

Faith Communiqué

30th June 2021



People of Faith are Allies to Generation Equality

As religious actors and networks of faith-based organisations, who work for the achievement of the Beijing Platform for Action and support the Action Coalitions, we welcome the Generation Equality Forum. We take this opportunity to speak out about our role and recommendations to the UN and its Member States, to the leaders and fellow commitment-makers of the Action Coalitions and the WPS-Humanitarian Action Compact, and to our civil society colleagues.

In 1995, 189 countries adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a bold and ambitious roadmap for gender equality. In the last 26 years, religious actors have been working from the local to the global, to transform gender norms, implement programmes, reform unjust laws and promote gender justice.

We lament that some religious actors have also contributed to slowing, or even blocking progress, towards achieving the Beijing Platform for Action. We call upon our constituencies to be accountable for our own human rights violations and to counter anti-rights actors, who are instrumentalising religion.

Commitment to Action Coalitions

The Action Coalitions are a new impetus to address pre-existing systemic and structural issues, while also seeking to address new challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing inequalities, rising racism, and the climate crisis.

As religious actors rooted in local communities, we understand how forms of repression are interrelated and recognise gender injustice as an intersectional issue; therefore we are pivotal partners in addressing them in local to global spaces and are making significant commitments to the Action Coalitions.

We are called to work in partnership for the protection and promotion of human dignity and to achieve gender justice. We recognise that we all benefit from a more gender-equal society.

Gender Based Violence

As people of faith, we are mobilising and equipping our communities around the world to address the root causes of gender-based violence, including promoting prevention and early intervention strategies, decolonising language and scripture, and speaking out against gender injustices. We are also working to serve those who have been subjected to gender-based violence, by creating safe spaces and advocating for their rights.

Economic Justice and Rights

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed pre-existing structural injustices and inequalities. We are committed to working for economic justice and rights, which is essential for broader social change. This includes tackling systemic issues related to unpaid care work, unequal pay, social protection, and reforming family laws, while also transforming gender norms.

Bodily Autonomy

Religious actors are mobilising to address entrenched gender norms, which act as barriers to bodily autonomy. Religious leaders are often trusted voices in communities, and therefore, have a critical role in transforming gender norms, promoting Comprehensive Sexuality Education, and enabling access to gender responsive sexual and reproductive health services.

Climate Justice

Ecological degradation and the impact on people and life forms are entwined, they are one phenomenon and must be addressed holistically. Religious actors are powerful forces for climate advocacy, which addresses interconnected issues, such as racial justice, ending gender-based violence, and defending Indigenous rights at local, regional and global spaces. We advocate for a just transition, towards a low carbon economy, which ensures women's rights are protected and promoted.

Technology and Innovation

The challenges posed by COVID-19 have awakened us all to the effectiveness of digital technologies but also the limited access that many of our communities' experience. We are alarmed by the global rise in racism and hate speech in virtual spaces, which is often experienced by women, young women and girls in all their diversity. We all, including religious actors, have a role to play in enabling access to safe online spaces, which we believe are a 'common good'.

Feminist Movements and Leadership

We recognise the absolute need to advance the leadership of women, young women and girls in all their diversity, in all spheres of society, including in our faith communities. We are committed to addressing the power dynamics and barriers that currently exist, and to promoting inclusive leadership in the spaces that we occupy and create. We are working with feminist theologians, to strengthen narratives for gender equality. We are also working to support young women and girls of faith to be heard in decision-making spaces. The faith community is and will continue to be an integral part within grassroots led feminist movements, working to break silos, and counter patriarchal backlashes.

Women, Peace & Security and Humanitarian Action

Women, young women and girls are important stakeholders in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. However, they are often excluded from participation in peace processes, due to gender norms and tradition, which we seek to transform. We also uphold the critical work of Human Rights Defenders, who are working for peace and gender equality. We will continue to amplify and protect courageous voices, who are boldly speaking out to achieve human rights for all.

Faith in Beijing Call for Partnership

We call upon you all to work with religious actors and faith-based networks to advance our shared goals for generation equality.

1. Recognise the unique role of religious actors, including women and girls, and our power to influence in the communities that we serve. Our platforms can be used to transform gender norms and to mobilise our diverse constituencies towards achieving gender equality at every level.

2. Increase funding and resources to enable strategic partnerships at all levels with religious actors, who have strong track records of working for gender equality and fulfilling the Beijing Platform for Action.
3. Enable all stakeholders to engage critically in the gender and religion nexus, including working with men and boys, and religious leaders, to advance action towards achieving the Beijing Platform for Action and Agenda 2030.
4. Co-develop gender justice policies, strategies and programmes with religious actors, which strengthen intersectional approaches to institutional changes and accountability.
5. Partner with us to promote feminist theologies that promote equality and counter backlashes to achieving gender equality, in particular, when anti-rights actors are instrumentalising our religions to block progress.
6. Recognise us as a reference point, who can enable partnerships with local communities, and share our learnings from working with religious and traditional leaders to be catalysts for social change.
7. Partner with us to amplify the unique voices and perspectives of young women of faith within policy and advocacy forums and debate.
8. Join us in national, regional, and global advocacy, as we seek to reform and implement laws and policies to address systemic inequalities, and to advance gender equality in all spheres of society.
9. Address the lack of gender-disaggregated data and accountability mechanisms to strengthen our collective efforts and understanding of policy and programmatic impacts to advance gender equality.
10. Work with us to tackle systemic racism, wherever it is encountered as we will never achieve gender equality without racial justice.

