. Additionally, it will be discussed with relevant experts who could serve as advisors during the process of drafting the paper (suggestions: inter alia Dr. Dr. Dietrich Werner from Bread for the World, Dr. Azza Karam from UNFPA / IATF). Once there is consensus on the basic orientation of the paper and the core chapters, suitable authors, who are ready to contribute to the paper without payment, will be identified. If necessary, a discussion with all authors will be organized to ensure a common understanding of the paper and the envisaged quality in the given time frame. To keep the costs low, a possible meeting could be docked at a conference or carried out online.

Draft by GIZ Sector Program Values, Religion and Development

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