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The Shared Societies Project:
Leadership for Dialogue, Diversity and Social Cohesion

Building a world safe for difference

Replicable example of practice

Commitment II

Create opportunities for minorities and marginalised groups and communities to be consulted about their needs and their perception of the responsiveness of state and community structures to meet those needs.

Suggested Approaches:

- Establish consultative councils on which all identity groups are represented and with the statutory right to be consulted on the impact of government policies.
- Create systems of community meetings that allow community members to express their views and air their grievances
- Create the statutory duty of public bodies to include representatives of smaller identity groups in their boards and other decision-making bodies.

Commitment III

Ensure that social cohesion is considered in devising governance structures, policy formation and policy implementation and establish procedures and mechanisms to ensure this is achieved and to reconcile divergent positions between sectional interests.

Suggested Approaches:

- Enact statutory provisions that require all public bodies to take account of the impact of their policies and decisions on social cohesion
- Create neutral, independent bodies to reconcile divergent positions and overcome competing interests through a participatory, consultative process

Commitment VIII

Initiate a process to encourage the creation of a shared vision of society at local and national level.

Suggested Approaches:

- Introduce citizens to materials that encourage them to think about their society and their place in it and the place of other identity groups. Also invite them to consider how they would want to see society in the future and the place it offers for different identity groups.

- Implement a national dialogue to exchange views on the nature of the society at present and how it could be changed to satisfy the interests of all sections and interests in society.
- Make government commitments to consider all ideas which emerge from exercises to envisage a future shared society and, where appropriate, incorporate them in legislation and policy. If the Government decided not to so incorporate them, it should also undertake to give a clear rationale and explanation of this decision within 3 months.

Commitment X

Take steps to reduce tensions and hostility between communities and ensure members of all communities are protected from abuse, intimidation and violence.

Suggested Approaches:

- Promote public awareness of the damage to individuals and the whole society as a result of intercommunity conflict and encourage the community to be vigilant in identifying and challenging situations that might lead to tension.
- Establish mechanisms at local community levels to improve communication among leaders from each community and equip them with the resources and skills to be able to neutralize and resolve critical situations before they escalate.

Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB) -Inter-religious Harmony Forum

Country: Indonesia

Background

- Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, with a total population of 235 million people.
- Indonesia is a very diverse country. There are over 300 ethnic groups speaking 250 languages spread over more than 6,000 islands. It is also a nation comprised of multiple religious groups. While over 90% of the people are Muslim, there are also Protestants, Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists, and other indigenous religions.
- The Indonesian constitution and Indonesia's governing ideology, Pancasila, recognize the ethnic and religious diversity of Indonesia and stress the importance of consensus and unity and freedom of worship. Its national motto, *"Bhinneka Tunggal Ika"* means "Unity in Diversity" or literally "many, yet one".
- While relations between different religious and ethnic groups have largely been harmonious the country has experienced periodic episodes of sectarian and ethnic strife, particularly since the transition to democracy in 1999.
- The Indonesian government and civil society organizations have adopted a series of measures to restore national unity and inter-religious and inter-ethnic harmony
- One of the most significant of these initiatives has been the Forum Kerukunan Umat Bergama (FKUB) or the Inter-Religious Harmony Forum

Goals

- On the provincial level the FKUB has four main tasks: conducting dialogue with religious leaders and followers, accommodating the aspirations of religious community organizations and the community, formulating policy recommendations, and making efforts to educate the community of Laws related to religious harmony.
- At the regency level, which is one step below the province, the Forum is given the same tasks at that level, with the additional responsibility of providing written recommendations on requests for building a place of worship.

Method

- The Inter-religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) was decreed by an ordinance from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Interior in 2005. The decree mandates government leaders in the provinces and districts to take part in sustaining harmony among religious communities and to support the establishment of FKUB chapters in their areas.
- Currently, FKUB can be found in most of the provinces and districts in Indonesia.
- The Forum consists of local religious leaders from every religion in the province/regency/city. A maximum number of members are set: 21 for a Regional Forum and 17 for a Regency Forum,
- The FKUB works with government officials to design policies aimed at ensuring inter-religious harmony.
- The FKUB encourages dialogue between religious leaders within a given community.

Impact

- FKUB has been established on a broad scale in Indonesia and thus provide government officials and religious leaders with a formal channel through which to discuss inter-religious issues.
- FKUB has created a formal mechanism through which religious leaders can mobilize to address sectarian issues before they escalate into outright conflict.

Enabling Conditions

- It receives wide support from the national and provincial governments
- It exists on a wide scale covering almost all provinces
- It is recognized that they are open to religious leaders from all the different sects and they are ready to take part
- It has a clear mandate

Contact/References

- www.depag.go.id
- Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: 2006
- http://www.pluralism.org/research/profiles/display.php?profile=74425