

## **WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT**

### **Report from Berlin Regional Working Meeting:**

**Thursday, 18th February, 2016, at Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe**

#### **Overview**

Representatives of faith-based organisations, religious institutions, secular NGOs, and the public sector met in Berlin in person (and via conference call) to discuss opportunities and challenges for faith engagement in humanitarian action, and to discuss the opportunity of the WHS Special Event on Religion & Humanitarian Action. Many of those present have been actively involved in WHS regional consultations and all have experience of humanitarian partnerships with religious leaders or local faith-based organisations.

After welcoming remarks by Thorsten Göbel of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, brief presentations were made by Jean Duff, Partnership for Faith & Development, and Azza Karam, UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion & Development (UN IATF), regarding the WHS Special Event on Religion & Humanitarian Action and broader faith engagement in the World Humanitarian Summit. Alastair Ager, Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh and Columbia University, briefed participants on the preparation of a series of briefs summarizing the evidence base for faith engagement in humanitarian action, as well as the on-going evidence collation process the JLIF&LC Resilience Learning Hub is leading.

Jean Duff summarized some of the themes from other regional working meetings, including needs for capacity building and integration of local faith actors, challenges in sustainable financing, challenges for international bodies in dealing with highly fragmented faith community,

Azza Karam outlined the management role of the Special Event by the UN IATF, and informed participants that the event was now expected to be one hour in length, formally integrated into the Summit program. UN IATF had forwarded a list of 200 names of religious leaders and leaders of FBOs to the WHS Secretariat with recommendation that they be invited to the Summit and to the Special Event. The UN IATF is coordinating with an Advisory Committee of faith groups on an outcome document and on the development of the program for the event.

Alastair Ager described how the JLIF&LC Resilience Learning Hub, together with the JLIF&LC Peace and Conflict Hub is in the process of collating the evidence on faith activity and contribution to humanitarian response, and is preparing five policy briefs relating to the five core responsibilities laid out in the UN Secretary General's report "One Humanity, Shared Responsibilities". The work is being funded by JLIF&LC and by the Henry J. Luce Foundation. The goal is to make information about faith based contributions, including the many valuable submissions from FBOs to the WHS consultation process, accessible to participants in the Summit. Additionally the policy briefs aim to be a useful resource beyond the Summit to policy makers and practitioners in support of great faith engagement in humanitarian response. Dr. Ager welcomed contributions from those present.

Jean Duff noted that the JLIF&LC has applied on behalf of a variety of faith-based partners to host at the WHS Summit a side event on evidence for religious and faith response to humanitarian needs at which a case study on religious contributions to peace-making in the Central African Republic, and the key messages from the 5 evidence briefs would be presented.

Participants in the Working Meeting identified key issues for discussion at the WHS, as well as highlighted challenges and risks for such an agenda.

### Key issues, perspectives, & challenges raised by Berlin participants:

- Discussion regarding the expectations of participants from the religious community during the Summit
- Regret that the current plan for the Summit does not allow space for in-depth discussion regarding the capacities and contributions of the religious sector and the barriers to their uptake
- Concerns raised that local community-based faith actors and networks are inadequately incorporated into decision-making and not included in funding. Imbalance was noted between people of faith coming from outside and people of faith suffering from the disaster; outsiders often dictate strategy, control funding, fail to include local leaders, and leave without sustainable funding mechanisms in place
- The role of religious organizations in responding to the Ebola crisis is illustrative of the power of religious actors to communicate at the local level because of the trust with which they are regarded by the community.
- Religious communities are active in responding to humanitarian needs with or without international aid. Too often, the relationship between local faith and secular humanitarian actors is framed not in dialogue, but more in competition or even adversarial relations. The importance of equal footing of faith and secular actors was discussed.
- The importance was discussed of joint commitments to action by both governments and international aid bodies and the faith community with the necessity of a balance and reciprocity of commitment being underscored by participants in the Working Meeting. Greater engagement of FBOs especially local networks in humanitarian response requires active collaboration between public sector and faith bodies.
- Participants in the Working meeting expressed an interest in contributing information to the evidence collation process, especially relating to engagement of local faith networks in humanitarian response. Dr. Ager welcomed this and encouraged participants to share information and join the JLIF&LC Resilience Learning Hub
- A note of caution was raised regarding the sudden change in interest in partnership with religious bodies on the part the German government...participants wanted to be sure this is not a fad. Others noted longstanding interest and engagement with faith based partners by UN, World Bank, and governments, and noted increased awareness at global level of contributions of religious actors.

### Recommendations for WHS GRF agenda, format, and outputs

- Better communication of FBO capacities, and in particular their contributions to strengthening resilience in vulnerable communities
- Better communicate role of Local Faith communities as trusted leaders in whom local community members have confidence, with a view to improved engagement and resourcing of these networks.
- Build the capacity of local communities independently of external partners. Voice of local communities must be heard at the WHS Religion Special Event
- Promote recognition of key role of religious leaders in peace-making
- Look for opportunities to intensify dialogue between religious and secular partners as a follow on from the Summit

## Next Steps

- Dr. Karam noted that a Roundtable on Faith-based Financing for development is being planned
- Jean Duff would prepare summary of Berlin Working Meeting and circulate the Summary to the UN IATF, the Advisory Council, along with a link to the reports from the other Regional Working Meetings
- Participants wishing to contribute information including case studies, mapping and other evidence to the evidence collation process, should contact Alastair Ager at [AAger@qmu.ac.uk](mailto:AAger@qmu.ac.uk)

## Annex 1

### Meeting Participants

Dr. Alastair Ager	Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
Muhtari Aminu-Kano	Islamic Relief
Dr. Milton Amayun	International Care Ministries, Manila
Gweneth Berge	Norwegian Church Aid
Dr. Jürgen Clemens	Malteser International
Harry Donsbach	World Vision Deutschland e.V.
Jean Duff	Partnership for Faith & Development
Matthew Frost	Tearfund
Dr. Thorsten Göbel	Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
Michael Hansmann	Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
Andrea Hitzemann	Caritas International
Elisabeth Jeglitzka	Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
Dr. Azza Karam	UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Rel. & Dev.
Katherine Marshall	Georgetown University, Washington D.C.
Peter Nitschke	International Care Ministries, Manila
Jussi Ojala	Finn Church Aid
Daniela Simm	Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
Corrie van der Ven	ICCO Cooperation
Msgr Robert Vitillo	Caritas Internationalis
Dionne Gravesande	Christian Aid, by telephone
Dr. Martin Quack	By telephone

## Annex 2

### Agenda

Opening Remarks	Dr. Thorsten Göbel, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
Introduction to Multi-Faith Engagement & Collaboration for the World Humanitarian Summit	Jean Duff, Partnership for Faith & Development
Introduction to the WHS Special Event on Religion & Humanitarian Action	Dr. Azza Karam, UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion & Development
Evidence base for faith groups in humanitarian action	Dr. Alastair Ager, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh & Columbia University
Discussion, Q&A	