

APPENDIX 2 UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA PARTNER COUNCIL 2025-2028

PARTNER REPRESENTATIVES

ASIA: SARAH “BESTANG” DEKDEKEN, CORDILLERA PEOPLE’S ALLIANCE (PHILIPPINES)

Bestang Dekdeken is the Secretary General of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA), an alliance of 307 of Indigenous peoples’ and sectoral organizations and belongs to the Kankanaey-Igorot Indigenous people in the Cordillera region, northern Philippines. She is a long-time indigenous activist who advocates against corporate mining, mega-dams, and other destructive projects in the Cordillera. Bestang is among the victims of the Philippine government’s attacks against activists and human rights defenders. Bestang has been experiencing intensified red-tagging, terrorist labeling and political vilification.

The Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) is a federation of grassroots-based organizations of Indigenous Peoples and marginalized sectors in the Cordillera region, Philippines. It is committed to the promotion and defense of Indigenous Peoples’ rights, human rights, social justice, and national freedom and democracy.

CANADA: KAIROS: CANADIAN ECUMENICAL JUSTICE INITIATIVES SILVIA VASQUEZ-OLGUIN (TORONTO, CANADA)

Silvia Vasquez-Olguin is the Global Coordinator for Latin America, Gender Justice and Extractivism at KAIROS Canada.

KAIROS Canada is a coalition of Canadian churches, church-based agencies, and religious organizations dedicated to promoting human rights, justice, and peace, viable human development, and universal solidarity among the peoples of the Earth. It is a decisive and faithful response to God’s call for respect of the Earth and justice for its peoples.

MIDDLE EAST: WI’AM: THE PALESTINIAN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION CENTER ZOUGHBI AL-ZOUGHBI (PALESTINE)

Zoughbi Al-Zoughbi is the founder and director of Wiam, The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center (Palestine) a trainer and facilitator in conflict mediation, writer, human rights activist and lecturer in interdisciplinary fields of conflict mediation and transformation

Wi’am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center is a grassroots civil society organization based in Bethlehem. In Arabic, “*wi’am*” means “cordial relationships,” and developing relationships is the essence of Wi’am’s mission. It helps resolve disputes within the Palestinian community at the grassroots level by implementing the traditional Arab form of mediation, known as “*Sulha*”, along with other global models of conflict transformation. Wi’am’s programs empower children, youth, women and men, seeking to address the psychological and physiological impacts of long-term, chronic conflict.

AFRICA: ZIMBABWE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (ZCC) MARIA TENDAI DENDERE (ZIMBABWE)

Maria Tendai Dendere is the Director for Humanitarian Services and Diakonia at the Zimbabwe Council of Churches. A leader in global ecumenical efforts, Maria co-chairs the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Diakonia Reference Group, the ACT Alliance Southern Africa Regional Forum, and is an active member of Act Alliance Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) is an accomplished ecumenical movement and an umbrella body of 31 main line churches and parachurch organizations in Zimbabwe. ZCC focuses its efforts on national unity, civic engagement, and humanitarian and development interventions. The ZCC also provides a forum for churches in their common work of leadership development towards liberation, reconciliation, justice, peace, human development and rights.

**LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN: LATIN AMERICAN BIBLICAL UNIVERSITY
(UNIVERSIDAD BIBLICA LATINOAMERICANA – UBL) ELIZABETH COOK (COSTA RICA)**

Elisabeth Cook is the Rector (President) of UBL and professor of Biblical Studies. She has served on the UBL staff since 1990.

The Latin American Biblical University (UBL), is a regional, ecumenical institution dedicated to theological education. Based in Costa Rica, with over 100 years of educational ministry, it is committed to empowering church and community leaders for ministries of transformation in Latin America and the Caribbean through degree and non-degree programs, research and community engagement.

**GLOBAL ECUMENICAL: WORLD COUNCIL OF REFORMED CHURCHES KENNETH MTATA
(SWITZERLAND)**

Kenneth Mtata is Programme Director for Public Witness and Diakonia for the World Council of Churches (WCC) ministries.

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and seeks to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a community of churches on the way to visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ. WCC seeks to advance towards this unity, as Jesus prayed for his followers, "so that the world may believe." (John 17:21). The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is Christian unity. The United Church of Canada is both a member and a partner of WCC.

2S AND LGBTQIA+: BURAKU LIBERATION CENTER (BLC) REINA UENO (JAPAN)

Reina Ueno is the Director of the Buraku Liberation Center of the United Church of Christ in Japan, a member of the National Council of Churches of Japan's Gender Justice Working Group and one of the openly-out Queer ministers in Japan.

The Buraku Liberation Center of the United Church of Christ in Japan works towards the freedom and equality of individuals residing in Buraku communities. The main objective of this center is to provide support and advocate for marginalized groups who have historically faced discrimination, including LGBTQ+ communities. By promoting social justice, BLC aims to uplift and empower those living in these areas through various initiatives and programs.