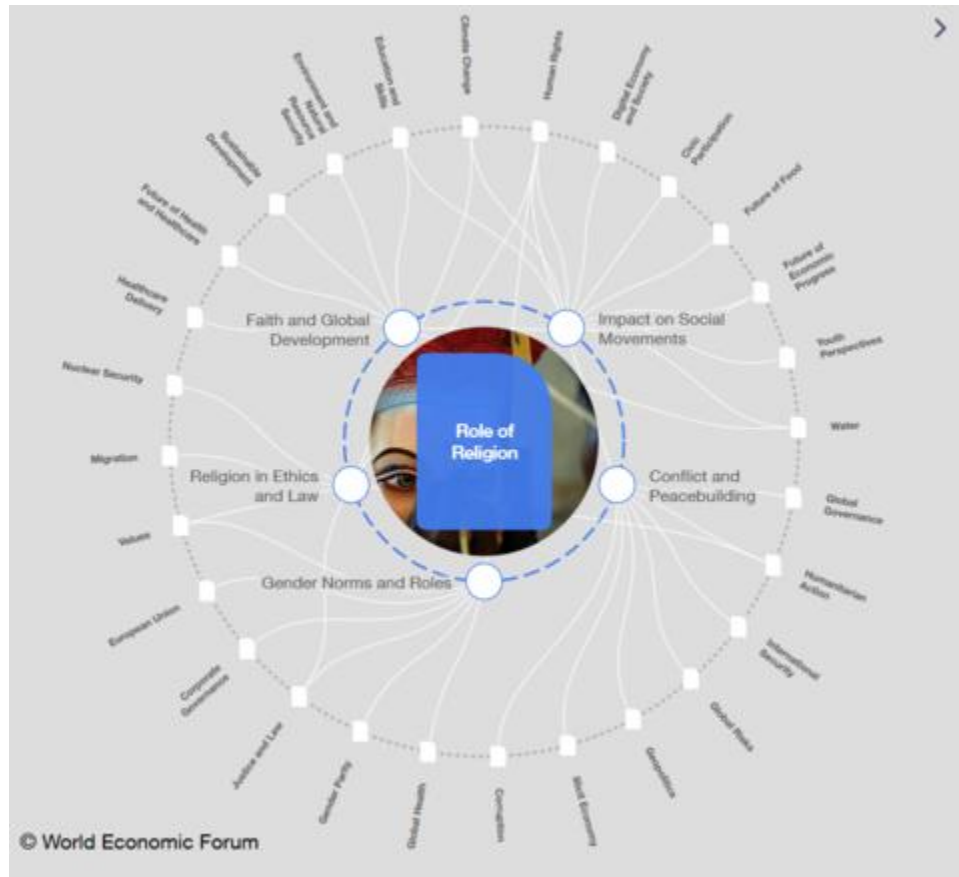


Serpentine Alliance Strangulates Faith



Summary

Religion is everywhere on the global stage. From Pope Francis to the Islamic State, and from the forced migration of refugees from the Middle East to the related responses made by populist politicians worldwide, many contemporary issues have some relationship to religion. Both presently and throughout history, religion has been both a cause of a great many ills, and a force for hope and good.

Key Issues

Impact on Social Movements, Conflict and Peacebuilding, Gender Norms and Roles, Religion in Ethics and Law, Faith and Global Development

COVID-19 has highlighted the interdependence of all people and the natural world.

The pandemic's disruption presents an opportunity to rebuild a world in which markets work for the whole of society.

The COVID-19 Response Alliance for Social Entrepreneurs will help faith-based organizations and social entrepreneurs enact radical change and rebuild a better future.

In recent months, we have witnessed the courage and sacrifice of so many people delivering healthcare and essential services.

At the same time, there has been a sharp wake-up call about gross inequities in testing, economic pain, even survival itself. For much of the world – especially least-developed countries with only one or two doctors for every 10,000 people – the worst of the coronavirus still lies ahead. If this pandemic has revealed anything, it's that we are globally interdependent.

It is time to pay attention and change course.

Have you read?

[Why social entrepreneurs are critical to our response to and recovery from the COVID-19 crisis](#)

[Faith leaders: an untapped resource in protecting communities](#)

A better world – one that nurtures human potential among the least of us – can only grow from the seeds of honest conversation. As the holy texts of all major faiths attest, we reap what we sow. This is especially true in the natural world, where droughts, fierce storms, accelerating extinctions, rising seas and now coronavirus tell us that we are imperiling our own future.

We can't simply go back to the way things were. Markets are highly inefficient in distributing empathy, compassion, hope and dignity – or even, as many have recently discovered, assigning true economic value with any degree of accuracy. We must build the world we want out of this disruption, so that markets work for the whole of society, not just a few. For what is the purpose of a free market if the people who make it possible are not themselves free? How we earn, how we spend and how we sustain the world and each other need a radical rebalancing.

For example, why are millions of “essential” workers – nurses, garbage collectors, grocery clerks, postal workers – so poorly paid? Why have companies and markets failed so spectacularly at anticipating, let alone balancing, supply and demand for basic protective gear? **And how can one even place a monetary figure on the freedom to walk without mortal fear of a passing stranger's cough, or to attend a loved one's funeral?**

Markets are not infallible arbiters of value.

We have always lived in a world of kindness and cruelty, generosity and greed, hope and cynicism, love and hate – all in constant tension. But which of these prevail in our countries, companies and communities ultimately depends upon the candour and courage of the conversations we have with our leaders – and the accountability we insist upon from them.

Now, we must embrace the moral imperative of radical change not just because it is right, but because it is the only practical

course of action that can save the world from a worse fate in years to come.

Fortunately, recent events have shown us that rapid and radical change is in fact possible on a mass scale. Our challenge now is to channel and build upon it.

What is the World Economic Forum doing to champion social innovation?

Innovative social entrepreneurs are addressing the world's most serious challenges ranging from illiteracy to girls' education and disaster relief. To achieve maximum impact and start to address root causes, they need greater visibility, credibility, access to finance, favourable policy decisions, and in some cases a better understanding of global affairs.

The [Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship](#) is supporting more than 350 late-stage social entrepreneurs. By providing an unparalleled global platform, the Foundation's goal is to highlight and expand innovative models of social innovation. It helps strengthen and grow the field of social enterprise by showcasing best-in-class examples, models for replication and cutting-edge research on social innovation.

A bold response to this call for change is the [COVID-19 Response Alliance for Social Entrepreneurs](#), a new coalition of innovative social entrepreneurs, foundations, civil society, faith actors, corporations and international organizations, hosted by the Schwab Foundation at the World Economic Forum. Together, we will work towards change on several fronts.

1. Synchronize the response

First, we will marshal and synchronize our response to alleviate the pandemic's impact on the excluded and most vulnerable populations and engage others in such service.

2. Leverage trust in faith-based organizations

In good times, faith-based organizations and social entrepreneurs provide at least one-third of primary healthcare in many countries in Africa, according to Christian Health Associations. Religions for Peace estimates this figure to be significantly higher in places affected by humanitarian disasters, where governments struggle to cope with needs. These partnerships have established a vital reservoir of trust, and in times of hardship and rapid change, trust is among the most important capital.

3. Add our voice to the Great Transformation

As the World Economic Forum explores the fundamental challenges of creating opportunity, equity, economic growth and sustainability in a post-pandemic world, we will add our voices to the global call for more humane and ecological measures of progress, as well as rules and incentives to transform these high ideals into everyday reality.

4. Understand civic and political life as an expression of love

One value that we believe should guide such conversations is love – a word that makes many political and business leaders strangely uncomfortable. In this context, love is much deeper and broader than a romantic sentiment. It is a courageous acknowledgment of interdependence, even obligation, to one another as fellow human beings. That's why Pope Francis has identified civic and political life as among the highest possible expressions of love.

Some 800 years ago, Saint Francis of Assisi showed the world that institutions cannot forever cater to the rich and powerful

without sacrificing their moral authority, their vital connection with the natural world or their own sense of every life's intrinsic equality. In modern terms, we would consider him a social entrepreneur – a person who, through deep love and his own organizational abilities, changed the way millions perceived the poor, revitalized the purpose of institutions, restored people's relationship with nature and demonstrated the enduring power of faith to affect change.

This pandemic is not just a health crisis – it's also a crisis of faith in many of the assumptions, systems and institutions that have utterly failed us. Without hope and faith in the future, people have little to live for. With faith, however, in all its rich and varied dimensions, anything is possible.

So, let's get started with the hard work, and hard conversations, together. Because whether you consider yourself an idealist or a realist, the path forward will be hard and steep for years to come. Let's at least make sure we are headed in a direction that most people can believe in, and rebuild a future of hope, value and possibility for all people and the natural world we call home.

The COVID Response Alliance for Social Entrepreneurs brings together over 40 leading global organizations to coordinate response for social entrepreneurs as they overcome the significant impacts of COVID-19.

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"Social entrepreneurs are battling at the forefront of this pandemic to serve the most vulnerable populations using their ingenuity to confront the problems on the ground. This Alliance will support them with their mission at a time when they are needed more than ever"

—Hilde Schwab, Co-Founder and Chairperson, Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship

What is the COVID Response Alliance for Social Entrepreneurs?

The COVID Response Alliance for Social Entrepreneurs is an unprecedented collaboration between over 40 global organizations to support social entrepreneurs in pooling knowledge, experience and responses to alleviate suffering and advance new models of change for a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable world.

Alliance members currently support more than 15,000 social entrepreneurs helping 1.5 billion people cumulatively in over 190 countries, working to serve the needs of excluded, marginalized and vulnerable groups – many of whom have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The alliance also aims to coordinate between member organizations and amplify the support for social entrepreneurs under extreme stress by the pandemic.



"This Alliance continues to strengthen our unwavering mission of sustainable and inclusive progress, which remains critical as business and government shape their response to the current crisis"

— Dominic Waughray, Managing Director, World Economic Forum

Why support Social Entrepreneurs?

The Alliance represents a network of over 15,000 social entrepreneurs, who have impacted the lives of 1.5 billion people cumulatively: protecting livelihoods, mitigating millions of tonnes of CO₂, improving access to health, sanitation, education, and energy, driven social inclusion movements for the disabled, homeless, or those with refugee status.

From providing access to food & water to developing mobile community tracing initiatives, the work of social entrepreneurs is even more critical during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they reach those who the market and governments are unable to account for. Social entrepreneurs need our support to continue making the world a better place for us all.

"Social entrepreneurs and their community partners have been working for years to solve market failures and demonstrate more sustainable and inclusive models. These front-line organizations now face bankruptcy and severe constraints while they also innovate and respond to this global pandemic. Through this Alliance, members are committing support for social entrepreneurs to protect decades of work in the impact sector"

— François Bonnici, Head of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship

How will the Alliance support Social Entrepreneurs?

This Alliance will provide holistic support to social entrepreneurs as they overcome the impacts of COVID19:

Joint Action Platform: Aggregate action across impact-first organizations

Maximize Support: Identify, coordinate, and maximize the availability of resources

Visibility: Highlights available rapid response funding under one umbrella

Additionality: Designed not to replace, but to amplify individual responses

Existing Channels: Builds on existing funder/grantee relationships for speed

4 OVERARCHING SUPPORT TO SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

1

Assess and highlight needs across the social enterprise portfolios

2

Amplify and expand available financial support for social entrepreneurs

3

Coordinate non-financial support such as social procurement, legal services and technological support

4

Advance joint communication efforts to advocate for fiscal & policy interventions

#TogetherwithSocEnts

"Dimagi is supporting the front lines, carrying out community-based contract tracing by working with governments and in the USA and Togo to respond to COVID. But we can't do it alone – social entrepreneurs are mobilising to respond to the myriad of massive needs being exposed by the pandemic. We are thrilled to be represented in this Alliance through Catalyst 2030, so we can help, inform and steer the Alliance towards the needs of social entrepreneurs."

— Jonathan Jackson, CEO, Dimagi, & Co-Chair, Catalyst 2030 Working Group on COVID-19

Who is a member of this alliance?

Aavishkaar Group, Acumen, Africa Venture Philanthropy Alliance (AVPA), Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE), Ashoka, Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN), B Lab, Bertelsmann Stiftung, CASE at Duke University, Catalyst 2030, Co-Impact, Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation, Echoing Green, European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA), Fundación Avina, GHR Foundation, Global Innovation Fund, Global Steering Group for Impact Investing (GSG), Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN), Greenwood Place, IKEA Foundation, IKEA Social Entrepreneurship, Impact Assets, Impact Hub, International Labour Organization, Johnson & Johnson, KIVA, LatImpacto, Lex Mundi Pro Bono Foundation, Mercy Corps Ventures, Motsepe Foundation, NESsT, Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF), Open Road Alliance, Rippleworks, Root Capital, Salesforce.org, SAP, Schwab Foundation, Skoll Foundation, USAID Center for Innovation and Impact (CII), Yunus Social Business.

“With this new alliance, we will play a significant role in reducing the vulnerability of social entrepreneurs impacted by the pandemic, across the emerging markets we serve. As a Group we will act as a voice for the Global South, empower social entrepreneurs, enable them to gain access to services that can help them survive the slowdown and be positioned for growth while addressing humanitarian challenges that impact jobs and livelihoods”

— Vineet Rai, Founder and Chairman, Aavishkaar Group

How will the Alliance help me as a social entrepreneur?

The Alliance also features a new resource developed by the Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship (CASE) at Duke University, [Covidcap.com](https://covidcap.com). This dashboard is a searchable database

of emergency funds available to non-profit and for-profit entrepreneurs during COVID-19, and contains global capital relief offers worth over \$1 trillion.

Faith and Global Development

A lack of knowledge is hindering collaboration between faith-based and secular aid groups

There is a growing awareness that religion is a factor to be reckoned with when it comes to tackling environmental challenges, peacebuilding, improving education, and supporting economic growth. But there is still a general lack of knowledge about the practical contributions of religious actors to international development work. This applies to the impact of beliefs and behavior on development, and to the particular ways in which religion factors into key development sectors.

Education-related goals are at the centre of the global development agenda, and tend to deal glancingly with religious dimensions - if at all. Yet, religious institutions play significant roles in national and international education systems and approaches; religiously-affiliated schools fill critical gaps in rural areas and in countries with underdeveloped infrastructure.

Christian schools in particular have also been associated with colonization, however, and have often contributed to the marginalizing of Islamic and other minority communities in a way that creates parallel and unequal systems. I

Global health is another realm where religious actors provide key sources of aid, but can also become hindrances if they are not properly recognized and engaged. One example occurred during a recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa, when international health organizations failed to connect with religious actors and gain

their help in suspending traditional burial practices in order to limit the spread of the disease. Similarly, religious actors, who are often on the frontlines of administering healthcare to rural populations around the world, can play an important role in combatting the spread of antimicrobial resistance - though when global health experts fail to incorporate or train them in best practices, they may inadvertently become major drivers of the emergence and spread of drug-resistant bacteria. While religion and religious actors play significant roles in global development efforts, they are too often absent from the formulation of mainstream development policy and practices. The development of better data, understanding, and engagement with these actors could help to more effectively aid the poorest and most vulnerable communities in the world.

Religion in Ethics and Law

A better grasp of the role of religion could help us address global challenges

Ethics and values based on religion shape laws and policies, and factor into global governance. In order to fully understand systems of law and governance, and to build consensus on global challenges, one must therefore consider how religion factors into identities and responses to complex issues.

Religious traditions are increasingly being used by governments to achieve policy goals. The United Nations, for example, launched the Fez Plan of Action in 2017, which guides religious leaders on how to use their influence to prevent violent atrocities. At the same time, the intersection of law and religion continues to be a source of friction for many countries, as domestic courts consider questions about the free exercise, establishment, and accommodation of diverse religious practices. For example, in 2018, both the United Kingdom

Supreme Court and the US Supreme Court considered cases where a bakery had refused to produce a cake associated with support for same-sex marriage on religious grounds. Legal conflicts (and related remedies) are also increasingly occurring across borders, and among culturally and religiously diverse participants including individuals, governments, corporations and nongovernmental organizations. Understanding and adjudicating such challenges requires a sustained engagement with religion, ethics, political theory, and theories of globalization.

Similarly, issues like nuclear proliferation, climate change, and the refugee crisis have raised questions about responsibility sharing and shared governance - and an understanding of how morality, ethics, and religion influence the policies and approaches of multinational institutions is essential for consensus building and action. Questions to be considered include whether there is a shared set of values across national borders (for example, related to human rights) upon which joint action can be based, and how religion can help or harm such efforts. Addressing the forced displacement of refugees in the Middle East and North Africa, for example, could be encouraged by highlighting religious narratives of displacement including the Jewish Exodus narrative, the flight of Jesus, Mary and Joseph to Egypt, and the migration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina. Many first responders and aid workers in conflict and crisis situations are already religiously motivated - though, ironically, populist political movements in the West based on religious or socioeconomic identity often thwart international efforts to address global issues. Regardless of how religious belief motivates certain people, religion often plays a fundamental role in legitimating political and legal systems, and it must therefore be taken into account in order to make real progress on our shared challenges.

Conflict and Peacebuilding

Negative appeals to ethnoreligious identity can foster conflict, but can also be mitigated through engagement

We know very little about the exact role that religion plays in conflict situations or peacebuilding efforts. Religion intersects with related economic, social, and political factors in complex ways, and religious communities are often arrayed on opposite sides of the same issue. Still, evidence suggests that religion plays a significant role in both the causes of conflict, and in the path to peace and reconciliation. Religious beliefs and communities have helped to spur people to violence in the past; in many conflicts, religion is a clear identity marker, simultaneously grouping those who affiliate, and differentiating those perceived to be “others.” Religious identities used in this way can encourage social cleavage and enclaves, weakening social cohesion by fostering suspicion. The Bosnian War fought among Bosnian (largely Muslim), Serbian (Orthodox), and Croatian (Catholic) forces as part of the breakup of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, for example, was not a purely religious conflict, as religious groups had coexisted and intermarried for centuries. However, during those centuries, a cohesive, shared identity did not develop, and in late 20th century Bosnia nationalists were therefore able to use ethnoreligious identity as a rallying mechanism (even as foes were not genuinely fighting about religion).

Whatever the cause of conflict or the parties involved, it is important to analyze the potential roles that religion can play in the peace process - and in the reconstruction of both societies and social cohesion. In contexts where multiple religious groups or traditions are involved, interreligious engagement can help foster strategies for peace that cut across divisions. Interreligious engagement relies upon each religious tradition

involved representing its own principles and values, while also providing a space to hear and understand the perspective of other traditions; gaining richer knowledge and forging deeper social relations are key aims. Interreligious engagement is not easy, and entails risk, but there have been recent examples of successful interreligious dialogue. Pope Francis, for example, used a 2014 visit to the al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem to embrace an imam and a rabbi and call on Christians, Jews, and Muslims to love another.

Impact on Social Movements

Religious belief inspires action for justice, and problematic social division

Through the interpretation of their texts and traditions, religious actors have extensive resources that can help promote social activism on issues ranging from environmental stewardship to social justice. Many religious groups and organizations are actively combating climate change and fighting against racial and social inequality - though religion's direct role in these efforts varies. Religious-based action on climate change in particular has increased dramatically in recent years. In 2017, Pope Francis and Orthodox Christian leader Patriarch Bartholomew jointly called for world leaders to collectively respond to climate change, while noting that the most vulnerable people in the world will be the first to suffer from its disastrous effects. Religious actors are also increasingly involved in on-the-ground efforts to combat the effects of climate change, which include reduced food security, the faster spreading of disease, population displacement, and increasing water scarcity. In order to respond to these problems, religious actors are fostering greater environmental education and disaster relief, and moving

forward on smaller-scale projects related to water management and agricultural reform.

Religious groups have also led cutting-edge initiatives to combat racial, economic, and educational disparities around the globe. Religiously affiliated aid organizations are similarly engaged in initiatives related to education, gender, racial justice, and health. However, religion factors into social movements in complex ways. In the US, for example, African-American churches once served as the heart of the civil rights movement, while today they are relatively less prominent in the Black Lives Matter movement - which works to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities. More troubling are some grassroots political movements, particularly in Western countries, that promote the idea of a national identity based on being white, Christian, and heterosexual. Such social-political movements, which may have religious connections, often undermine unified domestic and global action addressing shared threats, and impair efforts to promote racial justice and gender parity.

Gender Norms and Roles

Religion, and misperceptions about religion, can complicate efforts to promote women's empowerment

The intersection of gender and religion can be controversial. While religion is often viewed as a source of traditional, "backward" attitudes related to gender, the reality is more complex. In the development sector, for example, the diverse perspectives on gender among various religious institutions run the gamut from the ultraconservative that seek the preservation of (or return to) ancient traditions and teachings on gender relations, to radical visions of new gender dynamics and relationships for the future. In many religious traditions, women often have more influence on religious practices and gender-

related standards than is generally recognized. In addition, many religiously-affiliated development and humanitarian organizations are seeking to aid women's empowerment by focusing particular attention on women and girls, and by engaging in efforts to increase female access to education, employment, healthcare, and political and business decision-making. This area of work, however, poses challenges - as the role of religion in shaping gender roles is often viewed with suspicion by secular actors.

Outside of the development world, the relationship between secularism, democracy, religion, and gender equality is similarly complex and contested, especially in Western countries. In Europe, for example, support for gender equality and the rejection of religious authority have become common markers of identity for many people. Under these conditions, everyone is pressured to demonstrate a certain level of conformity to liberal values in order to become legitimate, recognized members of national communities. Muslim women in particular are caught in the crosshairs of these European identity politics. They are assumed to be victims of patriarchy, expected to embrace Western gender roles and dress, and, perhaps most ironically, are often silenced and deprived of influence by the very feminists who purport to defend them. Narratives regarding the relationship of religion to gender and sexuality are further complicated by the fact that many women with religious identities have also become leaders in peacebuilding organizations (such as the Liberian Women in Peacebuilding Network, which brought Muslim and Christian women together to advocate for peace) and LGBTI advocacy groups - though these roles tend to be highly nuanced.