

WHO Faith Network members statement on pandemic accord

March 25 2024

As members of the WHO Faith Network, we call for strengthened language in the pandemic accord on faith-based organizations and their vital role in pandemic prevention and response.

Faith communities lost a great deal during the pandemic: in closed worship services and spaces, restrictions on our ability to provide social support, in the death or illness of members over the long and short term, and in many other ways. In this context, we support the accord in its efforts to prevent and mitigate the effects of future pandemics and the suffering they cause.

Faith communities and faith-based organizations (FBO) have provided health care services for centuries, and they grew this vital role during the pandemic. FBO health work in the Covid pandemic was conducted in the face of opposition, misinformation and disruption. FBO health work also suffered from inequities in resource distribution and lack of coherent international cooperation. Therefore, we fully support the accord's work to establish principles for pandemic countermeasures.

FBOs are critical to making possible an all of society approach and intersectoral collaboration, and therefore we support the pandemic accord's role in empowering this work in the future.

FBOs are necessary to enabling equitable health access and challenging misinformation, and we need the increased/improved international collaboration which the pandemic accord offers, to equip us in our work.

Given the vital role of FBOs in making possible pandemic prevention, detection and response, we welcome the accord's aims to promote sustained investment in a whole of society approach and in the equitable sharing of health technologies, information and expertise. We support the opportunity for the accord to support transparent and accountable governance in pandemics.

Recent research shows that religiosity and religious affiliation will grow in the coming decades and the vast majority of the world's population will continue to identify with a religion. Faith communities and FBOs are significant parts of the governing and organisation of healthcare in many countries, and of organising and mobilising grassroots communities in many countries, and we approve of any efforts to support this role.

This statement has been developed and endorsed by members of the WHO Faith Network (see list of members below) and other faith organizations:

African Methodist Episcopal Church
Anglican Health and Community Network
Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII
Christian Health Association of Kenya
Global Ministries / The United Methodist Church
Go Health
International Catholic Migration Commission
Network of Ecumenical Patriarchate for Pastoral Health Care
World Vision International
World Council of Churches