

**UNHCR ANNUAL NGO CONSULTATIONS
SIDE EVENT ON FAITH AND PROTECTION
EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE:
PRELIMINARY OVERVIEW**

In April 2013, in follow up to the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection, UNHCR and FBOs solicited good practice examples of faith-based organisations (FBOs) and local faith communities (LFCs) in yielding protection outcomes, including in partnership with UNHCR. FBOs/LFCs and UNHCR staff at headquarters and in the field were invited to submit specific examples of good practice in protection of refugees, the internally displaced, stateless persons and returnees.

The call for examples sought to explore specific questions, including the protection outcomes achieved and activities undertaken; the implications of FBO/LFC faith identities, motivations, and structures in achieving these outcomes; and innovative partnership models between UNHCR and FBOs/LFCs.

In response to the call for examples, a total of 32 examples were submitted by FBOs/LFCs, and 20 examples were submitted by UNHCR staff. Upon initial review of the examples submitted, the following points are worth noting:

- While a wide range of faith groups were represented in the examples, nearly 85% of those submitted highlighted the role of Christian and Muslim FBOs/LFCs.
- Examples were submitted from around the world, including Africa, Asia, North and South America, Europe and the Middle East.
- The examples demonstrated the various types of FBOs/LFCs that play a role in protection, including local religious leaders, local faith communities, national FBOs, international FBOs, as well as denominational, umbrella and inter-faith organizations and networks.
- FBOs/LFCs contributed to a wide range of protection outcomes and activities, including: providing physical protection; advocating for legislative changes benefitting people of concern; combating xenophobia and discrimination; supporting resettlement and integration; prevention of and response to SGBV and forced recruitment; deterrence of violence through presence and accompaniment, reconciliation and peace-building; legal counselling and asylum case management; and mediating ethnic and land tensions. Additional information on these outcomes can be found in the Examples of Good Practice: Protection Outcomes.
- FBOs/LFCs identified values and teachings that stem from their unique faith traditions as motivating factors for their protection activities, including thoughtful reflections on the strengths and risks that stem from their affiliation with faith traditions and structures.
- Several examples demonstrated protection outcomes that benefited from the involvement of multiple faith groups in the same initiative. Inter-faith partnership examples included peace-building and reconciliation work, prevention of and response to xenophobia, and advocacy initiatives that brought together national leaders from various faith traditions.
- The protection outcomes often required complementary partnership between UNHCR and FBOs/LFCs. UNHCR's contribution to protection partnerships included, among other things, technical support, funding, high-level negotiations, guidance and advice, data and information sharing, legal support, and other types of capacity building. FBOs/LFCs' contribution to protection partnerships, among other things, included community-level understanding and influence; moral authority, including influencing governments and other decision makers; grassroots networks and mobilisation capacity; relationships and representation with constituencies; history, size and experience as first responders; and engaging as liaisons between various actors.

As this collection of examples remains in its initial stages, further analysis of the good practices of FBOs and LFCs, including in partnership with UNHCR, is still needed. The expectation is that these examples will culminate in a publication, and will serve as input into other work streams of follow-up

to the High Commissioner's December 2012 Dialogue on Faith and Protection, including training and guidance on 'faith literacy' for UNHCR staff and partners at the UN System Staff College. For the sake of discussion at the 2013 Annual NGO Consultations, the following are illustrative quotes from submitted examples:

The FBO "maintains its faith-driven commitment to protect refugees, ... has provided community outreach and legal assistance, ... acknowledges the importance faith/religion play in people's lives and how these elements are part of integral human development. [The FBO] teams work with religious leaders to seek protection outcomes that address gender-based violence and empower at-risk women and girls."

"The long term presence of some of these faith-based organizations is also more sustainable – it enables [the FBO] to focus on building the capacities of the local partners who will remain working there in the long term. This is particularly relevant for protection work which can take a while to take root and requires sustained action over a longer period."

"Inspired by its faith and ... social teaching, [the FBO] works to provide emergency assistance for IDPs and protective environments that prevent abuses such as trafficking, exploitation and forced labour... [The FBO] had already established a relationship with the principal community-based organisations years prior to provide development and relief aid to this area, [with faith] structures working in harmony with the local community for decades."

"Recognizing the importance of collaboration with religious leaders to prevent and reduce SGBV in a ... refugee community, the refugee focal points and community facilitators held initial sessions with religious leaders"

"This project aims to support survivors of rape and sexual violence with beneficiaries including returnees and displaced persons. The initiative came about after a local priest noticed that women were coming to the parish to talk about their experiences; the church was the only place the women felt they could talk about their experiences; the church was the only place the women felt they could gather and find support."

"An agreement has been reached with faith-based organisations to have dedicated speeches by [local religious leaders] once a week before Refugee Day to sensitise the faithful on the situation of refugees and seek their support and openness."

"We have observed that persons of other religions often find it easier to relate to an organization (and persons) that is also faith-based, even if the faith is different, than to an organization saying they have no faith."

We "visit immigrants in detention and works with service partners to provide legal services, ... resource local congregations in a variety of ways to help dispel myths and equip congregants to serve refugees and migrants in their own communities and ... work with former refugees to help identify and train refugee advocacy leaders."

"On the local level, our chaplaincy offices engage with a wide variety of religious groups to provide direct services to those detained, recruiting volunteers, procuring donations of religious items for the use of beneficiaries, and educating the authorities on religious practices and requirements."

"The members of that LFC provided emotional support, financial assistance, in-hospital and post-hospital care including visits and meals during recovery."

"Stronger trust and practical co-operative activities between [FBO] members and other faith communities resulted from these initiatives to build more cohesive and peaceful local communities. However, some weaknesses of [the faith] identity in such work is that it would be still viewed with suspicion by some individuals or groups of other religious faiths, ... being seen as a product of Western colonialism"

“At a national level, [the FBO] has the capacity to engage directly with political parties and prominent bodies including the police and media to advocate for a commitment to peace, the respect of human rights and the rule of law as a precondition for all political parties. [The FBO’s] assurance of neutrality strengthens its capacity to have its work endorsed by all parties.”

“A wide array of faith leaders is urging legislators to ensure that comprehensive immigration reform upholds the [country’s] proud history and tradition of protecting and welcoming refugees, asylum-seekers, and those fleeing persecution.”

“The [FBO] coordinated a strategy that continually monitors specific grassroots humanitarian needs and with the generous donations of our community and other [faith] organisations has managed to respond... The purpose of the group is to develop joint strategies to engage government structures such as justice and policing structures and explore how best to make interventions in order to address prejudice-related crime.”

“The joint UNHCR-[FBO] work had a real positive impact on displaced populations from the area. From the beginning of their displacement, IDPs never felt alone or abandoned. In addition to that, the mission gave a great contribution from a psychological and a spiritual point of view. The presence of a [local faith leader] side by side with a major humanitarian organization reassured displaced people, especially at the time when there was a lot of distrust among communities due to political links.”

“Cooperation had been close with [FBO] and the [faith leader]. Some of the positive outcomes were a postponement of the adoption of the legislation and the subsequent parliamentary hearings which indirectly triggered some improvements and prepared the ground for a more systematic approach to care and maintenance issues of asylum-seekers.”

“UNHCR’s mandate to address statelessness globally provided a useful entry point for high level dialogue ... [this gave the FBOs] the additional leverage needed to engage with them on what was previously considered – and to a certain extent still is – a highly sensitive political issue on which public sentiment is sharply divided.”

“A joint forum is also planned ... to bring all religious leaders from the three camps and the local community together to discuss and adopt a manifesto/declaration with a commitment of all religious leaders to eliminate Female Genital Mutilation practice in their respective communities. The capacity, knowledge and skills of the faith-based organisations and the community religious leaders prompted the [UNHCR] office to work closely with them.”

“One of the main challenges posed by some religious implementing partners ... is related to supporting specific needs of LGTBI populations and providing HIV/AIDS orientation... Another weakness is the difficult FBOs have in working with an empowering perspective instead of a paternalist one.”

FBO “strengths: ... values of integrity, desire to help and compassion were for us a key to the success of our protection goals. Weaknesses: - Some of our beneficiaries think they are more favoured and others think that they could be disadvantaged. Then we find it difficult to explain the neutrality and impartiality of our interventions”

“A local FBO voice has been critical to advocacy and in having a sustainable humanitarian impact on policy. One of the biggest challenges, perhaps, could be that UNHCR needs to make a stronger effort to create more space in global venues (such as NGO consultations) for innovative national FBOs to change their experience and practices. Large international FBO partners, while important partners, do not necessarily represent the full perspective or experience of partnerships with UNCHR and faith-based communities. National and location FBOs ... also need to have their voices heard at the global level.”

A special thanks goes to the following FBOs/LFCs for submitting examples of good practice:

- Act for Peace, Australia
- Armenian Caritas, Armenia
- CAFOD, multiple locations
- Capuchin Tertiary Sisters, Chile
- Caritas Internationalis
- Caritas Nairobi, Kenya
- Casa del Migrate Scalabrini, Mexico
- Catholic Relief Services, multiple locations
- Church World Service, multiple locations
- Christian Aid, Dominican Republic
- Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel, Occupied Palestinian Territories
- Edmund Rice International
- Franciscan Family, Chad
- Franciscans International
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, United States
- Integration and Support Unit/Mount Zion, United Kingdom
- Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
- Kerk in Actie, The Netherlands
- Lutheran Children and Family Service of Eastern Pennsylvania, United States
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, United States
- Lutheran Services Georgia, United States
- Lutheran World Federation
- Lutheran World Service, Lutheran World Federation, Kenya
- National Christian Council of Sri Lanka and Mahabodhi Society of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka
- Nepal Country Office, Lutheran World Federation, Nepal
- OFADEC, Senegal
- Revive/Holy Ghost Fathers and Christian Brothers, United Kingdom
- Sanctuary Movement/German Ecumenical Committee on Church Asylum, Germany
- South African Jewish Board of Deputies, South Africa
- The Refuge Pnan, South Korea
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Migration and Refugee Services, United States
- World Outreach Initiatives, Burundi
- Zimbabwe Council of Churches, Zimbabwe

A special thanks goes to the following UNHCR offices for submitting examples of good practice:

- UNHCR Tehran, Iran
- UNHCR Bangui, Central African Republic
- UNHCR Malaysia
- UNHCR Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
- UNHCR Austria
- UNHCR Sub-Office Jijiga, Ethiopia
- UNHCR Mexico
- UNHCR Panama City, Panama
- UNHCR Brasilia, Brazil
- UNHCR Washington D.C., United States

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