**JLI Refugee and Forced Migration Hub**

**Outline for new Scoping Survey**

**The Roles of Local Faith Communities in Supporting Displaced People**

**Introduction**

With an overburdened and underfunded humanitarian system in flux as the world faces the highest levels of displacement ever recorded - over 65 million people in 2015 - the international community is increasingly committed to supporting local responses to displacement. In 2016 the World Humanitarian Summit resulted in the Charter4Change and a renewed call for meaningful support for the ‘localisation of humanitarian aid’ agenda. Building on the UNHCR’s work following the *High Commissioner’s* *Dialogue on Faith and Protection* in December 2012, this includes a recognition of the actual and potential roles of local faith communities in offering protection, solidarity and assistance to displaced people throughout different stages and spaces of their journeys.

On the one hand, it is increasingly recognised that faith-based actors have historically played a fundamental role in welcoming and supporting displaced people – whether in material terms, through financial support and providing shelter, or through the provision of spiritual support and invoking religious traditions of accompaniment. On the other hand, however, a number of challenges remain to establishing partnerships with LFCs. These include:

* a lack of evidence regarding the impact of LFCs on supporting displaced people on individual, familial and community levels;
* a lack of trust, knowledge and capacity for such engagement; and
* the need for clear, implementable actions to improve partnership and the effectiveness of humanitarian response to displaced people.

Now, more than ever, we need evidence to help policy-makers and practitioners better understand the roles that faith-based actors already play, and have the potential to play, in supporting refugees and forced migrants.

This Scoping Survey by the new Refugees and Forced Migration Hub of the Joint Learning Initiative (JLI) on Faith and Local Communities seeks to understand the role of LFCs in providing assistance, solidarity and protection to refugees and IDPs, and to provide evidence-based recommendations to overcome the challenges to full engagement with LFCs.

In particular, there remains a lack of substantial evidence to indicate:

* the multiple roles that faith-based actors play in responding to the needs of forced migrants across different phases and spaces of displacement, including urban protracted displacement;
* what the strengths and weaknesses of such local support mechanisms are;
* the extent to which such mechanisms are integrated into international and national response systems; and
* how faith-based actors could be better supported in their work.

The Survey will investigate the evidence for LFC contribution to supporting displaced people under the guidance of the JLI Refugees and Forced Migration Hub, membership of which is made up of over 70 practitioners, academics and policymakers who are experts in refugees, displacement and faith communities.

**Building an improved evidence base on the impact of LFCs in supporting refugees**

The Scoping Survey will build on an existing synthesis of evidence compiled by the JLI[[1]](#footnote-1) and summarized in the 2016 *JLI Refugee and Forced Migration Learning Hub Policy Note*.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Cognizant of both the **localization of humanitarianism agenda** and the overwhelming trend of **urban protracted displacement in the global South**, and informed by the **priority themes identified by the members of the JLI Refugee and Forced Migration Hub** between July-Nov 2016, the survey will begin with mapping existing evidence relevant to the impact of LFCs on refugees and other displaced people through:

* an extensive literature review of academic and policy documents (Dec 16 – Apr 17),
* written contributions and case-studies submitted by partner humanitarian organisations (both secular and faith-based) and key policy-makers (Jan – Mar 2017), and
* semi-structured interviews conducted with circa 20 practitioners, policy-makers and faith leaders based in the global South (Feb – Mar 2017).

It will also be informed by an expanding number of research projects which are partnered with the JLI Refugee and Forced Migration Hub:

* *Local community experiences of and responses to displacement from Syria: Views from Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey* (UCL, Queen Margaret University, Durham and UEA: 2016-2020)
* *Role of Faith Networks in Migration and Refugee Advocacy and Support* (UK-focus) (Migrant Exchange: 2016-2018)
* *Religious Friendship and Refugee Integration* (UK-focus) (Warwick and Nottingham - TBC)

The literature review, written contributions and interviews will aim, *inter alia*, to answer the following questions, with regards to refugees, IDPs, and other groups of forced migrants as relevant:

* What evidence exists of faith-based initiatives to support displaced people having had a positive impact on protection outcomes?
* To what extent, and how, are local faith communities and religious leaders promoting displaced people’s protection and resilience?
* How do the theological reflections of local faith communities on issues around forced migration, hospitality and solidarity influence their approaches?
* How effective are current partnerships and relationships between faith communities and the mainstream humanitarian architecture/formal protection mechanisms?
* What lessons can be drawn from the ways that specific faith groups/communities interact with displaced people?

To answer these and other questions, the scoping research will identify evidence (*and* further priority policy questions) with regards to topics including:

* The roles of faith and faith-based actors in the emergency phase of processes of mass displacement, including with regards to the provision of:
  + Basic services
  + Psychosocial support
  + Spiritual support
* Tracing the roles of faith and faith-based actors throughout different stages of refugees/IDPs’ journeys:
  + Prior to departure
  + Departure
  + Transit
  + Involuntary immobility and ‘stuckedness’
  + Arrival/‘reception’
  + Waiting
  + Return and re-integration
  + Non-arrival (dignity in/after death)
* Tracing the roles of faith and faith-based actors in/across different spaces of refugees/IDPs’ journeys
  + Borders
  + Camps
  + Local neighbourhoods/towns/cities
  + Religious buildings (spaces of inclusion and protection, and/or exclusion and discrimination)
  + Transit spaces (shelter, food, spiritual support)
  + ‘Reception’ accommodation
  + Detention and deportation centres and prisons
  + Country of origin/return
* Tracing the roles of faith and faith-based actors during displaced people’s encounters with different state and non-state actors during their journeys:
  + Border and security officials
  + Smugglers and traffickers
  + Immigration officers
  + Detention system
  + Key actors in the Refugee Status Determination process
  + Local communities (hostile and hospitable)
  + Media
  + Deportation system
  + Country of origin/return
* Tracing the roles *and impact* of faith and faith-based actors in advocacy and lobbying activities in support of/in solidarity with refugees and other displaced people
  + Friendship, witness, and accompanying refugees
  + Engagement with media, policy-makers and legislation, incl:
    - Refugee rights
    - Upholding dignity and humanity of refugees
    - Birth registration
  + Potential to mobilise the development and maintenance of ‘welcoming communities’ and ‘communities of welcome’
* Identifying durable solutions for refugees, IDPs and stateless people
  + Resettlement – including safe passage programmes
  + Integration (housing, health, social, spiritual support)
  + Return (voluntary/involuntary)
  + Conflict resolution, post-conflict transitions

The search for evidence will include a particular focus on the ways in which local responses are related to gender; and processes of inclusion and exclusion including on the basis of ethnicity, religious identity, sexuality and gender identity, political beliefs, etc.

The precise topics will evolve/expand/be refined through the iterative search process.

Two Scoping Reports, Annotated Bibliographies, and related Policy Notes will be produced on the basis of the research. These will be collaboratively authored by members of the JLI Refugee and Forced Migration Hub, under the editorial guidance of the Hub Co-Chairs.

1. **LFC Responses in/to Urban Protracted Displacement**

* This Scoping Report will document the evidence about the roles played by LFCs in supporting protracted urban refugees and IDPs across the global South, purposefully seeking out case-studies from a wide range of geopolitical contexts.
* It will be guided by the need to provide evidence to promote a more meaningful engagement with LFCs within the context of the localization of aid agenda.
* It will document the strengths and weaknesses of such local support mechanisms and the extent to which such mechanisms are integrated into international and national response systems.
* It will aim to identify emerging best practice for LFC/FBO partnerships in contexts of urban protracted displacement.
* It will conclude with Recommendations of how faith-based actors could be better supported in their work in contexts of urban protracted displacement.
* It will be completed for presentation at the October 2017 meeting on *Localizing Response to Humanitarian Need: The Role of Religious and Faith-Based Organizations* and JLI Board Meeting and include key summaries of evidence.
* A 2- or 4-page Policy Note will be produced following discussion at the October 2017 Meeting, for dissemination in Nov/Dec 2017 and for repackaging for key talking points and presentation.

1. **The Roles of Faith and of Faith-Based Actors in Responding to the Needs of Forced Migrants across Different Phases and Spaces of Displacement.**

* This Scoping Report will document both the significance of faith for forced migrants in different phases and spaces of displacement, and evidence about the multiple roles played by LFCs in supporting (and/or undermining/rejecting) displaced people across different phases and spaces of displacement across the global South *and* the global North.
* It will document the strengths and weaknesses of such local support mechanisms and the extent to which such mechanisms are integrated into international and national response systems.
* It will aim to identify emerging best practice for LFC/FBO partnerships in different phases and spaces of displacement.
* It will conclude with recommendations of how faith-based actors could be better supported in their work in different phases and spaces of displacement across the global North and the global South.
* It will be completed in Spring 2018.
* On the basis of the report, a series of 5-8 succinct thematic Policy Notes will be produced in 2017-2019 to present evidence and key recommendations in a digestible fashion to key audiences in policy and practice. One Policy Note will draw out key points and recommendations that may be applicable to localized responses to humanitarian situations more broadly, beyond the specificity of displacement scenarios discussed in the report.

In collaboration with the ‘Refugee Hosts’ research project, 2019/2020 the JLI Refugee and Forced Migration Hub will also develop a *Religious Literacy Handbook* for use by policy-makers and practitioners working in this field, including examples both from the scoping research and from primary data collected as part of the research project.

**Budget:**

* **Research Assistance** (JLI is committed to fully funding this)
* **Publication Preparation**
  + Typesetting Reports and Policy Notes = EFQ can contribute c/o her UCL allowance
  + Printing =?
  + ? Translation into different languages? =?

**Annex 1: Summary of What We Know and What We Don’t Know (synthesis from *JLI R&FM Hub Policy Note*)**

**What we know:**

* Local Faith Communities (LFCs) are often the first responders to refugees and IDPs due to their presence and reach within communities.
* The social capital of many LFCs enables them to mobilise human and financial resources relatively quickly from within displaced communities and from those that host them.
* Religious buildings are used to store and distribute aid, as information hubs, and for shelter and protection.
* Engagement with LFCs may facilitate a more holistic understanding of need.
* LFCs can help to build cross-community and cross-border networks that ease integration (and re- integration) in contexts of displacement.
* Religious groups support refugees to claim their rights.
* Individuals hold beliefs that help them to recover from or manage adversity.
* LFCs are uniquely positioned to engage with “controversial” issues.

**What we don’t know:**

* What role does faith play in the lives of refugees and IDPs in different stages of displacement?
* To what extent do religious identity, values and practice provide psychosocial support and promote resilience amongst refugees at all stages of their journeys and throughout all processes of displacement?
* How inclusive are religious buildings and LFCs in providing sanctuary for those of all faiths and none?
* How do faith leaders and religious norms provide support to refugees and IDPs?
* What is the impact of faith leaders who intervene in public debates about refugees and IDPs?
* What is the role of gender in faith-based responses to refugees and IDPs?

1. Wilkinson, O. (2016) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Annex 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)