

SUMMARY OF COMMENT OF GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN AID LEADERS
at the
G20 INTERFAITH FORUM
Buenos Aires, Argentina
September 28, 2018

ADVANCING THE WORK OF
RELIGIOUSLY-AFFILIATED HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS

This plenary session explored the work of several faith-inspired organizations that operate in every world region; it focused on human dignity and on responses to humanitarian crises. Chaired by Fr. Augusto Zampini (Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Holy See); speakers were Jonathan Duffy (President, Adventist Development and Relief Association - ADRA); Sharon Eubank (LDS Charities; Presidency, Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints); Humberto Ortiz Roca (Latin American Council of Bishops, CELAM-Latin American Episcopal Council); Carlos Rauda (Regional Representative, ACT Alliance); and Christina Tobias-Nahi (Director of Public Affairs, Islamic Relief, USA).

Fr. Augusto Zampini introduced the panel. Faith organizations are indispensable actors, inspired by their faith to be and to stay in the most difficult situations; they contribute to hope and dignity. They work within the SDG framework and, as for all humanitarian organizations, face the challenge of linking aid, especially in crises and with refugees, with long term development. Humanitarian aid is not simply giving things to the poor; it is about transformation, and it requires complex alliances, among faith actors but also with non-believers, within a framework of human rights. Faith organization work with refugees has special significance and presents both financial and political challenges. Fr. Zampini highlighted the issue of responsibility: people suffer not because they are lazy (they did not cause climate change), yet prospects are that their situation will become worse. Where will resources come from to address these problems? The shift in world demographics towards urban life affects this work: Argentina is now 70 percent urbanized, thus one of the world's most urbanized countries, yet proper urban planning (including to cope with disasters) is rare.

Jonathan Duffy focused on the evolving roles of and challenges facing ADRA and other faith-inspired organizations. He began with a historical backdrop, stressing that the church has long played an important part in society, promoting issues of justice and service to the poor. Churches established hospitals to serve the sick, schools to give children opportunities to achieve their potential, and prisons to help reform individuals. They also provided significant voices on social reform: abolition of slavery and the rights of women, to name two. However, with the onset of World War 1 and the global atrocities of war, churches began to see themselves as incapable of changing society and switched more to the role of lifesaver, rowing amongst the drowning mass of humanity, saving one life at a time as they dragged a drowning soul into the safety of their boat. With World War II coming so close on the heels of WWI, much of Europe came to believe there must be no God as He would not have allowed this. We saw the rise of secularism and with it a divide between religion and the private world of the supernatural and spiritual beliefs and the "real" world of things scientific, political, and day-to-day living.

Perhaps unconsciously, religious groups have allowed themselves to be boxed into a religious category. Much of their focus centers on whose doctrines are correct and personal spiritual commitment and conversion. While their ideological commitment to assisting the poor is acknowledged, this has come to be seen not as their main mission, often relegated to a secondary position or a means to introduce people to their central mission.

As a faith-based humanitarian organization, ADRA is asked to straddle two camps. As an NGO, we need to demonstrate our commitment to best practices, global standards, and transparency and to prove that we do not proselytize. We also live within the world of our faith communities and battle the concept that we are not core to the main mission of the church; we are asked to demonstrate how we contribute to the fulfillment of our faith communities' mission. In order to prove our value as an NGO and be successful in winning grants (in the end it is still a business), we have tended to distance ourselves from the mainstream church activities, seeing the church as an opportunity to rob from the rich to give to the poor.

We come to the reality of the present as we cast an eye toward the future. In the past few years, dialogue around the role of faith in development and humanitarian response has changed. There is a growing awareness that with around 80 percent of the world's population having some form of religious affiliation, religious communities are a strong part of civil society. Organizations such as the Joint Learning Initiative for Local Faith Communities (JLI) have established a knowledge platform that, through empirical research, demonstrates the effectiveness of faith communities as agents of positive change within their societies. We see a changing role of FBOs, to reconnect with their faith groups to help them understand their responsibility as social actors and resource them to be social agents for change. I see this as the future for FBOs.

With that background, let's look at the challenges facing FBOs in situations of humanitarian crisis. My agency, ADRA, is present in most conflict areas. ADRA has a strong presence in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan, DRC, and many other fragile states. In one country, we are only able to respond through using local faith communities to distribute food, but unfortunately the situation is so sensitive I cannot expand upon this potential case study. Working in conflict areas constantly challenges our values. When things go bad, we immediately evacuate expatriate staff, but local staff (who make up the majority), are left to carry on under difficult circumstances. What is our responsibility to local staff and the imperative of serving those in need? Sometimes my staff brag that we have not been banned from the country like other NGOs, but where does the balance lie between speaking against a regime that is at the root cause, and the need to remain present in order to continue to provide the much-needed humanitarian relief? Are we under resourced to meet the needs of those in humanitarian crisis?

Let's understand that there is no free money. Private donors may give out of compassion for the poor with the expectation that every cent goes to the poor or in a few cases with the expectation that your presence creates a presence for the church in that region. Monies from national governments are sometimes politically driven and, rightfully so, have terms and expectations attached. In reality, in some way we are political actors, and are constantly challenged in 'what monies do we accept' and 'what monies can't we afford to take?' As a faith-affiliated humanitarian agency, we work with local faith communities in training them in disaster response so that in the event of a disaster, they can be first responders and be skilled in and understand the role they can play. These trainings often engage local government and faith

communities so that there is an understanding of each other's role in the case of a disaster. If I had more time, I would share case studies of where religious institutions have provided safe havens in times of conflict, health care to the injured, distributed goods to the displaced and served as first responders, established informal language schools for refugees, and supported them in seeking employment.

Concluding, FBOs, like the rest of the world, find themselves in a constantly changing environment. We are being asked to transition from being service deliverers to being agencies of influence and to focus on scalability. To achieve these ends, we must learn to engage, motivate, and resource our faith communities to be social agents of change for good. No one FBO can do this alone in isolation. Faith leaders need to engage in interfaith discussions and come together through their common values and desire to be agents of hope and healing. If we can accomplish this, then faith actors can be powerful agents in transitioning the SDGs from being aspirational toward being a reality.

Sharon Eubank highlighted longstanding friendships among colleagues on the panel. A short video illustrated migration flows over the past several years, while photos of Yemen, showed what happens to people and what can make their lives more bearable. With an estimated 65.6 million people displaced worldwide, it is hard to get a handle on what that actually means. Many come from middle class families, very much like those of us sitting in this room. They are thrust not only into financial poverty, but also spiritual and emotional poverty that is devastating to them at the family level. They are stressed in ways that they have a hard time articulating. An estimated 99 percent of them will never be resettled (Argentina intends to resettle some, but that only represents about 1 percent).

LDS Charities works to make policies that work for them at the tent level. Besides sanitation, protection and food, things at that tent level are not given much attention, seen as amenities that are often let go. FBOs are good at offering several items: 1) Choice - almost all choice has been taken away from refugees so to have even the smallest choice is helpful. People can choose what they use for their aid and it is innovative. With ADRA, LDS Charities offered 10,000 winter coats and boots in places like Iraq, where people could choose the coats they get, reducing waste. 2) Family –oral history interviews help in processing trauma, a collaboration with IsraAID in Sodoku, Japan. 3) Dignity – giving people something to do that helps provide their livelihood by collaborating on projects with Convoy of Hope in Uganda. 4) Friendship – bringing people together for a soccer tournament, establishing refugee and community football leagues with Caritas in Florence, Italy 5) Meaningful Work - to not have anything to do and the feeling of stagnation and rot is so difficult for people in camps. A program allows Christian parents to build school furniture for their own children for their school (with Caritas) in Mosul, Iraq. Another project involves sustainable family gardening, a collaboration with Muslim Aid in Bosnia 6) Culture and Sport - Community Centers with Christian Councils in Sinjar, India 7) Freedom of Faith - often an underlying reason why they are displaced- they work with a community in collaboration with Rahma Relief Foundation in Detroit, Michigan, USA. 8) Education –work in Argentina contributes concrete progress.

Finally, she recommended that the G20 to consider actions in relation to SDG 4: Ensuring Inclusive and Lifelong Education. This is not funded at the UN level in the cities of displacement; most education be among displaced persons is funded by FBOs. If we don't want further strife, we must invest in education in the cities of displacement. If we don't, they will be marginalized and radicalized, not because they came that way, but because we made them that way. Invest in education for the flowering of human

potential so that they reach their potential wherever they are. There are 65 million people that are displaced. If the G20 would invest in education in the cities of displacement, they would be meeting all of the following aspects of SDG 4: 1) ensure literacy and numeracy, 2) ensure educational access, 3) ensure affordable quality primary education, 4) substantially increase the number of youth and adults, 5) build and upgrade education, 6) substantially expand globally the number of scholarships, and 7) substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers. This is a large payoff for a concentrated focus area.

Humberto Ortiz Roca, representing the union of two Latin American church organizations: Caritas Latin America and SILEM (the justice group), described their work and approach. Teams from both organizations work together on social pastoral work. The approach is focused on civil and political rights and economic and environmental rights. Human rights are seen from a pastoral view. Political violence in our countries is still an important issue as is the humanitarian crisis around migration and transitional justice in Columbia and Peru. They now have 500,000 Venezuelans and by year end, due to migrants from Peru, they expect it to increase to a million. What does the Gospel say? ‘I came from the outside and you received me.’ They also work in jails, recognizing the dignity of people: despite their condition, they are still a child of God. We are concerned about the environment. There are conflicts in relation to extractive industries. We also have conflict management work and risk management. Our region is greatly affected by earthquakes and hurricanes and environmental issues. In the area of the economy, we are working on human economy with solidarity, and cooperative civil economics. With local work, we can rethink the economy at a macro level. We also encourage comprehensive healthcare including solidarity from the community side and what we call the political institutional approach. In the area of youth and childhood, we have a continental call to attention to care and to practice nonviolence in the home. There is a Panamazonic ecclesiastical network, as a social movement. We are working on a pillar we call the social environmental justice and good living pillar – a comprehensive view of development that emphasizes the full life model. There is involvement on political issues; with a focus on rights and political advocacy they work with the public sector. They work with youth to promote social action and increase their representation among the leadership. Accountability, responsible action and institutional life is to be at the service of local parishes at the grassroots level.

The social doctrine of the church is growing in importance. Pope Francis said: “I am personally respectful of NGOs, but the Caritas is the evangelizing work of the church altogether. So we have to work on the joint pastoral approach.” Caritas is a warm expression of the church with a political perspective. Our way of work is linked to training in technical areas. Professional services advocating for rights and on environmental issues are increasingly important and there is a need for competent professionals who can talk about environmental assessments and standards. We want to join forces with civil society – believers and non-believers - with whom we can bring about transformative change. We need to see how we can work as a joint church, but also in alliance with civil society.

Regarding recommendations, how do we emphasize policies related to transitional justice in a post conflict period? How do we care for migrants? How do we care for the assets of creation? It is important to promote new grassroots initiatives that inspire new economies that affirm the common good and encourage citizen participation. Advocacy for children and protecting the Amazonian forest and the aquifers are vital. Caritas emphasizes a comprehensive human development framework. Development is for all people, and the approach is moving from less to better human conditions. They work from the

grassroots, then move to the parish level, then to the regional and finally the global. Gender equality is an approach that cuts across all of their programs. Thus Caritas workd with groups sharing a similar vision.

Carlos Rauda (ACT Alliance) highlighted emphasized that the G20 Interfaith Forum cooperation is what ACT is about. The vision for humanitarian affairs means that fulfilling the SDGs is not possible if we don't address humanitarian affairs. Millions of vulnerable people in humanitarian crisis suffer from hunger. What do we mean about leaving no one behind with the SDGs? Taking responsibility for the humanitarian crisis is the ethical challenge for true implementation of the SDGs. Disasters result from historical environmental disasters and political crisis. ACT Alliance faces this challenge in a twofold manner: compassion and love for humans who suffer and taking responsibility and trying to transform it. We must talk about justice and put ourselves in the place of the most vulnerable. If we do not do so, we are not talking about true justice. In humanitarian affairs, we face drastic situations and have little time to work with scarce resources. As FBOs, we are well positioned to professionally respond to needs, not based on their beliefs. We go where we are needed. We have advantages as FBOs. Faith contributes to offering people facing vulnerability hope. We work to express faith that there must be a future beyond the suffering. We have a capability to be among the most vulnerable. We are not civil society that goes in simply with an intervention. We support people in many ways, accompanying them, ensuring that they don't feel lonely. We are part of the affected, in community, suffering with them. That allows us to reach out to certain sectors where others do not go. We are local actors who are part of the community. We are not first line actors. We are right there. We were already there. After a crisis, everyone leaves. Look at Haiti: after the disaster, we created another issue with lack of coordination. Haiti has been abandoned, but FBOs have stayed there. Because we were already there, we are able to respond when things happened. We must understand risk and disaster. Being in the community allows us to do that. We don't work on all seven sectors (water, food, etc.). That's ok, but we embrace a development perspective because development matters. I

He suggested four ideas for the G20. 1) Localization Commitments - two years ago, we had a 'Grand Bargain' of localization commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul: an agenda of localization to enable us to reach out with greater resources to more affected areas. This belongs on the agenda; there cannot be a safe world if there is not enough resources; 2) Global Involvement – we need a revolution in our participation. We can no longer think that the West and North has to support the humanitarian crisis; there needs to be global involvement and the ones affected need to participate in the decisions that affect their own lives; 3) Linking humanitarian work to the SDGs - what can we do to create better synergies and promote actions coordinated and framed within the SDGs focused on food, water, and climate change? The Caribbean faces many hurricanes that increase vulnerability. Humanitarian work must be linked to the SDG agenda to be effective, with climate change mitigation part of the humanitarian agenda. We cannot deny that the hurricanes are also part of climate change. Humanitarian response is not enough; and 4) Gender Justice - a gender justice strategy that recognizes the roles of women, also building new gender identities is needed to act appropriately so there is recovery for a decent future. Finally, e need to be aware of the power we have as FBOs on the SDGs, the capabilities and the faith people have in us. This will improve our humanitarian support.

Christina Tobias-Nahi. I am glad to be here in Pope Francis' home; his encyclical was inspiring. While faith and humanitarian NGOs can provide tents, food, and education in some cases - although that is

becoming increasingly more difficult – we as FBOs can't be a band aid. It takes all the actors here to restore dignity, but also to provide hope. Islamic Relief USA is an international relief and development organization present in 40 countries. Islamic Relief took that mantle and held consultations in 2015, taking into consideration recent natural disasters. We considered a declaration that came out that year, and we reflected on climate change.[1] The first issue we took up was that those most affected are the least responsible for its cause. Another recent global consultation focused on gender justice. The Islamic Declaration on Gender Justice[2] addressed cultural practices and called on our network to affirm gender justice.

It is important to look at these big issues using theology from an Islamic framework. *The Guardian* recently published an article on “Why Faith is Becoming More and More Popular”[3] that argued that the population as a whole is getting more adherents to faith. About 80 percent of global population subscribes to faith, with Islam being the second and fastest growing faith at 24 percent. We need to frame these issues and mobilize them so that we have advocates. We hear about conflicts between faiths in the media; what we hear less often is that faith can be a healer. Some concrete examples: (a) working out of the office of Catholic Relief Services in partnership with World Vision in an economic, not a faith partnership. (b) working with HIAS (a Jewish refugee resettlement agency) on refugee issues. As Islamic Relief matures, it is increasingly engaged in advocacy. From Washington DC IRUSA advocates around systemic and structural issues that create inequality. Our motto is ‘working together for a better world.’ A new program with funding from USAID looks at solar energy and works with local farmers with technology for economic development.

Looking to concrete recommendations to the G20, urbanization is important: how are we preparing for mega cities when 2/3 of our population are urbanized? Urbanization brings with it increased pollution, traffic, commuting, unsupervised children, and lowered quality of life; there is a need to think more about green spaces as we urbanize and for women to be more involved in urban planning. There is also the need/right for education and the right to dignified work, particularly for the displaced. We want the G20 to find political solutions to protracted crisis such as in Syria. We want them to create more access for FBOs in the financial system to transfer the funds to conflict situations (it is increasingly difficult to do the work on the ground because of financial holds on funds). The challenge is not just about providing basic needs, it is about restoring the dignity of people and providing them with hope. “Let there be among you a community calling to the good, enjoining right, and forbidding wrong. It is they who shall prosper” (AYAH al-Imran 3:104, The Study Quran). We partner and call on others to partner. We need all the stakeholders to find the solutions to these global problems.

Key Points Made:

- FBOs work within the SDG framework; like all humanitarian organizations, they face the challenge of linking aid, especially in crises and with refugees, with long term development.
- Humanitarian aid requires complex alliances as it is not simply giving things to the poor but about transformation.
- Changing FBO roles involve higher expectations responsibility as social actors and social agents for change
- Local empowerment of displaced peoples is important in preventing radicalization

Recommended Points for G20 Dialogue:

-That the G20 governments focus on commitments made under the ‘Grand Bargain’ on localization (from the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul)

-More focus on education among displaced populations

-Priority to strategies that affirm gender justice and empowerment among peoples affected by humanitarian crises.

[1] For more information, see <https://unfccc.int/news/islamic-declaration-on-climate-change>

[2] For more information, see <https://www.islamic-relief.org/islamic-declaration-gender-justice>

[3] See <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/aug/27/religion-why-is-faith-growing-and-what-happens-next>