

Forum to eradicate poverty launched

By Konradus Epa, Jakarta, 24 May 2010

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Indonesian religious leaders have launched a forum to help eradicate poverty in the country.

Buddhist, Catholic, Confucian, Hindu, Muslim and Protestant leaders launched the Interfaith Action for Justice and Poverty Eradication on May 20 in Central Jakarta.

These leaders represent various religious bodies such as the Indonesian Bishops' Conference, Communion of Protestant Churches, Nahdlatul Ulama, the country's largest Muslim organization, and Muhammadiyah, the country's second largest.



Religious leaders pose for a photo after the launch of the forum

“The forum will organize joint actions ... to help eradicate poverty in Indonesia based on humanitarian values,” Abdul Mu’ti, who heads the forum, told UCA News.

Currently, about 40 percent of 230 million people in Indonesia still live below the poverty line.

Mu’ti said religious leaders feel that interreligious efforts have not paid adequate attention to the poor and oppressed.

The forum’s deputy head Father Antonius Benny Susetyo agrees.

“Religious leaders should actualize their faiths by eradicating poverty instead of just talking about it,” said the priest, who is also executive secretary of the Indonesian bishops’ Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

He, however, noted that certain religious groups face difficulty in serving the poor because others charge them with proselytism.

However, Din Syamsuddin from Muhammadiyah believes that religious differences do not pose obstacles. “We must work together in facing poverty, our common enemy,” he asserted.

The forum will start its first training program for facilitators on May 26. Other programs include workshops and national interfaith meetings.