

Stories of faith: Social protection, stigma and safe havens

Monday 18th March 2019 | 4.30 | Parallel Event

Eighth Floor, Church Center for the United Nations, New York

Contributions by:

Islamic Relief Worldwide, United Nations Population Fund, Global Interfaith WASH Alliance, Anglican Communion, Side by Side: Faith movement for gender justice & Church of Uganda.

Join us for an event that amplifies the role of faith leaders in enabling the right to social protection, tackle stigma, challenge gender norms and create safe havens. The role of faith leaders has often been overlooked by humanitarian actors, who have adopted secular practices. However, as the work of our speakers demonstrate, when faith leaders are engaged, a journey of transformational change is possible.

Based firmly on our moral and scriptural obligations, we aim to create greater understanding of the role of faith actors in the advancement of gender rights and equality. Dr. Azza Karam, will open this event, with a keynote on *Telling Stories of Faith that can shape Policy and Practice*. Our panel will then share experiences and discussion on how faith leaders, are working together, to challenge attitudes and practices related to gender inequality. We hope this discussion will contribute to broader understanding within local civil society actors of the effects of and the long-term generation impact of faith based practices. Speakers will share tools, declarations and movements, which strengthen existing work in gender equality. Concluding remarks will be given by Irene Anena, Program Officer for Gender and Social Justice at the Church of Uganda.

Welcome and opening remarks:

The Rev. Canon Terrie Robinson, Director for Women in Church and Society, Anglican Communion

Keynote:

Telling Stories of Faith that can shape Policy and Practice.

Dr. Azza Karam, Senior Advisor on Social and Cultural Development, UNFPA

Faith in action panel discussion, followed by Q&A:

'Change lies within': Faith, Scripture and communities the powers to change from within

Mousumi Saikia, Partnerships and Programme Development Manager, Islamic Relief Worldwide

Faith in Social Protection: Challenging Stigma and Creating Peace.

The Rev. Joseph John Hayab, Faith Leader, Side by Side Nigeria

From Temples to Toilets:

Catalysing Revolutions in Sanitation, Caste System & Gender Equality

Sadhviji Bhagawati Saraswati, Secretary-General, Global Interfaith WASH Alliance

Closing Remarks:

Irene Anena, Program Officer for Gender and Social Justice, Church of Uganda



Islamic Relief
Worldwide



UN Commission on the Status of Women #63 Parallel Event

Stories of Faith: Social protection, stigma and safe havens

Background: Eighty-four per cent of the world's population self-identify as members of a faith/religious groups. Faith actors play an important role in the formation of people's values, norms of acceptable behaviour and life roles.¹ Consequently, faith actors occupy a unique position to make transformational and sustained progress towards gender equality. The important role of Faith Based Organisations was recognised in the CSW 62 Agreed Conclusions § 46. To build on this success, this event aims to advocate the role of faith actors, given their influence in respective communities, in enabling the right to social protection and stepping in when the state fails to deliver.

While it must be acknowledged that faith/religious actors can be part of the problem of gender injustice, underpinning discriminatory practices, they are increasingly becoming, and seen as part of the solution. Firstly, faith actors can contribute to building a value basis, which includes an inclusive approach based on human rights and equal access to social protection. Secondly, faith actors are also advocating for governments' responsibility to provide effective, and inclusive, social protection. Where governments fail to provide social protection, faith actors can, and often do, fill the gaps with important interventions.

Target audience: Policy makers, national level delegates, intergovernmental organisations and civil society actors, including Faith-Based/Religious Organisations and faith/religious actors.

Speaker Biographies

The Rev. Canon Terrie Robinson is Director for Women in Church & Society at the Anglican Communion Office, serving the world-wide Anglican Communion. She supports Anglican witness to the Christian belief that women and men are equally made in the image of God. Working with women and men at grassroot and leadership levels, she promotes theological reflection and tangible activities that respond to a recognition that gender equality and the empowerment of women and men to live and work in just relationship require a transformation of underlying social norms, structures and circumstances that disadvantage women and girls. Recent work includes convening an international group of theologians who are preparing a programme of study on just relationships between women and men, girls and boys. Terrie currently co-chairs the international Side by Side faith movement for gender justice.

Dr. Azza Karam serves as the senior advisor on social and cultural development at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), where she coordinates UNFPA-wide outreach with faith-based partners and chairs the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development. Before she joined UNFPA, she was the senior policy research advisor at the United Nations Development Program in the Regional Bureau for Arab States, where she coordinated the Arab Human Development Reports. With the support of the Ford Foundation, she founded the first Global Women of Faith Network during her tenure at Religions for Peace, while also advising on interfaith development work in Muslim-majority countries. During this time, she served also as president of the Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations.

¹ Brabant, S. & Brown, J. (2018) *Advocacy Briefing: The Role of Faith Leaders in Achieving Gender Justice*, Side by Side: UK.

Mousumi Saikia has over 15 years' experience in both the profit and not for profit sectors with expertise in the humanitarian, development, education and health sectors. She has designed, managed and delivered programmes for Oxfam, Care International, Sphere Project, British Council and for Islamic Relief Worldwide. Additionally, Mousumi also has managed the delivery of more than ten high quality education projects in the UK in partnership with the UK Department for Education (DfE). Mousumi has also worked for the National Health Trust (NHS) in the UK and provided consultancy services to manage the transition of Primary Care Trusts (PCT) to Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG). Mousumi currently works as the Partnerships and Programme Development Manager for Islamic Relief Worldwide and is the organisational lead for developing and implementing innovative programmes to strengthen IRW's ability to grow, maximise and diversify its funding portfolio. In 2018 she successfully led and secured SEK 48 million from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency's (SIDA's) Peace and Human Security Unit, for a community led global conflict prevention and peacebuilding programme. In addition, to her substantive role Mousumi is also one of IRW's disability and inclusion champions. The new Chair of CONCORD's Inclusive Network Committee. (CONCORD is the confederation of European relief and development organisations and the main interlocutor with the EU institutions on development policy). Mousumi holds Masters' Degrees in Sociology and Population Sciences. Mousumi has worked in Bangladesh, India, Jordan, Kenya, Macedonia, Malawi, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and the UK. She currently lives in London.

The Rev. Joseph John Hayab is a Baptist faith leader from Kaduna State in Northern Nigeria. He graduated from Baptist Theological Seminary Kaduna and is currently studying for Masters in Organizational Leadership. The Rev Hayab was elected Executive Secretary, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Kaduna State where he served for eight years. After a fruitful tenure as CAN Secretary for Kaduna State, Rev Joseph Hayab was appointed the Special Adviser on Christian and Pilgrimage Matters by two former Governors of Kaduna State. He is currently the Chairman Christian Association of Nigeria Kaduna State Chapter and a member of the Side by Side Nigeria Chapter.

Sadhviji Bhagawati Saraswati serves as Secretary-General of the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance, an international interfaith organization dedicated to clean water, sanitation & hygiene (WASH). She has also spoken at several United Nations events, including with the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, and at many international conferences and summits. She has been living at Parmarth Niketan in Rishikesh, India, for 22 years, engaged in spiritual practice and service. She was officially initiated into the order of Sanyas (monastic renunciation) in the year 2000, by His Holiness Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, one of the most revered spiritual leaders in India and the President of Parmarth Niketan. At Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh, where she lives most of the year, she gives daily spiritual discourses and satsang, teaches meditation, provides counselling and oversees myriad charitable and humanitarian projects and activities. Sadhviji is also the President of Divine Shakti Foundation, a foundation which runs free schools, vocational training programs and empowerment programs. Sadhviji is a renowned speaker who gives keynote addresses at large forums. Her TEDx talk on her journey from "Hollywood to the Holy Woods" has been watched by 152,000 people.

Irene Anena is a Program Officer for Gender and Social Justice at the Church of Uganda and the Co Chair and Convener for Side by Side Uganda Chapter. Irene has a Master Degree of Arts in Development Studies and Post graduate diploma in project planning and management. She has a background in social work and social administration, and training in gender analysis for strategic programming, gender mainstreaming, psycho-social support and conflict resolution and peace building. Irene has over a decade of work experience in implementing humanitarian response and development programme on multi-sectoral approach to Prevention and Response to Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Women's Economic Empowerment, Gender advocacy, Child Protection, Human Rights and Education. Irene is also Co-Chair of the Side by Side Uganda Chapter.