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Local faith communities and the promotion of resilience in humanitarian situations

A scoping study

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Photo credits: Anglican Alliance and Lindsay Stark

Executive summary

Local Faith Communities (LFCs) are groupings of religious actors bonded through shared allegiance to institutions, beliefs, history or identity. They engage in a range of activities across the humanitarian spectrum. Resilience – defined as the ability to anticipate, withstand and bounce back from external pressures and shocks – is increasingly a central construct in the shaping of humanitarian strategy by the international community.

Faith groups are often central to strengthening resilience and reinforcing the local processes of identity and connection that comprise the social fabric of communities disrupted by disaster or conflict. There is increasing recognition of LFCs' roles by the mainstream humanitarian community, as evidenced by emerging research and international dialogues on faith, such as the UNHCR Dialogue on Faith and Protection in December 2012. However there are a number of challenges to establishing partnerships with LFCs.

This Joint Learning Initiative (JLI) on Faith and Local Communities is seeking to understand the role of LFCs in strengthening resilience, and to address three challenges to full engagement with LFCs: a lack of evidence regarding the impact of LFCs on individual and community resilience; 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.

This scoping document investigates the evidence for LFC contribution to resilience under the guidance of the JLI Resilience Learning Hub, membership of which is made up of 20 practitioners, academics and policymakers expert in humanitarian services and faith communities.

Building an improved evidence base on the impact of LFCs on resilience

The JLI Resilience Learning Hub process began with mapping existing evidence relevant to the impact of LFCs on resilience with regard to four major issues: disaster risk reduction (DRR), emergency response (with respect to both provision of basic services and psychosocial support), and the identification of durable solutions for affected populations. The resulting report is based on an extensive literature review of over 300 academic and policy documents, written contributions submitted by eleven partner humanitarian organisations (both secular and faith-based), and semi-structured interviews conducted with ten practitioners and faith leaders from around the world.

Disaster risk reduction

Examples of LFCs' involvement in community-based DRR show that the narratives, values, and identity provided by LFCs can provide a basis for 'community formation' even in highly fractured situations (e.g. urbanisation, conflict) where social fragmentation is a major contributor to disaster vulnerability.

LFCs have material and social assets which make them a natural locus for DRR. Existing evidence suggests that mosque loudspeakers and church bells are a staple of many local early warning systems, and religious buildings often play a role in community disaster plans. The social assets of LFCs typically include existing volunteer networks and relationships with other LFCs and wider civil society actors. There are many examples of international non-

governmental organisations (INGOs) building on this existing capacity to promote community based DRR. An external cost-benefit analysis of Tearfund's DRR work with LFCs showed that for every \$1 invested in building the capacity of LFCs for DRR over \$24 dollars was saved.

Distinctively religious narratives about the causes of disaster can be a spur to DRR action.

Interviews with disaster survivors and observers suggest that religious explanations citing divine action remain very common. This is generally seen as a barrier to addressing the physical, political, and social root causes of disasters, as such beliefs can spur passivity and guilt and undermine psychological resilience in the face of crisis. However, evidence suggests that supernatural beliefs frequently coexist with acceptance of other causes and the willingness to address them. For example, it is noted how many evangelical church networks in Zimbabwe believe in a 'spiritual context' accounting for the drought and food crisis, but are also engaged in a practical nationwide campaign to promote drought-resilient 'conservation agriculture'. The role of religious leaders in interpreting religious values and applying them to DRR appears to be central: through their leadership, post-disaster soul-searching can lead to practical transformation.

Emergency response: basic services

There are many examples of LFCs meeting the basic needs of displaced persons, such as shelter, registration, food and non-food items. There is evidence that in some instances such provision may be marked by a particularly strong ethos of service and reflect special cultural appropriateness.

LFCs are 'first responders' in emergencies. In many contexts LFCs are particularly well situated to respond within the first 24-96 hours of an emergency, when access to remote or disaster-affected areas may be physically impossible for external actors, or in contexts of weak, fragile and dysfunctional states. Despite this, a number of examples were identified of LFCs having provided significant forms of support to affected communities, only subsequently to be implicitly or explicitly marginalised by international actors.

LFCs have key resources that equip them to provide basic services. 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 may be used for storage, information hubs, shelter and protection. In some fragile state contexts, such as Haiti, LFCs have acted as a 'pseudo state interlocutors' through whom international agencies gain access and understanding of local communities.

Engagement with LFCs may facilitate appropriate understanding of need. LFCs may be particularly well situated to recognise the extent to which 'basic needs' transcend secular organisations' expectations. Documented examples include the case of Muslim women affected by the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, for whom headscarves were essential to maintain their dignity and a prerequisite to be able to access other services in public fora.

Emergency response: psychosocial support

LFCs' understanding of the complexities of psychosocial issues and their situatedness within the community, often combined with an existing track record of pastoral care, serves as a potentially strong foundation for provision of psychosocial support. LFCs are particularly well

positioned to provide ‘psychological first aid’ which promotes resilience by building on existing coping strategies in the immediate context of crisis.

Individuals hold beliefs that help them to recover from or manage adversity. There is an established body of research literature documenting how religious beliefs frequently operate in support of resilience: values of positivity and motivation and ways of interpreting change equip individuals to withstand shocks. Interviews with survivors of Hurricane Katrina and the 2005 Tsunami reveal that belief in God and prayer remains critical in helping many respondents cope with disaster. Religious coping, however, is not monolithic but is expressed differently in different contexts. In some cases religious worldviews promote specific claims that may hinder resilience, by promoting fatalism and blame.

Active religious practices provide psychosocial support and may promote resilience. Psychosocial practices are embedded deeply in the practice of religious communities: rituals and rites define passages through phases of life, communities united by belief systems offer mutual support to one another, and respected leaders offer interpretations of life’s challenges and advice on the means of surviving them. This is demonstrated by the priority given to religious artefacts and spaces during disasters, such as prayer mats and the reconstruction of shrines, temples, churches and mosques.

Transitional and durable solutions

LFCs can play a crucial role in fostering recovery, relief and reconstruction if – through their embeddedness – they are better attuned to the needs, culture, practices and language of a community than external international organisations. In such circumstances they potentially benefit, too, from high levels of trust from other local actors. In many instances LFCs thus frequently serve as crucial operational partners assisting larger agencies. Practical contexts for such assistance include registering asylum seekers, community peacebuilding, conflict mitigation, promoting sustainable livelihoods and child protection.

LFCs can help to build cross-border networks that ease integration in contexts of displacement. In many instances LFCs have strong links with affiliated LFCs from the same tradition in neighbouring countries and further afield, which can provide an anchorage for displaced communities. UNHCR reports, for example, how in urban settings in Ghana and Liberia, refugees have frequently established relationships with host communities through shared religious beliefs and praying together.

LFCs are well-positioned to engage with controversial issues. LFCs may have access to issues that are considered too sensitive, taboo or stigmatised to openly share with external actors. For example, a study of Kikuyu victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Kenya highlights how faith communities were the only actors able to provide trauma counselling in that context. However evidence also suggests some LFCs perpetuate stigma by failing to challenge social norms that undermine individual resilience.

LFCs’ social and political capital can be used to promote peaceful durable solutions. During and after conflict, local faith leaders are often key actors in local peacebuilding initiatives. However, LFCs often struggle to remain impartial or to ‘name and shame’ as they are subject to political, sectarian and ethnic affiliations, and have often also been affected by the disaster themselves. LFCs embeddedness can thus both promote and hinder resilience.

This presents a challenge to the humanitarian principle of neutrality; durable solutions will always need sociopolitical solutions.

Partiality may hinder LFCs role in transitional and durable solutions. Where humanitarianism seeks to be impartial, apolitical and neutral, LFCs are partial by definition, often politically entrenched and frequently themselves actors in humanitarian situations. Along with the widespread concern that religious communities seek to take advantage of crises as opportunities for proselytising fragile communities, this creates both real and imagined barriers for joint working between secular humanitarian organisations and LFCs.

LFCs and participation: structures, networks and inclusion

Evidence suggests LFCs frequently have major capacities with respect to mobilising volunteers, training community members and working in partnership. However, there remain concerns about processes of inclusion and exclusion within local faith community humanitarian response (e.g. with respect to religious affiliation, gender, sexuality etc.). These warrant empirical analysis to determine the extent to which such concerns are justified, or reflect assumptions of secular agencies. In either case, there appear opportunities to engage with local faith communities on such issues.

Emerging best practice for LFC/FBO partnerships

Humanitarian organisations provided numerous examples of the opportunities for, and challenges of, engagement with LFCs and faith-based organisations (FBOs) in the context of humanitarian emergencies. Although ‘best practices’ are not yet established through rigorous evaluations, there was support for strategies which involve: establishing relationships with national FBOs and associations, engaging religious communities as civil society actors, connecting with the language and practice of faith communities, adapting to the structure and nature of religious communities and investing in strengthening the capacity of local faith communities for humanitarian response.

Conclusions

The study draws conclusions with respect to three major themes:

LFCs’ impact on resilience. LFCs utilise their pre-existing local networks and buildings, plus their shared identity, social vision, religious narratives and public leaders, to mobilise, coordinate, register, train, console, encourage and help resolve conflict. This approach builds on existing community coping mechanisms and assets, harnesses social capital and thus strengthens community resilience. Further inquiry is required into the added value of working with LFCs, including the use of social capital in community based responses, the importance of religious values and beliefs for responding to and preparing for disasters, and comparative cost effectiveness of building on existing structure and networks. Further inquiry is also essential to understand the processes of inclusion and exclusion – especially around issues such as gender – by LFCs, and to critically assess generalised assumptions about LFC conservatism or exclusivity.

LFCs’ presence and influence at community level. Respondents varied in their assessments of whether LFCs were inherently part of local community structures in predominantly religious societies, or whether such partnerships must be defined by engagement with religious specialists (clergy, scholars) or distinctly religious institutions (temple, church,

mosque). In many settings, the community's religious life is not readily distinguishable from its broader social and cultural life. Research is required to map and analyse the multiple informal ways LFCs are already contributing to the protection of displaced persons. This would appropriately include documentation of perspectives and experiences from a 'southern perspective' not fully explored in this preliminary scoping work, as well as participatory research in real time

LFCs' partnerships with humanitarian organisations. While many partnerships exist there are major barriers to fully utilising such engagement. These include conflicting secular and religious worldviews, issues of technical competency and independence from local political dynamics. Further inquiry is required into barriers to partnership, such as the extent to which LFCs are already meeting international standards in delivery and their levels of access and engagement with humanitarian coordinating mechanisms. This will include exploring mechanisms to strengthen 'religious literacy' within the humanitarian sector, as well as means to strengthen the capacity of local faith communities for engagement with national and international humanitarian actors.

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List of abbreviations

DRR	disaster risk reduction
FBO	faith-based organisation
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
JLI	Joint Learning Initiative
LFC	local faith community
LBGTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ORAM	Organization for Refugee Asylum and Migration
SPI	Socio-Pastoral Institute
VIMROD	Visayas Mindanao Regional Office for Development
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1 Introduction

The influence of local faith communities (LFCs) is pervasive in humanitarian contexts. In the early days of a crisis, LFCs are often amongst the first to respond to the needs of individuals, families and communities, offering shelter, food and support. As local faith communities typically already have the trust of the communities in which they work, they are not only well-positioned to provide emergency assistance, but also to tackle diverse drivers of vulnerability.

However, although LFCs are universally present and are frequently the *only* functioning civil society institutions in humanitarian crises, their overall potential often remains untapped. Their capacities are largely unmapped and their overall impacts uncharted. They are inadequately represented at the planning and coordination table and their scalability remains unexplored. As a result, development and humanitarian actors do not always understand their motivations and contributions.

Despite the contribution of faith and LFCs, they appear marginalised for two reasons. Firstly, they are local in an internationally dominated sector and, secondly, they are faith-based in a secularised system. Furthermore, there are widespread misconceptions concerning the role of faith groups in this area. Where partnerships do occur, there is a risk of faith groups being ‘instrumentalised’, that is, used as channels of assistance with little regard to their own motivations and assets.

Currently much of what is known about LFCs’ contribution in such contexts is largely through anecdotal evidence and unsystematic qualitative enquiry. It is widely recognised that faith is a significant priority for people in fragile environments, serving a crucial means of coping with the impacts of crises. Faith practice and teaching is indivisible from cultural norms of social support in such situations, for example, with respect to the care of orphans and widows. However, while the potential role of faith to support resilience in contexts of crisis may be acknowledged, it is also feared that local understanding of faith teachings may provide barriers in some contexts, or indeed exacerbate conflict.

This scoping study is founded on the notion that with compelling and robust evidence in hand, governments and non-governmental partners could identify appropriate ways to scale up their engagement with LFCs and mobilise millions of community partners to enable more sustainable and holistic community development and humanitarian response. The aim in this analysis is not to compare faith-based responses with those engaging other actors, nor to argue that faith communities are more resilient than communities which do not identify with a particular faith. Rather it seeks a robust appraisal of the evidence to identify means of securing more effective engagement with LFCs in delivering more effective humanitarian support to crisis-affected communities.

2 Approach, aims and concepts

This scoping study forms part of the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities¹ which aims to develop robust, practical evidence on the extensive, and yet thus far under-documented, role of LFCs in a wide range of development and humanitarian settings. Joint Learning Initiatives bring together practitioners, academics, faith leaders, local community members and other stakeholders in a joint-learning approach organised around ‘learning hubs’, each of which has a particular sectoral focus, including the JLI Learning Hub on Local Faith Communities and Resilience in Humanitarian and Disaster Situations responsible for the production of this scoping paper.

The JLI addresses the question: ‘What is the influence and impact, both positive and negative, of LFCs on community mobilisation and systems?’ The overarching goal of the Joint Learning Initiatives is to provide practitioners, policymakers and donors with robust evidence and actionable policy and programmatic recommendations which will, in turn, influence policy, praxis and funding decisions, improving the quality, effectiveness and impact of partnerships between LFCs and other development and humanitarian actors.

Learning hub on LFCs and resilience in humanitarian situations

As part of the overarching Joint Learning Initiative, the JLI Learning Hub on Local Faith Communities and Resilience in Humanitarian and Disaster Situations focuses on identifying and critically evaluating the activity and impact of local faith communities with regards to individual and community resilience in humanitarian and disaster situations. In line with the practically focused goals of the JLI as a whole, the specific aims of this Learning Hub are as follows:

1. To build an *improved evidence base* providing insight into the impact of LFCs in increasing individual and community resilience in humanitarian and disaster situations;
2. To provide *practical recommendations* for potential partners, including governments, donors and practitioners, who work with LFCs for improved partnership at local level, as well as broader national and international level strategies in the global South;
3. To develop the *capacity* of researchers, practitioners and local faith community members and their affiliated networks and institutions through the development of shared language tools, knowledge resources and network building.

This scoping study is the first part of a two stage process² which as a whole aims to generate evidence that can be used by policymakers, donors, and practitioners to enhance partnerships with local faith communities in humanitarian situations. To achieve this aim, we seek to understand the contributions which diverse local faith communities may make in a range of humanitarian contexts and processes, in order to strengthen the positive and mitigate the negative. This preliminary research process therefore assesses local measures which variously support or undermine individual and community capacity to deal with crisis, shocks and loss,

¹ www.jliflc.com

² Building upon the scoping study, stage two will consist of a research initiative directly involving members of Southern faith communities, both as researchers and as interviewees throughout the entire research process.

through coping, adjustment, engagement and resource mobilisations. We aim for the evidence arising from the study to also facilitate critical reflection amongst local faith communities themselves as they seek to strengthen their work.

The scoping study identifies and critically assesses existing knowledge regarding a range of processes and activities which LFCs engage in during humanitarian situations. The study identifies evidence that documents the role of LFCs in resilience in humanitarian settings by highlighting the wide range of communities of faith involved in responding to humanitarian situations in a diverse range of contexts.

Joint learning research approach

This scoping study is the result of a collaborative, joint learning initiative. JLI members have identified and critically analysed relevant academic materials and policy and practitioner reports, both published and unpublished. In order to fill gaps and answer questions arising in these materials, the broad literature has been supplemented through targeted contributions from JLI Hub members and the Learning Hub's broader research network, including written responses and semi-structured interviews with leading practitioners and faith leaders from around the world.³ In line with the participatory nature of the joint learning initiative, Hub members have contributed throughout the preparation of this report, providing case studies, co-authoring diverse sections, and reviewing drafts of the present report.

Defining local faith communities

UNICEF defines religious communities as 'both female and male religious actors and...systems and structures that institutionalize belief systems within religious traditions at all levels from local to global' (2011:7). UNAIDS identifies three levels of faith-based communities: 'formal religious communities with an organised hierarchy and leadership,' 'independent faith-influenced non-governmental organisations...and... networks' and 'informal social groups or local faith communities' (Samuels *et al* 2010). Religious and faith-based communities therefore comprise diverse actors and networks situated across diverse sites. *Local* faith communities – such as congregations, mosques and temples – are those whose members reside in relatively close proximity, such that they can regularly meet together for religious purposes, often in a dedicated physical venue.

Although LFCs can have contested or conflictual roles within their villages or neighbourhoods, the existing literature generally depicts them as well-rooted within local structures: 'Congregations and their leaders have deep community roots and serve as regular gathering places for congregants [and] local faith leaders are often trusted community figures and can sometimes influence national policies' (UNICEF 2001: 9). It is however essential to note that 'local' actors are not necessarily more embedded in their communities, and that they may have a tense or conflictual relationship with other members of the community.

³ Section 3 provides an overview of the methodology of this study, with Annex 1 showing the survey form used to elicit information from agencies

The principal focus of the JLI is local faith communities based in the global South.⁴ However, to capture the multiple ways in which local faith communities are connected to responses to humanitarian situations, this scoping study explores partnerships with:

- LFCs
- local/national/indigenous faith-based development or charitable organisations
- local and national multi-faith-based networks
- local and national faith leaders.

In this context, a faith-based organisation (FBO) is defined as ‘any organisation that derives inspiration from and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within a faith’ (Clarke and Jennings 2008: 6).

Despite the definitions outlined above, it is essential to note that the categories ‘local faith community’ or ‘faith-based organisation’ may not be used by members of the local community themselves, since faith principles are often conceptualised as a foundational part of ‘a community’s heritage, culture and broader way of life,’ rather than as a ‘religious’ framework *per se* (Stakeholder Interview⁶, Yossi Ives, Tag Development). As Rabbi Yossi Ives notes:

Western categories exist regarding a ‘faith community’ such as a church, synagogue, mosque or temple – these are all very refined religious centres or organisations. However, this raises a significant conflict in the way that such categories are used by different actors. For instance, Sardovaya is a huge organisation in Sri Lanka, but while they would say that the organisation is based on Buddhist principles, at the end of the day most Buddhists don’t see themselves as ‘religious’ in the sense that Western observers conceptualise ‘faith communities’. As such, the work conducted by members of faith communities is not necessarily ‘religious’ in the way that these terms are used in contexts where there is a formal separation between the church and the state, such as in the United States. (Stakeholder Interview, Yossi Ives, Tag Development)

Indeed, UNFPA notes that the term ‘community organisation’ is often used rather than ‘faith-based organisation’ (Stakeholder Interview, Henia Dakkak, UNFPA), given that ‘faith’ may not be explicitly identified by members of the community themselves as the core motivating or organisational principle, and that ‘faith’ may be indistinguishable from the community’s broader social, cultural and political life. While recognising the vital distinction between a community’s self-description and its categorisation by external observers, this scoping study uses the words ‘faith’ and ‘religion’ as the least-flawed terms to describe institutionalised belief systems expressed in communal practices.

There are many documented cases of FBOs partnering with LFCs across the range of humanitarian response – from basic service provision to advocacy (see Box 1).

⁴ While there are extensive examples of local faith communities providing support in natural disasters in the global North, including numerous studies regarding LFCs’ roles in Hurricane Katrina (e.g. Fernando and Hebert 2011; Glandon, Miller and Almedom 2009; Laditka *et al* 2010), this study focuses on initiatives and responses taking place in the global South (broadly defined), which is where the majority of humanitarian situations and populations affected by conflict, disasters and displacement are situated.

Box 1: Illustrative examples of FBO engagement with LFCs

Islamic Relief Pakistan has integrated faith leaders into FBO planning by ‘mobilizing communities to cooperate with the relief agencies and identify the most vulnerable and marginalized segments of the communities.’

Jesuit Refugee Services state that ‘It is a JRS practice to establish ties with local Catholic Structures, and national, regional (Diocese) and local (Parish) levels when implementing projects in the field.’

Tearfund have worked with the Church of Uganda since 2009 in the Teso region of Uganda to implement disaster risk reduction measures at the community level.

(Survey Responses, Islamic Relief Pakistan, Jesuit Refugee Services and Tearfund respectively)

Religions for Peace have been extensively involved with local faith communities around the globe: ‘On the occasion of the UN Special Session on Children in 2002, Religions for Peace convened a multi-religious forum with religious leaders from conflict and post-conflict countries.’

(Religions for Peace/UNICEF, 2010. *Conflict, Child Protection and Religious Communities*. Available at: <http://religionsforpeace.org/assets/conflict-child-protection.pdf>)

The **Sardovaya** organisation in Sri Lanka regularly holds ‘events at the village, district and national levels [which] often begin with non-denominational meditation and invocations from the perspectives of all religions represented’ in the community, including Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus.

(Sarvodaya, 2012. *Frequently Asked Questions*. Available at: <http://www.sarvodaya.org/about/faq>)

In practice, the history, nature, motivations and implications of the relationship between LFCs and FBOs are highly heterogeneous, as reflected both in the literature reviewed and in the contributions offered by a wide range of organisations and practitioners involved in the JLI Learning Hub and research network.

Defining humanitarian situations

Humanitarian situations are highly complex and include a wide range of scenarios and diverse state and non-state actors. Broadly speaking, ‘humanitarian situations’ occur when disruptive changes exceed people’s normal coping capacities, requiring external intervention to save their lives and/or livelihoods. They can be described according to the *type* of disruption – a natural disaster, armed conflict, or food crisis, for example; the *duration* – acute or protracted; and the *actors* responding – including international, national, or local organisations, governments, or local communities.

International organisations have found it useful to classify their work in to distinct time categories, including: risk reduction and disaster planning before a humanitarian situation occurs, emergency response immediately afterwards, followed by long-term assistance if necessary and a durable, ‘developmental’ solution. However, such a linear framework generally fails to reflect the fluid realities on the ground, particularly if the organisations’ members or staff are part of the affected community (Clark 2006; Ferris 2011; Clarke and Jennings 2008). Much current humanitarian literature critiques the idea of a ‘relief to development continuum’ and of clearly defined stages leading to the ‘end of the refugee cycle’ (e.g. Koser and Black 1999).

With these critiques in mind, this report purposefully assesses LFC actions in diverse humanitarian situations, including the following:

- An immediate, emergency response to the needs of individuals, families and communities as they experience the *initial stages of a humanitarian crisis*. This may include the provision of material support such as food, water, shelter etc.
- Assistance over longer periods of time in *protracted humanitarian situations*, including material support (i.e. food, water, shelter), but also political (e.g. lobbying on behalf of individuals or communities), psychosocial, economic (e.g. micro-finance initiatives), and spiritual support.
- Assistance with finding *transitional and durable solutions* to the humanitarian situation. For example, if individuals or a community have experienced a disaster rendering them homeless, displaced or in need of reconstruction materials for their home, the LFC may be able to assist with housing, local integration into a host community (or resettlement or return, in the forced migration context), or obtaining materials to rebuild their lives in their community or elsewhere.
- Helping families reunite and assisting communities as they identify transitional and durable solutions and *longer-term strategies for risk reduction and adaptation mechanisms*.

LFCs operate within this complex range of humanitarian situations. At times they serve other populations in need; often they experience humanitarian need themselves whilst simultaneously providing assistance to others. In other instances, an LFC may be trying to deliver transitional and durable solutions to a protracted humanitarian crisis when another conflict or disaster affects their area, thereby prompting the renewed need for emergency interventions. Given that each humanitarian context is unique, cross-case comparisons are essential both to recognise and account for the fluidity of such situations.

LFCs are involved throughout the humanitarian process or situation as a result of their inherent ‘embeddedness’ in the conflict- or disaster-affected context. Compared to international organisations, there is more potential for LFCs to assist in community awareness raising, risk reduction and preparedness for a humanitarian crisis. The work of Islamic Relief Worldwide in North-West Bangladesh, for instance, illustrates how ‘Loud hailers or speakers used for the call to prayer can serve as an early warning system when flooding is imminent, or issue evacuation instructions in earthquake-prone areas,’ and ‘the *khutba* discussion at Friday prayers can provide a platform to raise awareness of disaster risk and inspire action’ (Islamic Relief Worldwide and Islamic Relief 2012: 30).



Image 1: LFC unloading food aid in Tamale, Ghana. Credit: Anglican Alliance.

LFCs are often well placed to be first responders during a rapid-onset crisis, such as an earthquake or a sudden influx of refugees (Ferris 2005; 2011). In the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, for example, Tearfund found that small church groups in Myanmar had ‘responded spontaneously’ to the emergency, with one church leader from the city of Bogale sheltering 30 neighbours in his house before it also collapsed (Bulmer 2010:14). When Burundian refugees fled into western Tanzania, the local Lutheran non-governmental organisation (NGO), Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS), was able to respond instantly to the influx, whilst international agencies took days to organise and arrive (Survey Response, Helen Stawski, Archbishop of Canterbury’s International Development Secretariat).

Subsequent sections of this study elaborate upon such engagement of LFCs in humanitarian action at various phases of humanitarian response.

Defining resilience

Resilience is the major process investigated by this scoping study with regard to LFCs’ roles in humanitarian situations. The concept of resilience has found favour in many research and policy discussions, with the proportion of academic articles referencing the concept having grown eight-fold in the last 20 years (Ager 2013). The definition of the term provided by UNICEF is broadly representative of contemporary approaches by humanitarian agencies:

The ability to anticipate, withstand and bounce back from external pressures and shocks – whether physical, emotional, economic, disaster or conflict related – in ways that avoid a fundamental loss of identity and maintain core functions. Resilience is applied to communities, which are seen to possess multiple sources of strength and resources – including human, material and social capital. These

sources may be rooted in traditions or developed over time and tapped during crises to reduce and manage loss. (UNICEF 2011)

Current understandings of the term draw upon a number of fields, ranging from *child development* to *ecology*. Rutter's work over the last fifty years on protective and risk factors for long-term development outcomes for children has been particularly influential in understanding processes that predict a child 'overcoming rather than succumbing to the effects of exposure to risks during an individual's life' (1987: 316). Work has evolved to consider 'adaptive systems' operating at the biological, familial, community and societal level that promote the 'ordinary magic' (Masten 2001) of resilience.

This increasingly 'systems focussed' approach to resilience is also reflected in the ecological analysis of crisis settings, which has significantly shaped humanitarian perspectives. Broadening from an initial focus on the capacity of agricultural and livelihoods practices to withstand 'shocks', ecological analyses have increasingly examined the socio-cultural processes of communities that support resilience. Drawing on the work of Bahadur *et al.* (2010) and Mitchell and Harris (2012) for example, Oxfam's framework for addressing resilience suggests that resilient communities embody the following characteristics:

- high level of *diversity* in terms of access to assets, voices included in decision-making, and in the availability of economic opportunities;
- high level of *connectivity* between institutions and organisations at different scales and the extent to which information, knowledge, evaluation, and learning propagates up and down across these scales;
- high degree of *different forms of knowledge* blended to anticipate and manage processes of change;
- high level of *redundancy* within systems, meaning some aspects can fail without leading to whole system collapse;
- system which is *equal and inclusive* of its component parts, and which avoids distributing risks in an imbalanced way;
- high degree of *social cohesion and capital*, allowing individuals to be supported within embedded social structures.

Learning Hub members provided examples that generally reinforce elements of the above approaches (see Box 2). Religions for Peace was one of the few Learning Hub members whose framing of resilience made explicit reference to local faith communities (though the term 'assets' is drawn from the secular professional lexicon of development practice).

While humanitarian actors, including many FBOs, tend toward a common understanding of resilience, local faith *communities* often do not share the worldview or lexicon of modern humanitarianism. In interviews with Christian bishops engaged in humanitarian work in Ghana and Georgia, for example, there was some confusion over the use of the word 'resilience', with both bishops pointing out that, in fact, they do not use the word in their programming.

Box 2: Illustrative definitions of resilience

Islamic Relief Pakistan states that resilience is the capacity for ‘resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure.’

Islamic Relief Worldwide (Sudan) argues that resilience can be ‘created, built, and sustained’ through programming.

UNHCR states that ‘resilience implies that displaced individuals and social groups can regain their normal or near normal levels of performance (economic, societal, domestic etc.) and autonomy after the events that led to displacement.’

Tag International Development frames resilience as ‘a community framework that has the mental and emotional resources within itself to cope with the challenges that will inevitably arise’ and creating a ‘capability’ so that ‘the community can respond proactively...in the case of an emergency.’

Christian Aid defines resilience as ‘the power of individuals and communities to live with dignity, responding...to disasters and the opportunities and risks they face.’

For **Religions for Peace**, resilience constitutes ‘harnessed capacity – knowledge, skills, and attitudes – and [includes] innate assets of multi-religious communities.’

(Survey Responses, Islamic Relief Pakistan, Islamic Relief Worldwide, UNHCR, Tag International Development, Christian Aid and Religions for Peace respectively)

While faith communities can exhibit and promote resilience without explicitly using the word, accounts of resilience expressed in the religious vernacular of LFCs are rarely seen in academic or humanitarian practitioner contexts. To explore the relationship between faith communities and resilience in a more nuanced fashion, academics and humanitarian actors will need to overcome this discomfort and remove any conditions requiring LFCs to learn to ‘speak the language’ of secular humanitarianism in order to be heard.

Holton (2010: 82), working with the Dinka of Sudan, cites an elder’s account of his community’s survival that is expressed in typical religious language: ‘Our hope comes from God. He is the air that we breathe. He is the sand that we walk on. Without him, we would not have made it, but through him we will have a future.’

There is great value in using language that is accessible to local communities when discussing processes of resilience. There is a case for more research to be ‘bilingual’ – that is, comfortable in both secular academic language and that of religious communities. For example, for faith communities, transcendence – the location of the divine outside the here and now, and the ability to connect to that divine – is commonly a vital component of life. Deneulin and Rakodi (2011: 70), building on work funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) on the role of faith in development, have explored the core challenge of collecting and integrating information from communities in a way that takes account of their worldview, including concepts like transcendence, that are inseparable from a religious worldview.

3 Methodology

The scoping exercise underpinning this study focused on three question areas to explore the role of LFCs/FBOs in humanitarian response: resilience, faith and humanitarianism; structures, networks and inclusion for LFC engagement and participation; and best practices in partnership with LFCs. These areas were selected to elicit reflection on key processes that would inform a more nuanced conceptual framework in relation to resilience in the next phase of this project.

Key framing research questions included:

- What is the role of LFCs in supporting resilience?
- How is the term ‘resilience’ understood by different actors and stakeholders in such processes?
- What evidence is there to show that the activities of LFCs/FBOs within affected communities are promoting or hindering personal and community resilience?
- How have local faith communities utilised their assets/networks/social capital/volunteer force to plan and implement their responses to humanitarian situations?
- To what extent are local faith networks and faith leaders integrated into the planning and implementation process of humanitarian response?
- To what extent are women and minority groups (including ethnic and religious minorities) in LFCs integrated into such planning and implementation processes?
- To what extent are LFCs able to forge partnerships with UN, INGOs, local or national government, other faiths, other civil society organisations?
- What are the characteristics of a successful partnership mechanism?
- Are there emerging best practices for engagement with LFCs in humanitarian situations?

These questions were considered with respect to four humanitarian processes: disaster risk reduction, emergency response to basic needs, emergency response to psychosocial support and facilitation of transitional and durable solutions. The rationale for focusing on these processes is outlined in Table 1.

A structured search of online databases using the terms specified in Table 1, complemented by requests to all JLI Hub partners to share relevant materials, yielded a body of 252 academic publications and 50 practitioner and policy reports. All documents were reviewed, and salient materials abstracted and collated with respect to the key study questions identified earlier.

An extensive organisational survey (see Annex 1) was, additionally, circulated to all Hub partner agencies, to elicit organisational views and experience related to the study questions and the specific areas of study noted above. A total of 11 survey responses were received. These responses were again reviewed and material abstracted and collated in relation to the articulated study questions.

Processes	Key words (for literature search)	Rationale
Disaster risk reduction	Risk mitigation/reduction/management and disaster risk reduction (DRR), preparedness, participatory vulnerability and capacity assessments (PVCA), early recovery, adaptation, strengths-based approach	Captures value of local networks for information sharing and behaviour change before, during and after a disaster; ability to plan and mitigate in advance (proactive) rather than just respond (reactive); ability to learn new methodologies (accountability and transparency) and to integrate items such as child protection.
Emergency response	Basic services, health, education, food items, sanitation, emergency shelter, protection spaces, protection by presence, community resilience	Recognisable contribution within mainstream sector; demonstrates physical assets and use of sacred spaces to deliver services; draws out social capital/trust and its impact on service delivery; engages with advantages and limitations of conceptualisations of the relief-development continuum.
	Psychosocial support, pastoral care, spiritual care, accompaniment, counselling, healing, psychological resilience, forgiveness, transformation	Looking at the distinctive contribution of LFC/FBOs given their holistic mandate (including spiritual capital); expectation of existing data; entry point into wider work of LFCs and the concept of faith as transformative beyond social capital gains.
Facilitating transitional and durable solutions	Conflict mitigation, peace building, arbitration, peace conferences, advocacy statements, reconciliation, justice, integration, resettlement, diversified livelihood strategies, drought cycle management	Captures holistic approach, social/political capital; long-term engagement/solutions, connection between humanitarian crisis and conflict; role of faith leaders and interfaith coalitions.

Table 1: Overview of the four humanitarian processes addressed in the study

The final source of data in the study was semi-structured interviews with key informants. Interviews were structured in an analogous way to the organisational survey, with a focus on eliciting practical examples of engagement with LFCs in humanitarian contexts and on learning regarding the implications of such work for individual and community resilience. A total of ten interviews were completed. Interviewees included JLI Hub members and field contacts, the latter comprising principally humanitarian actors, clergy and other religious leaders from the global South.

Study constraints and limitations

The principal focus of study was the relationship between LFCs (the object of study), humanitarian settings (the area of study), and resilience (the process at issue). However, the dearth of literature at the intersection of these three dimensions meant that learning relevant to any two of these dimensions was included for analysis.

The diversity of the source material allows us to illustrate particular dynamics while transcending the anecdotal nature of many examples initially shared by practitioners and local faith actors. By casting a wide net for sources, the study aimed to substantiate trends and insights emerging in diverse case studies with reference to findings from a broader literature, giving them more weight than a mere anecdote.

This is not to assume, however, that academic reports are inevitably more valid and reliable accounts than those of practitioners. In general, academic studies are articulated with a secular vocabulary and associated set of assumptions. The now established critique of the secularisation thesis in academic social science (e.g. Casanova 1994; Berger 1999; Ager and Ager 2011) has led to questions regarding the implicit assumptions of all viewpoints, including those of secular academia. Individual academics whose work has informed this study may or may not be persons of faith, may or may not explicitly self-identify as such on a professional level, and may or may not refer to their own belief systems in their published works. In fact, the secularity of academic literature may discourage persons of faith from disclosing their beliefs in publication. It is therefore important to keep in mind not only the potential presuppositions of policy and practitioner reports commissioned by FBOs, but also the extent to which the academic literature reviewed may be influenced by the faith- or non-faith perspectives of its authors.

The lack of direct engagement with local faith communities themselves is, however, perhaps the major constraint of the study. This limits our understanding of how different members within the community self-define, perceive the labels and terms used by outsiders (including 'faith community' and 'resilience'), and evaluate the roles which LFCs and FBOs play in humanitarian settings. Despite the stated aim of focusing on congregation-level perspectives, the vast majority of the academic literature, policy reports and written responses submitted by the research network have reflected the perspectives of Northern-based FBOs working with Southern faith-based NGOs, with a smaller number addressing both Northern and Southern FBOs' perspectives of working with local faith communities specifically. Very few written responses have focused specifically on congregation-level initiatives or the perspectives of members of local faith communities themselves. The absence of Southern voices and the voices of local community members can in part be attributed to the desk-based nature of this scoping study, its limited resources, and its brief time-frame. This challenge highlights the importance of the planned second phase of the research initiative directly involving members of Southern faith communities both as researchers and as interviewees.

Another limitation emerges in relation to the faith perspectives represented in the study. Despite attempts to engage directly with a wide variety of faiths, the vast majority of materials identified and responses received have been from Christian and Muslim organisations and practitioners, with a small number of written materials and interviews with Jewish practitioners. While these responses represent the internal heterogeneity of Christian and Muslim actors, it is essential that subsequent work purposefully integrates the views and

responses of other religious and philosophical traditions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism etc.

Another challenge arises in relation to the tensions and ambiguities of public self-reflection by FBOs and LFCs. Faith-based organisations and communities might be reluctant to provide examples of LFCs failing to respond, hindering the development of community resilience, or even actively reducing community resilience through their actions and inactions. Of course, self-censorship by FBOs and LFCs has its parallel in secular organisations, which may be equally reluctant to recognise that their projects may have had no traceable impact, or may have even led to the deterioration of living conditions.

FBO and LFC representatives may self-censor not only due to fears of being negatively evaluated by external observers, but also due to internal community differences and tensions, and the wish not to offend other members of their own faith community. As noted by one contributor with reference to a Christian colleague's experiences of visiting a Buddhist shrine in a conflict affected area:

[The community] asked him to take part in certain rituals which were customary when you visit the shrine, and he did it. However, he was aware that had he been visiting the shrine with his colleagues, who perhaps had a different view, they would have taken a very dim view of his liberalism, because, effectively, he was participating in idolatrous practices in line with their faith.

Also with reference to Buddhist shrines, the representative of a Jewish faith-based organisation explained that tensions might emerge not only between members/employees of the same FBO, but also over the extent to which an FBO's decision to respect a disaster-affected local faith community's request might alienate the FBO from 'its own' donor faith community. Having been asked to build a shrine for a particular disaster-affected community, the FBO argued:

If it ever got out that we had built a shrine, we would lose a lot of people, who would say 'you don't represent me.' They would say: 'you respect [the displaced] people and their religion, but you don't respect your own because your religion does not allow that and yet you did it anyway.'

Despite these and other processes of self-censorship (also see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2009; 2010; 2011), the Joint Learning Initiative has explicitly aimed to evaluate the potential for LFCs to both promote *and* hinder resilience on individual and collective levels in humanitarian situations. In some instances, such 'negative' or 'critical' examples have been presented anonymously in light of their sensitive nature and the potential implications for the organisations and individuals involved. One contributor, humorously citing the Biblical story of Noah (Genesis 9:23), suggested that FBOs must 'learn to walk backwards so as not to see the difficulties and contradictions' emerging in their interactions with FBOs and LFCs with different outlooks, including LFCs as both donors and as recipients.

A final challenge arises with reference to the potential benefits and dangers of drawing on a resilience framework. Key questions include whether resilience is perceived as being 'given' or 'developed' by external actors, or as being inherent to local communities, and whether it has come to be prioritised by Northern actors for political expediency and as a form of institutional outsourcing of responsibility for humanitarian situations to affected communities (Béné *et al* 2012; Ager 2013). Indeed, as noted by Khalid Roy of Islamic Relief,

‘we mustn’t forget a central contradiction which is that the more we “functionalise” and secularise the role of religion and religious institutions in this manner, the less “sacred” and appealing they might become precisely at the point of disaster.’

4 Disaster risk reduction

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) defines DRR as:

The concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events. (OCHA 2009, emphasis added)

The practice of DRR has changed along with perceptions of ‘the causal factors of disasters’. In Western discourse, the historic shift in focus has been pithily described as a movement from ‘Acts of God,’ to ‘Acts of Nature,’ to ‘Acts of Men and Women’ (Furedi 2007: 483). These categories of explanation are of course not mutually exclusive (Merli 2010: 106) and persist alongside each other in many disaster contexts. But especially amongst development academics and practitioners, the emphasis in recent decades has been on ‘social, economic, and political forces’ (Gaillard and Texier 2010: 82) as the key root causes of disaster. The title of an influential World Bank report on the economics of disaster prevention, *Natural Hazards, UnNatural Disasters* (GFDRR 2010), encapsulates the prevailing wisdom: hazards like earthquakes and floods may be ‘Acts of Nature,’ but the vulnerabilities that turn hazards into actual disasters are largely the result of human structures and choices, and can be reduced by human action.

While DRR has received considerable attention from scholars over the past decade, it has rarely been analysed with respect to local faith communities. The few articles that have addressed the intersection of faith and DRR generally focus more on the activities and discourse of international FBOs rather than LFCs (e.g. Gaillard and Texier 2010). DRR scholar Ben Wisner suggests that at present ‘there is less activity by faith communities...in the areas of preparedness and prevention’ than in disaster response and recovery (2010: 129). Meanwhile, media accounts of religion in disaster gravitate toward ‘alleged acts of god or the religion-related fatalistic attitudes of victims’ (Gaillard and Texier 2010). Such accounts imply that religion is generally an obstacle to DRR – that it either distracts people from addressing the ‘real’ reasons for the disaster, or directly discourages people from attempting to evade their fate.

This scoping study, by contrast, suggests that DRR is an area with growing LFC involvement and impact. A number of relevant LFC capacities for such engagement emerged from the field evidence and are detailed below.

The narratives of LFCs provide a basis for ‘community formation’

Community-level DRR requires joint reflection, decision, and action by community members. This elementary capacity to work together presumes a level of trust and shared identity which is often missing in complex, socially fragmented contexts like megacities, war zones, or refugee/IDP settlements. The narratives, values, and identity provided by LFCs can provide a basis for ‘community formation’ where social fragmentation is a major contributor to disaster vulnerability.

Case Study A shows how a local FBO in the Philippines used a religiously grounded community formation approach to mobile neighbourhoods for disaster risk reduction.

Case Study A: Bridging divides, building resilience: a stewardship approach

In complex environments like cities, community organisation is key to effective disaster preparedness, response and resilience building, but if little sense of ‘community’ exists, how can this be achieved?

When Typhoon Ketsana struck Metro Manila in the Philippines in 2009 causing widespread flash flooding and disaster, it became clear that the unchecked pace and quality of urbanisation in megacities, coupled with extreme levels of inequality, has created high levels of vulnerability for millions of people. In atomised urban environments where people from a multitude of backgrounds and places live in informal settlements, the lack of community cohesion is often an obstacle to effective disaster prevention and response.

Recognising this, Christian Aid partner Socio-Pastoral Institute (SPI), a faith-inspired organisation, applied its distinctive approach of ‘community formation’ in two neighbourhoods that had been badly affected by the 2009 floods. Through this approach, SPI aimed to help the communities overcome their differences and problems by working together to bring about both a more effective response to the floods as well as lasting solutions that would enable individuals in the communities to achieve fullness of life, security, and resilience to disasters.

SPI’s unique approach to community mobilisation and action places the notion of ‘cultural and spiritual capital’ at the heart and start of the development process. By focusing on stewardship, a concept found in both Islam and Christianity, individuals have been encouraged from the outset to move away from straightforward self-interest – a typical behaviour in complex environments like cities – to become social stewards who look beyond themselves towards improving conditions for the wider community. In so doing, cultural and spiritual foundations are established for effective community organisation and local management of responsibilities, resources and responses, especially important in vulnerable or high-risk environments.

SPI is a Catholic faith inspired NGO in the Philippines, striving to bring about social transformation and life in all its fullness for multi-faith communities in conflict and disaster prone areas of Mindanao and Metro Manila.

The role of faith in underpinning a community's capacity for joint action is obvious in areas of high fragmentation; elsewhere, it may be easier to take for granted, but no less vital. On this point, the scoping study suggested an interesting difference in perspective.

Many of the JLI's Christian and secular participants are extensively engaged in community-based DRR (CBDRR): helping communities come together to analyse their disaster risk and reduce their vulnerability. But when the JLI requested examples of LFCs increasing resilience to disasters, most of these respondents only offered CBDRR cases that included deliberate involvement of religious specialists (clergy, scholars) or distinctly religious institutions (temple, church, mosque). In other words, their responses presumed a distinction between the community (the 'secular' locus of most CBDRR work) and the local faith community.

By contrast, several JLI responses from Muslim participants simply described their CBDRR work. These responses seemed grounded in the assumption that, for example, all community members in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Somalia constituted a local faith community. There was no need to focus specifically on specialists or distinct institutions to demonstrate the link to faith. This again draws attention to the fact that in many parts of the world, the community's religious life is not readily distinguishable from its broader social and cultural life – and on the other hand, it suggests that many organisations are already using LFC capacities to mobilise communities for DRR, perhaps without recognising the fact.

Religious narratives on the causes of disaster can spur DRR action

As mentioned above, Western academic discourse on the causes of disaster defines itself by the move away from 'Acts of God' to focus on ecological, geological and (increasingly) social root causes. Chester and Duncan suggest that 'within the hazard research community there is a widely held view that...supernatural interpretations of natural disasters are historical curiosities and where they do occur today are merely symbolic of superstition and backwardness' (2010: 87). However, when Chester and Duncan survey the past century of major seismic disasters in Christian-majority contexts, they find that explanations in terms of divine action remain very common among disaster survivors and observers. Many JLI respondents confirmed that distinctively religious explanations for disaster are also very common in the humanitarian situations where they serve.

Does the belief that a disaster was caused by God or *karma* spur passivity in the face of disaster or distract people from the physical, political, and social root causes? The evidence suggests that it can, but often does not. Belief in supernatural causes often coexists with acceptance of other causes and the willingness to address them. For example, many evangelical church networks in Zimbabwe believe in a 'spiritual context' that explains drought and food crisis, but are also engaged in a practical nationwide campaign to promote drought-resilient 'conservation agriculture' techniques.⁵ Chester and Duncan (2010) note the existence of such 'parallel practices' in Italy, where 'actions to appease God and to encourage the miraculous have taken place whilst at the same time people have worked with the authorities to reduce losses by supporting measures such as evacuation.'

As noted later in Section 6, JLI respondents held diverse views on the common LFC linkage of disaster with wrongdoing. Some respondents considered any equation of disaster with

⁵ For example: Trumpet Call Zimbabwe. Available at <http://trumpetcallzimbabwe.org>.

preceding behaviour (in terms of concepts such as 'sin') inappropriate, leading to guilt and undermining people's psychological resilience. Others challenged the assumption that it is inherently unhealthy for survivors of a disaster to take responsibility for the disaster, or consider it an occasion for personal and communal repentance, particularly if this encourages practical action to reduce vulnerabilities to future disasters.

Post-disaster soul-searching can lead to practical transformation. The influential Vietnamese monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, responded to the 2004 tsunami in terms that were both a religious explanation and a call for better environmental management:

I have the feeling that our planet Earth is suffering, and this tsunami is the cry of the Earth as it writhes in pain: a lament, a cry for help, a warning. We have lived together so long without love and compassion for each other. We destroy each other; we abuse our mother Earth. So the Earth has turned back on us, has groaned, has suffered... We have to see that and wake up. (Falk 2010)

This quote demonstrates the central role of religious leaders in interpreting religious values, and the potential impact this has on community resilience.

LFCs' material and social assets make them a natural locus for DRR

In many communities, LFCs have material assets that can be used for disaster preparedness or mitigation. For example, mosque loudspeakers and church bells are a staple of local early warning systems, and religious buildings often play a role in community disaster plans. Hence Wisner's appeal for LFCs to 'assure that their meeting places, schools, and other buildings are located safely in relation to possible flood, landslide, and wildfire hazard and constructed to resist seismic and wind energy' (2010:130).

Religious leaders are multifaceted social assets. As well as interpreting and communicating religious values in response to disaster, they are often well placed to engage in public advocacy around local policies related to risk (Wisner, 2010: 130). Currently this appears to be an underutilised area of partnership, perhaps because religious groups have not sufficiently integrated DRR into their priorities.

The social assets of LFCs often include existing volunteer networks and relationships with other civil society actors. Many LFCs benefit from their integration with broader religious or denominational networks. For example, from 2005 a group of Protestant churches in Malawi began promoting DRR (and specifically drought-resilient agricultural techniques) through their relief and development arms, which work with and through local congregations. An external cost-benefit analysis of this DRR work by Tearfund showed an astonishing 1:24 ratio (Cabot Venton and Siedenburger 2010).

LFCs are also able to draw on DRR resources and knowledge from international FBOs. In the United States and some European countries, religious groups access training and resources for disaster preparedness and response through interfaith networks, while in Asia, Latin America and Africa some religious groups join with secular civil society in annual preparations for known seasonal disasters (Wisner 2010: 129). As Gaillard and Texier note (2010: 83), 'international religious non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have long been at the cutting edge of disaster risk reduction,' and their relationships with LFCs are characterised by 'a high level of trust.'

Some of the written responses from FBOs referred to the ways in which their own staff had developed and implemented DRR programmes, often in coordination with the LFCs with whom they work. Thus, FBOs have found partnerships with LFCs to be crucial to their DRR efforts:

- Christian Aid conducts trainings and workshops with LFC partners to increase preparedness and resilience. One individual working with a Catholic-based local organisation stated: ‘We are victims only of the situation, but not of ourselves... we have the capacity to help ourselves...to minimize the effects of disaster’ and more specifically noting that ‘DRR is the vehicle but the spirituality and stewardship fuels the DRR work.’
- In relation to Islamic Relief’s work in Pakistan, staff and communities alike have been trained in the community-based disaster risk management approach, and partnerships with LFCs have been developed to strengthen early warning systems and mobilise volunteers.
- In the context of Sudan, Islamic Relief Worldwide has developed close working relationships on DRR with the Yemeni Relief and Development Forum (a local organisation working with faith groups developed with assistance from the Muslim Charities Forum). Similarly, Islamic Relief’s DRR programmes in Bangladesh have been planned and implemented in partnerships with LFCs to establish disaster funds, facilitate food storage, and deliver vaccinations for livestock.

5 Emergency response: basic services

Emergency responses to disaster and conflict situations include a range of activities and practical measures which can be situated within the broader humanitarian continuum. LFCs contribute particularly to two such forms of support – the provision of ‘basic services’ and their facilitation of ‘psychosocial support’. The first of these is addressed in this section, the second in the following section.

Local faith communities have been significant providers of post-emergency basic services (food, shelter, sanitation etc.) from before the birth of the ‘professional’ humanitarian sector. Such provision is fundamentally linked to the promotion of resilience, particularly community resilience, by enabling a secure social environment – including access to vital resources, a support network and a sense of identity and belonging (Stakeholder Interview, Alison Schafer, World Vision) – within which normal life can be lived, and ‘bouncing back’ can begin.

As LFC assistance is decentralised and informal, it is challenging to reliably estimate the total annual value of basic services provided by LFCs (Religions For Peace 2010). Indeed, as noted by Ferris (2011: 601):

The contributions of these initiatives, such as soup kitchens organized by local religious organisations or volunteers helping disaster victims, are not recorded anywhere in the UN's statistics on humanitarian contributions. Nonetheless, the sums of money mobilized by these small mosques and congregationally-based charitable organisations are undoubtedly substantial.

The examples provided by survey respondents primarily illustrate the response of FBOs, and their coordination with LFCs in basic service provision. Evidence suggests, however, that basic service provision by LFCs frequently continues without the active engagement of humanitarian agencies, faith-based or otherwise.

LFCs are 'first responders' in emergencies

In many contexts, LFCs are particularly well situated to provide or facilitate the distribution of basic services, especially in the context of the first 24-96 hours of an emergency, when access to remote or disaster affected areas may be physically impossible for external actors, or in contexts of weak, fragile and dysfunctional states. Indeed, humanitarian agencies' recognition of this fact has contributed to renewed interest in engaging LFCs in recent years.

In response to the earthquake in Haiti, one of the first places that people started setting up tents was on church grounds until camps were set up and people moved on. Churches and LFCs are there before the humanitarians are, and their networks are amazing: they know each other, they know everybody by name, they know who is married and not married, who has children, how many and what their names are. (Stakeholder Interview, Alison Schafer, World Vision)

Bishop Malkhaz Songulashvili commented in interview on the capacities of church congregations during the first few hours after an emergency:

The truth of the matter is, you've got people, when these things happen...and they can always easily mobilise and you don't need infrastructure, you could make a call and you start working immediately, and this is what happened when the war broke out in Georgia...it was always the case. (Stakeholder Interview, Bishop Malkhaz Songulashvili)

Not only are LFCs valuable first responders by virtue of being already present in the locality of an emergency, LFCs are increasingly organising, in coordination with FBOs, to anticipate and prepare for crises. In Palu, Indonesia, 'Compassion in Action' teams established as part of a Salvation Army initiative known as Faith-Based Facilitation were trained and prepared for disaster response (Survey Response, Salvation Army). This preparation enabled the teams to respond to a flash flood and mudslide in Kulawi District in 2011:

The team...immediately responded with a ten person team...and went to the major disaster site. They put out a call for food and supplies to corps, the government, NGOs and local businesses, also utilising the Salvation Army radio station to call for donations. They provided post-trauma counselling (for which most had been trained), food, care, and any support necessary by visiting disaster-struck homes (including normalisation 'play' activities for children). (Salvation Army 2013)

LFCs have key resources that equip them to provide basic services

A wide range of reports from organisations and practitioners reflected on the ways in which LFCs, either alone or in coordination with FBOs, promote the resilience of affected populations through the provision of basic services, including maximising the use of their existing assets and structures.

Box 3: Illustrations of LFC engagement with the provision of basic services

Jesuit Refugee Services: The Catholic parish in Mwange refugee camp in Zambia ‘took up monthly collection in church and quarterly provided soap and other non-food items.’

UNHCR: After the Tsunami in Sri Lanka, the fear of further tsunamis among the affected populations remained a real concern. Particularly in Muslim communities, where the Mosque’s call to prayer could easily communicate with large numbers of the local population, an early warning mechanism was implemented. This was a simple and extremely cost effective channel whereby messages could be communicated quickly to a large number of people, and from a trusted source.

Islamic Relief Pakistan: Islamic Relief coordinated responses to all major disasters across Pakistan, by providing ‘water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, food distribution, primary health care services, provision of NFIs, cash for work opportunities.’

Islamic Relief reported witnessing many individual members of LFCs responding to the needs of their neighbours in times of emergency, highlighting such cases as: Qari Muhammad Abid, aged 45, who teaches the Qur’an in Karachi, returned during the 2010 floods back to his village, Sarron Walla in the district of Muzaffargarh, and actively participated in rescue and relief efforts to save the lives of his fellow villagers; whilst implementing the Punjab Programme, Islamic Relief formed a village committee and Qari Abid was nominated as a member of the organisation by the community due to his efforts in providing relief to the affected people.

Muslim Charities Forum: ‘Fundraising, particularly during Ramadan, has also focused heavily on collections at mosques, with funds supporting emergency response and development initiatives (such as providing food packs, the building of water wells, or providing education to young students for a year) in Somalia.’

Religions For Peace: LFCs have ‘decentralised networks that are quick to mobilise and sustainable resources.’

(Above sources, Survey Responses, Jesuit Refugee Service, UNHCR, Islamic Relief Pakistan, Islamic Relief, Muslim Charities Forum, Religions For Peace respectively.)

VIMROD-Mindanao: ‘The typhoon [in Northern Mindanao] hit on December 17th in the early morning, and by the afternoon of December 17th or the early morning of December 18th, support was coming from the parishes and the dioceses nearby – these supplies had already reached the diocese which was in charge of distributing relief goods.’

(Stakeholder Interview, Father Herbert, Visayas Mindanao Regional Office for Development, VIMROD)

Where religious communities are directly affected by an emergency, the existing academic research tends to focus on the resources intrinsic to the community that may lead to resilience

in the face of such adversity (see, for example, Pargament and Cummings 2012). In contrast, in contexts where faith communities host displaced ‘others’, research typically concentrates on the *extrinsic*, physical resources of the faith community. For instance, a parish in Central African Republic allowed Jesuit Refugee Services to use a convent house in order to coordinate IDP responses, while local mosques have regularly been made available to organisations such as Islamic Relief to store emergency supplies and house displaced populations (IR-Indonesia *et al* 2011; also Parsitau 2011). In fact, religious buildings have long been associated with protection for displaced, exiled or fugitive individuals in the form of the tradition of ‘sanctuary.’ In recent decades, this tradition has seen a renaissance among faith communities seeking to respond to a perceived ‘worldwide government retreat from formal commitments to protection’ (Marfleet 2011: 452).

The relevance of the ‘faith’ of LFCs in providing basic services

Beyond a quantitative evaluation of ‘how much’ LFCs may contribute in material terms, key questions remain to be explored in further detail regarding the extent to which the specific faith identity and belief systems underpinning LFCs’ provision of basic services are pivotal in enhancing or hindering resilience amongst and within affected populations. That is to say, what, if any, is the significance of a local *faith* community providing basic services to affected communities, in contrast with a local community which does not identify itself and/or is not identified by others as a ‘faith’ community *per se*? While further research is required with reference to humanitarian settings in particular, the report ‘Working for God?’ (World Bank, 2008), an analysis of health services delivery by faith-based actors in Uganda, suggest that the ethos of service motivating LFCs engagement in service provision has a discernible impact on service quality. More broadly, religious communities often share common characteristics that can be seen to motivate involvement in basic service delivery, including active ethical teaching that instructs adherents to care for and meet the needs of the vulnerable.

Religions For Peace also argue that LFCs help to ensure services are provided in locally sensitive ways, stressing that: ‘Importantly, religious women bring indigenous knowledge of female culture, shared concerns with women and children as some of the most vulnerable persons in conflict situations’ (Survey Response, Barbara Ammariti, Religions For Peace).

UN agencies such as UNFPA are also acutely aware that the very definition of what may be considered to be a ‘basic need’ is intimately related to the faith-identity and belief system of affected communities. LFCs may be particularly well situated to recognise the extent to which ‘basic needs’ transcend secular organisations’ perceptions, as demonstrated in the case of Muslim women affected by the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, for whom headscarves were essential to maintain their dignity and a prerequisite to be able to access other services in public fora.

As the Tsunami struck in the early morning, women were dressed in whatever they were wearing indoors, in their homes. Some of them were very, very unhappy with the way that service delivery was provided: having to line up, and stand in a queue without having a headscarf to wear was very uncomfortable for them to do in front of other members of their community... It was very important, when we were designing what we call ‘dignity kits’ or ‘hygiene kits’, for us to put scarves in the kits. This made sure that they would at least have something that they could put on when they go out, in order to physically be able to access other services. (Stakeholder Interview, Henia Dakkak, UNFPA)

The divergence of LFCs' and international agencies' views of what may be considered to be a basic service is also illustrated by instances in which local faith communities may consider a prayer mat to be a more 'basic' requirement than food during Ramadan, or may ask international agencies to build a church, shrine or mosque before investing in other infrastructure or service delivery. UNHCR's initial reluctance to provide burial shrouds to enable valid and respectful ceremonial for Mozambicans dying in the refugee camps of Malawi in the early 1990s is particularly notable in this regard (Ager *et al* 1995).

In addition to boosting community resilience, LFCs distributing basic services can be seen to exhibit and promote their own resilience, as they position themselves as providers, rather than as victims. For instance, a group of Khmer refugees in Norway, inspired by the Theravada Buddhist *paramita* of generosity, raised money for Khmer people still in Cambodia. A study of this group concluded that their provision for others contributed to their own resilience as a refugee community (Overland and Yenn, 2007). Erma Lawson's study of survivors of Hurricane Katrina found similar reports: 'When I help another person, it helps me to take my mind off my problems' (2010).

Box 4: Protection spaces and protection by presence in emergency situations

As part of an emergency response, LFCs and FBOs can provide protection in at least two ways:

1. The physical space of a place of worship can provide physical protection;
2. LFCs and FBOs can offer protection by presence.

In the Jaffna District of Northern Sri Lanka, in 2006, as the resumption of armed conflict started to emerge, masked gunmen entered a small, isolated fishing village at night, entering one of the larger houses and killing all of the occupants. This act of terror had the desired impact intended by the perpetrators: the island's remaining occupants fled to the mainland.

Spontaneously the IDPs took refuge in the grounds of a place of worship. As a physical space demarcated by walls, and as a place of worship with a regular and constant flow of people, the displaced islanders experienced a better sense of security than on their isolated island location.

The fact that the land belonged to a religious organisation made it easier for UNHCR to secure their presence there, than it might have been had the land been owned by a different private entity.

(Survey response, Edward Benson, UNHCR)



Image 2: Anglican priest of the Diocese of Tamale, Ghana with local government officials responding to floods with food aid in 2012. Credit: Anglican Alliance

6 Emergency response: psychosocial support

Psychosocial support has emerged as a major area of humanitarian programming over the last two decades, with best practice in interventions now increasingly shaped by research (Psychosocial Working Group 2003) and inter-agency consultation (IASC 2007). Work is principally focused on the experience of crisis-affected communities with respect to the ‘psychological’ and the ‘social’ dimensions of their experience, and their mutual interaction. The Psychosocial Reference Centre of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2012) notes, for example, how:

The term ‘psychosocial’ refers to the close relationship between the individual and the collective aspects [of experience of humanitarian crisis]... ‘psychological’ effects are caused by a range of experiences that affect the emotions, behaviour, thoughts, memory and learning capacity of an individual. ... ‘Social’ effects are the shared experiences of disruptive events that affect the relations between people – not only as a result of the events but also of death, separation and sense of loss.

Approaches to psychosocial support have increasingly drawn upon the concept of resilience. The Psychosocial Reference Centre further notes:

Psychosocial support is an approach to victims of violence or natural disasters to foster resilience of both communities and individuals. It aims at easing resumption of normalcy and to prevent pathological consequences of potentially traumatic situations.

The relationship between psychosocial work and local faith communities is a complex one. On one hand the Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines governing work in the field urge agencies to ‘facilitate conditions for appropriate communal cultural, “*spiritual and religious healing*” is one of the key actions in minimum response in emergencies (IASC 2007, emphasis added), a somewhat rare injunction for engagement with local faith communities in humanitarian agency guidance. However, psychosocial programming in practice is typically much more likely to engage with schools or the health sector than directly with religious groups and congregations (IFRC Psychosocial Reference Centre 2012).

The basis of the ambivalence which humanitarian agencies hold towards religion is illustrated by Strang and Wessells’ widely cited work, ‘Religion as resource and risk: the double-edged sword for children in situations of armed conflict’ (2006). Fears that religion may promote agendas at variance with humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality remain deeply rooted within the sector (Ager and Ager 2011). However, there is growing evidence that the intrinsic psychosocial elements of religious faith may support resilience.

Faith communities’ understanding of the complexities of psychosocial issues and their place within the community, often with existing records of pastoral care, may particularly suit them to provide psychosocial support.

I think a lot of psychosocial support is being offered by faith organisations that are better and more suited to the community than, let us say, any programmes that you bring from outside without building on the types of coping mechanisms that the community already has. (Stakeholder Interview, Henia Dakkak, UNFPA)

There appear to be two bases of psychosocial support potentially provided by faith and faith communities in the context of crisis: one reflecting belief and meaning, the other reflecting religious practices.

Individuals hold certain beliefs that help them manage in adversity

It is widely asserted in academic literature not directly relating to humanitarian situations that holding specific religious beliefs frequently operates in support of resilience. Specific religious beliefs have been observed to foster resilience factors as measured on the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), including *control* (Pargament and Cummings 2010; Au *et al* 2011), *strong will/commitment* related to religious views or karma (Fernando, G.A. 2012), and *adaptation* (Buikstra *et al* 2010; Bulkley *et al* 2012). *Positivity* and *motivation* (Bowland 2011; Ai 2005) are further identified as vital elements of religious worldviews, alongside the ability to interpret challenging situations in the form of opportunities or gifts from God (Greef 2008).

Meanwhile, within humanitarianism, the resources of religious belief for coping and resilience have begun to be recognised. For instance, with reference to different ways of supporting refugees with mental health issues, UNHCR recognises that ‘sometimes their belief in god is more therapeutic than other interventions and they can better express their issues through their religion – through their spiritual beliefs we can help them find solutions’ (Survey Response, Urban Refugees Evaluation Yaounde, UNHCR). Furthermore, a 2009 study on resilience in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina by Glandon found that 50 percent of respondents said that their faith in God was critical in helping them cope with the aftermath

of the hurricane: ‘When things became aggravating, confusing, or depressing, they found solace in believing that there is, in fact, some greater design’ (2009: 54). Similarly, a 2011 study by Fernando and Hebert found that ‘faith in God and religious practice were described as the most significant resources for the seven women survivors of the Tsunami’ (2011: 6), with a woman describing her coping in the immediate aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 as follows:

What helped me survive the first 12 hours was prayer and faith because both my children were missing for that time. Then I was told that they were both found and that they were uninjured. I praise God for His goodness to me. (2011:7)

Religious coping, however, is not monolithic but is expressed differently in different contexts. Fernando’s 2012 study of resilience discussed resilience with Buddhist and Muslim participants from four Sri Lankan districts. While all participants affirmed the role of hope, patience, adaptation and willpower, only Muslims mentioned dependence on God, and only Sinhalese Buddhists expressed the importance of accepting one’s fate. Engagement with local faith communities must reflect sensitivity to such transcultural specificities (Ehnmark 1994; Lothe and Heggen 2003).

Given that the place of religion in resilience is so widely reported, it is conspicuously absent in the work on child resilience of Grotberg (2001), which spans 22 countries, 1,194 children and 2,204 adults. Fernando (2012) explains that Western definitions of resilience tend to overlook religious aspects, perhaps considering them outside an appropriate secular framing of humanitarianism. Rabbi Yossi Ives of Tag Development offered a parallel reading of this exclusion, suggesting:

The inner-resources that people draw upon because of a disaster are so often of a religious nature (or what we in the West would call ‘religious’) that they almost count as ‘standard’, so standard that we perhaps don’t think of them as faith-based at all, but rather simply as the instinctive reactions that one expects in such situations. (Stakeholder Interview, Yossi Ives, Tag Development)

Active religious practices provide psychosocial support and promote resilience

Psychosocial practices are embedded deeply in the practice of religious communities. Rituals and rites define passage through phases of life, communities united by belief systems offer mutual support, and respected leaders offer interpretations of life’s challenges and advise on the means of surviving them.

In the context of Zambia, Ministers and Pastors continued their religious practices within the community, leading services and conducting weddings and funerals throughout the course of the humanitarian situation. According to Sister Modgala, this was ‘the most important’ element of their role in promoting resilience. (Stakeholder Interview, Sister Mogdala)

In the literature search and survey responses, several practices emerged as common religious activities that can foster resilience in psychosocial terms:

1. Counselling

Offering counselling is a particularly widespread response to emergencies by faith communities. For instance, a religious Tearfund partner organisation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which was established when the staff of three small Christian NGOs were

themselves displaced, founded a trauma clinic for displaced women and girls who had been raped. Equally, in Negros Oriental (Philippines), when over 50 people were buried alive by a landslide, the clergy of the local diocese ‘provided counselling to those families affected, the church made a visit to the site and then we celebrated a holy mass in memory of those who died because of the landslide, and offered mass in the community where the landslide happened’ (Stakeholder Interview, Father Herbert Fadriquela, VIMROD).

Aten (2012) articulates an interdisciplinary/Christian integrative approach for psychologists to be involved in ‘disaster spiritual and emotional care’, arguing that ‘Spiritual and emotional support interventions’ by religious groups can operate as a sort of ‘psychological first aid.’

2. Prayer

Prayer, practicing peace, and compassion are identified as contributing to resilience and may be appropriately seen as a form of psychosocial response by religious communities to disasters (Fernando and Ferrari 2011; Greeff and Loubser 2008).

Ofra Ayalon’s 1998 study of children traumatised by war found that religious rituals can act therapeutically in recovery and resilience. Prayer can encourage children to tell their traumatic stories to God. Memorials for the dead, even metaphorical ones, are important psychosocial means of moving on after the death of loved ones (Ayalon 1998; Dyregrov & Raundalen 1995; Van der Hart 1986). Werner & Smith (cited in Walsh 2003) also found that the act of prayer is a source of resilience.

The Muslim ‘Prayer for Rain’ (salaat al-istisqaa’) is a voluntary community prayer that is often used to make collective supplication for rain and improved climatic conditions. As such, it is no different to the numerous other collective prayers that Muslims carry out on a daily basis, but it is somewhat distinct in so much as a community may actually gather in the open specifically for this prayer and use supplications handed down through tradition. Muslim communities also make regular collective prayers for the deceased, and for any other aspect of daily life in supplications after their normative five daily prayers.



Image 3: A temporary mosque in the form of hanging sheets in the Stadion Maguwoharjo IDP camp, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Credit: Lindsay Stark

With reference to her research with internally displaced female survivors of sexual and gender based violence in Kenya, Parsitau (2011: 508-509) reflects that ‘when I asked what they believed faith did for them, respondents suggested that faith had done more to improve their lives and morale than political programmes and promises. Prayers gave them hope to rise up again and to face the uncertainties confronting them.’ She quotes Grace, the leader of one of these prayer groups:

Look at us, we have lost everything we had, we don't even have shelter, we have been rejected by our neighbours while we are forgotten by our government. God is all we have now and we are going to call upon His name and He will hear us.

Case Study B: Developing a Community of Witness Programme in the context of the internal displacement crisis of 2010: Anglican Alliance and the Diocese of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka suffered a 28-year-long conflict between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The last phase of the conflict was between late 2008 and May 2009 before the final defeat of the LTTE leadership in the north-eastern parts of the country. This period saw a massive internal displacement of people, which generated a humanitarian crisis.

Approximately 300,000 people were caught in the middle of the confrontation in the north and north-eastern part of the country known as the Vanni, and fled to the districts of Mannar, Jaffna, Trincomalee and Vavuniya. In those areas the Diocese of Colombo had various parishes and was able to provide aid relief to the communities.

The Diocese established ‘Community of Witness and Welcome Centres’ to support people to deal with the trauma that they experienced. Clergy and community gathered together to discuss, reflect and pray on the nature of the witness that they were called upon to bear in this particular situation. Additionally, it provided a space for IDPs to talk, to share, read a newspaper and to rest. Many churches within the diocese also carried out solidarity visits to the affected communities.

The work of the Diocese evolved with the changing situation brought about by the gradual release of IDPs from the camps and the start of the resettlement process. The activities have now shifted from distribution of relief material to temporary shelters, cooking utensils and livelihood support. Responding to the need for pre-school education for children below five years, the Diocese set up five schools which doubled as nutritional feeding centres in Killinochchi, Dharmapuram and Pallai, as well as Uduthurai in the Jaffna district and Thaneerootru in the Mullaitivu district.

As a natural development from the ‘Community of Witness’ initiative in Cheddikulam, the centre started to be used for multiple purposes. Several programmes were carried out to raise awareness of common medical problems and it was also used as a base for befriending and counselling initiatives for widows and young mothers.

3. Therapeutic narrative

In many local faith communities, therapeutic narrative is used as a means of connection with the wider community, providing a source of hope in a context of suffering and loss:

The ability of a community to see their own role in the story of God in the world, especially in times of tragedy, provides a deep well of resilience that fosters hope and may help mitigate the damaging effects of trauma. (Holton 2010: 71)

This may be seen as a psychosocially valuable tool in interpreting events, solidifying positive community and individual identity and ultimately building resilience.

Faith may serve as a barrier or hindrance to resilience

Religious communities, however, are also seen to challenge the development of resilience, as it is understood through a psychosocial lens. The commonly raised concerns are, firstly, a lack of professional training in religious communities and secondly, that religious worldviews promote specific claims that hinder resilience.

1. LFCs lack sufficient training to provide on-going psychosocial support

While LFCs and faith leaders may play pivotal roles in the provision of psychosocial support, a number of respondents expressed a concern that such support systems may not be sustainable. One respondent noted, for example:

A lot of people in faith communities start to get involved in attempts at sort of mental health treatment or mental health counselling but they are sometimes well and truly over their heads. We see that a lot, because a lot of faith leaders in the faith communities we work in say: 'Look, we need more counselling skills, we need more skills to be able to help people with very serious depression'. My response is, 'Well, that might actually not be your role.' (Survey Response, Alison Schafer, World Vision)

2. Religious worldviews can be seen to promote beliefs that hinder resilience

Both secular and other religious communities may consider specific discourses and belief systems to be unacceptably detrimental to the goal of resilience promotion. The example *par excellence*, alluded to earlier, is the common religious belief that crises, either natural or conflict-based, exemplify divine punishment or testing of the affected community. Khalid Roy of Islamic Relief commented: 'This understanding is central to our worldview and yet it is totally unacceptable in academic and humanitarian discourse because it is seen as judgemental and/or superstitious'.

Alison Schafer of World Vision identifies such faith discourses as hindering psychosocial resilience:

In Sri Lanka, for example, faith communities may say things like 'This [the tsunami] has occurred because people have sinned'. And members of the community therefore believe that they have deserved it, or they've been bad, and that then shatters their sense of identity and their sense of wellbeing; I definitely say that is a hindrance.

In World Vision's work in contexts such as Sri Lanka, she indicated that her organisation encouraged local Christian faith leaders to present 'positive messages to communities', rather

than discourses relating to sin and punishment. Equally, shortly after the earthquake in Haiti, Schafer reflected that

...they were already talking about the sin of the people and that this was the wrath of God, and people were devastated, you could see people crying and howling in the church...it's the fire and brimstone perspective on faith as opposed to the loving and tenderness of faith.

In contrast, it has been argued that this very concept can in reality operate in promotion of resilience. Rabbi Yossi Ives, Chairman of Tag International Development, argues that the beliefs of religious communities are powerful factors in a community's response to crisis, and the idea of punishment for sin, which is 'commonly derided by Western ideas', in fact encourages communities and individuals to take personal responsibility for disaster. This responsibility can be an essential asset leading to changes in behaviour that mitigate negative consequences of the crisis and, importantly, the development of preparedness for possible future instances of disaster.

7 Facilitating transitional and durable solutions

In the aftermath of a crisis, when the majority of emergency and basic services have been completed, humanitarian agencies, governments and other organisations consider the complex question of finding solutions to meet the long-term needs of the affected communities. The nature of such transitional and durable solutions depends on the nature of the humanitarian situation in question. They may include, but are not limited to: conflict mitigation, peace-building, reconciliation and justice, and the three 'traditional durable solutions' commonly discussed in the context of forced migration – return, local integration and resettlement. The literature search and survey responses highlight several key means by which LFCs can play an important role in helping to bring about transitional and durable solutions.

LFCs are embedded in communities

Fountain *et al* (2004) highlight the role of the Catholic Diocese in responding to the 1998 Aitape tsunami, arguing that because the diocese was an established local institution, it was able to coordinate local infrastructure development more effectively than the absent local government:

[The Roman Catholic Diocese] became the major disaster relief organisation...with the Aitape Catholic Diocese Relief Committee even carrying out work that was traditionally reserved solely for governmental authorities, including funding the construction of basic infrastructure, such as roads and bridges.

Furthermore, LFCs 'benefit from a high level of trust among local communities' (Gaillard and Texier 2010: 83) and may be better attuned to the needs of a community than external factors supporting the development of locally tailored solutions (Survey Response, Christian Aid; Ferris 2005).

LFCs are well positioned to engage with controversial issues

LFCs may have access to issues that are considered too sensitive, taboo or stigmatised to openly share with external actors. Parsitau (2011: 507), discussing the role of LFCs and personal faith in the lives of Kikuyu victims of SGBV in Kenya, highlights how faith and faith communities were the only actors able to provide trauma counselling:

Christian churches across Kenya provided prayers and free counselling to people traumatized by the crisis. In my view, this is where the uncelebrated role of both FBOs and individual faith in the lives of people traumatized by crisis lies.

LFCs may ease integration through facilitating cross-border networks

UNHCR reports that in urban or non-camp settings, in Ghana and Liberia for example, refugees have established relationships with host communities through shared religious beliefs and praying together. The Anglican Diocese of Makamba in Burundi further exemplifies this trend, forming 'peace committees' in 2005 to help repatriates from Tanzania and those returning from internal displacement to reintegrate into local communities. This involved mobilising local support for them, often gathering food and clothes for newly arrived families from the community, directing them to the Land Commission and local authorities in cases where there were issues related to land, and showing people the boundaries of their land. They also constructed new homes for hundreds of returning families, through a partnership with Christian Aid (Survey Response, Helen Stawski, Archbishop of Canterbury's International Development Secretariat).

LFCs are often crucial operational partners assisting larger agencies

The significant physical and human resources of LFCs have made them crucial operational partners in delivering durable solutions after crisis. For example, in Myanmar and Malaysia, UNHCR relies on LFCs to provide information to register asylum seekers and other forced migrants in order to help them attain individual and family-based temporary or permanent solutions to displacement.

Similarly, a series of joint Religions for Peace/UNICEF projects in Kenya, Liberia and the Philippines have seen partnership with LFCs to promote durable solutions ranging from conflict mitigation to child protection. One such project, based in Kenya, aimed to 'strengthen the capacity (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) of religious leaders and local communities to provide services that prevent conflict and protect children' by revitalising an existing local religious community, the Isiolo Interfaith Network (Survey Response, Barbara Ammariti, Religions for Peace).

Partiality may hinder LFCs role in transitional and durable solutions

Notwithstanding the above contributions, the literature search and survey responses identified a number of concerns at the role of LFCs in supporting resettlement processes. The particular identity, clearly defined worldviews and membership limitations that characterise most LFCs offer a stark contrast to the widely agreed values of humanitarian engagement. Where humanitarianism seeks to be impartial, apolitical and neutral, LFCs are partial by definition, often politically entrenched and often themselves actors in the humanitarian situation in question.

It is widely protested that religious communities are seen to take advantage of crises as an opportunity for proselytising fragile communities (Gaillard 2006). This contravenes the widely held value of the unconditionality of service provision and is seen to jeopardise transitional solutions.

As will be discussed in greater detail in the following section, certain LFCs may also hinder gender inclusion in planning for and implementing diverse transitional and durable solutions. For example, some informants to this study recognised that certain religious leaders in Pakistan and Afghanistan had hindered women's involvement in recovery and reconstruction, with cultural barriers being invoked to limit women's work in this area (Survey response, Islamic Relief Worldwide). A Christian organisation also highlighted that church hierarchies could pose a specific challenge, particularly with reference to gender and minority group inclusion in decision-making (Survey Response, Christian Aid).

While the embeddedness of LFCs within communities can work in support of developing and implementing solutions, proximity and establishment can be – to repeat the concept of earlier – a double-edged sword. A country director working with an Islamic humanitarian organisation summarised the commonly raised risks of working with embedded religious communities (see Box 5). Respondents with other religious affiliations shared similar concerns.

Box 5: An Islamic perspective on challenges of working with religious communities

Politicisation: There is often a tendency for staff to identify with Islamic political parties, as in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan, which may put the organisation in conflict with the government if it is of a different political persuasion, with others who do not support Islamic political parties, and with non-Muslims.

Nepotism: Looking after family members may lead to relatives being offered contracts, no action being taken against relatives when infringements take place, and aid being given to relatives.

Corruption: Endemic and difficult to prevent, even in Islamic organisations.

Internal conflict: Discrimination due to sectarian/ethnic differences; informal links between groups and individuals in field and head offices; discrimination against women; judgment about piety and dress; domination of financial issues over and above the needs of and service to beneficiaries; religious hypocrisy by using religion to 'score points.'

8 LFCs and participation: structures, networks and inclusion

As highlighted in the preceding discussions, LFCs have planned for and responded to humanitarian situations in unique and diverse ways, drawing on their assets, networks and social capital. While the fluidity and contextual nature of their responses cannot be easily categorised, a number of general themes emerge: mobilising volunteers, working in partnership, and training local community members.

Mobilising volunteers

First, LFCs can mobilise volunteers and networks of local community members to prepare and respond to humanitarian situations, including through drawing on assets, local networks, social capital or their social standing among the community. Indeed, it is now widely recognised that having a 'faith label' can help build trust among those they serve, thus having the potential to extend the reach and efficiency of LFCs (e.g. Kirmani and Khan 2008; Palmer 2001; De Cordier 2009). Partner FBOs reported that many LFCs took the initiative in responding to unmet needs identified within their community, something that is more easily done among community members that know one another well. The *Journal of Refugee Studies*, for example, noted a Catholic church that took up an offering (collection) for 'vulnerables' in a refugee camp in Zambia. Likewise Islamic Relief respondents reported that local imams in Bangladesh conducted awareness-raising in one example, and in another instance, local labourers and farmers from Hindu communities used their carts to rescue people trapped in flood waters in 2011. The now extensive literature on Hurricane Katrina also demonstrates how local church leaders from African American communities were able to mobilise reconstruction efforts and recovery needs for survivors of the disaster (see Cain and Barthelémy 2007; De Vita *et al* 2008; Elvey 2010; Hilton 2008; Marks *et al* 2009; Putnam *et al* 2012; Tausch *et al* 2011)

Training community members

LFCs also work to train local community members in preparing for and responding to humanitarian crises, and can both identify potential leaders and adapt trainings, skills and frameworks to the local context. Islamic Relief in Pakistan, for example, reported conducting trainings and recruiting local leaders to assist in their work, illustrated by the teacher of the Qur'an in Karachi (see Box 3) who returned to his village during the 2010 floods to help with the rescue and recovery efforts, and assisted Islamic Relief in helping to form a village committee to provide relief in the wake of the disaster. With reference to relief and early recovery and rehabilitation in IDP areas, a particularly pertinent case is that of a young woman who was trained in hygiene issues and now teaches children in her village, both through her local faith community and Islamic Relief.

Working in partnership

In addition, LFCs can work in partnership with FBOs, although to varying degrees (Ferris 2005, 2011; Goldsmith 2006). ACT Alliance, for example, works with LFCs in over 50 countries on behalf of a large body of Christian churches around the world, responding to humanitarian crises ranging from famine to refugee influxes. Similarly, Islamic Relief Worldwide-Sudan notes that the Muslim Charities Forum has helped establish, and has partnered with, a number of local organisations working with faith groups in a humanitarian capacity; inter alia, they helped develop the Somali Relief and Development Forum and

Yemeni Relief and Development Forum, both of which were able to reach communities which were inaccessible to the large organisation due to the degree of insecurity in the areas affected. FBOs and LFCs have not just partnered along religious lines, but have also worked in interfaith capacities. Muslim Aid and the United Methodist Committee on Relief, for example, partnered together in 2006 to provide humanitarian aid to victims of Sri Lanka's civil war (see Clarke 2008; also Benedetti 2006 and Bouta *et al* 2005 for more on NGO partnerships of different faiths in the local context).

These are a selection of the ways in which LFCs prepare for and respond to humanitarian situations in light of their assets, networks and social capital, thereby taking important steps toward finding both transition and durable solutions. This may be geared toward reconstruction, integration, returning home, or readjusting to life after a disaster (for more on refugee-related durable solutions and LFC assistance with resettlement, see Eby *et al* 2011; Hirschman 2004; Snyder 2011; Wilson 2011).

Following the arrival of international agencies and organisations, there were a number of reports of humanitarian agencies failing (implicitly, or at times explicitly and even purposefully) to recognise the potential for LFCs to continue providing diverse forms of support, assistance and protection. This is often as a result of concerns that LFCs do not comply with 'professional standards' or because international secular agencies perceive LFCs as potentially undermining the international humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and universality. Many examples were provided of LFCs having provided significant forms of support to affected communities – as in the case of Haiti, for example – only to then be implicitly or explicitly excluded or marginalised by international actors.

There are, indeed, some limitations in the relationships between LFCs and FBOs that can serve as challenges to cooperating and/or helping people find durable solutions to their situation. For example, LFCs may have different priorities than larger international FBOs, which are more likely to be concerned with adhering to international humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality, as well as professional standards of transparency and accountability. Indeed, an LFC may not share the same priorities, and may also answer to a different hierarchy. For example, a local church organisation may answer to the church hierarchy within the country, and potentially be more concerned with conversion, evangelism and church growth and carrying out humanitarian acts as a part of their faith, rather than explicitly acting in adherence to a code of human rights or international standards. A large FBO, on the other hand, may answer to donor pressures and while it may share some similar faith principles, may have vastly different priorities when it comes to day-to-day work. One large FBO respondent noted how their partner LFC did excellent work, but that they desired Bibles and church building materials alongside humanitarian materials, a request which the FBO was unable to fulfil. Similarly, issues such as gender equality or minority inclusion may not necessarily be shared by an LFC in the same way they might be shared with an INGO.

Challenges to inclusion

International organisations and large FBOs often follow strict codes to maximise the inclusion of diverse minority groups and women throughout the planning, delivery and assessment phases of their programmes. Just as these codes are at times not fully implemented in secular humanitarian settings, there are many challenges to the inclusion of minorities across the

spectrum of faith-based humanitarian settings, including amongst both institutionalised FBOs and local faith communities.

Box 6: Examples of processes of exclusion

In the context of Zambia, Sister Modgala indicated that local faith-based organisations and communities were ‘proactive’ in improving the situation for women in accessing health care, arguing that this trend was notable ‘across faith groups’. In her experience, however, exclusion was most perceptible in relation to homosexuality: ‘This was clear from the way certain people spoke about homosexuality and in light of a “fear of homosexuality.”’

(Stakeholder Interview, Sister Modgala)

Alison Schafer of World Vision in turn reflected on faith communities’ prioritisation of members of their own faith, rather than aid delivery being universal: ‘It is like a pecking order: we look after our own first and then we look after the others. On the one hand, I think that’s a bit sad, but on the other hand I think that local faith communities function a little bit like families, and I know that I would look out for my family before I look out for others. In part, I think it’s natural, and in other parts, I think it’s a bit of shame.’

(Survey Response, Alison Schafer, World Vision International)

On the one hand, it is worth noting that a recent survey by the Organization for Refugee Asylum and Migration (ORAM) of attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) asylum seekers concludes that FBOs have no better or worse attitudes than secular institutions on providing services to LGBTI people (Survey Response, UNHCR-Geneva). Equally, as noted throughout the diverse examples included above, there are numerous instances demonstrating that women in LFCs have been active participants in the delivery of services and the implementation of diverse programmes across DRR, emergency responses and the development of both transitional and durable solutions. Religious women have ensured that services are provided in locally sensitive ways, women’s church groups have driven peace-building initiatives in India, and female survivors of SGBV have designed and implemented support mechanisms in IDP camps in Kenya. Equally, Islamic Relief reports that Bangladeshi women ‘play a crucial role in communities like South Kabilpur’:

They are actively involved in village disaster committees, and serve as what Niger calls ‘first responders’ – the first line of defence for their own families in the event of flooding. Each ensures that her home is equipped with its own flood survival kit – a large basket stored on a high shelf that contains everything needed to fight back when disaster strikes. (Islamic Relief 2012)

Equally, Father Herbert of VIMROD reflected in interview that in some contexts women and children may be more actively involved in the implementation of programmes than men:

[i]n the context of VIMROD’s partner organisations in Central Visayas (Philippines), as men work in the urban centres they have limited time to participate in community-based and community-managed resilience efforts, and so it is the women and the children who participate in community efforts to promote resilience in humanitarian situations. (Stakeholder Interview, Father Herbert, VIMROD)

However, Islamic Relief Worldwide notes that in its operations in Sudan, ‘women’s participation in planning stages is considered low in comparison to implementation stages’ (Survey Response, Islamic Relief Worldwide). Equally, other respondents noted that church hierarchies in certain contexts across Sub-Saharan Africa fostered the exclusion of minorities and women in decision-making. These examples appear to reflect an implicit division between an accepted view of women as ‘carers’ and a greater reluctance to maximise women’s roles as ‘decision-makers.’ Beyond the distinction between ‘caring’ and ‘decision-making’, a range of respondents also noted that women were often excluded from assisting with DRR and transitional and durable solutions (e.g. Tearfund Survey Response, Islamic Relief Pakistan Survey Response), while they were more likely to be accepted as providing diverse forms of emergency response.

While many respondents indicated that women played a key role in raising-awareness in LFC partnerships with FBOs, FBOs’ reflections on their work with LFCs also included references to local religious or cultural practices which were identified as a fundamental clash of principles. For instance, Islamic Relief’s responses from Pakistan and Afghanistan specified that a major hindrance existed when religious leaders placed limits on women’s involvement in specific initiatives. Even more so, Islamic Relief suggested that:

Mainstream Muslims usually let down victims of rape – where a woman is traumatised by an overwhelming event and receives no mitigation from those around her in the form of sympathy, empathy and (sometimes) even no punishment for the perpetrator. This is a tragic example of a faith practice making things worse for the victims of disaster. (Survey Response, Islamic Relief)

Overall, further inquiry into the inclusion/exclusion of minority groups and women is needed, both to understand such processes of inclusion and exclusion, but also in order to provide an evidence base to assess the validity of widely held assumptions by secular actors that local faith communities are automatically more ‘conservative’ and ‘patriarchal’ than their secular counterparts: for instance, the assumption that LFCs and FBOs will be more reluctant to support LGBTI asylum-seekers than secular actors (refuted by the above-mentioned ORAM survey), or that LFCs and faith leaders will necessarily hinder women’s and girls’ participation in diverse activities.

Whilst not an example of female inclusion/exclusion as humanitarian providers, but rather of the need to carefully assess different actors’ assumptions regarding girls’ inclusion/exclusion as beneficiaries of humanitarian programmes, a particularly pertinent example was offered by Tag Development with reference to an outdoor activity project which they had planned to implement with male and female Muslim children in Azerbaijan:

When we went to plan the programme, we were told that girls couldn’t participate...But actually when it came to it, there was no such problem and whoever had spoken had spoken out of turn...the people they were quoting were clearly far more open than they had initially suggested and they did allow girls to participate...Indeed, what was said when we were planning the programme was that the religious leaders would never permit this, but, in fact, I don’t know whether the religious leaders even knew what was going on or not. In the end, there was no restriction whatsoever: the girls took full part in everything, and there was no exclusion, certainly not that I’m aware of. (Survey Response, Yossi Ives, Tag Development)

Assumptions regarding LFCs' approaches to female participation as aid and service providers, and/or as beneficiaries therefore need further analysis with reference to a wider array of case studies from a variety of faith perspectives.

Case Study C: Contemporary and historical examples of FBO origins in LFC response

In North East Haiti a group of four Roman Catholic nuns sheltered and fed refugees from the stricken urban areas after the 2010 earthquake. They fed and provided clothing for those in need. It then transpired that this small group was motivated to do more than just basic service provision and decided to set up their own local faith organisation and apply for funding to expand and develop their recovery work.

Although LFCs are often geographically isolated during a disaster, they are linked to a larger support system through their faith. Once the story of the nuns' responses in Haiti was known, international Catholic agencies offered their support in helping them to set up an official organisation.

In a similar way, CAFOD's roots are embedded in the actions of three Catholic women who in 1960 organised the first Family Fast Day. They were responding to a request from the people of the Dominica to help raise funds for a mother and baby healthcare programme. Elspeth Orchard (1919-2005), one of the first Fast Day organisers, recollected:

We were very keen that we should do it not just as a giving thing, but as a praying thing. We should really make the effort to remember people in the Third World, not just by giving them food and things, but by doing what we could to support them. We weren't doing anything special, we were just doing what we thought we ought to do, remembering that we are all God's children.

During this first fast day they raised far more than expected, more than £6000. This persuaded the hierarchy to set up a new fund for charitable work overseas and in 1962 CAFOD was established (CAFOD 2012).

Although they were only three Catholic women, they were able to do so much through the wider Catholic system. They were supported by strangers with similar beliefs and able to start a process that now has a 50 year legacy working to reduce poverty across the globe.

9 Emerging best practice for LFC/FBO partnerships

Survey responses from humanitarian organisations provided many examples of the opportunities for, and challenges of, engagement with LFCs and FBOs in the context of humanitarian emergencies. These insights were frequently elaborated upon in subsequent stakeholder interviews. Although 'best practices' may not yet be firmly established through rigorous evaluations, the following commendations are suggested on the basis of their support from multiple sources.

Establish relationships with national faith-based organisations and associations

A common theme of these suggested best practices lies in recognising the potential mediating role of national faith-based organisations in the relationship between large, international humanitarian organisations (secular or faith-based) and local faith communities. This is not to say that international humanitarian actors cannot reach directly into local communities; indeed, during some emergencies it is vital for them to do so, including forming relationships directly with LFCs. However, such connections will often be facilitated through national FBOs that have capacities suited to engagement with international humanitarian response as well as relationships with local faith communities.

National religious associations provide a particularly valuable mechanism for connecting international and national government responses with faith communities. A number of agencies reported the benefits of connecting with such associations, with established links with both governmental structures and local faith communities.

Engage religious communities as civil society actors

Strategies for civil society engagement should purposefully include faith-based organisations. This is not necessarily to assert that FBOs have always – through their practice of faith – a unique contribution to make in promoting community resilience. Evidence reviewed above suggests that this may be the case. But the inclusion of FBOs in civil society consultation is not necessarily predicated on their unique contribution. Rather it is mandated by the inappropriateness of their exclusion from such consultation. A reticence to engage with groups motivated by faith will, in many settings, mean lack of utilisation of significant civil society capacity.

There are some suggestions of an increasing acceptance of the role of FBOs as civil society actors, with faith groups working alongside and complementing the work of non-faith-based groupings.

Box 7: Illustration of the role of national faith-based organisations and associations

VIMROD works with five partner communities in Negros Oriental (Philippines), where the magnitude 6.9 earthquake happened [in February 2012]). Of those five partners, two were most affected by the earthquake, meaning most of its members, their houses and livelihoods were destroyed... Those people from the three partners who were not affected by the earthquake volunteered to provide free labour to reconstruct the houses. VIMROD [partnerships] from other communities therefore provided carpenters and some women helped by cooking food. People who were affected by the earthquake, whose houses were destroyed, didn't spend any money for materials, food, or labour, because it was collectively addressed by the organisation, by VIMROD, by the Philippine Independent Church through the support of the local government unit in Negros Oriental and also, most of all, through the support of the Anglican Board of Missions Australia, which was facilitated by the Episcopal Church in the Philippines.

(Stakeholder Interview, Father Herbert Fadriquela, VIMROD/Mindanao)

Christian Aid reported utilising the linkage and profile of associations such as Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) in India and the Kenya National Council of Churches and their relationship with their national governments in supporting humanitarian response. Another Christian Aid group, Yakkum Emergency Unit (YEU), based in Indonesia, works regionally on health issues not only with the governments in Burma and Malaysia, but also with UN bodies.

(Survey Responses, Christian Aid)

The establishment in 2011 of the Somali Humanitarian Operational Consortium (SHOC) by the Somali Relief and Development Forum – in partnership with the Muslim Charities Forum and the Humanitarian Forum – has established a basis for coordination with 52 local development organisations in Somalia. Such national associations also provide a basis for connecting with international actors – including UN bodies and international NGOs, faith-based and otherwise.

(Survey Response, Muslim Charities Forum)

Box 8: Local faith communities as key civil society actors

UNHCR is promoting further engagement with FBOs, including through the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection held in Geneva in December 2012. This ongoing initiative builds on the engagement of faith-based groups within the International Detention Coalition – a grouping of institutions from over 50 countries – and is informed by a sense of shared values with faith communities on such issues as 'sanctuary and sustenance, protection of the vulnerable, empowering communities, respect for life and dignity, family and social cohesion, and peace and harmony.'

In **Somalia**, local faith groups are seen as having particular capability in negotiating issues of clan affiliation and allegiance that preclude the engagement of many other actors.

Tearfund in Northern Kenya worked with local church leaders in drought preparedness and peace building. A Church Mobilisation Officer (CMO) was appointed in November 2006 to 'build the capacity of local churches to be involved in a response to the drought.' The CMO worked with 13 Christian churches in Marsabit district.

Churches in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, successfully lobbied the UN envoy who came to learn more about the situation after people lost their homes in the government's demolition of the city's slums.

(Above sources, Survey Response, UNHCR, Muslim Charities, and Tearfund respectively)

There was also a wide range of 'good practices' cited which were relevant for work with LFCs, but which could be seen as more generally appropriate for engagement with community structures and organisations (see Box 9).

Box 9: Principles for community engagement

- Islamic Relief Pakistan noted the importance of 'involving communities at all stages of programmes i.e. planning, execution and monitoring etc. and giving respect to local norms, ideas and building good relationships.'
- Foster relationships of respect and understanding between INGOs and LFC communities, especially leaders.

(Above sources, Survey Response, Islamic Relief Pakistan and Tearfund)

Agencies generally referred to the value of local faith communities in shaping programming to local context, with respect to objectives, values and approach.

Connect with the language and practice of faith communities

Although many respondents recognised the value of working through national and other representative bodies for the purpose of coordination, connection with the language and

practice of local communities was regularly suggested as crucial to the overall quality of humanitarian engagement. Such connection with local faith communities provides access to valuable insights and resources supporting resilience and recovery.

Integral to many faith communities are practices of mutual social and economic support, almsgiving, hospitality, and lifesaving support to marginalised groups. The institutional role of an LFC in the broader community may include learning, healing, seeking justice, and/or contributions to key livelihoods. These practices, all highly relevant to resilience, are understood by LFCs through the language and narratives of their faith, and not primarily through an idiom derived from a different faith or secular perspective.

As with many other community institutions, in this case international humanitarian response is prone to one of two errors: to ignore LFC institutions and practices, or to try to instrumentalise them as a delivery mechanism for external aid flows (usually first recasting them in generic, secular language). The former misses opportunities for humanitarian partnership. The latter can damage the LFC institutions themselves, providing strong incentives away from voluntary self-mobilisation and toward the mission (and language) of the external donor. The best option is to connect with the language and practice of faith communities, sensitively looking for ways to support and extend them without subverting them.

Speaking the language of faith is not limited to individuals or organisations which share the faith of the LFC. In Afghanistan, the evangelical Protestant agency Tearfund worked with local imams to counter fatalistic attitudes toward disaster through community discussions of the story of Nuh (who received a divine call to actively prepare for a great flood) and of *hadith* which criticised passivity in the face of disaster. Secular agencies can similarly lead constructive discussions on specific local faith narratives, experiences, and values in areas of common interest, without implying that the external agency itself shares a faith orientation.

FBOs which *do* share both faith convictions and a faith language with LFCs, however, have a unique capacity to galvanise LFC action. They can often credibly appeal to a common narrative or value set, pointing the LFC to relevant aspects of their shared tradition. For example, the Pentecostal Mission in the Andaman Islands initially debated whether engaging in disaster relief would be a ‘worldly’ distraction from their central spiritual/ethical mission (Survey Response, Tearfund). Partly through interaction with Tearfund, which emphasised the Biblical mandate for relief, the Mission threw itself into post-tsunami aid in 2004.

Adapt to the structure and nature of religious communities

The structure and operations of highly professionalised humanitarian agencies – singular and centralised with a clear ‘chain of command’ – may not naturally dovetail with the operations of LFCs, many of which comprise multiple local, decentralised communities each with a leadership structure and tradition of its own.

In survey responses, agencies emphasised such issues as the need to ‘adapt agreements to the organisational culture of the church,’ (Survey Response, Tearfund). One organisational consequence for Tearfund was the appointment of one officer to take responsibility for mobilising and liaising with the faith community.

Tearfund further highlighted the importance of supporting the scalability of programmes initiated by religious groups. For example, a peace process dealing with ethnic violence in northeast India was mediated by a group of six Christian FBOs, and reconciliation was pursued from community to government level by Tearfund supporting pastors from each of the affected communities. Secondly, a district-level disaster resilience process initiated by a national FBO in the state of Bihar was recognised by the National Disaster Management Authority and other Indian NGOs and government agencies as exceptional, and promoted for rollout on a national scale. Thirdly, agricultural techniques pioneered by a local church in Zimbabwe, the River of Life, were promoted nationally through a Conservation Agriculture Task Force that included the government, major donors and multilateral agencies (DFID, World Bank). The conservation agriculture techniques were also promoted internationally through FBOs and church networks extending into South Africa, Zambia, Malawi, and other nearby countries.

It is widely recognised that the asymmetry of structure between INGOs, local FBOs and LFCs may be challenging, but the strong grassroots character of LFCs – one source of asymmetry – may also be the key asset that makes partnership worthwhile (Social Science Research Council 2011).

Invest in LFCs' capacity

While LFCs may have strengths to bring in partnering with INGOs, NGOs and governmental agencies, they may equally exhibit weakness in key areas such as professionalism, development expertise and advanced preparedness.

A Tearfund report following Cyclone Nargis in Burma/Myanmar in May 2008, recommended that local faith communities, in dialogue with agency partners, identify key areas of weakness and build capacity and raise professional standards within the LFCs if possible, or by seconding staff for training or management roles. Tearfund identified two local church partners in the region through which the majority of its assistance was delivered, a strategy they concluded was the right one, providing the partners were willing to identify weaknesses and allow Tearfund to 'fill in' capacity gaps (Tearfund 2008).

10 Conclusions

LFCs' impact on resilience

Evidence suggests that LFCs utilise their pre-existing local networks and buildings, plus their shared identity, social vision, religious narratives and public leaders, to mobilise, coordinate, register, train, console, encourage and help resolve conflict. This approach builds on existing community coping mechanisms and assets, harnesses social capital, and thus strengthens community resilience. Concerns remain around the use of religious values to promote fatalism, inaction or scapegoating, and the risks of conditionality and proselytising when LFC engage in the delivery of services.

- Further inquiry is required into the added value of working with LFCs, including the use of social capital in community based responses, the importance of religious values

and beliefs for responding to and preparing for disasters, and comparative cost effectiveness of building on existing structure and networks.

- Further inquiry is also essential to understand the processes of inclusion and exclusion by LFCs, and to critically assess generalised assumptions about LFC conservatism or exclusivity.

LFCs' presence and influence at community level

Respondents varied in their assessments of whether LFCs were inherently part of local community structures in predominantly religious societies, or whether such partnerships must be defined by engagement with religious specialists (clergy, scholars) or distinctly religious institutions (temple, church, mosque). This illustrates that in many parts of the world, the community's religious life is not readily distinguishable from its broader social and cultural life; it also suggests that many organisations are already using LFC capacities in humanitarian activities, perhaps without recognising the fact.

- Research is required to map and analyse the multiple informal ways LFCs are already contributing to the protection of displaced persons.
- This would appropriately include documentation of perspectives and experiences from a 'southern perspective' not fully explored in this preliminary scoping work, as well as participatory research in real time

LFCs' partnerships with humanitarian organisations

Interviews with humanitarian agencies showed that many already engage to greater or lesser degrees with LFCs. However, barriers remain to deepening and expanding these partnerships, such as conflicting secular and religious worldviews, issues of technical competency and independence from local political dynamics.

- Further inquiry is recommended to critically interrogate barriers to partnership, such as the extent to which LFCs are already meeting international standards in delivery and their levels of access and engagement with humanitarian coordinating mechanisms.
- This will include exploring mechanisms to strengthen 'religious literacy' within the humanitarian sector, as well as means to strengthen the capacity of local faith communities for engagement with national and international humanitarian actors.

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Annex 1: Survey Matrix Used for Data Collection

Section A. Resilience, faith and humanitarianism

Opening Question: How does your organisation understand the term “resilience” in relation to its programmes and operations?

Please complete as many boxes as possible in the following matrix (there is no expectation that you will be able to complete all of the boxes below).

	<u>Disaster Resilience</u> Including, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk mitigation • Risk reduction • Preparedness • Risk management • Adaptation • Early recovery 	<u>Emergency Response</u> Including, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic service delivery • Psychosocial support 	<u>Transitional and Durable Solutions</u> Including, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict mitigation, peace-building, reconciliation, justice... • Return (“home”) • Local Integration (in host context) • Resettlement (in third location)
Example(s) of LFCs/FBOs within <u>affected communities promoting</u> personal/community resilience in... →			
Example(s) of LFCs/FBOs within <u>affected communities hindering</u> personal/community resilience in ... →			
Example(s) of LFCs/FBOs in <u>host communities promoting</u> personal/community resilience in ... →			
Example(s) of LFCs/FBOs in <u>host communities hindering</u> personal/community resilience in ... →			

Section B. LFCs and participation: structures, networks and inclusion

Please complete as many boxes as possible in the following matrix (there is no expectation that you will be able to complete all of the boxes below).

Please indicate whether your answers to the following questions relate to the same examples outlined in Section A, or whether you are referring to different examples.

	Disaster Resilience	Emergency Response	Transitional and Durable Solutions
How have LFCs utilised their assets/networks/social capital/volunteer force to plan and implement their responses to... →			
Example(s) of local faith networks and faith leaders being integrated into FBO planning process and implementation process in... →			
Example(s) of local faith networks and faith leaders NOT being integrated into FBO planning process and implementation process in... →			
Example(s) of women in LFCs being integrated into the planning process and implementation process in... →			
Example(s) of women in LFCs NOT being integrated into the planning process and implementation process in... →			

Section C. LFC/FBO partnerships and best practice

Please complete as many boxes as possible in the following matrix (there is no expectation that you will be able to complete all of the boxes below).

Please indicate whether your answers to the following questions relate to the same examples outlined in Section A, or whether you are referring to different examples.

	Disaster Resilience	Emergency Response	Transitional and Durable Solutions
Example(s) of LFC/FBOs being able to forge partnerships with UN, INGOs, local or national government, other faiths, other civil society organisations in... →			
What are the characteristics of a successful partnership mechanism in... → (Please illustrate with examples)			
Instances of best practices for engagement with LFC/FBO in disaster/humanitarian situations in... →			

Section D: Requests for Additional Information

Resilience, Faith and Humanitarian Contexts:

We would be grateful if you could provide your views on the following questions:

We plan to draw upon the following definition as “resilience” in this scoping study:

The ability to anticipate, withstand and bounce back from external pressures and shocks – whether physical, emotional, economic, or disaster or conflict related – in ways that avoid a fundamental loss of identity and maintain core functions.⁶

1. What are your views regarding this definition?

2. What, if anything, would you change, add, remove, clarify, etc., in the proposed definition?

3. If you would like to propose an alternative definition for the term “resilience”, please include below.

Organogram(s):

We would be grateful if you could prepare one or two organograms which visually represent the connections between local faith communities on the one hand, and local or national FBOs, other civil society organisations, other faith communities, local or national government, INGOS and/or UN Agencies on the other; for example, the connections (communication, reporting mechanisms, financial transfers, etc.) which exist between faith communities at the local/grassroots level and other organisations, communities, agencies etc. ranging from local, national, regional, international, etc.

These organograms may offer:

- a) A visual representation of the ways in which local faith networks and faith leaders are connected to FBOs active in responding to humanitarian situations (planning and implementation); or
- b) A visual representation of the ways in which LFC and/or FBOs have forged partnerships with UN, INGOS, local or national government, other faiths, other civil society organisations in humanitarian situations (planning and implementation); etc.

⁶ UNICEF (2012) *Fostering Resilience, Protecting Children: UNICEF in Humanitarian Action*.

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Supplementary Examples/Illustrations:

In addition to the examples requested in the matrix above, please add further details or outlines of any supplementary examples which you believe provide further insights into the ways in which LFCs / local-FBOs enhance or hinder the resilience of affected communities and/or host communities in humanitarian settings.

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Relevant materials/references:

Please indicate any specific materials (grey literature, publications, weblinks, etc.) which you consider provide key insights into the ways in which LFCs / local-FBOs enhance or hinder the resilience of affected communities and/or host communities in humanitarian settings.

1. Own organisation/agency
2. Partner organisation/agency
3. Other organisation/agency