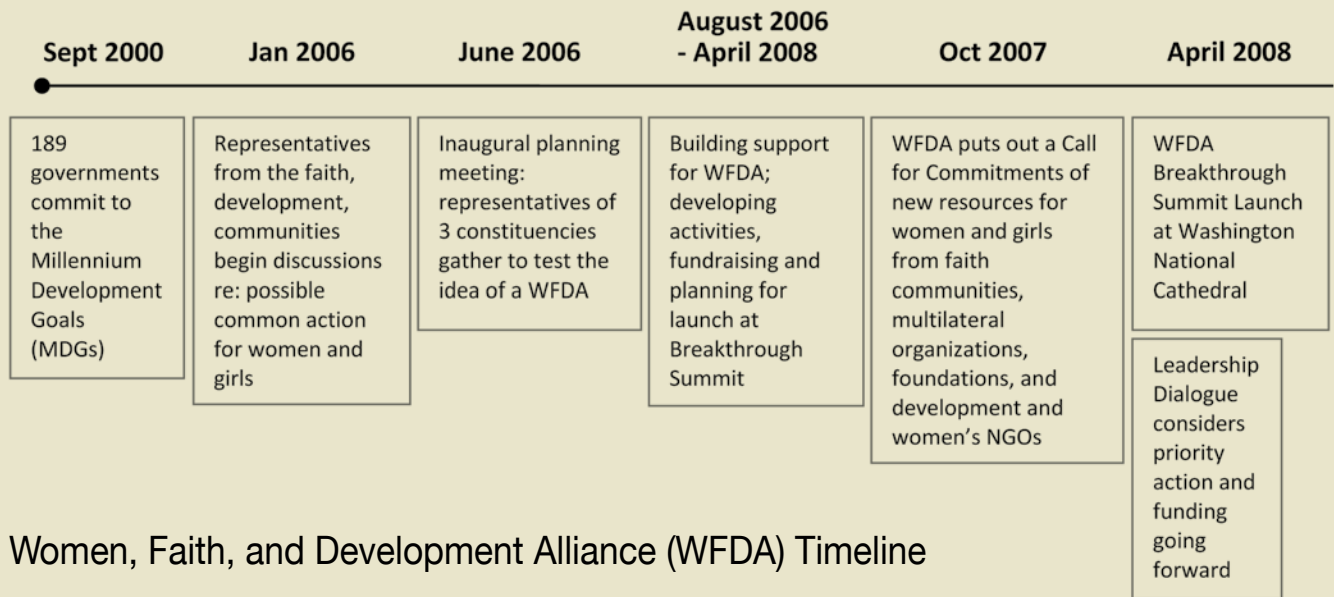




A Short History and Guide for Adaptation





Women, Faith, and Development Alliance (WFDA) Timeline

WFDA Co-Conveners



InterAction is the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian nonprofit organizations (NGOs) focused on the world's poor and most vulnerable people. InterAction leads, supports, and mobilizes its nearly 190 members to take collective action, improve the impact of their programs, increase their global reach, and advocate for efforts that advance human well-being around the world. InterAction's mission is to eliminate extreme poverty, uphold human rights, safeguard a sustainable planet, and ensure human dignity for poor and vulnerable populations worldwide by elevating and advancing the purposes of the U.S.-based international nonprofit community.

www.interaction.org



Women Thrive Worldwide is the leading organization advocating for U.S. policies that benefit women living in poverty around the world. Women Thrive works to develop, shape, and advocate for policies that foster economic opportunity for women, focusing on making U.S. international assistance and trade programs prioritize women. Women Thrive brings together a diverse coalition of more than 50 organizations and 40,000 individuals united in the belief that women are the key to ending global poverty, and that empowering them is not only right but also the most effective long-term solution to global poverty.

www.womenthrive.org



Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty at Washington National Cathedral has the mission of increasing the collective impact of the faith community on health and development. CIFA carries forward the work of the Washington National Cathedral's Center for Global Justice and Reconciliation, which is an original co-convenor of WFDA and forges effective partnerships between faith denominations and other sectors, with a special focus on malaria and gender.

www.cifa.org



Religions for Peace, the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition, works to transform violent conflict, advance human development, promote just and harmonious societies, and protect the earth. The global Religions for Peace network comprises a World Council of senior religious leaders from all regions of the world, six regional inter-religious bodies and more than 80 national ones, the Global Women of Faith Network and a Global Youth Network.

www.religionsforpeaceinternational.org

Nov 2008

July 2008

Dec 2008

Feb 2010

April 2011

First WFDA meeting in Africa - Monrovia, Liberia

International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) convenes meeting in Australia to discuss the establishment of an Asia-Pacific Alliance

Asia-Pacific Breakthrough Summit

More than 30 WFDA members brief Members of Congress on the importance of integrating gender across foreign assistance

UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) NY

Launch of the 'Breakthrough Commitments Evaluation Report' tracking the \$1.4 billion in new commitments

WFDA Toolkit & Website Launch

Collaboration with WFDA Liberia and Asia-Pacific WFDA colleagues

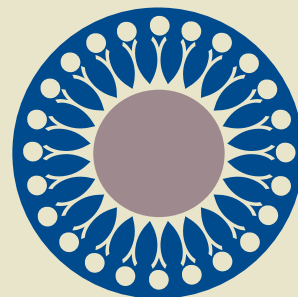


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Acknowledgements

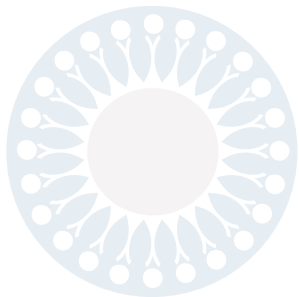
WFDA would like to acknowledge the support of its funders in the production of this publication, ExxonMobil Foundation and the United Nations Population Fund.

Author Acknowledgement

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Creating a Women, Faith, and Development Alliance (WFDA)



Introduction

The idea for WFDA was seeded in 2006, when several leaders of U.S.-based faith, development organizations and women's groups discovered a shared interest in exploring the links between the core teachings of religious faiths, improving the lives of women and girls, and reducing worldwide poverty.

The conversations of a few women expanded into a two-year dialogue involving more than a hundred leaders from diverse organizations. The idea was then born for a new partnership of faith, development, and women's organizations focused on international action.

A Bold Common Vision

This partnership would seek to unite the moral authority and expertise of these three communities in one common cause: elevating women's empowerment as a top priority in international development policies, programs and investment. The unifying force was agreement that the enormity of global poverty, particularly for women and girls, demanded transcending the separations in the three communities and developing new synergies for action.

The leaders recognized that the rights and inherent dignity of all members of the human family are embedded in the values of the world's major religions and enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Women, Faith, and Development Alliance (WFDA) was formally launched in 2008. It is a powerful new force dedicated to increasing political will and action to *engender** global efforts to reduce poverty – in every sense of that word.

Four organizations have served as co-conveners: the Center for Interfaith Action at Washington National Cathedral, InterAction, Religions for Peace, and Women Thrive Worldwide.

Thousands of activists and more than 300 organizations have joined with the WFDA to work together on its visionary agenda. Their collective efforts have been focused on advocacy with governments and donors and on the transformation of attitudes and practices within the communities of women, faith, and development.

Throughout this work, WFDA has celebrated the amazing and courageous work of women around the world and of all who are involved in WFDA. It has been the organization's privilege to carry forward the torch for this breakthrough alliance and its ambitious vision.

This guide tells the story of the WFDA, how it evolved, what it has accomplished to date, and where it's heading. It then offers a case study and a handbook for action in the hope that this story inspires others to form their own unique and daring partnerships of these three communities.

**Engender: to fully integrate gender, and to ensure that the needs and outcomes for both men and women are incorporated in policies, practice, programs, and legislation.*



Action is Needed Now

In 2000, 189 heads of state and world leaders made an unprecedented commitment to lift people out of poverty. These commitments, known as the Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs, set a series of targets to cut poverty in half by 2015. Women's health, education and equality are central to achieving the MDGs. But the international community's commitments on paper have not yet been translated into a commitment of the resources needed for real global breakthroughs. This must change.

Empowering Women Changes the World

Research and experience show that women's empowerment is essential to reducing global poverty.

- Educating girls contributes to increased economic productivity and improved family nutrition.
- Giving women the power to make decisions can strengthen family healthcare and nutrition and stem the spread of HIV/AIDS
- Empowered women are agents of the common good

Investing in the empowerment and rights of women and girls yields dividends for the whole human family. WFDA seeks to activate this positive cycle of women's empowerment and human well-being.

It's Time for New Ideas

Now more than ever, innovative approaches to fighting women's poverty are critical. For the first time, women's organizations, faith communities and the international development community have come together under the WFDA umbrella to tackle the issue, creating one of the most powerful and far-reaching anti-poverty coalitions in history. The united voices of Alliance members have amplified the call for engendering global efforts to reduce poverty and increasing investments for women's and girls' empowerment around the world.

Women are:

- **Dying at a rate of 350,000 each year – one woman every 90 seconds – from easily preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth**
- **Vulnerable to violence, with rates of abuse reaching 70 percent in some countries**
- **More than 60% of the world's hungry**
- **Holders of just 17% of seats in parliaments worldwide.**
- **Less than 20% of the world's landholders**

1. Millennium Development Goals Report 2007, page 17
2. Summary Report—WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women: Initial Results on Prevalence, Health Outcomes and Women's Responses. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2005.
3. UN Social and Economic Council. 2007. "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development."
4. UN Millennium Development Goals Report, 2007. New York: United Nations. page 13.
5. FAO. 2010. "Gender and Land Rights." Food and Agriculture Organization Web Site Brief, page 1.

SECTION 1: Why a Women, Faith, and Development Alliance?

"Women and girls around the world face great challenges. They bear an unjust burden and this must change for the benefit of all humanity. We must act with common purpose and speak with one voice to change global policies and global wills so that gender justice and an end to poverty can be achieved."

—Archbishop
Desmond Tutu
Honorary Breakthrough
Summit Co-Chair 2008





Invest in Women – It Pays!

- **Jobs:** If women were given greater access to job opportunities, the Asia-Pacific region would gain \$42 billion to \$47 billion in productivity each year.
- **Access:** If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30%. This could bring as many as 100–150 million people out of hunger.
- **Decision-making:** If men and women had equal influence in household decision-making, South Asia would have 13.4 million fewer undernourished children and sub-Saharan Africa would have 1.7 million fewer.
- **Ownership:** Agricultural productivity can increase by up to 20 percent where women’s access to land, seed, credit and fertilizer is equal to men’s.

1. UN DESA News February 2008, quoting the 2007 Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific: Surging ahead in uncertain times, New York, NY p 103)
2. FAO. 2011. State of Food and Agriculture Report 2010-2011 <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e00.htm>.
3. UNICEF 2007 report quoting Smith, Lisa C and Usha Ramakrishnan et. al: The Importance of Women’s Status for Child Nutrition in Developing Countries. IFPRI Research Report 131, Washington, DC: IFPRI, 2003, pages xi–xii
4. IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute). 2002. Reaching sustainable food security for all by 2020. Getting the priorities and responsibilities right. Washington, D.C: IFPRI

SECTION 2: Building Support

*“Sisters and brothers,
the Women, Faith,
and Development
Alliance needs your
ideas, your input,
and your steadfast
commitment.
Together, we can
realize a world
transformed, one
in which every girl
awakes in safety and
without want.”*

— Mehrezia
Labidi-Maiza [Association
for Women’s Progress,
and Religions for Peace
Global Women of Faith
network, Breakthrough
Summit 2008]

A Divided Past

The women’s community, the faith community and the international development community clearly share a deep commitment to, and concern for, the well-being of women and girls.

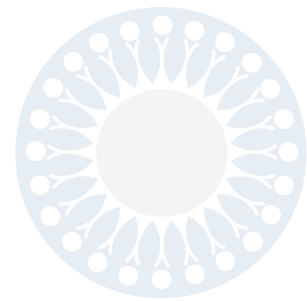
However, distrust and friction have long divided these communities, particularly the women’s rights and faith-based organizations. Some have misused or misinterpreted their religions to suppress women and girls and prevent them from reaching their full potential. Differences of opinion over women’s equality, reproductive rights and sexuality have polarized women, faith and development constituencies. Opposing views dominated debates at the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing in 1995, for example, and have solidified ever since.

This polarization over a few issues has obscured extensive common ground in other areas, especially the common concern for the advancement of women and girls that is shared across the three communities.

Getting Started

In the early stages, leadership from each of the constituencies was essential for recruiting their members into a dialogue and shaping the conversation so that collaboration would be possible. Thoughtful, personal outreach to key members of the three constituencies by leaders in each area was the essential first step in forming an alliance.

The idea for WFDA originated in January 2006 with Jean Duff of the faith community and Suzanne Kindervatter of the international development community. Emboldened by the possibilities and a sense that the time might be right for a breakthrough, the two leaders then worked together to draw in others from their respective networks.



These included an additional co-convener, Jacqueline Ogega representing Religions for Peace, the largest multi-religious coalition that added unique links from the global south. They recruited a key leader from the women's movement, Ritu Sharma of Women Thrive Worldwide. Small groups then gathered to explore the possibility of working together for the benefit of women and girls.

These first conversations were tremendously exciting! It was obvious from the roar of conversation and the eagerness to hear each other's views that there was sincere interest in dialogue and a new openness to collaboration. Relationships and friendships blossomed quickly across sectoral lines. Discussions concerned the relative strengths and contributions of the various constituencies, and especially what the faith community could bring to the table.

Consensus emerged that:

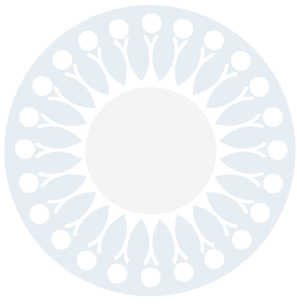
The global interfaith community works out of a universal call to care for the poor and the vulnerable in society. People of faith have much more that unites them than divides them on ways to address extreme poverty, but faith-based efforts are often limited to particular denominations and the collective impact can be diluted by fragmentation and sectarianism.

Many women's religious and faith networks are isolated from interdenominational and interfaith sister organizations. But even within the context of differences in beliefs and culture, faith leaders can agree on their fundamental values and on the goal of promoting the wellbeing of women and children. Such an agreement is the basis for advocacy and action by faith leaders and congregations, from which they can join leaders in civil governments and international bodies.

The international development community has an overall focus on social justice, poverty reduction, and saving lives and livelihoods. Many humanitarian assistance and development NGOs are also faith-based or inspired in their missions by faith traditions. These organizations have technical capacity in areas such as agricultural development, education, or health, and they also have functioning infrastructure for fieldwork, relationships with poor communities, and ongoing programs related to the MDGs.

Participants agreed that achieving women's empowerment involves social and cultural as well as technical change. By combining their strengths, the women in faith and development communities can create broader support for women's empowerment and achieve greater impact.

An important outcome from this two-year dialogue and advocacy process was that lasting networks of partnership for justice between faith and civil leaders were created and sustained, strengthening the long-term work of women's empowerment. But many questions remained. What did all those present have in common? What would a new alliance look like? Could each group offer something unique?



Asking The Right Questions

The question “What can we do together that we cannot do separately?” turned out to be the most useful in focusing initial conversations. People began to get very energized when they understood what could be accomplished if the *collective* power of the three constituencies could be harnessed for common efforts to benefit women and girls.

Four months later, a core group of representatives from each of the three constituencies was holding regular sessions and busily imagining a WFDA. The first Inaugural Planning meeting convened in June 2006 at the Washington National Cathedral, with more than 75 participants. They agreed with great enthusiasm to pursue the possibility of a WFDA, and outlined its goals, plans for bringing in new allies and ways to get funding.

See Appendix A for the WFDA Inaugural Planning Meeting paper.

Subsequent meetings saw the group grow to more than 100 representatives. New Working Groups (see Part 2) discussed matters relating to leadership and governance. They developed a draft Plan for Action and Evaluation that included four steps:

- The initial planning meeting
- Regional dialogs
- Consultation with international leaders on women’s issues and
- Tools and materials to support the action agenda, and a high-level launch event for the new WFDA.

Four Principles for Building Support

1. Agreeing to disagree

Recognizing the areas of past and possible future tension among the constituent groups, WFDA founders agreed early that they would not seek agreement in this venue on reproductive rights or other highly divisive areas. Rather they would focus the energy of this collaboration on the vast areas of their common concern and possibilities for joint action. This decision prevented the formation of many roadblocks and promoted mutual forbearance.

2. Being realistic about challenges to collaboration

Challenges to collaboration were plentiful and needed a good airing. They included:

- Historic mistrust grounded in real ideological differences
- Lack of familiarity with each other’s “cultures”
- Funding and staffing limitations
- Perceived competition for scarce resources
- Conflict across cultures and countries between faith institutions and women’s rights activists
- Concerns among women’s groups that faith organizations might use the WFDA to “women-wash” their work (make it seem approved by women who in fact opposed it) and

- Worry that collaboration between faith organizations and women's groups would obscure the fact that religion has sometimes been misused to subjugate women.

Separate meetings of representatives from each community were important for discussing these challenges and openly addressing them.

3. Modeling the desired collaboration

Right from the start WFDA aimed to model the collaboration it sought. Time was critical for relationships to build, to share laughter and suffering, to allow space for respectful listening. Leaders were firm in **insisting** on collective action that would make a real difference. Most of the meetings were fun most of the time, and devoted time for good food and personal exchanges.

4. Making the case for collaboration: what's in it for me?

To overcome longstanding resistance among the groups and to draw them into partnership, each community had to see what was in it for them and how collaboration might enhance their respective missions. The unique contributions of each one had to find a place at the table. Listening closely to one another, here is what each group decided:

- **The Development Community:** International and local NGOs bring important technical and managerial experience for working at the community level in developing countries. NGOs have an accumulated wisdom about promoting participation, knowing what works in the field and dealing with governments and donors. Partnering with the faith and women's communities can provide us with more leverage to advance women's empowerment and gender equality. Real cross-fertilization and learning become a reality. By partnering, we expand our network and engage in a deeper conversation about ways to address, tackle and solve these critical issues of ending poverty and achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.
- **The Faith Community:** Partnering with the development and women's communities gives us more visibility as an important promoter of the dignity and well-being of women and girls. Our work has potential for greater impact because our efforts are combined with those of many other partners. Faith communities also benefit from the skills and tools of the international development community, and we have the opportunity for dialogue for personal and professional growth. The partnership also fosters the crossover of knowledge about engendering programs and the women's movement as a whole.
- **The Women's Community:** While the women's community is primarily focused on ensuring that women are central to global development efforts, the development community has the best knowledge and experience about effective development practice. The faith community is not only well positioned to influence the social and cultural norms that often harm women and girls, it is also one of the largest aid service providers worldwide. Partnering with faith and development communities can thus be a major force multiplier of the kind needed to create the breakthrough for women in global development that the women's community seeks.



SECTION 3: Creating a Collective Vision

“When you combine leaders from faith, development and women’s empowerment communities, there is no question that radical breakthroughs will take place”.

—Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
[President, Liberia, Breakthrough Summit Co-Chair 2008]

Once each community was receptive to the idea of collaboration across traditional lines, a series of meetings worked to create a shared vision and purpose. The result was a clear statement of WFDA goals.

Key leaders from the three constituencies brainstormed this question:

What needs to happen to achieve major breakthroughs on women’s empowerment worldwide?

Participants’ responses were captured on a flip chart and included:

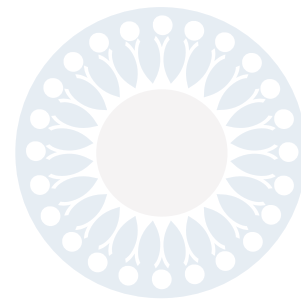
- Commitment to deep cultural change
- Shift the paradigm and influence policy
- Achieve the Millennium Development Goals
- Religious leaders promote gender equality
- Improve maternal health
- Empower girls
- Stop gender-based violence
- Economic empowerment
- Women in leadership
- Access to credit and resources
- Leadership training
- Reduce vulnerability to HIV
- Improve sexual and reproductive health, choice

Over the next eight months, several working groups held brainstorming sessions to narrow down these ideas into more specific areas of focus for WFDA. Their primary question was this:

What is your ideal vision of what WFDA could do in the next two to three years?

Ideas included the following:

- *Eliminate distrust* between the faith and development communities. Changed guidance from the top should say expressions of faith overseas need to address people’s bodies as well as their souls
- *Raise girls’ sanctity*. Educate girls so they can enter into the realm of equal treatment
- *Develop new ideas* and strategies to bring together different perspectives
- *Integrate women’s voices* into policy, practice, and public life. Involve the grassroots community; make women’s voices central everywhere
- *Balance action with partnership development*. Relationship-building is important, but it cannot displace action in the field for economic development. Balance is needed.
- *Don’t forget the individual groups*. They may need help in transforming themselves for collaboration and may prefer to work on activities or projects that enhance their own operations. Each may need to discuss just what the groups are trying to change, how they are going to do it and who will be involved
- *Address the resource question*. How can WFDA build resources for women by women?
- *Examine pending legislation* to see how women’s voices are addressed. WFDA might unite around a single statement and become an advocate before policymakers
- *Seek visibility*, perhaps with a campaign to focus public attention on a big goal such as economic and political empowerment for women worldwide
- *Reject the misuses of religion* for the subjugation of women
- *Involve men* as crucial players in this effort.



Building on these broad possibilities, the groups next considered possibilities for a specific focus: girls' education or violence against women, for example. The question now was this: *What unique objective can the members of WFDA achieve by working together?*

The final choice was **increasing funding and political will for development for women and girls.**

This proved to be a valuable organizing principle that united the groups' disparate approaches to bettering the lives of women and girls worldwide. A "Breakthrough Summit" was scheduled for April 2008 as a deadline against which to deliver these commitments.

The Alliance structure rests on a set of core values that emerged from lengthy discussions before the Alliance's launch in 2008. Here is the collective statement:

WFDA Core Values

We share a commitment to social justice and equal rights for women and men. The rights and inherent dignity of all members of the human family are embedded in the values of the world's major religions and enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In 1995, the women of the world and governments created a comprehensive agenda for women's rights, the Beijing Platform for Action, which was unanimously adopted by 189 countries at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. This global consensus document is the foundation for the WFDA's vision and actions.

In 2000, with the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, governments and donors renewed their pledge to uphold women's rights and endorsed women's empowerment as integral to eradicating poverty and to achieving sustainable development.

In considering an organizational structure to embody these values, WFDA organizers knew it had to represent the three founding communities: women, faith, and development. The co-conveners – InterAction, The Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty at the National Cathedral, Women Thrive Worldwide, and Religions for Peace – represented those three communities but also brought in differing capacities and approaches to advocacy, program implementation, organizational development and network outreach.

They were committed to functioning as a network, rather than as a hierarchical organization. They developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU: see box) that defined expectations and responsibilities in each area.



SECTION 4: Developing Leadership and a Constituency Structure

"Empowering adolescent girls is the key to ending poverty. And if we want a breakthrough and we want a new and sustained and real peace, we must protect, educate and empower girls".

—Ashley Judd
[Actress, Breakthrough Summit Co-Chair 2008]



**Memorandum of Understanding:
Women, Faith, and Development Alliance Co-Conveners Agreement**

8/15/07

1. Commit the time required for consultations and joint decision-making on WFDA's structure and activities, including monthly WFDA "staff" meetings and periodic partner meetings.
2. Consult internally with our respective organizations and bring the perspectives of our organizations to the other co-conveners.
3. Demonstrate substantial organizational commitment by including WFDA as a core part of our organizational activities and communications.
4. Share information on key meetings and relevant contacts with the other co-conveners.
5. Jointly review and sign off on key documents, website, and any other materials.
6. Collaborate on planning and implementing WFDA activities, including the 2008 Summit, the subsequent advocacy/media campaign, overseas activities, and all other relevant activities. We recognize that one or a combination of our organizations may take the lead in particular activity areas.
7. Raise funds in two ways:
 - Independently, to support our own participation in the WFDA, in coordination with the other co-conveners and within the context of our collective comparative advantage; and
 - Collectively, i.e. in the name of all four organizations. For each joint proposal submitted, we will define the specific costs to be allocated to each organization (salaries, program, indirect), which will vary depending on the focus and size of any proposal.
8. Mobilize our respective networks to become WFDA partners, recognizing that each of our four organizations represents key constituencies for inclusion.
9. Work toward expanding the partnership to include Europeans and Southern networks.
10. Bring into being an appropriate advisory group for the WFDA, to demonstrate the organization's high standards of excellence.

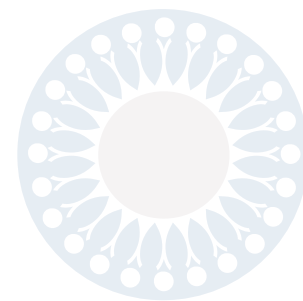
Growing Pains

The co-convening organizations then divided up and shared the "secretariat" functions of the WFDA, such as coordinating membership outreach, organizing meetings or preparing reports. As various activities began, however, some organizations took on more responsibility and others less. At times, this caused some strain in the groups' relationships.

Membership was open to all organizations (not to individuals), which joined by completing the "Becoming a Member Form" and by paying dues. On the form, organizations were encouraged to describe the ways they wanted to engage with WFDA activities. The focus on immediate dues payment was intended to establish a secure membership for the Alliance and to cement the partnership, as well as to contribute to WFDA's operating expenses. The dues structure was adopted after consultation with potential members.

Member organizations engaged with the WFDA mainly by participating in a committee or task force. These included the following:

- *Advocacy and Communications*: Developed messages, materials, and outreach to policymakers. (See Section 8)



Women, Faith, and Development Alliance Members

Adventist Development and Relief Agency

Africare

African Women of Faith Network

ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal

Alliance of Students Against Poverty

American Islamic Congress

American Jewish World Service

American Society of Muslim

Advancement

Amnesty International, USA

Anglican Women's Empowerment

Basic Education Coalition

Bonobo Conservation Initiative

Bead for Life

Brahma Kumaris

Bread for the World

CARE

Catholic Relief Services

Center for Development and Population

Activities (CEDPA)

Center for Health and Gender Equity

(CHANGE)

Children's Defense Fund

Christian Children's Fund

Church Women United

Church World Service

Community of Christ Denomination

Cordoba Initiative

Council for a Parliament of the World's

Religions

Disciples Ecumenical Consultative

Council

The Domestic and Foreign Missionary

Society of the Protestant Episcopal

Church in the USA

Episcopal Church in the US; Office of

Government Relations

Episcopal Church in the US; Office of

Women's Ministries

Episcopal Diocese of Washington

Episcopal Relief and Development

Equality Now

Evangelical Lutheran Women Inc.

FAIR Fund

Family Care International

FeelGood

Firstworks International

FLOW

Gender Action

Global Action Network/Sophia Alliance

Globalworks Foundation

Good Deed Foundation

Habitat For Humanity International

Heifer International

Helen Keller International

Initiative for Inclusive Security

Institute for Women's Policy Research

InterAction

Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa

International Center for Research on

Women

International Medical Corps

International Museum of Women

International Relief and Development

International Rescue Committee

International Youth Foundation

Islamic Relief USA

Lutheran World Federation

Lutheran World Relief

MADRE

Metropolitan Community Church

Mercy Corps

Microcredit Summit Campaign

Mission Life Center

Muslim Women's Coalition

Muslim Women's Organization of Ghana

National Congress of Black Women

National Council of the Churches of

Christ in the USA

National Council of Women's

Organizations

National Spiritual Assembly of the

Baha'is

NETWORK

Oiko Credit

Opportunity International

Oxfam

Pact Inc.

Pathfinder International

People's Advocacy

Peace X Peace

Population Media Center

Population Services International

Presbyterian Church

Progressive National Baptist Convention,

Inc.

Religions for Peace

RESULTS

Sakyadhita International Association of

Buddhist Women

Save the Children

Seventh Day Adventist Church, Women's

Ministries

Sister Fund

St. Columba's

Tarr-Whelan & Associates, Inc.

The ONE Campaign

Toledo Area Ministries

Toner Enterprises

UNAIDS

UNFPA

UNICEF

UNIFEM

United Church of Christ

United Methodist Church

United Nations Foundation

United Nations Development Program

United Religions Initiative

United Way

Union for Reform Judaism

US Committee for the United Nations

Development Program

US Women Connect

Washington National Cathedral's Center

for Global Justice and Reconciliation

Whole Planet Foundation

Winrock International

Women of Reform Judaism

Women Thrive Worldwide (formerly the

Women's Edge Coalition)

Women's Environmental Development

Organization

Women's Foreign Policy Group

Women's Funding Network

Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality

and Equity

Women's Learning Partnership

Women's Perspective

World Hope International

World Learning

World Vision



SECTION 5: Challenges For the Future

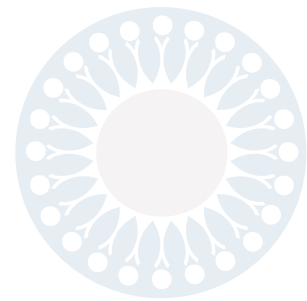
- *Summit planning:* Contributed to organizing and presenting the 2008 *Breakthrough Summit* (see Section 6).
- *Commitments Campaign:* Solicited organizational commitments to action or outreach and monitored their success (see Section 7).
- *Fundraising:* This committee was primarily composed of the co-conveners.

The recruitment process involved broad outreach by the co-conveners. At WFDA's zenith, it had 150 organizational members (see box for illustrative list).

The sustaining force for the Alliance from its earliest days and through today is a shared dedication to increasing political will and action to make women and girls central to global efforts to reduce poverty. This vision, which emerged from almost two years of reflection and discussion, has carried both the WFDA co-conveners and members through some difficult challenges.

Several of those challenges have limited WFDA's functioning:

- **Sharing the workload**
Time and resources have been key issues for the co-conveners. With limited funds raised for WFDA, each co-convenor has largely had to cover its own staff time as well as some WFDA operational expenses. The co-conveners have not all been able to engage at the same level and fulfill all the responsibilities articulated in the joint MOU.
- **The venue of operation**
Participants differed on the extent to which WFDA should work solely within the United States or aim for worldwide impact through chapters or similar networks organizations in other countries.
- **Leadership and governance**
Adherence to the concept of collaboration among equals occasionally slowed or even stopped WFDA decision-making while the co-conveners sought consensus. In the interests of time, particularly for fundraising, one or two of the partners occasionally moved without consultation, creating some friction.
- **Institutional changes**
The departure of a key WFDA leader from one of the co-convening organizations soon after the Summit created significant uncertainty about the future of WFDA. Bold new activities were put on hold until that leader found a platform at another organization. Some valuable time was lost in building on the momentum of the Summit.
- **Member engagement**
After the 2008 *Breakthrough Summit* (see Section 6), only two committees continued to function



(Advocacy/Communications and Commitments Campaign). Members who were not interested in either had no other opportunities for engagement. The “open forum” discussions that had been so fruitful in 2006-7 were no longer convened. The result was additional loss of momentum and group spirit.

- **Network structure vs. project structure**

While the co-conveners and members had a strong commitment to a network structure, funders proved to be more project-focused. The co-conveners gradually became more implementers than network leaders.

- **Fundraising**

It is much more challenging to identify donors for a network than for project-focused activities. A few visionary donors have shared the WFDA vision and supported it, for which the co-conveners are deeply grateful.

Despite these challenges, the four WFDA co-conveners remain dedicated and committed to identifying new ways that WFDA can realize its potential.

Identifying Sources of Support for WFDA

A central challenge for WFDA is sustainability. This includes sustaining the players’ commitment to the idea, vision and work of the alliance as well as sustaining the alliance with financial and human resources. One of the co-conveners’ chief motives for establishing WFDA was to mobilize resources to elevate the position of women and girls worldwide. It is obviously also crucial to identify streams of revenue to sustain the WFDA itself.

While WFDA’s network structure provides for maximum flexibility and allows creative accommodation of differences among widely diverse partners, it presents challenges in fundraising and sustainability. It is crucial to look for and find a balance of funders to understand these challenges as well as the value of the network structure as they support WFDA’s work.

It is very important for WFDA to leverage its full potential by working together on specific initiatives, but the usual short-term project-specific fundraising model alone does not work for WFDA. As in many networks, the co-conveners put in significant amounts of unfunded staff time, energy and donated resources to sustain the work, but a sustainable organization cannot rely upon such donations.

Funders have made different kinds of contributions. One model is grants to support a specific function (monitoring commitments, working with other in-country WFDA’s, or advocacy, for example). Other funders have made in-kind contributions, such as subsidizing an online tool to help monitor commitments, or flying in speakers and partners from all over the world for the *Breakthrough Summit*. Others have supported member retreats and facilitated dialogue. WFDA is grateful to all its funders and supporters, whatever their contribution.



PART 2

Mobilizing for Action: A Guide



“Within the Sufi school of Islam, there is a teaching in which a believer cries out, “Great God, how is it that a loving creator can witness such things as poverty, disease, violence and injustice and yet do nothing about them? To which God replies: “But you are wrong. I did do something. I made you.”

— Madeleine Albright
[Former U.S. Secretary of State, Breakthrough Summit Co-Chair 2008]network, Breakthrough Summit 2008]

WFDA’s main value is that it brings together players who often work in isolation from one another. Traditionally, women’s, faith and development communities—especially the first two—have not organized around a common vision and purpose, especially on gender issues. WFDA’s vision was that if they did work together, they could achieve enormous leverage and be a powerful force for change for women around the world, helping mobilize the political will and resources needed to fully realize the potential of half the world’s population.

WFDA’s unique value added is the game-changing possibilities raised by the network itself and the benefits of collaboration among the communities within it. Another value added by WFDA is the central role of men, both within the coalition and in successful field work. Male leaders of organizations in all three communities have been crucial players in moving WFDA forward, leading their organizations to make gender-based commitments, speaking out on advocacy, and coordinating work in the field. In short, WFDA is a great example of a project where the whole is much larger than the sum of its parts.

What follows is a step-by-step case study that offers a handbook for creating WFDA networks elsewhere.

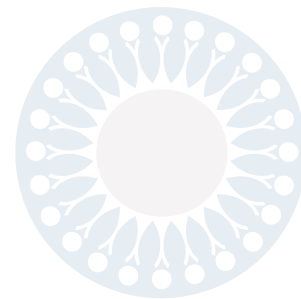
First create a vision

To begin, the WFDA put out a call for commitments to a broad cross-section of the three communities. The co-conveners asked them to pledge new resources, employ new approaches and create sustainable new programs and advocacy platforms so as to engender development in unique ways.

The resulting commitments truly showcased the potential and weight of the alliance -- for example, an interfaith commitment to help end gender-based violence through advocacy campaigns and programs worldwide. A high-level Commitments Campaign was then organized to cement each group’s pledges and generate energy and momentum for following through.

A follow-up report two years later found that partners were well on their way to realizing this common vision. Respondents in the development field reiterated their commitment to their investment in gender issues, which largely remained intact despite cutbacks in other areas. This spoke clearly to WFDA’s role in helping to elevate gender issues within development.

WFDA communities have also come together in Washington to advocate for gender as a cross-cutting focus for all U.S. foreign assistance and foreign policy efforts. While the women’s community has been pushing this change for decades, hearing a united message from the development and especially the faith communities ensured that the message was heard by a broader range of policymakers. This has helped shift the way gender is perceived in Washington.



A Commitments Campaign encouraged WFDA partners to formalize their commitment to putting women and girls at the center of poverty reduction efforts. In 2007, WFDA put out a Call for Commitments to faith communities, multilateral organizations, foundations, and development and women's NGOs, asking them to commit to new resources, programming, and advocacy to advance women and girls worldwide. The result: 73 combined commitments from more than 90 WFDA partners, totaling more than U.S. \$1.4 billion.

These represented the richness and diversity of WFDA, ranging from training women leaders in developing countries to organizing grassroots U.S. religious groups to take action. The commitments pledged to draw on new resources, employ creative approaches and partnerships, and have achievable and sustainable results. They not only represented the dedication of WFDA partners but also the potential and weight of this landmark alliance.

Step 1. Determine an adequate timeline for the campaign. The WFDA Breakthrough Commitments were collected and vetted over a five-month period. This was not nearly enough time to achieve the resource levels needed.

Step 2. Define a commitment. WFDA defined it as a clear, achievable, and new effort by individuals, organizations, government agencies, international institutions, faith communities or corporations to reduce global poverty by investing in women and girls.

Step 3. Determine the criteria for a commitment. WFDA required commitments to be new, creative, achievable and sustainable.

- **New**—Commitments were to be *new programs or resources* to tackle global poverty and enhance women's advancement. Commitments pushed beyond past and current actions in scope, scale and/or focus on gender.
- **Creative**—Commitments were to be *creative in exploring* the best way for institutions to address the *needs of women in poverty* beyond anything they had done in the past. They built innovative partnerships, unleashing the *creativity of the “and,”* combining forces to push action to a new level.
- **Achievable**—Commitments were to be solidly planned, measurable, and *realistic*. The goal was to create real, *achievable* change.
- **Sustainable**—Commitments were to reflect an understanding of the systemic problems that make and keep women poor, and offer *sustainable* solutions.

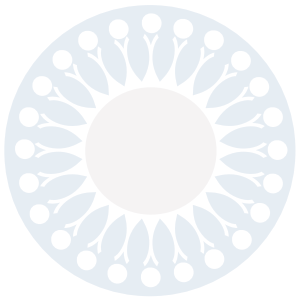
Step 4. Determine the types of acceptable commitments. WFDA accepted Breakthrough Commitments that took many different forms, including new programs on the ground, policy initiatives, in-kind contributions, financial donations, media coverage on issues relevant to women and girls, and engendering efforts already underway in transformational ways. Commitments were *not* accepted that consisted of existing programs and resources, statements of support, or resolutions.

SECTION 1: Leading a Commitments Campaign

“The Breakthrough Commitments are indicative of the kind of global social movement necessary to advance the common good for all people. They work across sectors and borders. They seek to empower certain segments of the population and the community to develop community-driven, long term solutions.”

— Brian Gallagher
[President, United Way,
WFDA Leadership
Advisory Council]

Commitments Digest
[www.wfd-alliance.org/
commitments_digest.pdf](http://www.wfd-alliance.org/commitments_digest.pdf)



Step 5. Determine the materials needed to put out a call for commitments, and vet them.

WFDA created two special forms just for the Breakthrough Commitment process:

A FAQ document outlining:

- The reasons an organization should make a commitment
- Definitions and criteria for acceptable commitments (from Steps 2-4 above)
- Follow-up work expected of an organization that makes a commitment and
- Ways that WFDA will monitor the organization's commitment.

A submission form that asked the organization to describe its commitment in terms of:

- A detailed overview
- The geographic scope
- The desired impact
- The timeframe
- The number of women and girls to be affected
- The total cost or investment expected
- Plans for execution and implementation
- Plans for measuring impact, and
- Plans for communicating the commitment to the general public.

Step 6. Determine ways to track and monitor the commitments.

WFDA asked itself:

- How will the commitments be used?
- What specifics will be expected of an organization that makes a commitment?
- How often, and what, should each group report on their commitment?
- What is progress?
- How will commitments be tracked and monitored? What software or self-reporting documents are required?
- How will the importance of progress be communicated to the community and the media?
- How will commitments that are not fulfilled be handled? By whom?

Tracking and Monitoring the Breakthrough Commitments

After the Breakthrough Summit, tracking and monitoring the more than \$1.4 billion in pledged new programs and resources for women and girls was a major WFDA priority. For months, the Commitments Campaign group researched monitoring and evaluation tools in use by various NGOs in international development. A tool called Making the Case (MTC) was selected.

This tool was designed by the Women's Funding Network and is being used as an annual reporting mechanism, monitoring the small grants to their many grantee organizations that serve the needs of women and girls around the country.

MTC gave WFDA a good picture of the progress organizations had made on meeting their commitments, on the effects that their programs and projects had on women and girls, and on the factors that both helped and hindered each organization in fulfilling its commitment.



WFDA decided to convene a high-level summit meeting as an opportunity to launch and publicize the new collaboration, as a platform to announce commitments towards WFDA goals, and as an energizing event for participants.

Benefits of a High-Level Summit

- It stages a physical manifestation of the collaboration where key leaders and stakeholders show up in the same place as a powerful, tangible expression of commitment to collaborate.
- It sets a deadline for future activities
- Working groups build cohesion to deliver specific outcomes
- Group conversations and brainstorming create ideas for a publicity/education vehicle to further meet the unmet needs of women and girls
- Celebrities and powerful leaders can be brought in to energize participants and gain public attention for a one-time event
- Relationships between partners in the three constituencies are strengthened, cementing the collaboration

Challenges of a High-Level Summit

- The time and resources necessary for planning and staging can sap too much energy from the group
- A Summit must fit well into the overall plan for achieving the collaboration's goals and help advance that plan without becoming an end in itself
- Ongoing group and collaborative advocacy and action plans must not be neglected during planning and staging a Summit
- Tensions can arise between the need for time-consuming consultation among the partners and the need to make quick decisions against deadlines.

A 12-Step Program for planning a High-Level Commitment Summit

1. Articulate the Summit's goals

- How does the Summit support the groups' overall implementation plan?
- In what specific ways will the Summit advance the goals of the collaborating groups?

2. Appoint and empower a Summit Management Committee

- Agree on reporting, decision-making, areas of responsibility, and signoff authority and procedures
- Empower the committee to act and move ahead.

3. Assess realistic fundraising possibilities

- Specify the fundraising expectations of co-conveners and partners
- Obtain their formal commitment to financial and in-kind contributions
- Identify a fundraising coordinator, and
- Be prepared to adjust the program according to fundraising progress. As funds often tend to come in close to the event, this can be nerve-wracking.

SECTION 2: Organizing a High-Level Summit

“Poverty – the most ancient enemy of human dignity – is a challenge against which all the resources of society should be mobilized. We mobilize here today across sectors, across religions, across nations, at the Washington National Cathedral, to declare we will defeat poverty by empowering women and girls.”

— Reverend
Dr. Ishmael Noko
[Honorary Breakthrough
Summit Co-Chair 2008]

Commitments Report
[www.wfd-alliance.org/
commitments_report.pdf](http://www.wfd-alliance.org/commitments_report.pdf)



Washington
National Cathedral
as location for
Breakthrough Summit

4. Agree on a budget

Major necessary budget categories include:

- Participant recruitment, registration, transportation, subsidies and accommodations during the event
- Travel and accommodations for speakers
- Event staging (sound, lighting, video, music, food, meeting special needs) and
- Communications: event marketing, event program, handouts, website, press, publicity, follow-up report, photography.

It is wise to decide early on one or more contingency plans for reducing or increasing event scope as fundraising progress may indicate.

5. Identify an event manager

Depending on the size of the event and the availability of seconded staff from the partners, event management may be a paid outside position. For the WFDA *Breakthrough Summit*, the Cathedral appointed its senior liaison to WFDA as Summit Manager, as the event was taking place in its space. A professional event planner was hired on a consultancy basis to provide necessary additional logistical and staff support.

6. Choose Time and Place

Set the Summit date and duration:

- Give planners enough lead time to prepare. The WFDA Breakthrough Summit was planned in eight months, which was not enough time for an event of such a scale.
- Consider religious holidays and other key dates on the calendars of prospective attendees.

Choose the venue: the four As:

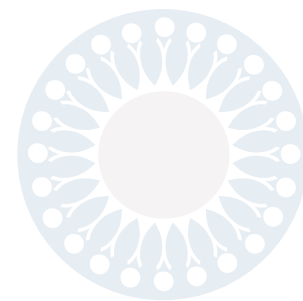
- Accessible: the site should minimize participants' travel requirements.
- Acceptable: consider each constituency's sensitivities. A space associated with a specific religion may present problems for other religious traditions or women's groups.
- Adequate: facilities for meetings, accommodations and food must be suitable in quality and size for the expected participants, with spaces for plenary and small-group sessions.
- Affordable: consider budgetary limits, the possibility of securing donated space, and ways to minimize travel and accommodation costs for participants.

7. Secure leadership

- Name Honorary Co-chairs
- Form a Leadership Council

8. Invite and secure speakers

- Agree as early as possible on a list of prospective speakers who are likely to attract an audience and media attention, as well as to get your key messages across effectively.



- Make sure each constituency is represented, paying special attention to youth, minorities, global south representatives, and diverse faith communities.
- Consider inviting more speakers than you can use, as some will refuse or cancel.
- Issue invitations as early as possible, and set a response deadline at least a month before the event.
- Let prospective speakers know in advance that they will be asked to accept your talking points, to strictly observe time limits on their remarks and possibly to be available for rehearsal before the event.
- Consider assigning dedicated staff to manage logistics and security for celebrity speakers.

9. Invite and manage participants

- Specify a target audience and develop an invitation list
- Send a Save-the-Date notice to possible participants as far in advance as possible
- Issue a formal invitation at least three months in advance
- Have constituency leaders engage in active recruitment
- Set up pre-registration, online and on-site registration processes
- Consider subsidies for participation by low-income individuals
- Send reminder invitations and distribute newsy and excited updates as planning proceeds

10. Plan a Summit Program

- Make sure the program supports both the message and media goals of the WFDA
- Try to engage celebrities, prominent leaders and activists to draw attention and to attract participants
- Ensure that all three constituencies are represented, and that the voices of those served by WFDA are directly and clearly heard
- Arrange a program that is provocative, fun, affordable and within the capabilities of the production team to deliver.

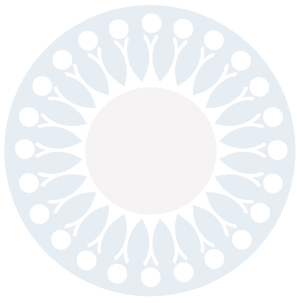
The *Breakthrough Summit* program was in the end a three-hour extravaganza at the National Cathedral, with music, video messages, celebrity speeches and a dance, attended by 2,000 people. The full program can be viewed at:

11. Plan Press and Publicity

A press and publicity plan should be drawn up well in advance of the Summit. Elements should include:

- Press releases before, during and after the event, with photographs if available
- A press kit that includes event schedules, fact sheets on each of the issues (with a reputable source given for each fact), lists of speakers with titles and brief bios
- Media outreach and a briefing a few days before the event
- A press conference at the event opening if you have celebrities in attendance
- Media sign-up sheets to obtain contacts for later reference

Summit Program
[www.wfd-alliance.org/
summit_program.pdf](http://www.wfd-alliance.org/summit_program.pdf)



- One-on-one interview opportunities offered to key media, and
- Follow-up contacts with media representatives in attendance.

Additional considerations:

- Reach new and mainstream media through printed material and online messages that have been approved and coordinated by the convening organizations
- Use text messages, emails, blogs and social media such as Facebook and Twitter
- Reporters are often forbidden to open email attachments. Put press releases, statements, speech texts etc. in the body of the message
- Websites should contain a Newsroom tab that is updated regularly.
- Printed materials should include contact information on each page
- Printed fact sheets should be one sheet each and include sources for all statistics
- Engage volunteer photographers and bloggers to video and document event preparations and the event itself
- After the event, compile a press clipping book with materials you used and notes on the coverage received, for future reference
- Depending on the scale and scope of the event, consider hiring expert communications and media support

12. Stage the event

Finally, after all the planning, the day of the event will arrive. Pray for good weather and good turnout. Plan for the inevitable crises and program derailments. Have plenty of volunteer help backing up all key people. And in the end, take satisfaction in knowing you have worked to make a difference in women's lives.

For a video of
excerpts from the WFDA
2008 Summit visit
[www.wfd-alliance.org/
summit_video](http://www.wfd-alliance.org/summit_video)

A Bridge to Action From the *Breakthrough Summit*

To create a bridge from the Summit to taking action and to harness the many ideas it generated, WFDA convened a one-day post-Summit *Leadership Dialogue and Strategy Session*. It drew more than 100 CEOs, religious leaders and heads of foundations to a day of defining, prioritizing and planning follow-up and advocacy action.

The co-chairs were Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, and Kim Campbell, former Prime Minister of Canada. Their energy and embrace of the WFDA concept catalyzed a highly interactive day of brainstorming and action planning for U.S. and global arenas.

The goals for the session were:

- To identify ideas and reach primary consensus on ways WFDA could be a continuing force for promoting and securing expanded investments in women and girls to reduce global poverty and achieve the MDGs



- To identify action (advocacy, communications, etc.) to take during the next year as a follow-up to the Summit and
- To determine the ways that Summit Leadership Council organizations would engage with and contribute to the WFDA into the future.

For meeting agenda, see box on page 24.

Participants were seated at round tables of 8 to 10, each mixing women's, faith, and development organizations. The meeting generated more than 80 ideas on ways WFDA could add value in different areas. The top 10 are in the box below.

Top Ten Ideas from Leadership Dialog

1. Develop a holistic pattern of advocacy grounded in women, faith, and development, targeting international meetings on aid effectiveness and climate change
2. Change the debate in the U.S. to make investments in women and girls central
3. Use the WFDA's collective moral voice to educate and influence political leaders, youth leaders, and the leadership of our own organizations
4. Create a focused communications and media strategy
5. Call on women, faith and, development communities to contribute resources to establish an Alliance Secretariat
6. Take the WFDA conversations around the world with culturally appropriate tools for advocacy
7. Replicate the Alliance in other countries (strong interest in Liberia) and broaden the Alliance to include the private sector
8. Use WFDA to hold male leaders, corporations, and religious communities accountable (particularly for resources)
9. Involve youth at all levels (boys and girls)
10. Press for a "Beijing Platform" (i.e. building on the outcome document from the UN Fourth World Conference on Women) with presidential candidates.

Breakthrough Summit and WFDA Funders

Women's Funds: The Women's Funding Network, The Sister Fund

Faith-based Funders: The Washington National Cathedral, the Presbyterian Church, Catholic Relief Services, Islamic Relief, Episcopal Relief and Development

Corporate foundations: The ExxonMobil Foundation, De Beers, Johnson & Johnson

Multilateral agencies: The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNAIDS

NGOs: Heifer International, World Vision, United Way

Family Foundations: Lodestar Foundation



Breakthrough Summit Leadership Dialog and Strategy Session:

Harnessing Our Collective Power for Investing in Women and Girls and Reducing Global Poverty

AGENDA

Co-chaired and Moderated by:

Her Excellency Mary Robinson, Former President of Ireland

The Right Honorable Kim Campbell, Former Prime Minister of Canada

- 9:15-9:35** Welcome and Summit Reflections (Table discussion: *What inspired and spoke to you in Sunday's program?*)
- 9:35-10:00** Moderated Panel: *Shaping Future Advocacy and Action Together*
- 10:00-12:15** Table Discussions: *Investing in Women and Girls—Why It Matters, What We Can Uniquely Do Together* and Plenary Report-Outs
- 12:15-1:00** Faith Message, Lunch, and Leadership Council Panel: *Perspectives on Priority Action*
- 1:00-1:45** Caucus Groups: *Moving Forward Together* (Self-selected small groups on the 10 priority areas of action and advocacy)
- 1:45-2:00** Mary Robinson and Kim Campbell: *A Call to Leadership* (Summary of areas of consensus for action and next steps)
- 2:00** Appreciations and Closing Faith Message





After the 2008 *Breakthrough Summit*, WFDA partners sought to mobilize around a common advocacy goal as a powerful way to show the breadth of the Alliance and the impact that bringing women's, faith, and development communities together can have on policymakers.

Traditionally, the three communities have not worked together on advocacy, so several steps were taken to ensure success and that each community could contribute and learn from one another.

Finding Common Ground

The first need was to find a common issue that WFDA organizations were either working on already or would find compelling enough to add to their labors. Conveners took the following steps:

- 1. Created a WFDA Advocacy Working Group**

This group, a sub-committee of the larger WFDA, was made up of organizations engaged or interested in engaging in advocacy with other WFDA members. Members were recruited from all three communities and were encouraged to lend their voice even if advocacy was not their core mission.

- 2. Brainstormed issues related to women's and girls' empowerment**

The Working Group considered issues from girl's education to maternal health, asking how the WFDA's joint voices might affect the public dialogue or policy debate around it, and what issues were current in Washington around foreign assistance. The Working Group looked at the different sectors the WFDA partners were working on through their Breakthrough Commitments.

- 3. Found consensus and common ground**

The Advocacy Working Group decided that the most impact would result from building on the Inter-Religious groups' commitment to combat gender-based violence, and in joining forces to influence the debate in Washington about foreign assistance reform.

Taking joint advocacy action

WFDA focused on these advocacy activities:

- 1. Sign-on letters (see Appendix B)**

Letters with hundreds of signatures presented the Alliance as a united front and helped focus the messages from the Alliance to policy makers and the Administration. WFDA created sign-on letters for both joint initiatives: combating gender-based violence and integrating gender into foreign assistance reform.

- 2. Lobby Days**

Lobby Days allowed partners to come together as one voice. In Fall 2009, WFDA members came together in Washington DC to brief Members of Congress on the importance of integrating gender across foreign assistance. Partners met with congressional staff, and CEOs of several organizations presented the sign-on letter to Senate leaders.

SECTION 3: Mobilizing Collective Advocacy

"It is our hope that communities around the world will hold women in prayer and with God's blessing, unleash the power of faith to fuel activism and transform the lives of women and girls."

—Hajia Katumi Mahama
[President, Federation of Muslim Women's Organizations of Ghana, Religions for Peace African Women of Faith Network WFDA Leadership Advisory Council]



3. UN Advocacy

In 2010, at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, WFDA members convened a working session on increasing investments on women and girls to end poverty. This session reported on the progress of the Breakthrough Commitments, provided the opportunity to update the community on the WFDA Asia Pacific Breakthrough held in December 2009, and shared the progress that had made in establishing WFDA Liberia.

SECTION 4: Adapting the WFDA Concept in Other Countries

One recommended action from the 2008 *Breakthrough Summit* was to support women's leaders in Liberia in making the transition from post-conflict recovery to development. Later that year, colleagues in Australia asked WFDA for guidance on convening their own summit for the Asia-Pacific region.

This section gives an overview of the Liberia and Australia/Asia-Pacific experiences. It includes challenges encountered and insights gleaned in these efforts.

WFDA Liberia

Getting Organized

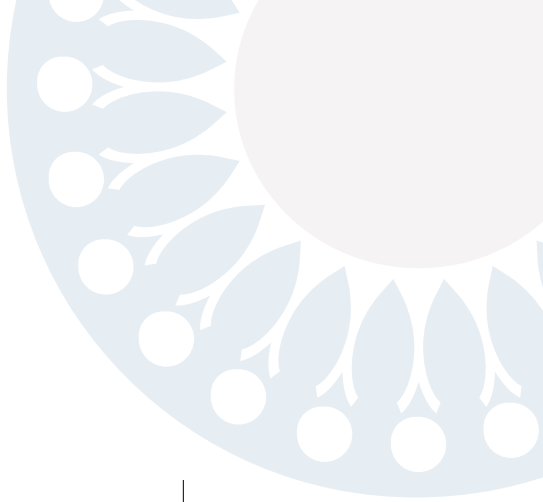
In November 2008, WFDA's first meetings in Africa took place in Monrovia, Liberia. Representatives from InterAction and Religions for Peace met with more than 30 local faith-based institutions and international non-governmental development organizations (NGOs) to discuss the possibility of creating a WFDA collaborative network. A steering committee was formed and a coordinator selected to help lead the process of forming WFDA Liberia.

Consensus emerged on thematic areas that included increasing resources to address violence against women and support for women's empowerment in post-conflict reconstruction. Religions for Peace Liberia took on the role of secretariat.

The Launch

WFDA partners InterAction and Religions for Peace returned to Monrovia in March 2009 for the formal launch of a Liberia Women, Faith, and Development Alliance at the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, Peace and Security.

In September 2009, a two-day workshop on collaboration and capacity-building was held for women leaders from Muslim, Christian, and Traditional religions (the latter represented through the National Traditional Council of Liberia). The Liberian Council of Churches (LCC) was the host. More consultations were convened in 2010, emphasizing engagement of male religious leaders, development organizations, women's organizations and support from governments.



Current Challenges

Despite interest at WFDA and potential contributions in Liberia, WFDA Liberia has yet to solidify. Financial resources have been inadequate and organizations have faced competing and often more urgent demands. Nevertheless, interest and energy continue among the Liberian organizations for exploring ways that women, faith, and development communities might work together.

These NGOs are prominent in Liberia's work to end poverty and often have overlapping initiatives, programs, and goals. A shared enthusiasm and energy keeps the idea of the alliance alive.

WFDA Australia/Asia-Pacific

Getting Organized

In July 2008, organizations in Australia convened by the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) began to take steps to establish a WFDA Australia. The goal was to launch this new alliance at an Asia-Pacific *Breakthrough Summit* December 2-3, 2009. A representative from InterAction worked with them on ideas for adapting WFDA in Australia and on planning the regional summit.

The Launch

The Asia-Pacific *Breakthrough Summit*, spearheaded by International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), succeeded in facilitating a much larger conversation than was originally envisioned, engaging leaders throughout the region. The program included a keynote address by Dr. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, then Executive Director of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, on the urgency of achieving Millennium Development Goals on gender equality, women's empowerment and maternal health.

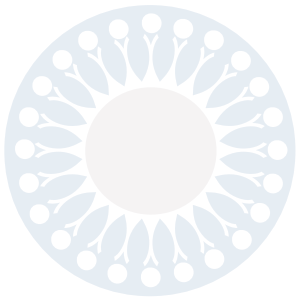
Ten Summit working groups created recommendations for action by a WFDA Australia/Asia-Pacific, focusing on women and climate change and on faith and peace-building. More than \$1 billion worth of new commitments for women and girls were offered at the Asia Pacific *Breakthrough Summit*. AusAID, the Australian Government's foreign aid agency, was the leading donor.

Current Challenges

WFDA Australia/Asia-Pacific has continued to meet and discuss ways this alliance can add value as a network to poverty reduction and the empowerment of women in the region. The group is still wrestling with the exact form the WFDA could take, and the specific activities that might best leverage the collective power of the women's, faith, and development communities to address shared goals. To date, WFDA Australia/Asia Pacific has not developed a formal structure, but the dialogue begun at the Summit is continuing.

Insights on Adapting the WFDA in Other Countries

The four co-conveners of the U.S.-based WFDA were inspired and humbled by their sisters and brothers in Liberia and Australia. The idea of adapting the WFDA in other countries was not part of the



Alliance's original vision, so it was deeply moving to have others grasp the potential of the WFDA's tripartite partnership in different contexts.

The concept has had greater resonance than the originators imagined, from Africa to the Asia-Pacific region. But the actual launch of new WFDAs presented considerable challenges. Carried forward by a shared vision and the energy that vision generates, the co-conveners moved ahead. But from the outset, adequate resources were not available for the kind of support that was clearly needed.

Lessons from Liberia

In Liberia, WFDA had three areas of challenge. First, Liberia is moving from post-conflict recovery to development, and the organizations that gathered for WFDA meetings all were immersed in that recovery in some way. When basic infrastructure of roads, electricity and phones are a challenge, and when people's basic needs are not yet addressed, organizations struggle to find the time to build a network with broader goals.

Second, the "W" in WFDA was missing in Liberia. While faith-based and development organizations engaged, outreach was not sufficient to bring women's organizations into the dialog.

Finally, adequate support and guidance are essential to creating a WFDA, particularly when organizations lack resources or structure for adding new activities to their existing heavy workload. Such groups need mentoring to be able to see the connections between collaborating and the benefits to their own program goals. They may not prioritize meetings and activities that do not seem directly related to the bottom line. WFDA, in its enthusiasm for the concept, underestimated the level of dedicated funding that would be needed to provide adequate on-site and ongoing mentoring for WFDA Liberia.

Lessons from Australia/Asia-Pacific

From the Asia-Pacific experience, the major insight is that no one right or even "best" structure exists for a Women, Faith, and Development Alliance. WFDA co-conveners initially sought to assist both Liberia and then Australia to develop an alliance modeled on the U.S.-based structure. But after much dialogue and debate, it was clear that partner organizations needed to find other models that would meet their unique needs.

The Asia-Pacific group is still exploring that question and has yet to determine the best approach and best ways to fund an alliance. Flexibility on these matters is required to advance common goals among women, faith and development partners.

Conclusion—Nurturing the Network and Lessons Learned

PART 3

At its core, WFDA is about relationships. The Alliance was founded on the idea of creating new understanding and collaboration among three communities that have a history of not working together and even of being mutually suspicious.

From the outset, the four co-convening organizations saw their role as one of building bridges for these new relationships, recognizing that they also had to reflect collaboration in their own interactions. The first 18 months of WFDA development focused on dialogue, building trust, and framing collaborative forms of engagement. On moving to focus on joint activities—the Summit, advocacy, the Commitments Campaign, and overseas adaptation—it was challenging to honor and nurture all the various relationships within and among the organizations, as well as to meet project deadlines and donor targets.

Reflecting together and writing this guide has reaffirmed the paramount importance of the quality of relationships within WFDA, among the co-conveners and among the broader network of women, faith, and development organizations. Indeed, these relationships have driven the creativity and energy that have carried WFDA through the past five years.

Lessons Learned

In closing, these lessons were learned on ways to maintain an essential balance between nurturing relationships and collective action.

Leadership: The four co-convening organizations and their lead individuals have different styles of working. Three are in Washington, D.C. and one is in New York City. The secretariat function rotated among the groups, based to some degree on available staff resources.

To maintain good working relationships and communication, biweekly or monthly meetings or conference calls were held, along with half-day and full-day retreats. Mutual understanding and collaborative decision-making were the watchwords. Even with these efforts, strains emerged over tasks and deadlines and sometimes over the direction of the Alliance. A strong and shared belief in the WFDA vision was the most powerful force in dealing with these challenges. Clear delineations of roles and responsibilities are essential.

Future WFDAs should make decision-making processes and authorities more clear, scheduling time for principals to discuss issues and make decisions on a regular basis.

Members: Leading up to the 2008 Summit, organizations had specific ways to join, to get involved in committees and to contribute through dues. However, the membership structure did not evolve after the Summit. Members then had no structured way to be involved in governance and decision-making. Activities became less of a network effort and more of an individual effort by the co-conveners. The dialogue meetings that were so lively and inspiring in WFDA's early days were no longer held. The real

“The Women, Faith, and Development Alliance is something new under the sun. We are global, we are united, we are doers, and we are here to stay.”

— Madeleine Albright
[Former U.S. Secretary of State, Breakthrough Summit Co-Chair 2008]



wealth of the Alliance—the interplay and associations among the three communities—was somewhat neglected in the focus on action plans.

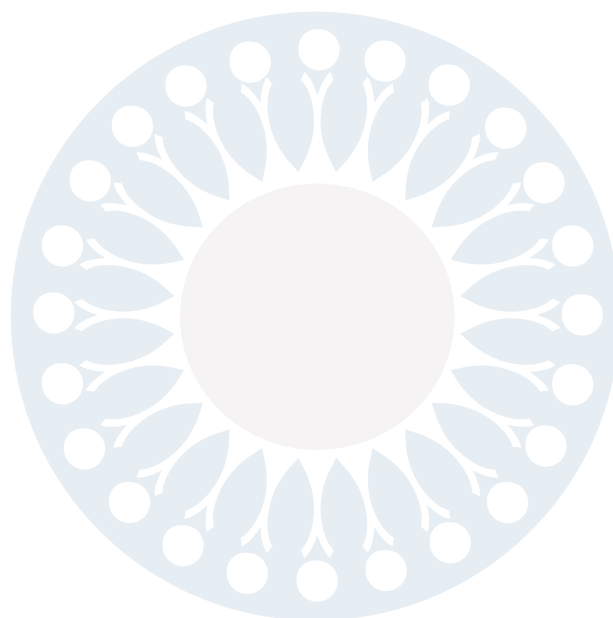
Resources: The strains between network nurturing and program action were to some degree a function of resources, or lack of them. The Leadership Dialogue at the end of the Summit emphasized what the WFDA would *do*, and donors were interested in concrete deliverables. It was harder to sell the concept of network-building than something tangible like the Commitments Campaign. Also, each co-convening organization was called on to contribute staff resources, and that was easier for some than others.

The co-conveners did not realize early enough the extent to which the project mode of operation would tax continued network development and strain relationships. Good intentions and shared vision united everyone, but operational day-to-day challenges persisted.

In further operations, and in any organizations considering a similar effort, a clear plan for resourcing secretariat functions and network nurturing must be a priority. Without this, the WFDA becomes a collective activity of the co-conveners rather than an expression of the network.

Despite these challenges, the WFDA vision continues to be very powerful. The co-conveners are seeking ways to carry on the vision, building on what has been accomplished and what was learned. Your thoughts, your questions, and your engagement are more than welcome – they are essential for achieving empowerment and better lives for women and girls worldwide.

Women, Faith, and
Development Alliance
(WFDA)
www.wfd-alliance.org



APPENDIX A

**Women's Faith and Development Initiative
Common Ground, Common Goals, Common Action**

**New Alliances to Help Halve Poverty by 2015
Mobilizing Women Faith and Development Leadership to promote and measure progress
on Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and the Millennium Development Goals.**

Working draft for discussion at Inaugural Planning Meeting on June 28th, 2006

Overview

Through the Women's Faith and Development Initiative (WFDI), women religious leaders working in partnership with women's development advocates and women of faith in public life define common ground, agree on common goals and chart common action to leverage their collective impact for women's empowerment and progress towards the goal of halving poverty by 2015. By strengthening enduring networks of women leaders collaborating across national, cultural and religious barriers and by tapping into the power of faith to create connection and engage in spiritual and social activism, extreme poverty can be dramatically reduced. This historic and ambitious initiative will use the moral authority and deep commitment that stems from faith to galvanize the world to action.

The Millennium Development Goals and the Empowerment of Women

In September 2000, heads of state met at the United Nations and endorsed the Millennium Declaration, a global commitment to reduce poverty by quantifiable measures called the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), by 2015.

"Promoting gender equality and empowering women," MDG # 3 is essential to achieve the other seven goals. Empirical research shows that investing in women brings a high payoff in economic and social gains for children, families and communities. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan has repeatedly affirmed this truth:

Study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No policy is as likely to raise economic productivity or to reduce infant and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health—including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing



the chances of education for the next generation. And I would venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after the conflict has ended.

WFDI views the global commitment to the MDGs as an unprecedented historical opportunity to intensify and accelerate efforts for gender equality and women's empowerment as key to achieving all the MDGs. Indeed, in 2005, the UN Millennium Task Force enumerated seven indicators for MDG #3 that intersect and advance the other Goals:

- Strengthen opportunities for secondary education of girls while meeting commitments to universal primary education
- Guarantee reproductive health and rights
- Invest in infrastructure to reduce women's and girls' time burdens
- Guarantee women's and girls' property and inheritance rights
- Eliminate gender inequalities in employment by decreasing women's reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings, and reducing occupational segregation
- Increase women's share of seats in national parliaments and local government bodies
- Combat violence against women and girls

WFDI is also informed by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, Beijing, 15 September 1995.

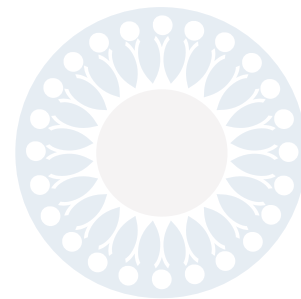
WFDI Goal, Objectives, and Outcomes

The Women's Faith and Development Initiative is based on the belief that connecting the unique gifts and capabilities of the women of faith and women in development communities will forge new and creative approaches for women's empowerment and poverty reduction worldwide.

The **goal** of WFDI is to create and mobilize new alliances among faith and development communities that leverage our collective impact to expand women's empowerment globally within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals.

The **objectives** are to:

1. Build Common Ground (June-December 2006)
 - **Interfaith:** Women of faith explore to what common beliefs and values about women's rights and empowerment we are called by our respective faiths.
 - **Faith and Development:** Women of faith and women's development advocates explore their common ground of values about women's rights and empowerment; consider existing global calls and platforms for action, and the relevance of the MDGs.
2. Create Common Goals (January-October 2007)
 - Women faith and development leaders in four regional dialogues in Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe agree on common goals for gender equity and women's empowerment, deploying however useful the rubric of the Millennium Development Goals.



3. Undertake Common Actions (November 2007-March 2008)

- Together with women leaders in civil society and leading advocates for women worldwide, women religious leaders and women development leaders create a shared agenda for women's empowerment that emerges out of the regional dialogues. The agenda will be ratified in a three-day Action and Advocacy Summit in March 2008 following the annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York.

The **successful outcomes** of the Initiative involve:

- Establishment of new Alliances in the US and in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas between women of faith and women in development groups
- An international action agenda for women's empowerment supported by leaders in faith and development sectors
- More effective deployment of congregational infrastructure for women's empowerment
- Production and adaptation of materials suitable for use in the faith sector for the benefit of women's empowerment
- An international media campaign to promote the action agenda proposed from the dialogues among leaders
- New and innovative approaches to promoting women's empowerment in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

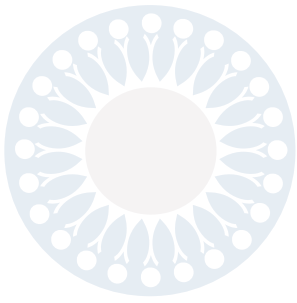
Principles for Engagement

The WFDI seeks not only to create new synergies of action but also to promote new ways of working together. The Initiative is guided by a vision of new alliances, a commitment to inclusive leadership and governance, and the utilization of processes for creative thinking and consensus building and for transparent communication. These are elaborated in the following sections.

New Alliances

This initiative can powerfully impact the lives of women and children, youth and young adults throughout the developing world by unleashing the power and moral authority of the world's religious women leaders acting in concert with women civic leaders and development organizations to fully embrace and intensify existing efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals in the less than nine years remaining to halve extreme poverty. By promoting cross sector collaboration and leveraging institutional resources, these dialogues will amplify the great ongoing work in each faith community, identify specific major actions and spur the broader community into action for women.

The targets for the Millennium Development Goals are ambitious. The MDGs will not be met unless religious and development leaders join together to intensify their efforts, transcending the often-historical separations between faith and secular groups. The Women's Faith and Development Initiative will create new alliances linking diverse women's religious networks in the



US and overseas, InterAction members, women-focused NGOs in developing countries, women leaders and women's organizations worldwide.

The global interfaith community brings tremendous resources to the challenges of fighting poverty and promoting women's empowerment both within faith communities and in civil society. Working as they do out of a universal call to care for the poor and the weak in society, people of faith have much more that unites them than divides them when it comes to addressing the challenges of extreme poverty. However, faith-based efforts are often targeted within denominational groups, and their collective impact is diluted by fragmentation and sectarianism. Many women's religious and faith networks are frequently not connected to their interdenominational and interfaith sister organizations. Even within the context of differences in beliefs and culture, faith leaders can agree on fundamental values and goals for the wellbeing of women and children. Such an agreement is the basis for advocacy and action by leaders within faith communities and congregations and the foundation from which they can go on to join with leaders in civil governments and international bodies.

The international development community shares similar values with its overall focus on social justice, poverty reduction, and saving lives and livelihoods. Many humanitarian assistance and development NGOs also are faith-based and inspired in their missions by their faith traditions. These organizations have technical capacity in areas such as agricultural development, education, or health; they also have existing infrastructure, relationships with poor communities, and ongoing programs related to the MDGs.

Achieving women's empowerment involves social and cultural as well as technical change. By combining their strengths, the women in faith and women in development communities can activate broader support for women's empowerment and ultimately achieve greater impact. As an important outcome from this two year dialogic and advocacy process, lasting networks of partnership for justice between faith and civil leaders will be created and sustained for long-term work of women's empowerment.

Leadership and Governance

The lead organizations for the WFDI are Washington National Cathedral's **Center for Global Justice and Reconciliation**—which forges ecumenical and interfaith collaborations against poverty while endorsing the MDGs—and **the Commission on the Advancement of InterAction**, which is the largest alliance of U.S.-based humanitarian and development organizations with over 160 members working in every developing country. Additional possible partners for the WFDI may include the Global Women's Initiative of Peace, World Religious for Peace: Women's Mobilization Project, Bread for the World, and others (*There will be a report on preliminary conversations with these organizations and others at June 28th meeting.*)

The Women's Faith and Development Initiative's **International Steering Committee**,



representing lead organizations, key faith and development leaders, and regional co-chairs, will be established immediately to shape the initiative and coordinate activities. Staff support to the International Steering Committee will be provided by InterAction and the Center for Global Justice and Reconciliation. An Executive Committee will oversee the operations of the Initiative. One important role of the International Steering Committee is the development of a common monitoring and reporting mechanism for the initiative.

Representatives of diverse women's faith networks will be invited to join a **"Sister's Circle"** that will act as an advisory to the International Steering Committee on the Initiative. An important role of the Sister's Circle may be to develop relationships between the interfaith women's networks. In addition, we need to develop a mechanism for other organizations to affiliate with this Initiative.

The WFDI will be inspired and advised by a **Council of Esteemed International Women Leader** who are women in prominent positions who also publicly acknowledge their faith foundations. The Council might be comprised of such internationally recognized leaders such as Liberian President Johnson Sirleaf, Secretary Madeleine Albright, Prime Minister Han Myung Sook, Chancellor Angela Merkel, Minister Casimira Rodriguez Romero, Ms. Wangari Maathai, Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, Oprah Winfrey, Prime Minister Khalea Zia and Gracia Machel (Mandela). The "Luminaries" lend their reputations and galvanize their constituencies to support the Initiative and take action to empower women. These Esteemed Leaders will set the tone for international dialogue and collaboration, call us to united action, promulgate the recommendations from regional leaders, and invite international faith and civil leaders to the Action and Advocacy Summit in March 2008.

Process

Woven throughout the WFDI and serving as the underlying foundation for all the work will be dialogic processes that create one-on-one and strong group relationships. Drawing from established best practices in the corporate, non-profit and NGO arena, WFDI will utilize such processes as Open Space Technology, Circle Council and Appreciative Inquiry to create dynamic, productive team- and consensus-building experiences that produce the common ground, common agenda and common action sought by participants.

Exchange of information is vital to the evolution of thinking and consensus in the WFDI. Key information and reports will be posted on a WFDI website, and e-groups and dialogues will foster broad participation of women in the US and overseas.

WFDI Draft Plan of Action and Evaluation

The project could proceed in stages as described below. These ideas are preliminary, formed out of early conversations with many faith and development representatives. Our June 28th inaugural consultation with faith and development leaders about how we can best join forces for advocacy and action may conceivably send us off in another direction.



Stage I. *Women of Faith and Development Initiative* Inaugural Planning Meeting, June 28, 2006:

The goal of this stage is to convene representatives of international women's religious and faith networks (see attached list), along with leaders from the development community, all of whom are seeking to advance women's empowerment globally. We intend to use this meeting to explore common ground, goals, and actions. Specifically, we hope to:

1. Begin to explore common ground among faith traditions and development communities.
2. Test the value of and interest in a women, faith, and development initiative.
3. Understand different perspectives on what such an initiative could encompass.
4. Agree on what is the unique impact that this coming together of faith and development organizations.
5. Get feedback on the proposed parameters and plan of action for achieving that impact
6. Get suggestions on other organizations to involve.
7. Determine tasks and next steps.
8. Brainstorm on possible sources of funding.

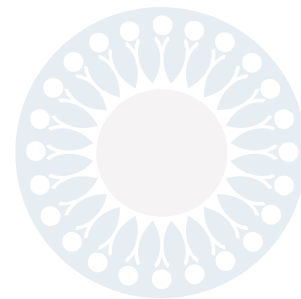
A broader consultation with representatives of faith and development organizations will be held in Fall 2006 to shape regional dialogues and joint advocacy and action.

Stage II. *Four Regional Dialogues, overseas January-October 2007:*

It is our hope to convene regional dialogues overseas between January and October of 2007 in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. The goals of these dialogues include:

1. Exploring interfaith and civil common ground, using the initial draft of the Steering Committee and reports from other regional dialogues as a foundation.
2. Exploring how faith and civic development organizations can help each other promote women's empowerment.
3. Reporting guiding ideas and proposing priorities for women's empowerment.
4. Developing methodology for disseminating information for faith leaders to use with congregations and educators.
5. Linking regional leadership networks to exchange views and shape the faith and development alliance, using our website as a primary way to exchange information.

The International Steering Committee, advised by the Sister's Circle, will identify four gathering places overseas. Among the locations being considered are: Hong Kong, Monrovia, Nairobi, Johannesburg, San Salvador, Maynooth and New York. The criteria for the selection of sites are to be discussed. The Steering Committee will look to the "Sister's Circle" and InterAction



members to suggest regional leadership and local hosts.

The International Steering Committee will then integrate the four regional reports into a draft Women's Empowerment Action and Advocacy Agenda and circulate it to all participants and to faith and development leaders for discussion and comment.

Stage III. Consultations among International Women Leaders on Women's Faith and Development Action Initiative, November 2007

We will invite Council of Esteemed International Women Leaders to comment on the draft agenda.

The Steering Committee will also host a small gathering of "Sister's Circle," women leaders of development organizations, and international women's leaders to consult on the draft agenda, shape the new alliance between faith and development leaders, and plan the March 2008 summit meeting.

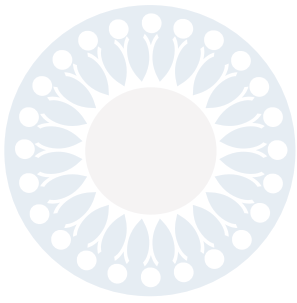
The Steering Committee will produce a finalized action agenda on the Women's Faith and Development Action Initiative that outlines a proposed WFDI Action Covenant. The steering committee will also plan an Action and Advocacy Summit and international media campaign. The final action agenda will be circulated along with the WFDI Covenant and signed by members of the Council of Esteemed Women Leaders with an invitation to join them in participation in the March summit meeting.

Stage IV. Development and Distribution of Tools and Materials to Support New Action Covenant and Media Outreach

The goal of this stage is to disseminate the recommendation and action priorities through faith communities to congregations, religious education groups, civic organizations and networks. Such broad distribution of the recommendations and action priorities spanning faith communities, congregations, religious education institutions, secular/civic groups and NGOs is key to achieving women's empowerment goals.

Building on the good work already in place, the WFDI will provide access to materials relating to the action agenda for women's empowerment for training faith leaders and for use with congregations and educators. The methodology for disseminating information will be developed in Stage II.

Grassroots and public communications campaigns will be tailored to in-country perspectives



that advance key messages within targeted populations identified by regional participants in WFDI. One or more simple message points could be universally promoted across the faith and development communities. (eg. “Your daughter is not a cow.”)

Stage V. Launch WFDI in Action and Advocacy Summit, March 2008, at Washington National Cathedral

Below are possible, very preliminary ideas for how a three-day summit might flow. Initial and additional input is sought from all concerned.

Following the 2008 meeting of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, we will stage a three-day Action and Advocacy Summit launch in Washington, D.C. We currently envision this Summit might take shape in this way:

Day One: tentatively March 10, 2008:

Faith, Development, and Civil Leaders Convergence: celebrating common ground and common goals when it comes to women, and calling to joint action for Women’s Empowerment.

“Day of Ceremony:” Leaders will participate in interfaith ritual, prayer and celebration.

Ceremonial signing of WFDI Action Covenant by worldwide religious and civil leaders.

Day Two: tentatively March 11, 2008:

“Day of Action:” Leaders participate in joining the Faith and Development agendas, with leadership and endorsement from Esteemed Leaders and launch international action and advocacy campaign.

Keynotes: eg: President Sirleaf/Secretary Madeleine Albright/Wangari Maathai

Muslim/Jewish/Hindu/Christian/Buddhist Women Leaders

Key leaders from Development World: Mary Robinson

Coordinate with overseas action.

Kick off Year of Action and U.S. Domestic Worldwide Launch of Women’s Empowerment Action Campaign.



Day Three: tentatively March 12, 2008:

“Day of Advocacy” conducted in partnership with key advocacy NGOs, e.g. ONE/Bread for the World.

Target U.S. Congress; target key legislatures overseas.

Address the U.S. presidential election process, the public and the faith community: *Could we stage a U.S. Presidential Candidates Forum on Women’s Empowerment?*

Debriefing and wrap up, closing dinner at Washington National Cathedral.

Stage VI. Women’s faith and development regional networks empowered and sustained in regional action.

Committed coalition groups working to continue and support regional networks.

APPENDIX B



A breakthrough partnership bringing together the women's, faith, and development communities to fight global poverty by investing in women and girls.
www.wfd-alliance.org

Dear Senators and Representatives,

As faith communities, united under the umbrella of the Women, Faith, and Development Alliance, we are grateful for your ongoing, outstanding leadership on human rights and, in particular, your commitment to those women and girls around the world who experience abuse and violence in their lives.

We are writing on behalf of our communities to express our continuing, deep concern about the plight of women and girls around the world who suffer acts of violence every day. **As people of faith we are writing to demonstrate our support for the International Violence Against Women Act (H.R. 4594, S. 2982) and ask that you continue to use your leadership role to ensure that Congress takes decisive action to see to it that it is passed.**

One out of every three women worldwide will be physically, sexually or otherwise abused during her lifetime, with rates reaching 70 percent in some countries. This type of violence threatens the lives of millions of women and girls, is often devastating to their mental health, and impedes their ability to provide for their families and contribute to the economic development of their countries.

We believe that efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls should be a top priority in U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance programs. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation, a public health epidemic and a barrier to addressing conflict, HIV/AIDS and extreme poverty. To help end it, the U.S. must exercise strong international leadership and provide dedicated resources to address the problem in a comprehensive fashion.

We affirm that gender equality is a prerequisite to sustainable global development, and agree on the need to collaborate to build the spiritual and political will necessary to empower women and girls and attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Our support of the **International Violence Against Women Act** is our first step towards that goal.

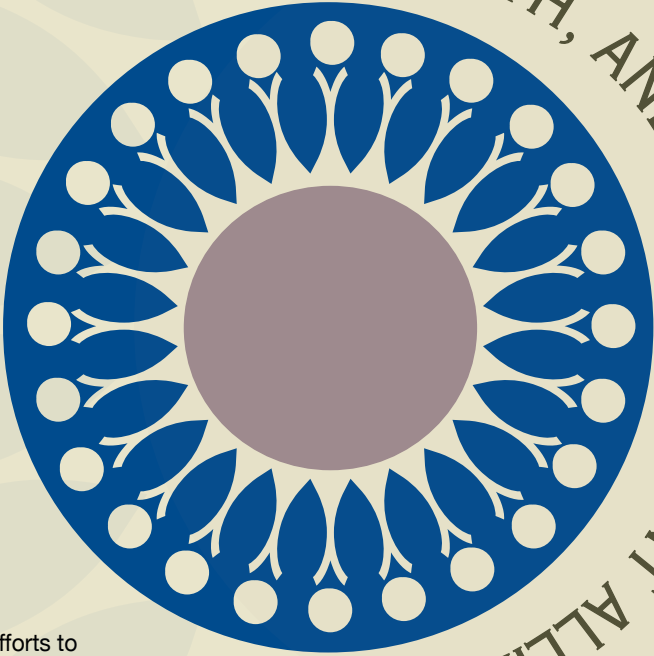
The passage of the **International Violence Against Women Act (H.R. 4594, S. 2982)** will be instrumental in providing the resources needed for development work and programs that benefit women and girls living in poverty around the world. Please use your leadership role to ensure that Congress takes decisive action to pass this important piece of legislation.

Signed,

FOUNDING PARTNERS
Washington National Cathedral
Women Thrive Worldwide
Religions for Peace
InterAction

Adventist Relief & Development Agency
 ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal
 American Islamic Congress
 American Jewish World Service
 Anglican Women's Empowerment
 Asian Women's Self Help Association
 Building Families, Inc.
 Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty
 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
 Church Women United
 Church World Service
 Community of Christ
 Council of Muslim Organizations
 Disciples of Christ, Women's Ministries
 FaithTrust Institute
 Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
 Interfaith Coalition Against Domestic Violence
 Islamic Relief USA
 Islamic Social Services Association USA
 The Jewish Council for Public Affairs
 Jewish Women International
 Lutheran World Relief
 Mennonite Central Committee
 Mission Life Center
 ML Ministries
 Muslimat Al-Nisaa
 Muslim Public Affairs Council
 Muslim Women's Coalition
 NA'AMAT USA
 National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
 National Council of Jewish Women
 National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the US
 North American Division of Seventh-Day Adventists
 Peaceful Families Project
 The Presbyterian Church USA
 Presbyterian Health Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)
 Safe Havens
 Sisters of the Good Shepherd, National Advocacy Center
 Union of Reform Judaism
 Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
 United Church of Christ, Justice & Witness Ministries
 United Methodist Church, General Board of Church & Society
 United Methodist Women, Washington Office of Public Policy
 United Religions Initiative
 Women of Reform Judaism
 World Conference of Religions for Peace
 World Vision

WOMEN, FAITH, AND DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE



We, leaders representing communities of women, faith, and development, commit ourselves today at the historic *Breakthrough Summit* to join with one another in unprecedented ways to create a world in which women and men and boys and girls everywhere can share equally in the care of their families, the right to dignity and freedom from violence, the opportunities for productive livelihoods, the decision-making that affects their lives, and the joys of the human experience.

We know that women and girls must be at the center of efforts to end global poverty, and together we commit ourselves and call upon the world to increase resources for the advancement of women and girls.

We commit ourselves to examining our own histories, policies, practices, and programs to ensure that we are responding to the voices of women and girls and shaping our work to engage them fully as creative agents of change in their own lives.

We claim our responsibility and our power to create a new world, one that is worthy of all our daughters and our sons, where women and men and boys and girls can grow into their full humanity.

We are gathered here today, young and old, from all parts of the world, representing all races and all faiths, to make this promise to the children of today and the future:

No longer will a woman fear for her safety, no longer will a girl be shuttered from a school, no longer will a mother die in childbirth, no longer will a wife bear the mark of her husband's hand upon her face, no longer will a single mother choose between food or shelter for her children, no longer will a woman be denied her right to have a job or be elected to lead her community, no longer will we deny the dreams of women and girls on this Earth.

We will work until it shall be.