‘As local as possible, as international as necessary’

Investigating the place of religious and faith-based actors in the localization of the international humanitarian system

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Introduction

Humanitarianism, assistance for those in need following disaster, forms an integral part of contemporary global society. It is an international system by which support is provided from countries with resources, to those areas without sufficient resources, to respond and recover after conflict and disasters following natural hazards. The international humanitarian system is recognized as ‘the network of interconnected institutional and operational entities through which humanitarian assistance is provided when local and national resources are insufficient to meet the needs of the affected population’ (ALNAP 2015, p. 18). While much effort is expended for altruistic reasons, it is also a battleground of power, used as a soft power by governments to fulfill foreign policy agendas (Kelman 2012), by private companies to capitalize on extreme circumstances (Klein 2007), and by civil society organizations, from the international to the local, to assert their place and their agenda (Barnett and Weiss 2011, p. 12). Given the extent of humanitarian needs around the world and the fact that the system created for response decades ago is struggling to keep up with those needs, the international humanitarian system has been called ‘not just broke, but broken’ (Spiegel 2017).

The power dynamics of the international humanitarian system have disproportionately favored Western elites. As Jan Egeland, former United Nations Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, put it: ‘The danger is that humanitarianism, a universal imperative and shared intercultural system of principles, has become so Westernized in its funding, staffing, organization structure, and political profile that it risks long-term adversity in many non-Western settings’ (Egeland, cited Barnett and Weiss 2011, p. xviii). In an ‘increasingly competitive marketplace for humanitarian goods and services’ (Weiss 2013, p. 55) in which large international organizations are already jostling for power and space, it is a challenge for local and national organizations to assert their place. Religion is a significant yet
Religious and faith-based actors in humanitarianism

Religious actors come under many guises and are called by many different names in humanitarianism. There is no definitive consensus on whether the words ‘religious’ or ‘faith’ are more relevant when speaking of humanitarian actors with non-secular backgrounds. At
times, both are used. For example, a recent international conference in Sri Lanka was titled ‘Localizing Response to Humanitarian Need: The Role of Religious and Faith-based Organizations’ (emphasis author’s own). Acknowledging that these terms (religion and faith) are much debated within theology and the social scientific study of religion at large, the purpose of this chapter is not to enter into purer definitional debates about each word, but discuss how these terms are applied in humanitarian contexts.

For humanitarian and international development contexts, Lunn offers the breakdown that religion should be seen as an institutionalized system of beliefs and practices concerning the supernatural realm; spirituality as the personal beliefs by which an individual relates to and experiences the supernatural realm; and faith as the human trust or belief in a transcendent reality (Lunn 2009, p. 937). As a starting point, this already helps differentiate between ‘religious’ and ‘faith’ actors in humanitarianism. Religious actors in humanitarianism are those that are part of religious institutions. For example, a mosque that provides shelter for displaced people, or a church committee that organizes distributions of material assistance from the church building. These are religious actors in humanitarianism because they are directly and undeniably linked to a religious institution, through their use of religious infrastructure, presence of leaders from the religious institution in the humanitarian efforts, and affirmed membership of a religious institution. It also includes the full range of religious hierarchies that are active in humanitarian issues. Recognizing levels of power, a figure such as the Pope holds religious influence on humanitarianism in the ways in which, in recent notable cases for example, Pope Francis has spoken out for refugees and migrants (Pope Francis 2018). Pope Francis also sent a direct message to the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. In it, he stated:

Today I offer a challenge to this Summit: let us hear the cry of the victims and those suffering. Let us allow them to teach us a lesson in humanity. Let us change our ways of life, politics, economic choices, behaviors and attitudes of cultural superiority. Learning from victims and those who suffer, we will be able to build a more humane world.

(Vatican Radio 2016)

While he did not attend himself, he sent a high-level delegation to the Summit. The Pope therefore aims to use soft power in humanitarian affairs, acting as a moral voice and representing around one-seventh of the world’s population. These examples demonstrate why religious actors can be seen as a specific designation of humanitarian actors.

To say that an actor is ‘faith-based’ sounds, at first glance, the same as ‘religious’ actor. A subtlety of the application of these terms means that faith-based and religious actors are largely different entities, however. While those religious actors will have a faith on which their humanitarian actions are based, the field of ‘faith-based’ actors has some specific features. Faith-based humanitarian actors are those who express affiliation to a religious tradition but can vary in their adherence to and closeness with that tradition. Thaut outlined four main traits that demonstrate the scale of ‘faith’ in the ‘faith-based’ categorization. They include the organization’s mission (whether it includes a statement of faith in its mission statement), its ties to a religious base or authorities (do religious leaders sit on its board, for example), its staff policies (are staff required to sign a statement of faith), and its base of donor support (what percentage of donations come from religious tithing, for example) (Thaut 2009, p. 328). Speaking of, what she calls ‘international religious’ organizations at the UN, Petersen (2010) suggests a scale also with four parts, which includes religiosity (religious affiliation), orientation
(goal, motivation, methods), organization (age, spread, size, origin, structure, membership representation, economy), and positioning (relations to state, markets, other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc.). From her analysis at the UN, she finds that:

[...]the religious aspect is indeed significant, but it is a significance that is continuously expressed in widely differing ways and with widely differing consequences. In itself, religiosity is not necessarily a characteristic that tells us anything about the person or organization possessing it. If we want to understand religious organizations, we cannot merely characterize them as religious, based on a prejudiced conception of the significance of religion, and leave it at that. Instead we have to examine how, when and why these actors are religious.

(Petersen 2010)

Both Thaut and Petersen help demonstrate that faith-based organizations mostly exist on a continuum rather than a distinct categorization that places them in or outside of a ‘faith-based’ designation. Whether using the words religious or faith-based to describe an organization, we limit ourselves if we only think of the organization in those terms or tie predefined meaning to those terms. It is worth recognizing, therefore, that a sharp division between religious and faith-based actors creates a false binary, but with a fuller understanding of nuances between different types of actors, the terms can help parse out useful distinctions. Also to note, some scholars now prefer to use terms such as ‘faith-inspired’ to recognize the variations of faith influence on organizations along a continuum (Marshall 2014). It has also been noted that many of the larger international faith-based/inspired organizations operate within the secularized standards of the humanitarian system, to the extent that they have very few distinguishing features apart from their name or organizational history that mark them as faith-based/inspired (Lynch 2011, p. 221).

Religious and faith-based organizations exist in larger and smaller forms and with greater or lesser influence on a global stage. Much of the debate has revolved around definitions for international religious and faith-based organizations. In many ways, the descriptor of ‘faith-based organization’ largely refers to international organizations from Western European and North American countries. The cultural hegemony of these ‘Western’ actors in the humanitarian system, from the most faith-based to the most secular, has been noted for years (Ghandour 2003; Davey 2012, 2013). My further specification here is that much of the discussion of faith-based organizations has largely been about those organizations originating in ‘Western’ countries, but with analysis of their activities in countries in the Global South (for example, Ferris 2005, 2011; Bornstein 2006; Barnett and Gross Stein 2012). While this is important research work, it is only in recent years that there has been a greater lens on the specific role of local faith communities in humanitarian response (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Ager 2013; Thomson 2014; Featherstone 2015; Wilkinson and Ager 2017, and others in the forty-eighth issue of the Forced Migration Review). This research not only places local faith communities as recipients of assistance or as co-opted sites of service delivery for international organizations, but it shifts the tone of the research to take local faith actors as legitimate humanitarian response actors, while necessarily acknowledging the challenges, as well as opportunities, that such actors can pose for humanitarian response.

To understand these challenges and opportunities, we must first examine the range of religious and faith actors that might be considered part of a humanitarian response. While there are several typologies of faith-based actors, the following designations from El Nakib...
and Ager and Bartelink and van Meerkerk are here used as noteworthy examples for the debate on local faith actors as they distinguish between international faith-based organizations and the range of organizations representing faith-based and religious perspectives and national and local levels in humanitarian response.

From El Nakib and Ager’s research with local faith communities in Irbid, Jordan, they identified six main groups of interest, all of whom were providing humanitarian response for Syrian refugees. Their designation was as follows:

1. International faith-based organizations were identified as major players in humanitarian response in Irbid. Islamic Relief Worldwide, for example, has acted as the lead humanitarian agency in a number of projects . . .

2. National faith-influenced organizations are non-governmental organizations whose work or missions are influenced by religious beliefs. They are typically registered with the Ministry of Social Development or the Ministry of Culture. Their main offices are located in the capital Amman, with possible branches in other governorates. They may rely on local partners for implementation, especially outside of Amman . . .

3. Local faith-influenced organizations were another group with considerable contributions to the humanitarian response. These are typically formal groups with strong ties to the community and are on the ground and at the forefront of service delivery. They may self-identify as faith-based or downplay their faith identity despite a conspicuous influence of religion on their activities . . . Human association organizations linked to the mosques (with offices on mosques’ premises), are also local faith-influenced organizations with a formal structure and an explicit faith identity . . .

4. Faith networks are groups of formally or informally linked faith groups working under a shared structure. One type of local structure through which aid to Syrian refugees is channeled is the zakat committees. These are networks of committees undertaking the disbursement of zakat or alms money and falling under the Ministry of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs. Despite variation in the way individual zakat committees work, each comprises official staff members deployed by the Ministry in addition to community volunteers who collect zakat money from donors . . .

5. Informal local faith and worship communities are informal and spontaneous social groups mobilizing in the context of crisis to provide relief services and deriving their motivation from a sense of religious obligation and duty. An example is an informal network of women who share a set of religious values and beliefs which motivate them to carry out charitable activities . . .

6. Local faith figures are influential leaders of their faith communities, or more generally respected figures in the community perceived as a source of moral authority. Examples are priests, worship leaders, imams, and sheikhs . . .

(El Nakib and Ager 2015, pp. 8–9)

Bartelink and van Meerkerk bring a broader perspective, aiming to outline the whole range of religious actors that might be present in a context to argue that these actors are overlooked in partnership efforts from international actors. They find that there are seven categorizations:
1. Religious leaders can play a vital role in peacebuilding and create stability in situations of fragility and conflict. A most famous example is, of course, Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was a role model for peace and reconciliation in post-Apartheid South Africa ...

2. Local religious structures, such as churches and mosques, are sometimes the only remaining structures in situations of fragility ...

3. Religious representative organizations and networks govern the faithful and represent them through engagement with the state and other actors. They are often active in development and social services. Examples include the National Council of Churches, Bishops Conferences and National Councils of Muslims found in countries worldwide, as well as international networks such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

4. Faith-based charitable or development organizations mobilize the faithful in support of the poor and other social groups, and fund or manage programmes aimed at tackling poverty and social exclusion. Examples of these organizations are World Vision and Islamic Relief.

5. Religious inspired social-political organizations include political parties and broad-based social movements such as the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement (a self-governance movement with Buddhist roots in Sri Lanka), cultural organizations and secret societies.

6. Missionary organizations have been involved in development work for a long time and are historically closely related to many development initiatives and agencies. Contemporary missionary organizations, such as SIM (Serving in Mission), are still influential today.

7. Faith-based radical, illegal or terrorist organizations, such as Hamas or Hezbollah, are often seen solely as terrorist organizations, but can also be active in providing charity and in development.

(van Meerkerk and Bartelink 2015)

Again, we also come across differences in terminology, with El Nakib and Ager preferring ‘faith-influenced’ and van Meerkerk and Bartelink switching between ‘faith’ and ‘religious’ designations, demonstrating that the continuum of religious and faith-based actors continues at the local level, as well as when it comes to definitions of international actors. The use of ‘faith-influenced’ is one way in which El Nakib and Ager differentiate between international and then national and local actors. ‘Faith-based organizations’ is very much associated with international actors for them, whereas at the national and local level they aim to bring out the gradations of faith and religious impact on actors by referring to ‘faith-influence.’

Both include religious leaders in various forms, with El Nakib and Ager focusing on local influencers and van Meerkerk and Bartelink looking towards leaders further up religious hierarchies, such as influential Archbishops. The commonality between the definitions is that they are referring to individuals rather than groups. The divergence is that the broader definition from El Nakib and Ager includes faith influencers to demonstrate that it is not only high up members of a religious structure but local priests, imams, and others who can play a role. Furthermore, we should add a gendered specification to include the fact that nuns and female lay leaders in religious environments, such as leaders of women’s groups connected to religious structures, can also be recognized as faith influencers. Indeed, these women must be included as religious leaders can otherwise be predominantly male.
The next sets of definitions become even hazier, with several points hovering around the level of religious infrastructure and religious or worship communities at a local level. For van Meerkerk and Bartelink this includes the structures of churches and mosques, whereas for El Nakib and Ager, this focuses more on the groups of people or communities that might be connected to churches and mosques. Of course, one does not exist without the other, so the point of convergence here is the capital that exists at this most local of levels connected to human (volunteers, informal committees, etc.) and infrastructural or material (buildings, vehicles, financial reserves, etc.) resources that can be mobilized in a humanitarian response.

The next level is larger, coordinated networks such as church councils or zakat committees. They are more formalized into an organizational or network structure, but still have a strongly religious identity and are highly connected to religious hierarchies and structures. As pointed out in both examples, they can have a range of people involved, from local volunteers, to national government employees, and international civil servants and policy makers. They often serve as a bridge between the more local and the most global activities, such as the connection of national church councils to the World Council of Churches. In this way, they demonstrate one of the ways in which religious structures are already ‘localized.’ They operate in ways that aim to support local organizations while also building structures that allow for worldwide cooperation and communication. Not without considerable challenges in local to global efforts and their own distinct issues in each case, these networks nevertheless have a longer history, in many cases, of efforts to link international and local actors than recent localization efforts.

The next sector of interest is the faith-based or faith-influenced organizations. Their distinctive features from others is that they are not necessarily formally part of a religious institution and are designated as NGOs or civil society organizations with registrations for these types of organizations as per their national laws. El Nakib and Ager differentiate between local, national, and international organizations within this type. They note that local organizations can still be part of religious institutions, such as associations with offices in mosques or, in another example, Diocesan Social Action Centers (DSACs) located within church grounds in the Philippines. National faith-influenced organizations are the next level removed, with offices in the capital and fewer links to local communities. Then, van Meerkerk and Bartelink and El Nakib and Ager agree that international faith-influenced organizations include ones such as Islamic Relief Worldwide.

Bartelink and van Meerkerk then add a notable list of other types of faith actors, such as missionary organizations and more politically influenced organizations including those based on social movements or even those classed as terrorist organizations. Missionary organizations can equally bridge local to global networks, with missionaries often traveling from higher income to lower income countries. Their funding may come from these richer nations, but their long-term presence in locations can also mean that they cross over into what might be more accurately described as local religious leaders or local religious communities. Their long-term presence in these places then means that they are established and locally known people and organizations who can act as everything from first responders to recovery and development actors if and when disaster or conflict strikes (Wilkinson 2015). They would not, however, formally be classed as humanitarian actors as their overt evangelical orientation means that they may be seen to lack the impartiality and neutrality required as part of the humanitarian principles. Even if they provide assistance to all based on need alone (impartiality), their mission to convert brings them in direct conflict with humanitarian principles to ensure that assistance is free and without ties.
As for religious and political organizations, they will certainly not be seen as humanitarian as they lack the neutrality required by the principles. Nevertheless, Bartelink and van Meerkerk point out that they will still be involved in providing assistance following disaster and may be viewed as part of the humanitarian effort by disaster-affected people even if the international humanitarian community would not count them as such. On these grounds, we can see already that the full range of ‘faith’ and ‘religious’ actors involved in providing for those affected by disaster will not be acceptable to the international humanitarian community for partnership within the localization agenda. However, there are also those organizations that may have a distinctive religious or faith-influenced identity that may still be acceptable to non-faith-based humanitarian actors for partnership. As is already the case, there are many ongoing partnerships in existence between all these types of actors. However, barriers still exist, sometimes in part due to biases surrounding local faith actors that they will be partial, lacking neutrality, and giving conditional aid, as has been outlined in these last few examples. If localization is to succeed, these barriers must be overcome. The next section will examine some of these fault lines within the localization agenda and the way that they have and will impact local faith actors.

## Localization, religion, power, and the future of the humanitarian system

This section investigates how the growing ‘localization’ policy agenda can potentially change religious power dynamics within the humanitarian system. Localization has spurred a major recent policy debate in the field of humanitarian action, emanating from the ‘Grand Bargain’ commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, which aim to achieve a goal of 25% of humanitarian funding for local and national actors by 2020 (World Humanitarian Summit 2016, p. 5). Among other things, the Grand Bargain encourages humanitarian actors to ‘Understand better and work to remove or reduce barriers that prevent organizations and donors from partnering with local and national responders’ (World Humanitarian Summit 2016, p. 5) and increase the participation of local communities in humanitarian decision making (World Humanitarian Summit 2016, p. 10). Implementation of the Grand Bargain is organized around ten workstreams (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2018).

Localization is now a buzzword in the humanitarian community indicating, aside from the specific commitments of the Grand Bargain, a need to shift from reliance on international organizational response to national and local organizations in disaster-affected countries. Almost two years after the World Humanitarian Summits, conversations in the workstreams have been contentious at times (Edwards 2017) and research has demonstrated few changes in ways of working (Humanitarian Advisory Group and NIRAPAD 2017), with the contention that some of the international organizations are struggling to let go of their power (Loy 2017). In discussions of localization, several different types of local actor have been categorized, including local and national NGOs and CSOs, local and national governments, local and national private corporations, and national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Redvers 2017). Local and national faith-based and religious actors would be placed within the local and national NGO and CSO categorization.

The categorizations of local and national faith-based and religious actors as localized humanitarian actors are not that neat, however. The role of local religious actors has spurred some contestation in the debate. First, there is the question of whether national organizations affiliated to global faith-based organizations merit categorization as local actors. World Vision India proved particularly noteworthy in this regard. A fear is that international...
organizations will register locally in countries to leverage local funding and encroaching on the fundraising space for local organizations originating from those countries. World Vision, however, has had national affiliates for many years. Red Cross and Red Crescent societies have been recognized as national organizations for the localization agenda as they exist as national organizations, brought together internationally in the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC). Just as many religious structures have networks with national affiliates and international coordination organizations, the national Red Crosses and Red Crescents represent a secular institutional structure that has, in many ways, always been localized. World Vision makes the case that their national affiliates should be recognized as national actors for localization in the same way as the Red Cross and Red Crescent. In an interview, Julian Srodecki, Technical Director of Humanitarian Grants at World Vision, argued that World Vision India had been in the country for a longer time than World Vision has had offices in the UK. He said ‘What’s local and what’s not varies by context’ (Redvers 2017).

These large international faith-based organizations have complex structures with local, national, and international levels of organization. While not an issue exclusive to faith-based organizations, these categorizations of local religious and faith-based actors demonstrated that there are many of these that are representatives of globalized religious structures, but also existing at a very local level through religious buildings, communities, and related social associations. Viewing localization through the lens of local faith actors shows that the differentiation between local and international will not necessarily be clear cut and there needs to be provision in localization definitions for those partners which, for example, are local members of the Caritas Internationalis network or ACT Alliance. World Vision is a more centralized structure than these others so there is no claim that all faith-affiliated structures should be treated in the same way. Nevertheless, the number of examples of networks with local and international affiliates is particularly high among the faith-based organizations. This can be seen in the endorsements of the Charter for Change, a platform through which national and international organizations are calling for change towards localization.3 This demonstrates how the localization agenda still operates with the ‘functional secularism’ of the humanitarian system (Ager and Ager 2011), in which many international FBOs are localized already because they have these natural links through religious structures to local congregations.

Shakman Hurd has argued that there are ‘two faces of faith’ in international relations, one face that represents good religion and is ‘to be restored to international relations’, and the other face that represents bad religion and ‘is to be reformed or disciplined through new partnerships for the public good’ (Shakman Hurd 2015, p. 24). This duality is also played out within the international humanitarian system, in which there is a continual measuring of faith-based actors to sort them into one category or the other. Recent examples of this duality include bank de-risking efforts that have impacted all humanitarian actors (as transfers to ‘risky’ countries have been denied), but have particularly affected Muslim organizations, whose names and areas of operation have particularly marked them out for denials from banks. Recent research has indicated that 37% of British NGOs that make up the Muslim Charities Forum have experienced difficulties (El Taraboulsi-McCarthy and Cimatti 2018, p. 4). From the same research, examples included Islamic Relief Worldwide, which had donations sent to them by supporters blocked in 2012, and the Ummah Welfare Trust, which had its bank account closed by HSBC in 2014. Other research on local faith communities in refugee response has pointed to a prioritization of Christian actors over other faith actors for partnership because of a greater familiarity on the part of Western

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NGOs with Christian structures and hierarchies (Wilkinson and Ager 2017, pp. 42–43). The overarching picture this shows is one in which Muslim people are at the center of many of the largest humanitarian crises of our present day, but Muslim organizations, and especially local faith-influenced organizations that have Muslim affiliations, are marginalized in the international system.

Finally, Ager and Ager identify the instrumentality of much humanitarian engagement with local faith actors currently. They note that, ‘The focus is on the physical and social resources of faith communities . . . This emphasis is evident in the vocabulary that is now frequently adopted to justify humanitarian engagement with religion: religious communities have important “resources,” “tools,” or “outreach capacities”’ (Ager and Ager 2015, pp. 64–65). They note that such partnerships ‘undermine the legitimacy and authority of the reasoning and reflection of people of faith in humanitarian contexts’ and make for ‘highly conditional’ engagements, in which the power is very clearly held by the external, international actor and not the local faith actor. This also links to the critique of ‘NGO-ization,’ as put forward by author Arundhati Roy (2014), naming the process by which resistance and social movements are co-opted in organizations that can depoliticize their message and serve a neoliberal agenda of forwarding social services through NGOs rather than public institutions. As local faith actors struggle to fit in with the international humanitarian system, they appear to become ‘NGO-ized’ to the point of losing their own faith identity. In one example from Lebanon, an organization that acts as an intermediary between international and local actors has found it extremely challenging to fit local faith actors into international donor requirements while also, as their director put it, ‘let[ting] the church be the church’ (Kraft 2015, p. 401). This is a significant conundrum for localization. On the one hand, the aim is to shift power and financing to these local actors, but on the other, the requirements needed for this could lead to the more negative aspects of NGO-ization. One of the main elements of localization is to streamline and reduce the burden of financial reporting systems, which will be a great help. However, it is still a fine balance between allowing ‘the church to be the church’ while also bringing it into line with many of the much needed and well-established standards of the humanitarian system that are in place. Accepting that there are weaknesses and strengths on both sides, more actors have been talking about processes of ‘two-way literacy’ (Wilkinson 2017, pp. 53–55) in which training could be provided both for international humanitarian actors to better familiarize them with the religious landscape of a given context and the possibilities for partnership with local faith actors, and for local faith actors to acquaint them with the humanitarian system, its principles, and standards. Efforts are only beginning in this regard and results remain to be seen. Nevertheless, it bodes well at least for the timely recognition of weaknesses within the humanitarian system and efforts to correct previous imbalances.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the intersections of religious and faith-based organizations, the international humanitarian system, and localization efforts in humanitarianism. The context of a broken humanitarian system has made this intersection of recent importance because there is a need to recognize and support a larger diversity of actors who are present for humanitarian response. If the humanitarian system is to move forward and face the challenges of our century, local actors, and within that local faith actors, will need to be part of the broader and diversified picture of what counts as humanitarianism.
There are several barriers on the way to this vision, however. A breakdown of the types of actors that can be called religious and faith-based in humanitarian response demonstrates both the wealth of diversity and the unwieldiness of engaging with such contextually specific and wide-ranging types of actors. It also demonstrates that the international humanitarian system has a long way to go until it truly accepts some of these actors. Linking this into the debate on localization, we saw that policies such as de-risking by banks, a lack of familiarity with religions other than Christianity, and the intricacies of someone of the religious networks to which these local faith actors belong, has further complicated the picture and made equitable engagement between international humanitarian actors and local faith actors an even more distant goal.

Against these barriers and others, the localization agenda has already begun to falter. Yet it may not take a global policy agenda for other types of localization to exist and seep through into the humanitarian system. The existence of networks such as the ACT Alliance, only founded in 2010 after all, has brought local faith actors into international fora. The effects of the World Humanitarian Summit may not be cemented in a final decision from the Grand Bargain workstreams, but cultural shifts have occurred in the way that local actors are prioritized in certain funding efforts, such as local faith actors through the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (UN OCHA 2017). There is still a need for further research. By continuing the interrogation of the role of local faith actors in the international humanitarian system, researchers can shine a light on the inequalities perpetuated in the humanitarian juggernaut. Most importantly, however, they can consistently bring examples of good practice and ways to overcome barriers to the fore. By demonstrating tried and tested ways of working, and particularly those that are scalable, research can show international humanitarian actors that there is an evidence base for improving engagement with local faith actors.

Notes
2 A further definitional list from UNICEF is of note. They define ‘religious communities’ as follows local worship communities (e.g., churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, etc.), denominational leadership (e.g., bishops, clerics, ayatollahs, lamas, etc.), scholars, theologians and religious educators, mission workers, youth faith or inter-faith groups, women of faith networks, faith-based or faith-inspired organizations, denominational, ecumenical and intra-religious institutions, umbrella organizations and networks, inter-faith institutions. In this breakdown, they notably include youth and women’s groups as members of religious communities that are of interest for UNICEF partnerships (UNICEF 2012, p. 7).
3 For a full list of national organizations that have endorsed the Charter for Change, an up-to-date list can be found at https://charter4change.org/endorsements/ [Accessed on 15 April 2018].

References


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