Report of the Symposium on Faith-inspired Organizations and Global Development Policy
U.S. and International Perspectives
April 16, 2007

A project of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs and the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University

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With renewed worldwide efforts to combat economic and social inequality in this era of globalization, development has moved up the global agenda. Religious communities have long been among the most engaged in the fight against poverty, disease, and advocating for education and shelter. Faith-inspired organizations lead many development efforts across the globe, although patterns of activity differ across various regions of the world. Faith-based NGOs, rooted in diverse world traditions, are an essential part of the global civil society revolution and, more broadly, of international relations and politics.

Against this backdrop, the lack of communication and cooperation among religious and secular actors in the development field is striking. Development professionals in governments and secular NGOs have tended to view religion as marginal—or as divisive or dangerous. Leading religious groups have often viewed the state-directed development enterprise with suspicion. Likewise, not nearly enough is known about the specific activities and contributions made by faith-inspired NGOs.

On April 16, 2007, the Luce/SFS Program on Religion and International Affairs convened a major symposium on Faith-inspired Organizations and Global Development Policy: U.S. and International Perspectives. Leading representatives of faith-based NGOs and policy analysts discussed their increasing role in mobilizing public support, collaborating with national governments and international institutions, and implementing policy on the ground. The emphasis was on US-based NGOs that interact with national governments and international organizations across a range of issue areas, including education, health care, gender, humanitarian relief, microfinance, and the environment. Panelists explored the specific tensions around ethical and practical considerations centered on the proper relationship with public authorities and the special nature of the connection between faith, poverty, and social justice.

The Participants

Panel: Framing the Discussion
How Faith-Based Organizations are Involved in Development Work Today
CHAIR: Katherine Marshall, Senior Fellow, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Georgetown
Hady Amr, Brookings Institution, Doha Center
David Beckmann, Bread for the World
William O’Keefe, Catholic Relief Services Director of Advocacy
Steven Weir, Habitat for Humanity International

Panel: Politics Encounters Substance
Exploring Facets of the Debates about the Roles of FBOs
CHAIR: Carol Lancaster, Associate Professor and Director, Mortara Center for International Studies, Georgetown
Douglas Balfour, Geneva Global
Doug Bassett, Compassion International
Deborah Dortzbach, World Relief
William Recant, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
The April 2007 symposium, focused on the US, is part of a broader comparative project on Religion and Global Development within the Luce/SFS Program on Religion and International Affairs. The program examines both the role of religious groups and ideas in donor and developing countries, and the prospects for greater religious-secular cooperation in the development field. Its components include graduate student research fellowships; a religion and development database; and the creation and dissemination of “religious literacy” materials for development professionals in government, NGOs, and international organizations.

Through a series of meetings with stakeholders and background reports, the Luce/SFS Program on Religion and Global Development will map the role of faith-based organizations around the world and point to best practices and areas for collaboration. Further meetings are planned for Doha, Qatar (November 2007) to explore the role of faith-based organizations in the Muslim world, and Europe (Spring 2008) to examine the European context.

A collaborative effort of the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, the Luce/SFS Program on Religion and International Affairs is supported through a generous grant from the Henry R. Luce Initiative on Religion and International Affairs.
“Faith isn’t just another dimension, it is our substance. It commands how we view the world, interpret our success, drive our programs, envision our future. Our faith sustains us in critical periods, grows our compassion, and enables us to do more with less. It permeates not only who we are, but what we do and how we go about doing it.”

Deborah Dortzbach, World Relief

“Because religion does inspire social change and social action, our lack of understanding of religion from the highest levels of government leads to a failure to understand the world.”

Hady Amr, Brookings Institution

In advance of the symposium, SFS/Luce graduate fellows helped to craft a background paper reviewing and mapping the emergent constellation of US-based faith-inspired organizations in development policy and practice. In-depth interviews were also conducted with symposium participants that explored the faith dimension of their work and potential links between specifically religious goals (including proselytizing) and broader commitment to poverty alleviation and social justice. Both the background paper and the interviews are available on the web.
The first panel focused on the political dimensions of development work and issues of mobilizing support for policy changes and work on the ground. The panelists spoke about the breadth and diversity of faith-inspired institutions in international development work and their personal paths to their current positions of leadership. Panelists stressed their advocacy roles and the potential power of faith-based NGOs to help build constituencies for development work. They addressed the growing—but still partial and controversial—role of religion in United States foreign policy and how this affects their work both abroad—in coordinating with foreign governments—and at home—by building policy support and a strong financial basis. The participants also spoke about their experiences as active development professionals, with stories illustrating the problems and promise of development efforts.

Faith-based organizations are part of a force for social change that can be obscured if the focus is just on concrete development or social service work. Faith plays roles in so many issues, from basic identity to politics. The civil rights movement, after all, has many explicitly Christian roots, just to take one example. We should not miss out on seeing those elements in processes.

As you think about the Luce/SFS FBO project and conferences, what are the issues you would most like to see addressed?

Reflecting on the past, from Jamal a-Din al-Afghani to Martin Luther King, my reading is that faith and social advancement have always been mixed together. We need to acknowledge that and study it in more detail. The lenses of the 1970s, when a lot of the development framework took shape, had as one of its strong facets and legacies that it induced or encouraged us to leave faith aside. It is time to be open to faith as well as to the other important dimensions and disciplines. What seems to me most interesting is to come to a much stronger understanding of the role that faith plays in social movements, and in inspiring individuals in their actions. It would also be vital to understand better the part that faith plays in the way leaders communicate their beliefs to other individuals. This may be manifest through their work with other individuals in private settings, and it may emerge in a very public domain, such as political campaigns. This is really about social entrepreneurship.

Hady Amr, Brookings Institution

What special roles do you see for faith-based organizations in development work?

More people in the world seem to be turning away from the 19th century ideal of religion being a thing of the past, as faith is an increasing part of people’s lives, so too must we address the organizations that are part of the faith world. Second, the scriptures of Islam and Christianity and Judaism (the religions that I know) all inspire charity, fairness and social development. Unleashing one’s faith in development can tap into a powerful part of the human spirit.
What has been your experience with FBO issues and interactions in your global work?

In Lebanon, in Palestine and in Israel, faith-based organizations have a powerful role to play in social transformation. There are faith-based social networks and organizations doing powerful development and charitable work. A lot of it is traditional schools, orphanages and hospitals; however, a small but increasing portion is environmental. These are Muslim, Christian, and Jewish organizations. We also need to acknowledge that faith blends with anger to form terror in the Middle East in Muslim, Jewish and Christian settings. A question we need to ask ourselves is: can faith-based development work be a powerful anecdote to faith-based anger and terror. Can we humans channel the faith in different directions? Religious organizations also are active here in the USA. There are great organizations that are evangelical that are increasingly advocating for a place at the policy table.

David Beckmann, Bread for the World

Has the faith character of Bread for the World changed over time?

Bread for the World’s grounding in Christian faith is deep but not strident. From its very beginnings Bread for the World has been a civil organization. But its grounding in the Christian faith is real. For 95% of our members, the love of God that they know in Jesus is what has drawn them into caring for the poor. The Bible calls for justice, that is clear, but for many Christians the next steps are not easy. What can someone sitting in South Dakota do to help the poor in Africa? How do you move your government? Bread for the World gives people handles. Bread for the World underlines that our God is the God of history, and that through the organization we can be part of what God is doing to overthrow oppression. It gives religious people handles to be part of history and to act. For members of Bread for the World, their engagement is an important part of their religious life.

What do you see as the main agenda issues ahead on poverty and hunger?

The most important priority is to increase and improve development assistance. That also includes working to advance the HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative). Money is the main constraint, thus funding and making sure programs are of high quality. That is the main thing the US can do. And US funding has tripled since 1999, and we have been part of the effort that has led to that. The second priority is changes in trade and agriculture policy, to make it easier for poor people to make a living. Third, we need to work to change US foreign policy to give a much higher priority to peace making in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Darfur, northern Uganda, and other places. At present, advocacy for peace tends to be very case specific (like the Darfur mobilization today). We need more durable and broad structures. And we need to focus on poverty and hunger in the United States. The fastest and most effective way to end hunger in this country would be to expand food stamps so that the 25 million people on food stamps at least have food for the whole month. We have the numbers today, and we can see clearly that all the food stamps are gone by the third week of the month. We could cut hunger by half, just by the simple act of covering that last week, and the cost is not prohibitive (about $17 billion a year).

How does Bread for the World work at an international level? What are your global links?

We have many links, but they are not strong enough. Our main channels of coordination tend to be through the main Christian structures. We have a ready-made network with Catholic and Protestant organizations; there are important channels of information through organizations like Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, and the US National Council of Churches. We get lots of feedback that way, as well as lots of support. We are part of an ongoing conversation on global issues with many organizations, but we are not a major player in international dialogue.

Which emerging issues could really benefit from religious/secular partnership? (i.e the “new” trafficking, Darfur, debt relief, etc.)

Bread for the World is better placed than any other organization in this country to move the Congress. And the US Congress is the most powerful link in the global system. It is in many respects the most conservative link and the hardest to move. We are better positioned than anyone else to bring change and we are ruthlessly focused on that. We may share in some radical visions of what the future could be but our job now is to move Congress on specific issues. To do that we must talk to real people in power, about concrete issues, and not about big dreams.
William O’Keefe, Catholic Relief Services

How would you describe the “faith component” of your own work and that of CRS?

Both personally and for CRS more generally, being part of a faith community is very important. It provides our mission and commitment and is also part of the professional character and quality of the organization. I am a lay person, married, but consider my work with CRS a vocational choice. CRS often works through the infrastructure of the Catholic Church. Because of its ties to the Catholic Church, the organization has a much richer understanding of the faith elements of development generally and the issues that people face. Over the period I have been with CRS and especially since the 1990s, there has been a tremendous change in the way the CRS mission and thus its work are conceived. One factor in this change has been a much more intentional reflection on Catholic Social Teaching. CRS today takes consciously and seriously its responsibility as an organization built to address directly the roots of social injustice. Our work now is also built on a conscious foundation of working towards global solidarity. This has two sides: working in countries to that end, and offering the experience to American Catholics. Up to the 1980s, donors were donors, and saw themselves primarily as supporting the Catholic Church and discharging a general responsibility. The new focus on solidarity brings with it a much greater role for advocacy, and involvement of our supporters; their engagement benefits others, but also themselves in a spiritual way.

We have received federal money to support our work since 1943. We do not proselytize. We have careful and professional management systems, and we have been doing professional work for a long time. The FBO policy is more directed to evangelical churches who felt they could not participate in government funding because they lacked a clear wall between their development and their faith activities. CRS has a wall. Propagation of faith, evangelization is done by another part of the Church. It is not in the job description of CRS.

The issues that turn around the roles of FBOs in global health offer an illustration of how this problem takes shape. CRS is deeply involved in HIV/AIDS work. CRS follows a strategy here that is both professional and consistent with its faith ethos. CRS in its HIV/AIDS work focuses on prevention; it does not support or promote condom use, nor does it distribute them, but it does give complete and accurate information about them. We support abstinence programs on their merits, and we rely on scientific evidence. But the issue of abstinence is highly polarized today. On one side there are some FBOs that take a much less scientific approach in the design of their abstinence programs. On the other, some family planning groups are chomping at the bit to roll back the role of FBOs, to get back to an approach that relies far more on condom distribution in USAID funding (at one stage it seemed that 90% of their funding was going to condoms). This polarization is unhealthy and dangerous. CRS does not define itself, and should not be defined in terms of condoms. Our position is well known and we do not see it as a limitation. We provide first class anti-retroviral therapy to 70,000 people in 9 countries, as well as palliative care;
we offer dignity to those who are dying, nutrition to families and much else. Others are simply not involved in this range of work and that should be recognized.

How does CRS work with other Catholic Institutions and other faith-based organizations?

CRS is part of Caritas International, the international federation of Catholic social service organizations. We are also part of CIDSE (Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité) which is a European network of Catholic organizations working on international development. We work closely with these networks, and with many other organizations. We benefit from their financial support. Most of these organizations do not have an operational presence in a wide range of countries. Thus in a crisis or following a disaster they will often channel their funds to CRS to do what needs to be done. We coordinate with these umbrella organizations, for a start to support the local Catholic churches in emergency situations. After the tsunami in 2004, for example, the Catholic Church in India was much involved in a mass appeal. CRS was on the ground, engaged in health care work with local churches. Caritas Germany and CAFOD in the UK were eager to help and turned to CRS.

How would you describe the range of issues of concern to CRS? How is CRS involved in development policy issues?

CRS only really got involved actively in policy from about 1993, and it came as a result of our reflections on social justice. This was a very deliberate process…In parallel there was a process of looking at CRS programming from a justice lens. Out of that came a specific moment, as I recall, during a planning meeting in 1993–4, when there was a recognition of the implications of global changes in CRS policy. We saw that there were trends in the world that we are not keeping up with, the violence and strife that were contributing to crises, and that we must do something about the root causes, as well as to US policies. Otherwise we would never make a difference. This was a significant adjustment for people. We had to ask: Are we political? What does it mean in practice? We had to agree on what we meant by political, as opposed to partisan. We had to discuss criteria and decide on what kinds of issues we would discuss and what capacity we needed to do so properly.

This policy focus translates into a major concern with the structure and funding of US foreign assistance. We would like to see a reform of foreign assistance, so it is responsive to the needs of poor, and we would like to see it adequately financed. We see a central role for issues of hunger, and thus the farm bill. We are looking at reducing subsidies that contribute to lower prices for poor country producers. We focus on the authorization for Title II food assistance. CRS has been much involved in debt relief, working on it as part of the global Catholic movement. We focus on the international financial institutions primarily through looking to US government oversight. Our view is that as an American organization we can be more effective influencing American institutions.
Steve Weir, Habitat for Humanity International

What would you describe as the “faith element” in the work of Habitat?

The mission principles of Habitat for Humanity as an organization are pretty clear. We state, as a very first principle, that we focus on the elimination of poverty housing, “as a demonstration of the love and teaching of Jesus Christ”. This is clear up front. We do not however, have a required faith statement that defines the faith link in our work. Our founder liked to describe Habitat as a “big tent ministry”. Habitat aims to reach out, as Jesus did, and tries to engage people where they are. That means working with them in the communities where they live and in the context of their own faith. Thus our organization’s expression of its faith elements tends to look quite different in each culture. Habitat works through a network of volunteer affiliates, who are autonomously registered in each country and often each community, and takes on the characteristics of that community—the faith role plays out differently in each local context. Habitat is, nonetheless, overwhelmingly a Christian organization, in the way we try to operate.

A central principle for Habitat is our aim of working towards transformational and sustainable development. While we try to influence public policy through advocacy, we believe that real change happens on the ground. Faith plays a vital role in that. We believe that for change to be lasting, it must take place within the whole community, especially amongst the community of influence and affluence. People must come to believe that it is not acceptable to have families living in sub-human condition in their community. That calls for transformation at the level of the community. The community’s world vision needs to be transformed for authentic change to happen.

What is the experience of Habitat in working with other faith-based organizations?

In working in Asia, I have the sense that the world has changed, especially since September 11, 2001. While Asia is different in many respects, this global change has become more openly evident in recent years. There seems to be growing suspicion between different faith communities in many communities. This applies particularly when Christians are a small minority. Having said that, I still perceive today more openness than non-openness. The situation in Aceh is a good example where most people have not been exposed to Christianity due to decades of martial law. Children after the tsunami were surprised that Christians had come to help, based on what the imam had told them about Christians. Partly because of this background, our work there led to a lasting change in understanding and inter-faith responses in the affected areas, itself contributing to a greater openness. We work with many other faith-based organization organizations, especially some of the larger organizations like World Vision and Catholic Relief Services, but we probably work more often with local faith-based organizations. As an example, in Sri Lanka, we worked through ecumenical groups in our peace builds projects, consistent with our aim to create working relations with local communities. We, in Habitat, work somewhat differently from most INGOs in that we create and then work through our own affiliated CBOs, which are local autonomous community-based organizations. The board and staff leadership in most country programs are local nationals.

Have you witnessed any special difficulties or issues facing faith-based groups or interfaith relations as they work in the development area?

In Indonesia, especially, we have found more reluctance amongst volunteers to work with Christian faith-based organizations than we normally do. This seems to have changed for the better in the wake of the tsunami. In the beginning, it took people in rural and peri-urban Muslim communities a long time to figure us out. In one place, the local Muslim leadership would not allow us to do community development ourselves but insisted that we work through local Muslim community-based organizations. In one village outside of Jakarta, we worked through the local yayasan (Indonesian community-based organization) and completed several hundred houses; the imam in the next district, however, was anxious about working with a Christian group. The imam persuaded people who had houses built and financed with Habitat support in the first village to stop making payments. As a result we had to stop working in that area. This was an illustration of the all too real problem of Christian-Muslim tensions in rural Indonesia.
How, in your experience, does the issue of proselytization affect faith-based work?

In general, most faith-based organizations do abide by a tacit agreement which defines an appropriate code of conduct on proselytizing. The larger faith-based organizations, especially, those who are there for the long haul, are trying to create an atmosphere where they can work with local leaders. If, however, their long term project is really church planting, then social justice and development seems less important. Thus, there are some groups that work actively to proselytize and aim to convert to Christianity. When this occurs it can alienate local leaders from other religions against all faith-based organizations. When, in reality or in appearance, development is offered as a prelude to or, worse still, incentive to conversion, it hurts. It creates animosity that spills over in many areas.

Evangelical political activity is not animated by an elaborate political philosophy or social doctrine (as is the case, say, with the official policy advocacy of the Roman Catholic Church) but by a fairly straightforward, biblically-informed vision of individual and social morality. In this vision, moral and social ills that the Bible is believed to condemn unambiguously receive preponderant attention by politically engaged evangelicals. These evils include abortion on demand, the social and legal promotion of homosexuality, legal and political restrictions on religious freedom and especially the freedom of churches to promote the Christian message, abject poverty and human suffering, and failure to pray for the peace and prosperity of Israel. How evangelicals interpret the Bible, and the perceived salience of moral and social issues in the Bible, thus helps explain why some specific issues have most galvanized the evangelical community.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Hady Amr is a Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution and Director of the Brookings Center in Doha, Qatar. He is a thought leader in US relations with the Muslim World and expert in the economic development and democratization in the Arab World, as well as Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations.

David Beckmann has been president of Bread for the World for 15 years, leading large-scale and successful campaigning to strengthen US political commitment to overcoming hunger and poverty. He is one of the foremost US advocates for hungry people in the United States and worldwide.

William O’Keefe is Senior Director of Advocacy at Catholic Relief Services. He advances policy and advocacy positions on issues important to CRS, such as foreign aid reform, trade, humanitarian assistance, migration, and extractive industries. He has served both in Africa and in the US.

Stephen Weir has recently taken up the newly created position at Habitat for Humanity as International of Vice President for Global Development and Support. He comes to this position from Bangkok where he was Vice President for Habitat’s Asia programs. He is an architect by profession.

(Panel Chair) Katherine Marshall is Senior Fellow at Georgetown University’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs and Visiting Professor of Government. She has worked for over three decades on international development, largely with the World Bank, and focusing on issues facing the world’s poorest countries.
The second panel focused on the compatibility of an active faith motivation to carry out development work with the demands for professionalism and strong ethical standards. Panelists addressed the complex issues of working as faith-inspired development advocates in a non-sectarian environment. They noted differing approaches on sensitive issues, such as concerns about proselytization and the proper extent to which development workers can bring an explicit focus on religion into their development work. The panel also addressed the special advantages that faith-inspired institutions can bring to development work. In particular, the panelists contended that a common uniting theme among them was a desire to alleviate poverty and a general emphasis on professionalism and transparency in their approach to development work.

Douglas Balfour, Geneva Global, Inc.

As you think about the Luce/SFS FBO project and conferences, what are the issues you would most like to see addressed?

The need for stronger alliances among faith organizations generally and Christian organizations more specifically is a critical and live issue. I have had a keen interest in such alliances for some time, indeed founded what is virtually the only international Christian alliance (Integral). I also take some pride in helping in the rapid and successful development of the Micah Challenge (http://www.micahchallenge.org/), which now engages more than 600 organizations. Second, there is great need for work to understand and analyze the work of faith-based organizations in a far more thorough and systematic fashion. There is incredibly little work in this area—really only one serious research effort to test how effective FBOs are.

How has faith been part of the vision and evolution of your institution and what is its role today?

Geneva Global has a broad development mission. We aim to change lives and to do so by helping to intermediate money. We also want to convey clearly and solidly a message about what can be done to measure the effectiveness of development work, and to demonstrate how this can be done well through the best community-based organizations. We aim thus to influence the philanthropic marketplace, and to make it more transparent. We are passionate about this objective and believe deeply in it. We are concerned that Geneva Global’s influence could be impaired if it is painted into a faith corner, and perceived as overly or exclusively Christian.

What does Geneva Global do, at a practical level?

Geneva Global seeks to develop outstanding projects and to do so it invests in depth research. I have a team of 52 people in the field who do just that. They work on identifying options, understanding the situation, needs assessments, gap analysis and so forth.
For example, we are working on a program in Rwanda, where our client is someone keenly interested in education in Rwanda, particularly at the secondary level. We are focusing on the Bugesera area, one of the least developed and served regions of Rwanda, an area where refugees are returning but where people hope to leave as soon as they can. In some respects it is a dumping ground for returning refugees. Our preparations focus on the large problem of primary school retention, because that is what makes secondary school attendance possible. We are looking at the many factors that lie behind the education challenges, including health care, quality issues, and the geographical footprint. Our work has taken us into land issues. The new land law enacted in November, 2006 makes possible for the first time 99 year leases, which allows land to pass from generation to generation. Our team recognized that the rich have figured out how to get titles but not the poor. Conflicting property claims threaten to become swiftly a major issue. We are engaged in discussions about how to take on that issue and our client is working along side us, keen to make this opportunity to secure solid land rights for the poor a development reality.

How do you view the link between the issue of corruption and faith-based organizations on the ground?

In many cases the faith-based organization, drawing on its values and traditions, is likely to be the most honest as well as the most effective development partner. However, we recognize full well that not all FBOs live up to the ideals we hold for integrity and motivation. There is a need across the board, including, of course for faith-based organizations, for strong accountability processes, solid government reporting etc. The point is that this should apply equally to all organizations. We need to make it quite clear that no one, including our clients, can or should rely just on trust, or on the intrinsic virtues of the organizations. There are plenty of examples of faith organizations with the worst kind of corruption, taking money and buying things. There are also exemplars of honesty. Solid preparation and good processes as well as transparency are the way to go for all projects.

Douglas Bassett, Compassion International

How has faith been part of the vision and evolution of your institution?

Compassion was founded by Evangelist Everett Swanson, who saw the needs of orphans in Korea in the early 1950s and sought ways to respond. The work of our organization expanded by collaborating with Protestant missionaries of varying denominations, who identified children who needed assistance. Eventually, we began to open country offices and at that point established relationships with national denominations and local churches, and defined an increasingly formal program with children. Today our work is almost exclusively carried out through 3,800 local churches and our commitment to work with local churches is rooted in our understanding from the Bible of the critical role given to the Church of holistically addressing human need.
How does the US dimension of your organization relate to its international role and profile?

As a faith-based organization, we believe that we are part of a worldwide Christian faith community. That gives a deep and natural tie to people all over the world with whom we share a profound bond. This has led us to an alliance of 10 donor countries. In spite of the deep identification with each other, we continue to need to learn how to collaborate with each other and to work on better defining governance approaches. This has been challenged by the fact that the US donor country comprises the majority of the funding. In spite of that, we have recently identified new ways to bring other donor countries into critical governance structures of the broader organization through Board and executive leadership structures.

Has the faith relationship and inspiration of the organization changed over time or would you see it as a stable element?

Over time our inspiration has remained very consistent, but what we do has become better defined. We had a concern from the beginning of providing charity and Christian witness but that has evolved into a commitment to what we call a Holistic Child Development Model. The model is more reflective of intentional, long-term programming as well as what we have learned in the aspects of physical, spiritual, socio-emotional, and cognitive development.

What do you see as the path of evolution of FBOs in the US?

I cannot speak for other faith traditions but three trends stand out in the Evangelical Protestant environment. The first is an ever-increasing desire to form strategic alliances between FBOs instead of seeking to be all things to all people. There is recognition of the need for others who have specialized strengths yet a similar vision. A second trend is the need to engage with local churches in the United States. Churches increasingly come to organizations desiring to partner with them and not only provide financial donations. This includes a desire to find ways to engage volunteers in short-term activities overseas, work with them expanding the vision of their church, and recognize that they have an active role to play. A third trend is that organizations are frequently and easily bypassed by supporters who can establish their own direct relationship to far-flung places given the ease of transportation and communications.

What are the central challenges for your organization as you look to the future?

As we look at our program, our first challenge is how to be more focused on outcomes and effective in measuring impact. This is an extraordinarily complex commitment to implement around the world. A second challenge is to increase the quality of our partnership with local churches while also ensuring accountability for results and legitimate donor expectations. Thirdly, we face the challenge of high growth. We have ever more opportunity due to new supporters yet we want to make sure that the growth is accompanied by quality programs on an ever broader scale. A final challenge is how to become more international in our headquarters staffing and find ways that the knowledge and insights of staff around the world influence the directions of the organization.

Deborah Dortzbach, World Relief

How has faith been part of the vision and evolution of your institution?

Faith is visceral to all we do at World Relief. We seek to clearly represent churches in the US and partner with churches internationally. The “faith factor” is integrated into our guiding principles, board resolutions, reports, and even funding base. It is critical to our strategic frameworks and workplans.

How does the US dimension of your organization relate to its international role and profile?

Our US office serves the international ones. It serves to provide technical assistance, discover funds, and provide valuable linkages to international faith development and expression between churches globally. Our non-US churches enrich our US organization and connections through exchanges, providing lessons learned, and engagement in strategic planning, and exposure to non-western thought, ideas, and relationships. Additionally, we seek to build a global concern among US churches, offering opportunities for exposure, participation, and sharing of resources to counterpart churches in other regions of the world. This “global shrinking” informs and
transforms churches in the US and offers much needed assistance to churches in other parts of the world.

**What kinds of funding issues arise for your organization, especially insofar as its faith links are concerned?**

There are many—do funding sources have restrictions (most do); do they create dependency or have strings attached in terms of participation? Perhaps the largest issue for me is how to effectively use funds to leverage programs without snuffing out local initiative and creating dependency. Money often corrupts and limits initiative. I am encouraged as I see churches in Africa pull together to address the AIDS crisis in their communities through their own resources of dedicated volunteers, relationship building and community support, advocacy, time, and the offer of what they have in their homes and fields. This inspires us to strive to support this more, adding much needed leverage for scaling up not only good intentions but sustainable practice.

**How does the organization interact with major secular development organizations?**

We seek to blend into society—learning with secular groups—informing and enriching them. This is fleshed out through our many professional memberships, funding and program partnerships, and participation with numerous government interventions in the countries of operation. We purposefully do research, develop abstracts and publish, and participate in international and national forums that are secular.

**What is one major misconception about FBOs in development work?**

That they cannot produce products or program with far reaching impact and scientific confirmation. When we first began our large program of AIDS prevention with youth, (a PEPFAR funded program working in four countries with 1.8 million youth and those who influence them) there was a great deal of skepticism expressed in the press about how this would roll out and how youth would be tracked in behavior change. To date, we are surpassing our goals, even in conflict-ridden areas like Haiti. I think the unusual dedication and determination embedded in faith presses through obstacles to find ways to get the job done.

**William Recant**, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

**AJJDC has several very different faces. What is its core mission?**

Our core mission is rescue, relief, and rehabilitation, outside the United States. We are inspired by the Jewish saying Tikkum Olam, which means, roughly, “repair of the world.” We do not have the ability to repair the whole world, so we specialize in putting on band-aids. We have worked for 92 years, and we use our expertise everywhere. We do have a strategic focus which includes helping to support moderate Moslem countries, such as Morocco, Turkey, and Indonesia. Thus we support street children in Istanbul and elsewhere in Turkey, and provide wheelchairs in Morocco. We let it be known that it is Jewish community which is providing them, and hope that in time the human dimension of our work prevails.

**What do you see as the most important role for faith-based organizations in relief and development work?**

The overall situation of faith organizations working in development can best be described as a hodgepodge. There is often competition among various NGOs and FBOs. The name on the van seems important to some, and within two weeks of a disaster, there are dozens of vehicles with names emblazoned on them in the area. The motives for this are mixed but draw in many organizations, including the Red Cross, CRS, International Rescue Committee, and others, as they seek to generate public support. For that you need a sexy program which gets media attention. There can also be competing interests on occasion, which can involve faith-based and other organizations. Sometimes faith-based organizations behave in ways that are not culturally appropriate. Interfaith work offers the best hope for engaging faith in both disaster relief and in development. I see a very positive side when I am on the ground and witness how groups can work together. I also see the worst, as I did when I was in Somalia and saw children starving because officials would not allow us, CRS, and others in the camp to give them food and we could do nothing. But the best relief and development work I have seen is when faiths are working together.
As you think about the Luce/SFS FBO project and conferences, what are the issues you would most like to see addressed?

The issues of proselytization are critical to us. We will not partner with organizations that proselytize. We are concerned about it, though in fact it is not seen very frequently in disaster and crisis situations. And when it occurs, it generally disappears fairly quickly. As an example, there have been recent discussions with the Church of Latter Day Saints, which has agreed that it should not undertake proselytizing work in disaster situations. The issues of proselytizing are in part tied to governmental policies, meaning specifically the attitudes of governments other than the United States. Their attitudes should guide the work of relief organizations. There are important issues around US government funding for faith-based organizations. USAID is supposed to be supporting a lot of FBOs but the funding has not been equitably distributed. It is groups which engage in a lot of lobbying that get the bulk of funding. I suggest that we should look at the approach and policy through another lens. This would involve a substantial restructuring of USAID. In requests for proposals, USAID should ensure that the organizations demonstrate their interfaith approach. It would be quite appropriate to require that organizations have a variety of organizations as their partners.

Which emerging issues could really benefit from religious/secular partnership?

We underline the importance of clear and effective policies regarding separation of religion and state. At the point of intersection, it should be interfaith bodies that work on how those intersections take place. There needs to be more competition and with transparent rules. The work of FBOs should aim at ensuring that the work contributes to building peace and does not accentuate controversies (for example in areas like sex education in Africa).

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Douglas Balfour is International Director of Research for Geneva Global, Inc. He earlier served as Executive Director of Integral—an alliance of 12 Christian Relief and Development agencies and, for nine years, as General Director of the Christian relief and development agency, Tearfund.

Douglas Basset serves as International Program Development Executive Director for Compassion International and leads the design and development global programs, program research and evaluation, and child advocacy efforts with Protestant Churches in the Two-Thirds World. He has also worked with World Relief.

Deborah Dortzbach is World Relief’s International Director for HIV/AIDS programs. She has been involved in church-based HIV/AIDS prevention and care since the early 1990s. She has worked extensively on HIV/AIDS issues and is a nurse by training.

William Recant is the Assistant Executive Vice-President of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and senior staff person regarding JDC’s non-sectarian and disaster relief programs. He coordinates projects relating to the rescue, relief, and renewal of Jewish communities worldwide and develops non-sectarian programs. (Panel Chair) Carol Lancaster is an Associate Professor in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and Director of the Mortara Center for International Studies. She has served in various positions in the US government, including Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Africa and Deputy Administrator of USAID. She is a leading expert on development policy and its links back to domestic US politics and author, most recently, of Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics (University of Chicago Press, 2006).
About the Luce/SFS Program on Religion and International Affairs

Religion is a critical but neglected factor in world affairs. The Henry R. Luce Initiative on Religion and International Affairs, announced in 2005, seeks to deepen American understanding of religion as a factor in international policy issues. The Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University is the recipient of a two-year grant that funds the Luce/SFS Program on Religion and International Affairs, implemented in collaboration with the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University.

The Luce/SFS Program focuses on two thematic areas: religion and global development and the religious sources of foreign policy. Luce Foundation support enables innovative teaching, research, and outreach activities in both areas, as well as innovative publications and web-based knowledge resources.

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THE EDMUND A. WALSH SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE

Founded in 1919 to educate students and prepare them for leadership roles in international affairs, the School of Foreign Service conducts an undergraduate program for over 1300 students and graduate programs at the Master’s level for students. Under the leadership of Dean Robert Gallucci, the School houses sixteen regional and functional centers and programs, most of which offer courses, conduct research, host events, and contribute to the intellectual development of the field of international affairs. A 2007 survey of over 1,000 faculty in the US and Canada featured in Foreign Policy magazine ranked Georgetown University as having the #1 Master’s and #4 undergraduate programs in international relations.

THE BERKLEY CENTER

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, created within the Office of the President in March 2006, is part of a university-wide effort to build knowledge about religion’s role in world affairs and promote interreligious understanding in the service of peace. Through research, teaching, and outreach activities, the Center explores the intersection of religion with four global challenges: diplomacy and transnational relations, democracy and human rights, global development, and interreligious dialogue. Thomas Banchoff, Associate Professor in the Department of Government and the School of Foreign Service, is the Center’s first director.

MORTARA CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The Mortara Center for International Studies is a critical partner in the implementation of the Luce/SFS Program on Religion and International Affairs. Located within the School of Foreign Service, the Center is at the heart of campus-wide activities centered on foreign policy and international relations, one of Georgetown’s research and teaching strengths. Center Director Carol Lancaster is a leading expert on development policy and its links back to domestic US politics. She is author, most recently, of Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics (University of Chicago Press, 2006).
About The Berkley Center
Religious Literacy Series

This paper is part of a series of reports that maps the activity of faith-based organizations around key development topics. These reports explore the role of religious groups in addressing global challenges as a way to bridge the coordination gap between secular and religious organizations in the common effort of international development work.

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