

Keeping Faith in Development:
The significance of interfaith relations
in the work of humanitarian aid and
international development organisations

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Executive Summary

Increasing recognition has been given in recent years to the role that faith plays, both constructively and destructively, in the work of development and humanitarian aid organisations. *Keeping Faith in Development* explores how faith-based organisations can work across the religious divide and how better interfaith relations can improve their ability to deliver aid.

The work of Christian Aid, Islamic Relief and World Jewish Relief, our partners in this project, shows that faith organisations are effective in a way that sets them apart from their secular counterparts. For example, they have a unique reach because they represent, and are respected by, their faith community. In addition, a faith-base may give extra credibility with local religious communities on the ground which can facilitate their work.

An examination of the work of these faith organisations provides a number of lessons for Development and Humanitarian Aid:

- Acknowledging the spirituality of other faiths can improve efficiency
- Local communities can be more receptive to faith-based than secular organisations
- Collaboration between faith organisations furthers inter-religious and cross cultural understanding
- Positive grassroots relations in the region can be an unexpected but valuable by-product of faith-based work

Main Recommendations:

- Increase the number of collaborative projects on the ground
- Establish advisory groups with representatives from different faith communities
- Provide faith literacy educational programmes for staff working in faith-based organisations
- Establish a faith-based humanitarian aid resources network with representatives from the faith-based organisations

Some Concerns:

- Faith-based organisations face some concerns from within their own community about giving to 'others' before their 'own'. The need to overcome donor concerns remains a constant challenge.
- Faith organisations must be aware of local politics, and carefully manage the risks of appearing to represent one faith group.
- The baggage of historical memory, such as a history of persecution and forced-conversion, may linger in a faith community's collective memory, leading to suspicion towards another faith organisation.
- Faith organisations should take care in the use of vocabulary since words, particularly religious words, can be interpreted in different ways. Religious language should be used carefully, and with knowledge of the community to which it is addressed.

Introduction

In December 2008, the Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths hosted a unique and timely conference, along with the humanitarian aid and international development charities Christian Aid, World Jewish Relief and Islamic Relief Worldwide.

Entitled *Keeping Faith in Development*, the conference took place in the context of increasing public and Government awareness of the role and contribution of faith-based organisations in the field of development. Increasing recognition has been given in recent years to the beneficial role that faith plays in the work of development and humanitarian aid organisations, and we will explore these below. Yet faith is a topical issue for less positive reasons too.

To give two recent examples of the convergence between faith and development, the conference was held less than two months after the murder of Gayle Williams, a development worker in Afghanistan. Those who claimed responsibility for her death said that Williams was targeted because she worked for an organisation that preached Christianity. Williams' killing highlights (albeit in an extreme form) the kind of challenges faced by faith-based organisations when working in parts of the world where a different religion and culture pre-dominates. The second example came just under two months after the conference. In early 2009, a controversy arose when the BBC declined to broadcast a Disasters Emergency Committee appeal for the victims of the war in Gaza. The vehement reactions, both against and, to a lesser extent, in favour of the BBC's decision demonstrated the extent to which development and aid work is tied up with issues of faith and politics.

The work of faith-based humanitarian aid organisations is increasingly challenging as they face a variety of pressures and growing public attention. *Keeping Faith in Development* aimed to explore the role that relations between faiths can play. To what extent can faith-based organisations work across the religious divide? Can better interfaith relations improve their ability to deliver aid? And if so, how should this be implemented?

The Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths is dedicated to teaching, research and dialogue in the encounter between Jews, Christians and Muslims. It first proposed the idea for *Keeping Faith in Development* to Christian Aid. Both Islamic Relief and World Jewish Relief also agreed to be partners. Our interest was to explore the extent to which an emphasis on inter-religious understanding and tackling prejudice could better facilitate the work of faith-based humanitarian aid organisations.

In this report, we describe and reflect on the work being done, as well as make recommendations.

A little-known fact is that "interfaith" is already being practiced by and between a small number of faith-based humanitarian aid organisations. Given this, each of the three partner organisations was asked to present a case study of their work in a community of more than one faith group and where collaboration made their work more effective.

Why are faith-based humanitarian aid organisations distinctive and effective?

It is generally accepted that faith-based organisations are effective in a way that sets them apart from secular organisations. This was acknowledged by Ivan Lewis MP, Department for International Development, who stated,

“We embrace the role of faiths in development... We believe you have a crucial role. One we fully support.”

In today's multi-faith society, faith-based organisations have:

Unique reach: They represent, and are respected by, their faith community. The 2001 census indicated that over 75% (44 million) Britons identify with a faith group. Charitable organisations which represent these groups have a unique reach in terms of mobilising support.

“The reach and influence of faiths over people's values and behaviour – sometimes positive, sometimes not – means that we can't afford to be 'faith neutral'”

Ivan Lewis MP

Credibility and trust: A faith-base gives credibility with local religious communities on the ground which can facilitate a bond of trust and contribute to a positive long-term relationship. Faith leaders and teachers, both in the UK and overseas, often hold great sway in their communities, and their support may lead to a significant number of others offering their support.

“If you go to a Muslim community and start saying I'm a person of the Book or I am a Muslim, people will be more accepting of you because of the faith element”

Maki Mohamed (Islamic Relief):

Depth and breadth of concern: Faith groups bring to the fore ethical and moral beliefs, alongside the practical alleviation of poverty. Many are selflessly devoted to their work as a result of their faith perspective, leading to the provision not only of humanitarian aid but also spiritual support for recipients.

“The 'development' of a person, or of a community, should not end with economics or material worth. It must consider also quality of life and what contributes to that life.”

Cassie Williams, (World Jewish Relief)

“Development work must become an engagement with the whole lives of the people with whom we work and not just their 'material' progress.”

Jose Clemente (SPI, a partner of Christian Aid)

The Participating Organisations

Christian Aid was founded in the 1940's with an aim to alleviate suffering in Europe after the Second World War. It currently works in nearly fifty countries and aims to aid the poorest of the poor, seeking to reform structures that favour the rich and powerful over the poor and marginalised. Christian Aid, which is the official development agency of 41 churches in the UK and Ireland, works with partners on the ground in different parts of the world. The organisation is influenced by its Christian values, but takes seriously the contribution of other faiths to its work. Its website states that "Christian Aid is driven by the gospel of good news to the poor and inspired by the vision of a new earth where all people can live in justice, peace and plenty". It was the first faith-based humanitarian aid organisation to appoint an Interfaith Manager (Nigel Varndell, 2005) and values interfaith cooperation as an important aspect of its work.

Islamic Relief Worldwide was established in 1984 in Birmingham and now has offices in 25 countries worldwide, working in over 30 countries. Its aim is to alleviate the suffering of the world's poorest people and in so doing focuses on 6 areas: education, health and nutrition, sustainable livelihoods, water and sanitation, orphans and child welfare, and emergency relief / disaster preparedness. Islamic Relief takes its inspiration from the Qur'an and Muslim values, quoting on its website: "*Whoever saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind*" (Qur'an 5:32).

World Jewish Relief (WJR) was established in 1933 as the Central British Fund for German Jewry, with the purpose of rescuing Jews from Nazi Germany. In the 1930's it was instrumental in the Kindertransport, rescuing 10,000 Jewish children. Today, WJR's work extends both within and beyond the Jewish community and seeks to provide support to some of the world's most vulnerable: isolated older people, orphans, vulnerable children and people with disabilities. It is also the main UK charity providing a Jewish response to overseas emergencies.

All three faith-based organisations share:

- A policy of responding to need, regardless of race, religion or ethnic origin.
- A dual aim of both reacting to emergencies, and investing in long-term development projects.
- religious inspiration from one faith but an awareness that the values of care for humanity is common to all faiths:

"Whoever saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind"

Qur'an 5:32

"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me"

Matthew 25:35-38

"Therefore was Adam created single, to teach you that the destruction of any person's life is tantamount to destroying a whole world and the preservation of a single life is tantamount to preserving a whole world"

Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5

The Case Studies

Each of the three participating organisations presented a case study of their work overseas. Here we summarise each of the case studies. (For a full transcript, see www.woolfinstitute.cam.ac.uk/conferences/presenters.php)



CHRISTIAN AID: BUILDING DARUSALAMS OR PEACE COMMUNITIES

The island of Mindanao in the Philippines has seen a longstanding conflict between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and a Muslim secessionist movement, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths, as many refugees, and extreme poverty. The population of Mindanao is dominated by a majority Christian population (Catholic) but Muslim and non-Muslim indigenous groups make up a sizeable proportion.

Everyone on Mindanao has been affected by the conflict. The impact has contributed to violent crime, corruption and high levels of poverty. A climate of mistrust, fear and a lack of belief that life could change for the better have prevented Mindanao's different faith communities from working together to improve the situation.

In 2000, two local organisations, The Social Pastoral Institute (SPI), a non-governmental organisation that works with local Catholic churches in training and development to combat social difficulties, and *Ummah fi Salaam* (Community for Peace), a Muslim organisation that works towards a vision of equality, peace and justice, began to work together with the support of Christian Aid. They shared the view that ecumenism goes beyond one's own community, and in 2003 launched the project "Building Darusalams or Peace Communities" in Pagadian City.

Building Darusalams is based on socio-political renewal, which also takes into account Christian and Muslim spirituality. Interfaith activity, therefore, forms an integral part of the humanitarian work. Joint programmes now include re-building destroyed homes, campaigning to protect livelihoods for small-scale fishermen, creating neighbourhood associations, organising adult literacy classes, providing basic health training to women leaders, and negotiating the termination of blood feuds.

SPI Director Jose Clemente concluded his case study presentation with the statement that "Interfaith dialogue is vital to our success". This, he told the conference, is not only in order to create a fellowship of theological understanding, but more importantly "to create a mechanism where the interfaith councils and the grassroots communities can work with one another for the common good."

Lessons from the Christian Aid case study:

1. There are times when the interfaith approach is essential to Development
2. Poverty makes no distinction between religions, and the goal of overcoming poverty is shared by the Christian and Muslim grass-roots organisations in the case study.
3. Both the Christian and Muslim grass-roots organisations shared similar values
4. The Christian and Muslim grass-roots organisations acknowledged the value of each other's spirituality



ISLAMIC RELIEF: MUSLIM/NON-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN SOUTHERN SUDAN

Islamic Relief started working in southern Sudan during the civil war (1983-2005), a period during which fighting led to the displacement of many people and the breakdown of infrastructure. Only 27% of the population have access to clean water and 16% access to sanitation. Sudan has one of the world's highest rates of infant mortality, 15%, and adult mortality is a staggering 25%.

The approach of Islamic Relief in Southern Sudan is to work with local communities, providing for their most basic needs. In practical terms, this could mean anything from building health clinics to boring holes to provide water.

The conflict in Sudan has sometimes been (simplistically and inaccurately) portrayed as a Muslim-Christian conflict. This resulted in significant challenges for a Muslim NGO working in an area which was predominately Animist and Christian. However, operating in three different areas of southern Sudan provided Islamic Relief with the opportunity to build bridges between communities and to challenge negative perceptions.

In his presentation, Makki Mohamed of Islamic Relief described examples of bridge-building between the faiths. One occasion was when the Bishop of Jubbah was told that Islamic Relief was working in his area. The bishop paid a visit and was impressed by their work. He made a personal donation, a powerful gesture in the Sudanese context.

In addition, good relationships with Christian and other faith-based organisations in Britain have helped Islamic Relief work not only in Sudan, but in other religiously sensitive areas such as Kenya and elsewhere in Africa.

Lessons from the Islamic Relief case study:

1. Helping to meet basic human needs can improve interfaith relations in the local context
2. Local communities can be more receptive to faith based organisations
3. Symbolic gestures matter
4. Furthering interfaith understanding in one part of the world can help faith-based aid organisations in other parts of the world too

Eleven Lessons taken from the Case Studies



WORLD JEWISH RELIEF: JEWISH-MUSLIM RELATIONS; BUILDING HOMES AND UNDERSTANDING IN KASHMIR

Following the devastating earthquake which hit Pakistan in October 2005, World Jewish Relief (WJR) raised over £200,000 from the UK Jewish community for the relief effort. Their Muslim partner in Pakistan, Human Aid Focus (HAF) implemented a programme in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, providing materials to build, initially, temporary shelters but later permanent homes.

HAF operates in 59 villages in the remote Bagh District of Azad Kashmir, encouraging social development through the establishment of community based organisations allowing communities to identify problems, prioritise needs and offer solutions. The organisation's vision is to promote a tolerant, peaceful, gender friendly society based on the principles of social justice, freedom, empowerment and equality; in particular, assisting the disadvantaged, marginalised, under-privileged and neglected population.

At the time of the earthquake, it was decided that the Jewish source of the financial support should be transparent, despite some concerns that humanitarian aid had been refused elsewhere because it was of Jewish origin. In Pakistan, the source of the aid was welcomed and provoked a new interest in Judaism amongst people who knew little or nothing about the religion.

As a result, WJR's involvement with HAF led to an unexpected celebration of cross-communal cooperation, at grass-roots and senior levels. For example, there have been talks of formalising education about Judaism in the Kashmir area and initiating formal interfaith dialogue. WJR's involvement in earthquake relief assisted in dispelling myths about Judaism, and indeed about Israel, in a region where radicalisation and intolerance pose a genuine threat to inter-religious understanding.

Lessons from the World Jewish Relief case study:

1. The benefit of transparent support
2. Collaboration between faith-based humanitarian aid organisations furthers inter-religious and cross cultural understanding
3. Positive grassroots relations in the region can be an unexpected but valuable by-product of the humanitarian relief effort

- There are times when the interfaith approach is essential to Development
- Poverty makes no distinction between religions
- Faith-based organisations often share similar values
- Acknowledging the spirituality of other faiths can facilitate development work
- Helping to meet basic human needs can improve interfaith relations in the local context
- Local communities can be more receptive to faith-based than secular organisations
- Symbolic gestures matter
- Furthering interfaith understanding in one part of the world can help faith-based aid organisations in other parts of the world too
- There are benefits in making the sources of aid transparent
- Collaboration between faith-based humanitarian aid organisations furthers inter-religious and cross cultural understanding
- Positive grassroots relations in the region can be an unexpected but valuable by-product of the humanitarian relief effort

Improving the effectiveness of faith-based humanitarian aid organisations in an interfaith context

Face-to-face / side-by-side

In his book *The Home We Build Together* (2008), Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks discusses face-to-face and side-by-side dialogue, which we believe is a useful approach in making a series of recommendations. In face-to-face dialogue, different faiths learn to understand each other, both in terms of similarities as well as differences. They face one another, creating a shared, but inward-looking bond. Side-by-side dialogue consists of working together to achieve shared goals. In this second category, the faiths stand together, but face outwards, unified in a common task.

We make the following recommendations:

Promote awareness of the benefits of collaboration more widely among faith-based organisations

All faith-based humanitarian aid organisations should be made aware of the value of interfaith collaboration. Christian Aid was the first to appoint an Interfaith Manager in this field (Nigel Varndell, 2005) whose role is to work with different faith communities. This is a pioneering appointment. More resources should be devoted to interfaith collaboration; we note CAFOD recently appointed an interfaith officer (2008) and hope other organisations will follow. This recommendation is also applicable to secular organisations.

Increase the number of collaborative projects on the ground

Development work involves reaching out to local religious leaders and their communal organisations and generating trust and confidence in areas where the organisation works. We would like to see more partnerships on the ground, particularly between faith-based organisations, founded on shared goals. We are confident that increased collaboration, especially in areas where different faith communities are in close proximity, will facilitate the work of development organisations.

Establish advisory groups with representatives from different faith communities

When an organisation is working in an area with communities of different religions, it would be helpful to access advice, pooled from the experience and knowledge of that religious community.

Provide faith literacy educational programmes, designed for staff working in faith-based organisations

Staff in head offices and in the field would benefit from courses providing an understanding of different faith traditions. Educational programmes should focus on similarities and differences in the beliefs and practices of different faith communities, in a global as well as local context.

Establish a faith-based humanitarian aid resources network

With many shared goals, principles, and regions where Development work is being undertaken, we propose the establishment of a network between organisations, through which resources and experience can be pooled. One suggestion is for each organisation to offer an internship for a staff member from another.

Publicise existing activities in the UK and abroad

The collaborative work already being done by the three organisations is insufficiently known by the respective faith communities and civil society. We propose publicising existing collaborative programmes which may lead to increased support for the organisations among faith communities, wider society, as well as further interfaith collaboration.

Some challenges specific to faith-based humanitarian aid organisations

Donors

Some faith-based organisations face concerns from within their own community about giving to 'others' before their 'own'. We understand the concern that a lower priority should be given to travelling around the globe, when need is on one's doorstep. However, in today's 'global village', we are closer than ever before to those far away from us. The need to overcome these donor concerns remains a constant challenge.

Local Politics

Faith-based humanitarian-aid organisations must be aware of local politics, and carefully manage the risks of appearing to represent one faith group. An example was seen in the Sudan case study, where Islamic Relief's logo – a dome with two minarets – was perceived by some as political. Similarly, a Cross or a Star of David may pose a similar risk. However, we also recognise the opportunity for faith-based organisations to overcome local misconceptions.

Recipients

Sometimes, religious prejudice and the political context may result in pressure to reject aid, leading to questions about whether the source of support should be publicised. The World Jewish Relief Kashmir case study, however, demonstrates the value of transparency. This cannot be assumed as a general rule, however, and individual contexts should be carefully considered.

Proselytism

The baggage of historical memory, such as a history of persecution and forced-conversion, may linger in a faith community's collective memory, leading to suspicion towards another faith-based organisation. It should be made clear that a faith organisation is not proselytising but rather seeks to provide aid to people in their need. As the Christian Aid website states, "We believe that all people are created equal, with inherent dignity and infinite worth. Individual human needs must always come first, ahead of dogma, ideology or political necessity."

Religious vocabulary

Organisations should take care in the use of vocabulary because words gain meanings from the contexts in which they are used. Since words can have more than one meaning, they can cause misunderstanding. On the other hand, in the experience of Islamic Relief, developmental advice (such as on immunising children) is taken more seriously when framed in religious talk (e.g. "The imam says it is a sin to neglect your child. This means you should care for their health by immunising them..."). Therefore religious language should be used carefully, and with knowledge of the community to which it is addressed.

Appendix – The address of Ivan Lewis MP:

DFID's perspective on faith and multi-faith collaboration in development

We live in changing times, times of economic change, change in the balance of global power and wealth. Political changes such as in the US elections.

All this changes the context for development. This demands that we respond – British government, civil society and faiths who share the belief that unacceptable levels of poverty exist across the world. And share the belief that something must be done about it.

So what a great time for this important meeting, which explores how faiths and multi-faith collaboration can help meet the challenges ahead – and make the most of new opportunities. I'm honoured to be here and grateful for the invitation to speak today.



FAITHS AND DEVELOPMENT

The last census told us that 44 million people in Britain have a faith. And that's multiplied up many times across the world. This unique reach into the poor and rich worlds – the ability to reach and mobilise vast number of people – is one factor in the distinctive role the faiths have to play. But it goes much deeper.

First, for many people across the world, faith is fundamental to understanding and relating to the world. It helps shape how we understand the opportunities and challenges of life – and how we respond. For example, as a civil society colleague said to me last week, it's difficult to tackle HIV in Africa without a proactive engagement with faith communities. The reach and influence of faiths over people's values and behaviour – sometimes positive, sometimes not – means that we can't afford to be 'faith neutral'.

Second, faith groups bring to the fore ethical and moral beliefs – such as selflessness, service and compassion. That's certainly not to say that faiths have a monopoly on morality – but it's clear to me that faith can inspire people to do something for their fellow human beings. And there is an inherent focus on individuals and their well-being. Helping break away from a focus on activities, expenditure and process – to focus more on what all this means to the lives of poor people.

A third feature is trust. Faith is often part of the identity of individuals and groups. Faith groups are often seen as deeply involved and committed to the local community. This inspires confidence and trust. It gives them legitimacy to represent the interests of the poor.

So there are concrete factors which give faiths and faith-based organisations the potential to play a special role. But what can that mean in practice? Why did DFID spend over £21 million through faith-based organisations last year? And why are we investing £3.5 million in researching the role of faith in development between now and 2010?

Let me structure my response to that around the four basic reasons that DFID works with civil society – which of course includes the faiths.

First, the faiths and other parts of civil society have a significant direct impact on poverty in poor countries. It is hard to quantify, but the importance of the faiths in delivering services

is indisputable. Whether providing schools, clinics, orphanages or other services, the faiths have always been – and still are – hugely important in providing some of the basics we take for granted in the rich world. Equally important, the faiths and other parts of civil society push for better governance and help people hold their government to account. And faith-based organisations are so often leaders in the humanitarian response to natural and man-made disasters.

Second, we can work together to improve British development policy. And I mean *our* government policies – and *your* policies.

This can take various forms. For example, who today can claim full understanding of policy areas which cut right across countries, regions, sectors and themes? With a myriad of well-argued but different positions? It's by coming together around policy problems that we broaden our reach into knowledge, ideas and experience. Build a more comprehensive, collective understanding. And build a better chance of a good policy decision. It is through networking that we can join up more of the dots and make greater sense of complexity.

And we can often gain most when working with those who are 'different'. Differences in faith, ideology or approach may sometimes have made earlier collaboration uncomfortable. But we can gain more because those who move in different circles to ourselves are the ones who can bring new knowledge to the table. And it is that broader knowledge that benefits our policies. Another way we work together to improve British development policy is through engagement in advocacy and campaigning. The public plays a vital role in challenging our government positions and actions. It helps keep policy fresh. It encourages us to test and re-test the evidence. It can stimulate innovation and further policy development.

Third, we can work together to improve international development policy and behaviour. In this interconnected world, one voice can only carry so far. It is when many join together that many others listen. And things change. Look at Make Poverty History, Accra and the MDG meeting in September. All of these benefited enormously from the support of the faiths and their collaboration. We believe that faith groups have a crucial role to play in contributing to public debate and building a vibrant, assertive international civil society.

In the field of international development, the British government and British civil society agree on so much. Put half a dozen DFID and civil society staff into the same room for an hour and the chances are they'll agree on nine issues out of ten. Then they'll leave the room and continue debating the one area of disagreement. That's healthy and legitimate. But we're not doing enough with the nine areas of agreement. Too often, they're left on the table. We must get better at pushing outwards *together*. If there's a problem on which we agree – with the World Bank, trade or climate change – let's join forces to influence them. Some of the organisations represented today are members of the UK Aid Network. I know how important your work was to the success in the recent Accra meetings, which will redefine how aid is delivered. By the time we reached Accra, we'd come to agreement on the major issues. DFID and civil society pushed together there and we got a good result.

Another angle to this is how faith-based organisations can push outwards across their faith. Take HIV again. The faiths can be fundamental in defining values, attitudes, behaviours and taboos which influence the epidemic and efforts to control it. Sometimes this is a positive thing, sometimes not. And it is difficult for 'outsiders' to come in and challenge attitudes around gender or sexuality which are having a negative impact. But I know that some of your organisations are working from *within* the faith, sensitively and credibly challenging your faith to re-think and more openly discuss some of these difficult issues.

Fourth and finally is the importance of working together to improve public support for development.

Over recent years we have seen unprecedented British support for international development with the public rallying for the international community to put an end to poverty. Live Aid, Jubilee 2000 and Make Poverty History showed how strongly the UK public feels about development.

Faith based organisations played a prominent role in getting the public behind these campaigns. But we cannot take this public mood for granted. It is crucial that we continue to inform the public about the issues and tell them how they can get involved. Given the role you play in development and the

membership you have in the UK, you can do much to help.

This government is committed to meeting our aid commitments. But with the economic downturn, keeping development high on the longer-term political agenda means keeping it high on the public's agenda. It is critical for all of us that we explain what we do more clearly and that we demonstrate the difference we make.

Every organisation represented in this room has contact with many supporters and potential supporters of development. Every organisation represented in this room has great stories which illustrate what development is about. Every organisation in this room has skilled communications teams. But we're not doing enough with that yet. There's a lot of work to do.



THE ROLE OF INTERFAITH WORK

By now, I hope that the level of commitment by DFID to the faiths in development is clear. We embrace the role of faiths in development. We're not remotely 'nervous' about working with you – to the contrary, we believe you have a crucial role. One we fully support.

But what about interfaith work? A useful starting point is the framework for multi-faith partnership recently set out by the Department for Communities and Local Government – to which we and others contributed. The distinction between 'face to face' and 'side by side' multi-faith relationships, first coined by Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks, is a useful one.

Face to face dialogue leads to people developing a better understanding of one another, including celebrating the values held in common as well as acknowledging distinctiveness. This two-day event is a living example of that. We're drawn together by the thread of a core belief in positive action to tackle global poverty, whilst learning from and valuing our different perspectives and approaches. As a result, I hope we'll all leave today with a greater understanding of the issues and each other. And that should carry through into the future work we do to in pursuit of the aims I described above – having direct impact, better UK policy, better international policy, public support for development.

The value of face to face dialogue in poor countries is also clear. Too often, religious differences have contributed to conflict around the world. But we know that when faith leaders and institutions come together around issues, multi-faith initiatives can actually help to bridge the differences between communities. One example is the way that Muslim and Catholic partners have worked on interfaith peace building in the Philippines, West Papua and East Timor, supported by British organisations such as *Progressio*.

Side by side collaborative action involves people and groups working together to achieve change. There are many examples to draw upon. If we look first at initiatives seeking direct impact, I know that Christian Aid, Islamic Relief and CAFOD have often worked together on development in areas such as Pakistan, Darfur and the Northern Causcaus. And as part of the humanitarian effort following the tsunami,

World Vision worked in Aceh in partnership with Mohammadiyya, one of the largest Islamic organisations in Indonesia.

And we don't need to look back far to find vibrant examples of side by side action targeting global policies. In September this year, the UN convened the largest ever coalition of governments, civil society and business to call and plan for action against the Millennium Development Goals. The scale, diversity and visibility of multi-faith events which surrounded that was incredible. A powerful demonstration of how concerted action from the faiths can put pressure on world leaders to make – and we hope to keep – commitments to play their part.

When it comes to building understanding and support for development at home, look at the Platform2 Youth Volunteering programme launched by Douglas Alexander earlier this year. Funded by DFID and implemented by a partnership of Christian Aid, Islamic Relief and BUNAC, this offers young adults from less advantaged backgrounds the opportunity to live, work and learn about life in poorer countries. Its about making a real difference to people's lives in those countries – but also about promoting a greater understanding in Britain of other cultures and global issues. The first groups of volunteers have now been to Ghana, South Africa, Peru and India.



CLOSING WORDS

I'd like to finish with a challenge to all of us – faiths and government alike. There are many important examples of what the faiths can achieve for development. You have been discussing some in other sessions – I have mentioned a few. But it seems to me that these are just glimpses of what the faiths could achieve, given your vast reach around the world, your depth of influence over people's values and actions and your drive to make this world a better place. Are we sometimes limiting potential impact by bottling our initiatives up within faith-based development organisations or specialist networks – rather than exploiting the full power of the mainstream faiths?

So DFID values and supports the work of faith-based organisations and multi-faith initiatives. It's crucial that organisations such as Christian Aid, Islamic Relief, World Jewish Relief and others here today continue their work. And we'll continue to support that.

But can we step up our ambitions? Can we explore what it would mean for Christianity, Islam, Judaism and other faiths to fully engage with the development challenge? What could you do to promote that? What could we do together?

Thank you.

www.christianaid.org.uk
www.islamic-relief.org.uk
www.wjr.org.uk
www.woolfninstitute.cam.ac.uk

About the Woolf Institute

The Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths is dedicated to teaching, research and dialogue in the encounter between Jews, Christians and Muslims. It is an umbrella organisation for the Centre for the Study of Jewish–Christian Relations (CJCR, founded in 1998) and the Centre for the Study of Muslim–Jewish Relations (CMJR, established in 2006). CJCR is one of the world’s leading institutes in the study and teaching of all aspects of the encounter between Christians and Jews throughout the ages. CMJR is the first and only academic centre in Europe dedicated to fostering relations between Muslims and Jews through teaching, research and dialogue.

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