

UN Commission on the Status of Women #63 Roundtable

Faith, Feminism and Human Rights Frameworks

Friday 15th March 2019 | 09:00 – 10:30 | Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations

Join our expert panel for a roundtable discussion on how faith, feminist and human rights frameworks enable gender equality and empowerment. Speakers will identify avenues on how these different frameworks are, or can be, interconnected.

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Opening Remarks: Canadian Government Representative

Moderator: **Kirsten Muth**, Special Advisor, Episcopal Relief and Development

Bani Dugal, Principal Representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations

Revd. Fedis Nyagah, Programme Coordinator, Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa

Ulrich Nitschke, Head of Secretariat, International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development

Shaykha Tamara Gray, Founder and Executive Director, Rabata

Josephine Mukwendi, MenEngage Africa Training and Youth Coordinator, Sonke Gender Justice

Closing Remarks: **Solange Mukamana**, Leader of a Survivor Movement in South Africa, Tearfund

Organised by the PaRD Gender Equality and Empowerment Workstream:



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FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES



World Vision



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Background: Eighty-four per cent of the world's population self-identify as members of a faith/religious groups. Faith/religious 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/Religious 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/religious 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/religious 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.

Event Objectives:

- Share the findings from the Joint Learning Initiative (JLI) research conducted for the PaRD Gender Equality and Empowerment workstream on the current and potential role of faith
- Learn from current faith-based practices on gender equality and strengthen partnerships across faith/secular and NGO/government actors.
- Identify areas to foster faith/religious engagement in combating Sexual and Gender Based Violence in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

Speaker Biographies

Kirsten Laursen Muth currently serves as Special Advisor for International Programs at Episcopal Relief & Development where she created and leads their strategy to engage men and women faith leaders at institutional and community levels to promote gender justice and end violence against women, girls and children. Prior to that she served as the Senior Director for International Programs. She has also served as the Deputy Director of Church World Service and the Director of Community Education at Helen Keller International, where she designed behavior change, communication strategies, and training tools for global health issues including onchocerciasis and trachoma control, micronutrient initiatives, and community health care. Kirsten holds a degree in Foreign Service, and Masters Degrees in Social Anthropology and Adult Education. She is most passionate about leadership development, particularly as it supports faith leaders to more effectively and consistently ensure that their communities are regarded as safe spaces and reliable champions of gender justice, as well as to institutionalize these approaches within religious institutions and their governing bodies.

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

Bani Dugal is the Principal Representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the UN. She is serving as the Vice Chair of the Steering Committee of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council. She is the Vice President of the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief, past Chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, past Chair of the Global Forum of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, amongst several positions she has held at the UN in NY. Ms. Dugal holds a Master's degree (LL.M) in Environmental Law from Pace University School of Law, New York and a law degree (LL.B) from the University of Delhi, India. She has authored published articles, statements and papers.

Prior to relocating to the U.S. in 1988, she practiced law before the Supreme Court of India. She has participated in many high-level events, including: UNWomen Intergenerational Dialogue Day at the 59th CSW/Beijing+20 (2015), and World Economic Forum (2005, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018), International Inter-religious Conference on Faith in Human Rights in The Hague (2008), and the Conference commemorating the UN Declaration on Religious Tolerance and Non-Discrimination (2006) and the GA High Level Session (2016).

Ulrich Nitschke is the Head of the PaRD Secretariat and the Sector Programme Values, Religion and Development. The International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development ([PaRD](#)) is currently financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and administered by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in Bonn.

Prior to his current assignment, Mr. Nitschke worked in Urban Development, heading programmes for GIZ on Civil Society Development and Local Governance in Palestine and Benin. He started his career at GIZ with its predecessor Capacity Building International (InWEnt GmbH) in local governance, capacity development and political development education, as well as leadership development. Holding a degree in Theology and Philosophy from Fribourg University and a master's degree in Development Studies from the University of Cologne, Mr Nitschke has published extensively on community development with focuses on civil society engagement, youth rights and participation as well as challenges for municipalities and cities in a globalized world.

The Revd Fedis Nyagah is the programme coordinator at the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA) which exists to effectively coordinate and provide a platform for the Anglican Church in Africa to celebrate life, consult and address challenges in the continent in order to fulfil God's promise for abundant life. Rev Fedis has been involved in leadership training and community mobilisation focusing on faith and community development throughout the continent of Africa. She has addressed numerous national, regional and international fora on issues of faith, development and gender and continues to serve as priest in her local community.

Shaykha Tamara Gray is the founder of Rabata, an organization dedicated to promoting positive cultural change through creative educational experiences. She is an Islamic scholar and holds multiple ijazas in Islamic sacred texts and subject matters. Shaykha Tamara is a doctoral student in the Leadership, Policy and Administration program at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN. She holds a master's degree in Curriculum Theory and Instruction, and worked for twenty-five years in the field of education, before moving into the non-profit world. Shaykha Tamara works as Executive Director for Rabata, building and sustaining its many and varied educational projects. Some of the projects of Rabata are: the Ribaat Academic Program; and online seminary for Muslim women, Daybreak Press publishing, Daybreak Bookshop and Community Gathering Space, Leadership and Legacy Curriculum Materials. She is also a community faculty member at Metropolitan State University in the Ethics and Religious Studies department, and Associate Chaplain at the University of St. Thomas.

Josephine Comfort Mukwendi is a Zimbabwean feminist and human rights activist working with Sonke Gender Justice in Cape Town, focusing on programmes development and coordinating training programs for Gender activists across Africa. Josephine holds a BSc (Honours) Psychology from the Women's University in Africa-Zimbabwe, a Postgraduate Diploma in HIV and AIDS Management from the University of Stellenbosch and a Master's degree in HIV and AIDS Management from Stellenbosch University. Josephine is passionate about working with young people, spearheading youth focused programmes in MenEngage Africa, focusing especially on youth leadership and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights. Josephine is in the process of writing a PhD proposal focussing on the effects of Hegemonic masculinities on the uptake of HIV and AIDS services by men.

Solange Mbonigaba was born in Rwanda, and now lives in South Africa with her husband and four children. She is a passionate feminist, human rights activist and believes strongly in fighting for social justice both in her local community and globally. Her passion for seeking justice has led her to work for Tearfund, coordinating its Survivor Movement programme in South Africa, which has grown to include 547 survivors in the past four years. The movement's objective is to empower survivors of SGBV to come together to find peer group support and to work together to advocate for gender justice among faith leaders, groups and local community. As part of the Survivor Movement project, Solange has also coordinated the development of the 'Journey to Healing' process for survivors in which individuals can share their experiences in a non-judgemental and supported space, and work through the emotional, physical and spiritual challenges they face as survivors of SGBV. The Survivor Movement was the winner of the UK's 2018 Charity Awards, International Development entry and the project is now being rolled out and adapted to other contexts across the world. Solange firmly believes in the spirit of working together to complete one another than competing one another.