



Second UNDP/HARPAS Forum Launches Regional Network of Multi-Faith Arab Religious Leaders Responding to AIDS 'CHAHAMA' 'الأديان في خدمة الإنسان'

DEAR COLLEAGUE,

UNDP/HARPAS is proud to announce our *Second Regional Religious Leaders' Forum in Response to AIDS in the Arab States*, November 6-9th 2006, in Cairo, Egypt.

UNDP/HARPAS flagship Religious Leader's Initiative has grown tremendously since its inception two years ago. The first Regional Religious Leaders Colloquium in December 2004, marked the first regional gathering of **Muslim and Christian Leaders in the AIDS response**. The Colloquium resulted in the signing of the historic *Cairo Declaration* by 80 key Muslim and Christian leaders including the Sheikh of Al-Azhar and the Coptic Pope. This signified a ground breaking step that has created increased inter-faith cooperation responding to the greatest development, governance and human rights challenge in our region.

The principles of the *Cairo Declaration* have been put into action at community, national, sub-regional and regional levels. This has included the production of Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders Kits by and for Arab Religious Leaders used in specific trainings, based on principles agreed to in the *Cairo Declaration* and teachings from relevant religious texts. Due to high demand, 40,000 Muslim and Christian Kits were published and used in five sub-regional trainings in 2005 covering the entire Arab States region HARPAS serves. These trainings paved the way for **addressing the feminization of AIDS** and the crucial contributions *women* religious leaders could make in an effective response. As a result, the first-ever **Arab Region female religious leader's training on HIV/AIDS** was held May 2006 in Tripoli, Libya. The landmark creation and signing of the *Tripoli Declaration* addressing women's rights and AIDS resulted, and is now another powerful statement for leadership that is inclusive, honours women and men and responds to AIDS in Arab solidarity.

To catalyze this initiative, mobilize its leaders and implement the next phase of action, **our Second Forum aims to launch CHAHAMA**— a network of faith based organizations and leaders responding to AIDS in the Arab region. It will be held with the aim of bringing together the hundreds of Christian, Muslim, female and male religious leaders in the Arab region who have been mobilized, trained and are making a difference in the AIDS response from community to regional level. The Forum will provide space for leaders to further network, share experiences and plan new ways to reach vulnerable groups and the broader community. As with the first Forum, this second Forum will **be held under the auspices of the League of Arab States and will welcome leadership from Al-Azhar and the Coptic Pope**.

If you would like further information about the Forum please contact Regional Programme Officer, Ms. Amy Kay at: amy.kay@undp.org with cc: to Regional Programme Assistant, Ms. Heba Wassef at: heba.wassef@undp.org.

In Solidarity,

Khadija T. Moalla

Dr. Khadija T. Moalla
UNDP/HARPAS Regional Programme Coordinator
khadija.moalla@undp.org; mobile: +20101402016

