

EVIDENCE BRIEF 5

The Secretary General's report *One Humanity: Shared Responsibility* recognises the unprecedented challenges presented by current humanitarian crises and calls for 'accepting and acting upon our individual and shared responsibilities [to] be the central theme of

the World Humanitarian Summit'. The report identifies five core responsibilities that will be the focus of discussion and proposed action. The JLIF&LC – in support of the WHS Special Event on Humanitarianism and Religious Engagement – has prepared evidence briefs linked to each of these responsibilities. Each brief summarises key evidence regarding the role of local faith communities (LFCs) and faith-based organisations (FBOs) with respect to that responsibility, provides links to key research and documentation, and highlights significant issues and strategies for dialogue to secure more effective engagement with religious actors in this area.



© World Bank Group

Investing in humanity means supporting local faith communities' work in reducing the impact of crises

CORE RESPONSIBILITY 5: Financing: Invest in Humanity

This responsibility recognises that 'Accepting and acting upon our shared responsibilities for humanity requires political, institutional, and financial investment'. There are three specific calls to action in the SG's report of particular relevance for religious engagement: '**invest in local capacities** to manage their own risks and reduce the impact of crises'; '**increase investment in peaceful and inclusive societies and institutions**'; and the call for a new way of working for the international community that '**promotes and incentivises collective outcomes**' and allocates roles and resources depending on 'which actor has the comparative advantage rather than funding in a way that promotes fragmentation'.

¹ See <http://www.unhcr.org/539ef28b9.pdf>

² DFID, Faith Partnership Principles: *Working Effectively with Faith Groups to Fight Global Poverty*, June 26, 2012, London: DFID.

³ See also *Restoring Humanity: Global Voices Calling for Action*. Synthesis of the consultation process for the WHS, 2016.

⁴ Hoggood, S. and Vinjamuri, L. Faith in Markets, in J. Gross Stein (ed) *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism*, 2012, New York: Oxford University Press, 38–64.

⁵ Robinson, M. and Hanmer, S. *Partnering with Religious Communities for Children*, 2012, New York: UNICEF, 9.

⁶ Schipper, E. Religion and Belief Systems: Drivers of Vulnerability, Entry Points for Resilience Building? in Bankoff, G. et al (ed) *Cultures and Disasters: Understanding Cultural Framings in Disaster Risk Reduction*, 2015, Abingdon: Routledge, 152.

⁷ Fiddian-Qasimiyeh, E. and Ager, A. Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Humanitarian Situations: A Scoping Study, Oxford: JLIF&LC RSC Working Paper, 2013, 23.

While it has been widely recognised that local faith communities are important, influential, and integral actors throughout the disaster cycle, this acknowledgement has not been matched by investment in LFCs. The UNSG's Agenda for Humanity notes that less than 0.2% of humanitarian financing globally goes to local organisations. This brief reviews the critical role of LFCs in emergency response and examples of the mechanisms being proposed to increase investment in them.

Local faith communities invest significant resources in crisis response and risk reduction

Studies clearly establish that LFCs are one of the key local-level institutions that invest their resources in the management of crises. For

example, the UNHCR *Partnership Note on FBOs, LFCs and Faith Leaders*¹ and DFID's *Faith Partnership Principles*² acknowledge that LFCs are major service providers, particularly in fragile states.³ In contexts where other social institutions have little capacity due to conflict and weak government structures, local faith communities can become significant resource providers when emergencies arise. It is the local connections of these faith communities that differentiate them from larger, international faith-based organisations, which have more diversified access to resources.⁴

Several studies have documented the range of roles LFCs regularly play in emergencies.^{5,6,7} For example, Robinson and Hanmer note that local congregations and groups, even without

institutional support from international FBOs or other networks, have several capacities that they utilise for emergency response:

- “Local religious leaders can be effective change agents, mobilizing congregations by influencing attitudes and behaviours and inspiring action, and engaging in advocacy.
- Congregational members can be mobilised locally or across borders to donate, volunteer, advocate, or monitor their communities.

- Houses of worship can serve as the infrastructure for gathering people or as a distribution channel.”

In a study of the work of local faith-based groups in Irbid, Jordan with Syrian refugees, Nakib and Ager⁸ highlight the resources of local faith communities mobilised in terms of social capital, human capital, spiritual capital, and material capital. Particularly in regards to human and material capital, their research demonstrates how access to networks of reliable volunteers and to physical space, including mosques, churches, hospitals, and schools, meant that LFCs were often at the forefront of response activities for refugees in the area.

This study also documented the significant financial capital mobilised through faith communities, often utilising international linkages. A recent review by UNOCHA showed 37 of the top 250 organisations appealing for funds for humanitarian response to be faith-based organisations.⁹



© Hope Miyagi

Case Study: The Baptist Church in Miyagi

Following the earthquake and tsunami in Japan in 2011, the Shiogama Bible Baptist Church served all in their community, regardless of faith. They provided resources to help rebuild a local Buddhist school and provide teaching. They also acted as bridge for external actors by providing housing and team leadership for volunteers from the outside.¹⁰

⁸ Nakib, S. E. and Ager, A. Local Faith Community and Related Civil Society Engagement in Humanitarian Response with Syrian Refugees in Irbid, Jordan: Report to the Henry Luce Foundation, 2015, New York: Columbia University, MSPH.

⁹ Center for Faith for the Common Good. *Faith-Based Financing*. <http://www.faithforcommongood.org/resources.html>

¹⁰ World Evangelical Alliance, *A Call to Commitment and Partnership: A World Evangelical Alliance Brief on the Evangelical Community and Humanitarian Development*, July 31, 2015.

¹¹ Sauv , S., Farrell, S., and Michau, L. *Through the Voice of Faith: Learning to Inspire Domestic Violence Prevention Through Faith Institutions*, 2013, Maynooth, Ireland & Kampala, Uganda: Tr caire and Raising Voices.

¹² Nzapalainga, D., Layama, O. K. and Gbangou, N. G. Religious Leaders Unite to Disarm Hearts and Minds, *Forced Migration Review*, 2014, 48, 4.

¹³ Joakim, E. P. and White, R. S. Exploring the Impact of Religious Beliefs, Leadership, and Networks on Response and Recovery of Disaster-Affected Populations: A Case Study from Indonesia, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 2015, 30, no. 2, 193–212.

Local faith communities are local institutions that can mobilise the public to promote peace

Religious authority maintains an influence on attitudes and behaviours in societies. LFCs can challenge negative behaviours, as well as promote peaceful and inclusive societies. There is growing evidence of the ways in which LFCs have successfully advocated for change. Research has shown that LFCs can be key allies in the area of gender-based violence in particular. For example, a three-year project in Uganda worked through priests’ prayers and sermons to reduce domestic violence and spread awareness about HIV/AIDS.¹¹

Having a legitimate and authoritative voice in the eyes of the community is central to these advocacy messages. In many societies, LFCs have more trust and authority than the

government. Leaders from the Central African Inter-Religious Platform affirmed, “Churches and mosques have more legitimacy than the national government, and reach deep into the heart of the country [CAR].”¹² Evidence increasingly suggests the critical importance of engaging with religious institutions to further messages of peace and inclusivity for programme success. In a study following the earthquake in Yogyakarta in Indonesia in 2006, researchers concluded that it is important for faith and non-faith actors to unify messages during the recovery phase, building on the authority and responsibility carried by religious leaders.¹³

The resilience people find in their faith is also particularly important in assuaging the damaging effects of conflict. In Sri Lanka children who had experienced conflict and were living in Christian and Buddhist orphanages felt

their faith helped with “their personal wellbeing and sense of belonging”, as well as learning “to value peace and compassion.”¹⁴ Strengthening the deployment of resources from LFCs for psychological support, community engagement, and cultural change requires political and institutional investment from other humanitarian actors.

Without engagement with LFCs, external organisations risk wasted energy and investment on irrelevant and inappropriate assistance. Research in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan found that the affected population felt local FBOs more fully knew their needs because they had spent more time in the community.¹⁵ Their position meant they had a more holistic response to the full range of needs, including the emotional and spiritual, as well as purely material. An example from Tearfund in Mozambique shows that this engagement is crucial for locally relevant outcomes to be found. Following an outbreak of cholera, and bearing in mind the local distrust of the Ministry of Health, a church in Gurue District successfully acted as the main agent for providing chlorine treatment to the community, taking on this additional role to ensure acceptance among local people.¹⁶

Operating through LFCs can represent significant return on investment. One study in Malawi indicated that promoting drought-resilient agricultural techniques through local congregations brought a 24-fold return in net benefits for local communities to help them



overcome food insecurity.¹⁷ However, if LFCs, like national and local NGOs, are not able to engage with the humanitarian system, these opportunities are lost.¹⁸

Case Study: The Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan (ECSSS)

During the current crisis in South Sudan, ECSSS has worked to bring relief to affected communities, often reaching areas that others have not reached. They have also worked with schools and communities on trauma healing and peace-building, enabling parents to send their children back to school and them to resume income-generating activities. The messages from grassroots peace-building and reconciliation were shared with political, intellectual and other leaders urging them to build trust and overcome differences.

New mechanisms are required to enable response

The UNSG’s report acknowledges that to attain collective outcomes financing needs to recognize the comparative advantage of specific actors. Local faith communities and groups are generally marginalised in existing financing mechanisms. Much of the comparative advantage that they bring can be lost if they are – at best – constrained to a role of implementing agent of an international agency’s programme.⁸ There is growing recognition amongst INGOs of the need for structural reform of financing mechanisms – and broader

changes in organizational practices – to enable the localisation of response that is being widely called for.¹⁹

Additionally, there is significant potential for more effective partnership regarding the mobilization of resources by religious organizations. In addition to the significant fund-raising capacity of FBOs⁹ noted earlier, this includes mechanisms of Islamic social finance. Exploring one specific source of such potential, a recent report noted the “clear parallels to be drawn between the eight individual categories of eligible recipients of Zakat listed in the Qur’an and people in need of humanitarian assistance.”²⁰

¹⁴ Fernando, C. and Ferrari, M. Spirituality and Resilience in Children of War in Sri Lanka, *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 2011, 13, 1.

¹⁵ Wilkinson, O. Faith and Resilience after Disaster: The Case of Typhoon Haiyan, 2015, Dublin: Misesan Cara.

¹⁶ World Evangelical Alliance, A Call to Commitment and Partnership: A World Evangelical Alliance Brief on the Evangelical Community and Humanitarian Development, July 31, 2015. 20.

¹⁷ Tearfund, *Investing in Communities: The benefits and costs of building resilience for food security in Malawi*. 2010, Teddington.

¹⁸ Ramalingam et al., 2013, see Key Sources.

¹⁹ See www.charter4change.org regarding INGO commitments to passing a greater proportion of funds to local actors and adopting working practices less undermining of local capacities

²⁰ Stirk, C., 2015, see Key Sources.

Core Commitments and Key Actions

WHS Core Commitments²¹ relevant to aspects of the core responsibility 'Financing: Invest in Humanity' considered in this brief include:

Core Commitment 1: To increase and diversify global support and share of resources

Core Commitment 2: To empower national and local humanitarian action by increasing the share of financing accessible to local and national actors

Core Commitment 5: To broaden and adapt global instruments and approaches to meet urgent needs, reduce risk and vulnerability and increase resilience.

The evidence reviewed regarding local faith communities and faith-based organisations suggests the following Key Actions in support of these commitments:

1. Recognise and leverage existing LFC investments. LFCs provide many resources that are useful at all stages of the disaster cycle from DRR activities to long-term recovery. They are loci of locally based social, human, spiritual, material and financial capital. How can international humanitarian actors support these types of capital without distorting these contributions? Activities should include:

- provision of financial support for DRR focused on LFC infrastructure
- assessment of LFC resource contribution in evaluations of humanitarian response
- development of diversified funding mechanisms accessible to local actors

- improve channels between Zakat – and other mechanisms of financing from religious groups and networks – and the international humanitarian system¹⁹

2. Partner with LFCs to mobilize for change.

What are the humanitarian issues in a community that are also relevant to religious beliefs? LFCs have critical human resources for the promotion of change. Activities should include:

- sensitisation programmes with LFCs
- capacity-building training exercises for LFC volunteers
- sensitisation of staff in international organisations on the value of LFCs in localised humanitarian response

3. Evolve new ways of working. International actors come equipped with considerable resources compared to LFCs. These resources create a power imbalance that can have a distorting or corrupting influence on LFCs. How can engagement locally proceed so as to minimise this influence and respect the autonomy and integrity of local actors? Activities should include:

- adopt pre-existing local coordination mechanisms and institutional structures rather than duplicating provision
- INGOs to commit to passing a minimum of 20% of humanitarian funds directly to local and national NGOs¹⁸
- allocate a far greater percentage of UN managed Country Based Pooled Funds to local and national actors

Key Sources

Ramalingam, B., Gray, B. and Cerruti, G. *Missed opportunities: The case for strengthening national and local partnership-based humanitarian responses*. 2013. London: Christian Aid, CAFOD, Oxfam, Tearfund and ActionAid.

Stirk, C. *An Act of Faith: Humanitarian Financing and Zakat*. GHA, London, 2015. http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ONLINE-Zakat_report_V9a.pdf

The JLIF&LC has collated all submissions related to religion and faith made during the course of WHS consultation at: <http://jliflc.com/world-humanitarian-summit-resources/>

A fuller annotated bibliography on sources relevant to the engagement of local faith communities in humanitarian response is available at: <http://jliflc.com/resources/the-evidence-base-faith-religion-and-humanitarian-action-annotated-bibliography/>

This evidence brief was drafted on behalf of the JLIF&LC Resilience Hub by Olivia Wilkinson (Trinity College Dublin), Alastair Ager (QMU, Edinburgh), Anne Street (CAFOD), Sadia Kidwai (Islamic Relief Worldwide) and Janice Proud (Anglican Alliance). The views expressed are those of the drafting team alone and do not represent the formal position of the JLIF&LC or any of its affiliated organisations.

²¹ Full, updated details are available on the WHS site at <http://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/summit/roundtables>