

Palais des Nations

Weds 15<sup>th</sup> Nov 2017, Michael French, LWF

### Slide 1 (Whole of Society Response)

- I'd like to make some comments about a 'whole of society' response by taking seriously the reality of 'faith/religion/spirituality' as a factor in people's identity, and of faith communities as part of response
- I'm doing so based on some work initiated originally through a collaboration between Islamic Relief Worldwide and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). From that interfaith collaboration, it has gathered momentum, with strong buy in from major humanitarian actors and institutions, faith-based and non faith-based, including the UNHCR
- In the concept note for these discussions, there are suggestions that focus on mobilising faith-based organisations (for example in providing spiritual and psycho-social support, social safety nets, housing, mental and physical health and education). All well and good ...
- But our work tends to suggest that, except when you are talking about faith-based NGOs organised for humanitarian response, faith actors are more like 'communities' than organisations, and the

problem is *how* to engage with them - who do you deal with, where, how ?

- Our work indicates that you have to engage in each specific context : you have to understand what is the faith identity of the people you are responding to in that place, work out who are viable and legitimate actors, and so on. So that means busy humanitarians in the field, in the face of 1001 other things they have to do, need to be able to navigate the complicated waters of faith identity and faith communities as actors. To do that they need some authoritative tools, and our work has been about providing some such tools.
- This recalls some work in which I was involved with the WHO about 10 years ago on how to engage with churches as some of the key health service providers in sub-Saharan Africa (there were figures of 40-70% of health services being provided by faith communities). The question was : 'how - as a global institution - do you engage with them to mobilise them, or work with them?'
- The result was some good learning about the polity and structure of faith communities : do you get together the global CEOs, sign an MoU and away you go ? Faith communities aren't organised like that, so it doesn't work : you get hold of one bit of them, but that is not the whole; and even if you

have got hold of them, they may not be the best placed to respond in every place.

- This seems to be true also of global humanitarian institutions, governments and actors engaging faith communities in response. Our Islamic Relief colleagues have commented, for example, that a local imam may not have the same sort of formal institutional authority that one might assume with hierarchical religious communities, even though that person will have considerable spiritual authority, and that faith community may have significant capacity to respond ...
- So you have to engage in each specific context : understand what is the faith identity of the people you are responding to in that place, how to respond to that, and work out who are viable and legitimate actors.
- That is all the more the case when you consider the localisation agenda : if you are looking to engage local faith communities in humanitarian response then you need some tools to do that
- So the work and the comments I am presenting arise from an attempt to provide such tools : it concerns a project to provide authoritative guidelines - with the weight of major global actors

- on how to do psychosocial programming which is 'faith-sensitive'

### Slide 2 (Guidelines ...)

- The aim is to give some authoritative practical tools to busy humanitarians (whatever their culture, creed, background) to help navigate the complicated waters of faith identity and faith communities, to help them to make decisions : who, what, how, where, when ... Current humanitarian guidelines are noticeably almost silent on the subject (the SPHERE handbook for example)
- The origins of this work in a collaboration between a Christian-based and a Muslim-based NGO - Lutheran World Federation and Islamic Relief Worldwide - demonstrate, we hope, that there is no partisan interest, no hidden agenda to advance one religion or another
- And happily there has been strong buy-in from a range of actors, from different faith perspectives and (crucially) non faith-based : UNHCR, IFRC, HIAS, Church of Sweden, World Vision - all of whom are on the advisory group steering this work - ... and the process has been endorsed by the IASC Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

- So it is not about faith-based actors commending faith, or even commenting from within a faith-based frame of reference, it's about humanitarians of whatever persuasion, faith or none, working out how to engage with 1. the faith identity of the people we serve, and 2. the reality of faith communities as part of the response
- So it is faith-sensitive (for all actors), not faith-based (for faith-based actors)

#### Slide 3 - woman refugees etc.

- It starts with the *people we serve*, not with the mechanisms we can mobilise. Therefore it's about the faith identity of affected populations: how do we respond given that the vast majority have some kind of faith, which is an important part of their identity, their coping mechanism? What does one say to a woman, a refugee, traumatised, perhaps who has been assaulted, much of whose psychosocial well-being and sense of worth, and therefore prospects for recovery, are tied up with her faith, her sense of being accepted by God, Allah, whoever, and by her faith community?
- Then it turns to who to work with in order to serve that woman, that child, that man for whom faith identity is fundamental. How do you, as a busy camp manager with 1001 things to do and no time

to learn every religion under the sun, decide which of a range of faith communities in the locality to engage with to provide support and response : can you call on them, if so which ones, who is responsible, can you provide facilities, funding ? Or not ?

#### Slide 4 - guidelines

- This is the project: to produce some guidelines as a useful tool. They have come out of field research, and are now being widely reviewed and road-tested in pilots. This has engaged practitioners in a wide variety of settings in Kenya, Chad, Nigeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Nepal as well as global experts
- Psychosocial programming is an entry point for considering faith-sensitivity across the whole of humanitarian response. This tool, these guidelines, address faith-sensitive psychosocial support as a cross-sectoral intervention across the whole range of humanitarian response (it touches on WASH, shelter, etc.) so by introducing tools for faith-sensitive psychosocial programming, we are already addressing faith-sensitive guidance across the whole of humanitarian response, and that is something which is needed
- ... The publication of the guidelines is planned for early next year

- As an aside, along the way we have provided input into the SPHERE revision, and we really hope that in the new version there will be some prominent mention (at the very least) of the fact that the humanitarian community is now taking faith identity and faith communities seriously as a factor in response
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- In terms of the guidance provided within the guidelines, some of that is broad and I've touched on a number of those aspects already by way of commenting on the 'whole of society' response using the work on these guidelines as a lens
- In terms of more specific guidance, time is too short to go into detail, but there is guidance for example on things like:
  - How to identify religious leaders and faith partners and strengthen their capacities and ability to participate in the humanitarian system
  - How to identify those with whom it is not appropriate to work
  - How to identify factors in people's faith identity which will be a relevant element in

their coping mechanism, so it can be included in psychosocial support

- How to draw on existing structures within faith communities to support those coping mechanisms
- How to mix affirmation with critique: there are aspects of faith/religion or of specific faith communities which may not be consistent with humanitarian principles - therefore how to engage with faith leaders to shift social norms or harmful practices
- How to sensitize faith leaders to key challenges (e.g. safe burials during the Ebola crisis)
- How to take people's faith identity seriously in other sectors: food security and nutrition, shelter, WASH
- And so on ...

- Thank you for your attention. I am aware that I have partly presented a specific tool, but I hope it has been a useful vehicle to highlight some key factors to take into consideration as part of a 'whole of society' response which takes seriously the reality of 'faith/religion/spirituality' as a factor in people's identity, and of faith communities as part of the response. Thank you ...
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# A 'Whole of Society Response



*Faith identity ?*

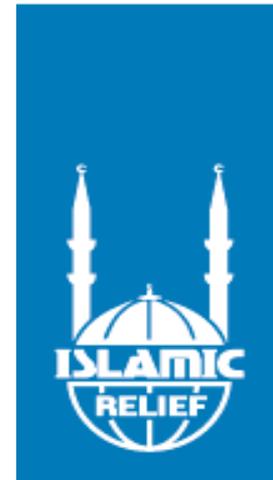
*Faith communities ?*



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# *A 'Whole of Society Response* **Guidelines for faith-sensitive psychosocial programming**



*Faith identity ?*

*Faith communities ?*

UNHCR

IFRC Psychosocial Centre

HIAS

Church of Sweden

World Vision

Islamic Relief

LWF

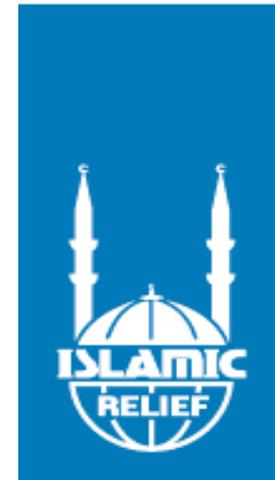
+ IASC Ref Gp on MHPSS



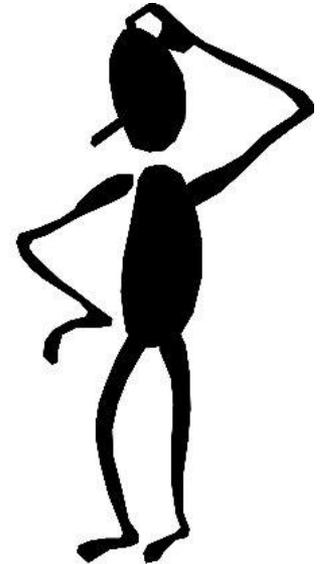
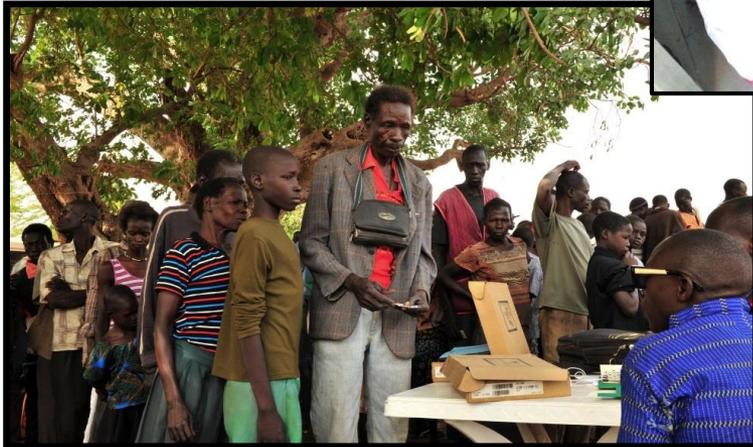
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# A 'Whole of Society Response' 'Faith-sensitive' - what is it?



# Guidelines ...

A. Common functions across domains		
1	Coordination	e.g. participation of FBOs, faith networks, interfaith groups in intersectoral coordination group and in programme planning and implementation
2	Assessment, monitoring and evaluation	e.g. monitoring and evaluating partnerships with FBOs and faith-based networks (i.e. assessing the role and effectiveness of all parties within the partnership) e.g. mapping local FBOs, local faith institutions and faith leaders re influence and activities (including protection) e.g. mapping skills of humanitarian actors in religious engagement (as part of faith literacy capacity-building) e.g. assessing existing religious coping strategies in a manner that supports developing of programming and engagement of implementation partners
3	Protection and human rights standards	e.g. provision of detailed guidance about international humanitarian law and religious engagement, including obligations to support religious practice and formation (including religious rites involving dignified burials, births, etc.) e.g. inclusion of religious social protection mechanisms to build local protection capacities
4	Human resources	e.g. recruitment of staff from relevant religious groupings in population e.g. training in faith literacy of humanitarian actors, where needed e.g. awareness raising in relation to the spiritual needs of humanitarian actors e.g. addition of guidance on human resources that is written from the point of view of a national FBO or faith network e.g. include training on faith-sensitive psychosocial support in MHPSS training for staff and volunteers
B. Core mental health and psychosocial support domains		
5	Community mobilization and support	e.g. build on the role of religious leaders to support communities in the short and long term in changing attitudes and behaviour (e.g. to combat disease/provide infection control) e.g. trans
6	Health services	e.g. provit e.g. provit requirem
7	Education	e.g. provit e.g. docum parenting
8	Dissemination of information	e.g. build partnersh
C. Social Considerations in sectoral domain		
9	Food security and nutrition	e.g. use of
10	Shelter and site planning	e.g. availa
11	Water and sanitation	e.g. aware

## Draft guidelines for faith-sensitive psychosocial programming

December 2016



Chad  
Iraq  
Jordan  
Kenya  
Lebanon  
Nepal  
Nigeria

Publication: Early 2018