

Religious Resourcing for Humanitarian Efforts:

Highlights from a Policy Roundtable in Preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS)

ROUNDTABLE CO-HOSTED BY:

THE UN INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE FOR ENGAGING WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS,

with

The UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND - UNFPA

THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS – UN OCHA

THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ADVISER ON THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE



The Rationale

In his address at the Vatican on February 22, UN OCHA Undersecretary-General O'Brien noted the "unique relationship that faith-based groups have built with communities, which makes them well-equipped to contribute to the shifts required to put vulnerable people at the centre of global decision-making."

The Economist estimated that even in the United States itself, in reference to the Catholic Church in particular:

[A]nnual spending by the church and entities owned by the church was around \$170 billion in 2010.... We think 57% of this goes on health-care networks, followed by 28% on colleges, with parish and diocesan day-to-day operations accounting for just 6% and national charitable activities just 2.7%

While this data applies to only one major religious institution in a developed country context, it is not difficult to imagine how significant the data would be if applied to every religious institutions, in poorer developing country contexts where government run social services already suffer from the struggle to reach major urban populations. The challenges are exacerbated in harder to reach communities in rural areas.

All this would be significant in 'normal' contexts. In humanitarian crises (whether natural or conflict-based), when the central governments struggle to reach vulnerable populations in situations of danger and desperate need, the role of faith-based entities (not just religious institutions but also faith-based NGOs (FBOs), many of whom deliver significant amounts of services to the needy) becomes even more pronounced.

The Secretary General's Report highlights 5 core responsibilities:

- Global leadership to prevent and end conflict;
- Upholding the norms that safeguard humanity;
- Leaving no one behind;
- Changing people's lives – from delivering aid to ending need; and
- Investing in humanity.

Each of these relates, in diverse ways and significance, to the work of religious leaders and faith-based organizations in particular – especially given they are the closest (and often part of) the local communities themselves. The latter core responsibility in particular, is perhaps most relevant. Articulated thus:

Accepting and acting upon our shared responsibilities for humanity requires political, institutional and financial investment. As a shift is needed from funding to financing that invests in local capacities, is risk-informed, invests in fragile situations and incentivizes collective outcomes. We must also reduce the funding gap for humanitarian needs.

As also noted by UN Secretary General Stephen O'Brien: "Faith-based groups already mobilize resources on a massive scale in response to crises - now we must identify innovative ways to extend this to reducing vulnerability and shoring up resilience."

It is precisely these capacities to mobilize resources (human, financial, social and even political), that require better appreciation and understanding – both among the faith-based communities themselves, as well as among the wider developmental and humanitarian communities. Particularly in times of diminishing Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) on one hand, and a rise in anticipated humanitarian disasters (due to diverse factors including climate change, compromised financial systems and increasing intra and

inter-state conflicts) on the other, it behooves the international community to be better informed as to innovative means of mobilizing resources.

To that end, and with a view towards the World Humanitarian Summit in May, UNFPA, in its capacity as the Coordinator of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations, hosted an informal policy roundtable.

The invitees to this policy roundtable included

1. UN development and humanitarian specialized agencies as well as select Secretariat offices as well as the World Bank;
2. Bilateral donors/governments and a Coordinating entity (International Partnership of Religions for Development);
3. Major international faith-based organizations who partner with the UN in development and humanitarian engagement at the policy making as well as the practical service delivery levels; and

The objectives of this roundtable were to level the playing field of knowledge between these different faith-based international actors as to the following questions:

1. *How do different religious NGOs identify and 'raise' or mobilize resources (human, financial and social) for their work – where these resources are not donor/government funded in particular?*
2. *What are some of the strengths of their diverse approaches which could be instructive for the UN system especially, but also for bilateral donors and NGO partners?*
3. *What are some of the challenges of their resource mobilization approaches – for FBOs as well as for the UN system?*
4. *What are the concrete recommendations for partnerships which are needed to be communicated to all level of policy makers (within the UN system and FBOs, NGOs as well as the private sector), in order to secure better partnerships to build on the strengths, and mitigate against the challenges?*

I – DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS¹

Identified Sources and Means of funding

- Individual giving;
- Contributions from foundations; corporate donors (including pharmaceuticals) and donations received through appeals (CMMB)
- Government grants – including bilateral donors;
- Grants received from UN and other organisations when FBOs act as implementing partners (CRS, Islamic Relief)
- Campaigns on specific issues, e.g. to support refugees or in response to humanitarian crisis/disaster (World Vision);
- Private fundraising (including annual collection in almost all Catholic parishes - Catholic Relief Services/CRS as well as donations by private citizens Tzu Chi);
- Contributions from member churches (WCC and Episcopalians);
- Special collections during crises;
- Through Islamic tradition of endowments, to be used to support community development (schools, hospitals, etc.) (Islamic Relief)
- Through wealth tax on Muslims (2.5%) of savings, which generates an estimated \$600 billion annually. Islamic Relief is one organization that benefits, among others. Can be used for a variety of causes, including peace building/conflict resolution; slavery – human trafficking; support to vulnerable communities.
- Legacy giving, bequests (Islamic Relief, American Jewish Committee -AJC). AJC noted that much of the organisation’s funds come from bequests, which go to organisations that meet specific needs.

The unique positioning of FBOs - given their enormous cache of private, untied resources, their volunteer staff human resources and familiarity/longevity in communities – make them not only important to humanitarian response but more likely rather indispensable, particularly in light of the dire funding prospects of INGOs, multilateral and bilateral donors/implementer community. Juxtaposing the resources

¹ Special thanks to Gillian Kitley, Clare Sneed, Dean Pallant, William O’Keefe and Maha Akhtar for sharing their notes towards this. This is not a comprehensive review by any means, but the full presentations and Papers shared by the participants can be accessed here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B3QhycXoPICaWVNvemxpTzdudUE>

for crisis raised through international appeals vs. those that can be raised (from private funders) by FBOs is hugely telling and suggestive of the influence and criticality of FBOs to overall humanitarian system.

Faith based NGOs are not a monolith, and the diversity among them is generally positive. There was discussion as to whether they may benefit from a coherent body or architecture through which they engage with and message the larger Humanitarian Assistance (HA) community/system. Currently, the 'faith-based' humanitarian scene tends to be uncoordinated as such, and the general lack of coherence may render it easier to dismiss or overlook their efforts, or even take them for granted - given their proximity to national communities particularly in the face of a crisis when system coherence is very much needed.

The deep legacy and experience working within SPHERE minimum standards (indeed, drafting them) for many decades, and within the UN cluster system should also be amplified in all for a around, up to and at the WHS. The perception (or lack of knowledge) of FBOs as not working within SPHERE and international standards of impartiality etc. should be challenged and rectified.

Meanwhile, evidence of the diverse roles and contributions of faith-based entities and some best practices are integrated

Issues that could also mention from benefitting at the WHS include the gulf between the major international FBOs and more localized ones, as well as an intentionality to reference women's-specific needs, the proven economic and social sense in attending to these, as well as to highlight the benefits to community and nations of gender equality, together with the need to ensure women's leadership and engagement (as raised at the end of the meeting). Both of these issues are also considered challenges of FBO engagement - in terms of being seen as like-minded players by the secular organizations.

Especially for smaller and locally rooted faith-based NGOs, there are capacity building and service delivery challenges which can constitute deficits, so there is a call for funding their capacity building needs both by the larger FBOs, but also through the UN's own efforts in countries.

A question was raised as to how to make capacity building and local empowerment (through cash transfers) a core principle and value? Noted here the Buddhist Tzu Chi approach based on local procurements and engaging local businesses in humanitarian donation/delivery – started out as housewives in China donating 2 cents a day to a multi-million dollar international entity – speaks to cost effective and locally owned means of empowering the very same recipients of humanitarian support (though risks should also be assessed).

The value of volunteer time and human resources /free labor, is a tremendous resource that FBOs are uniquely positioned to provide, and is not sufficiently acknowledged by global actors;

Some FBOs asked if the UN is really fit for purpose and what is the role of organizations like theirs to help the UN be fit for purpose (some said they wanted to see the UN to be fit for 'action').

Some Strengths of faith-based organizations (FBO)/faith-based NGO approaches

- ✚ Most FBOs are unique in that *they have both a value-based religious approach and adhere to SPHERE – Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*¹.
- ✚ *They are often closely tied to – if not generically part of - grassroots communities*, which are often inter-connected, have inter-faith initiatives and can therefore identify and work towards common problems.
- ✚ As the experience of the Salvation Army (SA), among others, demonstrates, there is a focus on training local people to respond to needs. While the is very structured, it also encourages and enables local people to respond immediately to their local situation using local resources. External funds and support are usually a second line support. *Local people are thus both mobilised and enabled to raise their own resources.*
- ✚ Because all major international FBOs often have *a strong reputation for value based service delivery* and some of the larger ones have a track record of delivery as well as results based management, many bilateral donors tend to send money when there is need.
- ✚ *Ability to combine resources with other FBOs and civil society organizations* and initiatives, increases capacity. Moreover, there is a value of FBOs partnering with other faith based and secular agencies to address particular issues (e.g. statelessness).
- ✚ There is a *value of partnering with local churches and religious institutions* which are the first respondents and caretakers of communities during crisis and can be service deliverers in addition to the usual religious and spiritual services they deliver.
- ✚ As with other NGOs, *some FBOs are able to focus on one particular issue* that resonates with potential donors.
- ✚ While raising resources, *FBOs are both mobilizing active and needed support and building political will for advocacy at political levels.*
- ✚ There is value of *FBO's flexibility in how to use funds*, rendering more feasible the possibility that they can be channeled according to greatest need, and used to develop creative new approaches and to build long term capacity of local partners.
- ✚ FBOs *have some of the oldest and largest youth networks* albeit not always acknowledged by the UN. This positions the FBOs to be able to actively involve youth who are normally forgotten, left out, and isolated in humanitarian settings, and providing them with opportunities for involvement.
- ✚ The *inclusion of especially vulnerable populations is a key approach of most FBOs in line with putting people at the center and addressing their needs.* Knowing a community's needs is very important to be effective to the community members. Examples of populations referenced include the Druze community in danger of Shi'a proselytization as well as persecuted Muslims in Rakhine State, Myanmar and Central African Republic.

Muslim FBOs and Specific Challenges

The Islamic model provides financial and institutional sustainability, local accountability and influence. The model is built on the belief in fulfilling duties to communities, both local and elsewhere and on the tradition that beneficiaries have a right to your wealth – it is not a question of charity, but rather an obligation.

The structural barriers to operations faced by NGOs that Muslim Charities discussed and relating to Foreign Terrorist Financing restrictions is something that must be tackled at the WHS by the UN and major donor countries. Neither governments nor the UN can afford to vilify and undercut local organizations, especially given that they are the only ones capable of delivering in high-volatility areas. NB: data point shared that 75% of crises in the last 15 years took place in Muslim-majority contexts, so Muslim fundraising and local organisations are critical to responses.

Specific challenges include:

- The increased number of regulatory policies, legislations and donor requirements are affecting Muslim charities and their capacity to receive contributions;
- Lengthy due diligence processes (of both givers and recipients) limit their ability to work in specific areas or to work with ‘prescribed’ groups
- Donations are often anonymous and this puts charities under risk e.g., to be associated with terrorist groups, which affects their reputation;
- Increased tensions between donors (including Banks) and charities given that risks are now placed solely on their shoulders;
- Media antagonism to such charities can/continue to be a significant challenge facing FBOs especially Muslim ones;
- Internal controls are needed and adhered to, but it is important to emphasize the collateral costs which the implementation of these controls can have, in terms of the trade-off with actually reaching and serving those in need.

The delineation between Humanitarian work, Development and Peace-building

For FBOs (as well as for communities themselves), these bureaucratic distinctions between what constitutes humanitarian work, development and peacebuilding are not as stark or real both conceptually and operationally, and this is increasingly the new reality of working in failed states. Humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding objectives are mutually dependent and intertwined. This goes against neutrality principles (according to international standards of keeping politics out aid, but is simply the reality of many of these contexts- and Syria demonstrates that.

In terms of parsing out resources and efforts, crisis response is not a 6 month or 12 month proposition, but in fact requires a longer term investment. A lesson learned in Haiti, but how do we take that newly understood reality to the WHS and push for reforms that enable more voice for FBOs, and more flexibility with funding mechanisms to enable longer term investments, higher ‘risk’ investments (like cash transfers, which FBOs can do and are doing unlike federally funded NGOs which are pushed to do more in-kind).

II - RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FBOs to the UN

WIDEN/DEEPEN KNOWLEDGE

- Encourage greater literacy about the intersections of religion with developmental and humanitarian issues and engagement, opening the door to greater recognition of the types of faith groups, faith-based “assets” and faith-inspired models of resource mobilization, partnership and service delivery. Build on existing resource and knowledge bases and seek to map them (see side bar).
- Seek to compile and segregate data sources on FBO’s own financing capabilities in situations of humanitarian need, so that FBO contributions can/may be better identified. Data regarding the financing/fund raising capabilities of FBOs is absolutely critical to amplify for the donor and multilateral community. While some of this data is available, it has yet to be compiled -- and its contents checked for veracity – especially regarding non-Western-based FBOs.

STREAMLINE APPROACH

- Shift to area-based flexible approach for coordinating disaster response from current sector-based cluster system. Religious groups especially see people in the context of integral human development; by very nature being complex, multi-sectoral beings. Individual, family, and community needs do not fit in neat sectoral buckets and faith groups seek to respond more holistically and not just sector by sector. Consequently, assessments, planning, and implementation are better organized around specific locations, and not sectors.
- Make the UN and country pooled funds more streamlined, available and accessible to FBOs (including local). Faith groups, especially local ones, need to be able to access UN funding streams in emergencies so their work can be adequately, fairly, and quickly resourced. Seek to leverage UN funds by partnering with FBOs.
- Develop and implement a common, streamlined partnership framework across UN agencies so FBOs, especially local ones, can partner effectively and efficiently, while maintaining their respective roles. The plethora of complex application and reporting requirements of all the UN agencies (as well as other donors) is a barrier to entry for many FBOs, especially many smaller yet capable ones that meet critical human needs but lack this specific capacity.
- Consider Muslim FBOs as investment opportunities, which both the UN and other FBOs can have to consider the opportunity to engage with and to shape their long-term trajectory.
- Enable more opportunities for cross-sector cooperation and coordination for Muslim FBOs and support them without taking away from their value added of being able to operate between blurred lines.
- Reframe the question “what can we learn from FBOs” to “how can we support the work they are doing”.

INCLUDE AND ENGAGE FBOs

- Engage in pre-disaster cooperation/collaboration with FBOs focusing on shared goals of peace, risk reduction, resilience, and growth for the development of relationships with faith communities. Integrate faith groups in the planning and pre-positioning of relief items and delineation of zones of distribution; complement FBOs asset of presence with government/UN asset of logistical supports, while seeking to provide FBOs with some means of operating freedom.
- Engage in pre-disaster technical collaborations to accompany faith groups in building capacity, meeting gaps, modeling professional practices/principles, and recognize faith organizations in national risk reduction efforts and preparedness plans.
- Provide – globally - the opportunity for faith-based voices in the case referral chain and cluster response mechanisms.
- Invite/integrate faith groups in to national dialogues and networks (pre-disaster and during responses), thus increasing the demand for the religious communities' (church and other similar institutions') professional voice, i.e., pulling faith-based partners into the *practice* of documentation and visibility reporting.

FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION

- Work with FBOs to also actively target and (re)build the **communication infrastructure** in humanitarian contexts, including
- Develop community-level emergency communication plans;
- Develop communication plans for actors that involve local and community media, and that entail listening, not just disseminate information;
- Enable community media to become communication hubs during emergencies.



Mapping Humanitarian Engagement by FBOs –available resources

NB: Many faith-based actors map humanitarian activities through collaborations with Interaction. This might be an interesting model to build a more focused enterprise of mapping religious assets. (<https://www.ngoaidmap.org/>)

The Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities is compiling Evidence Briefs of FBO engagement (www.jlilfc.org)

The International Partnership of Religions for Sustainable Development (PaRD) is compiling best practices (<http://www.partner-religion-development.org/>)

The Episcopal Church also increasingly does online mapping of assets (infrastructure and ministries) in order to help facilitate cooperation and synergies across the ministries. The expectation is to expand this work to include partners across the Anglican Communion in the next few years, including Latin America, Africa and Asia (<http://episcopalassetmap.org>)

How can the UN engage better generally?

- Continue to leverage unique **convening power**, but do not ask FBOs, Religious Leaders or community based religious actors to become 'more like the UN' or other actors;
- Continue to provide **logistical coordination** support in humanitarian contexts - but be more deliberate about identifying and including faith-based community actors and ensure the extension of due inclusiveness and civility afforded other humanitarian actors;
- **Demystify** the UN system and its bureaucracy to faith-based partners at the global, regional and national levels, and with a view to doing so particularly in humanitarian contexts;

The UN should also:

- a. Be explicit about its desire to invest in this crucial sector, and why it is doing so.
- b. Seek to embrace the selflessness valued of its own FBO partners.
- c. Clarify and share patterns of optimal coordination between FBOs and governments, and what are the needs to realize those. This may help reduce anxiety by some FBOs as regards being coopted by government actors, or losing credibility with at-risk communities.
- d. Be explicit about what it needs.

ANNEX I – BACKGROUND PAPER

BACKGROUND PAPER: KEY Messages from the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Finance

Religious Resourcing for Humanitarian Work Policy Roundtable
March 29, 2016²

Pope Benedict XVI said during his visit to the United Kingdom, “[W]here human lives are concerned, time is always short: yet the world has witnessed the vast resources that governments can draw upon to rescue financial institutions deemed ‘too big to fail’. Surely the integral human development of the world’s peoples is no less important: here is an enterprise, worthy of the world’s attention that is truly ‘too big to fail’.” It was from these words that we drew inspiration to call the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Finance’s report “Too important to fail”.

With global stability threatened by the steady increase in the number of conflicts and with natural disasters becoming more frequent and more severe, we recognise and applaud the generosity of all those who give their support to 125 million people who desperately require humanitarian assistance.

We recognize that three-quarters of the humanitarian needs today are the result of man-made conflicts.

The greatest humanitarian solution on the planet is the end of today’s wars and the prevention of future conflicts. Wars break out for many reasons: injustice, deprivation, greed and the unbridled pursuit of gain, the pathological pursuit of power, distrust across the lines of culture, religion, class and race.

Yet all these reasons can be corrected with honesty, love, mutual dialogue, restraint, and the pursuit of international law and justice. All these can provide a solution. Ending wars saves lives, avoids humanitarian crises, obviates mass refugee movements and saves money. Ending wars is without question the least costly and most practical form of humanitarian assistance available in the world.

The remaining quarter of current humanitarian needs arise from natural disasters, which in turn reflect the combination of rising environmental crises combined with social exclusion. The poor and excluded are inevitably the first to suffer from extreme environmental events such as famines, floods, and extreme storms. As with conflict-related humanitarian crises, prevention is also the best remedy for environmental-related crises. This is why the recent agreement in Paris on climate change is essentially a humanitarian triumph. The Paris Agreement, if properly implemented, will spare humanity from many untold risks of climate-related disasters in the future.

While foresight and prevention are humanity’s most powerful humanitarian responses, we recognise that we must also come to the assistance of those in dire need when prevention fails and conflict or extreme natural disasters occur.

² By David Sharrock -Senior Humanitarian Affairs Officer/Principal Writer, Secretariat of the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Wisdom and justice therefore require the combination of prevention – especially of wars and human-caused climate change – and a rapid, adequate and just response to those in need when crises nonetheless occur.

In his recent Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls upon us to embrace a global ethic of justice, mercy and peace, especially towards the excluded, the marginalized and "the least of our brothers and sisters". And he calls on us to embrace a common plan for our common home. Pope Francis's words speak to us urgently about the need to prevent humanitarian crises and to respond to them when they occur. He calls on us to be not only just but also practical, taking actions and steps that can make a difference now to those who most urgently need our help.

In February in the Vatican City we took the opportunity of the meeting, "Reaffirming global solidarity, restoring humanity", to recommit ourselves to the most basic principle of humanity shared by all religions and all humanitarian organisations: to treat other people as we would have them treat us.

And we pledged to jointly look for innovative solutions to address the challenges of a world in crisis through mobilising all available resources to defend the identity, freedom and dignity of all human beings.

The United Nations Security Council must play its role by showing global leadership in a consensus to end the wars and the suffering that is caused by all the ongoing conflicts. Jesus declared, "Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God". All of humanity can embrace this message.

The presence of so many world religious leaders, heads of humanitarian agencies and major donors at the Vatican City meeting was evidence of our determination that every effort should be made to meet global humanitarian needs.

The soul of humanitarianism and the current work of secular humanitarian organisations is very often inspired by the ethos of religion, which has inspired a culture of sustainable development. Our faiths, although diverse, teach us the importance of mercy and compassion, and of our common shared humanity.

In a world as wealthy as ours there is a moral imperative to stop the wars, to prevent conflict and to help the poor and the stricken. No human being should be left behind for insufficient resources to lift each and every individual out of poverty and suffering.

This is not just a collective responsibility on the part of the rich and the powerful – although they shoulder a greater duty to respond. Each and every person can play his or her role in reducing human suffering and misery. With the World Humanitarian Summit approaching, we call for that work to begin today.

Pope Benedict XVI said during his visit to the United Kingdom, "Where human lives are concerned, time is always short: yet the world has witnessed the vast resources that governments can draw upon to rescue financial institutions deemed 'too big to fail'. Surely the integral human development of the world's peoples is no less important: here is an enterprise, worthy of the world's attention that is truly 'too big to fail'." It was from these words that we drew inspiration to call the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Finance's report "Too important to fail".

ANNEX 2 – ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED

American Jewish Committee (AJC)
Bahá'í International Community (BIC)
Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
Caritas Internationalis (CI)
Catholic Medical Missions Board (CMMB)
Center on International Cooperation (CIC)
Church of Latter Day Saints – Office of the UN (LDS)
Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD)
Georgia State Tech University
German International Development Cooperation –GIZ (with) the International Partnerships of Religion for Sustainable Development (PaRD)
Islamic Relief USA (IR-USA)
The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
Mission of Canada to the UN (Global Affairs Canada)
Mission of Sweden to the UN
Muslim Charities Forum, UK
Network of Religious Leaders and Peacemakers
Partnerships for Faith and Development (PfD)
Pusama Buddhist Organization
Religions for Peace (RfP)
Salvation Army International Headquarters
Sovereign Order of Malta
Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation
United Religions Initiative (URI)
World Association for Christian Communication
World Council of Churches (WCC)
World Evangelical Alliance (WEA)
World Vision International (WV)
UN Office of the Special Advisor to the Secretary-General for the SDGs
UN Office of the Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Prevention of Genocide
UNDP
UNFPA
UNICEF
UNOCHA
UN Women