



A CALL TO COMMITMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

A WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE BRIEF ON THE EVANGELICAL COMMUNITY
AND HUMANITARIAN DEVELOPMENT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A CALL TO COMMITMENT AND PARTNERSHIP	1
CONTRIBUTORS	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
PREAMBLE	6
WHO WE ARE	7
WHO ARE EVANGELICALS?	7
THE EVANGELICAL HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY	9
THE ASSOCIATIONS AND NETWORKS	10
THE INTERNATIONAL NGOS	10
LOCAL FAITH COMMUNITIES	11
FAITH-BASED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	15
A GLOBAL COMMUNITY	15
HUMANITARIAN EFFECTIVENESS	16
SERVING ALL PEOPLE	16
INJUSTICE AND VULNERABILITY	16
CORRUPTION	17
PEACE AND RECONCILIATION.....	17
TIMELINESS/EFFICIENCY	18
APPROPRIATENESS/EFFECTIVENESS	18
LOCAL KNOWLEDGE	18
SUSTAINABILITY/LASTING IMPACT	19
ACKNOWLEDGING THE CHALLENGES	21
RECOMMENDATIONS	23
COMMITMENTS	24
CLOSING	24

COVER LETTER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The World Evangelical Alliance and its Global Partners are pleased to provide this position paper on the unique and essential role of the evangelical community in humanitarian response and development. Research has long shown that people and communities turn to faith in times of humanitarian crises to make meaning and find hope. In fact, “many – perhaps most – development scholars and practitioners would now accept the need to see religion as an important dimension of development” and “there is wide agreement that religion is now a significant factor to be considered in any study or policy concerning social development.”¹ New studies have also begun to bring light to the important role faith-based organizations provide in humanitarian contexts. This role is based upon a theology of Christian faith that models itself on the unconditional love of Jesus Christ, who calls us to love our neighbor. In the humanitarian context, love is expressed through timely, lifesaving action in service to all in need without discrimination.

The evangelical community is a diverse fellowship of churches and local faith communities, NGOs, associations, and schools. The relationships among these members of the community is the basis for trust and reciprocity, which in turn is the foundation for effective global service.

The evangelical community is committed to participating as an active partner in humanitarian response and development, recognizing that in a diverse world we will act alongside other faith and non-faith groups, and do so with respect and humility.

We are mindful of both the misperceptions and proper criticisms of the evangelical community around gender discrimination and proselytizing, and

call upon the evangelical community to work together toward addressing these issues. We also see that the large majority of faith-based organizations from all traditions are ethical and effective contributors to humanitarian development.

We conclude this brief by calling upon the UN to:

- Improve the acceptance/understanding among the international community of the unique value of faith based organizations, and thereby more deeply engage the faith communities in humanitarian and development response.
- Improve the connection between the high level UN and Intergovernmental Agendas and the ongoing work of the local and international churches, using International and National Faith Based organizations as a conduit for dialogue.
- Ensure the important voice of the local church and faith structures are present and heard in humanitarian decision making, coordination and strategic planning.
- Respond to the failure of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction to recognize the role of faith-based organizations², and ensure that faith-based organizations are actively integrated into national disaster preparedness including resource mobilization, planning and training.

Finally, we also recommend to our own broader evangelical community the following:

1. Recommit to evidence-based reporting on the effectiveness and value-added of the faith community;
2. Increase commitment to a spirit of collaboration, and
3. Renew our effort on long term development that aims at reducing risk and vulnerability while increasing resilience.

¹Haynes, J., 2007. Religion and Development: Conflict or Cooperation? Houndsmill: Palgrave MacMillan.

²United Nations (2015) Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 UNISDR Switzerland

PREAMBLE

In the call for the World Humanitarian Summit, the UN recognized that “the number of people affected by humanitarian crises has almost doubled over the past decade, and is expected to keep rising.” Global economic and demographic shifts, including rapid urbanization and competition for resources, express themselves in intra- and inter-state wars, destruction of natural resources, and even persecution on the basis of religion or ethnicity. The world’s population now sees over 52 million refugees. These increasing threats to the planet’s life support systems mandate action. In response to this, the World Humanitarian Summit asks “How can the humanitarian needs of people affected by crises be most effectively met? Who is best placed to meet those needs? And how can humanitarian needs be met in a more sustainable manner?”³

It is the position of the authors of this paper that in the face of growing and overwhelming humanitarian needs, collaboration across faith communities and the larger humanitarian efforts and systems is essential. We agree with Ager & Ager⁴ that “seeking to put local actors at the center of humanitarian response inevitably means closer working relations with faith groups”. Further, we acknowledge that the issue of neutrality and impartiality are at the center of concerns over the role of faith-based agencies. We present this position paper in the hope that clarity of belief and philosophy may contribute to resolving these concerns and strengthen the collaboration between the evangelical and the humanitarian communities.

Therefore, speaking for the Christian communities represented by the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), this paper establishes a basis for greater collaboration between the evangelical community and global humanitarian actors. It is our view that the evangelical community is an effective partner in humanitarian development, but there are perceptions of the evangelical community that pose barriers to a more effective collaboration. Therefore, we begin by presenting the theological and ethical foundations of Christian engagement in humanitarian work in order to promote understanding of this community and the nature of its motives. Our aim is to show that vibrant, compassionate care of the poor and marginalized - who are most vulnerable to humanitarian crises - has historically been and continues to be at the core of evangelical commitment and fundamental to our beliefs. Building on the defining characteristics of the evangelical community, we then describe the components of the evangelical community engaged in humanitarian development and the important resources that they bring to development.

We also speak to the evangelical community in this paper, laying out a basis for ethical and theologically consistent humanitarian action, as a basis for collaboration with the larger humanitarian community. We conclude with a set of recommendations for the global humanitarian community and call for commitments from the evangelical community that we believe will foster greater cooperation and ultimately contribute to the effectiveness of humanitarian care.

³World Humanitarian Summit Initial Scoping Paper WHS Theme 1: Humanitarian Effectiveness

⁴<http://blog.worldhumanitariansummit.org/entries/religion/>

WHO WE ARE



Over two billion Christians in the world are represented by several world church bodies. The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) is one such body, serving and representing more than 600 million evangelicals. Launched in 1846, WEA is a network of churches in 129 nations that have each formed an evangelical alliance and over 150 international organizations.

Who are Evangelicals?

Because we recognize that, regrettably, faith-based groups have sometimes made humanitarian aid conditional or even a tool of religious coercion, we deem it necessary to define who we are and explain the theological base that inspires Christian humanitarianism.

British historian David Bebbington⁵ identifies four primary characteristics of evangelicals:

- Show a particular regard for the Bible
- Focus on the work of Jesus Christ on the cross
- Affirm that human beings need to amend their lives, and,
- Believe that social action is a vital expression of Christian faith.

Love of Neighbor as Justice and Peace

Christians affirm that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16) and that all human beings bear the image of God (e.g. Genesis 1:26-31; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 John 4:7-12). For Christians, therefore, all human life is sacred and the dignity of all persons is at the foundation of everything we do.⁶ In both the Old and New

⁵Bebbington, D. (1989). *Evangelicalism in modern Britain: A history from the 1730s to the 1980s*. London: Unwin Hyman.

⁶For a fuller exposition on the life and dignity of the human person that Christians hold in common, please see,

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/life-and-dignity-of-the-human-person.cfm>

⁷Anthony Meredith S.J., *The Cappadocians* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 29.

Testaments, the Bible proclaims that God engages human beings, calling us into community with one another, without regard to race, gender, ability, ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status.

As Christians, we love others because it is in our nature as created and redeemed by God.⁷ In spite of historical shortcomings, Christians are called to follow the example of Jesus, who loved and served the most vulnerable of society: the poor, the sick, the marginalized and the outcast.

When asked by a young lawyer, “Teacher, which is the first commandment of the Law?” Jesus answers him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39). As Dermot Tredget notes, “these two evangelical commandments have their origin in the Law of Moses from Old Testament. It is the same Lord who speaks in both.”⁸ Throughout history, Christians have understood that the second commandment not only follows the first but it also completes it. In keeping the second commandment, we keep the first, and vice-versa.



⁸Dermot Tredget, OSM, “Basil of Caesarea and His Influence on Monastic Mission” (2005, <http://www.benedictines.org.uk/theology/2005/tredget.pdf>).

The Evangelical Humanitarian Community

The greater evangelical community is made up of sub-groups of international and national networks, associations and NGOs as well as local faith communities and churches. Understanding the connections and interactions between these constituents, while difficult⁹, is critical to understanding the evangelical community's value in the humanitarian space. Further, understanding the interconnections between these faith-based actors is important for both the humanitarian community and also for the larger evangelical community, including donors who may see humanitarian development as instrumental (a means to an end) rather than expression of core values¹⁰. Therefore, we present the evangelical community as composed of four structural units: Associations and Networks, International NGOs, Local Faith Communities (which includes the local church) and NGOs, plus the relationships between these units and the dynamics created by those relationships.

⁹Tadros (2010) Faith-Based Organizations and Service Delivery Some Gender Conundrums UNRISD Gender and Development Programme Paper Number 11

¹⁰Clarke, G. (August 01, 2006). Faith matters: faith-based organisations, civil society and international development. *Journal of International Development*, 18, 6, 835-848.

CASE STUDY 1

Ibrahim lost his mother, father and sisters and now is the main care provider for his younger siblings. After their deaths, he struggled with grief and despair and didn't know how he would be able to provide for his family.

However, Ibrahim met two faith leaders who had been trained in Psychosocial counselling by Tearfund's partner, EFSL. They were well respected in his community, so he attended a week-long session they facilitated on a range of counselling issues, both social and spiritual. "Some of the words that I can still recall are that there is life after Ebola, all is not lost, God is on your side, look at what is ahead of you and stop reflecting on what has happened. If you do, it will stop you from doing what will push you ahead".

Since then, Ibrahim says the words have been like medicine, bringing comfort and, most of all, hope. He said, "Today, though we are orphaned by Ebola, we thank God that our very lives are in existence."

EFSL is providing food and other essential items for orphans as well as training faith leaders to provide psycho social support for survivors, particularly orphans.

KUALA LUMPUR In September 1999, a small group of leaders from Christian relief and development organizations met in Kuala Lumpur. Here they developed ideas for a new international network, one which would have the potential to significantly strengthen the capacity of participating organizations, as well as develop their ability to act collectively in key areas of concern. Micah works by ...

- Strengthening the capacity of participating agencies to make a biblically-shaped response to the needs of the poor and oppressed
- Speaking strongly and effectively regarding the nature of the mission of the Church to proclaim and demonstrate the love of Christ to a world in need
- Prophetically calling upon and influencing the leaders and decision-makers of societies to "maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed and rescue the weak and needy".

The Association and Networks

The array of global associations within the evangelical community seeks to strengthen relationships, coordination, cooperation and humanitarian impact across this community, ultimately reaching to the local community through the local church. Two examples of these associations are Micah Global¹¹ and Integral Alliance. Integral Alliance is a membership organization of international NGOs in the evangelical community that seek to work together to more effectively respond to poverty worldwide. Members are engaged across the world in a variety of humanitarian crises, and agree to adopt a set of professional international ethical and quality standards as part of their work (in some cases extending those standards).

The International NGOs

Faith-based International NGOs (INGOs) are increasingly recognized for their role in development¹², particularly for their abilities to bridge disparate partners like major international agencies, including the UN, with local communities and key actors within those communities. In practice, faith-based INGOs are able to operate within and speak the technocratic language of the humanitarian industry while leveraging - through the local church - the local knowledge and expertise of target populations for relevant and sensitive humanitarian aid and development. Operating effectively within the highly professional humanitarian sphere situates the faith-based INGO as a valuable conduit for much needed funding and technical knowledge to the local community.

¹¹<http://www.micahnetwork.org/>

¹²Haynes, J., 2007. Religion and Development: Conflict or Cooperation? Houndsmill: Palgrave MacMillan.

EBOLA

"My name is Fatmata Conteh. I am an Ebola survivor and widow with three children, two of whom were also infected with the virus but, thank God, they also survived. Upon our discharge, and return to our village, many accused us of bringing the virus to the community and would not come near us.

Thank God for the Imam and Pastor who were trained by the NEHADO project. They have been regularly visiting our community, counselling me and my children and talking to my people to accept us. Since their visits, we have been accepted by the community.

The radio programs run by NEHADO have been a great help in raising awareness and reducing the stigma surrounding Ebola in the community. I use this radio given to me by NEHADO to share information."

Local Faith Communities

Local faith communities (LFC) are important actors in the community in many parts of the world. They are in a unique position to assist with identifying needs and challenges, as well as resources and solutions to address humanitarian needs. “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.”¹³ In particular, LFCs provide a continuous, embedded, sustainable presence within communities to implement long-term, slow-paced programs involving behavior change and skill development. These local communities are often connected through local associations, which in turn may be part of larger international associations (e.g., WEA, Micah Global). Following are several unique ways LFC may foster humanitarian response and development.

LFCs are communities of healing that can attend to the physical, psychosocial, and spiritual needs of a community. People often turn to LFCs following disasters and other humanitarian crises for everything from resources to help making sense of and living with their traumatic experiences. Teachings, social activities, community events, and other community level activities serve to provide healing to those in need by demonstrating that they are part of a community that cares.



¹³Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. & Ager, A (EDs) (2013) Local faith communities and the promotion of resilience in humanitarian situations: A scoping study *Refugee Studies Centre Working Paper Series No. 90*, Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford, p.6

Numerous studies have shown that basic religious support activities like the aforementioned can help buffer against negative mental and physical health consequences.

In some cases LFCs may become advocates for their communities when it observes government oversight or corruption. Bonhoeffer spoke to this rare but important role of LFCs to confront government when it is failing in its role to maintain law and order needed to serve the people¹⁴. This is not to be confused with LFCs becoming politically active. As Bonhoeffer emphasizes, LFCs remain independent of the state but not uninvolved so that they can serve as watchdogs and advocates for the marginalized. In this role LFCs can help reveal and correct failures of the state.

The relationship between LFCs and community improvement and entrepreneurship has been getting more attention in recent years. For example, the World Bank estimates that LFCs carry out 50% of the health and education services in sub-Saharan Africa. Examples of LFCs' value added to entrepreneurship (and in general) include naturally existing and interconnected social networks, enhanced credibility and accessibility, ability to connect with "grassroots" religious innovation, and enhanced sustainability of social enterprise.

LFCs can also help foster trust and improve communication between local communities, international NGOs, and governments. "Religion plays a central, integrating role in social and cultural

life in most developing countries...there are many more religious leaders than health workers. They are in close and regular contact with all age groups in society and their voice is highly respected. In traditional communities, religious leaders are often more influential than local government officials or secular community leaders (UNICEF 1995)."¹⁵ For example, one of the major barriers to the international community's response to the Ebola outbreak in Africa was lack of trust, as many communities did not understand the methods many international NGOs and governments were employing to address the outbreak which often led to fear. Because LFCs were seen as trusted institutions, they were able to help convey important public health information to their communities in ways that other organizations were not able. LFCs also helped some international NGOs understand the importance of religious rituals that increased risk of contamination (i.e., public burials and marches). As a result, NGOs found greater community adherence to humanitarian best-practices by integrating greater religious sensitivity into their work.

Finally, the local community is also the frontier for change and the focus of our greatest challenges. As the United Nations has increasingly placed greater emphasis on disaster risk reduction, considerable change has been evidenced at the international and national levels. Yet change at the local level has been far more difficult. Relationships that go to the local level and bridge the gap between national and local are increasingly important to effective and sustainable change efforts.¹⁶

¹⁴Metaxas, E. (2010). Bonhoeffer, pastor, martyr, prophet, spy: A righteous genfile vs. the third reich. *Nashville, TN: Nelson*.

¹⁵Haynes, J., 2007. Religion and Development: Conflict or Cooperation? Houndsmill: Palgrave MacMillan.

¹⁶Djalante, r., Holley, C., Thomalla, F. & Carnegie, M. (2013) Pathways for adaptive and integrated disaster resilience *Natural Hazards* 68:2105-2135 DOI: 10.1007/s11069-013-0797-5

Overall, we propose LFCs can also be a source of justice. Within the evangelical community, in particular, there has been a movement known as biblical justice, which emphasizes caring for the vulnerable through social engagement and action. By virtue of being a part of the local community, LFCs are ideally placed to identify the inequity that exists in local institutions and systems.

THE FAMINE OF 368 C.E. IN CAPPADOCIA AND THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE

One of the better known natural disasters in late antiquity was the drought and famine in the Roman province of Cappadocia (central Turkey) at the end of the 360s C.E. Though food shortages were endemic in the ancient world, an extremely cold, dry winter had been followed by an unusually hot, dry spring, leading to a catastrophic agricultural crisis as wells and rivers dried up and crops failed. One of the contemporary writers, Gregory of Nazianzus, described the situation in this way: "There was a famine, the most severe one ever recorded. The city was in distress and there was no source of assistance or relief for the calamity" (*Oration* 43.34).

This particular famine lasted for over four years and resulted in additional social disorder. As market prices soared, some responded by hoarding grain while others resorted to stealing. "Laborers began to starve. Schools closed down... The poor who worked in the fields and wandered along the roads took on the appearance of living cadavers. Possibly the poor resorted to exposing their children, or selling them, while the rich haggled with them over the

purchase price." Thousands were displaced and many fell ill. Mortality from starvation was soon a serious and visible problem. "The hungry are dying," claimed Basil of Caesarea, the bishop of the region, in one of his homilies (*Hom.* 8). It seems that the situation was heightened by the difficulty of importing emergency food supplies to a landlocked region.

In the midst of the catastrophe, Basil used his great skills and resources as administrator to change the cities in his jurisdiction. Basil encouraged care for the poor and needy and insisted that care of the marginalized was the primary role of the Church. He effected the release of local grain hoards, gathered together famine victims of all ages, and "attended to the bodies and souls of those who needed it" with food and medical care (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 43.34-36). He also called upon the Christians of the region—especially the monks under his jurisdiction—to return to the cities and help him establish a neighborhood that contained a range of buildings for the care of the sick and for the distribution of surplus food to those in need. This neighborhood came to be known as the *Basileiados* (i.e. "the city of Basil") and became a refuge for many generations. Under Basil's leadership, the Church established hospitals for the poor and hospices for Christian pilgrims, as well as a series of what would be called "urban monasteries," whose task was to provide charity throughout the city. It was the Christian community around Basil and his monks that spearheaded a large-scale relief effort in Cappadocia in the aftermath of the famine.

THE ROLE OF FAITH LEADERS IN RESPONDING TO THE EBOLA CRISIS

The Ebola crisis provides a case in point on the qualities of evangelical humanitarian assistance. Faith Leaders played an important role in responding to the Ebola Crisis that struck in Western Africa. Five particular attributes enabled them to undertake a role that is unique to the leaders of Faith Based Communities, and fulfill a role that otherwise would have been unmet.

Value: Faith leaders were highly motivated to support their communities and did so out of a spirit of compassion.

Access: The access that faith leaders had to communities was unparalleled, even in the most remote parts of the countries.

Trust: The effectiveness of faith leaders in responding to Ebola relied in large part on the trust that community members had in them, which stemmed from their shared belief.

Long-term presence: While interviews highlighted the churn experienced in NGOs and in governments, religious leaders were unique in occupying long-term leadership positions. While this has played a role in garnering the trust and respect of community members, it also provides faith leaders with a unique perspective on development of their communities.

Knowledge: Faith leaders have a deep knowledge of love for the communities where they lived. During interviews, Imams and church leaders spoke passionately about those that had been lost to the disease and played a key role in role-modeling acceptance of those that had recovered from Ebola back into the community.

NEPAL

Rescue Network Nepal (RNN) was established in November, 2012, with the primary goal of training and equipping church and community members to respond quickly to injuries caused by traffic and other accidents, providing them with the skills to administer critical care for serious injuries as well as basic health and first aid care. In 2014 and 2015, Rescue Network Nepal provided first aid and basic rescue training to 35 members of Aashish church in the town of Palung in Makwanpur district.

Within 20 minutes of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck Nepal on 25th April 2015, causing the collapse of up to 60% of the houses in the small town, the trained church community members were responding, rescuing people from amongst the rubble and administering first aid to the injured.

A good relationship between the leader of Aashish church, Pastor Subas and the head of RNN in Kathmandu also aided the quick provision of tarpaulins, blankets, food and medical supplies to the area. The church volunteers continue to treat minor ailments and injuries and provide emotional support to those living in the makeshift camps.

Faith-based Educational Institutions

Local faith communities often establish local educational institutions which not only provide standardized education and credentials for local faith leaders but can also be involved in humanitarian efforts (See text box – Africa Nazarene University Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies). These local faith-based educational resources can even arise within a refugee community and provide a foundation for service consistent with the beliefs described in this brief.¹⁷ Majority world faith-based institutions of higher learning prepare many of the professionals and leaders for humanitarian development, often working in supportive of or in collaboration with their developing world counterparts.

A Global Community

The last component, relationships, forms a community of connected actors from what would otherwise be a collection of independent actors. As a community, the network of evangelical actors ranges from the large, international associations and INGOs to the local church and community groups. If the four sections of the evangelical community were isolated actors, their effectiveness would be greatly diminished.

However, in a context of increasing globalization, local faith communities in the Global South find themselves in ever closer relationships with their evangelical brethren in the Global North. Ease

and affordability of travel along with advances in communication technology have facilitated the strengthening of networks between evangelical churches, associations and INGOs. These networks are creating positive synergy between resource-rich associations and INGOS in the Global North and churches and associations in the Global South who are uniquely positioned within communities to provide local knowledge of culture, customs, expertise, and information while linking with the most vulnerable populations in times of crisis.

As a networked community, their interaction builds community and trust that serves as a foundation for local community access to resources, and creates reciprocity between actors that is fundamental to establishing constructive influence (See Putnam¹⁸). Likewise, these strengthened, pre-existing relationships and networks make engagement with one another in critical emergency responses as quick, efficient, and immediately effective as possible. **This is an essential feature of the evangelical community that is at the heart of its effectiveness as a humanitarian agent.** Recognizing that considerable work remains to build this global community into a more effective, collaborative force for international development, this is still a connected group of actors whose relationships are built on shared faith and values and a common commitment to serve the vulnerable. As much as any set of programs by any group within this community, the connections that link local faith communities around the world through international NGOs and Associations are an essential part of the impact of the evangelical community.

¹⁷Boan, D., Drake, K. Andrews, B., Martinson, D. & Louwer, E. (In review) A Qualitative Study of a Grass Roots Faith-Based Peace and Reconciliation Program in Kakuma Kenya" *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation*.

¹⁸Putnam, R., Light, I., Briggs, X. S., Rohe, W., Vidal, A., Hutchinson, J., Gress, J., ... Woolcock, M. (June 30, 2004). Using Social Capital to Help Integrate Planning Theory, Research, and Practice: Preface. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 70, 2, 142-192.

HUMANITARIAN EFFECTIVENESS

The historical role of the church in relationship to the community, and the service to the vulnerable that is central to the expression of its identity, are the foundation of the humanitarian effectiveness of evangelical community. The shared beliefs among members of the evangelical fellowship create natural norms and trust between evangelical groups which, as we describe next, are part of our humanitarian effectiveness. In this section we describe that effectiveness according to the five elements identified by the World Humanitarian Summit:

Serving All People

We believe that **ALL PEOPLE** are created in the image of God, and as such it is our responsibility to provide aid in a free and impartial manner. This apparently simple value has been a source of tension between faith communities and the humanitarian community. For example, faith-based organizations have been seen as basing aid on conforming to religiously defined roles.¹⁹ We acknowledge this as a failure which the evangelical community must address (See *Challenges*). Achieving free and impartial service requires addressing several core issues threatening humanitarian impact that are priority concerns for the evangelical community and for the World Humanitarian Summit. These include injustice, vulnerability, corruption, and peace and conflict resolution.

Injustice and Vulnerability. Injustice is at the heart of understanding vulnerability to harm. People are made vulnerable in part due to exposure to extreme events (i.e. living in harm's way), but this is multiplied by injustice. It is injustice that denies equitable access, voice, representation and development, and keeps people in vulnerable states. Injustice can be from commission, such as through theft

¹⁹BID

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IN KAKUMA

The United Refugee and Host Churches (URHC) is an association of churches in Kakuma Refugee Camp (Kenya) and the surrounding Turkana community founded and operated by refugees and local Turkana people. Originally founded in 1996, this group addressed ongoing conflict and distrust in the refugee camp by establishing a system of procedural and distributive justice. This group has established principles for fairness, non-discrimination, and sacrifice for those more vulnerable that have had a clear impact on the quality of life in the camp. The remarkable part of this is that the URHC's work was done across tribal groups traditionally at war. As such, this group serves as an example of how local faith groups can be both an effective link to outside resources and a source of peace and reconciliation in a community.

or exploitation, or by omission, such as failing to consider the differences in needs and required services of different groups within a community, or often by simply treating a community as a homogenous unit when in fact many members of the community have special needs. Because the consequences of injustice may unfold slowly, the local community is best placed to detect and speak out about injustice, advocate for the vulnerable, and thereby help international agencies craft their programs to better serve local constituencies. Members of the evangelical community have been assisting local faith communities in recognizing injustice and speaking out against it. More recent work focuses on learning from local actors, recognizing the importance of their expertise, and developing mechanisms that help them speak into humanitarian efforts.

Corruption. Like injustice, corruption is a pervasive threat to the effectiveness of humanitarian development. Local faith communities can be an effective voice against corruption, especially when they receive support from the larger community. For example, the Philippine Council of evangelical Churches (PCEC) recognizes that the Philippines was recently ranked the fourth most corrupt country in the world. In response, the PCEC called for the local church to increase its impact on the local community through the formation of local Peace and Reconciliation Communities²⁰ to engage local government and civil society organizations to address social justice, peace and economic sufficiency.

Peace and Reconciliation. Reconciliation and peace initiatives are a vital part of conflict resolution. Faith plays an important part in dealing with underlying prejudices and hatred and can bring lasting healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. We recognize that when faith is used as a divisive tool in the hands of those with ulterior motives, it can be abused. Multi faith / inter faith dialogue seeking intentional synergies, building on the shared values linked to justice, peace and reconciliation therefore become an integral part of any successful peace initiative.

²⁰<http://waves.ca/2011/06/14/description-of-the-evangelical-church-today/>

BANGLADESH

Kalika Hariund Church in Birsiri Union, Netrokona District, took part in a project organised by Garo Baptist Convention focusing on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction. Applying concepts from biblical stories, the congregation was encouraged to consider how these might be adapted to the context of disaster preparedness

in Bangladesh. Following the initial training, a 20-member Disaster Management Committee (DMC) was formed which included both members of the church as well as the wider community; the DMC were trained in early warning, search and rescue, first aid and shelter management. Technical and indigenous knowledge were combined in establishing methods to identify risks and disseminate information to the community. One such capacity identified within the community through the Participatory Assessment of Disaster Risk (PADR) tool was the use of the church bell as an early warning indicator.

In September 2011, Dn Taposh Sangma, Vice-Chairman of Kalika Hariund DMC heard news on the radio and TV that neighbouring Assam, India, was experiencing severe flooding and began visiting the river bank regularly to monitor the situation. The river was calm and clear in the morning, but later in the day the water had turned grey, and by the afternoon the flow of the river had increased rapidly, even though no rain had fallen in the district.

He called the DMC secretary, Mr. Malay Rangma, to organize an emergency meeting to disseminate information and warn the local community. Mr. Malay Rangma rang the church bell, calling the community together to warn them of the impending danger. Some people gathered at the church, while other DMC members went to the houses of vulnerable families and encouraged them to relocate to higher ground. Whilst there was damage to houses and crops, lives were saved by the prompt action of the Chairman and Secretary of the DMC.

Timeliness/Efficiency.

Local actors, including the local faith community, are usually the first responders on the scene of a disaster and the last to leave. Rapid mobilization for collective action and the norms and trust that are necessary for this.

Since the evangelical community includes the local faith community, it can mobilize rapidly and is typically among the first responders to a crisis. The timeliness and effectiveness of this response is based not only on physical proximity, but also due to having the trust of the local community and credibility born out of years of service. Further, as members of the local community, local faith communities are in a position to recognize and understand local vulnerabilities and can help international actors work in a manner more informed by local expertise.

At the same time we agree with Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Ager²¹ that the overall potential of local faith communities 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.”²²

The reasons for this untapped potential exist with both the faith community and the humanitarian community. The call for respect for the faith, values and culture of local people often results in a “hands off approach”, even among faith-based organizations, where respect means setting aside rather than engaging and risking disrespect, especially when operating in a secular system.

Despite the contribution of faith and LFCs, they appear marginalised for two reasons. Firstly, they are local bodies in a sector dominated by international organizations 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.”²³

Appropriateness/Effectiveness

The impact and effectiveness of humanitarian action rest on social authority. Programming and policy in the international arena typically draw their authority from evidence, often expressed as statistics. This is a technology laden approach that can lend itself to impersonal and data driven decision making and engagement. In contrast, the authority of local faith communities is derived socially from the service to and being embedded in the community. This local faith community can serve as a bridge to external actors, extending this social authority to external partners where collaborative relationships are established.

Local Knowledge

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.

²¹Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. & Ager, A (EDs) (2013) Local faith communities and the promotion of resilience in humanitarian situations: A scoping study *Refugee Studies Centre Working Paper Series* No. 90, Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford

²²IBID

²³IBID

LFCs are also a source of local expertise that can be captured and communicated to the humanitarian community through integrated local-global networks. While evidence on the effectiveness of this network is still to be acquired, there are promising examples for its potential.

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. We suggest that the humanitarian community needs to assess its relationship with local actors.

Sustainability/Lasting Impact

Sustainable impact is a major and elusive goal of international development. We propose that development is more likely to be sustained where it is aligned with local resources and responsive to local needs. This is best achieved where there is a faithful and relational presence²⁴, such as exists with local faith communities.

Sustainable impact also requires building local capacity. The evangelical community's connection to the local community is an important resource that can serve the effort to build local capacity by building on a trusted relationship. It can also serve as a source of local knowledge, helping external programs to better align with locally perceived needs.

FAITHFUL PRESENCE IN MIYAGI

When the earthquake and tsunami struck Eastern Japan on March 11, 2011, the people of Shiogama Bible Baptist Church determined that they would serve those in need, without respect to faith, for as long as needed. This faithful service included rebuilding a local Buddhist school and helping with instruction. The initial focus was on repair, but as the recovery progressed and other needs became evident, the program evolved to better match the local needs. A key component of the program is serving as a bridge for outside agencies and volunteers. The church provides housing and team leadership for external volunteers and assists in ensuring that the work of volunteers is aligned with and sensitive to local needs.

Disaster *resilience*, or the local capacity to respond to and recover from natural and manmade disasters, shocks and stresses, is a critical factor in mitigating setbacks to long-term development efforts and contributing to positive future development in areas of chronic exposure. A key component of *resilience* in these communities is social capital (Aldrich, 2012). The local evangelical church can play a critical role in promoting strong *bonding social capital* within itself in order to mobilize and coordinate good will and resources to the broader community. Likewise, the promotion of Christian principles outlined above help to promote *bridging social capital* between other groups within the community; many of whom

²⁴<http://www.hopemiyagi.org/3205720171-about.html>

are also religious in nature. This positive social cohesion is vital to effective and efficient recovery from humanitarian crises. Finally, the common beliefs shared between evangelical groups, associates and INGOs promotes collaboration, cooperation and sharing of resources across regional and national boundaries. These “vertical” linkages - or *linking social capital* - facilitate the flow of resources and information within the evangelical network to the broader local community. This is vital for effective and efficient recovery from humanitarian crises and greater coordination and cooperation within the broader humanitarian community would only strengthen these dynamics.²⁵

Finally, sustainable impact requires confronting the major threats to growth: conflict and corruption. The evangelical community is dedicated to lasting peace in full recognition that faith can be a source of conflict as well as a source of peace. Likewise, confronting corruption is an important theme in local development efforts that includes emphasizing the role of local faith groups in calling attention to corruption, recognizing the vulnerability of local groups to corruption, and equipping local groups for advocacy.

MOZAMBIQUE

In 2012, Tearfund partner CODESA worked with the President of the District Pastors Forum in Gurue District, Pastor Lisboa, to carry out an envisioning and training programme with local pastors through the Umoja approach. Umoja focuses on empowering local church leaders to identify the skills and resources that

are available within their community that can be harnessed to help them prepare for and respond to small scale disasters in their locality.

Heavy rains during the first three months of 2015 saw significant flooding in the Central and Northern regions of the country. Both housing and local infrastructure, including schools, road and bridges, were severely affected. As a result of lack of access to clean water supplies, a cholera outbreak was reported in six provinces.

The church in Gurue district, having received the Umoja envisioning training and made contingency plans, managed the distribution of food and NFIs to 908 people during this time. Due to a lack of government and INGO capacity and accessibility issues, those affected by the flooding in Gurue district received no other assistance.

The Gurue church also set up a cholera response initiative. Through Pastor Lisboa's links with the Ministry of Health, members were mobilized, and trained to support cholera awareness and chlorine distribution in affected areas. Communities were distrusting of the Ministry of Health, in some cases accusing them of spreading cholera, and hence would not accept the health messages or water purification treatments from the Ministry of Health brigades. The church, recognising the risks of inaction, took on the responsibility for providing chlorine to treat the water and helped avert huge loss of life. Out of 178 people affected with Cholera in Gurue, only three lost their lives; in previous years, many more lives would have been lost.

²⁵Aldrich, D.P., 2012. *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE CHALLENGES

In order to forge a more effective collaboration, it is essential to acknowledge the significant challenges that exist. **Power differentials** between international agencies and local actors undermine effective and sustainable programming while contributing to distrust and corruption. It is essential for international actors from both the faith and secular communities to develop ways to engage with local faith communities without inundating or co-opting. The evidence is growing that power differentials have unintended consequences for local actors, especially among those serving the poor and vulnerable²⁶. Too often local actors are diverted from locally determined needs to focus more on international priorities and the increased resources that come with them. Further, the greater the local needs the greater the power differential and the impact on local communities. Once again, the marginalized are the most vulnerable to the unintended consequences of good intentions.

Proselytizing continues to be an issue of concern both in the secular community and the faith community. We acknowledge that while clear ethical standards exist, both in the faith community (See Integral Alliance Standards²⁷) and secular agencies (See UNHCR Ethics²⁸) work is still needed among the faith community to foster greater compliance with ethical practice while still allowing for respectful expression of faith. At the same time, we call for greater acknowledgement of the progress that has been made for faith-based organizations to share

their faith in the context of religious liberty, but never in a way that denigrates the value of the other person or other culture, or that is coercive or contingent. All actors influence those that serve, whether faith-based or secular. As noted above, it is a basic fact of the impact of power differential in relationships. The challenge for all those in the humanitarian world is to strive to minimize unacknowledged influence on indigenous people and develop methods that are respectful of local culture.

Gender discrimination is a global concern. Discrimination is a major barrier to development and though progress has been made,²⁹ much remains to be done. We recognize that this is an area where local faith communities can be a source of discrimination or a source of healing and change. In some areas, culture and religious standards can perpetuate the risk for the marginalized. The evangelical community is committed to respect for all people and works with local communities to see how such discrimination is inconsistent with their faith. Further, we are committed to engaging and providing services without regard to race, ethnicity, gender, or nationality. As one community, we believe it is important to keep local faith communities and faith-based organizations accountable to one another for ever more faithful presence of our purpose and mission as communities of faith. Further, we see accountability as an essential role for the local faith community where the church is to be challenged, keeping the church accountable, faithfully self-reflective on its own practice.

²⁶Burchardt, M (2013) Faith-Based Humanitarianism: Organizational Change and Everyday Meanings in South Africa *Sociology of Religion* 74:1 30-55 doi:10.1093/socrel/srs068

²⁷<http://www.integralalliance.org/about/standards/>

²⁸<http://www.unhcr.org/422dbc89a.html>

²⁹<http://genderindex.org/ranking>

While emphasizing change, we also recognize that programming and growth, however well designed and well intentioned, is **inherently disruptive** to local communities in ways that can be harmful as well as healing. This is especially true of those local NGOs serving the poor, as they themselves are typically poorly resourced and thus vulnerable to undue influence from those who are well resourced. Our challenge in recognizing this is to engage without changing the character of the local community into becoming like the more resourced partner.

Finally, we recognize that **our reach is limited**. The evangelical community does not reach every community on the globe. As such, we value being faithful partners in a diverse world, building relationships that help us to serve and support when and where we can.



Recommendations

Based on the previously stated values and capabilities, whilst being mindful of the challenges in international development, we propose the following recommendations to the World Humanitarian Summit in the hope of fostering a greater level of understanding and collaboration.

- Improve the acceptance/understanding among the international community (i.e World Bank, UN Agencies, Development and Humanitarian Government Departments) of the unique value of faith based organizations, and subsequently increase the integration of faith communities into humanitarian and development responses.
- Improve the connection between the high level UN and Intergovernmental Agendas and the ongoing work of the local and international churches, using International and National Faith Based organizations as a conduit for dialogue.
- Recognizing there are multiple groups among civil society, create a permanent space for the faith community to participate at the strategic planning level by, for example, encouraging UNOCHA to formally acknowledge/engage the faith community in disaster planning and response.
- Recognizing the unique value of church networks and faith bodies to provide access, accountability, a voice for affected populations and to remain post-crisis, it is important that the UN, national and local governments ensure a role for the local church and faith structures in decision making, coordination and strategic planning.
- Responding to the absence of a role for faith based organisations in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, ensure that faith-based organizations are actively integrated into national disaster preparedness including resource mobilization, planning and training.

Commitments

In addition to our recommendations to the Global Development Community, we also **challenge the evangelical community** to further the aim of greater collaboration in service of the world's vulnerable by adopting the following commitments. We call on FBOs, INGOs and other global Christian bodies to commit to:

- 1.** Providing training, skills, capacity and knowledge to effectively engage with disaster co-ordination;
- 2.** Emphasize humility and mutuality in our collaboration with other in the humanitarian sphere.
- 3.** Serve as effective translators between the needs, priorities and vulnerabilities of the local community and the powerful actors who desire to assist them;
- 4.** Make a recommitment to do no harm;
- 5.** Commit to more effective, evidence-based monitoring and evaluation of the impact of faith-based actors, hold ourselves accountable to the evidence, and learn from our evaluations.
- 6.** Engage in active debate concerning the danger of coercive proselytizing.

Closing

In closing, we commend the United Nations for launching the World Humanitarian Summit as an opportunity to reflect on how society at large may live more sacrificially on behalf of the world's vulnerable. We hope that our brief will be a constructive contribution to this process that fosters more cooperative and productive work between the evangelical community, other faith communities and secular agencies. Most importantly, we call on the UN to recognize the role of the faith community in providing principled and effective humanitarian response and to proactively engage with the faith community as part of the World Humanitarian Summit.