

**FAITH-BASED
ORGANIZATIONS
FORUM**

ON MULTI-RELIGIOUS
COOPERATION FOR
HUMANITARIAN RELIEF,
DEVELOPMENT
AND PEACE

FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS FORUM

on Multi-religious Cooperation for
Humanitarian Relief, Development and Peace

Report and Recommendations

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Hosted by Islamic Relief-Canada

ABOUT THE FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS FORUM

on Multi-religious Cooperation for Humanitarian Relief, Development and Peace

When disaster strikes—a tsunami, a hurricane, a civil war—faith-based humanitarian and relief agencies are on the ground, often within hours. They bring water, food, shelter, and medical care. And, very often, they provide the spiritual guidance and counseling that is needed to help survivors cope with the unimaginable. In many cases, they are operating effective, long-term development programs. Collectively, these faith-based organizations provide an invaluable service.

Coordination mechanisms exist to link the humanitarian and development programs of some of the faith communities. Often they have an ecumenical orientation, for example ACT International (Protestant) and Caritas Internationalis (Catholic). Might there be a way for faith-based organizations to cooperate across multiple religions to add to the quality of humanitarian and development responses following protocols that are acceptable to all faith communities?

With the goal of exploring this question, *Religions for Peace* has convened representatives from faith-based organizations working in the fields of humanitarian relief, development and peace (May 2006, Washington D.C.; August 2006, Kyoto) to explore the viability of and interest in an ongoing forum for exploration and dialogue.

Participants in these consultations confirmed the value of an informal forum for dialogue and exploration, and recommended that *Religions for Peace* convene an annual meeting of the FBO Forum on Multi-religious Cooperation.

The “Faith-based Organizations Forum on Multi-religious Cooperation for Humanitarian Relief, Development and Peace,” known as the FBO Forum, is a loosely structured, informal network of organizations engaged in an ongoing dialogue dedicated to:

1. **Building trust** by encouraging multi-religious cooperation and providing a forum in which relationships can be strengthened
2. **Creating a learning forum** to share best practices of FBO collaborations to help ensure continuous improvement in the benefit delivery of humanitarian aid, community development and peace building. Case studies could be geographically or thematically focused
3. **Facilitating joint advocacy** at the local, national, regional or global level to change public opinion and influence government policies; and on a regional and global basis to influence international and United Nations initiatives; conduct joint research to develop advocacy positions
4. **Promoting joint research** that advances multi-religious cooperation including the development of principles, codes of conduct and cases studies

The 2009 Forum was co-hosted by Islamic Relief Canada in Toronto. Previous meetings were held in London in 2007 co-hosted the Hindu Aid and in Frankfurt in 2008 with Humanity First-Germany.

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Mr. Alex Lisman for producing the YouTube video, which can be viewed on Religions for Peace's website.

Finally, thank you to **all the participants** who traveled from near and far to attend the FBO Forum and contribute to this ongoing dialogue.

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Executive Summary

The third annual FBO Forum was convened in Toronto by *Religions for Peace* and hosted by Islamic Relief-Canada. Representatives of twenty five organizations representing Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh religious communities gathered for the program. While the majority were from North America, eight participants traveled from African and Europe. One-third of the group had attended a previous FBO Forum.

The FBO Forum follows a case-study format; presentations of on-the-ground projects are followed by small group discussions. This year's agenda was designed to delve more deeply in several of the themes that emerged from previous sessions:

- How do FBOs define themselves, and with what consequences?
- Assessing the added-value of multi-religious cooperation when working IN and ON conflict;
- Identify the value of and opportunities for multi-religious advocacy.

Key Observations

- The review of “typologies” of faith-based humanitarian and development organizations underscored how FBO are pulled between two roles: their functional or service-delivery role and their motivational or healing (prophetic) role. A key differential is the extent to which these organizations are linked institutionally to churches, mosques and temples.
- Whether an organization is working “in” environments or working “on” conflict issues, the success any initiative is dependent upon building strong partnerships with local actors based on trust.
- There are both benefits and challenges to multi-religious cooperation. Further, it can serve dual functions: to deliver needed services and overcome divisions in society. As one participant stated, “Service unites.” At the same time, collaboration requires a level of coordination that is difficult to justify financially. However, when it is supported at a high-level, it can mobilize other assets and give legitimacy to project work that might be seen as undermining local initiatives.
- The best advocacy strategies have three components: they are founded on research conducted in partnership with affected communities, balanced by engagement with policy-makers and advanced by giving voice in public fora. Using these criteria, this is a strong case for multi-religious advocacy initiatives is great. By marrying their values (bearing witness and taking testimony) to science (engaging in participatory advocacy research), they have the potential for powerful results.

Conclusions

A major development in the 2009 program was the agreement among participants to explore the formation of a Multi-religious Advocacy Forum at the United Nations.

Religions for Peace was asked to facilitate the formation of Steering Committee to explore the potential processes for joint advocacy and themes that could be taken up by a wide range of participating organizations. A set of recommendations for action will be prepared for the 2010 FBO Forum.

SESSION C: How do FBO's Define Themselves, and with What Consequences?

Presenter: John Siebert, Director, Ploughshares

Our faith identities profoundly influence the shape and purposes of our faith-based humanitarian and development organizations – how they are structured, what they deliver, who they serve and with whom they partner. No two faith-based organizations are alike, and our differences may impact the way we relate to each other on the ground. This session was designed to elicit a conversation around the consequences of how we define ourselves as FBOs. Is there a need for FBOs to increase their understanding of one another? Can this lead to better communication and cooperation?

To prepare for this session, the group was introduced to the work of INTRAC, a training and research consultancy that supports organizations involved in international development and relief. INTRAC has researched how faith identity is “interpreted and implemented in organisational life and relationships.” A recent INTRAC paper cites two sets of typologies to that serve to define and differentiate FBOs¹.

The first set of typologies, developed by J. Sider and colleagues, relates to how faith-based organizations are structured and the relationship between structure, mission, governance and programs. The second set of typologies, developed by G. Clarke, addresses the values that drive FBOs. These behavioral manifestations are more difficult to ascertain as they relate to the spiritual dimension of humanitarian work by an organization's leaders, members and volunteers. The typologies include attributes that are unflattering. The issue of prosthelytizing arises here.

John Siebert asked the group to reflect on the typologies and state those that best define their organizations. Most of the participants found it easy to identify a structural typology and, in fact, the majority felt they combined elements of several typologies. The values-based typologies were more challenging for the group. Spiritual dimensions affect the perceptions of the organization by both insiders and outsiders.” Insiders, or people from a faith community, are concerned whether their associated FBOs are living by the faith. Outsiders, who may support the work and are often the beneficiaries of programs, might be uncomfortable with some aspects of the spiritual dimension, namely the boundary between professing one's faith and prosthelytizing.

Response: Yaser Haddara, Islamic Relief-Canada

Generational changes can dilute the identity of organizations. An organization founded several decades ago will evolve with the times and environment. How it articulates identity is key. Identity needs to reflect the culture of the organization, the values of the people doing the work. It needs to reflect who you are serving – are you exclusive to certain groups or open and inclusive? Islamic Relief is built to “operationalize” faith but serves everyone without preference for faith background. Islamic Relief

¹ INTRAC Praxis Paper 22, What is Distinctive About FBOs? How European FBOs define and operationalise their faith; Rick James, February 2009. (The typologies were developed by J. Sider, and G. Clarke, respectively) Sider, J and Unruh, H.R. (2004) “Typology of Religious Characteristics of Social Service and Educational Organizations and Programs,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, (2004; 33; 109) Clarke, G and Jennings M (2008) *Development, Civil Society and Faith-based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular* Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke

delivers the message, delivers aid and helps those in need. What are we doing on the ground to ensure there is no proselytizing in aid delivery? We are communicating at all levels. We are conducting monitoring and oversight internally, and it is done by grantees and grantors. We build partnerships with other groups to build trust. For example with other faith communities like the Mormon church and with governments.

Response: Rob van Drimmelen, APRODEV

APRODEV is a network of 17 ecumenical development and humanitarian aid organisations in Europe which work closely together in the context of the World Council of Churches. The main task of APRODEV is to influence European Union development and related policies. As a network, it is not “operational in the field.” In the typologies given by Sider and Clarke, the various APRODEV members are dispersed over different categories. Where the members are in the different typologies depends to some extent, but not exclusively, on how they are organisationally linked to churches [and mosques and temples] as institutions.

APRODEV would be ill advised to emphasise its ecumenical identity too much in its daily dealings with the various EU institutions as the EU institutional context is highly influenced by the French concept of ‘laïcité’, which originally stood for a strict separation between church and state, and nowadays means a separation between religion and state (or EU institutions). There are, however, other ways we refer to our faith-based identity. These have more to do with our organizational points of view than what motivates and inspires us. We normally take a functional rather than a motivational approach.

The vast majority of APRODEV partners are working with actors close to local realities. This provides those who are part of the ecumenical movement with the unique possibility to have their ears close to the ground and to engage. Thus, our activities have the potential of being more relevant, more effective and more efficient. In this sense, we are, like most faith-based development and humanitarian organisations, different from organisations like Doctors without Borders (who do excellent work). “We” are present before, during and after a crisis.

SIDER’S FBO TYPOLOGY

FAITH-PERMEATED: the connection is evident at all levels of mission, staffing, governance and support. The religious dimension is essential to program effectiveness.

FAITH-CENTRED: founded for religious purpose, remain strongly connected but participants can readily opt out of religious elements

FAITH-AFFILIATED: retain influence of founders, but do not require staff to affirm religious beliefs or practices (except for some board and leaders). They may incorporate little or no explicitly religious content, may affirm faith in a general way and make spiritual resources available to participants.

FAITH-BACKGROUND: look and act like secular NGOs. They have a historical tie to faith tradition. Religious beliefs may motivate some staff, but this is not considered in selection.

FAITH-SECULAR PARTNERSHIP: whereby an FBO works together with secular agencies to create a temporary hybrid that resembles faith background.

CLARKE’S FBO TYPOLOGY

PASSIVE: Faith is subsidiary to broader humanitarian principles as a motivation for action and in mobilising staff and supporters and plays a secondary role in identifying, helping or working with beneficiaries and partners.

ACTIVE: Faith provides an important and explicit motivation for action and in mobilizing staff and supporters. It plays a direct role in identifying, helping or working with beneficiaries and partners, although there is no discrimination against non-believers and the organisation supports multi-faith cooperation.

PERSUASIVE: Faith provides an important and explicit motivation for action and in mobilising staff and supporters. Plays a significant role in identifying, helping or working with beneficiaries and partners and provides the dominant basis for engagement. Aims to bring new converts to the faith or to advance the faith at the expense of others;

EXCLUSIVE: Faith provides the principal or overriding motivation for action and in mobilizing staff and supporters. It provides the principal or sole consideration in identifying beneficiaries. Social and political engagement is rooted in the faith and is often militant or violent and directed at one or more rival faiths.

Five features define the APRODEV network: a global reach, strong and committed constituencies, like-minded member organisations, continuity, and independence. APRODEV and its member organisations are in an excellent position to engage convincingly, credibly and effectively in lobby and advocacy vis-à-vis the European Union, thereby putting their faith into action.

The importance of the interactions between religion and development, and religion and politics is increasingly recognised. APRODEV and its members are, in principle, well placed to discern the role of religion and to engage in policies and activities that enhance the positive role religion can play in improving the livelihoods of people. Inter-religious dialogue is of paramount importance in this respect.

Sometimes you hear a juxtaposition being made between “faith-based” and “professional.” Faith-based organisations are per definition professional in the original sense of the word: they profess their faith and beliefs through their identity and the activities. They are, however, also professional in that the members can build on decades of expertise of working closely together with local partner organisations in the areas of development and humanitarian aid.

Group Discussion: John Siebert posed a set of questions for small group discussion. Following are the questions and summary of responses.

What value does faith add to the performance of and perception of a faith-based organization?

- Faith-based organization work through local churches and present before, during and after crises. Their responses are tailor-made for the situation by people who are familiar with and sensitive to the context.
- They have strong and committed ties to local constituencies.
- Members (people engaging in this work) have similar ethos which creates a kind of coherence in a network. They feel called to the issues and taking action, which is an advantage
- FBOs bring continuity; they are not working on a single issue but represent a broad array of issues that relate to the totality of humanity.
- People who work for them bring decades of professional experience to the work at the same time as they carry their faith identity and profess their faith within their work

How do faith-based organizations address the challenge of working for their faith while avoiding the perceptions of or actually engaging in prosthelytizing?

- Define your organizational principles and adhere to them
- Conduct monitoring and oversight on multiple levels – by beneficiaries, grantees, donors – and support the free exchange of communication
- Build trust with other groups through action partnerships
- Adhere to codes of conducts

How do we find balance between our values and the conditions of funding and our living our values?

- Opt out of difficult funding sources
- Deal with conditions and shape an agenda that is least harmful on the ground
- Set limits on amount of funding from particular sources
- Educate audiences through advocacy
- Be clear about our principles and adhere to them
- Be consistent in our approach
- Be strategically ambiguous

Session D: Working “in” and “on” Conflict

Presenter: Dayna Brown, Director of the Listening Project CDA Collaborative Learning Projects

Many of our organizations are working in conflict zones on projects that range from humanitarian interventions (working **in** conflict) to peace building and mediation interventions (working **on** conflict). This session was designed to continue the discussion raised in 2008. The session began with a presentation by Dayna Brown on the collaborative learning methodology used by CDA for over 20 years. This methodology has been applied to in a number of research projects including the Listening Project, which was introduced to the group.

The Listening Project is a comprehensive and systematic exploration of the ideas and insights of people who live in societies that have been on the recipient side of international assistance (humanitarian aid, development cooperation, peace-building activities, human rights work, environmental conservation, etc.) The main findings of the Listening Project were presented for reflection and as a basis for group discussion:

1. People appreciate international assistance, and are often surprised that there are others willing and able to help without even knowing them.
2. The systems and structures of international assistance (the “business model”) are more focused on the *efficient delivery of goods and services* than on *relationships*.
3. People in recipient societies place high values on the *presence* of international assistance agencies, saying that “being here matters.”
4. People in recipient societies want to “discuss together, decide together, and work together.”
5. External agendas, priorities, fads, and trends determine the types of assistance people receive and are able to access, and are often disconnected to the realities of the situation on the ground.
6. The systems of international assistance *bias the ways that agencies and aid workers listen* and do not listen, what they listen to, where and when they listen, and to whom they listen.

The group was invited to form small groups to consider three questions: Do FBOs approach providing assistance differently? If so, how? What are the implications for your work and how you identify your organization, especially in areas of conflict? What could be gained by working together more and how could this have a positive impact on local conflicts? The following summarizes the main points raised in the group.

Do FBOs approach providing assistance differently? If so, how?

A recurring refrain within the group was the long-term commitment or “presence” that FBOs have in relations to other development actors. FBOs have links through congregational networks that give them a holistic understand of the context and circumstances in which they work. Their commitment tends to be long-term and defined by long-term partnerships.

All the participants spoke of the need to build in structure for local partnerships, raised earlier, was reiterated. “Engaging for partnership and connection is of highest importance.” “Relationships drive our work.” “Human dignity is of primary value.” “Listening to beneficiaries makes us better learners.” “One needs to hear not just listen.”

The group discerned three “levels” of presence:

1. Physically present but not connected: This is the least desirable form of presence and one that tends to ignore the human-centered values of development. FBOs tend not to engage in this kind of presence but in some circumstances it happens.
2. Physically present and connected: Interventions are based on human-centered values and engagement with local partners is given high priority. The majority of participants work from this perspective. But long-term physical presence can be expensive and lead to duplication of efforts or worse, dependency.
3. Program presence at a distance: This is the most progressive form of presence. At its core, it aims to strengthen the roles and capacities of our local partners by providing guidance at a distance followed by periodic or ad-hoc visits. It respects the autonomy, knowledge and capabilities of those at the center of development.

There was acknowledgement that not all faith-organizations are alike and some are fostering division and dissent. The examples of Chechnya and Lebanon were given as examples where local actor/partners on the ground may have been acting impartially or acting in cooperation with perpetrators of violence. “Our organizations are attached to churches that are part of the problem.” “What are the trade-offs between good work (serving in times of humanitarian need) and wrong doing (not following the principles of Do No Harm)?” “As long as religious institutions are important in society, it is foolish to ignore them.”

What could be gained by working together more and how could this have a positive impact on local conflicts?

There was considerable agreement that partnerships among faith-based organizations could have a positive impact. “Relationships and partnerships among service organizations can lead to better outcomes.” “The end value is human dignity is taken seriously.” “Partnership is unavoidably vital because it avoids dilution and duplication.” “Multi-religious team signal trust and confidence.” For successful partnerships, partners “need to create a mechanism together and have a shared appreciation and understanding of the context.” “We need to learn to listen and re-tune our ears in a multi-religious context.” Several participants raised up the need to increase communications in sustaining partnerships. “Identifying partnerships and communicating well is important.” “We need to increase communication with partners.” “We need education in each other’s faiths.” We work with partners that share the same values and can share assets.” “Organizations (in partnerships) should specialize and compliment one another.”

The challenges of partnership were also noted. “Coordination depends on circumstances.” “The choices (for determining interventions and identifying partners) are enormous and difficult.” “It’s a mixed-bag of countries, issues, interventions. Some NGOs put the human-values at the center, others don’t.” “The context and timing defines the interventions, whether its emergency response, reconstruction or long-term development.” “We have to consider the relationships between organizations working in long-term development and those working in emergency response.” “We can’t separate the situation from the type of assistance and the speed of the issue.”

The varying mission and structures of faith-based organizations shape how they approach situations. And funders often have a considerable role in determining operations on the ground. “Faith-based

values may be more important at the “collection level” where donors make decisions based on their faith and values.”

What are the implications for your work and how you identify your organization, especially in areas of conflict?

The reality that the “business model” and “efficiency effectiveness” criteria are driving much of humanitarian and development work was a major focus for the group. This trend is often at odds with the kind of presence FBOs prefer to have on the ground. “The business model is inescapable because there is a huge amount of funding flowing to the field.”

There was strong agreement that adhering to faith-based values does not mean FBOs are working at odds with best business practices. “NGOs on the ground are often accused of a lack of competence but competence and compassion can go together.” “How language is used to frame this is essential; you can use the language of scripture and compassion to frame an issue or cause and still be operationally efficient.” “We can be faith-inspired but business-focused.” “If organizations are compassionate about their cause, their faith-affiliation shouldn’t matter. Many secular NGOs have human-centered values. Many secular organizations were founded on spiritual values.”

The group acknowledged that sometime their organizations are faced with contradictory challenges. “Do No Harm and other principles are taken seriously but it doesn’t make it easy in the field – you can’t be completely impartial.” “The language of business can get in the way.” “Efficiency effectiveness criteria often blocks religious engagement.”

One participant’s comment brought it all together: “The bottom line of service delivery organizations is partnerships and trust.”

SESSION E: Building and Activating Local Multi-Religious Platforms

Presenters: [Joshua Kitakule, Secretary General of the Interreligious Council of Uganda](#)
[Gisle Kvanvig, Norwegian Church Aid](#)

This session focused on how multi-religious partnerships and platforms have been initiated and mobilized to serve humanitarian and development efforts. The intent was to draw “lessons learned” and possibly identify geographical areas where concrete steps could be taken to work with existing multi-religious platforms or to create new ones with local partners where they do not currently exist. The stage was set with illustrations of two multi-religious platforms that have been instrumental in facilitating multi-religious approaches to humanitarian, development and advocacy efforts.

[Interreligious Council of Uganda](#)

Mr. Joshua Kitakule gave a history of the Interreligious Councils of Uganda, which was formed in 2000 as an umbrella under which religious communities could collaborate to address Uganda’s most pressing issues – the high prevalence rate of HIV and the ongoing conflict in Northern Uganda.

The IRC-U is comprised of five major faith communities as well as several minority communities. As a national platform, it is able to promote the sharing of knowledge among religious communities and to foster partnerships among its members and other civil society organizations that translate to concrete action on the ground.

The IRC-U is actively engaged in addressing the humanitarian needs and conditions of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Kenya, DRC, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan as well as IDPs from the north. It is advocating for the peaceful resolution of conflict. It is mobilizing material support from its member communities. It is also serving as the secretariat for the Great Lakes Inter-religious Network (GL IRN), a regional entity that fosters collaboration and information sharing among inter-religious councils in Rwanda, Burundi, DRC and Kenya.

The IRC-U has an impressive record in the field of HIV/AIDS care, prevention and treatment. It’s programs are reaching thousands of Ugandans with services ranging from testing and counseling (160,000 people), palliative care (45,000), AVR therapy, and care for orphans and vulnerable children (12,000). More than 3,000 religious leaders have been sensitized to the needs and circumstances of people living with HIV/AIDS. Further, the IRC-U is a lead player in civil society advocacy efforts.

The IRC-U is not competing with its member religious communities for resources. They have their own channels that remain intact. The IRC-U is receiving funds from the government and other bilateral agencies.

The IRC-U demonstrates the power of multi-religious collaboration that can be effective at national and sub-regional levels.

[NCA’s experiences in Tanzania and Pakistan](#)

Gisle Kvanvig provided two very different multi-religious initiatives that it supported. NCA partnered with *Religions for Peace-Tanzania* on a mining advocacy project. *Religions for Peace-Tanzania* is a national inter-religious council, with representatives from all over the country. There are 30 inter-

religious district councils that support groups on the local level that work with loans and savings schemes, budget monitoring of public expenditures, and HIV/AIDS, and to a lesser extent the mining industry. This structure makes it possible for local groups to call on support from the district and national councils in their work, which gives them more clout.

The mining industry case is an interesting example of how a multi faith platform can work successfully. NCA worked with the district councils because the national council, only recently established, was considered to be too fragile to bear the brunt of the mining industry's counter offensive and taking on this project might have been detrimental to its development. Their goal was to mobilize the community to advocate for the end of destructive mining practices and legal and financial practices that impinge on the rights of local residents.

The three main religious leaders of the Muslims, Protestants and Catholics spearheaded the campaign, which interestingly started with a listening exercise. The three leaders visited the mining communities together and were exposed to the grievances of the communities that pertained to environmental degradation, land ownership, forced migration, and tax flight. NCA acted as a resource partner and at times facilitator, without taking anything away from the efforts of our partners. NCA brought lawyers and an environmental team Tanzania to advise the religious leaders on legal aspects of the mining contracts, taxes and company conduct. NCA also provided funding and contributed to the advocacy campaign by bringing the issue to the attention of the international media, as well as Norwegian politicians. One key result was that Norway's sovereign wealth fund withdrew their investments from the mining company, Barrick Gold. This is an ongoing issue and a lot of work remains.

NCA's experience with multi-religious cooperation in Pakistan was very different. The initiative combined an integrated approach to emergency aid, long-term development and peacebuilding. They worked with the World Councils of Religions, a multi-faith platform formed in 2005 with religious leaders representing Sunni and Shia Muslims as well as Sikh, Hindu and Christian minorities communities. The issues this group is dealing with include conflict mediation, madrassa and Christian seminar curricula and gender.

In the spring of 2009, the Council, with NCA's support, took an integrated approach and joint ownership of the emergency aid effort to the IDPs. Representatives of the World Council of Religions made several joint field visits to Hindu, Christian and Muslim communities and camps. They delivered aid on the ground and conducted advocacy on behalf of the IDPs. These efforts gave legitimacy to the religious leaders and the aid effort was protected by religious sanctioning.

While NCA is still analyzing the lessons from these initiatives, some general points can be extracted. This work requires true partnerships that are built on mutuality. They need to be designed for the long-term and developed slowly and with deliberations. Partners need to be transparent on contentious issues and have an open exchange of views. And there should be flexibility in participation and membership. Another important factor in any partnership is the personal chemistry among personalities.

For NCA, multi-faith peacebuilding is a unique added-value. A surprising discovery, which they are analyzing for the ramifications, is how multi-faith peacebuilding is becoming a risk. They have seen their local partners exposed to risk and personal exposure, and have not been able to make them more secure. Thus, they recognize a need to step back from an issue or an initiative when asked to.

Observations from group discussion

- Multi-religious coordinating bodies operating at a high-level give legitimacy to project work which might otherwise be seen as undermining local initiatives.
- Multi-religious partnerships are successful when the religious leaders at the top mobilize their community's assets. Another measure of success in serving the public interest is through the empirical data of numbers of people served.
- On the other hand, coordinating bodies can be seen as "heavy" with large secretariats that do not implement projects. Other actions, such as resource mobilization, capacity building and advocacy are supervised by the respective faiths in the partnership.
- An interesting question was raised: Can a coordinating body prioritize a humanitarian agenda and coordinate with respect to funding? Would this provide value or are there too many conflicting priorities and competition?
- Is it worth the tax-payer money to support the growth of bureaucracies which are not implementing? Multi-religious platforms could be yet another structure that takes resources and energy from projects.
- The structures and capacities of religious communities in general are a challenge. They tend to be dominated by the "club of old men." Further, the examples given today were all funded by the global north.
- Inter-faith work is inspired by faith. When they are in the room, they focus on concrete issues, not faith. The issues are more important than inter-faith relations.
- There are controversies and tensions when working with other faiths.
- Some faith communities come close to the line of proselytizing and ignore the standards of impartiality.
- Tensions arise when staff don't understand how to work with other faiths. Power struggles can occur.
- Is there a need to create inter-faith forums in which to learn how to work with other faiths?
- Doctrine divides, service unites.

SESSION F: Multi-religious Advocacy

Presenters: [Michele Cesari, Life and Peace Institute](#)
[Mustafa Ali, Secretary General, African Council of Religious Leaders/](#)
[Religions for Peace-Africa](#)
[Dr. Jafar Jawad, Al-Hakim Foundation](#)

Advocacy related to humanitarian concerns is carried out on local, national, regional and global levels by all development actors including FBOs. Credible advocacy research needs to be methodologically rigorous. The best advocacy research is based in a scientific methodology that is rooted in the local context.

Michele Cesari presented a discussion on the differences between policy and advocacy and their linkages. He presented three “bottlenecks” to that could potentially undermine scientific advocacy research conducted by FBOs and illustrated them with concrete examples.

- 1. A strong vision of “what should be” can undermine the scientific approach:** Many FBOs approach advocacy issues from the standpoint of “what should be” – which comes from their convictions to adjust the unjust and uphold human dignity. The drive to “what should be” can be strong and can lead to a strong case for public action. However, if one already knows “what should be,” why conduct research? What happens to the scientific method?
- 2. Belief can alter observation:** FBOs take principled actions based on their values. If one strongly believes in something, it is easy for observations to reinforce beliefs. People observe what they expect to see until they are shown otherwise. And disconfirmation is often resisted. Science and faith do not always co-exist easily.
- 3. An oppositional framework is at odds with the need to work together with policy makers:** Organizations that conduct advocacy research often work from an oppositional framework. Their goal is to expose injustice or misdeeds and create conditions for policy change. However, experience shows that to fully influence policy makers, one needs to work *with* them. It is not enough to disseminate findings and call for resolution.

This last point has tremendous implications for advocacy and advocacy research. Advocacy research requires development of a *parallel and complimentary policy process* from the very start. In this situation, policy makers will participate in the advocacy research, will affect its design and will be

POLICY: A deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes - applies to government, private sector and individuals.

POLICY RESEARCH: Social scientific research which has non-university groups as main intended audience – although results may interest also academia. It attempts to apply social scientific findings to the solution of problems identified by a client - e.g. “Game Theory” and US Department of Defence.

ADVOCACY: The pursuit of influencing outcomes – including public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic and social systems and institutions – that directly affect people's current lives. It is a series of actions taken to change “what is” into “what should be.”

ADVOCACY RESEARCH: One kind of policy research carried out by people who are deeply concerned about certain social problems, with a view to heighten social awareness and/or providing a catalyst to policy proposals and other actions to ameliorate the problem.

engaged in implement and outcome development. What results is a negotiated process of collaboration.

Presenting three cases from LPI's work, Michele illustrated how a participatory research model that incorporates a clear policy strategy can achieve better advocacy outcomes. In participatory research, partnership is a goal in itself. At the same time, no research can be neutral so FBOs must be honest about the lens they are using. Participatory methods allow the researcher to get behind the scenes and listen for opportunities to enhance what is already working.

Mustafa Ali shared background on a multi-religious advocacy research that is supporting the Religious Leaders Peace Initiative in the Horn of Africa (RL PIHA). This initiative brings together religious leaders from the IGAD countries, as well as from Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania to work together on peace building, conflict prevention and transformation efforts in the Horn of Africa. The approach is multi-pronged dia-praxis in which Christian and Muslim religious leaders at the grassroots to national to regional levels meet to create synergies and link and network their activities. Joint conferencing, training and solidarity visits aim to bring religious leaders from warring countries, communities and tribes to work together to chart out plans for peace in their localities and countries. It also ensures horizontal linkages are created, strengthened and coordinated, while the vertical linkages to maximize impact and potential synergies between formal and informal peace building efforts. The ultimate goal is to link the informal track II processes with the track I bilateral and multilateral diplomatic processes. The working group members come from pan African and regional organizations and networks including AACC, FECCLAHA, UMCESA, IFAPA, EAMLEF and others.

The presentations were followed by a dialogue on the merits of scientific advocacy research versus an open-ended participatory model. CDA uses an alternative methodology to the traditional scientific approach. Their teams start with asking open-ended questions to gather evidence. There is no hypothesis or next steps determined at the beginning. Some questioned whether this approach produces findings that would be deemed credible by policy-makers. A participant synthesized the need for both approaches by stating, "The scientific approach has good uses and bad uses. Advocacy efforts have a desired outcome based on values, beliefs and opinions. Scientific research can support advocacy efforts through mapping the current state and identifying gaps to achieving the desired state. But science cannot tell us what the desired outcome should be." Successful advocacy programs require a marriage of values and science.

Comments and Observations

- Inter-religious platforms can be important to cooperation for confidence building and advocacy. Being focused on an issue is a key point. Partnerships designed for explicit projects build trust and create strong relationships. These relationships need agreed upon structures and methods for operating. Intra-religious cooperation focuses on the differences while inter-religious cooperation focuses on what can be done together. Coordinating bodies can play a constructive facilitative and consulting role by creating table around which to connect, learn, analyze gaps and foster partnership.
- Advocacy strategies and tools need to be considered tools for FBOs: bearing witness and taking testimony; using the media to cover stories and bring attention to situations.

- Advocacy needs to be done at all levels to reinforce efforts by all actors. For example, CIDA renamed Sudan as humanitarian priority as a result of media attention from George Clooney and others
- Different FBOs take different approaches to advocacy. Global Witness and Christian Aid are more forceful in their advocacy. NCA takes a softer approach. Based on their relationship with the government, they can notify the government of situations and suggest or discuss courses of action.
- The best advocacy takes a three-pronged approach: is founded on research; balanced by engagement with policy-makers; and advanced through a public voice.
- Research findings are based on credibility. Researchers set an agenda, chose a methodology and implement. However, reports by North and South NGOs on the same issues have radically different solutions.
- Participatory Research is based on shared ownership and use of research. When developing advocacy research projects, it's important to have a tool for clear actions and end results. Advocacy research is not just for academic purposes. It is driven by need and, therefore, it's important that there are clear actions and end results.

WRAP-UP SESSION: The Need for Multi-religious Advocacy at the UN

Presenters: [Stein Villumstad, Religions for Peace](#)
[Dr. Jafar Jawad, Al-Hakim Foundation](#)

Participants in the Frankfurt FBO Forum recognized a need to know more about relevant advocacy initiatives by faith-based organizations and to have a deeper understanding of the methods for effective advocacy research. This session was designed to map the opportunities and challenges to multi-religious advocacy action and solicit the level of interest in and ideas for creating such a mechanism. Experience in spoke of the opportunities that might be pursued for advocacy at the UN.

Jafar Jawad began by speaking of the Al-Hakim's advocacy efforts at the UN and the insights it has gained. The complexity of the system can be difficult to navigate and it takes time to develop knowledge and make connections. The Al-Hakim Foundation has been active for the past three years in the Commission on the Status of Women and participated in hunger and poverty initiatives. These initiatives bring it contact with range of religious and non-religious action. Among the religious actors, there are global umbrella organizations with a presence in New York that are conducting advocacy work around concerns, themes and topics raised by their member organizations and constituents. Other religious traditions have a smaller presence at the UN but are also effectively carrying out efforts. However, many religious communities and faith-based organizations do not have representation at the UN and lack the knowledge, connections and skills to be effective advocacy agents. Working in partnership or working through a mechanism, faith-based organizations can share information and be a resource to each other to further advocacy agendas – either together or individually.

Stein Villumstad gave an overview of the UN system – the decision-makers, advocacy actors, religious advocacy actors, and multi-religious coalitions. In order to be successful, religious actors need to a clear understanding of the who makes decisions, what other groups are conducting advocacy and where there are opportunities for linkages or cooperation. He identified three tiers of decision-makers: political, operational agencies and the Member States themselves. At the political level, there is the Security Council, General Assembly and its related committees and entities such as the Peacebuilding Commission and, finally, the UN Members States themselves. The operational level is comprised of specialized agencies such as OCHA, UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR and the Peacebuilding Support Office.

Several are several layers of actors conducting advocacy targeted at one or several decision-makers. Those conducting advocacy fall into two categories: Members States and their representatives (working independently and in informal configurations) and Non-State Actors. This second category is quite extensive and include the business community (through the Global Compact), NGOs and their coalitions accredited to the ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council), representatives of religious communities, the media and other interest groups.

Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN (a formal membership committee linked to ECOSOC), Working Groups (mainly ecumenical groups addressing themes or situations) and the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, a partnership of governments, UN agencies and civil society organizations. The Forum explores practical measures, utilizing interfaith dialogue and cooperation, to advance understanding between diverse peoples, their cultures and religions, in order to foster mutual respect, tolerance and friendship.

Among advocacy actors, religious actors fall into several categories: umbrella organizations representing a single community (e.g. World Council of Churches), single religious communities (e.g. Risso Kosekhei, Won Buddhism International, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Mennonites, Quakers, World Union of Progressive Judaism) and inter-faith organizations (e.g. *Religions for Peace*, Temple of Understanding, United Religious Initiative).

Missing from the UN context is a mechanism to coordinate multi-religious advocacy efforts. While the Committee of Religious NGOs might seem a likely mechanism, its mission is promote networking and dialogue about the religious dimensions of the UN agenda. It is not designed to support an action agenda.

The idea of a Working Group for Multi-religious Advocacy, was proposed with the following characteristics:

- Invite participation among groups on an equal level,
- Support an informal platform,
- Be open to those who want to join,
- Entertain requests from actors who do not have presence,
- Complement the Committee of Religious NGOs.

Religions for Peace offered to facilitate the Working Group. Potential advocacy themes might focus on climate change or the "war on terror." Forum participants were asked to comment on the viability and desirability of the Working Group. Following are the comments:

Comments and Suggestions

- Working in groups gives us a chance to have a voice but not expose ourselves (in situations where they could be difficult)
- First, we need a thorough analysis of what affects the UN agenda. But it could be difficult for FBOs to develop joint agendas. Religions for Peace could play a role in convening FBOs, hosting events and raising issues. These are not contradictory roles, rather it could serve to support what's most effective.
- UN advocacy must be needs based. It would take much time for our group to decide on an advocacy issue and develop a strategy. By the time where are ready, the issue may be irrelevant. But this Forum could be an instrument for linking an organization that already has a campaign to other organizations that can sign-on and support it.
- There are many themes we might consider: UN security reform, arms control, good donorship, ignored emergencies, the right to protect, war on terror and the abrogation of due process.
- This group could convene a working group to consider opportunities and openings, share ideas and gain skills. Some organizations lack skills and resources for this work. The group could prepare background work and support and empower them to take action.
- We could bring representatives from our organizations who are working in the field to the UN for briefings. We need to have multiple entry points/targets at the UN to have weight and credibility
- There are unreasonable restrictions on humanitarian organizations. We should not wait for agreement on a theme but should put an infrastructure in place that we can all access and act together. The working group can facilitate their access, develop and cultivate relationships and access to key actors so we can be ready to act (in a time of crisis).

THIRD FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS FORUM
ON MULTI-RELIGIOUS COOPERATION
FOR HUMANITARIAN RELIEF, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Toronto Airport Marriott Hotel, Toronto, Canada
26-27 October 2009

Participant List

Dr. Mustafa Ali, Secretary General, **African Council of Religious Leaders/Religions for Peace-Africa**
Dr. Jafar Jawad, Director and Representative to the United Nations, **Al-Hakim Foundation**
Dr. Ali Al-Mosawy, **Al-Hakim Foundation**
Mr. Dereje Wordofa, Regional Director, Africa, **American Friends Service Committee**
Ms. Gianne Broughton, Programme Coordinator, **American Friends Service Committee**
Mr. Rob van Drimmelen, General Secretary, **APRODEV**
H. H. Swami Parameshananda, Secretary, **Bharat Sevashram Sangha USA**
Ms. Dayna Brown, Director of the Listening Project, **CDA Collaborative Learning Projects**
Ms. Ingrid Rosendorf Joys, Senior Information Officer, **European Council of Religious Leaders/Religions for Peace**
Ms. Megan Bradfield, Associate Director for Global Mission/International Development and Disaster Response, **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**
Reverend Fred Nyabera, Executive Director, **FECCLAHA**
Ms. Jussi Ojala, Peace and Reconciliation Advisor, **Finnish Church Aid**
Sewa Singh Mandla, Advisor, **Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha**
Mr. Farooqui Baksh, Chair, **Human Concern International**
Mr. Irfan Khurshid, Executive Director, **ICNA Relief Canada**
Mr. Syed M. Agha, Office Manager, **ICNA Relief Canada**
Ms. Jane Connolly, Director of Programs, **International Development & Relief Foundation**
Mr. Mohammad Zohair Al-Khateeb, Board Member, **International Islamic Relief Organization Canada**
Mr. Alexis Trobetzkoy, **International Orthodox Christian Charities**
Ag. Joshua Kitakule, Secretary General, **Inter-Religious Council of Uganda/Religions for Peace-Uganda**
Dr. El- Tantawy Attia, Board Member, **Islamic Relief Canada**
Mr. Yaser M. Haddara, President, **Islamic Relief Canada**
Mr. Michele Cesari, Nairobi Representative, **Life and Peace Institute**
Mr. Mohammad Khatib, Director, **Muslim World League Canada**
Mr. Gisle Kvanvig, Program Coordinator, **Norwegian Church Aid**
Mr. John Siebert, Executive Director, **Project Ploughshares**
Ms. Lisa Locke, Director of Institutional Support, **Religions for Peace-International**
Mr. Stein Villumstad, Deputy Secretary General, **Religions for Peace-International**
Ms. Lisa D. Jackson, **United Methodists Committee on Relief**
Mr. Kirpal Singh Nijher, Past Chairperson & Present Committee Member, **World Sikh Council**
Mr. Chris Derksen-Hiebert, Director of Advocacy and Education, **World Vision Canada**



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AGENDA

25 October

Arrival in the hotel
19:00 Informal dinner

26 October

08:30 *Check-in Coffee/tea*

A. Introductions & Setting the Scene

09:00 *Opening*
09:15 *Presentation of participants*
09:30 *Review of program/agenda*

B. Background to *Religions for Peace* & Observations from Previous Forums

09:45 *Re-capitulation of the process leading to this meeting, including main observations and recommendations from 2007 and 2008*
Introduction by Stein Villumstad, *Religions for Peace*:
Observations from the participants

C. How do FBOs Define Themselves, and with what Consequences?

10:00 *How do FBOs define themselves, and with what consequences?*
John Siebert, Executive Director of Project Ploughshares, Canada will introduce the theme.
10:30 *Responses from FBOs:*
a. Islamic Relief: Dr. Yaser Haddara
b. APRODEV: Mr. Rob van Drimmelen
Bharat Sevashram Sangha: Swami Parameshananda
11:00 *Coffee / tea*
11:30 *Plenary discussion*
12:30 *Lunch*

D. Working “in and on” Conflict

14:00 *Working “in and on” Conflict. Case studies and analysis that highlight the role of FBOs.*
Ms. Dayna Brown, Director Listening Project at CDA Collaborative Learning Projects
14:45 *Group discussions*
15:30 *Coffee / tea*

- 16:00 *Plenary: report back from groups, discussion and tentative conclusions/recommendations.*
- 17:00 *Update from Humanitarian Forum on its activities, current status and relevance for the FBO forum*
Ms Shahira Maarouf, Programme Manager.
Discussion and possible recommendations
- 18:00 *End of day*
- 19:00 *Visit to a local Mosque (tentatively scheduled) followed by dinner*

27 October

- E. Building and Activating Local Multi-Religious Platforms**
- 09:00 *Field experiences with local partnerships between FBOs and multi-religious platforms*
Sharing of experiences - successes and challenges – in groups
- 09:30 *Establishment and the role of an interreligious council*
Secretary General Joshua Kitakule of the Interreligious Council of Uganda will present his council and its role in facilitating multi-religious approaches to humanitarian and development work.
- 10:00 *Partner perspective on cooperation with multi-religious platforms in Tanzania*
Gisle Kvanvig, Norwegian Church Aid
- 10:10 *Discussion and possible recommendations*
- 10:45 *Coffee / tea*
- F. Multi-Religious Advocacy**
- 11:00 *The linkage between action research and advocacy: the case of Horn of Africa*
Michele Cesari, Life and Peace Institute, Nairobi
- 11:30 *Action research in Horn of Africa recommended by the Frankfurt FBO Forum 2008*
Dr. Mustafa Ali, Secretary General of Africa Council of Religious Leaders
- 11:40 *Plenary discussion and recommendations*
- 12:30 *Overview of findings from Religions for Peace exercise to systematize information on FBOs' advocacy*
- Clarifications and discussion**
- 13:00 *Lunch*
- 14:00 *Multi-religious humanitarian advocacy at the United Nations: introductions of two cases*
Dr.Jafar Jawad, Al-Hakim Foundation
Stein Villumstad, Religions for Peace
- 14:30 *Buzz groups*
- 14:45 *Discussions and possible suggestion for themes and humanitarian/human need situations that may be followed up with multi-religious advocacy approaches towards the UN, including OCHA, ECOSOC, appropriate UN agencies and the Security Council*
- 15:30 *Final observations, conclusions and suggested way forward*
- 16:00 *End of RT. Tea /coffee*

ABOUT RELIGIONS FOR PEACE

Religions for Peace

Religions for Peace—the world’s largest and most representative multi-religious coalition—advances common action among the world’s religious communities for peace. *Religions for Peace* works to transform violent conflict, advance human development, promote just and harmonious societies, and protect the earth. The global *Religions for Peace* network comprises a World Council of senior religious leaders from all regions of the world; more than seventy national and four regional inter-religious bodies; and the Global Women of Faith Network and Global Youth Network.