

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

The good practice examples of faith-based organisations (FBOs) and local faith communities (LFCs) have demonstrated the practical ways in which these organisations and communities help protect and assist refugees, the internally displaced, stateless persons, and returnees, and to improve protection space, including in partnership with UNHCR. The present document, to be read in conjunction with the Examples of Good Practice: Preliminary Overview, seeks to foster greater understanding of the range of FBOs/LFCs involved in humanitarian action, and a deeper appreciation of the social and political capital they bring to bear on a variety of protection activities at all stages of the refugee and displacement cycle.

1) **How did FBOs/LFCs prevent further harm to people affected by disaster or armed conflict?**

- There were examples of LFCs **advocating for safe humanitarian access** due to their ability to **dialogue with groups of a common faith background**. In Central African Republic, Muslim faith leaders leveraged their local knowledge of social and political networks to negotiate the peaceful outcome of a conflict between refugees and armed groups who shared the Muslim faith, preventing further harm to persons of concern to UNHCR.
- There were examples of national FBOs encouraging and participating in **local peace-building and reconciliation** processes by designing faith-sensitive and culturally-appropriate programs for different ethnic and religious groups. In Sri Lanka, national FBOs worked with local LFCs to help reconcile different conflict-affected ethnic and religious groups by developing a common education curriculum and establishing 'Peace Nurseries' where children and parents fostered friendships and social networks across community divides that reduced tensions, fears and suspicions, and promoted tolerance, respect and enhanced community harmony.

2) **How did FBOs/LFCs ensure impartial access to assistance, particularly for vulnerable and discriminated groups?**

- There were examples of international FBOs providing impartial/non-discriminatory humanitarian assistance, such as water and sanitation, education, livelihood projects and skills training. In Ethiopia, an FBO designed and implemented livelihood/self-reliance projects that provided **impartial access to assistance to both refugee and host communities**. The livelihood project improved self-reliance for 150 refugee and 50 host community households by increasing their production capacity with drip irrigation, backyard gardening and commercial poultry production, while building relationships, promoting cooperation and reducing tensions between the two communities.
- There were examples of national and international FBOs providing health and education services that were **faith-sensitive**, especially in cases where the service-provider did not share the religious background of the beneficiaries. In Dadaab camp, Kenya, a Christian FBO supported the creation of community-based 'Duksis' or pre-schools for children, **consistent with the traditional Somali system** as well as Muslim values. The FBO was attuned to the role of faith in the daily life of Somali refugees by drawing on its knowledge of faith and religious values to create child-friendly, faith-sensitive and culturally-appropriate spaces and offer protection during the day.

3) How did FBOs/LFCs protect people from violence, forced conscription, degrading treatment, physical and psychological harm?

- There were examples where LFCs and faith leaders partnered with UNHCR to endorse materials developed by UNHCR and advocate for the dissemination of information on and **prevention of SGBV**. In Iran, refugee faith leaders helped protect women by speaking to issues of SGBV in a 5-day religious gathering in which 3,000 refugees participated, raising awareness and reducing social stigma associated with this form of physical and psychological harm amongst men and women equally. In this instance, LFCs provided UNHCR with an important means to access communities, while utilising their moral authority, and religious beliefs and values, to reinforce and amplify key messages.
- There were examples of **physical protection** provided by LFCs who were often the first to respond to a sudden-onset emergency. In western Côte d'Ivoire, near the Liberian border, an LFC hosted as many as 27,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) on 3.5 hectares of land around the premises of a place of worship, making it the largest IDP site in the country during the peak of the crisis. The LFC provided immediate protection in the form of physical space before an IDP site was constructed by UNHCR's implementing partner in the following weeks.
- In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, FBOs drew on the long-standing Christian religious tradition of providing 'witness', 'solidarity' and 'accompaniment' for affected populations to develop an extensive network of well-trained volunteer deployees to **deter abuses through their presence** (at high-risk check points, settlements and other areas), monitor human rights violations, and provide information on new and changing patterns of abuses in order to inform the protection advocacy of FBOs and secular humanitarian actors at the local, national and international levels.

4) How did FBOs/LFCs assist with rights claims, legal redress, compensation or restitution of property, plus access to remedies and recovery from abuse?

- There were examples of national and international FBOs advocating for the rights of asylum-seekers, stateless persons and resettled refugees through **high-level talks with national authorities**, often in collaboration with UNHCR. In the Dominican Republic, a Christian FBO supported research and advocacy aimed at legal redress for children born to Haitian parents classified as 'non-residents' and subsequently excluded from obtaining citizenship.
- There were also examples of national FBOs advising their country's domestic asylum system on **asylum claims** based on their knowledge and experience with faith issues. In Brazil, a network of Christian FBOs played a crucial role in sensitising government officials and service-providers on the protection needs of asylum-seekers in border areas and sea ports and was an active member in the public body responsible for refugee status determination, thereby reversing negative asylum decisions to positive outcomes on 67 additional cases in 2012.
- Numerous examples were provided of FBOs and LFCs using their ability to mobilise community resources and support to facilitate **resettlement and integration**, including addressing racism and discrimination. In the United States, the close collaboration between two FBOs and UNHCR has led to significant engagement on issues of refugee assistance, child welfare services and advocacy, including revising UNHCR Best Interest Determination Guidelines, training UNHCR staff and providing child specialists for secondment to UNHCR. Both the FBOs and UNHCR Washington D.C. acknowledged the mutual benefit of working in partnership to improve the situation of unaccompanied minor children resettled in the U.S.