

**Faith and Development Leaders Meeting**  
**Faith-inspired networks and organizations:**  
**Their contributions to development programs and policies**

A meeting organized by the Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics at The World Bank, the UK Department for International Development, and the World Faiths Development Dialogue

**Accra, Ghana, July 1-3, 2009**

**Opening remarks, Mr. Graeme Wheeler, Managing Director, The World Bank**

We are meeting at an extraordinary time. Three years ago, the developing world was experiencing its most rapid economic growth in four decades. We talked of the global transfer of skill-enhancing technologies, the powerful catalysts of trade, investment, and capital flows, and whether the developing economies were decoupling from the developed economies.

Three crises later, things are dramatically different. Today, 1.4 billion people—a fifth of the world's population—live in extreme poverty. Sixty million people remain trapped in extreme poverty as a result of the recent food and fuel crises. In addition, the effects of the global slowdown from the financial crisis are only just beginning to be felt in the low income countries. Every 1% decline in the average GDP growth rate for the developing world thrusts an additional 20 million people into extreme poverty. For regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, with 54% of its population aged below 20, the impact can be devastating.

Faith-inspired institutions and development organizations share deep interests in fighting back poverty and combating global climate change.

Poverty numbers mask the true nature of poverty. Extreme poverty has the face of a woman and child. It disguises the infant mortality, the hunger and malnutrition, the lack of access to health care and education, and it disguises the pain of social exclusion.

It is a dangerous time. Governments in the developed world are absorbed with their domestic policy agendas. They have taken on new roles as investors and guarantors of last resort, and are running government balance sheet risks and exposures that were simply unimaginable.

The poorest and most vulnerable on the planet are becoming politically and socially disenfranchised and disconnected from global society. Most of these people are born and die without leaving a legal record or official trace of their existence. They hunger for inclusion, to belong, to have opportunities and access to services and property rights, and to feel empowered.

Climate change is the second greatest challenge. We know, for example, that over the past 30 years, the area of the globe affected by drought has doubled and that the snow and ice covers in the Eastern Himalayas have declined by a third. Each year, rainforests equivalent in size to Poland are being destroyed, while the world's deserts expand by an area equivalent to that of Austria.

Low income countries—particularly the extreme poor—are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. During the 1990's two billion people in developing countries were significantly affected by climate-related disasters compared to less than 25 million in developed countries. Climate change will be felt most acutely in Africa where 95% of farming is rainfall dependent, and in low-lying areas like Bangladesh, and small island states.

In our past conferences, we have talked about how the work of development organizations and faith-inspired institutions is linked. We share similar passions for social justice, good governance, and building hope for individuals and communities, with dignity and empowerment.

Now is the time to strengthen the links between development organizations and faith-inspired institutions. Our partnership is needed more than ever.

Your institutions make a tremendous difference to people's lives. In many African countries, you provide 30 to 70% of the health services, and in post-conflict countries, the majority of primary education services. You deliver innovation and results, and you speak courageously about ethical challenges, injustice, and failures in governance.

You have enormous influence on family and individual's beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions. You motivate and mobilize communities and influence decisions on education and health—decisions that have long term effects on personal development and opportunity. Your impact will become even more critical as official donors face domestic pressures to focus more of their spending on their own citizens.

In the Bank, we are strengthening our work on faith and development to better support government partners and faith-inspired organizations. Though our funding is channeled to governments, we can support your institutions by:

- expanding the dialogue between governments, development partners, and faith-inspired organizations. We are seeing this in the International Health Partnership where partners are funding numerous civil society organizations;
- sharing successful experiences of faith-inspired organizations in delivering social services, e.g., our work with the World Council of Religions for Peace in creating a directory of faith-inspired organizations in Central America, and our work with the Fe y Alegria Jesuit Movement in Latin America to draw insights on the delivery of education services;
- supporting faith-inspired organizations through analytical work and capacity building, especially on monitoring and evaluation by using household surveys to measure the quality and cost of services; and
- giving a stronger voice to faith leaders as done in recent community development projects in Togo.

We have a unique opportunity and a responsibility to work together to protect the most vulnerable. Together, we need to advocate at local and global levels for better policies and for more resources to help governments and communities strive to meet the millennium development goals. We need to promote actions to help reduce the enormous devastation that will accompany global climate change.

Over the next two days, we have a wonderful opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other. We need to value and respect our differences, but, above all, we need to learn more about how we can build stronger partnerships to provide hope and opportunity for the poor.