



... working with UNHCR

The vast majority of people lay claim to some form of faith or religion, and they do not leave it behind in a humanitarian crisis. Taking people's faith identity seriously in shaping humanitarian response is simply part of a people-centered approach. How do we address this without threatening humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality? How can humanitarians (regardless of faith, ideology, or whatever) become 'faith-sensitive'? How can we engage with faith communities and faith actors in response? This requires the insights of all humanitarian actors, non-faith as well as faith-based. This session presents a tool to help us, and insights to guide us. We will also be seeking participants' views on how best to address this.

UNHCR-NGO Consultations 2018

... join us at a 'food for thought' session

Faith-sensitivity in Humanitarian Response: Tools and Partnerships for Inclusion

Friday 29 June, 12h30-14h
Room 5/6, CIG

Speakers:

- **Daniel Endres**, Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions UNHCR
- **Martin Junge**, General Secretary Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
- **Alastair Ager**, Director, Institute for Global Health and Development, Queen Margaret University
- **Ann Reggie Jaj**, Islamic Relief Kenya
- **Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh**, University College London, Joint Learning Initiative co-chair
- Moderators: **Michael French & Ojot Ojulu**, LWF

**UNHCR ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs
27 – 29 JUNE 2018**

International Conference Center Geneva

DISCUSSION PAPER

Session title: *“Faith-sensitivity in humanitarian response:
tools and partnership for inclusion”*

Date: Friday 29 June

Time/Room: 12h30 – 14h00 – Room 5/6

Background:

The vast majority of people lay claim to some form of faith or religion, and they do not leave it behind in a humanitarian crisis. Taking people’s faith identity seriously in shaping humanitarian response is simply part of a people-centered approach which takes seriously something which is a deeply important part – for some, the most important part – of the identity of those we aim to serve. It shapes their perspectives; it can be the key to how they cope and survive.

Concern about not threatening humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality, coupled perhaps with a suspicion that faith-based actors were commending their own perspectives, has often led to humanitarian literature and guidelines being almost silent on something which is central to people’s identity and dignity. This people-centered approach to faith and faith identity - ‘putting people first’ - can help overcome that impasse.

This means that humanitarians need to be ‘faith-sensitive’. This term (as opposed to ‘faith-based’) ensures a focus on the faith, identity and dignity of people affected by conflict, disaster and displacement, rather than on the faith allegiance (or non-faith allegiance) of humanitarian organizations and agencies.

Working out how to be ‘faith-sensitive’ – how to navigate the sometimes complex waters of faith and faith identity and decide what to do and not to do - requires the insights of all humanitarian actors, non-faith as well as faith-based. To do so, humanitarians require tools, and this side-event presents one such tool intended for use by all humanitarian actors, regardless of their faith or ideology.

This people-centered approach to faith and faith identity then leads on to consideration of how best to act in a faith-sensitive way by engaging faith communities and faith actors, to build understanding and to work in partnership. Local Faith-based organizations and actors are recognized as stakeholders in the Draft of the Global Compact and as important partners within the multi-lateral approach promoted by the CRRF. The call for partnership with Local Faith Communities (LFCs) needs to be supported by evidence, policy commitment and validated ways of working so that existing barriers to their inclusion can be overcome and their huge added value to protection realized.

Over the last two years faith based and non-faith based agencies and academics have been working in partnership with UNHCR to improve learning and practice in engagement of local faith actors. The Refugee and Forced Migration Hub of the JLIFLC (Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities) has been conducting research into the role that LFCs play in receiving and protecting forced migrants. Currently, in partnership with UNHCR) they are embarking on a programme of action research into the capacity building of LFCs to enable full engagement in the CRRF pilot countries.

This side event will showcase some of the ground breaking action-research that has been achieved, and is currently planned, to ensure that LFCs are enabled to contribute within a multi-lateral approach to refugee protection.

Objectives of the session:

1. Introductory Remarks (Volker Türk, Martin Jünge)
2. Presentation of a Useful Tool:

Published in June 2018, 'A Faith-sensitive Approach in Humanitarian Response: Guidance on Mental Health and Psychosocial Programming' is a hands-on tool with a people-centered approach intended to be useful across all sectors of humanitarian response. Psychosocial support is a logical entry point for looking at faith identity, but precisely because it takes an inter-sectoral approach, it enables this tool to provide guidance and examples of how to take faith identity seriously across all sectors, and how to engage with faith actors in order to do so.

The development of the guidance tool, which will be available in hard copy at the session (also at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/node/22264/view>) has been steered by a range of actors, from different faith perspectives and (crucially) non faith-based: Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW), UNHCR, IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support, HIAS, Church of Sweden, World Vision, and the process has been endorsed by the IASC Reference

Group on MHPSS. Insights from the work have been fed into the Sphere Handbook revision process.

This part of the side event is intended to start us off on a practical note. We will explain the concept of 'faith-sensitivity', stress the importance of the people-centered approach, present the key features of the guidance tool, highlight examples of 'how to do it', and open up the way into the second section.

3. Faith and faith actors: building understanding and partnership:

Research has been conducted through the Joint Learning Initiative (JLI) Refugee and Forced Migration Hub into engagement with faith actors, drawing together evidence and experience to enable policy formation and recommendations that can inform the new Global Compact for Refugees. This work has included several scoping studies and consultations through roundtable events and has resulted in a Joint Statement, all of which will be presented at the side-event. There will be a short presentation of an important further partnership with UNHCR and others that will extend to mapping exercises, case study collection, policy guidelines and piloting ground-breaking training and tools to ensure engagement and partnership with faith communities, and the breaking down of existing barriers to their full contribution.

This part of the side event will open up exploration of the field, and lead into discussion.

4. Discussion and questionnaire/poll

Desired outcome of the session:

1. Participants will be better equipped, with a tool designed to help humanitarians with faith-sensitivity in humanitarian response
2. Participants will understand better how to engage with faith communities and faith actors in response
3. Participants will provide feedback on faith-sensitivity which will strengthen ownership of such approaches across the humanitarian community