

# **INTER-RELIGIOUS BREAKTHROUGH COMMITMENT**

## **Breakthrough: The Women, Faith and Development Summit to End Global Poverty**

Today more than ever in the twenty-first century, poverty has taken a female face. Gender discrimination continues to be pervasive worldwide, impacting negatively on the education, health and wellbeing of women and girls.

We face the stark realities of gender inequalities that fuel chronic poverty, gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, conflicts, and maternal mortality among other challenges. Women and girls are impoverished and the wellbeing of communities is jeopardized.

The root causes of gender-based poverty and solutions thereof are manifold, but we commit to focus on those that relate to religion. We applaud religiously motivated interventions to end poverty and promote women's empowerment. We acknowledge that our sacred texts, traditions and values have been misused to violate the rights and wellbeing of women and girls. We condemn all forms of religious extremism that invoke the name and power of religion to discriminate against women and girls. We recognize that women and girls are key to ending global poverty, and religions can and must do more to address the feminization of poverty and empower women and girls.

Therefore we re-commit to work together in inter-religious cooperation to:

- I. Address the Millennium Development Goals to empower women and promote gender equality,
- II. End Gender-Based Violence.

### **I. Address the Millennium Development Goals to Empower Women and Promote Gender Equality**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the global consensus for development. Equality between women and men, boys and girls is a development goal in and of itself and also necessary to achieve all the MDGs by 2015. Focusing on the MDGs to empower women and girls and promote gender equality is a strategy that will benefit the entire world.

As people of faith, we affirm that gender equality is not only a moral imperative but also a prerequisite to sustainable global development. Our faith traditions and our values call us to be outraged at the ongoing tragedy of poverty and the disproportionate burden borne by women and girls at a time when we can do so much more. To remain silent while poverty kills, injures and cripples the lives of so many women and girls violates the fundamental teachings overwhelmingly shared by the world's religions.

Religious communities hold a vital key to the achievement of the MDGs, and religious leaders and faith communities have the power to ensure that world leaders work to achieve the MDGs by 2015. Religion powerfully articulates the values and attitudes that shape relationships between individuals, communities and nations and call forth actions that transform society and culture.

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Faith has always fueled activism, and people of faith can and must act together to build the spiritual and political will necessary to attain the Millennium Development Goals and empower women and girls. Together we can serve as moral advocates for the needed changes and as powerful agents of action.

### **We commit to one or more of the following actions:**

- Raise awareness about the MDGS and empower faith communities to take action.
- Incorporate MDGs into religious education.
- Hold special religious services on the MDGs.
- Link the MDGs to activities our community is already taking.
- Use gender tools to realize financial goals to attain gender equity.
- Put pressure on governments to fulfill their responsibilities and the commitments they made when they signed the Millennium Declaration in 2000.
- OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

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*(Please list other creative new initiatives and actions your organization will undertake to address Millennium Development Goals.)*

### **II. End Gender-Based Violence**

Gender-based violence is a violation of human rights, an impediment to the global efforts to eradicate poverty, and one of the strongest causes of the AIDS epidemic. As women and men leaders of religious groups, we have a moral and ethical responsibility to name and condemn gender-based violence, to raise awareness about it, and to educate our members to avoid practicing, being subjected to or being complacent about such violence. We commit ourselves to addressing gender-based violence within our families, our institutions, and our societies through education, advocacy, and the provision of services to mitigate its impact. We commit to creating safe environments for our daughters to enable them to grow into the persons God created them to be -- daughters of God, who are to be loved, valued and empowered.

We call upon our male religious leaders and colleagues to become role models for the men and boys in their communities of faith, and to promote behaviors and attitudes towards women and girls that do not include or depend on dominance over women. As religious leaders, all of us are in a position to speak out against gender-based violence and to use our influence to fuel an unstoppable force that will make gender based violence history.

### **We commit to one or more of the following actions:**

- Educate religious leaders on domestic violence.
- Share information on gender violence with a worshipping community.
- Create, review, and implement a NO TOLERANCE policy for sexual harassment and domestic violence at all levels.

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- Partner with local ecumenical/interfaith organizations to aid women who are victims of violence.
- OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please list other creative new initiatives and actions your organization will undertake to address Gender Based Violence.)*

Joining together across different faiths and traditions, we hereby claim and affirm our shared responsibility and capability to empower women and girls.

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### **Signatures to Inter-Religious Commitment for BREAKTHROUGH: The Women, Faith and Development Summit to End Global Poverty**

**Margaret Arach**; Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), Christian  
**Dr. Vinu Aram**; Director, Shanti Ashram; Vice Moderator, Religions for Peace World Council  
**Hamid Byamugenzi**; Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa, Muslim  
**The Right Reverend John Bryson Chane**; Bishop of Washington  
**Ahmad El Bendary**; Founder & Senior Advisor, Islamic Relief USA  
**Uzma Farooq**; Vice –President, Muslim Women's Coalition, Director For The Greater Washington DC Area  
**Rev. Dirk Ficca**; Executive Director, Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions  
**Dr. Richard L. Hamm**; former General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. & Canada  
**Bishop Sumoward Harris**; Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa, Christian  
**Judith M. Hertz**; Co-chair, Commission on Interreligious Affairs, Union for Reform Judaism  
**Robert Hounon**; Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa, African Traditional Religion  
**Sr. Mariah Udorah Ifechukwu**; Nigeria Conference of Religious Women; Religions for Peace African Women of Faith Network  
**Daisy Khan**; Executive Director, American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA); Founder, Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equity (WISE)  
**Rev. Michael Kinnamon, Ph.D.**; General Secretary, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA  
**The Reverend Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick**; Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA)  
**Constance Kreshtool**; Past President, Women of Reform Judaism  
**Ms. Mehrezia Labidi-Maiza**; Secretary, Association for Women Progress and Representative; Coordinator, Religions for Peace Global Women of Faith Network  
**Shelley Lindauer**; Executive Director, Women of Reform Judaism  
**Ms. Hajia Katumi Mahama**; President, Muslim Women's Organization of Ghana; Coordinator, Religions for Peace African Women of Faith Network  
**Rev. Gail E. Mengel**; National President, Church Women United

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**Sheikh Shaban Mubaje;** Grand Mufti, Uganda Muslim Supreme Council; Co-Chair, Religions for Peace African Council of Religious Leaders

**Ms. Stellamaris Mulaeh;** Peace Units Programme National Coordinator, Pax Romana Africa Regional Office; Coordinator, Religions for Peace Global Youth Network

**Rev. Samuel Nixon, Jr.;** Executive Director Missions, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

**The Reverend Dr. Ishmael Noko;** General Secretary, Lutheran World Federation

**Rev. Ilukpitty Pannasekara;** Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa, Buddhist

**Ms. Ana Victoria Pelaez;** Meso American Women of Faith Network; Coordinator, Guatemalan Inter-Religious Dialogue on Development

**Prabhudas Pattni;** Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa, Hindu

**Rev. Dr. Tyrone Pitts;** General Secretary, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

**Feisal Abdul Rauf;** Imam, Masjid Al Farah; Founder & CEO, Cordoba Initiative

**The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori;** Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church

**Rosanne M. Selfon;** President, Women of Reform Judaism

**Hadja Mariama Sow;** Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa, Muslim

**Rev. Dr. T. DeWitt Smith, Jr.;** President, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

**John Thomas;** General Minister and President of United Church of Christ

**Rev. Judith VanOsdol;** Women and Gender Justice Pastoral Coordinator, Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI); Coordinator, Religions for Peace Latin American and the Caribbean Women of Faith Network

**Lucretia Warren;** Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa, Baha'i

**The Rev. Dr. Robert K. Welsh;** General Secretary of the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council

**James E. Winkler;** General Secretary, General Board of Church & Society, United Methodist Church

**Rabbi Eric Yoffie;** President, Union for Reform Judaism

Religious leaders are invited to sign on to this commitment by going to <http://wfd-alliance.org/blog/hope.htm> (bottom of page) and posting comment to be counted.

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## RESOURCES RELATED TO MDGS

- Faith in Action: Working Toward the Millennium Development Goals; An Action Toolkit for Religious Leaders and Communities. Religions for Peace/United Nations Development Program, 2005; <http://www.religionsforpeace.org/resources/toolkits/index>
- Bread for the World resources at [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org). See in particular briefing paper 1 at <http://www.bread.org/BFW-Institute/briefing-papers/mdg-briefing-paper-1.pdf>
- Resources from the Episcopal Church in support of the ONE Campaign to achieve the Millennium Development Goals; <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/ONE/>; see also wide range of MDG materials available at <http://www.episcopalbookstore.org>
- Resource from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to support the ONE Campaign which will help in achieving the Millennium Development Goals; <http://www.elca.org/advocacy/one>
- Women of Reform Judaism 2006 Resolution on Ending Global Poverty: <http://WomenofReformJudaism.org/programming/resolutions-statements/ending-global-poverty>; and 2000 Resolution on Rights of Women and Girl Children World Wide: <http://womenofreformjudaism.org/programming/resolutions-statements/rights-of-women-and-girl-children-worldwide>

## RESOURCES RELATED TO ENDING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

- Faith Trust Institute website for educational resources and training related to ending violence against women which includes resources from Christian, Muslim and Jewish; <http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/>
- Caritas Internationalis; Guide to Gender Strategies; <http://www.caritas.org/Upload/g/genderen.PDF>
- The World Council of Churches; Decade to Overcome Violence; <http://overcomingviolence.org/en/resources/wcc-resources/bible-studies.html>
- National Council of Churches; <http://www.nccusa.org/womenshistory/domesticviolence2.html>.
- The Lutheran World Federation; "Churches Say 'NO' to Violence Against Women"; [http://www.lutheranworld.org/LWF\\_Documents/Lwfviolece-EN.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/Lwfviolece-EN.pdf)
- Canadian Council of Muslim Women provides a wide range of resources; <http://www.ccmw.com/>; see especially Education Wife Assault; <http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/>
- Women Living Under Muslim Law(WLUM); <http://wluml.org/english/index.shtml>
- Bahá'í International Community; statement on violence against women; <http://statements.bahai.org/06-0702.htm>

PLEASE VISIT THE WFDA website at [www.wfd-alliance.org](http://www.wfd-alliance.org) for additional resources and updates.