

## **Faith Community Pledges Greater Collaboration on Malaria Elimination**

*New Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty Convenes Faith Leaders, Government Officials, and Development Experts for First Major Summit on Next Generation Partnerships against Poverty and Disease*

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**December 16, 2008 (WASHINGTON)** – Amidst global economic turmoil, it might be easy to forget that a child dies of malaria every thirty seconds in sub-Saharan Africa. Last Friday, however, more than 50 high-level leaders from the faith, international development, and public health communities showcased their fresh outlook, energy and resolve by coming together for a special event – the Leadership Consultation on Scaling up Faith Community Impact against Malaria – hosted by the new Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty (CIFA).

The event, which opened a new and necessary chapter in the fight against poverty and disease, was organized based on the common recognition that the faith community – which is estimated to provide between 40 and 70 percent of treatment and care to the world’s poorest and most vulnerable populations – possesses tremendous untapped potential to drive change for the world’s poorest people. In the past, however, diverse faith groups and congregations have not worked together or shared information about successful efforts, which has hindered overall progress. CIFA was created to fill this void.

“I’m convinced that the faith community’s role in providing services to the world’s less fortunate is underutilized, underappreciated, and underfunded,” said CIFA’s Chairman and Founder, Ed Scott. “We’re here because we believe the faith community is critical to bringing hope to the 33 million global citizens suffering from HIV, the millions of children who are orphaned by HIV, the 350-500 million affected by malaria, and the one million people who die each year of malaria —85% of whom are children under five in Africa.”

### **High Level Participation**

Co-sponsored by the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, the event drew support from global financing and coordinating agencies such as the World Bank, World Health Organization, the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, Malaria No More, the Global Health Council, and the ONE Campaign. Other high-level participants included:

- Mr. Ray Chambers, UN Special Envoy for Malaria
- Rear Admiral Tim Ziemer, U.S. Malaria Coordinator, President’s Malaria Initiative
- Ambassador Mark Dybul, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator
- Ambassador Abdul Wahab, Permanent Observer to the United Nations of the Organization of the Islamic Conference

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- Dr. Hany El-Banna, co-founder of Islamic Relief Worldwide and President of the Humanitarian Forum
- Dr. Tim Shriver, President, Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty
- Kathy Bushkin Calvin, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, United Nations
- Dr. John DeGioia, President, Georgetown University
- The Very Reverend Samuel Lloyd, Dean of the Washington National Cathedral
- Ms. Ruth Turner, Chief Executive, Tony Blair Faith Foundation
- Ms. Ruth Messinger, President, American Jewish World Service
- Mr. Charles Sandefur, President, Adventist Development and Relief Agency
- Rev. Larry Hollon, General Secretary, United Methodist Communications
- Mr. Rajmund Dabrowski, Communication Director, General Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist Church

“Faith-based organizations may be the one big engine that can push us up the hill for all the Millennium Development Goals,” said Ray Chambers, the United Nations Special Envoy for Malaria, who called for the faith community to play a leading role in meeting the goals of universal bednet coverage and achieving zero mortality from malaria by 2015. “There will be a sprint in the next 24 months, and we need CIFA and all of the people here today to take on a huge part of that obligation.”

### **Diverse Faith Groups Join for Groundbreaking Pledge of Cooperation and Focus**

Key leaders from faith-based development organizations including World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, American Jewish World Service, Islamic Relief Worldwide, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Episcopal Relief and Development, Lutheran World Relief, Saddleback Church, the United Methodist Church, the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, and Compassion International pledged to increase collaboration and information-sharing in their efforts to eliminate malaria worldwide. The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs and the World Faiths Development Dialogue produced a new overview of faith-based activities against malaria for the event, [Malaria: Scoping New Partnerships](#).

“Although we are committed to the sprint,” said Rob Radtke, President of Episcopal Relief and Development, “in the long run, this will be a marathon, and we have to build the capacity that will make these efforts sustainable.”

With Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo accounting for 30 to 40 percent of all malaria deaths in Africa, reaching the 2010 goals will not happen without effective cooperation and intervention in those nations. Tim Shriver, CIFA President and Chairman of the Special Olympics, challenged attendees to find ways to coordinate to increase the overall impact of the faith sector. A group of the leaders participating committed to join a Task Force that will map faith community resources in Nigeria in conjunction with the World Bank’s upcoming Business Plan for that country. Following standardization of a successful model for identifying and

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scaling faith community resources, CIFA and the Task Force plan to expand to map and build faith resources in other malaria endemic countries.

“The greatest strength of faith community is their tremendous power and ability to work across borders,” said Joy Phumaphi, Vice President of Human Development at the World Bank. “I don’t think that there is any other community that can do this as effectively. The faith community has to play a leading role, a critical role in malaria elimination, and it will be an essential partner for us at the Bank, and for other partners as well.”

### **Background on Faith-based Efforts against Poverty and Disease**

The faith community’s critical role in the fight against poverty and disease spans history—often rooted in the common call among the world’s sacred texts to abide by the global ethic of the golden rule. From Christian orphanages founded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to Buddhist monks providing palliative care to people living with HIV/AIDS in Thailand today, the faith community has long shown a commitment to caring for the poor and vulnerable.

Perhaps the largest and most successful recent example of interfaith collaboration against malaria is found in Mozambique, where 10 faith communities have joined forces to spread malaria prevention and treatment messages to hundreds of thousands of people through their houses of worship in a program called [Together against Malaria](#).

The U.S government has also shown an increasing interest in tapping the strength of the faith community with the creation in 2001 of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, and a commitment to funding faith-based programs. Building capacity of the faith community to tackle global problems is a trend that appears likely to continue under an Obama administration. However, in economic times that threaten promised funds for anti-malaria efforts, Hervé Verhoosel, External Relations Manager for the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, urged the faith leaders present to voice their support of this work, “You can and you must use your power as advocates to ensure that donors follow through with their commitments.”

As Ambassador Mark Dybul, head of the Office of the General AIDS Coordinator stated, “If we get faith community involved, the assets are there. Meeting the 2010 goals is not difficult—it’s complicated. With the power of the faith community, of public-private partnerships, of the lions and the lambs lying down together, we can do this very easily.”

### **Next Steps**

To ensure that the outcomes of the Consultation are carried through, CIFA will staff the Task Force to create a replicable country-level coordinating mechanism for integrating faith community assets into national malaria programs, starting with Nigeria. As an organization whose mission is to improve the collective capacity and effectiveness of the faith community in its effort to reduce global poverty and disease through increased interfaith coordination, best practices and model sharing, innovative mobilization of resources, and influential advocacy,

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CIFA will not stop with malaria. CIFA plans to launch similar action on HIV/AIDS, gender justice, and neglected tropical diseases.

“Our job is to support the great work of the faith community,” said Jean Duff, Executive Director of CIFA. “We hope to do so by bringing faith groups together, linking to new partners, and driving research, technical program support and new funds around their efforts.”

### **About CIFA**

The mission of The Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty (CIFA) is to improve the capacity and effectiveness of the faith community in its collective effort to reduce global poverty and disease. CIFA does this through increased interfaith coordination, best practices and model sharing, innovative mobilization of resources and influential advocacy to governments and the general public.

Find out more about CIFA’s action agenda at [www.centerforinterfaithaction.org](http://www.centerforinterfaithaction.org).

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