

The RfPUK 2022 Story - What a year!

We are well into 2023, and we are just turning the corner from delivering all the project reports and uploading all of our recordings, and blink! January is almost over! Let us recount our endeavour and share with you the exciting work we have been doing for the past 12 months.

At the start of 2022, we at Religions for Peace UK, our Women of Faith and Interfaith Youth networks were ready to take on stepped-up activities as we further emerge from COVID lockdown, and we have regrouped our focus to further align with our international key priorities. In the new year, Ravinder Kaur Nijjar, Chair of UKWFN, having just been named on the Infinity Media Group's Top Scots Asians 2022 list, and in February, was invited to participate in EcoSikh's Reflections of COP 26 webinar, an engaging dialogue on climate change, the Sikh Sangat contribution and the legacy of COP26.

Nothing could have prepared us for the Russian invasion of Ukraine. RfPUK joined RfP International in a global statement to call for the end of the Ukraine war, <https://www.rfpuk.org/resources/RfP-COP26.pdf> and in March, RfPUK joined RfP Europe in sending a letter to a former member of the European Council of Religious Leaders, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, asking him to help end the violence in Ukraine. <https://www.rfpuk.org/resources/kirill.pdf> We were hopeful that this communication might be considered as we witnessed unabated escalation of military action. It is with heavy hearts that the European community is still facing the continued onslaught of violence.

March saw UKWFN acknowledging International Women's Day with an Inspirational Women webinar <http://bit.ly/3vj1qk>. By this time the RfP International Youth Committee has also issued their statement on the Ukraine conflict, calling RfP global youth networks from our 90 affiliates to formulate their response in aid of the people whose homes were being destroyed and populations who were being displaced. <https://www.rfpuk.org/resources/IYC.png> The RfP Multi-Religious Humanitarian Fund sent out a call for project proposals aiming to tackle crisis across the front lines and RfPUK took up that encouragement and leapt into action.

Our UK Interfaith Youth Network partnered with Hillsong Church UK who successfully obtained support from the Humanitarian Fund for a refugee integration project in the UK, which featured activities beyond the regular language classes they provided and brought the refugees, some with families, to venture beyond their camps, meet people they would not otherwise meet, and experience each others' religious festivals, so they may gain insight and build friendship with people who speak different languages and worship in different faith traditions. Many refugees in the project became volunteers themselves, finding engagement, meaning and achievement in their somewhat diminished role in life. https://www.facebook.com/rfp.ukiyn/posts/pfbid02j4JFGQjDhaXKswEbeC-S4pnoj5qufKJ8TVZWdefTUR1812F5njwTE45xXbyJySFHRI?locale=tw_TW

Following the humanitarian relief theme in response to the Ukraine crisis, RfPUK reached out to sponsor a mission by Save a Child, a UK charity, in their mission to remove Ukrainian children from conflict zones. Their efforts have taken around 200 children, many of whom were orphaned, out of war-torn areas into the UK where they can be cared for and receive much needed medical attention. The eye-watering complexities and hinderance of getting them settle in the UK proved to be

as hard, if not harder, than getting them out of war zones. While missions were launched and completed, the war rages on. Our work to call for peace and bring relief to the afflicted continues. https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10225319685117373&set=pcb.10225319688317453&locale=tw_TW

RfP Europe, a regional body for RfP national chapters in Europe, went through restructuring and the new entity was launched in Germany. One of their constituent bodies, the European Religious Leaders Council, called a meeting in Birmingham to discuss a new way forward. RfPUK Chair Cinde Lee delivered the UK report to the Council as UK, although not in the EU after Brexit, is still a part of the European movement aiming to provide service along the global priorities guideline inspired by spiritual beliefs. https://www.facebook.com/religionsforpeaceuk/photos/a.1539671242913706/3078754012338747/?locale=tw_TW

Both the UK Women of Faith Network and the UK Interfaith Youth Network celebrated the Queen's Jubilee through 2 interfaith picnics, one in Glasgow and one in London. We were much saddened by the later unfortunate news of Her Majesty's death. Her steadfast service to our nation will be well remembered as we seek to render service to our community and beyond. <https://www.facebook.com/UKWFN/posts/pfbid0w8E1PbAZhCxi79iE3qhx3vzCdZkAoFBgVy6TwPxoJFaf4DHpz2geF-dtrmNPRcdD2I>

UKWFN pioneered an empowerment project featuring the Dignity of Women-Scriptural Reflections exhibition, moderated discussion sessions provided opportunities for participants to learn what scriptures of different faiths say about their women, and inspirational women were featured in webinars to share their scholarship as well as life experiences. <https://www.facebook.com/UKWFN/posts/pfbid0GsBgBahv9jX5siHjBATdXqUq2L82DbLSXoVoKLqTGJoNnZ2HWtqnvfiTztEqLbFI>

In order to encourage understanding and collaboration between our Interfaith Youth Network communities, UKIYN instigated a series of videos to advocate Youth Leadership through Service. A playlist of that name has been published on YouTube and more videos are being uploaded to feature our youngsters' faith, conviction, action and how in giving their unconditional service they achieve maturity and leadership through their endeavours. <http://bit.ly/3FWWAI1>

This year, UKWFN took up the challenge of 16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. We launched a series of videos online called "Visible Advocacy: Interfaith Male Allies in our Midst". They are male religious leaders who are supporting the cause to voice their opinion regarding women and their dignity and how we are all a part of changing the culture of silence. <http://bit.ly/3BYJ2LI>

RfP International, in partnership with the City Council of Manresa, Spain, presented a multi-sectoral inter-generational answer to the social and environmental crisis. At a Crossroads was an international forum which took place to explore the crisis emphasizing the role of youth and women. The UK working model in engaging this work was presented by RfPUK Chair Cinde Lee, who recounted even a country like the UK which seems so ready to embrace multi-culture and multi-faith initiatives must carry out such work with respect and patience. When religious, governmental and civil agencies work together, it is possible that increasing urbanisation all over the world can follow the path of sustainability, thus ensuring people and resources are protected, this is a worldwide task that all concerned are equally responsible. <https://www.facebook.com/religionsforpeaceuk/posts/pfbid0soFXQiBu6stxE55kvH9RwLj4Dt3hhyBpushZDgceEfyw7vhfo4DbSJ6qreZWuQtVI>

Continuing on the Inspirational Women theme, UKWFN invited scriptural scholars to a webinar in which each speaker discussed women from their scriptures, how they were perceived, and how

the modern world need to step up to grasp the importance of women, not only from antiquity but from our daily life, how their contemporary contribution should be duly recognised and women leaders in religious organisations must be given their rightful place as they play key roles in all parts of religious life, especially when they are in leadership roles. <http://bit.ly/3GOxn16>

For our Human Rights Day Lecture which commemorated the late Helen Mayer, our colleague and benefactor, RfPUK showcased Sally Becker to recount her extraordinary decades of rescue missions from Bosnia to Afghanistan and now Ukraine. In her we can see what love and dedication in one woman can do. When asked what individuals can do in the face of calamity, she said that each act of kindness and each remark of compassion from anyone all contribute to making this world a better place. We are indeed proud to have been Save a Child's partner in their humanitarian aid in the ongoing Ukraine conflict. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zf9gX2JNRp4&t=21s>

In the coming year, RfPUK, UKWFN and UKIYN will take programmes we are already working forward, developing young volunteers working together, advocating against gender based violence, tackling environmental crisis we all face, and breaking ground on peace education fronts. We also have in place a programme to take interfaith dialogue and good practice forward, providing training to advocates as well as working with faith communities to foster cordial relationships to actualise the "different faiths common action" motto, which runs deep in the Religions for Peace movement worldwide.

2022 has been a year of a flurry of activities, we hope that in the coming year we are able to activate further under our religious leadership, to work with government and non-government agencies, to strengthen our ties with faith and belief communities, and to bring further collaboration with all people aiming to bring shared security and shared peace to the world.

Please get in touch with us if you wish to know more about our work, to bring your network to our attention, to explore collaboration possibilities and to effect change in our society.

www.rfpuk.org