"Development is the new name for peace". This short phrase, that Pope John Paul II spoke in 1987, conveys a fundamental wisdom about world affairs. It also presents challenges that, in this turbulent and troubling moment in 2014, invite dialogue and reflection. The complex links between economics and peace invite religious leaders and institutions to reflect and to act. In my introduction I address three questions: How are peace and development linked? What questions are most actively debated? And, looking forward, how can religious engagement on inequality and inequity be enhanced?

Why and how are peace and development linked?

The two main arguments for linking development and peace are first, that despair and hopelessness (a failure to develop) invite chaos and conflict, and second, that the manifest injustices that are part of endemic poverty and large gulfs between rich and poor invite anger and exacerbate ancient and modern conflicts. The hope is that in societies where the development brings prosperity, where an educated citizenry has opportunities to develop their gifts, where children and adults have access to health care, and where there is freedom to speak and act, and to worship, peace will prevail. The world is witness to such societies and we should not forget that it is a miracle of our contemporary world that we have the possibility for the first time in human history of assuring a decent, healthy life to all people. But we are far from what we know is our potential.

So why is there so much debate? What are some unanswered questions?

While the basic arguments that development and peace are intricately linked seem compelling, hiding behind any simple consensus are very different ways of looking at and understanding the forces and issues involved. Some see in most conflicts today the injustices of history and imbalances in power among nations. An economist might argue that the answer to instability and poverty is a business friendly investment climate so that companies can create jobs. An educator in turn suggests that the answer is education, education, education. The health specialist sees grave potential for instability in the threat of infectious disease. The conflict specialist, in contrast, might argue that without facing the pain and injustice of the past no peace is possible. The environmentalist will argue that untrammeled economic growth is unsustainable and destructive so new paths are needed. And the political scientist would argue that until elites are inclusive and people are empowered neither peace nor development can be sustained.

Let me highlight four topics that merit our particular focus in this community.
Inequality and inequity are the subject of one of the most hotly debated books of the year, by Thomas Piketty. Some argue that inequality is nigh inevitable, even “fair”; that those who have wealth have “earned” it. Others see it as rank injustice, the product of history and abuse of power. There are many who argue that rather than focusing on inequality, the priority is to work to eradicate extreme poverty. But most wise observers see something grossly amiss in the ever more visible gulfs that separate rich and poor. The question is what to do about it. Is the priority “human capabilities”, a focus on education and health so that all have equal opportunities? Or is the priority instead some form of redistribution? Are new systems needed or can we build on what exists?

The role of the state, a eternal topic of debate, is central and unresolved. Debates take many forms: are democratic forms of government best or is a “guardian state”, even if it is autocratic, acceptable or even desirable? How large a role should the state take? How far can the regulatory powers of the state direct the forces of capitalist markets in positive directions? What can be done to assure honest stewardship, to curb or end corruption?

Third, the role of international aid for development is hotly debated: is it a vital human right and obligation, or a waste of resources that encourages dependency and corruption? There are differences and tensions between an approach grounded in charity and a rights based frame of reference. Charity, an ancient principle and good, has perils, including a casting of those in need as objects and victims. Rights based approaches highlight the dignity of the individual and acknowledge their just right to a decent chance to thrive. Both are necessary but the differences can cloud approaches to development aid. The roles of money (how much? How? To whom?) and of expertise are clouded.

And fourth, there are lively debates around various dimensions of human rights. Equality between women and men is viewed very differently in different societies and especially within some religious communities. It is an important area of tension because for many development professionals (myself among them) full and true equality is fundamental to successful development. Many other topics turn around gender roles, including the extraordinary levels of domestic violence and violations of women that we still see well into the twenty-first centuries. Other human rights issues focus on minorities, whether minority religious communities or LGBT groups.

Societies are rightly judged by how they treat the weakest and most vulnerable among their populations. The realities of how to protect the very poor and those threatened by discrimination and exclusion are very much with us and they present continuing moral challenges.

Looking forward: religious engagement on inequality and inequity

Despite much tribute to the idea that development and peace are tightly linked, they are often treated in separate silos. The development and conflict resolution professions tend to be quite distinct. Peacebuilders view economists askance and many economists secretly wonder what peace work really achieves since the real answer lies in jobs and
growth. Part of the answer to these gulfs in understanding and action is more active engagement with religious leaders and communities.

James D. Wolfensohn and Lord Carey (then President of the World Bank and Archbishop of Canterbury) saw the need to bridge such gulfs, especially those that involved religious and secular development actors, because it seemed mad that committed advocates for poor people were at odds. Working together, working out differences in view, is essential. There is vast knowledge and expertise on both sides, including active programs and insights from lived experience. They organization I lead, the World Faiths Development Dialogue, http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/wfdd, continues this work, building knowledge and encouraging dialogue on tough issues in many fields related to development and peace.

Whether fighting corruption together, improving quality of education, looking to truth and reconciliation, or working to address climate change, religious and secular actors can achieve far more together than they can separately. What matters in work for development and for peace is the principled engagement of the many different actors involved, and a willingness to engage, to learn from each other, and to be transformed. That is the challenge for dialogue in the effort to turn the ideal that development is the new name for peace into reality.