

UCL Migration Research Unit

JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES (JLI)

SCOPING STUDY ON LOCAL FAITH COMMUNITIES IN URBAN DISPLACEMENT: *EVIDENCE ON LOCALISATION AND URBANISATION*

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Acronyms

AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
BASRAN	Bangkok Asylum Seekers and Refugee Assistance Network
BIC	Baha'i International Community
CINEP	Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CWS	Church World Service
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FBO	Faith-based Organisation
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
JLI	Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Services
LSESD	Lebanese Society for Educational & Social Development
LFC	Local Faith Community
LNHA	Local and National Humanitarian Actor
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
RCCG	Redeemed Christian Church of God
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
StARS	St Andrew's Refugee Services
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this report is to highlight evidence regarding the roles and impact that Local Faith Communities (LFCs) play in relation to urban refugees, with the aim of informing interconnected conversations around localisation and urbanisation.

The international community is increasingly committed to supporting local responses to displacement, at a time when the humanitarian system is overburdened, underfunded and in flux as the world reportedly faces the highest levels of displacement ever recorded - over 65 million people in 2017, who have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence, and persecution. In 2016 the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) resulted in the Charter for Change and a renewed call for meaningful support for the 'localisation of humanitarian aid' agenda. In part building on the UNHCR's work following the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection in December 2012, this includes recognition of the actual and potential roles of LFCs in offering protection, solidarity and assistance to displaced people throughout different stages and spaces of their journeys.

It is against this backdrop, and in light of the majority of displaced people around the world living in towns and cities (rather than in isolated camps) across the global South, that this report offers a state-of-the-art synthesis and analysis of evidence about the roles played by Local Faith Communities in supporting protracted urban refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the globe, particularly focusing on the global South. This evidence is therefore centrally relevant to two key debates in contemporary humanitarian policy and practice – localisation and urbanisation – whose outcomes will have a significant impact on the future of refugee protection.

Our review of the evidence confirms that urbanisation and the localisation agendas are, in many ways, two sides of the same coin. Far from the (real or imagined) segregation of displaced people in rural camps, the settlement of refugee and IDP populations in towns and cities worldwide means that displaced people live alongside local communities with whom they have complex relationships.

The contextual migration from camp to city, with refugees predominantly living in urban environments rather than camps, has provoked fundamental debate around the practice of refugee protection and response, and raises the question of the role that LFCs - central features of rural and urban contexts of displacement – play in supporting urban refugees and IDPs. Among these renewed debates are how local community members respond to the arrival and settlement of displaced people; how government authorities interact with urban refugees; what constitutes authentic partnership and 'capacity-building' between global humanitarian actors and local civic, governmental and religious bodies; and how to achieve effective coordination of response.

Our findings show that:

- a) LFCs are active and largely effective across the range of refugee response modalities, including basic services (such as offering shelter and material support), psychosocial support, registration and Refugee Status Determination, advocacy and influencing on behalf of refugees, and peacebuilding in contexts of displacement. Yet they also contend with challenges including being overburdened, being intertwined with conflicting parties, and operating with different norms to other humanitarian actors;
- b) The different norms and structures between international humanitarian actors and local faith actors create barriers to full engagement. These differences include parallel coordination structures and a lack of understanding about how to engage with those that are outside the strictly defined limits of secular humanitarianism. Proselytisation is a critical dividing line. The research shows many nuances in this debate, however, and offers examples of how training with LFCs can open avenues for new partnerships where non-conditionality and impartiality prevail;
- c) Transnational religious networks are a key resource for refugees and forced migrants, offering integration in places of waiting and arrival, advice and support for ongoing journeys, and provision of material and financial assistance in urban centres. The evidence from these transnational religious networks demonstrates the sustained position of religious actors in refugee response in ways that are largely unknown to the broader humanitarian system.

From our review of the evidence, we argue that LFCs represent a crucial dimension of the landscape of locality that play multiple, often complex, roles in responding to urban refugees, and yet, faith remains a dimension that is systematically overlooked by the humanitarian system. The assistance provided by these local communities, including through LFCs, can operate in a largely parallel system to the international humanitarian response to displacement. The localisation agenda, to encompass full and integrated localisation, is not only about shifting responsibility and resources to national governments, but also about recognising and capacitating this diversity of local actors in communities at a neighbourhood level.

Definitions

While the term faith-based organisation (FBO) is commonly used to denote the broad range of humanitarian organisations that take inspiration from faith across various domains (e.g. mission and vision, recruitment practices, funding, affiliation to religious institutions¹), the term is commonly given to international and national organisations rather than including the variety of religious groupings at local levels. To be inclusive, the social, material, financial, and spiritual capital held by these actors for refugee and IDP response must also be examined.²

The focus of this report is how LFCs respond to the presence, needs and rights of refugees and IDPs, and not the roles played by international FBOs. This focus stems firstly from our desire to contribute to the global debate around the meaning of ‘localisation’, and secondly from our findings that FBOs which are integrated into the international humanitarian system face many of the same challenges as secular actors when trying to understand and engage with LFCs. One key informant³ a senior staff member of an international FBO illustrated this:

“A lot of our staff also feel that it would be problematic to formally partner with local faith communities...in some research we did in Nepal and Kenya and elsewhere, we found that our own staff felt quite uncomfortable approaching faith leaders. We actually feel that we have a problem ourselves. We have to improve our own practice.”

Many FBOs operate on a largely secular basis, as in Indonesia, where interviewees noted that several major FBOs - Tzu Chi, Dompot Dhuafa, Church World Service (CWS) and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) - are deeply involved in refugee response, yet their work proceeds along largely secular lines. As such, it must be recognised that there are different scales of religious affiliation among organisations, with actors represented on a spectrum or continuum of religious affiliation rather than a binary of faith and non-faith.

In recognition of the broad range of ways in which local religious actors can respond to displacement, the term “local faith community” (LFC) as used in this report can refer to:

¹ Laura C. Thaut, “The Role of Faith in Christian Faith-Based Humanitarian Agencies: Constructing the Taxonomy,” *Voluntas*, 20:4, 2009, 319–50.

² Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “Introduction: Faith-Based Humanitarianism in Contexts of Forced Displacement,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 429–39; Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Alastair Ager, “Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Humanitarian Situations: A Scoping Study” (Oxford: Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities and RSC Working Paper, 2013).

³ Here and throughout the report, interviewees’ names have been anonymized in order to protect respondent confidentiality. Some organizational names and locations have been associated with interviewees as necessary to provide readers with an understanding of the contextual specificity of examples.

1. Local faith figures (respected female and male community figures perceived as a source of moral authority such as imams, sheikhs, monks, sisters and nuns, and priests)⁴
2. Informal local faith and worship communities (informal and spontaneous social groups mobilizing in crisis to provide basic services, deriving motivation from religious sources)
3. Faith networks (formally or informally linked faith groups working under a shared structure, such as zakat committees, or councils of churches)
4. Local faith-influenced organizations (formal groups with strong ties to the community, from community-based organisations that are faith-inspired but not linked to religious structures to social outreach associations linked to religious structures such as associations on mosque premises or social action centers linked to churches)
5. National faith-influenced organizations – national NGOs whose work or mission are influenced by religious beliefs, e.g. Muhammadiyah.⁵

Definitions of ‘the local’ can subsume some of the nuances into generalised terms with local actors being equated with national governments and large national organisations.⁶ A recent Harvard and Oxfam report uses the term ‘Local and National Humanitarian Actor’ (LNHA) to show that this broad category of ‘local actor’ can include “domestic government, civil society, and community-based organisations.” Definitions of ‘the local’ in the localization agenda could include all of the actors in the list above. To this extent, there is no level at which faith actors are not involved in localization - they are present throughout. There are also allowances, somewhat controversially,⁷ of international faith-influenced organizations (e.g. World Vision, Catholic Relief Services) to act as intermediaries between the local and international, as international FBOs can have clear links to local religious actors through their religious affiliation. There are organisations that are registered nationally but linked to international organisational structures, such as World Vision India. A recent straw poll by IRIN on Twitter indicated that respondents did not feel that World Vision India should be counted as a local organisation.⁸ Yet others noted that World Vision India has been in the country longer than World Vision has been in the UK.⁹

⁴ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (ed) “Gender, Religion and Humanitarian Responses to Refugees,” Migration Research Unit Policy Briefing (London: University College London, 2016), 12, <http://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/research/research-centres/migration-research-unit/policy-briefings>.

⁵ Based on Shatha El Nakib and Alastair Ager, “Local Faith Community and Related Civil Society Engagement in Humanitarian Response with Syrian Refugees in Irbid, Jordan: Report to the Henry Luce Foundation” (New York: Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, April 2015), 6–7, <http://jliflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/El-Nakib-Ager-Local-faith-communities-and-humanitarian-response-in-Irbid-.pdf>.

⁶ Tara R. Gingerich et al., “Local Humanitarian Leadership and Religious Literacy: Engaging with Religion, Faith, and Faith Actors” (Boston; Washington DC: Harvard Divinity School; Oxfam America, March 2017), 11, <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/research-publications/local-humanitarian-leadership-and-religious-literacy-engaging-with-religion-faith-and-faith-actors/>.

⁷ <https://www.devex.com/news/dispute-over-grand-bargain-localization-commitments-boils-over-90603>.

⁸ <https://twitter.com/irinnews/status/881847538604802049>.

⁹ <https://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2017/03/27/local-aid-agencies-still-waiting-bigger-share-funding-cake>.

While the debate on the exact parameters of which actors are ‘local’ in the context of localisation continues, this report builds on the evidence to hone in on the key issues of relevance to localization debates relating to LFCs operating in urban environments. In the context of the global humanitarian conversation on localisation, and the parallel recognition that cities and towns comprise a growing majority of contexts of displacement, we aim to provide evidence that promotes meaningful engagement with LFCs, documenting the strengths and weaknesses of such local support mechanisms and the extent to which such mechanisms are integrated into international and national response systems.

The report focuses on cases of displacement both across national boundaries for refugees and within national boundaries for internally displaced people (IDPs). The notion of ‘protracted’ displacement refers to the extended periods of time in which most displacement now occurs, with UNHCR defining a protracted refugee situation as “one in which 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or longer in a given asylum country.”¹⁰ ODI research highlights that “Data from 1978–2014 suggests that less than one in 40 refugee crises are resolved within three years, and that ‘protractedness’ is usually a matter of decades. More than 80% of refugee crises last for ten years or more; two in five last 20 years or more.”¹¹

The context of urban protracted displacement also has its own nuances, with overlapping displacement occurring, which Fiddian-Qasmiyeh defines in two senses:

“Firstly, refugees and IDPs have often both personally and collectively experienced secondary and tertiary displacement, as in the case of Palestinian and Iraqi refugees who had originally sought safety in Damascus only to be displaced once more by the on-going Syrian conflict... Secondly, refugees are increasingly experiencing overlapping displacement in the sense that they often physically share spaces with other displaced people in diverse spaces of asylum: Turkey hosts refugees from over 35 countries of origin, Lebanon from 17, Kenya 16, Jordan 14, Chad 12, and both Ethiopia and Pakistan 11.”¹²

This often results in what Fiddian-Qasmiyeh refers to as ‘refugees hosting refugees’, with situations of both hospitality and hostility occurring in these encounters. As will be shown later on in the report, religious institutions are part of these secondary and tertiary displacements as well as being part of the shared and diverse spaces of asylum in urban centres.

¹⁰ <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/policyissues/issues/protracted/>.

¹¹ Nicholas Crawford et al., “Protracted Displacement: Uncertain Paths to Self-Reliance in Exile” (London: Overseas Development Institute, September 2015), 1, <https://www.odi.org/publications/9906-refugee-idp-displacement-livelihoods-humanitarian-development>.

¹² Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “Refugee-Refugee Relations in Contexts of Overlapping Displacement,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 2016, <http://www.ijurr.org/spotlight-on-overview/spotlight-urban-refugee-crisis/refugee-refugee-relations-contexts-overlapping-displacement/>.

The focus in this report is primarily on examples of urban protracted displacement in the global South. The definition of the global South used in this report takes its lead from Pacitto and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh.¹³

“the terms ‘global North’ and ‘global South’ are used in this paper in line with McEwan’s suggestion that ‘it is most useful to think of North/South as a *metaphorical* rather than a *geographical* distinction.’ Furthermore, the terms global North/South transcend the connotations of typologies such as ‘First’ and ‘Third’ World, ‘developed’ or ‘developing’ which ‘suggest both a hierarchy and a value judgment’, in addition to transcending the inherently *negative* framework implicit in the usage of the term ‘non-West’ as the counterpoint to ‘West’”.

A second JLI Refugees and Forced Migration Hub report on the stages and spaces of LFCs involvement in the refugee experience is planned for the future, and a greater proportion of the evidence in that report will include perspectives from North American, European, and Australasian countries.

Finally, the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence,¹⁴ are of importance here, particularly the definition of impartiality. The definition of impartiality has two components: first, that assistance be given on the basis of need alone and, second, that assistance should not discriminate based on nationality, race, gender, religion, class or political affiliation. The principle of impartiality becomes a key point of debate in the role of LFCs, as an underlying fear is that LFCs will give priority to their co-religionists rather than operate non-discriminatorily based on need alone. This will be addressed in depth in the second section of the report.

The evidence shows that in order to develop and implement appropriate, local, effective and sustainable policies regarding refugees and IDPs in urban contexts, it will be increasingly necessary to engage strategically with LFCs across the globe. Our report provides an overview of debates relating to localisation and urbanisation by means of providing context, and then identifies key case studies and examples of best practice for partnerships with faith communities across three areas: the roles that LFCs play in supporting people living in contexts of urban displacement; their alignment and non-alignment with the structure and norms of the international response system; and the influence of transnational religious networks in refugee and IDP experiences. The report concludes with recommendations on how LFCs could be better supported in their work in contexts of urban protracted displacement.

¹³ Julia Pacitto and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “Writing the ‘Other’ into Humanitarian Discourse: Framing Theory and Practice in South–South Humanitarian Responses to Forced Displacement,” *RSC Working Paper Series* 93 (2013): 3, <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/writing-the-other-into-humanitarian-discourse-framing-theory-and-practice-in-south-south-humanitarian-responses-to-forced-displacement>.

¹⁴ For more information: https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf.

METHODOLOGY

The evidence collected and identified for this report include 21 key informant interviews conducted by the authors between May and August 2017, and a review of 293 publications addressing refugees, IDPs, and religion (including journal articles, books, reports, policy briefs, newspaper articles, and other documentation); this selection was subsequently distilled to include the most relevant articles, with 168 publications analysed in detail.

Literature was gathered through systematic Internet searches using standard academic and aid-specific repositories.¹⁵ The systematic searches were based on pre-defined terms from the **Scoping Study Outline** document, which was written by the Hub Co-chairs (Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Sadia Kidwai) and reviewed by the Hub members to ensure that all main points were covered; this acted as a pre-approved guide to the main areas of interest for those across the Hub. As well as searching with general terms like ‘religion’ and ‘refugees’ we also looked at specific terms such as ‘camps’, ‘deportation,’ ‘detention’, ‘transit’ and other such keywords as noted in the outline.

The review process started at the beginning of January 2017, with publications added to and subsequently coded in a joint library created on the bibliographic management software, Zotero. The preliminary round of coding was undertaken to sort articles into the broad areas detailed in the Scoping Study Outline. The main themes, as condensed into short titles, are:

1. Emergency;
2. Stages;
3. Spaces;
4. State and non-state actors;
5. Advocacy and lobbying;
6. Durable solutions.¹⁶

In a process of iteration, the content of these main themes were discussed in regular Skype meetings between the two researchers. Additional specifications were noted as literature was added to the shared library, including the observations that many of the articles about psychology and coping skills were linked to the emergency or resettlement

¹⁵ Google Scholar, Trinity College Dublin Online Databases, Columbia University Library Database, Cairn.info, ALNAP, ReliefWeb, JLI Resources.

¹⁶ See the Outline included in Annex 1 of this report for full details of what is included in each of these themes.

rather than the broader literature on economic migrants (while acknowledging the conceptual and pragmatic difficulties of defining ‘forced’ versus ‘voluntary’ migration).¹⁷

Through the categorisation of articles using Zotero’s tagging tool, an indication of the most common and least common areas in the literature was revealed from the primary set of documents collected. A coding of the broad themes represented in the literature showed the following:

Areas that are very well documented (brackets denote total number of documents):

Christianity (56)	North America (US & (& Canada – 48). US alone (38)	Islam (41)
Sub-Saharan Africa (36).	Middle East and North Africa (36. Iraq [10] and Syria [8] make up half).	Psychosocial (includes religion as a coping mechanism, resilience, mental health, psychology, trauma, and well-being - 25)

Areas that are relatively well documented (fewer than 20 docs):

Critiques/negatives/barriers/challenges (15)	Gender aspects (14)	Southeast Asia (13 total. Primarily Myanmar – 8)
South Asia (12)	Urban focus (10)	Sanctuary (9)
Children (9)	UK (7)	

Areas that are not well documented in relation to the intersection with religion (5 docs and fewer):

Latin America	Religions other than Christianity and Islam	Borders
Camps	Deportation	Detention
Protection issues	Smuggling/trafficking	Return
Media	Security and immigration officials	Non-arrival (dignity in/after death)
Involuntary immobility	Statelessness	Transit/journeys

There was a clear prevalence of literature on Christianity and North America, indicating levels of funding and ease of access for such research. Areas that are more contested and difficult to research such as the roles of LFCs in supporting smuggled and trafficked people, or in contexts of deportation and detention were underrepresented in the whole.

¹⁷ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., “Introduction,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, ed. Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

The themes with the least amount of data influenced the construction of the interview protocol. Interviews were conducted by the two main researchers using a snowball sampling technique in which key informants were recommended by JLI Hub members, who then also recommended further leads. In total, 21 key informants were interviewed via Skype with conversations on average lasting 1 hour. Interviewees had knowledge and expertise in the following geographical areas and countries:

- Middle East and North Africa, particularly Egypt, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq
- Balkans Route, particularly Serbia and Albania
- Latin America, particularly Colombia
- Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia and Ethiopia
- The Sahel, particularly Mauritania and Chad
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Nepal
- Thailand
- Indonesia
- Sri Lanka
- Italy

The interviews were semi-structured in nature, with a brief set of questions developed to guide the general structure of the conversation. Interviewees came from a range of organisational backgrounds, from local religious leaders, to representatives of national faith-based organizations, and international faith-based and secular organizations. Interviews were analysed by coding the data through the same main themes as the literature, particularly drawing out information on localisation and urbanisation in line with the overarching focus of this report. The final report was jointly drafted by the main researchers, before being submitted for a review process with JLI Hub members.

There are several limitations to acknowledge in this research process. While Internet searches and interviews were conducted in French and Spanish (in line with the Hub's commitment to try to transcend the limitations of monolingual research), the large majority of texts are in English and therefore research published in other languages is not represented in the review of the literature. Likewise, the interview sampling strategy used focuses in on key informants who can present an informed overview of a situation, but are not representative of a population as a whole. Efforts were made to speak to interviewees from a broad range of countries and backgrounds, but it must be acknowledged that not all types of stakeholders involved in refugee and IDP response have been interviewed and not all forms of knowledge pertaining to refugee and IDP populations are represented among interviewees.

Recognising these limitations, the purpose of the state-of-the-art review is to highlight main areas of knowledge, to analyse what is known about the intersections of religion, refugees, localisation, and urbanisation, and to uncover research gaps requiring further attention amongst academics, practitioners and policy-makers.

TWO TRENDS IN REFUGEE/IDP RESPONSE: LOCALISATION AND URBANISATION

Localisation

In 2016, the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS)¹⁸ affirmed that localisation is fundamental to the delivery of effective humanitarian response, concluding that humanitarian action should be “*as local as possible, as international as necessary*.” Related initiatives such as the Grand Bargain¹⁹, Charter4Change²⁰, and the NEAR Project²¹ have significantly raised the public profile and urgency of the conversation on localisation, and articulated clear goals and principles for implementation.

Although variation exists among these and other initiatives on precisely what localisation means, broad descriptions typically include: a shift toward active participation of local actors in the design, decision making and governance processes of response; the prioritisation of actors that are ‘as local as possible’, including local community, civil society, local government and in some cases national actors; an increase in the flow of resources to the local level; and a commitment to equity in partnership between local and international actors.²²

Alongside the advocacy of primarily Southern NGO networks, such as the NEAR network,²³ and organizations for greater equity and more meaningful partnership models between international and local humanitarian actors, there has also been a growing recognition among primarily Northern NGOs and INGOs that aid delivered by local actors is often ‘faster, cheaper and more culturally appropriate’²⁴ and is often highly effective.²⁵ Localisation can be seen as an inevitable and necessary shift in the pattern of humanitarianism,²⁶ in the light of the scale of humanitarian disasters, changes in technology, shifts in governmental funding commitments, and other social changes that are deeply influencing the flow of problems, resources and capacities worldwide.

¹⁸ <http://agendaforhumanity.org/summit>.

¹⁹ <http://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861>.

²⁰ <https://charter4change.org/>.

²¹ <http://www.near.ngo/>.

²² IASC: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/more-support-and-funding-tools-local-and-national-responders>

²³ <http://www.near.ngo/>.

²⁴ https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/rr-turning-humanitarian-system-local-capacity-270715-en.pdf.

²⁵ Obrecht, 2014. Available at: http://www.iris-france.org/docs/kfm_docs/docs/obs_questions_humanitaires/eng-obshuma-obrecht-octobre2014.pdf.

²⁶ Imogen Wall and Kerren Hedlund, “Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response: A Literature Review” (Local 2 Global Protection; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, May 2016), 5, http://www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_SDC_Lit_Review_LocallyLed_June_2016_final.pdf. Revised version available at: http://www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_SDC_Lit_Review_LocallyLed_June_2016_revisedJan_2017_online.pdf.

Localisation is also needed to realign current power imbalances between international actors and local and national counterparts.²⁷

The localization agenda is also fundamentally about the capacity of the current system to cope with the scale of the problem, and about the equitable sharing of humanitarian resources. Between 2007 and 2013, the proportion of the global humanitarian budget provided directly to local actors - even including national actors in that definition - averaged 1.87% annually.²⁸ One interviewee pointed to the complexity and importance of debate around the allocation of resources, arguing that what interest there is among Northern governments, NGOs and INGOs in the humanitarian roles of LFCs has at times been interpreted by Southern local and some national NGOs primarily in terms of competition for scarce funding. This can lead to a tendency at a local non-faith NGO level to push back against investment in faith communities. As one interview put it:

“As much as there are detractors in the international community, now a lot of the resistance is coming from other local actors. What has been interesting has been the emergence of local NGOs, who you would have thought would have been more sympathetic to having a religious presence...but actually, no, it’s the opposite. Some of them have been actively trying to isolate religious actors. The challenge we have is not just talking to the UN or the Red Cross, but those who are calling for localisation from the global South. And that’s a different challenge. Part of it is power dynamics. In many ways, the localisation agenda is about who gets the money. Unfortunately, we may have got into a scenario of competition, if local [non-faith] actors feel that the local faith organisation is going to be more trusted. We don’t really appreciate this [challenge] fully yet.”

There is a long way to go to implement the localization agenda. Since the WHS, several work-stream updates have noted that progress towards localisation ‘remains inconsistent and incomplete.’²⁹

²⁷ Tara R. Gingerich and Marc J. Cohen, “Turning the Humanitarian System on Its Head: Saving Lives and Livelihoods by Strengthening Local Capacity and Shifting Leadership to Local Actors” (Oxfam America, July 2015), 14, https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/rr-turning-humanitarian-system-local-capacity-270715-en.pdf.

²⁸ UNICEF Concept Note on Localization: “Accelerating progress towards locally-led coordination of protection responses- Concept and key results for 2017-2018; <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/more-support-and-funding-tools-local-and-national-responders/content/localization-work-stream>; The STAIT Report on Somalia also found that local actors continue to be encouraged to play a role in project-based implementation, but are not sufficiently engaged in strategic planning and do not receive the capacity building support necessary to transition to a more longer-term, sustainable role in the response.

²⁹ UNICEF Concept Note on Localization: “Accelerating progress towards locally-led coordination of protection responses- Concept and key results for 2017-2018; <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/more-support-and-funding-tools-local-and-national-responders/content/localization-work-stream>; The STAIT Report on Somalia also found that local actors continue to be encouraged to play a role in project-based implementation, but are not sufficiently engaged in strategic planning and do not receive the capacity building support necessary to transition to a more longer-term, sustainable role in the response. [fam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/rr-turning-humanitarian-system-local-capacity-270715-en.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/rr-turning-humanitarian-system-local-capacity-270715-en.pdf).

Local Faith Communities are an underrepresented sector of localisation

The vigorous debate in the humanitarian sector for the last decade around the roles played by faith communities in humanitarian response³⁰ has sparked significant interest amongst academics, humanitarian practitioners and policy-makers³¹. Most recently, FBOs were listed as stakeholders in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) drafted as part of UN General Assembly's 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.³²

Despite this, LFCs are still largely absent from most contemporary humanitarian models of the landscape of locality: Oxfam's 2015 localisation report, *Turning the Humanitarian System on its Head* does not mention local faith communities or local FBOs³³; a recent UNICEF Child Protection localisation concept note did not include local faith communities in a list of 'non-traditional local actors'³⁴; Obrecht's well-cited 2014 article³⁵ on 'De-internationalising' humanitarian action makes no mention of faith, religion or faith communities; and a 40-page, 2016 Literature Review on 'Localization and Locally-led Crisis Response' has no citations on the topic of faith, religion or faith communities³⁶.

The possible reasons for LFCs' apparent under-representation in dominant accounts of locality are explored in the broader debate around the interaction of faith and humanitarianism, a topic that has been written about widely in the past decade.³⁷ The 'functional secularism'³⁸ of the humanitarian system may contribute to the gap between it and LFCs. Eghdamian's research³⁹ with Syrian refugees in Jordan found this widely held perspective on religion among humanitarian staff:

³⁰ See, for example, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Alastair Ager, "Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Humanitarian Situations: A Scoping Study" (Oxford: Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities and RSC Working Paper, 2013); Michael Barnett and Janice Gross Stein, "Introduction: The Secularization and Sanctification of Humanitarianism," in *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism*, ed. Michael Barnett and Janice Gross Stein (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2012), 3–36.

³¹ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, "Introduction: Faith-Based Humanitarianism in Contexts of Forced Displacement," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 429–39.

³² http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/1.

³³ https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/rr-turning-humanitarian-system-local-capacity-270715-en.pdf.

³⁴ UNICEF Concept Note on Localization: "Accelerating progress towards locally-led coordination of protection responses- Concept and key results for 2017-2018.

³⁵ http://www.iris-france.org/docs/kfm_docs/docs/obs_questions_humanitaires/eng-obshuma-obrecht-octobre2014.pdf.

³⁶ Imogen Wall and Kerren Hedlund, "Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response: A Literature Review" (Local 2 Global Protection; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, May 2016), 5, http://www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_SDC_Lit_Review_LocallyLed_June_2016_final.pdf.

³⁷ Alastair Ager and Joey Ager, *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement: Finding the Place of Religion in the Support of Displaced Communities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

³⁸ Ager, Alastair, and Joey Ager. "Faith and the Discourse of Secular Humanitarianism." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 456–72.

³⁹ Kat Eghdamian, "The Experiences of Syrian Christian and Druze Refugees in Jordan", Migration Research Unit Policy Briefing (London: University College London, 2015), <http://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/about-the-department/news/news-archive-2016/january-2016/the-experiences-of-syrian-christian-and-druze-refugees-in-jordan>.

“Many of the humanitarian actors interviewed preferred to avoid engagement with religion in responding to displacement. This was due to two widely held assumptions. First, that religion was a non-essential feature of displacement and unimportant in relation to the hierarchy of refugee identities, needs, and experiences. Second, that religion is a source of conflict and identity politics.”⁴⁰

This secular reluctance has also been found in research following Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.⁴¹ At this crucial stage of policy development, this report aims to equip the contemporary humanitarian debate around localisation with what evidence exists concerning the nature, role and impact of local faith communities in urban contexts of response to forced migrants and refugees.

The recently published *Future of Aid* report⁴² acknowledged that humanitarian actors must include the local and faith-based, but interestingly combined these two into one, with discussion of both localisation and faith in one section. While the acknowledgment goes some way, the amalgamation of two different themes without analysis is concerning. While agreeing that local and faith-based work are often closely aligned, this does not recognise the layers of marginalisation that local actors can experience in the greater humanitarian system.

As one interviewee explained, there is already marginalisation being a Pakistani or Somali local NGO, and adding a Muslim identity on top of that puts them in a difficult position and limits their opportunities for partnership. As she put it, “the risks outweigh the benefits.” In this way, the multiple identities of an organisation are judged by donors and potentially interconnected identities such as nationality and religion compound an organisation’s marginalisation. The intersectional nature of these pressures on organisations show how local NGOs must conform to humanitarian norms in order to adhere to systems of domination from international humanitarianism.

⁴⁰ The need for UN agencies to purposefully disengage from religion *in order to maintain a neutral and impartial stance*, was also asserted by a humanitarian practitioner who participated in a July 2017 workshop on the topic of ‘Challenges and Opportunities of Faith-based Local Community responses to Displacement’ convened by the AHRC-ESRC funded Refugee Hosts project (www.refugeehosts.org). A report of the workshop will be available from www.refugeehosts.org in winter 2017: Aydan Greatrick, *Challenges and Opportunities of Local Faith Community Responses to Displacement from Syria*, Refugee Hosts and Migration Research Unit Working Paper, forthcoming.

⁴¹ Olivia Wilkinson, “‘Faith Can Come In, but Not Religion.’ Secularity and Its Effects on the Disaster Response to Typhoon Haiyan,” *Disasters*, Forthcoming.

⁴² Action Against Hunger et al., “The Future of Aid INGOs in 2030,” July 26, 2017, 131, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/The_Future_Of_Aid_INGOs_In_2030-20.compressed.pdf.

Urbanisation

By 2030, it is expected that 60% of the world's population will live in cities and towns, twice the proportion in 1950. The refugee population mirrors this trend; today, over half of the world's refugees live in urban contexts, although this trend varies significantly by region: there is a greater prevalence of encampment policies and refugee camps in Sub-Saharan Africa, versus a greater tendency for urban settlement in regions such as the Middle East, where an estimated 90% of all refugees from Syria are living in non-camp settings.⁴³ Whereas in the past, urban refugees that were registered with UNHCR tended to be young, working men, today's urban refugees represent the full demographic range of the global refugee population.⁴⁴

Until 2009, UNHCR was largely structured around a camp-based model of refugee response.⁴⁵ The policy shift away from camps, announced in 2009, amid continued resistance from reluctant host states, stems from a recognition of weaknesses in the camp model, including the protracted nature of camps intended to be temporary, concerns that they engender dependency, perpetuate trauma, distort local economies, and increase protection risks including Sexual and Gender Based Violence.⁴⁶

Such challenges have arguably contributed to the increased urbanisation of refugee populations, with refugees choosing alternatives to camps. Certain countries have encampment policies, and these policies mean that people living outside of camps may be in breach of administrative laws and at risk of detention or even deportation; as such, refugees living outside of camps may prefer to live 'invisible' lives in urban settings. Urban contexts come with a range of challenges for refugees, including persistent protection risks such as sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), HIV/AIDS and trafficking. In spite of these risks, UNHCR has expressed optimism that, by avoiding the negative dynamics of camps, urban settings can offer refugees "the possibility to live with greater dignity, independence and normality as members of the community, either from the beginning of displacement or as soon as possible thereafter."⁴⁷

⁴³ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, *Refugee-Refugee Relations in Contexts of Overlapping Displacement*, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 2016, <http://www.ijurr.org/spotlight-on-overview/spotlight-urban-refugee-crisis/refugee-refugee-relations-contexts-overlapping-displacement/>.

⁴⁴ UNHCR, 2009: Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas <http://www.unhcr.org/4ab356ab6.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Although it must be noted that in the 1970s urban refugees were in fact the main focus of international organisations, leading Robert Chambers to write an article drawing attention to rural refugees: 'Rural Refugees in Africa: What the Eye Does Not See', *Disasters*, 1979; on the shift from an 'urban bias' in the 1970s to the challenges faced by INGOs and UN Agencies when addressing the needs of urban refugees in the 2000s, see Pantuliano, S. 'Introduction to virtual special issue on 'Refugees and the Displaced'', *Disasters*, 2011.

⁴⁶ *Alternative to Camps*, UNHCR, 2014 <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/statelessness/5422b8f09/unhcr-policy-alternatives-camps.html>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2014.

Relative to the experience of refugees, there are many significant differences between large sanctioned refugee camps and urban environments. One important difference is physical: whereas the provision of services in camps is largely centralised and delivered to often vast settlement of refugees in one place, in urban contexts, refugees may be spread across vast, complex and varied urban territories.

Another key difference concerns the relationship between refugees and local legal, civic and governmental structures: refugees who settle outside sanctioned camps may violate administrative laws, adding arrest and deportation to protection risks, and such refugees may not register with UNHCR,⁴⁸ challenging protection and service delivery.

Furthermore, urban contexts can place considerable pressure on local resources and services that are often already unable to meet the needs of the urban poor, in some cases leading to tensions between refugees and the resident population and competition in often sparse labour markets.⁴⁹ However, the notion of refugees as a burden on society may be a matter of perception rather than reality,⁵⁰ one which has been enhanced by political rhetoric; indeed, various interdisciplinary research studies have traced and developed methods to measure the relative 'costs' and 'benefits' of hosting refugees, including the benefits that may arise through the provision of funding for services and infrastructure which can be used by hosts and refugees alike.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Kat Eghdamian, "The Experiences of Syrian Christian and Druze Refugees in Jordan" (London: University College London, 2015), <http://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/about-the-department/news/news-archive-2016/january-2016/the-experiences-of-syrian-christian-and-druze-refugees-in-jordan>; Sebnem Arsu, "No Christmas for Syrian Christians in Turkey," *POLITICO*, December 24, 2016, <http://www.politico.eu/article/no-christmas-for-syrian-christians-in-turkey/>.

⁴⁹ UNHCR, 2009.

⁵⁰ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., Ruiz, I., Vargas-Silva, C. and Zetter, R. (2011) *Measuring the Costs and Benefits of Forced Migration: A State-of-the-Art Review*, Refugee Studies Centre Report, submitted to the World Bank, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/147891468181502178/pdf/95960-v2-WP-PUBLIC-Box391432B-Assessing-the-Impacts-and-Costs-of-Forced-Displacement-vol2.pdf>; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2016) 'Refugee-Refugee Relations in Contexts of Overlapping Displacement', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, <http://www.ijurr.org/spotlight-on-overview/spotlight-urban-refugee-crisis/refugee-refugee-relations-contexts-overlapping-displacement/>.

⁵¹ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., Ruiz, I., Vargas-Silva, C. and Zetter, R. (2011) *Measuring the Costs and Benefits of Forced Migration: A State-of-the-Art Review*, Refugee Studies Centre Report, submitted to the World Bank, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/147891468181502178/pdf/95960-v2-WP-PUBLIC-Box391432B-Assessing-the-Impacts-and-Costs-of-Forced-Displacement-vol2.pdf>.

Refugees live alongside and share spaces and services with local communities, including local faith communities (and, indeed, other established refugee/IDP communities).⁵² Rather than assuming that such encounters are necessarily framed around tensions, this report examines the evidence around:

- 1) the main roles that LFCs take in refugee response;
- 2) the differing systems and norms between the international humanitarian system and local faith actors;
- 3) the transnational aspects of religion and refugee response.

Urbanisation and localisation present two of the most pressing overarching themes of contemporary debate in refugee response. In the next section, the report will go into detail on the evidence from literature and interviews on these themes.

⁵² Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. and Pacitto, J. (2015) Writing the Other into Humanitarianism: A conversation between 'South-South' and 'faith-based' humanitarianisms," in Z. Sezgin and D. Dijkzeul (eds.) *The New Humanitarianisms in International Practice: Emerging actors and contested principles*, Oxford: Routledge; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2016) *Promoting the successful integration of refugees/forcibly displaced people in situations of Protracted Forced Displacement*, Commissioned DfID Rapid Review, UK Department for International Development, March 2016 (available from the author upon request).

LOCAL FAITH COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO URBAN PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT: A REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

A review of literature and key informant interviews with practitioners around LFC response to urban protracted displacement revealed three relevant themes: (1) the roles that LFCs play in response to displacement; (2) the asymmetry between the structures and norms of the humanitarian system and those of faith communities; and (3) the transnational nature of many religious communities.

1. The roles LFCs play in response to displacement

This report is ultimately interested in examining the roles that LFCs do and could play in supporting refugees living in urban protracted displacement, but before turning to the potential capacities and opportunities for LFC involvement, it is important to start by acknowledging that interviews with practitioners and academic evidence clearly substantiate some widely held concerns about the negative roles that faith can play in displacement.

(i) Challenges

Interviews undertaken for this research and a review of the academic literature identify that faith can be seen as a driving force for displacement, and note that LFCs are often viewed as inevitably partisan, as falling short of humanitarian principles, and lacking capacity.

Driving Conflict

Specifically in reference to displacement, Orji notes that the sectarian violence that displaced tens of thousands in Jos, Nigeria had been driven by “elites from different groups [who] amplify religious differences and provoke religious conflicts as part of a wider strategy to acquire and consolidate political influence.”⁵³ Faith-based responses to violence and displacement in Jos have also largely occurred along faith community lines, raising significant questions about the impartiality of FBOs: “scholars have not sufficiently examined the role of faith-based organisations as both protagonists in conflicts and providers of relief to internally displaced persons.”⁵⁴ Similarly, in Iraq, one key informant interviewee noted instances when religious leaders mitigated against the integration of returnees by issuing a *fatwa* declaring that women who had been forcibly married to IS fighters would be integrated back into their communities only if they abandoned the children they had borne during their time held by ISIS.

⁵³ Orji, Nkwachukwu. “Faith-Based Aid to People Affected by Conflict in Jos, Nigeria: An Analysis of the Role of Christian and Muslim Organizations.” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 473–92.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.473

According to an interviewee in Colombia, local faith communities have long played a role in driving conflict:

“There is lot of scepticism about whether religion can be a force for peace here, because for a long time religion has been a force for violence, for war. During the war, the Church was often in favour of the conservatives and against the liberals... there were pastors and Bishops who supported - economically and through church newspapers - the conservatives. We can’t deny that. We can just say that today we are in a different posture, we are representing the original teachings of Jesus...”

While the scope of this paper does not allow for detailed reflection on the role of religion in peace, conflict, and conflict-induced displacement, the JLI has previously published a scoping report on religion in peace and conflict,⁵⁵ as well as a policy brief for the World Humanitarian Summit,⁵⁶ in which more analysis can be found.

Proselytising

We will return to the theme of proselytisation in more depth in the next section, but for now it is sufficient to note that in interviews and the literature we found commonly expressed concern that some LFCs supporting displaced communities will engage in proselytisation and make their assistance conditional to religious participation. This happens at all stages of the refugee journey from prior to departure, during the journey, in camps and cities, and in resettlement.⁵⁷

Partiality

Another widely expressed concern was the inability of LFCs to cohere with humanitarian principles, especially the ability to impartially deliver assistance. In Iraq, according to a UNICEF Child Protection Sub-cluster Coordinator, tribal and religious identities are powerful and fundamentally inseparable social forces, and these strong ties both support and obstruct response. Strong ethno-religious bonds enable UNICEF to quickly place children displaced by conflict into foster care in families of the same tribal/religious background, but also lead to widespread concern that assistance offered by LFCs is deeply conditional on religious identity. Similarly, a key informant explained that in Indonesia, Afghan displaced unaccompanied minors living in group homes with the Tzu Chi Foundation receive guidance to publicly identify broadly as Muslim, but not specifically as Shiite owing to that country’s Sunni dominance: *“the people of Indonesia are kind to displaced people, especially those who appear to be Arab...but in Indonesia they cannot accept Shiite Mazhab. It can be very dangerous for the children in our group home.”*

⁵⁵ <https://peace-and-conflict.jliflc.com/resources/faith-based-interventions-peace-conflict-violence-scoping-study/>

⁵⁶ <https://jliflc.com/resources/evidence-brief-1-engaging-faith-communities-meet-needs-people-living-conflict/>

⁵⁷ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “The Pragmatics of Performance: Putting ‘Faith’ in Aid in the Sahrawi Refugee Camps,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.24, No. 3, 2011, 533–47; Stephanie J. Nawyn, “Faith, Ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 49, no. 11 (July 1, 2006): 1509–27; Nancy J. Smith-Hefner, “Ethnicity and the Force of Faith: Christian Conversion among Khmer Refugees,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (1994): 24–37.

Overburdened/lacking capacity

An example from the literature on Lebanon⁵⁸, as well as interviewees from Lebanon, Serbia, and Italy all mentioned that burnout or lack of capacity was a difficulty for local faith communities. One interviewee also noted concern around whether LFC programming was held to the same standards of accountability and professionalism as international NGOs. In Serbia, the interviewee noted that faith communities are understaffed with spiritual counsellors, which comprised the largest gap in the provision of faith-based services for people who had experienced severe trauma. They noted that the Muslim community in Serbia is understaffed in this regard, whereas the majority of refugees are Muslim. In essence, there was an imbalance in supply and demand between co-religionists, especially in rural areas. This was also naturally context specific with some respondents, in Serbia and Nepal, noting that there were relatively few LFCs responding, while in contrast there were more international FBOs. In other areas, such as the DRC according to one interviewee, LFCs are much more present in responding to displacement. This can be a product of national legislation and circumstances, with the situation in Nepal, for example, prohibiting Tibetans from owning property and the Tibetan community still recovering from their displacement over the last 50 years, as detailed by one interviewee.

(ii) LFCs' constructive roles in displacement

Despite evidence that supports commonly held concerns about LFCs' refugee response, the academic literature and our key informant interviews indicate that LFCs play a wide range of other constructive roles in contexts of displacement.

Basic Services

As Ferris⁵⁹ has argued, there is an enduring data gap regarding the true extent of the response of LFCs, including with regards to basic services:

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

Part of the reason for this gap - that LFC response often takes place outside of the formal coordination system - is discussed in more detail below.

LFCs provide a wide range of basic services to displaced communities. They are often ‘first responders’⁶⁰ in a crisis and can mobilise money, volunteers, food and shelter almost

⁵⁸ Kathryn Kraft, “Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response: Lessons from Lebanese Evangelical Churches Providing Food Aid,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 97, no. 897/898 (June 2015): 395–421.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Ferris, “Faith and Humanitarianism: It’s Complicated,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 24, Issue 3, 1 September 2011, Pages 606–625.

⁶⁰ Ferris, Elizabeth. “Faith-Based and Secular Humanitarian Organizations.” *International Review of the Red Cross* 87, no. 858 (June 2005): 311.

instantaneously. Georgian Bishop Malkhaz Songulashvili commented⁶¹ on the rapidity of LFC response,

“...the truth of the matter is, you’ve got people, when these things happen...and they can always easily mobilise and you don’t need infrastructure, you could make a call and you start working immediately, and this is what happened when the war broke out in Georgia... it was always the case.”

Similarly, when Burundian refugees fled into western Tanzania, the local Lutheran organisation Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS), was able to respond instantly to the influx, whilst international agencies took days to organise and arrive.⁶²

Faith connections can also help with ease of access to basic services. One interviewee recounted a time in the initial phase after the Syrian conflict had begun when 5,000 Syrian refugees arrived in the town of Tripoli, northern Lebanon. The military had set up an exclusion zone and it was necessary to pass through military checkpoints because of the government’s fear that weapons might be smuggled into the country. The interviewee arrived at a checkpoint with the pastor of the local church that was implementing the response. They were not initially allowed to proceed with their truck of food. The pastor spoke to the General at the checkpoint who was a Shia Muslim. While they were of different religious backgrounds, the General allowed them through because he knew where the church was located in the community if there were any problems and understood the religious duty of this community institution to respond. The interviewee described this as a “theology of place” - LFCs are local and community-based institutions. They are known by the community and they know what is going on in the community.

Examples of immediate provision of shelter are common worldwide and illustrate some of the strengths of LFC response. Particularly in urban spaces, the use of religious buildings and sacred spaces to provide basic services to refugees was a common theme in the evidence. Around the world, the grounds of religious buildings have become makeshift and then established camps for displaced people.⁶³ More recently, a report of more than 10,000 people living in the compound of a Catholic Cathedral in Wau, South Sudan, was published by IRIN in August 2017.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Cited in Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Alastair Ager, “Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Humanitarian Situations: A Scoping Study” (Oxford: Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities and RSC Working Paper, 2013) p.27. ted in Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Alastair Ager, “Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Humanitarian Situations: A Scoping Study” (Oxford: Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities and RSC Working Paper, 2013) p.27.

⁶² Ibid, p15.

⁶³ For example, Barbara Bompani, “Local Religious Organisations Performing Development: Refugees in the Central Methodist Mission in Johannesburg,” *Journal of International Development* 27, no. 2 (March 1, 2015): 197–212; Edward Benson and Carine Jacquet, “Faith-Based Humanitarianism in Northern Myanmar,” *Forced Migration Review* 48 (2014), <http://www.fmreview.org/faith/benson-jacquet.html>; Damaris Seleina Parsitau, “The Role of Faith and Faith-Based Organizations among Internally Displaced Persons in Kenya,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 493–512.

⁶⁴ Ferris, Elizabeth. “Faith-Based and Secular Humanitarian Organizations.” *International Review of the Red Cross* 87, no. 858 (June 2005): 311.

In the wake of the conflict which has displaced 2.1 million people in North-Eastern Nigeria, St Theresa's cathedral in Yola has at times hosted as many as 1,000 displaced women and children.⁶⁵ In 2008, after a wave of violence directed against Zimbabweans in South Africa, the Central Methodist Mission building changed from being simply a religious site to being an improvised 'refugee camp' hosting around 3,000 refugees.⁶⁶

The use of religious buildings by refugees has been found to have different consequences for different genders. In research on Afghan refugees in Iran, it was found that religious buildings were used as an equalising space, predominantly for Afghan women, and one of the few spaces they were willing to go in the city. For men, they felt that discrimination followed them into the shrines in the city of Shiraz. Yet for women the shrines hosted a diverse range of activities, including education for Afghan children who would meet for Iranian lessons in the outer quarters of shrines.⁶⁷ In the city of Irbid, Jordan, Islamic Relief have found that Muslim refugee women from Jordan specifically seek out support in mosques and with faith leaders, with mosques acting as safe spaces for these women. Again, in contrast, Muslim refugee men do not have the same experience as faith leaders are not trusted as they are potentially political actors as well as faith actors.⁶⁸

In Cairo, an interviewee explained how they partnered with other denominations to find extra space for their activities. The advantage of existing infrastructure from LFCs for service provision has been noted in previous JLI-linked reports. The diversity of ways in which religious space is used and created for refugee response shows the mutability of this space. While religious traditions might preserve the most sacred spaces as separate, such as the centre of the shrine in the example from Iran, these religious spaces are open for refugees, and may be linked to traditions of sanctuary.

Other interviewees noted that the nature of overlapping displacement can affect how LFCs respond to displacement and disasters. For example, in the DRC, one interviewee explained that some small and locally run mosques would not have been present 20 or so years ago to provide basic services as they themselves are products of people being displaced and establishing new religious communities. It is a case of displaced people aiding other displaced people.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/ng-interactive/2016/nov/03/nigerian-communities-open-homes-hearts-to-refugees-boko-haram-photo-essay>.

⁶⁶ Bompani, Barbara. "Local Religious Organisations Performing Development: Refugees in the Central Methodist Mission in Johannesburg." *Journal of International Development* 27, no. 2 (March 1, 2015): 197–212.

⁶⁷ Elisabeth Yarbakhsh, "Iranian Hospitality and Afghan Refugees in the City of Shiraz," *Anthropology of the Middle East* 10, no. 2 (December 1, 2015): 106.

⁶⁸ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (ed) "Gender, Religion and Humanitarian Responses to Refugees," 13.

⁶⁹ Aso see Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh. (2016) 'Refugees hosting refugees,' *Forced Migration Review*, September 2016; Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh. (2016) 'Refugee-Refugee Relations in Contexts of Overlapping Displacement', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. Available at: <http://www.ijur.org/spotlight-on-overview/spotlight-urban-refugee-crisis/refugee-refugee-relations-contexts-overlapping-displacement/>.

In Nepal, however, another interviewee noted that the Tibetan Buddhist community were still recovering from their own displacement over the past 50-60 years and there had been no proliferation of local Buddhist NGOs to provide basic services to newly displaced people, even though there was strong spiritual support *within* the broader community derived from Buddhist principles to cope with the 2015 earthquake. These nuances of religion in displacement show that displacement is not only a short-term experience, but a long term state in which religious resources can both provide coping mechanisms whilst also needing time for recovery.

CASE STUDY: Refugees-Hosting-Refugees in North Lebanon [By Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh]

Baddawi refugee camp is an urban Palestinian camp in North Lebanon that has been home to 'established' Palestinian refugees since the 1950s, to over 15,000 'new' Palestinian refugees who were displaced from nearby Nahr el-Bared refugee camp when that camp was destroyed during the fighting between Fatah Al-Islam and the Lebanese army in 2007, and to tens of thousands of 'new' refugees arriving from Syria since 2011.⁷⁰ Since 2011, these include not only Syrian refugees, but also Palestinian and Iraqi refugees who had been living in Syria at the outbreak of the conflict and who have found themselves refugees-once-more.

As in the past, this encounter with refugees fleeing Syria situates Palestinians as active providers of support to others, rather than as aid recipients, whilst, equally, reflecting the extent to which urban camps can become 'shared spaces', spaces to which 'new' refugees can head in search of safety.⁷¹ With an estimated 10,000 Palestinian refugees from Nahr el-Bared still residing in Baddawi camp, these 'internally-displaced-refugees-hosted-by-refugees' have in turn become part of the 'established' refugee community in Baddawi hosting 'newly' displaced refugees from Syria.⁷²

During interviews in 2015-2017, refugees from Syria explained that they had travelled directly to, and arrived in, Baddawi camp, where established residents and local organisations offered them shelter, food and clothes. This is in spite of the extreme poverty and armed clashes that take place between armed factions controlling different parts of the camp.⁷³ Baddawi camp continues to be perceived by many 'new' refugees as being safer than any of the ('national'/ Lebanese) spaces available outside of the existing Palestinian camps, as they are isolated from the national policies that increasingly restrict refugees from Syria in the country.

⁷⁰ Qasmiyeh, Y.M. and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2013) "Refugee Camps and Cities in Conversation," in J. Garnett and Harris, A. (Eds) *Rescripting Religion in the City: Migration and Religious Identity in the Modern Metropolis*, Farnham: Ashgate. pp.131-143. Qasmiyeh, Y.M. (2016) 'At the Feast of Asylum,' *GeoHumanities* 1(2): 238:253.

⁷¹ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. and Qasmiyeh, Y. M. (2016) 'Refugee Neighbours and Hospitality: Exploring the complexities of refugee-refugee humanitarianism,' *The Critique*, 5 January 2016.

⁷² Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2016) 'Refugees hosting refugees,' *Forced Migration Review*, 53, September 2016.

⁷³ Sayigh, R (2000) 'Greater Insecurity for Refugees in Lebanon.' *Middle East Research and Information Project*, 1 March.

Before and during every Ramadan, local groups of Baddawi camp residents collect donations (including through *zakat*) to prepare and distribute *iftar* food baskets with which particularly vulnerable families can break their fast – these donations, collected by, from and for refugees are distributed to families with particularly precarious livelihoods, irrespective of their place of origin or how long they have lived in Baddawi: this includes long-term Baddawi residents, refugees from Nahr el-Bared, and ‘new’ refugees from Syria alike.

Other rituals in these spaces of overlapping displacement are also organized by, with and for different groups of refugees in this urban camp. For instance, the cemetery has been at the core of Baddawi refugee camp from the camp’s birth in the 1950s, and, as time has passed, and as wars have led to new arrivals – Palestinians from other camps, Syrians, Kurds, Iraqis... – the cemetery has outgrown its original space. There are now 5 cemeteries in Baddawi camp, with Syrians, Palestinians, Iraqis and Kurds all now sharing the same soil.

Abu-Diab, the only grave-digger in Baddawi camp, speaks of the pragmatics of dying: “I dig for the living, and I dig for the dead.” To live and maintain life, to keep the dignity of the dead and the solace of those who remain.⁷⁴

Psychosocial/spiritual support

The idea that faith itself can be a deep source of strength in the experiences of refugees and forced migrants is substantiated by a wide corpus of academic literature. Faith has been shown to be critical in developing refugees’ coping mechanisms,⁷⁵ meaning-making and the recovery of identity,⁷⁶ and fostering resilience factors including *control*,⁷⁷ *strong*

⁷⁴ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. and Qasmiyeh, Y.M. ‘Refugee Refugee Solidarity in Death and in Dying,’ *Refugee Hosts*, 23 May 2017. Available at <https://refugeehosts.org/2017/05/23/refugee-refugee-solidarity-in-death-and-dying/>.

⁷⁵ Michael Brune et al., “Belief Systems as Coping Factors for Traumatized Refugees: A Pilot Study,” *European Psychiatry* 17, no. 8 (December 2002): 451–58; Faith C. Chilongo, “Religious Coping Among Refugee Women: An Exploratory Study” (Regent University, 2010); Mavis Dako-Gyeke and Ernestina Adu, “Challenges and Coping Strategies of Refugees: Exploring Residual Liberian Refugees’ Experiences in Ghana,” *Qualitative Social Work* 16, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 96–112; Aala El-Khani et al., “Syria: Coping Mechanisms Utilised by Displaced Refugee Parents Caring for Their Children in Pre-Resettlement Contexts,” *Intervention: International Journal of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Conflict Affected Areas*, 2016; C Fernando and M Ferrari, “Spirituality and Resilience in Children of War in Sri Lanka,” *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 13, no. 1 (2011); Delini M. Fernando and Barbara B. Hebert, “Resiliency and Recovery: Lessons From the Asian Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina,” *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 39, no. 1 (2011): 2–13.

⁷⁶ Curtis Elliott, “Theologizing Place in Displacement: Reconciling, Remaking, and Reimagining Place in the Republic of Georgia” (Ph.D.I.S., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2015).

⁷⁷ Pargament, K. I. and J. Cumming (2012). “Anchored by faith: Religion as a resilience factor.” In Reich, J. W. et al (Eds) (2012). “Handbook of Adult Resilience.” New York: Guilford Press. Pp193-210; Au, E. W., C. Y. Chiu, et al. (2011). “Maintaining faith in agency under immutable constraints: cognitive consequences of believing in negotiable fate.” *International Journal of Psychology* 46(6): 463-474.

will/commitment,⁷⁸ adaptation,⁷⁹ and positivity and motivation.⁸⁰

With reference to her research with internally displaced female survivors of sexual and gender based violence in Kenya, Parsitau⁸¹ reflects that *‘when I asked what they believed faith did for them, respondents suggested that faith had done more to improve their lives and morale than political programmes and promises. Prayers gave them hope to rise up again and to face the uncertainties confronting them.’*

Indeed, several key informants shared that they were aware of such roles that faith plays in the lives of refugees, but commented that they largely consider this to be outside their proper sphere of action. Faith is often seen by humanitarian practitioners as a private matter left in the life of the individual refugee and understood as part of the internal resilience of individuals and communities⁸² which is present irrespective of humanitarian intervention.

This pattern of privatisation of religious faith is well reflected in Bramadat’s⁸³ research with Canadian faith-based resettlement agencies:

“When I asked volunteers whether they did or might like to share their religious motivations or the religious roots of their agency with representatives of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, almost no-one replied positively. Similarly, when I asked CIC representatives if they are interested in the values and convictions that motivate the agency volunteers with whom they work, they also said no.”

However, such a view may unconsciously reflect a particular Western philosophy of religion that is reflected in the humanitarian system, and represents a barrier to localisation. In much of the world – in which more than eight in ten people identify with a religious faith⁸⁴ - rather than private and individual, religious life is integrated and communal.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Fernando, G. A. (2012). “Bloodied but unbowed: resilience examined in a South Asian community.” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 82(3): 367-375.

⁷⁹ Buikstra, E., H. Ross, et al. (2010). “The components of resilience-Perceptions of an Australian rural community.” *Journal of Community Psychology* 38(8): 975-991

⁸⁰ Sayigh, R (2000) ‘Greater Insecurity for Refugees in Lebanon.’ *Middle East Research and Information Project*, 1 March.

⁸¹ Parsitau, “The Role of Faith and Faith-Based Organizations among Internally Displaced Persons in Kenya,” 508–9.

⁸² Ibid., 493; Olivia Wilkinson, “Faith and Resilience after Disaster: The Case of Typhoon Haiyan” (Dublin: Misan Cara, 2015), <http://www.miseancara.ie/faith-resilience-disaster/>.

⁸³ Bramadat, Paul. “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: Refugee Settlement and Religion in British Columbia.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82, no. 4 (December 2014): 907–37.

⁸⁴ <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>.

⁸⁵ Ager, Alastair, and Joey Ager. *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement: Finding the Place of Religion in the Support of Displaced Communities*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. p. 20.

Furthermore, the inputs of secular, external psychologists have been criticised as culturally inappropriate.⁸⁶ In this light, the psychosocial response of LFCs in the lives of displaced communities is highly relevant to the localisation debate, as agencies seek to understand local norms and practice and engage with those that support humanitarian goals.

In fact, the evidence suggests that the most powerful psychosocial impacts of LFCs for refugees come not simply from privately held doctrines but from communal, public, performative practices more readily studied and engaged. Religious rituals exemplify such communal practice. Dudley⁸⁷ has written that ritual ‘mediates the displaced person’s forced migration experience, and is fundamental to notions of communal well-being’. A key informant from the Tzu Chi Foundation noted the power of two other shared practices - fasting and grieving - in building community coherence and dignity among displaced unaccompanied Afghan minors in Indonesia.⁸⁸ Death is ever present in refugee experiences. Particularly in terms of grieving and burial, the place of faith was asserted as important by several interviewees, yet equally noted as an aspect in which humanitarian organisations struggle to recognise religious practice. Taking a lead from examples of integrated response from Ebola⁸⁹ there are now possibilities for improved attention to this aspect of refugee experience.

Overall, the influence of religion in psychosocial response for urban refugees through LFCs can be broken in the following four areas:

Religious Community and Identity as Psychosocial Support

LFCs have created unique spaces of communal reflection and group processing of trauma. In 2010, after massive internal displacement, the Diocese of Colombo and Anglican Alliance in Sri Lanka established ‘Community of Witness and Welcome Centres’ in Mannar, Jaffna, Trincomalee and Vavuniya to support displaced people to deal with the trauma that they experienced. Clergy and community gathered together to discuss, reflect and pray together.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Jean-Baptiste Pesquet, “Les récits de souffrance chez les réfugiés syriens au Liban,” *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, no. 138 (December 15, 2015): 62; Marwa Shueb, Harvey M. Weinstein, and Jodi Halpern, “Living in Religious Time and Space: Iraqi Refugees in Dearborn, Michigan,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 457; Alessandra Pigni, “Psychologists Stay Home: Nepal Doesn’t Need You,” *IRIN*, May 11, 2015.

⁸⁷ Dudley, Sandra H. “Ritual Practice, Material Culture, and Well-Being in Displacement: Ka-Thow-Bòw in a Karenni Refugee Camp in Thailand.” In *Building Noah’s Ark for Migrants, Refugees, and Religious Communities*, edited by Alexander Horstmann and Jin-Heon Jung, 101–26. *Contemporary Anthropology of Religion*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015.

⁸⁸ See Also: E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Y. M. Qasmiyeh (2017) ‘Refugee-Refugee Solidarity In Death And Dying,’ Refugee Hosts, 23 May 2017, Available at <https://refugeehosts.org/2017/05/23/refugee-refugee-solidarity-in-death-and-dying/>.

⁸⁹ Andy Featherstone, “Keeping the Faith: The Role of Faith Leaders in the Ebola Response (Full Report)” (London; Birmingham; Teddington: Christian Aid; CAFOD; Tearfund; Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2015), <http://jliflc.com/resources/keeping-the-faith-the-role-of-faith-leaders-in-the-ebola-response-full-report/>.

⁹⁰ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Alastair Ager, “Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Humanitarian Situations: A Scoping Study” (Oxford: Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities and RSC Working Paper, 2013).

McMichael also explains how spaces in the city can also be made sacred. She recounts how resettled refugees in Australia transformed their apartments and houses provided by the state into Muslim spaces:

“Mats woven with images of Mecca were unrolled and women prayed together, veils were hurriedly readjusted if men without affinal ties entered the room, the Qur’an weighted with beautiful text lay on tables, shoes were removed at the door, and women’s homes were filled with tapestries, plates and ornaments decorated with Qur’anic text and pictures of Mecca. These are some of the visible signs of Islam that are threaded into the everyday lives of many Somali women. They are not only religious practices, but are ways of inscribing Islam on new physical spaces and social landscapes following displacement.”⁹¹

Zaman devotes a chapter to the sacralisation of space outside of the mosque by Iraqi refugees in Damascus. He finds that the home is sacralised, particularly among women, who will not attend the mosque at the same frequency as men.⁹² Spaces of interaction are found throughout the city: “in Damascus, the air is thick with religious significance and practices. For Iraqi refugees this affirms Damascus as being a familiar space,” to the extent that resettlement in a European country is not sought. As one of Zaman’s interviewees stated:

“[If] you speak to someone who is fairly comfortable in Syria, has work and a home - he doesn’t give Europe a second thought. Do you know why? He tells you that he can go to the mosque and pray at his convenience. He can hear the adhan (call to prayer) as a Muslim.”

They continued:

⁸⁶ Jean-Baptiste Pesquet, “Les récits de souffrance chez les réfugiés syriens au Liban,” *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, no. 138 (December 15, 2015): 62; Marwa Shoeb, Harvey M. Weinstein, and Jodi Halpern, “Living in Religious Time and Space: Iraqi Refugees in Dearborn, Michigan,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 457; Alessandra Pigni, “Psychologists Stay Home: Nepal Doesn’t Need You,” *IRIN*, May 11, 2015.

⁸⁷ Dudley, Sandra H. “Ritual Practice, Material Culture, and Well-Being in Displacement: Ka-Thow-Bòw in a Karenni Refugee Camp in Thailand.” In *Building Noah’s Ark for Migrants, Refugees, and Religious Communities*, edited by Alexander Horstmann and Jin-Heon Jung, 101–26. *Contemporary Anthropology of Religion*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015.

⁸⁸ See Also: E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Y. M. Qasmiyeh (2017) ‘Refugee-Refugee Solidarity In Death And Dying,’ Refugee Hosts, 23 May 2017, Available at <https://refugeehosts.org/2017/05/23/refugee-refugee-solidarity-in-death-and-dying/>.

⁸⁹ Andy Featherstone, “Keeping the Faith: The Role of Faith Leaders in the Ebola Response (Full Report)” (London; Birmingham; Teddington: Christian Aid; CAFOD; Tearfund; Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2015), <http://jiflc.com/resources/keeping-the-faith-the-role-of-faith-leaders-in-the-ebola-response-full-report/>.

⁹⁰ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Alastair Ager, “Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Humanitarian Situations: A Scoping Study” (Oxford: Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities and RSC Working Paper, 2013).

⁹¹ Celia McMichael, “‘Everywhere Is Allah’s Place’: Islam and the Everyday Life of Somali Women in Melbourne, Australia,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 15, no. 2 (June 1, 2002): 180.

⁹² Tahir Zaman, *Islamic Traditions of Refuge in the Crises of Iraq and Syria*, Religion and Global Migrations (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), 144.

“When it’s Ramadan he feels that it actually is Ramadan and the same for ‘Eid. In Europe, you can’t feel that it’s Ramadan, ‘Eid or any other occasion.”⁹³

While the community role of mosques had been limited by the regime at the time of research in 2010 and 2011, local organisations, not necessarily faith affiliated but linked to national identities instead, filled a role of social and religious community spaces. One such organisation was the *Rabeta al-Falastiniyi al-Iraq* (Palestinian Iraqi Community Association). Practices such as the enactment of wedding ceremonies (*katab al-kitab*) or paying condolences to a grieving family (*ta’ziya*) were conducted at the Rabeta. There were *iftar* meals during Ramadan and gatherings for ‘Eid al-Adha.⁹⁴ These examples show that spaces in the city and outside of formal religious buildings can be sacralised as religious “homes” for refugees.

Another key informant speaking of the DRC noted the holistic way in which LFCs provide psychosocial support. He explained that there is a process of “two-way integration” because LFCs do not work with the IDPs alone but with the whole community. Especially in regards to displaced people hosting other displaced people, he explained that there is no particular funding but there is moral support, which is linked to a perceived religious responsibility to become hosts. It comes from personal experiences of having also been displaced coupled with a religious conviction of what is right and wrong and the social networks that exist within churches that put people in touch with each other.

Similarly, a key informant in Lebanon noted that, as LFCs have a pre-existing community and are a group of people living together, they can be powerful actors:

“[They uphold] the human dignity of the people that they are assisting. That brings additional activities such as sitting with people, weeping and listening with them. That is overlooked in humanitarian busy-ness. It is the being not the doing. It’s what they bring to the humanitarian work that they do that other NGOs can’t play that role. The relationships look different.”

This may not be a targeted psychosocial project as such, but in the ways that LFCs work, operating within social networks by building relationships, they naturally provide psychosocial support through their community.

Religious Interpretation of Displacement

From the evidence, it was seen that religious interpretations of displacement can be particularly significant for men. In an example from Lebanon, the place of Friday prayer to bring Syrian and Lebanese Sunni Muslims together is highlighted. The role of the Imam in expressing messages of fraternity and working towards reducing feelings of animosity between groups is described by Pesquet. Using the story of the Ansars welcoming the Prophet Muhammad into Medina, having fled from Mecca, the imam of one informal

⁹³ Ibid., 153.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 163.

neighbourhood in Tripoli spread a message of camaraderie, putting an accent on the religious dimension of working through animosity, rather than a secular psychological approach.⁹⁵

In turn, research from Dearborn, Michigan, Shoeb et al. found that the identity of *Muhajirin* (those who leave their homes in the cause of Allah, and also the name for those who fled Mecca with Muhammad) conferred “a noble aura to the Iraqi plight”⁹⁶ among male Iraqi refugees in the USA. Shoeb et al. explain that “the identity of Muhajir serves as a centripetal anchor for Iraqi men, who otherwise may perceive themselves as failures living on government support in the United States. This religious notion of self empowers them by stabilising their pre-exile identity. For the Muhajir leaves only to return to triumph over the enemy who has temporarily displaced him from his rightful home...”⁹⁷

In another example from Tanzania, young male urban refugees from Burundi received instructions from their Pentecostal churches about how to behave in their new urban environment.⁹⁸ Somewhat in contrast, Jaji found that young male refugees in Nairobi felt dislocated from their previous religious practices and more likely to engage in social activities they would not previously have considered. Yet they also used their religious beliefs to rationalise the suffering they have experienced as a refugee:

*“Young refugee men rationalise this suffering as their destiny, God’s test to determine the strength of their faith or as inconsequential to God’s greater plans in their lives. They view spiritual endurance and suffering as constituting the essence of masculinity; if a ‘real’ man is courageous, this courage is expressed by young refugee men’s capacity to live through difficult times in Nairobi and remain hopeful for a better future.”*⁹⁹

These religious interpretations of and guidance in displacement provide a meaning-making framework through which the dislocation and new experiences of displacement can be explained.

Religious Leaders in Psychosocial Support

The leaders of LFCs are often part of the psychosocial support for refugees. For example, a religious Tearfund partner in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which was established when the staff of three small Christian NGOs were themselves displaced, founded a trauma clinic for displaced women and girls who had been raped.¹⁰⁰ In another case,

⁹⁵ Pesquet, “Les récits de souffrance chez les réfugiés syriens au Liban,” 67.

⁹⁶ Shoeb, Weinstein, and Halpern, “Living in Religious Time and Space,” 449.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 450.

⁹⁸ Marc Sommers, “Young, Male and Pentecostal: Urban Refugees in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 14, no. 4 (December 1, 2001): 363.

⁹⁹ Rosemary Jaji, “Masculinity on Unstable Ground: Young Refugee Men in Nairobi, Kenya,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22, no. 2 (June 1, 2009): 191–92.

¹⁰⁰ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Alastair Ager, “Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Humanitarian Situations: A Scoping Study” (Oxford: Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities and RSC Working Paper, 2013), 33–34.

following displacement in Kenya after the 2007-2008 election violence, Parsitau recounts how people sought psychological and spiritual support from members of the clergy, who were “not just trained in Christian counselling, but also have extensive experience in counselling people traumatised by different experiences, supplemented the therapeutic support provided by Kenya’s professional counsellors, including psychotherapists and psychologists.”¹⁰¹

It should be noted that there can be a gap in capacity among LFCs to comply with international standards around psychosocial assistance. In these cases, the benefits of collaboration between several actors, including LFCs, can provide the most integrated response that is fully informed by the complementary skills of local religious leaders and external psychologists. A key informant in Nepal¹⁰² also explained that, when working with Tibetan refugees who had also experienced the 2015 earthquake, there were many levels of trauma and an integrated approach building both from secular psychology and spirituality was needed. In the Tibetan refugee community, Buddhism is so ingrained into everyday life that it could not have been separated from the assistance. Coupled with assistance from psychological expertise on trauma and mental health, an integrated approach was devised. Training was given to spiritual leaders to be able to give psychological help while also providing spiritual counselling.

The examples demonstrate a potential complementarity of approaches for religious and secular psychosocial assistance with refugees, while also demonstrating the potential for training religious leaders so that they can provide an integrated approach in communities where support is sought primarily from these figures.

Religiosity and Trauma in Refugees

Psychological assessment related to religiosity with refugees have had varied results. In one study, a quantitative psychological assessment of Tibetan refugees arriving in Dharamsala, India, demonstrated low levels of psychological distress in spite of a high prevalence of traumatising experiences. The authors note that coping activity, which was mainly religious, “appeared to mediate the psychological effects of trauma exposure.”¹⁰³ In another study with Syrian refugees, substantial depressive disorders were in evidence, but they were not found to have a meaningful correlation either negatively or positively with levels of religiosity.¹⁰⁴ This shows the contextual specificity of the ways in which religion will influence the psychological state of refugees.

Indeed, McMichael sends a warning not to essentialise religion in this way. Her study of Muslim refugees in Australia demonstrated a diversity of choices made by refugees for psychosocial support, with recourse to both Islamic practices such as five daily prayers

¹⁰¹ Parsitau, “The Role of Faith and Faith-Based Organizations among Internally Displaced Persons in Kenya,” 497.

¹⁰² <https://ajws.org/blog/how-a-community-of-buddhist-nuns-and-monks-bounced-back/>.

¹⁰³ Emily Sachs et al., “Entering Exile: Trauma, Mental Health, and Coping among Tibetan Refugees Arriving in Dharamsala, India,” *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 21, no. 2 (April 1, 2008): 199.

¹⁰⁴ Wadih J. Naja et al., “Prevalence of Depression in Syrian Refugees and the Influence of Religiosity,” *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 68 (July 2016): 78.

(also at varying levels of adherence among research participants) and Western medical doctors for anti-depressants or counsellors for therapy, even while Islam remained a constant undercurrent to support them through emotional distress in the resettlement process.¹⁰⁵

Registration and Refugee Status Determination

There is substantial academic literature around the significance of LFCs and FBOs in Northern refugee resettlement.¹⁰⁶ It is beyond doubt that these organisations and communities form an essential part of the success of resettlement in the US, Canada, Australia and Europe. While this will be accounted for in the next JLI Refugees and Forced Migration Hub report on the roles played by faith actors in diverse stages and spaces of refugee experience, this report is more concerned with experiences in the global South, such as the roles of LFCs in supporting people applying for asylum and resettlement from their countries of first asylum.

Of note in the formal procedures for asylum and resettlement, LFCs are involved in supporting asylum-seekers during diverse Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures. While much attention has been given to the role of FBOs in resettling refugees to the global North, the processes needed to secure resettlement in the global North take place while refugees are situated in the global South.¹⁰⁷ While acknowledging that most refugees in urban settings in the global South neither apply for or secure refugee status, LFCs have played key roles both during and after RSD. In Cairo, the St Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) "provides both adult and child educational programs, psychosocial services and legal aid for refugees in Cairo, Sacred Heart Church, a Roman Catholic Church which serves the Sudanese refugee community in Cairo, and Refuge

¹⁰⁵ McMichael, "'Everywhere Is Allah's Place'," 181, 184.

¹⁰⁶ For example, Janet McLellan, *Cambodian Refugees in Ontario: Resettlement, Religion, and Identity* (University of Toronto Press, 2009); Erin Wilson, "Much to Be Proud Of, Much to Be Done: Faith-Based Organizations and the Politics of Asylum in Australia," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 548–64.; Jacqueline Hagan and Helen Rose Ebaugh, "Calling Upon the Sacred: Migrants' Use of Religion in the Migration Process," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 4 (December 1, 2003): 1145–62.; Nicole Ives and Jill Witmer Sinha, "The Religious Congregation as Partner in Refugee Resettlement: An Overview of Theory and Practice for Social Workers," *Canadian Social Work* 12, no. 1 (2010); Nicole Ives, Jill Witmer Sinha, and Ram Cnaan, "Who Is Welcoming the Stranger? Exploring Faith-Based Service Provision to Refugees in Philadelphia," *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 29, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 71–89.; Allan Heaton Anderson, "Eritrean Pentecostals as Asylum Seekers in Britain," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 43, no. 2 (May 2013): 167–95; Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Yousif M. Qasmiyeh, "Muslim Asylum-Seekers and Refugees: Negotiating Identity, Politics and Religion in the UK," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 294–314; Susy Mugnes, Felicina Prosperio, and Luisa Deponti, "An Ecumenical Organisation for Asylum Seekers in Switzerland," *Forced Migration Review* 48 (2014); Verena Mittermaier, "Refuge in Europe? Church Asylum as Human Rights Work in Fortress Europe," *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 26, no. 1 (2009); Nawyn, "Faith, Ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement"; Sarilee Kahn, "Experiences of Faith for Gender Role Non-Conforming Muslims in Resettlement: Preliminary Considerations for Social Work Practitioners," *British Journal of Social Work* 45, no. 7 (October 2015): 2038–55; Dianna J. Shandy, "Nuer Christians in America," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 15, no. 2 (June 1, 2002): 213–21; Pamela A. De Voe, "Symbolic Action: Religion's Role in the Changing Environment of Young Somali Women," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 15, no. 2 (June 1, 2002): 234–46; Maryam Zoma, "Respecting Faiths, Avoiding Harm: Psychosocial Assistance in Jordan and the United States," *Forced Migration Review* 48 (November 2014): 45–47; Smith-Hefner, "Ethnicity and the Force of Faith."

¹⁰⁷ For instance, see Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 'Relocating: The Asylum Experience in Cairo,' *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 8(1): 295–318.

Egypt,¹⁰⁸ a Christian aid and development organisation based at All Saints' Cathedral, a ministry of the Episcopal/Anglican Diocese of Egypt." StARS' Resettlement Legal Aid Project offers advice on submitting files and attending interviews.¹⁰⁹

Also of note is the role that LFCs can play in registering refugees outside of UNHCR and IOM procedures. Refugees might register with multiple actors or prefer to register only with an actor of their same religious affiliation. In Jordan, the Syrian Women's Organisation, the Islamic Charity Centre Society, and Al-Kitab wal Sunnah Association have been active in registering and providing assistance to refugees arriving from Syria. The Syrian Women's Organisation is also an example of refugees hosting refugees, as they were formed by refugees who had left Syria in the 1980s after an uprising from the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.¹¹⁰ In Lebanon, a survey of religious minorities found that "Almost half (49%) of all Syrian and Iraqi respondents were registered with an organisation other than UNHCR, including local charities, NGOs, churches and the government."¹¹¹ Likewise, in "the Kurdistan region of Iraq... almost all (99%) of respondents were registered with an organisation other than the Kurdish authorities, to complement the support they could provide: 54% were registered with an NGO, 49% with a UN agency, 48% with a church organisation and 3% with a charity."¹¹²

In Syria, a different picture was seen again:

*"NGO registration in Syria was highest among Muslim respondents (54%), compared to 24% of Christian respondents. This underscores the... reluctance by many Christians to publicly ask for assistance – especially because, before the crisis, many of them were more likely to be aid donors rather than recipients. However, this could also be the result of real or perceived discrimination by certain NGOs against non-Muslims. The relatively low level of Christians registered with NGOs contrasts with their registration rates for aid from church organisations. Among Christian respondents, registration with church aid providers was highest among Syriac Orthodox people (85%), Evangelicals (79%) and Syriac Catholics (70%), highlighting these groups' preference for this type of humanitarian aid channel."*¹¹³

Even though churches provide assistance impartially to people of all faiths, there was self-selection among Christians to register with these organisations. It was also reported that some organisations were criticised locally by other co-religionists for not specifically helping the Christian communities more. LFCs, in this way, must negotiate a range

¹⁰⁸ Pacitto and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, "Writing the 'Other' into Humanitarian Discourse," 21.

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/resettlement/558c07389/refugee-legal-aid-project-st-andrews-refugee-services-cairo-egypt.html>.

¹¹⁰ Heba Aly, "Civil Society at Heart of Syrian Refugee Response," *IRIN*, April 11, 2012, <http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2012/04/11/civil-society-heart-syrian-refugee-response>.

¹¹¹ Norwegian Church Aid, "The Protection Needs of Minorities from Syria and Iraq" (Oslo: Norwegian Church Aid; World Council of Churches, November 2016), 27, <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/about-nca/publications/publications/the-protection-needs-of-minorities-from-syria-and-iraq/>.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 28.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

of pressures from their wider religious institutions, co-religionist refugees that seek to register as beneficiaries, international humanitarian structures, and national governmental structures.

Yet this thin line is walked by many LFCs in the global South in order to provide for refugees. South-South cooperation in displacement and humanitarianism is a growing field of research.¹¹⁴ Research projects such as “Refugee Hosts: Local Community Experiences of Displacement from Syria: Views from Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey”¹¹⁵ aim to put a spotlight on the crucial work of hosting and hospitality that is extended towards refugees from those communities that have also previously been displaced. As noted elsewhere in the report, this can often be with the assistance of LFCs, with religious leaders and institutions acting as part of the hosting community, and promoting religious values that encourage hosting.

Peacebuilding in Contexts of Displacement

In addition to providing services to people displaced by conflict, LFCs engage in peacebuilding programs designed to confront root causes of displacement. This section will specifically focus on the displacement and peacebuilding process in Colombia. Alongside the provision of basic and psychosocial services to displaced communities, the example of Colombia provides insight into the role that LFCs can play in peacebuilding.

PEACEBUILDING IN URBAN PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT

COUNTRY FOCUS: Colombia - Medellín and Bogotá

It is estimated that 93% of the internally displaced population in Colombia have been displaced into urban areas.¹¹⁶ Bogotá and Medellín - the largest and second largest cities in Colombia - have been the destination for large numbers of mostly rural IDPs displaced through violence committed by paramilitary and other organisations across the country. Though exact numbers are unknown, some estimate that over five million people have been displaced by conflict in Colombia,¹¹⁷ making it the second largest situation of forced displacement in the world. Motivated by the desire for anonymity and the relative

¹¹⁴ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Julia Pacitto, “Writing the Other into Humanitarianism: A Conversation between ‘South-South’ and ‘faith-Based’ humanitarianisms,” in *The New Humanitarians in International Practice: Emerging Actors and Contested Principles*, ed. Zeynep Sezgin and Dennis Dijkzeul (Routledge, 2016); Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, *South–South Educational Migration, Humanitarianism and Development: Views from the Caribbean, North Africa and the Middle East* (Routledge, 2015). A new project funded by the European Research Council ‘Analysing South-South Responses to Displacement from Syria’, led by E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh at University College London (UCL), will *inter alia*, explore the roles of Southern-led faith-based humanitarian responses to refugees from Syria in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

¹¹⁵ <https://refugeehosts.org>.

¹¹⁶ Sebastián Albuja and Marcela Ceballos, “Urban Displacement and Migration in Colombia,” *Forced Migration Review* 34, no. February 2010: 10–11.

¹¹⁷ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), “Internal Displacement Global Overview 2011: People Internally Displaced by Conflict and Violence” (Geneva: Norwegian Refugee Council, April 2012), 8, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/library/publications/2012/internal-displacement-global-overview-2011-people-internally-displaced-by-conflict-and-violence/>.

availability of accommodation, most *desplazados* (IDPs) settle in the outskirts of Bogotá and Medellín.¹¹⁸

The displaced population in Medellín reflects the demographics of *desplazados* across the country: mostly rural, mostly female and mostly young. The main cause of displacement, for 52.4% of IDPs, is direct threats of violence. The second most common cause, affecting 16% of the cases, is violence suffered in a close environment, resulting in the death of a relative or friend, or being a the solely witness of violence. Massacres are the third most common cause, representing 8.7% of the cases.¹¹⁹

Urban displacement in Colombia is complicated by the pattern of intra-urban displacement as a result of violence inside the city's neighbourhoods between militias, paramilitary organisations and criminal cartels. 65 families displaced by conflict from the El Saludo neighbourhood in Medellín in 2002 were not able to register with the Unidad Territorial de la Red de Solidaridad Social (currently Departamento de Prosperidad Social) because the state agency considered that their situation did not fit the description "*displaced by violence*". As a result, none of these families received aid from the State agencies.¹²⁰

Despite a successful legal fight by these families for recognition as a displaced community, "*there remain many cases where legal recognition is not accorded to such people and they do not receive assistance.*"¹²¹

In 1997 a broad network of civil society groups launched the Citizen's Mandate for Peace, Life and Liberty. When local elections took place on October 26 of that year, the network held an alternative election in which Colombians were given the chance to cast a vote for peace. Over 10 million did so out of a population of only 38 million, demonstrating the ability of religious and other civil society actors to motivate massive public actions in support of peace.¹²²

According to a 2013 Berkley Center report,¹²³ "*While non-Catholic denominations make up only about 10 percent of the Colombian population, Protestant and ecumenical organisations like Justapaz, Christian Peacemaker Teams, and World Vision have made significant contributions to local and national peacebuilding efforts.*" Justapaz, a Colombian Mennonite LFC works at both the local and national level, and has developed a

¹¹⁸ Instituto de Estudios Políticos, "Seguimiento y balance sobre el desplazamiento forzado, la población afectada y las políticas públicas" (MIMEO, 2008), 27.

¹¹⁹ Comisión de Seguimiento, "Tercer informe de verificación sobre el cumplimiento de los derechos de la población desplazada" (Dec., 2010). <http://mesadesplazamientoydiscapacidad.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/iii-informe-de-verificacic3b3n-cs-2010.pdf>.

¹²⁰ Sánchez Mojica and Beatriz Eugenia, "A CITY TORN APART: FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA," *International Law*, no. 22 (June 2013): 179–210.

¹²¹ Luz Amparo Sánchez Medina, "Displacement within the City: Colombia | Forced Migration Review," *Forced Migration Review* 34 (February 2010), <http://www.fmreview.org/urban-displacement/sanchezmedina.html>.

¹²² Colombia: Religious Actors Inspiring Reconciliation, Berkeley Center Report, August 2013. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/berkeley-center/130801BCColombiaReligiousActorsInspiringReconciliation.pdf>.

¹²³ Ibid.

network of ‘Sanctuary of Peace Churches’ where violence is condemned and refuge is given to people on all sides of the conflict.¹²⁴

Churches across the country have become places where hosts and IDPs interact and build shared identity and work: “In our pastoral work in the parish, we carry out activities that bring together the host community and IDPs.”¹²⁵

Due to the massive scale of the problem, displacement is understood by some faith communities as a foundational experience shaping religious life, leading to renewed development of political theology and the integration of response to displacement into church programming, operations, and theology:

*“Suburban pastorship with a population in a situation of displacement demands that community pastors and parishes involve themselves in political action in defence of human rights. Not just to be present, but to accompany people in their tortuous paths of reclaiming and affirming their legitimate rights. This breaks with the old paradigm of apolitical pastorship.”*¹²⁶

CASE STUDY: Programa por la Paz, CINEP, Colombia

The *Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular* (CINEP), a Jesuit center in Colombia, has implemented peacebuilding initiatives with displaced victims of violence particularly in Antioquia Department. The program draws on Lederach’s work (1998) articulates a vision for peacebuilding deeply informed by its faith tradition, and committed to a non-partisan modality: “we are not in a war of the ‘good ones’ and the ‘bad ones’...the women we work with have a different approach, one that breaks with the Manichaeism that sustains all forms of violence, one that understands that every group sees itself as the good one” (Jorge Julio Mejia, S.J., CINEP).

*“The invitation of these women is centred in a call to all who have experienced the pain of losing a loved one, their land, a part of their body...they recognise as survivors and as carriers of a voice that allows them to name the unnameable and through this, to build the foundations for the transformation of armed conflict, of our society and our politics.”*¹²⁷

CINEP has also developed The Peace and Development Program, operational since 1995, which works in partnership with Christian LFCs across the country to develop economic opportunities for displaced communities. The effectiveness of these programs has been widely recognised, and is explained in large part because their ties to local

¹²⁴ <https://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/colombia/peacebuilding-organisations/justapaz/>.

¹²⁵ Ciudad Bolívar host community focus group, 2011, Red Cross/Brookings.

¹²⁶ Consuelo Vélez et al., “El Desplazamiento Forzado: Un Desafío a La Pastoral Suburbana,” *Franciscanum. Revista de Las Ciencias Del Espíritu* 56, no. 161 (January 2014): 90.

¹²⁷ Nombrar lo Innombrable: Reconciliación desde la perspectiva de las víctimas, Edición del Programa por la Paz – CINEP, 2007.

churches, which “give it credibility with local residents, and program projects have been careful to avoid partisan alliance with any side in the armed conflict.”¹²⁸

This section refutes the idea that religion is only a driver of conflict and demonstrates how religion can be a significant driver for peace.

Influencing public and political opinion around displacement and refugees

Public Opinion

There is growing recognition of the role that religious leaders play in shaping public opinion surrounding refugees, displacement and welcome. Several interviewees noted that their organisations are involved in programming designed to influence and mobilise local religious leaders to shape popular perception of displaced people and of issues related to displaced communities. One interviewee noted that the success of this strategy varies according to the issue - in Iraq, faith leaders in conjunction with UNHCR have developed teachings against forced child marriage rooted in their religious tradition, but the same partners were not willing to respond to UNHCR’s concerns about child discipline.

According to Borda Carulla, small Pentecostal churches in large urban centers in Colombia are adept at re-incorporating *desplazados* because they primarily identify them as something other than ‘desplazado’:

*“A desplazado that enters a Pentecostal congregation is no longer a desplazado to the eyes of the other members: he is, above all, a “brother in Christ”, equal to the rest of the community. In the mind of the believers, as well as in the desplazado’s, one is a Christian before being a desplazado. In every interview with converted desplazados, the negative experience of displacement is systematically subordinated to the positive experience of conversion, which invades all spheres of the person’s life and imaginary.”*¹²⁹

Local and national networks of faith communities have developed teaching tools and strategies to inform their local membership about displacement and refugees. Catholic Charities of Louisville, USA, produced a participatory simulation - Seeking Refuge - in which learners gain insight into the challenges associated with seeking refuge in a refugee camp. Participants engage in an experiential process that also fosters a sense of humility, grace-filled charity, and solidarity. The program was created as an attempt to provide education and awareness toward the plight of refugees to the greater Catholic Community.

Similarly, on 9 September 2015, a joint letter¹³⁰ issued by the World Council of Churches,

¹²⁸ Colombia: Religious Actors Inspiring Reconciliation, Berkeley Center Report, August 2013. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/berkeley-center/130801BCColombiaReligiousActorsInspiringReconciliation.pdf>.

¹²⁹ Borda Carulla, Susana. “Resocialization of ‘desplazados’ in Small Pentecostal Congregations in Bogotá, Colombia.” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (January 1, 2007): 36–46. doi:10.1093/rsq/hdi0225.

¹³⁰ <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/international-affairs/letter-on-european-refugee-situation>.

the Conference of European Churches, and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, addressed to all their member churches and associated organisations, called on them to mobilise their efforts in order to respond properly to the emerging refugee crisis.

Furthermore, faith leaders are in a position to powerfully influence underlying narratives around refuge and displacement. Allard identifies the 'victim' or 'passive' identity of refugees as foundational to dominant perspectives on displacement, but argues that religious teachings can offer an alternative:

*"current conceptions of asylum-seeker subjectivity obscure the asylum seeker's moral demand...alternative narratives exist—I draw on the Hebrew Bible story of the Exodus and the Qur'anic story of the Hijra—in which flight from oppression is conceived as an act of moral agency."*¹³¹

Political

In 2009, UNHCR recognised that the shift from camps to urban settings for the majority of refugees worldwide often entailed a change in the legal standing of refugees, with urban refugees in some cases choosing to live without legal status in a city in order to be closer to work or shared community, or to avoid refugee camps. One consequence of this and other patterns is that strategically pursuing positive changes in local and national legal structures concerning refugees should arguably be included in the definition of refugee protection. Though some faith communities may receive public funding for resettlement and other refugee work, leading to what Goldsmith et al¹³² have called the muting of religiosity stemming from concern for losing funding, LFCs are often key actors driving local and national public debate around refugees.

In Germany, church leaders protested against the number of migrants dying during attempts to cross the Mediterranean, using public demonstrations of solidarity such as holding religious ceremonies in memory of the dead.¹³³ Campbell gives the example of LFC advocacy and organising in Australia:

"Between March and November 2014, 112 faith leaders including 41 clergy, four nuns and a Jewish rabbi occupied the offices of twelve members of parliament across Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane, Launceston and Canberra. 95 people were arrested and 25 faced court for trespass but the cases were later dismissed by magistrates. They frame it as an injustice so intolerable that as Christians they are called to action by the 'refugee Jesus' who as an infant had to flee persecution by King Herod. Framing the issue

¹³¹ Allard, Silas W. "Reimagining Asylum: Religious Narratives and the Moral Obligation to the Asylum Seeker." *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 29, no. 1 (October 18, 2013). <http://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/37521>.

¹³² Goldsmith, S. Eimicke, W. and Pineda, C. (2006) Faith Based Organisations Versus Their Secular Counterparts-a Primer for Local Officials, Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation, John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2006.

¹³³ Mittermaier, Verena. "Refuge in Europe? Church Asylum as Human Rights Work in Fortress Europe." *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 26, no. 1 (2009). <http://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/30607>.

in this way is designed to persuade other Christians to change their views on asylum seekers or to join the movement.”¹³⁴

In Uganda, the Catholic Bishops have urged priests, in a statement released in July 2017, to “volunteer and provide pastoral care for people living in refugee camps.”¹³⁵ However, LFCs are not universally politically engaged, nor are they all supportive of good refugee public policy. In the USA, some conservative Christian churches have been supportive of recent anti-refugee White House policy. However, in March 2017, over 5,000 religious leaders signed a letter to the Trump administration condemning the ban on refugees from Muslim-majority countries and the postponement of the entire refugee resettlement program.¹³⁶

While LFCs certainly play complex roles in the lives of forced migrants and refugees, the evidence suggests that they are powerful actors and potentially strong partners in responding to crises. However, even in cases where the broad response of LFCs is recognised by humanitarian actors, challenges to coordination, and by extension to the localisation agenda, remain. The next section deals with these challenges.

2. The structures and norms of the humanitarian system and local faith actors

When acting in response to refugees, the humanitarian system applies the same principles and structures as seen in response to natural hazards, such as earthquakes and typhoons. This includes the observance of certain international norms underpinning the humanitarian systems such as the humanitarian principles, the application of formalised structures such as the cluster system,¹³⁷ and various sets of minimum standards.¹³⁸

However, actors outside of the centralised humanitarian system are playing a growing role in response:

“the role of diaspora groups is becoming ever more important and sophisticated as communications technology and online fundraising facilitates the development of international ad-hoc responses that currently operate mostly outside of the formal

¹³⁴ Marcus Campbell, “Christian Civil Disobedience and Indefinite, Mandatory Immigration Detention in Australia,” *Forced Migration Review* 48 (2014), <http://www.fmreview.org/faith/campbell.html>.

¹³⁵ <http://communications.amecea.org/index.php/2017/07/07/uganda-catholic-bishops-urge-priests-to-provide-pastoral-care-in-refugee-camps/>.

¹³⁶ <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/5000religiousleaderletter/>.

¹³⁷ The cluster system is a formalised approach to coordinating humanitarian response. It is based on a series of thematic areas or clusters (e.g. shelter, education, nutrition, etc.) through which the range of humanitarian actors responding in each context organise their efforts to reduce gaps and duplication. For more information: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/about-clusters/what-is-the-cluster-approach>.

¹³⁸ For example, the Sphere standards that cover a broad range of bases from shelter to sanitation, or more sector specific standards such as the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies or the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.

*humanitarian sector. In places like Syria such initiatives are contributing a significant amount of the assistance on the ground. Humanitarian funding in the form of remittances is already thought to have outstripped official assistance in many emergencies, and is increasing.*¹³⁹

LFCs come into contact with the centralised humanitarian system's structures and norms, with varying levels of integration. The question of funding and financial compliance is often the largest barrier for partnerships between international and local actors, where the accountability systems in place for large scale funding have requirements that are onerous even for the larger NGOs, let alone smaller LFCs that do not have experience with international financial compliance requirements. This top-down approach to compliance remains a practical barrier and a substantial challenge to localisation.

Challenges also remain in the power structures at work in policy discussions on localisation. As the localisation agenda within the humanitarian system has been criticised for being built from the top down, there will remain a burden on local actors to integrate into the structures and norms created by international humanitarian actors; an inherent imbalance therefore already exists between those with the power to make system-wide changes and those that must follow. LFCs and their contributions as local actors for refugee response can act as a significant example of the ways in which a broad effort to localise humanitarian response will falter before it starts if local actors are not understood and involved in decision making processes.

By reflecting on the impact of structures (the formal elements of the humanitarian system that allow for standardisation in comparison to the religious structures/hierarchies that formalise faith responses) and norms (the understandings within international secular humanitarianism and religious groups that guide acceptable behaviour), this next section will highlight points of diversion and adaptation that affect the place of LFCs in humanitarian localisation.

Different Structures

Many faith initiatives are already localised

Through the interviews conducted as part of this state-of-the-art-review, a picture of long-term local-national-international partnerships has emerged. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church and certain Protestant denominations such as the Anglican Church, have allowed for an integrated structure of collaboration that necessitate a connection with local congregations as focal points of action, both sacred and profane. While these church hierarchies have their own nuances and difficulties, it has meant that international FBOs affiliated with these structures have been working with LFCs, such as local congregations, since their start. As one interviewee who had worked for secular organisations in Chad, Mauritania, and Niger put it, a priest linked to a church can establish an organisation quite easily. He had also previously partnered with local churches that were linked to the Caritas

¹³⁹ Imogen Wall and Kerren Hedlund, "Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response: A Literature Review" (Local 2 Global Protection; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, May 2016), 5, http://www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_SDC_Lit_Review_LocallyLed_June_2016_final.pdf.

Internationalis network. These are local faith actors that are already visible in response to displacement and are relatively well established. Recent research from Oxfam and Harvard noted that “one role medium-sized [FBOs] do appear to play more than their secular counterparts is that of an intermediary between larger INGOs and local faith actors.”¹⁴⁰ Caritas and other actors such as the Anglican Alliance and Mother’s Union work to link their local co-religionists around the world to the broader humanitarian and development systems. In this way, these type of actors can serve as “culture brokers”.¹⁴¹

The Lebanese Society for Educational & Social Development (LSESD) also act as culture brokers between local churches and international donors in responding to Syrian refugees in communities. They define best practice as:

“a project cycle where the LFC comes to LSESD and [we] recognise a need on the ground... so a church will recognise that children in the community don’t have a school, so [we] work with the church to pitch to a donor, and help them with a proposal, and then help in between the donor and the church partners. [We] help them align with humanitarian minimum standards. [We] provide the key humanitarian expertise and language that the churches don’t have and then they have the idea. [We] provide the monitoring expertise, submit the final reporting, and communicate with the donor.... That’s ideal because it comes from the LFC.”

This recognises that the LFC might not have the humanitarian technical expertise as defined by the structure and norms of the international humanitarian system, but that they will have the local and community expertise to identify needs and implement projects. This level of support for LFCs contributes an example of good practice. Not all LFCs have this level of support to link into the humanitarian system, however. As shown by El Nakib and Ager in Jordan, there are LFCs that struggle to navigate these structural divides, which leads international organisations to state that LFC partners are not compliant with their systems and do not have the capacity to scale up in the way that they require.¹⁴²

One caveat with the LSESD case is that donors are mostly faith-based and prioritise work with LFCs, using private funds aside from major institutional donors. Private funds allow the level of flexibility needed to support smaller LFCs. Donors note the need for adaptability on their part, as well as that of the LFC. Partnership with LFCs requires a sustained commitment and internal tensions within donor organisations can arise about a lack of compliance with industry standards. As one reviewer of this report put,

“[It] is important to be clear that INGOs/donors need to not only be prepared to capacity build and train and give the LFC time to ‘change’ – but they need to be prepared to absorb

¹⁴⁰ Gingerich et al., “Local Humanitarian Leadership and Religious Literacy: Engaging with Religion, Faith, and Faith Actors,” 4.

¹⁴¹ Katherine E. Browne, *Standing in the Need: Culture, Comfort, and Coming Home after Katrina*, The Katrina Bookshelf (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015).

¹⁴² Shatha El Nakib and Alastair Ager, “Local Faith Community and Related Civil Society Engagement in Humanitarian Response with Syrian Refugees in Irbid, Jordan: Report to the Henry Luce Foundation” (New York: Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, April 2015), 18–19, <http://jliflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/El-Nakib-Ager-Local-faith-communities-and-humanitarian-response-in-Irbid-.pdf>.

greater risk and accept that ‘compliance’ may not be possible. And if they can’t or aren’t, partnership with many LFCs will be prohibitive. If it is evidenced that LFCs can be more effective, INGOs/donors will have to reflect hard on this.”

As LFCs can be effective in many cases, the adaptability needed for partnership is required by all and reflection from INGOs/donors therefore needs to include decisions around acceptable risk. The risks taken to allow for full capacity building amount to more than the risks taken for a one-off training, for example. This can necessitate several years of accompaniment. The power dynamic remains on the side of the donor to define acceptable risk, however. For situations of protracted urban displacement where long term commitments to capacity building are required that will necessitate shifts away from shorter-term sub-contracting that instrumentalises local organisations.

Whereas international organisations can decrease the capacity of local organisations by poaching staff and instrumentalising them for sub-contracting work without capacity building, some, although certainly not all, transnational faith-based structures have a long-term commitment to partner with each other as co-religionists. It is also recognised that there are examples of international FBOs that sub-contract to LFCs in an instrumentalising fashion. As one interviewee explained, it is more straightforward for local faith actors to align and maintain productive partnerships with co-religionists: “If you are a Muslim organisation, you are much more likely to find like minded partners and funders in Somalia. Or Christian in South Sudan.”

These partnerships are longer term and help create more sustainable institutions. She said that the real “scandal” of a lack of localisation thus far in the humanitarian system is that there are international organisations that have been in countries for 40 years and only have a handful of local partners operating at the level they expect. The partnerships have been extractive rather than mutually beneficial. The question in this case is who is the one doing the “localising”? Even with its current momentum, it is still the larger international organisations that are making decisions about the parameters of localisation and defining the standards and procedures of the international humanitarian system. This is the difference between localising from the top-down rather than having leaders and decision-makers who are local to begin with. Localisation aims to give agency to local actors, but with the caveat that it can also be taken away by the international system. Principles of community organizing, in which local partners are capacitated to grasp their own agency, would be of use in this context.

Muslim Organisations

Interviewees noted how they had not partnered with Muslim associations in the same way as Christian organisations, even though many of the countries in which they worked had significant or majority Muslim populations. Christian organisational structures allow for distributed response systems that give local congregations a role. In comparison, the structure of Muslim organisations is less familiar to international institutions and therefore they do not know how to access these actors, with the end result that partnerships are less frequently created. As described by Zaman following work with Iraqi refugees in Damascus prior to the Syrian conflict, “International humanitarian organisations, including United Nations (UN) agencies, simply do not share a common ‘script’ with local Islamic faith-

-based welfare service providers.”¹⁴³ He continues: “Instead, they find it easier to engage with churches that have transnational connections with other faith based international NGOs. As such, church organisations are better positioned to articulate their welfare activities in a secular frame than their Muslim counterparts.”¹⁴⁴

An interviewee noted that the international system is much more comfortable with the notion of a network of churches, meaning that it is more comfortable to transfer resources and power to actors at that level. She noted that they have a “much harder time” doing the same with a network of mosques. One underlying reason is a lack of knowledge and understanding - larger humanitarian institutions do not know how to manage these relationships or even understand that these relationships are possible. A second underlying reason is that there is a level of institutional bias in which networks of mosques are associated with extremism, money laundering, and other risks.¹⁴⁵ This is an awkward and uncomfortable aspect to the angle reflection on religion can add to the localisation debate. As related by El Nakib and Ager in Jordan, a Sheikh that was head of a local organisation said:

*“We have no problem in partnering with organisations. However, they would not like to partner with us. Let us not play games here. We are Islamists. They would not be looking for partnership with Islamists, would they?”*¹⁴⁶

The question remains as to which local actors will be deemed “acceptable”, with religious identity acting as one of the ways in which local actors might be deemed “unacceptable” by the humanitarian system at large. It was noted by this interviewee that the extreme pressures of the Syria response have forced humanitarian actors to think “outside the box” in this way and engage with local mosques, but evidence from El Nakib and Ager shows that many of these actors still feel left outside the coordination system in the Syria response.¹⁴⁷

Another interviewee thought that Muslim organisations are less visible because of the ways in which organisations self-identify and present themselves to outsiders such as international humanitarian actors. National NGOs will have predominantly Muslim employees and affiliations, but will not necessarily self-identify as a Muslim organisation. Another interviewee explained that in the context of Islam, spirituality is not necessarily linked with an easily identifiable group like a congregation. There is a community around a mosque, but not with the same kind of formalisation as a congregation. Instead, she explained, there is a “responsibility that Islam places on a host community...to feed and make sure that a traveller is ok.” Indeed, those that are travelling, especially with meagre resources, are one of the eight groups to whom zakat can be given. She continued “this is part of the coping mechanisms and social safety nets that exist in really fragile Muslim

¹⁴³ Tahir Zaman, “Jockeying for Position in the Humanitarian Field: Iraqi Refugees and Faith-Based Organisations in Damascus,” *Disasters* 36 Suppl 1 (July 2012): S126-148.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁴⁵ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (ed) “Gender, Religion and Humanitarian Responses to Refugees,” 15.

¹⁴⁶ El Nakib and Ager, “Local Faith Community and Related Civil Society Engagement in Humanitarian Response with Syrian Refugees in Irbid, Jordan: Report to the Henry Luce Foundation,” 22.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

contexts such as Somalia or Yemen.” There may not be an easily identifiable local actor in this scenario as assistance is dispersed across the community, but within the religious structure there is a system for attending to the welfare of those that are displaced. This counter-balances assumptions that a host community will be hostile and resentful towards the arrival and settlement of refugees and IDPs.

Parallel coordination structures

One factor contributing to the gap between the humanitarian system and LFCs could be that traditional partnership models are ill-equipped to engage responders whose actions occur outside of local government or centralised humanitarian coordination systems. Wall & Hedlund write of identifying local actors that “those who have an official role are the most easily identified – government officials, local NGOs representatives, etc. But in a crisis this number swells exponentially as volunteers, the private sector and groups previously uninvolved in disaster response become responders overnight.”¹⁴⁸ LFCs exist in both the former and the latter, as highly evolved local NGOs in some cases, and first responders assisting with the immediate needs of the local population but with little formalisation in other cases. In partnership structures it is the former that can benefit from relationships with INGOs, while the latter will struggle for recognition.

Yet, in another layer, the institutional structures of the humanitarian system have been regularly shown to exclude almost all local actors in coordination, even those that have a visible presence such as local NGO representatives.¹⁴⁹ An interviewee noted that there is sometimes frustration that local Muslim agencies are not involved in cluster meetings:

“Local faith based organisations feel unconfident about entering that arena [clusters]...they don’t use the same terminology...aid professionals have in many ways made themselves quite exclusive...most people don’t know what [humanitarian terminology] means! Part of it is reluctance because of a lack of confidence...and also they are not confident that joining clusters will benefit them because they perceive a prejudice in terms of where funding will go...they think it will go to secular agencies. To some extent that is true. A lot of funders have been reluctant to work with faith based partners.”

In this way, the hierarchy of the humanitarian system has worked to exclude many LFCs, not only through a lack of understanding about how and why to include them, but also internal biases about with whom to engage.

In those contexts where the humanitarian response of faith communities is acknowledged by mainstream humanitarian agencies, they are still often left outside the formal coordination system, both by exclusion and their own non-participation or non-

¹⁴⁸ Imogen Wall and Kerren Hedlund, “Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response: A Literature Review” (Local 2 Global Protection; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, May 2016), http://www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_SDC_Lit_Review_LocallyLed_June_2016_final.pdf.

¹⁴⁹ Ben Ramalingam, Bill Gray, and Giorgia Cerruti, “Missed Opportunities: The Case for Strengthening National and Local Partnership-Based Humanitarian Responses,” Research (ActionAid; CAFOD; Christian Aid; Oxfam GB; Tearfund, November 2013), <http://www.alnap.org/resource/8890>; Andy Featherstone, “Missed Again: Making Space for Partnership in the Typhoon Haiyan Response” (London: Christian Aid; CAFOD; Oxfam GB; Tearfund; Action Aid, 2014).

identification. For example, after the displacement of 4 million people by Typhoon Haiyan, many FBOs and LFCs mobilised in response, providing vast amounts of immediate assistance without coordination with central systems. Far from being perceived as a resource, in the 2015 World Disasters Report, this pattern was identified as a 'specific challenge' to humanitarian response.¹⁵⁰

In response in urban environments, examples from Bangkok, Kampala, and Cairo demonstrate the advantage of interfaith networks to support each other and work to avoid overburdening individual organisations. In Bangkok, the high number of refugees in the city put pressure on LFCs which did not have resources to commit. This pressure created animosity on the part of church congregants who felt that the purpose of activities, such as sharing a meal after a church service, were becoming distorted. In contrast to the example above from Velez, it also distanced Christian refugees who felt as though their relationship to the church changed into one of beneficiary alone, with one refugee saying "It feels that we are not going into the church to please God but we go there for other purposes, like getting food or some help or donations... [this is] obviously not good for our mental health, nor for our faith."¹⁵¹ This highlights the challenges of cultural proximity – it cannot be a given that a refugee of one religion will also be attracted to assistance from an LFC of the same religion or that an LFC or FBO of one religion will be able to provide for their co-religionists. Palmer highlights this in relation to refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh when their camp is managed by a Muslim organisation. She explains that refugees assumed a better level of provision from a Muslim organisation than a secular organisation that had previously run the camp, but this was not necessarily the case. Likewise, refugees assumed that

*"Muslim FBOs are funded by the umma and should therefore provide certain religious services and facilities. Many refugees in Leda Camp presumed that Islamic Relief would have a greater understanding of, and sympathy for, their religious needs and would provide services in accordance with this. One example is the provision of sacrificed meat at Eid ul Adha and food packages for iftar (the traditional meal for breaking fast) during the holy month of Ramadan. Apart from these seasonal programmes, however, religious leaders in Leda Camp explained that their religious needs were not being met by Islamic Relief. The lack of key facilities required for practising Islam, such as graveyards, madrassas (religious schools), and mosques, created a significant negative impact on individual and community spiritual well-being."*¹⁵²

Islamic Relief was limited due to donor requirements with further clarification that "ECHO prohibited the building of purpose-built mosques in Leda Camp (in line with their policy of not supporting religious institutions) and reluctantly gave permission for the community centres to be used instead."¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Wilkinson (2015); http://ifrc-media.org/interactive/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/1293600-World-Disasters-Report-2015_en.pdf

¹⁵¹ Sabine Larribeau and Sharonne Broadhead, "The Costs of Giving and Receiving: Dilemmas in Bangkok," *Forced Migration Review* 48 (2014): 51.

¹⁵² Victoria Palmer, "Analysing Cultural Proximity: Islamic Relief Worldwide and Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh," *Development in Practice* 21, no. 1 (February 2011): 102–3.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 304.

In another example of why LFCs might feel external pressure towards co-religionists, Lauterbach notes that there is a norm of “non-refusal” among pastors in Kampala when responding to the needs of Congolese refugees. As she explains, “if pastors are not delivering material services they are not seen as providing in the same way as those who do.”¹⁵⁴ This leaves pastors with a “dilemma between fulfilling the will of God or one’s pastoral calling and involvement in the social networks that would enable one to do so.”¹⁵⁵ Pastors feel compelled to respond because of social pressures, even while they feel that their theological and spiritual duties are being compromised. Organisations have their own competing demands - such as adherence to the norms of the secular humanitarian system on one hand, or adherence to the norms of a faith community on the other hand - that might mean their provision of assistance is not as desired by the refugees themselves or affects their own identity as a local *faith* community.

As pointed out by Larribeau, secular organisations also have their own issues in providing assistance but have created structures to harness collective support. She notes “Secular refugee service providers in Bangkok too are in a similar position of assessing and sometimes refusing direct assistance to those in need, and can similarly struggle to do this with a rights-based approach. However, they work collaboratively with other service providers, sharing resources and implementing standards. There are regular meetings and structured weekly communications, as well as informal daily interactions. The organisations hold each other accountable, and support each other. FBOs typically do not have the same grounding and involvement in refugee issues specifically, despite their actual pivotal role.”¹⁵⁶

In response, the Bangkok Asylum Seekers and Refugee Assistance Network (BASRAN) was established. While a challenge of the urban environment was demonstrated with the large numbers of refugees seeking assistance from LFCs, an advantage was presented in the critical mass of LFCs present which could come together to form such a network. BASRAN includes a range of actors, including UNHCR, and meetings “are a neutral space in which refugee service providers and FBOs can hold discussions. ...One example is NGOs, FBOs and refugee community leaders – connected through BASRAN – responding to financial extortion within refugee communities; these groups have worked together to assist individuals affected, and to raise awareness within the communities of the risks of exploitation.”¹⁵⁷ Urban interfaith and secular networks are an example of good practice in providing coordination across different organisational background in the context of the specific needs of different urban environments.

An interviewee in Egypt also noted that the Cairo Refugee Assistance Network has a similar aim of improving communications between a variety of LFCs working in that city. Other interviewees noted that being in an urban centre provided them with more access to other organisations that could support their work, for example, from a Christian FBO in Belgrade building relationships with mosques, to the same interviewee in Cairo who had

¹⁵⁴ Karen Lauterbach, “Religion and Displacement in Africa,” *Religion and Theology* 21, no. 3–4 (January 1, 2014): 300.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 304.

¹⁵⁶ Larribeau and Broadhead, “The Costs of Giving and Receiving: Dilemmas in Bangkok,” 52.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

built partnerships with Muslim organisations to provide healthcare for Muslim refugees that they were assisting.

Different Norms

The norms that underpin the international humanitarian system have the humanitarian principles at their foundations. While some norms have varying levels of adherence (independence is particularly suffering in an age of government donors directing most funds), the principle of impartiality remains more sacrosanct. Impartiality underlines the need to provide assistance based on need alone and without discrimination due to nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, class or political position. As shown in other research¹⁵⁸ and as discussed above with regards to partial responses for co-religionists in Nigeria,¹⁵⁹ impartiality is regarded as a largely secular principle, in that there is suspicion that faith actors will prioritise those of the same faith or tie their assistance to the condition of conversion. A primary problem for localisation, as noted above, is that local actors may not abide by the expectations of the international humanitarian system. This leaves many sticking points for international-local partnerships, mainly those dictated by the international partners. Riera and Poitier provide a comprehensive list from the point of view of a UN agency, which can be seen as largely representative of international non-governmental organisations in this regard.

“From UNHCR’s perspective, the most difficult partnership challenges are presented when faith actors promote or condone the following:

- antagonism towards or exclusion of members of other faith backgrounds;
- hate speech or incitement to violence directed against individuals or communities of another faith;
- proselytisation and pressure to convert as a pre-condition for continued support;
- early marriage or other possibly harmful traditional practices;
- gender stereotypes, and disregard for the specific rights of women, boys and girls, and for vulnerabilities in contexts where sexual and gender-based violence and negative coping mechanisms are widespread;¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Olivia Wilkinson, “‘Faith Can Come In, but Not Religion.’ Secularity and Its Effects on the Disaster Response to Typhoon Haiyan,” *Disasters*, Forthcoming; Kraft, “Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response.”

¹⁵⁹ Nkwachukwu Orji, “Faith-Based Aid to People Affected by Conflict in Jos, Nigeria: An Analysis of the Role of Christian and Muslim Organizations,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 473–92.

¹⁶⁰ For a more detailed analysis and critique of the assumptions around faith and gender, see Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Chloe Lewis, and Georgia Cole, “‘Faithing’ Gender and Responses to Violence in Refugee Communities: Insights from the Sahrawi Refugee Camps and the Democratic Republic of Congo,” in *Gender, Violence, Refugees*, ed. Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ulrike Krause, Forced Migration 37 (New York ; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017), 302; Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “*The Faith-Gender-Asylum Nexus: An Intersectionalist Analysis of Representations of the ‘Refugee Crisis’*,” in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion*, ed. Erin Wilson and Luca Mavelli, Critical Perspectives on Religion in International Politics (Rowman and Littlefield International, Ltd., 2016); Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (ed) “Gender, Religion and Humanitarian Responses to Refugees”; and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2015) “Engendering Understandings of Faith-Based Organisations: Intersections between religion and gender in development and humanitarian interventions,” in A. Coles, L. Gray, and J. Momsen (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Development*, London: Routledge. pp. 560-570.

- stigmatisation and discrimination surrounding HIV/AIDS;
- and stigmatisation and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals and communities.
- in addition, local faith communities may lack familiarity with UNHCR's processes and procedures, including its strategic priorities and notions of risk and vulnerability, which can become a source of frustration and misunderstanding for UNHCR staff."¹⁶¹

The final point notes the misalignment in structures, while the previous points detail many of the norms that are (seemingly) in conflict between the international humanitarian system and the countless varieties of religion in existence. It is the point on proselytisation that is widely held as a fundamental rule in humanitarianism, i.e. those providing assistance to displaced people should not proselytise to these people and/or tie their provision of assistance to religious participation.

Proselytising

The large FBOs that are accepted members of the international humanitarian system absolutely outlaw proselytisation. In interviews, respondents from international, national, and local organisations were all quick to affirm that they did not allow proselytisation. Yet there are many small, local religious actors, from local religious leaders to relatively large national faith-based organisations, who will see that providing assistance is part of their faith and that discussion of their faith with the people they are helping is an inherent part of the whole initiative.

The problem for localisation is that an underlying contradiction arises: these local actors may be acting effectively and efficiently in their provision of assistance, yet are not acceptable local partners because they include elements of proselytisation, requiring beneficiaries to attend a prayer before distribution for example, as part of their assistance. Several interviewees said they had witnessed such practices in locations worldwide and had been appalled at the conditionality of aid given in such a circumstance. In turn, international actors must either exclude themselves from partnership with such an actor, or influence them to stop such practices by offering their financial assistance for the local partner only if they change their methods. In an irony often missed by the humanitarian system at large, the international actor attaches conditions to their assistance for the local faith actor and pressures them to “convert” to the secular way of operating.

Conversion from proselytisation and/or for immigration purposes is also a point of concern regarding the legal aspects of seeking asylum and judgements made according to religious persecution. The veracity of such claims can be doubted and difficulties arise for immigration officials in verifying these claims.¹⁶² There have been reports from

¹⁶¹ Jose Riera and Marie-Claude Poirier, “‘Welcoming the Stranger’ and UNHCR’s Cooperation with Faith-Based Organisations,” *Forced Migration Review* 48 (2014): 65.

¹⁶² Tuan N. Samahon, “The Religion Clauses and Political Asylum: Religious Persecution Claims and the Religious Membership-Conversion Imposter Problem,” *Georgetown Law Journal* 88 (2000 1999): 2211; Alexandra Maria Rodrigues Araújo, “The Qualification for Being a Refugee under EU Law: Religion as a Reason for Persecution,” *European Journal of Migration and Law* 16, no. 4 (November 14, 2014).

Sweden¹⁶³ and the UK¹⁶⁴ of tests on the Biblical knowledge of asylum seekers to check their religiosity.

What is missed in this exchange is the complexity of the proselytisation and conversion narrative. Various pieces of research have highlighted the need to re-examine the role of agency in conversion stories among refugees and not assume a situation of pressure on the side of the local faith actor and passive acceptance for want of material goods on the part of the refugee receiving assistance.¹⁶⁵ This reduces the refugee experience to one of need and deprivation alone.

The negatives of conversion

Research from Lebanon in recent years around the response to Syrian refugees is particularly of interest with regards to conversion in protracted refugee situations. Research from Kaoues with refugees who have converted from Islam to Christianity demonstrates the uncomfortable and awkward experience of converts who will find themselves separated from the rest of the Sunni population in their camp,¹⁶⁶ for example, or not welcomed by the Christian community in the place where they now live, demonstrating a cultural separation that even conversion cannot overcome.¹⁶⁷ They are potentially doubted on one side by the Christian community as being “fake” converts for financial and material advantages and then excluded on the other side from their previous communities for converting.¹⁶⁸ This is not a position to take lightly or to undergo just for material benefits, which will not necessarily outweigh the disadvantages.

The agency of beneficiaries

What more frequently happens is that beneficiaries of one religion will accept assistance from an actor of another faith, taking pamphlets and attending services, without converting. Their agency in this context is to draw both material and non-material benefits that they will from these efforts. In the Sahrawi refugee camps in South West Algeria, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh saw how Sahrawi refugees’ political representatives “mobilised religiously-related claims to maximise diverse short- and long-term benefits both inside and outside the camps,”¹⁶⁹ accessing both material resources and the political support provided by Evangelical American actors in the camps and in the USA.

Research from Kraft, in Lebanon, underlines that much of this is based on the

¹⁶³ <https://www.thelocal.se/20170514/swedish-migration-agency-criticized-for-grilling-asylum-seekers-on-their-faith>.

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jun/07/refugees-asylum-religious-grounds-quizzed-on-bible-trivia>.

¹⁶⁵ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2011) ‘The Pragmatics of Performance: Putting ‘faith’ in aid in the Sahrawi refugee camps,’ *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24(3): 533-547.

¹⁶⁶ Fatiha Kaoues, “Réfugiés et migrants dans les églises protestantes évangéliques libanaises : Recompositions identitaires et enjeux sociaux,” *L’Année du Maghreb*, no. 11 (December 23, 2014): 5.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶⁸ On the significance of intersectionality amongst refugees from so-called ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ religious backgrounds, and the ways in which religious identity and belief is ‘read’ and ‘ascribed’ by observers on the basis of identifiers such as ethnicity and nationality, see Saunders, J., Snyder, S. and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2016) “Introduction: Articulating Intersections at the Global Crossroads of Religion and Migration,” in Saunders, J., Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. and Snyder, S. (eds) *Intersections of Religion and Migration: Issues at the Global Crossroads*, New York: Palgrave.

¹⁶⁹ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “The Pragmatics of Performance: Putting ‘Faith’ in Aid in the Sahrawi Refugee Camps.”

establishment and building of relationships. Kraft describes one church in which the leadership had decided to make distributions at the church rather than delivering food packages to homes. The decision was made, on the one hand, to ensure that food items were not sold, but, on the other hand, the pastor wanted people to come to the church so that they can build relationships with them. As a result, “this church had begun to function like a community centre, with office hours for refugees, medical clinic services, educational activities for all ages, and a space where families could often be seen sitting around in the shade.”¹⁷⁰ This meant that beneficiaries had very close relationships with church volunteers, with one man explaining

*“that the church had become an integral part of his life and community, and that the church volunteers were the people whom he would tell if he had any problems. Usually, he acknowledged, they did not have the capacity to do anything to address his concerns, but he still felt comfortable sharing his worries with them, knowing that ‘they do what they can’.”*¹⁷¹

This is one way in which relationship building can limit the faith-based approach - it hampers the scaling up of projects because of the necessary time commitment - but volunteers stated that they would deliver food vouchers or packages to as many people as possible if the necessary resources are present.

Religious Leaders

This volunteer capacity demonstrates one form of ‘added value’ in LFC responses. The agency of local religious leaders and their wider community, including volunteers, is also of note. Interviews in Lebanon, as well as Kraft’s paper, note that local religious leaders do not want to pressure people to convert and gain new faith community members due to material assistance alone. Again, it is not solely a numbers exercise in terms of people converted, but a prolonged call for relationship building and closeness with refugees. One interviewee did note some difficulties, however, in explaining impartiality and non-conditionality to religious leaders in Lebanon. She explained that local partners “sit in the meeting and nod their heads, and then they do something that is incongruent with that. But then we realise that we are using a term that doesn’t make sense to them.” Instead of using terms such as impartiality, scenarios are used to explain the parameters of acceptability.¹⁷²

Divergence and flexibility between religious traditions

In terms of humanitarian norms, however, there can be divergence between groups, with an interviewee in Egypt describing some difficulties in working with other denominations that only serve or employ Christians for example. The norm of impartiality is equally a point of religious and social divergence, demonstrating that a larger religious community in one location can have many different approaches. Again, this demonstrates the complexity

¹⁷⁰ Kraft, “Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response,” 409.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 410.

¹⁷² Also see Aydan Greatrick, ‘Challenges and Opportunities of Local Faith Community Responses to Displacement from Syria,’ Refugee Hosts and Migration Research Unit Working Paper, forthcoming.

impartiality – it is a point of disagreement between LFCs themselves, not just LFCs and secularised international organisations.

Another interviewee, discussing the DRC, described the flexibility of affiliation. Hosting internally displaced people in local communities is not necessarily based on tribal linkages, and denominational affiliation may change dependent on access. The emphasis is on the social aspects of church and if displacement occurs, people will attend a different denomination's church with ease. This can also be a case of displaced people, who have established a church years previously, hosting other displaced people in a country (DRC) in which internal displacement is common.

Example of negotiation on proselytisation

One interviewee related the line that must be negotiated with regards to proselytisation. On one hand there is a fear of the “NGO-isation” of local faith communities, in which they are instrumentalised to the point of being purely service agencies and lose the added value of being a faith community. On the other hand, the norm surrounding impartiality will limit funding opportunities if proselytisation occurs.

The interviewee described working with local churches in Lebanon to negotiate what would be acceptable. As a result, assessment, distribution, and monitoring were all conducted as per secular standards, with the allowance that they could hold a meeting about Christianity *after* all distributions had been made, with beneficiaries welcome to attend if they wished to do so. They estimated that about 50% would attend the initial meeting after the distribution had taken place. Importantly, it was a choice and not tied to assistance. The interviewee noted that refugees will not be manipulated and that they should be treated with dignity. This method maintained dignity on all sides, in their opinion, for refugees and the local faith community, who are not necessarily wealthy themselves. The religious functions of a local faith community will continue (for instance, sermons, prayer, rites of passage and other rituals), as separate to assistance, but accessible to refugees and displaced people if they so choose.

With commodity-based assistance, the line is more easily defined, as the provision of material assistance can be separated from religious practice as described above. However, a reviewer of this report noted that assistance related to education, such as schools run by religious institutions in which religious education predominates, is less clear and that negotiation once again becomes complex to the point of impossibility for INGOs and donors maintaining standards of impartiality. It must also be recognised that some LFCs will simply not accept a diversion away from the proclamation of their faith and will reject the humanitarian principle of impartiality.

¹⁷³ Kraft, “Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response,” 409.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 410.

¹⁷² Also see Aydan Greatrick, ‘Challenges and Opportunities of Local Faith Community Responses to Displacement from Syria,’ Refugee Hosts and Migration Research Unit Working Paper, forthcoming.

This demonstrates the complexity with which international humanitarianism must contend if localisation is to be achieved, but also demonstrates the possibilities for partnership with LFCs. Partnerships can be achieved with changes in the practices of LFCs towards proselytisation, if they previously operated in such a manner. These partnerships would potentially require a higher level of initial input to train LFCs in humanitarian principles and negotiate the modalities of operations. However, this input then opens more partnership possibilities and counters damaging processes of instrumentalisation and sub-contracting of LFCs.

3. Transnational religious networks

Both key debates - around localisation and urbanisation of refugee response - are naturally shaped by the largely secular discursive norms of modern humanitarianism. Consequently, policies and scholarship around urban contexts of displacement typically follow the logic of the field of migration studies more broadly, with primary attention being given to national and international labour markets and economics, political and social factors, and growing attention being given to environmental factors.

Consequently, the link between religion and migration has long been overlooked.¹⁷³ Our review of the evidence suggests that LFCs play important roles in the lives of refugees and IDPs in ways that lie outside the traditionally secular discourse of humanitarianism, particularly in terms of the transnational nature of many religious networks. According to Cherry, transnationalism ‘*involves the flow of people, goods, information, and culture across and between two or more national boundaries...[and] can be...felt in people’s daily lives as they actively construct and maintain social ties across borders—linking them to new and old homes and wherever diaspora has taken them.*’¹⁷⁴ Although the term transnational is relatively mainstream in migration studies, transnational theory largely ignores religion as a central force in transnational communities across the globe.¹⁷⁵

This evidence makes an important contribution to the debates on localisation and urbanisation by re-mapping urban and local spaces in ways that are more reflective of transnational religious identity and networks frequently experienced by refugees. Akcapar argues that local religious communities and transnational religious institutions support refugees by creating alternative social networks¹⁷⁶ (assuming the role of what

¹⁷³ Hagan and Ebaugh, “Calling Upon the Sacred”; Jennifer B. Saunders, Susanna Snyder, and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “Introduction: Articulating Intersections at the Global Crossroads of Religion and Migration,” in *Intersections of Religion and Migration*, ed. Jennifer B. Saunders, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, and Susanna Snyder, (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), 1–46.

¹⁷⁴ Cherry, Stephen M. “Exploring the Contours of Transnational Religious Spaces and Networks.” In *Intersections of Religion and Migration*, edited by Jennifer B. Saunders, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, and Susanna Snyder, 195–224. (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016): 195–224. (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), 1–46.

¹⁷⁵ Meyer, Katherine, Eileen Barker, Helen Rose Ebaugh, and Mark Juergensmeyer. “Religion in Global Perspective: SSSR Presidential Panel.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50, no. 2 (June 1, 2011): 240–51.

¹⁷⁶ Akcapar, Sebnem Koser. “Conversion as a Migration Strategy in a Transit Country: Iranian Shiites Becoming Christians in Turkey.” *The International Migration Review* 40, no. 4 (2006): 817–53.

Ebaugh and Curry call ‘fictive kin’¹⁷⁷), giving meaning to life, and supporting national and international migration. The Catholic Church offers an example of an ‘extended transnational religious organisation’¹⁷⁸ whose relationships across national lines deeply impact the lives of refugees. Danis¹⁷⁹ cites the example of an Italian Catholic Church in Beyoglu, Istanbul:

‘The central spatial element for the Iraqi Christian community in Istanbul is the church of Catholic Italians in Beyoglu...Chaldeans dwell in run-down city center districts in the vicinity of the church and Caritas...Sunday rituals held at the church provide a unique occasion to gather the community together...reinforcing the relations among members of the community...the yard constitutes a lively social field where job opportunities for youngsters are discussed...possibilities of further migration are discussed.’

In this, and other examples from Athens, Amman, Beirut and Damascus, Danis notes the transnational linkages made back to ideas of ‘home’ through the mediating role of priests and the presence of religious transnational media platforms, deeper *into* transit spaces through local religious networks, and *forward* to further migration and resettlement through the transnational religious network.

Similarly *‘transnational Islam is a public space of reference and debate [which] draws, of course, on Islam’s history of movement, communication and institutional innovation. Islam has an intrinsic universality (which it shares with Christian religions) and also more specific universalistic dimensions. The message of the Qur’an was to turn away from localised deities and worship the transcendent God.’*¹⁸⁰ Such fundamental transnationalism is realised theologically from the historic roots of Islam, which are often explained¹⁸¹ in terms of the hijrah from Medina to Mecca. Agha writes,¹⁸² regarding the theological development of the early Islamic era that *‘the creation of the ummah by the Prophet for all Muslims of Yathrib was instrumental both in forging a deep consciousness of Muslim identity, and in enabling the Muslim refugees to assimilate their new surroundings.’*

¹⁷⁷ Ebaugh, Helen Rose, and Mary Curry. “Fictive Kin as Social Capital in New Immigrant Communities.” *Sociological Perspectives* 43, no. 2 (2000): 189–209.

¹⁷⁸ Levitt, Peggy. *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape*. New York: New Press, 2007.

¹⁷⁹ Danis, Didem A. “Waiting on the Purgatory: Religious Networks of Iraqi Christian Transit Migrants in Istanbul.” Working Paper, 2006. <http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/6228>.

¹⁸⁰ Bowen, John R. “Beyond Migration: Islam as a Transnational Public Space.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30, no. 5 (September 1, 2004): 879–94.

¹⁸¹ Eickelman, Dale F., and James P. Piscatori. *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*. University of California Press, 1990.

¹⁸² Agha, Sharifah Nazneen. “The Ethics of Asylum in Early Muslim Society.” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (January 1, 2008): 30–40.

SOUTHERN TRANSNATIONAL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Cherry¹⁸³ notes three examples of transnational religious networks that are (1) rooted in Southern diasporas, (2) that offer humanitarian support of varying kinds to refugees, and (3) that include displaced communities as participants.

- The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)¹⁸⁴, a Nigerian Pentecostal movement operating in 110 countries with over five million followers, alongside its primarily religious mission, provides a broad range of social services and has more recently developed a focus on services to displaced communities in the African diaspora. This has led to more active membership and participation in RCCG on the part of refugees.
- The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)¹⁸⁵, an Ismaili Muslim movement that began in India but now operates in over 19 countries and has developed its humanitarian outreach beyond the Ismaili diaspora to become “one of the world’s most effective and broadly serving charitable organisations”.
- The Baha’i International Community (BIC),¹⁸⁶ which began in Iran and currently operates in over 180 countries, is now comprised mostly of non-Iranians. “The BIC has partnered with local communities and the United Nations (UN), and has initiated and implemented a host of projects to aid refugees, improve the condition of women around the world, and strengthen global socioeconomic stability—and these are but a few examples of the projects they are undertaking across borders.”

Ideas of transnational identity follow refugees in processes of waiting and resettlement, with religion playing a role in this cultural identification. The existence of many cultures in urban environments has meant that refugees often experience moments of profound attachment as well as some rejection of the cultures in which they previously lived in their home nations. Alignment with the religious practices of the resettlement country has been noted, such as with refugees from what is now South Sudan waiting in Egypt to be resettled in Western Europe in the mid-00s. One recounted that a church marriage ceremony was important because, “The ideal time to have the church ceremony is right before resettlement because you can join the African way, and the Western way. Since you are going to the West, and this is the Western system you have to adopt it right here in Cairo.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Stephen M. Cherry, “Exploring the Contours of Transnational Religious Spaces and Networks,” in *Intersections of Religion and Migration*, ed. Jennifer B. Saunders, Elena Fiddian-Qasimiyeh, and Susanna Snyder, Religion and Global Migrations (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), 195–224.

¹⁸⁴ Afe Adogame, “The Redeemed Christian Church of God: African Pentecostalism,” in *Global Religious Movements Across Borders: Sacred Service*, eds. Stephen M. Cherry and Helen Rose Ebaugh (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 35–60.

¹⁸⁵ Karim H. Karim, “Aga Khan Development Network: Shia Ismaili Islam,” in *Global Religious Movements Across Borders: Sacred Service*, eds. Stephen M. Cherry and Helen Rose Ebaugh (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 143–160.

¹⁸⁶ Mike McMullen, “Baha’i International Community: Baha’i Faith,” in *Global Religious Movements Across Borders: Sacred Service*, eds. Stephen M. Cherry and Helen Rose Ebaugh (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 161–184.

¹⁸⁷ Lorraine Currie, “‘Who Can Be Added’: The Effects of Refugee Status Determination and Third Country Resettlement Processes on the Marriage Strategies, Rites, and Customs of the Southern Sudanese in Cairo,” *Refuge: Canada’s Journal on Refugees* 24, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 79.

Alignment is not always the case, however, with Smith-Heffner finding a negligible level of conversion to Christianity among Khmer Cambodians in metropolitan Boston,¹⁸⁸ with those who did convert having done so in refugee camps before being resettled largely due to the trauma they had experienced¹⁸⁹ rather than a desire to find cultural conformity with a resettlement country. Yet, Smith-Heffner also describes that this was dependent on resettlement area:

*“...it is in those areas of the country where refugee resettlement has been primarily sponsored by Christian churches, rather than by secular organisations or liberal denominations less concerned with promoting conversion, that the highest percentage of Khmer have converted. This pattern seems to be most strikingly apparent in Dallas, Texas, where a large number of Khmer refugees first settled. There conservative, evangelical Protestant churches played a primary role in the resettlement program, and it appears that a far larger proportion-upwards of fifteen percent-of the Khmer population has converted.”*¹⁹⁰

In Kampala, Uganda, research has found that there are a number of “refugee churches” of Congolese Christians. As of the date of publication, Lauterbach reported that there were around 50 Congolese churches in Kampala, mostly of a charismatic, evangelical orientation, and mostly established in the last 10 years. They represent the diversity of the city with some catering only to refugees, and others including membership from “students, business people and Congolese people who are in Kampala for other reasons.”¹⁹¹ They are dynamic in that many of their congregants are mobile and will change churches frequently. They also provide assistance for their congregants, from basic services such as shelter and food to longer-term grants for small businesses and education. The number of Congolese churches in the city allows for “church-shopping”¹⁹² or a variety of choices for refugees, linked to both spiritual and material support. It also demonstrates the vibrancy of religious networks in urban spaces.

This was equally reflected in the example from an interviewee in Cairo who described the story of an Eritrean psychosocial worker in their staff who travelled through Sudan to Egypt and used a Pentecostal contact that she had been given as a first point of assistance on arrival. Likewise, in the context of Iraqi refugees in Damascus, just prior to the Syrian conflict, Zaman points out that familial and religious networks are also the first points of contact and assistance.¹⁹³

Social capital within cities can be difficult to establish for displaced people. Research in 2011 in Nairobi showed that “IDPs and migrants were significantly less likely than non-migrants to participate in community organisations, and had roughly equal (low) rates of participation in all groups *except* religious organisations.”¹⁹⁴ This link to transnational

¹⁸⁸ Smith-Heffner, “Ethnicity and the Force of Faith,” 24.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 30.

¹⁹¹ Lauterbach, “Religion and Displacement in Africa,” 298.

¹⁹² Ibid., 291.

¹⁹³ Zaman, “Jockeying for Position in the Humanitarian Field,” 129.

¹⁹⁴ <http://www.alnap.org/resource/6428>

religious organisations is an immediate resource when other levels of social capital are not yet available. Likewise, faith-based organisations, from the international to the local, will step in to cover gaps in services for refugees provided by UNHCR and the government. Further research in Kenya documented the variety of services offered by faith organisations in cities, including health assistance from the National Council of Churches in Kenya through their Urban Refugees Assistance Programme.¹⁹⁵

Other examples of transnational support include the connections of religious minorities from Iraq and Syria in Lebanon and Jordan. Research from Norwegian Church Aid found that “the majority of displaced people already have an established local contact before entering a new country [and] churches in host countries have developed their own informal ‘referral system’, redirecting Christians to the church of a particular denomination.”¹⁹⁶ In response to displacement from Myanmar, Christian transnational networks, specifically in Thailand, support IDPs in Myanmar’s Karen state, like the Karen Baptist Convention and the Karenni Social and Welfare Centre “which works in coordination with the Thailand Burma Border Consortium and the Burma Relief Centre.”¹⁹⁷

In Johannesburg, forced migrants living in the city have developed intricate networks of social involvement that are both part of the city and separate from it or, as Landau puts it, “partial inclusion in a transforming society without becoming bounded by it.”¹⁹⁸ Religion in this environment is “a form of claim making on the city.”¹⁹⁹ Within Johannesburg, Landau’s evidence points to a system of ‘globalisation from below’ in which migrants are the main “conduits of information, money, and values; go-betweens tying home villages and local communities to their city of residence and urban centres around the world.”²⁰⁰ In that city, lack of trust between citizens and towards public institutions as well as the precarious legal status of forced migrants can mean that integration is not feasible. Instead, “inclusion into this decentred, largely unregulated, globalised networks may represent a far more significant form of membership.”²⁰¹

One of the main arenas for these type of networks is religious affiliation. In particular, Landau notes the expansion of Nigerian-run Pentecostal churches that have congregants from all over the African continent. Churches acts as bridges between South Africans and forced migrants and as platforms to offer guidance and support as migrants move out of the inner city or to other countries.²⁰² Integration into the city is not advantageous with a mobile population of migrants, but globalised local religious networks can connect forced migrants to transnational communities. Landau describes religion, in this sense, as a “translocal value system” noting that, “Through their use of religion and other transterritorial rhetorics, migrants can generate a subjectivity that allows them to be in but not of the city.”²⁰³

¹⁹⁵ Stoddard p28-29

¹⁹⁶ Norwegian Church Aid, “The Protection Needs of Minorities from Syria and Iraq,” 27.

¹⁹⁷ Pacitto and Fiddian-Qasmieh, “Writing the ‘Other’ into Humanitarian Discourse,” 17.

¹⁹⁸ Loren B. Landau, “Living Within and Beyond Johannesburg: Exclusion, Religion, and Emerging Forms of Being,” *African Studies* 68, no. 2 (August 1, 2009): 197.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 198.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 207.

CASE STUDY: Humanitarian Corridors in Italy: Urban LFCs and Transnational Affiliations [By Susanna Trotta]

In December 2015 the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Federation of Evangelical Churches (FCEI) and the Waldensian Church signed a protocol with the Italian Ministries of Interior and of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The protocol granted 1,000 exceptional visas with limited territorial validity to refugees in particularly vulnerable conditions, to be transferred to Italy from Lebanon and Ethiopia. Its aim is to secure legal and safe passages to Italy for refugees living in Lebanon and Ethiopia. The FBOs are in charge of funding and carrying out selection, transfer and reception processes, and the initiative is set to provide protection to 1,000 beneficiaries between January 2016 and December 2017.

The beneficiaries of the programmes are mainly of Syrian nationality and they are chosen by the FBOs and their partner organisations working in Lebanon, who also organise and carry out transfer, reception and integration processes. The Italian authorities are responsible for security checks, in collaboration with the local government. The costs are entirely covered by the FBOs through fundraising systems (e.g. donations from the annual income tax return, fundraising events, individual donations) and contributions from their transnational networks.

The collaboration with the Italian authorities has proved to be a promising starting point for further initiatives of the kind. A second agreement signed by the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI), the Community of Sant'Egidio, Migrantes, Caritas and the Italian government in January 2017 will allow for 500 visas to be granted to refugees currently based in Ethiopia. Furthermore, the collaboration with the FBOs' transnational networks also allows for the replication of the programme in countries other than Italy. Humanitarian corridors established in France by the Italian and French Community of Sant'Egidio in collaboration with two Catholic and three Protestant FBOs were launched in March 2017, and the first beneficiaries arrived from Lebanon in early July. The faith-based humanitarian corridors initiative's progress and replicability are clearly favoured by the growing connections between faith- and non-faith-based actors and by the engagement of some local authorities and of transnational networks.

A common trait of all three FBOs' reception systems (which differ otherwise, for instance, in housing modalities) is the engagement of local faith and non-faith communities in the provision of services to refugees and in various activities. For instance, local migrant communities are often involved in processes of cultural and linguistic mediation, and groups of citizens and professionals provide spaces and material resources to be used by the beneficiaries and the organisations. Furthermore, refugees are introduced to the LFCs if they so wish. For instance, a Muslim family who arrived in Genoa during Ramadan was able to soon join one of the local mosques for celebrations and prayers - a sign of intra-faith connections and sensitivity towards refugees' spiritual needs. Thus, the nature of the organisations running the initiative allows for a critical understanding of the interplay between forced migration, transnational religious connections, and welcoming refugees in urban spaces through engagement with local communities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence provided in this report focuses on cases of local faith actors in urban environments responding to displaced people, largely in the global South. Within this, evidence has been provided on the many and various roles played by local faith communities to demonstrate the widespread support provided by these actors across a range of services (emergency services including provision of shelter, psychosocial and spiritual support, registration and refugee status determination support, peacebuilding activities, and advocacy activities). This list is not exhaustive and LFCs are involved in many more activities, some of which will be covered in a future report on the role of LFCs in different stages and spaces of the refugee experience.

Certain tensions were also brought to light. With the acknowledgement that the role of religion can influence the reasons for, as well as the solutions to, displacement, the place of LFCs in the international humanitarian system was discussed. This highlighted that there are still processes of domination and marginalisation which mean that local faith actors are not recognised. This included apprehension (from unfamiliarity and/or inherent bias) towards Muslim actors and the existence of parallel coordination structures, which mean that local religious networks and international humanitarian networks operate separately.

One of the reasons for this separation and apprehension was pinpointed in the debate on proselytisation and impartiality. Examination of these issues in an urban context with local actors does not remove all obstacles, but it does add nuances to the debate to show that the complexity of conversion and proselytisation are not clear cut and that there remains space for negotiation and cooperation that would allow for much more fruitful partnerships between LFCs and international secular actors.

Finally, an urban focus meant a specific attention was needed on the role of transnational religious networks. These transnational networks have lively and dynamic followings in urban centres and support refugees and forced migrants in their journeys either to that urban centre as a destination or on their continued journey elsewhere. Networks can vary dramatically in size and formality, but the common underlying thread is that they provide familiarity and cultural and social cohesion and capital for refugees and forced migrants in otherwise unknown cities in which relationships can be difficult to build.

Recommendations are as follows:

- ***The localisation process needs to evaluate the balance between engaging with ‘national’ level actors (including state-linked bodies such as ministries), municipal level authorities, and (sub-national) local stakeholders which are based around communities and at the neighbourhood level, such as local faith actors.***

LFCs often operate at this most local level, yet much of the localisation debate focuses on the national level and will therefore continue to marginalise these community and neighbourhood actors. Changing the balance will require more sustained analysis and critical engagement with the roles played by *local faith* communities in contexts of protracted urban displacement.

- ***How can the localisation process learn from community organising and faith-based community organising? An integrated approach looking at the mobilisation of LFCs in situations of displacement is encouraged for future efforts.***

The research has recognised that current localisation processes are not including LFCs that will be central actors in the future to respond to displacement. To shift the power balance away from its current locus in the centralised, international response system, the agency of local actors should be enhanced, with community organising being a long-tested methodology for such an approach,²⁰⁴ with specific expertise available on faith-based community organising. This also links to the work of the JLI Mobilisation Hub,²⁰⁵ which is working to explore the different methodologies used to promote active engagement in community issues from LFCs.

- ***Barriers and biases around partnership with local faith actors, particularly Muslim actors, need to be broken down. A greater familiarity with the structures of LFCs is needed.***

LFCs' experiences of marginalisation and their distance from centralised response structures has shown that there is a lack of knowledge and experience among international organisations and staff about how to even begin a process of partnership. While this barrier will be different from context to context, it is suggested that a local area be taken as a trial for increased efforts to understand the possibilities for partnership, particularly with Muslim LFCs. Furthermore, training humanitarian staff about the structures of LFCs in each context, again specifically with Muslim organisations if appropriate to that context, would begin a process of breaking down barriers around a lack of knowledge and familiarity and encourage them to engage with structures that may be outside their experience. Certain tools could be developed, taking the lead from subject areas that have seen mainstreaming efforts such as gender or climate change adaptation. The tools would help international organisations navigate processes needed to effectively engage with LFCs. LFCs would need to be involved in the development of such tools, which would focus on areas such as risk management and compliance, some of the main concerns expressed by INGOs for partnership with LFCs.

- ***“Culture brokers” or actors with an understanding of both the international humanitarian system and local faith structures can be essential in increasing partnerships and breaking down barriers.***

Suspicion exists on both sides (LFCs may be suspicious that they are instrumentalised/ “sub-contracted” without power; international humanitarian organisations may be suspicious that they will lose their claim to impartiality and neutrality). At the moment, partnerships for increased localisation with LFCs face too many barriers for them to be effective. “Culture brokers” can provide minimal, but necessary, institutional support to LFCs. The example of LSESD in Lebanon and StARS in Cairo as national FBOs with

²⁰⁴ <https://www.piconetwork.org/about/faith-based-community-organizing>.

transnational ties and strong links in the local community, provide noteworthy examples of organisations that bridge divides from the most international to the most local.

- ***Psychosocial assistance that integrates elements of secular psychology with the spiritual support of local faith communities is needed to provide culturally relevant and appropriate psychosocial support.***

Faith emerges as a powerful source of internal resilience present within and across displaced urban communities. Responding actors have previously distanced themselves from this for fears of proselytisation and discrimination. However, refugees' ability to use these forms of internal resilience whilst also maintaining their beliefs and practices and working with organisations of other religions demonstrates that these fears do not always come to fruition. The question that remains is how organisations can work to enhance these psychosocial advantages present within LFCs while upholding the humanitarian principles of international humanitarian organisations. An example of good practice with Tibetan refugees following the 2015 Nepal earthquake demonstrated that an integrated approach building on the authority and experience of religious leaders in conjunction with secular psychological approaches can be successful. It potentially takes more time, with some training of religious leaders and secular psychologists needed to come to a point of understanding, but the resulting program will be more effective and culturally appropriate.

- ***Research translation and communication is needed to engage with decision-makers and promote an awareness of and familiarity with LFC structure for refugee response.***

There needs to be more work on research translation and communication process, specifically towards decision makers in the EU, DFID, USAID, etc. so that change can be made. This will help these decision makers become more familiar with the capacities of LFCs and help address some of the fears and concerns that currently impede greater inclusion. Awareness needs to be raised from the headquarters down to field representatives who make localised funding decisions.

- ***Humanitarian coordination, and particularly coordination lead organisations, must engage more deeply with local actors.***

To diminish duplication in parallel coordination structures, organisations that act as cluster leads must gain further awareness about the inclusion of local actors, including LFCs. An initial step would be to encourage dialogue between NGOs and LFCs, and a further step would be to include requirements about the inclusion of local actors, including LFCs. This will need to include initial assessments that look more deeply into the full range of actors present in the location, funding for local actors to attend meetings and the support of select international organisations in providing a bridge and standing alongside/accompanying LFCs to that the stigma around their inclusion is broken down.

Annex 1: Scoping Study Outline

JLI Refugees and Forced Migration Hub Outline for new Scoping Survey The Roles of Local Faith Communities in Supporting Displaced People

Introduction

With an overburdened and underfunded humanitarian system in flux as the world faces the highest levels of displacement ever recorded - over 65 million people in 2015 - the international community is increasingly committed to supporting local responses to displacement. In 2016 the World Humanitarian Summit resulted in the Charter4Change and a renewed call for meaningful support for the 'localisation of humanitarian aid' agenda. Building on the UNHCR's work following the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection in December 2012, this includes a recognition of the actual and potential roles of local faith communities in offering protection, solidarity and assistance to displaced people throughout different stages and spaces of their journeys.

On the one hand, it is increasingly recognised that faith-based actors have historically played a fundamental role in welcoming and supporting displaced people – whether in material terms, through financial support and providing shelter, or through the provision of spiritual support and invoking religious traditions of accompaniment. On the other hand, however, a number of challenges remain to establishing partnerships with LFCs. These include:

- a lack of evidence regarding the impact of LFCs on supporting displaced people on individual, familial and community levels;
- a lack of trust, knowledge and capacity for such engagement; and
- the need for clear, implementable actions to improve partnership and the effectiveness of humanitarian response to displaced people.

Now, more than ever, we need evidence to help policy-makers and practitioners better understand the roles that faith-based actors already play, and have the potential to play, in supporting refugees and forced migrants.

This Scoping Survey by the new Refugees and Forced Migration Hub of the Joint Learning Initiative (JLI) on Faith and Local Communities seeks to understand the role of LFCs in providing assistance, solidarity and protection to refugees and IDPs, and to provide evidence-based recommendations to overcome the challenges to full engagement with LFCs.

In particular, there remains a lack of substantial evidence to indicate:

- the multiple roles that faith-based actors play in responding to the needs of forced migrants across different phases and spaces of displacement, including urban protracted displacement;
- what the strengths and weaknesses of such local support mechanisms are;
- the extent to which such mechanisms are integrated into international and national response systems; and
- how faith-based actors could be better supported in their work.

The Survey will investigate the evidence for LFC contribution to supporting displaced people under the guidance of the JLI Refugees and Forced Migration Hub, membership of which is made up of over 70 practitioners, academics and policymakers who are experts in refugees, displacement and faith communities.

Building an improved evidence base on the impact of LFCs in supporting refugees

The Scoping Survey will build on an existing synthesis of evidence compiled by the JLI and summarized in the 2016 *JLI Refugees and Forced Migration Learning Hub Policy Note*.

Cognizant of both the **localization of humanitarianism agenda** and the overwhelming trend of **urban protracted displacement in the global South**, and informed by the **priority themes identified by the members of the JLI Refugee and Forced Migration Hub** between July-Nov 2016, the survey will begin with mapping existing evidence relevant to the impact of LFCs on refugees and other displaced people through:

- an extensive literature review of academic and policy documents (Dec 16 – Apr 17),
- written contributions and case-studies submitted by partner humanitarian organisations (both secular and faith-based) and key policy-makers (Jan – Mar 2017), and
- semi-structured interviews conducted with at least 20 practitioners, policy-makers and faith leaders especially those based in the global South (Feb – Mar 2017).

It will also be informed by an expanding number of research projects which are partnered with the JLI Refugee and Forced Migration Hub:

- *Local community experiences of and responses to displacement from Syria: Views from Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey* (UCL, Queen Margaret University, Durham and UEA: 2016-2020),
- *Role of Faith Networks in Migration and Refugee Advocacy and Support* (UK-focus) (Migrant Exchange: 2016-2018),
- *Religious Friendship and Refugee Integration* (UK-focus) (Warwick and Nottingham - TBC).

The literature review, written contributions and interviews will aim, *inter alia*, to answer the following questions, with regards to refugees, IDPs, and other groups of forced migrants as relevant:

- What evidence exists of faith-based initiatives to support displaced people having had a positive impact on protection outcomes?

- To what extent, and how, are local faith communities and religious leaders promoting displaced people's protection and resilience?
- How do the theological reflections of local faith communities on issues around forced migration, hospitality and solidarity influence their approaches?
- How effective are current partnerships and relationships between faith communities and the mainstream humanitarian architecture/formal protection mechanisms?
- What lessons can be drawn from the ways that specific faith groups/communities interact with displaced people?

To answer these and other questions, the scoping research will identify evidence (and further priority policy questions) with regards to topics including:

- The roles of faith and faith-based actors in the emergency phase of processes of mass displacement, including with regards to the provision of:
 - Basic services
 - Psychosocial support
 - Spiritual support
- Tracing the roles of faith and faith-based actors throughout different stages of refugees/IDPs' journeys:
 - Prior to departure
 - Departure
 - Transit
 - Involuntary immobility and 'stuckness'
 - Arrival/'reception'
 - Waiting
 - Return and re-integration
 - Non-arrival (dignity in/after death)
- Tracing the roles of faith and faith-based actors in/across different spaces of refugees/IDPs' journeys
 - Borders
 - Camps
 - Local neighbourhoods/towns/cities
 - Religious buildings (spaces of inclusion and protection, and/or exclusion and discrimination)
 - Transit spaces (shelter, food, spiritual support)
 - 'Reception' accommodation
 - Detention and deportation centres and prisons
 - Country of origin/return
- Tracing the roles of faith and faith-based actors during displaced people's encounters with different state and non-state actors during their journeys:
 - Border and security officials
 - Smugglers and traffickers
 - Immigration officers
 - Detention system
 - Key actors in the Refugee Status Determination process
 - Local communities (hostile and hospitable)

- Media
- Deportation system
- Country of origin/return
- Tracing the roles *and impact* of faith and faith-based actors in advocacy and lobbying activities in support of/in solidarity with refugees and other displaced people
 - Friendship, witness, and accompanying refugees
 - Engagement with media, policy-makers and legislation, incl:
 - Refugee rights
 - Upholding dignity and humanity of refugees
 - Birth registration
 - Potential to mobilise the development and maintenance of ‘welcoming communities’ and ‘communities of welcome’
- Identifying durable solutions for refugees, IDPs and stateless people
 - Resettlement – including safe passage programmes
 - Integration (housing, health, social, spiritual support)
 - Return (voluntary/involuntary)
 - Conflict resolution, post-conflict transitions

The search for evidence will include a particular focus on the ways in which local responses are related to gender; and processes of inclusion and exclusion including on the basis of ethnicity, religious identity, sexuality and gender identity, political beliefs, local social economies etc.

The precise topics will evolve/expand/be refined through the iterative search process.

Two Scoping Reports, Annotated Bibliographies, and related Policy Notes will be produced on the basis of the research. These will be collaboratively authored by members of the JLI Refugees and Forced Migration Hub, under the editorial guidance of the Hub Co-Chairs.

1. LFC Responses in/to Urban Protracted Displacement

- This Scoping Report will document the evidence about the roles played by LFCs in supporting protracted urban refugees and IDPs across the global South, purposefully seeking out case-studies from a wide range of geopolitical contexts.
- It will be guided by the need to provide evidence to promote a more meaningful engagement with LFCs within the context of the localization of aid agenda.
- It will document the strengths and weaknesses of such local support mechanisms and the extent to which such mechanisms are integrated into international and national response systems.
- It will aim to identify emerging best practice for LFC/FBO partnerships in contexts of urban protracted displacement.
- It will conclude with Recommendations of how faith-based actors could be better supported in their work in contexts of urban protracted displacement.
- It will be completed for presentation at the October 2017 meeting on *Localizing Response to Humanitarian Need: The Role of Religious and Faith-Based Organizations* and JLI Board Meeting and include key summaries of evidence.
- A 2- or 4-page Policy Note will be produced following discussion at the October 2017

Meeting, for dissemination in Nov/Dec 2017 and for repackaging for key talking points and presentation.

2. The Roles of Faith and of Faith-Based Actors in Responding to the Needs of Forced Migrants across Different Phases and Spaces of Displacement

- This Scoping Report will document both the significance of faith for forced migrants in different phases and spaces of displacement, and evidence about the multiple roles played by LFCs in supporting (and/or undermining/rejecting) displaced people across different phases and spaces of displacement across the global South *and* the global North.
- It will document the strengths and weaknesses of such local support mechanisms and the extent to which such mechanisms are integrated into international and national response systems.
- It will aim to identify emerging best practice for LFC/FBO partnerships in different phases and spaces of displacement.
- It will conclude with recommendations of how faith-based actors could be better supported in their work in different phases and spaces of displacement across the global North and the global South.
- It will be completed in Spring 2018.
- On the basis of the report, a series of 5-8 succinct thematic Policy Notes will be produced in 2017-2019 to present evidence and key recommendations in a digestible fashion to key audiences in policy and practice. One Policy Note will draw out key points and recommendations that may be applicable to localized responses to humanitarian situations more broadly, beyond the specificity of displacement scenarios discussed in the report.

In collaboration with the 'Refugee Hosts' research project (www.refugeehosts.org), 2019/2020 the JLI Refugees and Forced Migration Hub will also develop a *Religious Literacy Handbook* for use by policy-makers and practitioners working in this field, including examples both from the scoping research and from primary data collected as part of the research project.

Summary of What We Know and What We Don't Know **(synthesis from JLI R&FM Hub Policy Note)**

What we know:

- Local Faith Communities (LFCs) are often the first responders to refugees and IDPs due to their presence and reach within communities.
- The social capital of many LFCs enables them to mobilise human and financial resources relatively quickly from within displaced communities and from those that host them.
- Religious buildings are used to store and distribute aid, as information hubs, and for shelter and protection.
- Engagement with LFCs may facilitate a more holistic understanding of need.

- LFCs can help to build cross-community and cross-border networks that ease integration (and re-integration) in contexts of displacement.
- Religious groups support refugees to claim their rights.
- Individuals hold beliefs that help them to recover from or manage adversity.
- LFCs are uniquely positioned to engage with “controversial” issues.

What we don't know:

- What role does faith play in the lives of refugees and IDPs in different stages of displacement?
- To what extent do religious identity, values and practice provide psychosocial support and promote resilience amongst refugees at all stages of their journeys and throughout all processes of displacement?
- How inclusive are religious buildings and LFCs in providing sanctuary for those of all faiths and none?
- How do faith leaders and religious norms provide support to refugees and IDPs?
- What is the impact of faith leaders who intervene in public debates about refugees and IDPs?
- What is the role of gender in faith-based responses to refugees and IDPs?

Annex 2: General Interview Guide

- Tell us about your organisation's work with refugees and what you do.
- How do you work with local faith communities (LFCs) on refugees?
- What are a) the opportunities and b) the challenges of working with LFCs on refugee response?
- What examples can you give that demonstrate the role of religion for refugees?
- Pick up on areas that are not well documented for questions as relevant per interviewee, such as:
 - Latin America
 - Religions other than Christianity and Islam
 - Camps
 - Deportation
 - Detention
 - Transit/journeys
 - Smuggling/trafficking
 - Media
 - Security and immigration officials
 - Involuntary immobility
 - Non-arrival (dignity in/after death)
- Any other examples or information that you have in mind?



At the historical, physical and metaphorical core of Baddawi refugee camp in North Lebanon is the original cemetery, which continues to host the camp's 'original' residents. (c) E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh. December 2016.



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JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on **FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES**



Refugees & Forced Migration Learning Hub

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