

# Localizing Response to Humanitarian Need: THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS AND FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

October 24<sup>th</sup> 2017

## BRIEF SUMMARY REPORT ON FORUM ON LOCALIZING HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Dear Colleague:

The [Forum on Localizing Response to Humanitarian Need](#) as held Oct 16-19 this past week in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The Forum was organized as a follow on from the World Humanitarian Summit, responding to and reinforcing the localization of aid/Grand Bargain discussions, and designed to produce a body of evidence on questions of HOW to engage local faith actors, and actions to scale up their engagement as local partners.

[142 people from 36 countries](#) assembled to learn from Sri Lankan religious leaders and FBOs and from each other about local faith engagement in humanitarian response, and to discuss how to scale up engagement. About 40 local actors received a subsidy to attend.



### **Perspectives of Sri Lankan Religious Leaders**

[LtoR : Sheikh Arkham Nooramith, Nooraniya Arabic College (Islamic Leader) ; Ven. Galkande Dhammananda Thero, Executive Director, Walpola Rahula Institute of Buddhist Studies (Buddhist Leader) ; Brahmsri Vytheeswara Kurukkal, Shri Vishnu Kovil (Hindu Leader) ; Ven. Banagala Upatissa Thero, President, Mahabodhi Society, Sri Lanka & Co-Host ) ; Rev. Ebenezer Joseph, General Secretary, National Christian Council of Sri Lanka & Co-Host ]

[The local host committee](#), co-chaired by Venerable Banagala Upatissa Thero and Rev Ebenezer Joseph, brought forward many inspiring examples of courageous inter-religious leadership and effective collaboration on peacemaking and post war reconciliation, recovery from the 2004 Tsunami and other humanitarian situations. We learnt a great deal about how the religious leaders and faith communities work together, and how they coordinate with faith based and secular NGOs, both local and international, and governmental bodies. As the Planning Committee had hoped when they selected Sri Lanka as the site of the Forum, there was indeed much to learn from the Sri Lankan experiences about how local faith actors can contribute to sustainable peace and to disaster preparedness and recovery.

The Forum resulted from an intensive yearlong collaboration between the Sri Lankan host committee and [the International Planning Committee](#) consisting of diverse international faith networks. Under the leadership of the Partnership for Faith and Development, the organizing partners worked collaboratively to secure high rates of participation by local faith actors in the Forum, to create a rich evidence base, and to secure the [funding needed to stage the event](#). USAID's early backing gave us the confidence to go full steam ahead on the planning, and many faith based networks and the GHR Foundation contributed the rest of the funding required.

During the Forum panels on the Contributions of Religion and FBOs to 6 themes of humanitarian response formed the basis for a rich exchange of information, and the development of specific recommendations for scaling up LFA engagement. Panel topics included Peace and Conflict, Disaster Response, Disaster Risk reduction and Prevention, Refugees and Forced Migration, Children and Health and Gender-based Violence.

In addition to diverse religious leaders and FBO, both local and global, many academic and secular participants contributed their research and technical resources [to the learning exchange](#).

Intergovernmental organizations gave helpful inputs and guidance to the Forum also. From bilateral: Sri Lanka, USA, Australia, Germany; and multilaterals: the UN Resident Coordinator, World Food Program, UNHCR, UNICEF. It was especially helpful to have Una McCauley (UNRC Sri Lanka) give remarks at both the opening and closing of the Forum.

Forum participants expressed clear interest in informing ongoing governmental negotiations regarding the reform of the Humanitarian system and localization of aid, as well in aligning with ongoing advocacy processes both global north e.g. Charter4Change, and global south e.g. NEAR network. A draft Call to ACTION was discussed. An ongoing Advocacy Working Group was formed with about 30 members, and plans for finalizing the Call to ACTION and an ACTION plan are underway.

## Specific outputs from the forum include:

### ➤ Attached now :

- [Final Agenda](#)
- List of diverse attendees [with email](#)
- [Press release](#) and [quotes from participants](#)
- [Selected photographs](#)
- [LRF Facebook page](#)
- [LRF Team Group](#)
- [Draft Call to Action](#)
- [List of recommendations from 6 panels](#)

### ➤ Coming up soon :

- Video interviews and clips of participants on their contributions as LFAs
- A portrait slideshow of images of diverse LFAs
- A 10 min video of highlights of the Forum
- On-line evidence base
- Financial report and reconciliation for funders
- List of recommendations from the 6 thematic areas
- Forum Proceedings
- 6 policy briefs
- Report on post Forum Survey

## We count among the Forum outcomes:

- Photos from the forum can be uploaded [here](#)
- Mobile video footage can be uploaded [here](#)
- New ideas, education, affirmation of ongoing work
- Great networking, new friendships, and new partnerships
- Affirmation of Sri Lankan leadership
- Formation of Advocacy Working Group—first tasks : finalize Call to Action and develop Advocacy Action Plan
- Many plans to draw on the resources of the Forum for briefings – own Networks, religious leaders, national and regional, and governmental
- Possible replications in Sri Lanka, China, Nepal, DRC and elsewhere
- Awareness of existing technologies and resources that can be taken up and easily adapted to the needs of LFA

The Forum would not have been possible without –

**Our funders :** GHR Foundation, USAID, World Vision International, Adventist Relief and Development, Church of Sweden, KAICIID, Islamic Relief USA, Episcopal Relief and Development, Soka Gakkai International, Finn Church Aid, Religions for Peace, World Evangelical Alliance;

**Local Host Committee:** Ven. Banagala Upatissa Thero (Co-Chair), Rev. Ebenezer Joseph (Co-Chair), Faizer Khan (Muslim Aid SL), Firzan Hashim (APAD SL), Dr. M. Saleem, Nagulan Nessiah (Episcopal Relief & Development, Kavitha Vijayaraj (Sarvodaya), Urmila Selvanayagam (World Vision SL) ;

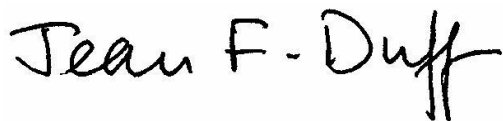
**The International Planning Committee:** ACT Alliance, Anglican Communion, Cadena, Finn Church Aid, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities, Network of Religious and Traditional Leaders, Muslim Aid, Muslim Charities Forum, Partnership for Faith and Development, Religions for Peace, Soka Gakkai International, Tearfund, World Council of Churches, World Evangelical alliance, World Vision International ;

**Partnership for Faith and Development:** Jean Duff, Aeysha Chaudry and Cassandra Lawrence

**Local Coordinating team:** Kevin de Silva (Bini Solutionz), Saabira Mohideen, Shevandra Wijemanne, Zainab Ismail, Nafli Mufthi, Sasmini Bandara, Rehana Dole and Vinu Wijemanna.

For more information, please contact [Saabira Mohideen](#) or me at the address below

With gratitude



Jean Duff  
President  
Partnership for Faith and Development  
[jeanduff@pfaithdev.org](mailto:jeanduff@pfaithdev.org)