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Abrahamic Faith-Based NGOs: A New Approach to Peacemaking and Development

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ABRAHAMIC FAITH-BASED NGOs:
A New Approach to Peacemaking and Development

A Global Studies Senior Thesis



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Global Studies Capstone

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Abstract

This thesis examines the new phenomenon of faith-based nongovernmental organizations and their work in peacemaking and development. In our current globalized world, religion has become a heated topic, often times being the cause of international conflict. However, this argument proves that religion, specifically those of the Abrahamic faiths, and which has been used as a means in peacemaking for many years, is now coming to the forefront of providing a strong foundation for NGOs to thrive. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have some of the most popular, successful, and expansive NGOs currently involved with humanitarian aid and peacemaking. This paper goes on to argue that faith-based NGOs are addressing the problem through grassroots initiatives, therefore creating sustainable peace and development practices. Lastly, the argument concludes that faith-based NGOs are imperative to the success of peacemaking and development, and will continue to look to the future in hopes of growing under the current Obama administration.

Introduction

A few years ago, my father took a trip to Jerusalem with an organization called the International Orthodox Christian Charities. His job there was to go and work for a couple weeks at multiple program sites through Jerusalem, and to later report back to our parish of his work and the duties of our faith to help others. I was skeptical at first of this organization because I thought that faith-based organizations like this were ones proselytized, or converted the community they worked with to their religion. This stereotype was one I had gained by seeing multiple infomercials on the television, asking for money to help the cause. These popular infomercials reach out to the American population and use religion and images of precious, needy children to guilt you into giving them funds. Do we really know what their efforts are? The religious factor to these organizations gains an automatic trust from the American public, because who else can they trust more than their church, mosque or temple? After my father took this trip, I was intrigued to learn of what he thought, as he explained that this is a common misconception of the work that the IOCC (and many other faith-based organizations) does around the world. He said to me, “Is it wrong for people to use their faith as a *motivation* to help others?” I just couldn’t argue with that.

The role of religion in communities has always interested me. Religion is not only a part of some cultures, but it tends to be the core aspect of many communities. It can be the cause of conflict or it can be the solution; especially because of the degree of passion and human dedication people’s faith entail. I have always been very involved and active within my church, so I understand the importance that religion can play in one’s life or

community. My work at Greek Orthodox summer camps has really defined how I feel about faith-based work. Many children all over the world have had opportunities to go to summer camp, and I'm sure it is an experience that they will never forget. However, I believe that the kinds of camps that I have worked at go above and beyond a normal camp setting. The program reaches to the children through their faith. I have seen first hand that often times it changes the way a child perceives their own life and the world, because they have never been reached out to in the unique way of Christ's word. The automatic connection and trust that develops is incomparable. The development and betterment in the youth's spiritual health seems to make tremendous changes. This first hand experience has shown me that this type of work can truly influence ones way of thinking.

It seems to be quite logical to me, especially after the research I have conducted, that this type of influence can work to help and reach out to communities with major conflicts. Even taking a look around us at our current world today, we can see how religion is playing an enormous role in conflict, whether it is in Iraq, Palestine or in Darfur. Faith-based NGOs can now use this same idea that religion is at the heart of the community, and focus it so that we can approach conflict resolution in ways that were not possible before. The idea that "faith can move mountains" is one that I don't think should be taken lightly because people who are passionate about their faith can do enormous things, as well as reach out to people in ways that have not been attempted before. Therefore, my question for my thesis is: How affective are Abrahamic faith-based NGOs in their work towards peacemaking and development?

Faith-based NGOs can reach new heights in peacemaking and development. Through much of my research, I have realized that faith-based organizations are able to approach peacemaking and development in new ways because of the connection to the community, especially to the individual. Globalization has created what many would call a monoculture. Yet religion has remained a constant, which is the reason why faith-based NGOs can be so successful. No longer are these NGOs viewed as an outside organization, but they are apart of the community.

I have also seen that many of the misconceptions of faith-based NGOs are not accurate because although they have a mission statement that is faith oriented, many organizations do not have any motivation to proselytize people. The core belief and support of human rights in the Abrahamic faiths provides opportunities for people to look past what makes humans different and serves as a foundation for equality. According to these faiths, equality is what we strive for because we are all made in the image and likeness of God. To answer my father's question, do I think that it's wrong for people to use their faith as a motivation to help others? Simply put, no. I actually think that faith-based work can often prove to be the most effective manner of approaching peacemaking and development in our current globalized world. My thesis research will demonstrate the truly affective approach to peacemaking and development.

Literature Review

Abstract:

This paper examines the new phenomenon of faith-based nongovernmental organizations and their work in peacemaking and development. First it looks at the effectiveness and benefits to faith-based NGOs. It will then take a deeper look into the faith-based NGOs of the Abrahamic faiths because of their similarities and their strong beliefs in human rights. They also have a strong calling to a sense of duty, which is taken very seriously, and provides an important foundation built upon trust. We will take a deeper look into the Abrahamic faiths (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) and how the ethics of the religions has called for such an activist role. The paper argues that the increased popularity of faith-based NGOs resulted from the effects of globalization and the increased unity of religions. Finally, the paper will explore the issues surrounding faith-based organizations, including the struggle of remaining neutral within conflicted countries.

What is a faith-based NGO? Why is there such popularity?

Faith-based NGOs and their work:

What is a faith-based NGO?

Faith-based NGOs have many definitions, for instance, many assume that the term faith-based implies a strict religious guideline to the organization in terms of the work it produces and the way it goes about doing its work. Yet, this stereotype has been broken by those who have defined the work of faith-based NGOs, such as Elizabeth Ferris, author of “Faith-Based and Secular Humanitarian Organizations.” She believes that faith-based NGOs have certain characteristics that are required in order to define it as faith-based:

An affiliation with a religious body; a mission statement with explicit reference to religious values; financial support from religious sources; and/or a governance structure where selection of board members or staff is based on religious beliefs or affiliation and/or decision-making processes based on religious values (Ferris, 2005).

She believes that if the mission and/or values of an organization are faith-based, it does not mean that the values of that organization are inflicted upon the people they are trying to help. The missions of these organizations do not need to be directly related to development of that particular faith because many faith-based NGOs can reach out to any type of person. Mojca Leban agrees with this idea and defines a faith-based NGO as a nongovernmental organization that is motivated by religious values, but also does not participate in religious services. These organizations engage in activities that promote interfaith cooperation and immediate humanitarian aid, as well as fostering long-term reconstruction and sustainable development (Leban, 2003). Thus, contrary to popular

perception, faith-based NGOs are lead and inspired by their faith missions, are not blinded by these values in their work.

How They Operate:

Religious affiliation:

The faith-based NGOs differ in accordance to the religion in which they are affiliated. Each religion differs with whom they are associated and whom they help because of different traditions they encompass. Although the three religions of the Abrahamic faiths are similar, they all have traditions that separate them in how they operate. Christian organizations tend to have a more global perspective and outreach, often times helping those regardless of their religious affiliation. However, there are sharp differences between some of the various traditions of Christianity. The Protestant tradition sees their humanitarian work integrated in their mission work, which means they are more committed to evangelization (Ferris, 2005). Catholic NGOs consider their work more of an interfaith reconciliation, while the Orthodox NGOs, as well as the Islamic NGOs, work more toward relief and development (Leban, 2003). These differences allow Christianity to approach its mission at many levels and different angles.

Jewish and Islamic NGOs primarily serve members of their own communities because of their customs of protecting the threats against their religion (Ferris, 2005). For example, Jews feel they need to help those specifically of their own religion because of the long history of persecution that they have endured (Thistlethwaite and Stassen, 2008). These feelings however, do not limit their work, as many organizations also help those outside of their religion. Many faith-based organizations also hire international and local staff, no matter their religious affiliation in order to add to their understanding of the

situation (Leban, 2003). There are faith-based NGOs who only hire within their religion to maintain a certain dedication to the mission of the religion as well as the organization (Bornstein, 2007). Although there are sentiments that these organizations should be willing to hire people of any religion, many also believe it is imperative for these organizations to maintain the religious purity which in turn preserves the religious mission.

Short-Term Work vs. Long-Term Work:

The type of work that is done varies according to the goals of an organization. Short-term work means assisting the most prevalent issue at the time. NGOs like the Church World Service have more of a short-term idea and do programs such as distributing food, household supplies and livestock for subsistence agriculture. This short-term work can also be emergency work for disaster relief. Organizations such as the Mennonite Central Committee and Quaker Peace, on the other hand, have more of a long-term goal in mind, and establish longer relationships with the communities that they are trying to help. They facilitate and support programs and ideas already undertaken by local agents (Leban, 5-6). Although this type of time oriented goal setting is very different and they have different results, they are both equally important in the work of a faith-based NGO because of how different the effects of their work can be.

Local vs. International Organizations:

Faith-based NGOs work both globally and locally. The local organizations are rooted in their communities, therefore providing a more intimate work experience and also provide a greater assurance for those in the community. Many local organizations are able to survive in areas of great conflict because they are rooted so deeply in the

community. An example of this is the Middle East Council of Churches who were still able to continue their work after most international NGOs had withdrawn from Iraq because of the dangerous environment. However, there are some organizations that work at the international level as well and have great success because of their ability to communicate and respond rapidly. In cases of emergency, organizations such as some Christian umbrella organizations are able to respond because they already have the resources in all different areas, as well as the ability to raise funds quickly (Ferris, 2005). Not only does the church reach its own religious community to coordinate advocacy at all levels, but also because it is so closely knit in the community they are working with, it can work quickly and effectively.

Funding:

Faith-based NGOs get their funds in much the same way to secular NGOs. Like many of the NGOs, faith-based NGOs receive their funding from such sources like donations through fundraising. These funds especially flourish during such times as natural disasters and other sorts of emergencies. However, unlike secular NGOs, most of their money can come from religious traditions that are the same as the NGO or support their cause (Ferris 2005). Although these organizations are nongovernmental, funding has also been coming from government funds. Recently, President Obama announced newly appointed funding towards faith-based organizations, arguing that these organizations are the fundamental movements that help the local community. Supporters of this funding claim that this money is imperative for the endurance of the faith-based movement, and note that there are restrictions to the funds. “Financial survival is a concern for many churches, mosques, synagogues, and other faith-based institutions

serving predominantly low-and moderate- income communities, and government dollars can assist in expanding services” (Flanigan, 2007). Because religious institutions rely greatly on the donations given to them through their community and often times those can be scarce, it is important for these organizations to collect funds from any viable, trustworthy source.

Popularity:

Faith-based NGOs have experienced a newfound popularity within the past ten to fifteen years. The source of this popularity has been discussed because of the diverse environment in which faith-based NGOs have flourished. Many agree that globalization has lead us to look at new ways to approach peacemaking and development. The article, “Faith in international development [...]”, by Linda Kurti, Anna Whelan and Anthony Zwi, shows their belief that the popularity arises from a recognition of the role of religion in today’s society; however, they note that this recognition is not evidence that religious providers have a greater efficiency and effectiveness compared to secular providers (Kurti et. al., 2004). They point out that the trends reflect the hope that religious organizations can succeed where secular efforts have failed in the past.

Thomas and Mayotte would also agree that there is a new recognition of religion within communities; however, this recognition is a result of ineffective policies. Mayotte believes that the rise of faith-based development organizations is a result of the decrease of government from international assistance as well as federal government programs to the state (Mayotte, 1998). Although the United States dedicated much of their time and money to foreign reconstruction at the end of World War II with the Marshall Plan, they since have only dedicated one percent of their GDP to foreign aid. Mayotte argues that at

the same time grassroots movements and NGOs have gained speed, and through this globalization has allowed faith-based NGOs pick up where the government has left off (Mayotte, 1998). The bond that the faith-based NGOs have with the community they work with is strong because of the trust the NGOs gain. As many of the governments in these conflicted areas have lost the trust of their people, these NGOs are able to work with the community and find solutions to many issues where the government has failed.

Thomas takes a slightly different approach, however, agreeing that the all government has failed with foreign aid and development. Thomas states that “the global resurgence of religion is the result of the failure of the secular modernizing state to produce democracy or development, and of the widespread inequalities in wealth brought by the new-liberal prescription of free markets and open economies” (Thomas, 2004). Where secularism allows inequality to flourish, the hope is that religion will combat and fix those ideas of inequalities and injustices. Thomas emphasizes the idea of community and that globalization has brought a new sense of community to our world. Globalization has changed the way that humanity view and live within their community, as many now live in communities of mixed religions, cultures and ideas. These smaller communities unite religion because they protect the customs and traditions of the faith and have created a new approach to policy in international relations (Thomas, 2004). It is an idea that merges the individual to the community, and the community to the world.

Lastly, Ferris argues that the media forces organizations to grow; therefore, expanding their message. A sense of competition between NGOs has started to take place because of the shift toward emergency response and media coverage. “The emergence of new NGOs in response to a particular emergency situation [...] makes generalization

difficult, but has clearly created a more competitive environment for all NGOs, including faith-based organizations” (Ferris, 2005). The competition for foreign funds has created issues for NGOs, and has also brought media attention to the situation. With growing donor requirements for accountability because of foreign funding, organizations were no longer able to be just local organizations, but were forced to move to a global scale (Ferris, 2005). This move to the global scale created more awareness towards different issues and organizations, giving faith-based organizations a spotlight.

Effectiveness and Benefits of Faith-Based NGOs

The Role of Religion:

Cultural and Religious Sensitivity:

It is very important to realize and understand the profound affects of religion in the humanitarian work towards peacemaking and development in other countries. Thomas discusses the connection between poor communities and faith communities. The areas which are usually involved with conflict are the ones that struggle to develop. The poor communities have held onto the beliefs, rituals, practices, and institutions of religion, which have remained central to the social, cultural, and moral life of these individuals and communities (Thomas, 2004). Because these certain communities are also where conflict and underdevelopment are, approaching religion as a way of communicating with the community is important. Thomas notes a recent study which states, “faith-based organizations probably provide the best social and physical infrastructure in the poorest communities...[because] churches, temples, mosques, and other places of worship [are] focal points for the communities they serve” (Thomas, 2004). This new approach to peacemaking and development is an important move

because they are able to better communicate with the people, and in turn have a better understanding. The values, norms, virtues and moral judgments of the community are inseparable from the community's religious traditions (Thomas, 2004). The faith-based NGOs are able to automatically associate themselves with those values, norms, virtues and moral judgments because of their religious background. If the NGO is not of the same religion, it is able to understand the importance of the community's customs because of the recognition of their own customs of their religion.

Faith-based NGOs make a connection with religious traditions of a community while at the same time building a unique trust between the individual and the organization. Because the bond through religion is so strong and so integrated within the communities, it is only natural for this bond to transcend the faith-based NGOs. Leban argues in his article, "Faith-based NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina," that the presence of faith-based NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina created a new credibility to the NGOs working there. During the conflict, Muslim and Orthodox NGOs started to take a leading role in peacemaking. Although they may have had less experience than the Western Christian organizations, these organizations were still very successful because of the immense trust they gained from the surrounding communities. "The greatest of these is their presence and immense credibility in communities of their faith, as well as strong negotiating position with local authorities who share their faith" (Leban, 2003). Smock would also agree with Leban, saying that faith-based NGOs do not necessarily do a better job than secular NGOs; however, through the connection they have with the local communities, they inspire real change that in turn enhances their effectiveness (Smock, 2001). This connection is something unique and incomparable to other NGOs.

Likewise, Douglas Johnston says that because of the trust faith-based NGOs attain, these organizations have resources that the government or other NGOs would be hard to match. The local parties feel reassured they are understood by these organizations, therefore, are more willing to partake in peacemaking efforts with church leaders or conflicting ethnicities (Johnston, 2003). Faith-based organizations proceed beyond immediate humanitarian aid by seeking peace and development through creating a unique bond of trust and developing connections of religious intimacy.

Duty and Religious Calling:

Something that makes faith-based NGOs very unique is the dedication of the staff. The beliefs of the Abrahamic faiths and the sense of duty or religious calling result in many willing and devoted workers. Faith-based NGOs also emphasize issues of social justice, education or health like other secular NGOs, but “religious NGOs also seek to act according to their understanding of the teachings of their respective tradition” (Kurti et.al. 2004). Peacemaking is a foundation and justified in the scriptures and traditions of the Abrahamic faiths. Peace building, thus for the Abrahamic faiths, is considered a mandate of their faith. Smock describes that many of the people who work with faith-based NGOs think of this ministry as fulfilling the spiritual purpose of one’s faith, not a mission of proselytizing (Smock, 2001). Ferris also points out the principle that caring for others is very strong in the Christian tradition. In the Catholic Church, orders were established to provide charity to the poor and hospitality to strangers. There is also a long tradition of *diakonia* (Greek word for service) in the Orthodox and Protestant sectors of Christianity. “This service to others was based not only on Christian values of charity and mercy but was also rooted in the belief in the absolute value of the human person” (Ferris, 2005).

Jesus Christ, the “Prince of Peace,” preaches the constant act of kindness and love. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). Likewise, the golden rule, love your neighbor as yourself, is called the “greatest commandment” dictated by God, which represents the ultimate calling to share your talents and love with others.

The Islamic faith also has a calling or duty to serve others. Almsgiving is one of the five pillars of the faith and is shown through the idea of *zakat*. *Zakat*, which is obligatory giving, serves as a way for everyone to help fellow mankind. Yusuf al-Qaradawi who works with multiple Islamic NGOs discussed disbursing *zakat* in the fight against illiteracy, or perhaps collecting enough during Ramadan to allocate it for natural disasters. This collection, he said, was a way of participating “in the struggle along the path of Allah” (Bellion-Jourdan, 2007). Islam preaches and obligates the followers of the faith to practice social justice through peace. The Qur’an shuns violence and repeatedly encourages Muslims to cooperate and seek peace with those of the same faith as well those of other faiths (Thistlethwaite and Stassen, 2007). The Qur’an teaches this by saying, “The believers are but a single brotherhood: so make peace and reconciliation between your brothers and reverence GOD, that you may attain mercy” (49:10). Islam also focuses on forgiveness as a proper response to injustice and violence, as it is considered a higher virtue to forgive rather than bear hatred (Thistlethwaite and Stassen, 2007). These teachings are very strong in the Islamic faith and are evident in the work done by the Islamic NGOs.

Judaism also has a tradition of peacemaking, which is reflected in their work of faith-based organizations. Judaism is particularly sensitive to human suffering because of

its long history of suffering and persecution of those of the Jewish faith. Because of the history, it has become a kind of primary religious mandate within the Jewish faith to help others who are in need (Thistlethwaite and Stassen, 2007). “Rights alone are only protective of people’s interests, while duties go further by proposing that human beings have a moral obligation to seek good actively; that they commit themselves to acts for others out of recognition of their rights and basic dignity” (Thistlethwaite and Stassen, 2007). The strong sympathy to those who are suffering creates an important motive for faith-based NGOs. Thistlethwaite also notes that because of the history of suffering the Jews have endured, followers of the faith have realized that it is imperative to act in accordance to Gods works, who throughout scriptures is depicted as the defender of the poor and the oppressed (Thistlethwaite and Stassen, 2007). The laws of the Jewish faith clearly set guidelines and motivation to help people internationally of all faiths to become self-sustaining.

Human Rights:

Human rights are an idea that is at the core of all three of the Abrahamic faiths, the pursuit of which is a way for faith-based NGOs to practice their beliefs. According to Mayotte, religion can be transformational because when religion informs social change the ideas of change and development is reached by what is important to people. “The community is encouraged to base development choices on its deeper, broader values, including basic human rights” (Mayotte, 1998). Religion in this case, can serve as the cultural link to society-connecting the poor to the rich and relate everyone as human beings. For the Jewish faith, human rights can be a religious mandate because of the past human suffering of the Jewish people. For them moral imperatives are defined as duties

requiring a certain action. However, for many of those duties, rights are needed (Thistlethwaite and Stassen, 2007). The Jewish faith usually takes positions that are in the defense or rights, because although their tradition relies greatly on the ability to have rights they don't have specifics written out. Islam also has a strong tradition in human rights as well because of their beliefs in equality. The individual should be equal because of their beliefs of oneness and the origin of all human beings (Thistlethwaite and Stassen, 2007). The Qur'an states:

O mankind! We created you from a single [pair] of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other [not that ye may despise each other]. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is [he who is] the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well-acquainted with all things (49:13).

This verse describes that all people are viewed equally in the eyes of Allah, and everyone should treat each other equally, no matter race, sex, or ethnicity (Thistlethwaite and Stassen, 2007). One is only judged on the good deeds that he or she does, which also relates to the Islamic faith's involvement in faith-based NGOs. Christianity also has a strong idea of human rights, which is reflected in the scriptures. There are many references to the equality of man such as the idea that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. "And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness [...] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them [...]" (Genesis 1:26-28). This idea of equality is reflected in the ethic of Christianity that clearly is relayed in the work of Christian NGOs.

These beliefs of the Abrahamic faiths are deeply rooted in the traditions of each of the three religions, no matter how different they may seem. This creates a healthy

atmosphere for this type of NGO to flourish and act because it is something, according to Judith Mayotte, which remains constant. Because the presence of religion is constant in these communities, faith-based NGOs are able to maintain a stable presence (Mayotte, 1998). Not only is religion constant within these communities, these ideas are instilled in the workers of these organizations. “They are motivated by their faith and they have a constituency which is broader than humanitarian concerns. For believers, to be a Jew or a Muslim or a Christian implies a duty to respond to the needs of the poor and the marginalized” (Ferris, 2005). Vocation to serve is an idea of the utmost importance, and is shown through many of the teachings in each religion’s scripture.

The “Right Way”:

Another large contribution from faith-based NGOs that needs to be considered in the benefit of the “right way.” This idea that not only do faith-based NGOs help with development issues and peacemaking, but they also teach the values and principles of “right living.” The religious NGOs are able to share the values of humanity, that way they can make significant life changes and practices to the over-developed countries as well as under-developed countries (Kurti, et. al. 2004). Thomas also argues that as communities experience the work of a faith-based organization, they will learn the moral life and traditions of the faith they are apart of (Thomas, 2004). Whether or not the teachings are intentional or not intentional, the ability to make that sort of change in their work is very likely.

Neutrality:

Faith-based NGOs also have a strong neutrality agenda. Although there is much discussion on whether or not these NGOs can remain neutral in conflict, their strong

agenda has proven otherwise. Because many faith-based organizations have such a strong religious tradition, they are very unlikely to stray away from that tradition and choose a side that is contrary to what they practice (Ferris, 2005). These organizations may be in an area where their religion is present and a part of the conflict. Ferris discusses the NGO/Red Cross and Red Crescent Code of Conduct for Humanitarian work that was launched in 1997 to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian organizations (Ferris, 2005). This program checks to make sure that organizations are on task, and carry out the mission they are so dedicated too. Faith-based organizations remain especially neutral because they tend to carry a strict agenda because of the religious dedication and duty.

In the current globalized world, it is very important to use what little advantages remain. Faith-based NGOs are no exception, as they seek to use the benefits that globalization has set for us. Because cultures are starting to mold together because globalization, Thomas argues that religions are being unified. Globalization is creating a new kind of religious “intermestic” policy in international relations (Thomas, 2004). As it is noted, religion is being used to look at international conflicts to find solutions, not just as a cultural difference or issue. We are able to unite Muslims, Jews or Christians all over the world in order to create a strong bond between faiths. This uniting factor can be used to the advantage of the faith-based organization because this means that there is more support coming from all different directions.

Faith-based NGOs and Cooperation:

Tolerance:

Faith-based NGOs provide many ways for cooperation to increase between people who are involved with a conflict, or are part of a development movement. Cooperation is

key with this kind of work. In order to have discussions and development with these issues, you have to be able to listen and cooperate with the other side. Especially with such history of tension in areas like Palestine, people being able to express themselves is important. This can prove to be very difficult especially with conflicts that have to deal with religion and ethnic clashing, because these issues are at the very core of the identity of a person or community. Tolerance is one of the most important ideas that faith-based NGOs are able to contribute to in their movements and work. In order to be able conduct programs like interfaith dialogue, there has to be a tolerance for the other party. Many times people from a certain ethnicity or religion will not step into the same room with someone of the opposite ethnicity or religion.

Many faith-based organizations hire people regardless of religious affiliation, in this way they are able to embody the principles of non-discrimination and tolerance as they aim to get the communities to partake in the same ideas (Leban, 2003). By gaining the trust because of the religious affiliation, organizations are able to demonstrate ideas such as tolerance and create a following. If organizations can get churches or mosques to get a representative, such as a bishop, to tell the community to act a certain way, tolerance will have a better chance at being accepted and active within that community (Flanigan, 160). Getting a representative is not the only solution to the problem, but it helps the comfort level of interfaith dialogue members. However, some religious traditions are more apt to focus on tolerance more than others. Tolerance can exist more than others, for example, in certain orders of the Catholic Church. During the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, organizations had to work with different orders of the Catholic faith because some had a long tradition of tolerance and others did not. The Catholic

order of Franciscans in northern Bosnia have a long tradition of promoting interfaith tolerance, however the Croatian Catholic hierarchy and Franciscans of the south did not have that tradition (Leban, 2003). Faith-based NGOs are able to communicate and relate to both traditions and gage their work to fit with both views on tolerance.

Interfaith Dialogue:

Tolerance is the gateway for interfaith dialogue. Interfaith dialogue is at the core of the mission for many of the faith-based NGOs because it is the first step in resolving conflict. Smock describes interfaith dialogue as the framework for relief and development, since often-times interfaith and interethnic dialogue can improve relations at the community level before going on the larger scale with elites and politicians (Smock, 2001). The interfaith dialogue in Kosovo provides a strong example. World Vision International, a faith-based international NGO, developed the Community Council for Peace and Tolerance of the City of Mitrovica (Kosovo). Through this council, the organization was able to initiate the first multiethnic and multireligious meeting in the conflicted city. The participants agreed on tolerance and respect of all rights and freedoms of all citizens, by laying down any ethnic, religious or gender differences during the meeting. In October of 2001, they wrote a declaration and “committed themselves to ‘purge prejudice from our hearts,’ and ‘to unite our hearts’ in order to ‘construct non-violent alternatives for dealing with our differences’” (Johnston, 2003). These ideas not only provide a base for further dialogue and reconciliation, but they also provide pressure on the government and elites to start dialogue with the conflicting side. Smock further argues that interfaith dialogue and collaboration can also provide a stronger movement towards peace if the two conflicting sides are united (Smock, 2001).

Uniting these sides would not automatically result in peace; however, if both sides have peace set as a common goal, it is more likely that a solution will be met.

If interfaith dialogue goes well, organizations can eventually start programs where opposing sides interact with each other on a daily basis. These programs are crucial to peacemaking because they show that these groups on opposing sides can live harmoniously, not just have dialogue. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) have been introducing programs that primarily focus on the promotion of peace and justice, specifically looking at the root causes of religious and ethnic conflict. Starting in 1996, CRS created programs in Mindinao in southern Philippines, and helped establish a bakery that brings Christians and Muslims together as co-workers. Previous interfaith dialogues between bishops and ullama co-sponsored by the CRS has developed the relationship between the two religious groups, which helped it lead to the work programs that it has developed. This type of work lays the groundwork for peacemaking and social reconstruction (Smock, 2001). Other attempts of interfaith programs have been programs that encourage reconciliation through music. An interfaith choir has been set up in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to initiate dialogue reconciliation between the Muslims and Christian traditions. Children's choirs have set up trips to visit churches and mosques in order to provide an understanding of the other faith. Although some choirs have difficulty because they have not previously been apart of a different tradition, sometimes feeling "sick or disgusted" by singing these songs, it is initial exposure that sets a basis for understanding (Leban, 2003). Ivo Markovic, the Franciscan director, realizes the connections that can be made through programs such as the choir. "I want to understand you and to start to love the Orthodox faith and therefore I want to sing your song. A

Bosniak *ilahija* [song] is part of my culture too and I want to know this part of spirituality as well” (Leban, 2003). Although the children might be of different faith, the music has been able to bring them to get though and understand just that small part of the other faith. Each song shows a little more of that certain faith to the choir, therefore providing the choir with a better understanding than before.

Reconciliation:

Reconciliation efforts can be seen through things such as the interfaith dialogue. Reconciliation can be seen as both the search for acceptance, justice and forgiveness, and also economic and political reconciliation. Religious and ethnic conflicts, as well as development issues, can break apart every part of a country. Politics are corrupt or helpless, the economic status of that country plummets, and relationships between communities are hurt. Leban discusses how different types of reconciliation require different actions, such as economic reconciliation includes willingness to higher workers across religious or community lines. In politics, it requires joint participation within formal institutions and selection and replacement of leadership (Leban, 2003). Faith-based NGOs can be a big part of the reconciliation process because of their ability to communicate with so many communities and individuals. According to Leban, the post-conflict challenge of reconciliation is trying to establish relationships with former enemies, while trying to maintain their own identity and tolerating the opposing side’s identity as well (Leban, 2003). Because the faith-based NGOs are willing to work with each other as well as establish interfaith relationships, they are not only helpful but are crucial in the reconciliation process. Johnston also argues that faith-based NGOs can help the reconciliation process not just through groups, but also give the individual an

opportunity to have greater openness and self-examination, as it is key to reassure your own identity. By focusing on relationship building and finding commonalities with other individuals, faith-based organizations were successfully able to have Serbs and Albanians working together to plan irrigation systems in Kosovo (Johnston, 2003). These commonalities not only help with reconciliation, but through reassuring your own identity you can provide a good model for future generations.

Concerns and Criticisms with Faith-Based NGOs:

Proselytization:

The greatest concern surrounding faith-based NGOs is proselytization. Many of the articles and books out on the subject express concern about the de-legitimizing effect of proselytization on faith-based NGOs. For example, Mayotte argues proselytizing historically has been a significant dimension of religious groups and their performance of charitable works (Mayotte, 1998). Not many of the faith-based organizations support this type of action, because they alienate Christian NGOs from the rest of the faith-based NGOs. Problems ensue because one of the main arguments for faith-based NGOs is that they have a deeper understanding of the communities that they are trying to help through their religious connection. The issue that proselytization groups create is the inability to see local problems through the eyes of the community because of their own agenda (Flanigan, 2007). By destroying this foundation and unique approach to peacemaking, it is putting faith-based NGOs on the same level as all other secular NGOs that have proven to be ineffective. By attacking someone's religion in an extremely religious area, people also will feel threatened and will not want to cooperate with the perpetrators.

Christian NGOs have had the most problems with this issue, often leading to anti-Christian sentiments, most especially among the Protestant groups who have a strong tradition of evangelization. These groups see their humanitarian work as an integral part of their missionary activities. They are frequently criticized by other traditional faith-based NGOs because they believe that these groups aren't committed to respecting the religions and traditions of the communities that they are working in (Ferris, 2005). These groups create problems for other Christian organizations that want to work in certain areas; however, they are not able to because of the preconception they will proselytize while working in that community, even if they are not a proselytizing tradition (Ferris, 2005). Christian groups are therefore not able to perform their humanitarian work, which is one of the greatest missions of the religion.

Proselytization has also added onto the conflict between Islam and the West, creating a deeper anti-Christian sentiment. Many Islamic countries are countries of great conflict and need of development, and have seen an increase in the number of faith-based NGOs. They view these evangelical groups as a threat to their religion because a core belief is the protection of the Islamic religion, and therefore the groups clash. In Nigeria for example, hospitals have been built by fundamentalist Protestants who have practiced such events as forced baptism of Muslim children, as well as saying Christian prayers at patient's bedsides. "Sections of the Muslim population (Muslims are the majority in northern Nigeria) reacted strongly against these activities, refusing to work or receive treatment in these hospitals" (Ghandour, 2003). Because of actions like this, Islamic NGOs have also attempted to control aid delivered by Western Christian NGOs. Although Islamic NGOs are developing because they are taking a bigger role in areas of

conflict, problems are being created because these faith-based NGOs are not cooperating with each other. Cooperation is something that these NGOs are known to do, and is often why many faith-based NGOs are praised for their work (Ghandour, 2003). This conflict is prohibiting effective programs and work from these faith-based NGOs that could potentially be very useful.

Another challenge is that many of these communities don't know that they are being proselytized. Organizations are doing usually forbidden things, although in many cases are overlooked, by donor government officials, such as Bible studies with clients and patients. In these types of cases, the people don't know, or may not understand that they are subject to proselytization. "In the case of some faith-based NGOs, it seems that clients may be unwilling, or in the case of young children, unknowingly subject to proselytization, and thus denied their freedom not to associate" (Flanigan, 2007).

According to Flanigan, this is an infringement on people's rights and faith-based NGOs exist for the purpose of protecting the rights of these communities, not to associate in religious activities (Flanigan, 2007). Proselytization has continuously hindered the work of Christian NGOs, as well as ruining relations between other NGOs and religions.

Community reactions:

Another issue concerning faith-based NGOs is how the communities involved will react to the work being done by these organizations. According to Leban, many times it is hard to even get the communities motivated to be apart of programs initiated in these areas. Civic engagement is lacking because for many this is the first time that they are apart of reconciliation movements. Leban writes: "Many who are not participating in various village-level councils or workshops are doing so for the first time. Even those

individuals willing to pursue joint goals with members of other religions or ethnic groups lack experience and skills in doing so” (Leban, 2003). In these cases, it is important that leaders take initiative to help out. Leban argues that religious leaders such as priests need to work with these faith-based NGOs in order to get communities motivated. An example is one Croat community that was involved with a NGOs start of a program of reconciliation with the Serbs in central Bosnia. The community was originally not participating because of many concerns they had, however when a new Catholic priest expressed his enthusiasm for the program, many Croatian youth became more comfortable with the program and started to participate. However, when the priest was transferred, the attendance dropped (Leban, 2003). This demonstrates the issues surrounding motivation of faith-based programs, as well as shows the communities caution to approach peacemaking. Although motivation is clearly an issue, the problem is deeper at the center of the community. The Priest was able to make the community feel more comfortable; however, this is an issue that has been apart of their daily lives for many years. This makes motivation and comfort from a leader an important part of the process.

Other issues surrounding reconciliation are reactions to reconciliation. Some efforts from faith-based NGOs for interfaith reconciliation have had issues with violence because people are not willing, or are not ready, for reconciliation. There have been riots as well as deaths, for communities who are not ready for reconciliation or feel as though they are being forced to fix the problem. A Serbian activist who experienced programs in Banja Luka felt as though local communities weren't ready to reconcile, and therefore felt like he had to take action. “I had the impression that they were ordering us to

reconcile. You do not do that on order” (Leban, 2003). The history of a community and conflict must be very well known and recognized when approaching peacemaking. In many conflicts, sentiments of hate for another group are imbedded in the culture and minds of a community. Accordingly, making a group to feel as though they are forced to reconcile is ineffective and dangerous. In such cases, it is important that the situation is well observed because as shown, many issues and conflicts can arise from the attempt at peacemaking.

False Neutrality:

Faith-based NGOs have many different opinions about their ability to maintain neutral in situations of conflict. Although many faith-based NGOs don't tend to have an issue with neutrality because of their strong missions, there is still great concern. The fact that these organizations are faith-based create an issue because if they are involved in a country with an religious conflict with one side being of the same religion, there is going to be great difficulty maintaining neutrality without bias. Religion is a very deep bond between individuals as well as communities, and if these faith-based organizations are involved with a conflict that deals with a group of their own religion, how are they not going to have a bias (Ferris, 2005)? Therefore this issue is a very difficult and important issue to discuss.

Governmental Funding:

Flanigan also discusses the neutrality issue in terms of government and funding. Many NGOs have neutrality issues with government for the same reasons. Several of these faith-based NGOs also receive funding from governments because of the fear that they wont be able to suffice without those funds; however, this proves to be very difficult

concerning neutrality. Many of these NGOs can strike deals with the governments, especially if they are governments of the same faith. This creates biased work and also has potential for corruption between both parties (Flanigan, 2007). Donations are also an issue because not only may they not get enough donations to suffice programs from the organization, but they also might create a bias. Large donations from large benefactors or companies might cause the faith-based NGO to compromise their original service mission (Flanigan, 2007). This issue of funding faith-based NGOs generates many issues with the ability of the organization to actually carry out the mission of the Abrahamic faiths in order to serve others.

Conclusion:

The information presented from my literature demonstrates the excellent work put out by these Abrahamic faith-based NGOs. It has demonstrated the role of religion in our growing globalized world. Religion is something that is involved so very deeply in the lives of many people, often times at the center and the very being of a culture and community. As our globalized world is bringing cultures and countries closer together, religion seems to be becoming stronger because of the bonds communities are now able to form with other religious communities. Faith-based NGOs respond to this calling by using religion as a tool for peacemaking. These organizations are responding to the policies which have failed in the past in hopes that it will reach people at a new level. By relating with these people on a deep level such as religion, a new understanding of culture and what it means to be a human being, which has been lost among the mountains of money through globalization, will be found. We can only hope that faith-based NGOs

bring peace and development to the people who have been suffering for so many years without hope in sight.

Through my research, I tried to give a balanced understanding of what an Abrahamic faith-based NGO is, as well as the work that they do. Although I gave a substantial amount on the benefits of faith-based NGO work, there is less evidence of concerns and criticism. I believe this demonstrates the successful and cutting edge work these groups are doing. Faith-based work is a very new type of approach to peacemaking and development, and I think it is developing at the right time. It provides a renewed understanding and respect for traditions that have been apart of communities for so long.

Methods

Throughout the process of researching and developing my thesis, there were many difficulties along the way. My thesis topic is Abrahamic faith-based NGOs and their work towards peace and development. The issue I looked into is the efficiency of these types of NGOs and what types of issues or ideas the Abrahamic religions bring to a charity setting. I also looked at how this kind of faith based humanitarian work combats the negative affects of globalization, while also looking at how these NGOs are able to work and cooperate with other NGOs (religious and secular). I was interested on learning about how the role of religion affects the work that these NGOs do, as well as why the teachings of the Abrahamic faith sets a healthy environment for humanitarian aid and peacemaking to flourish.

My community engaged part of my thesis was a hard to narrow down. I realized that it would be hard to find a faith-based NGO in the area in which I would be able to work with. At first, I had wished to have my community partner with the International Orthodox Christian Charities because of my multiple connections that I had with them. I especially was excited by the connection that I had with the IOCC representative in Palestine, Dick Van Gorp. He provided me with very helpful information that was crucial to my research and development of my thesis. Although we only communicated by email, he supplied me with different programs that are used in their region, power point presentations on interfaith lessons that they had used for classes, as well as financial information. I was able to look at how this specific faith-based NGO functioned in one of the most conflicted regions in the world. This information and communication with this organization was especially important because religion plays such a big role in the

conflict. It was important to analyze the role of religion in the relationship between the IOCC and the surrounding religious communities.

However, because my community partner had an international component, I also felt the need to have a more local relationship as well. I decided to work with a local church in which I analyzed how this specific church works within the community, and how they use their religion as a way to reach out to those they are surrounded by. I felt that this was an important connection that I could use because although they are not established as an NGO, they still use the religious establishment to reach out to the surrounding community. With this community partner, I was able to analyze how this diverse community in the United States responded to the help from a local, religious establishment. I felt that both of these community partners were crucial to my thesis because they each had a unique component that demonstrated the versatility of religion in humanitarian aid and peace making.

Since addressing the topic of faith-based NGOs is a fairly new development, it was difficult to encounter very much information written on the topic. There were a few main sources (scholarly journals) that I encountered which were helpful and that I returned to frequently while writing my literature review and thesis. These sources also addressed some issues and ideas that I was able to expand on through other sources. I had to conduct a broad search, exploring all sorts of literature written on each religion, as well as comparing and contrasting other types of NGOs with those of a religious background. This allowed me to discover the benefits and disadvantages of faith-based NGOs. By looking at how faith-based NGOs functioned in comparison, it was clear to see how the

community was an important component to the Abrahamic faiths and in turn, important to these humanitarian organizations.

However since the information and sources were not abundant, interviews were the best possible solution. With interviews, I would be able to get first hand accounts and opinions to the effectiveness of these NGOs. I also considered these interviews to be apart of my community-engaged research because of my interactions with the organizations, as well as applying specifically what the organizations did to my conclusions. I would also be able to compare my interviews with each other, as well as ask questions that specifically related to the relationship between their humanitarian work and their religion. I would also be able to ask specifically how they function in conflict areas, especially addressing the issue of working with other organizations (religious or secular) in the same region. I first sent out emails to a list of faith-based NGOs from all over the world, hoping that I would get some response and various opinions. I emailed Jewish, Muslim, and Christian organizations and unfortunately the response was limited. Some felt that their organization had nothing to do with the thesis, while others purely didn't respond. I then attempted to call multiple organizations, many of them being international organizations which had branches in the United States. This proved to be more affective, however it did take a long time to get responses. I set up interviews with a Jewish organization, a Catholic organization, an Orthodox Christian organization, as well as a branch of an organization that specifically sets up interfaith interactions with communities of the Abrahamic faiths in Israel/Palestine. These interviews proved to be crucial to my research, and provided the answers and connections that I needed.

Findings

Our current world is filled with conflicts and wars of expansive history and culture. Globalization has also developed rapidly, creating a race to the bottom and expansive gap between the rich and the impoverished people of the world. Those around us need help in many ways, shapes, and forms. It is evident, however, that the strategies and policies of the globalized west are not solving the long term issues at hand, and many times only get involved if it benefits them. Non-governmental organizations are working around the clock to give humanitarian aid to those who need it, as well as helping to work with and resolve conflicts amongst communities and countries. Where governments have failed to produce results, NGOs are coming out front and center in taking action to help to those in need, and are currently key components in the global response to emergencies. However it is hard to generalize NGOs and the work that they do, because there is a wide range of organizations that address various issues. Faith-based NGOs are apart of this wide range, and have become one of the leading NGOs in humanitarian aid as well as peacemaking. Faith-based NGOs not only work because of their own religious mission but they work with religion, which is at the heart of many communities. Working at the grassroots level, the organizations are addressing the problems at the very core by relating to the communities they are working with in a respectful and understanding manner. Current faith-based organizations are breaking stereotypes and are becoming some of the most successful aid organizations around the world. This thesis will look at the effectiveness of the Abrahamic faith-based NGOs in peacemaking and development.

Firstly, the Abrahamic religions have produced some of the most important and popular faith-based NGOs in the world because of the teachings of the faiths. The

Abrahamic faiths consist of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. These religions share many commonalities, the most important being the belief in the same God. The faiths also share many of the same morals, although they might differ in execution or interpretation as well as having cultural differences. The most prevalent commonalities are that of duty or religious calling, dedication to social justice (helping fellow human beings), and a strong belief in peacemaking. The Abrahamic faiths are founded on the ideas of peace and equality and act upon these ideas as a mandate of the faith. “Religious NGOs also seek to act according to their understanding of the teachings of their respective tradition” (Kurti et. al, 2004). These traditions of the Abrahamic faiths create a healthy atmosphere for NGOs to thrive because of the teachings of human equality and peace, as well as the fact that these beliefs remain constant and therefore creating a firm foundation.

Christianity, Judaism and Islam all have specific reasons why helping others is an important part of their theology. For Christianity, it is the wisdom of Jesus Christ who is described as the “Prince of Peace.” Jesus Christ’s teachings demonstrate true love, compassion and tolerance. Because, according to the Christian tradition, we are all created in the image and likeness of God, we all must treat each other rightfully. God’s greatest commandments for Christians are to first love God with your every fiber of being, and secondly to treat others the way you want to be treated. This is often referred to as the Golden Rule.

’The most important one,’ answered Jesus, ‘is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.’
Mark 12:29-31

This message, according to Fr. Andrew George of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Cranston, RI, is the fundamental reason why the Christian church is called to

serve others. With concern for our neighbors we are called to help and give to those who have less. We also are also expected to treat others rightfully and live peacefully among one another. This is why Christian NGOs are so predominate and affective in peacemaking and humanitarian aid.

These teachings of the Christian faith also create a sense of vocation or mission to the followers of the faith. Vocation, as defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary, is “a summon or strong inclination to a particular state or course of action; *especially*: a divine call to the religious life” (Merriam-Webster). For the many representatives of the Christian organizations that I talked with, vocation was an important reason why they are working in the faith-based NGO setting. “I regard my work as my calling and what I believe God wants me to do with the abilities and blessings he has given me to use in this life. The primary and fundamental reason that I am engaged in this vocation/work is founded in the Christian gospels and teachings of our Savior Jesus Christ” (van Gorp). The teachings of the Christian gospels, through the life of compassion of Jesus Christ, can call a person to serve others through the same compassion Christ showed us. We as a human race can also spread God’s word through our actions. This is an idea that the representative from Catholic Relief Services emphasized. They noted that their staff frequently uses the statement that it’s their mission to work in this environment while bringing their strong commitment to social justice to help others because it is how Christ acted in his life (Fisher). For the staff at Christian NGOs, the teachings of their religion play a fundamental role in why they work for these organizations.

The teachings of Islam also provide a strong foundation for humanitarian aid NGOs. Giving back to others is so vital in the Islamic faith that is one of the five pillars

of Islam. The five pillars of Islam are at the core of the religion and are duties that Muslims must follow. The five pillars are the profession of faith, almsgiving, pilgrimage to Mecca, fasting during Ramadan, and prayer. As almsgiving is one of the five pillars, Muslims are required to give back to their community, especially in the form of zakat, which is an obligatory donation. These ideas of almsgiving and zakat set in the everyday lives of the Muslim people provide an important setting for humanitarian aid and peacemaking because it is a natural progression for the Islamic faith. The Qu'ran, which are considered to be the direct words of Allah (God) from the Prophet Muhammad, preaches peace and shuns violence. The Qu'ran states: "The believers are but a single brotherhood: so make peace and reconciliation between your brothers and reverence GOD, that you may attain mercy" (49:10). Not only should Muslims be peaceful towards other Muslims, but also they should be peaceful to all of mankind. These teachings are evident in Islamic NGOs work. For organizations such as Islamic Relief, self sustaining programs such as micro financing are important to helping establish a successful life for those in need. They recognize programs such as these go along with the teachings of the Qu'ran; "Whoever saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind" (5:32). Again, this shows the importance of helping others and demonstrates the fundamental values of Islam, which in turn create a successful environment for NGOs to flourish.

The Jewish tradition also teaches human equality and encourages social justice. God is viewed as the defender of the poor and of the oppressed, which provides motivation to help others. Many also realize it is imperative to act in accordance with God's words. The Jews also believe that human kind was created in the Divine image, therefore establishing the fundamental relationship between one person and another while

also implying equality. “All were created in the image of God. Therefore, Judaism holds, all are entitled to equal respect for their dignity and worth” (Colter, 1999). These teachings provide a foundation for human rights advocacy as well as peacemaking. As God is just and merciful to all of his creatures, the Jewish people should be as well.

Judaism is also particularly sensitive to human suffering because of the long history of suffering and persecution. Events such as Jewish oppression by the Egyptians and the Holocaust cause the Jews to empathize with human suffering (especially those of Jewish decent). However, although this might play a role in why Jews feel the need to help others, for William Recant of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, this is not the fundamental reason. “The reason that Jewish NGOs and Jewish people are involved is multi faceted. Some of it has to do with historical background; most has to do with general concept of the light unto the nations. You are supposed to share your best with others” (Recant). The historical context might provide a motivation to form Jewish NGOs to help other human beings, but it is the teachings of God to act in accordance to his will which is the most important. However, Mr. Recant also emphasizes that the Jewish motivation to help others is unlike the Christian missionary work or vocational calling. He argues that it the strong belief in social justice, volunteerism and community service are more of the motivation than a specific vocation or religious calling (Recant). Because the dedication to help others is so important in the Jewish religion, it creates a successful and capable environment to help establish peacemaking and development programs to help people all over the world.

Although each religion of the Abrahamic faiths feels a deep connection with their own community and religion, the respective NGOs do not specifically help their own

communities. Each religion has an emphasis on helping human kind, not just those of their own background. However, the faiths might be more inclined to help those in their own community because of the commonalities and understanding that they have for one another. For example, a Jewish NGO might be more inclined to help Jewish communities because of the historical background of this specific group. They might feel obligated to help their own community because they know what their family generations have been through, also they might be able to use their religious teachings to relate to the specific Jewish community they are working with. However, NGOs such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, although the core of the organization is to help Jewish communities outside of North America, also have had a section of their organization since 1986 that does disaster and relief work that is not specified towards any religious group. Catholic Relief Services also has a similar situation working within their community. They have over five thousand operations in one hundred countries, including the United States. The United States programs work specifically with Catholics, while the programs abroad are not focused on faith. The programs established abroad work towards helping provide relief as well as establishing long-term programs like micro financing, (Fisher). Although the faith-based NGOs feel inclined to help those in their own community, their help also extends to those of all faiths and ethnicities.

As the theology proves that the Abrahamic faiths provide a solid foundation to build a faith-based NGO, how do they work in the regions they extend their help to? There is a connection between poor communities and faith communities. The areas, which are usually involved with conflict, are the ones that struggle to develop. Poor communities have held onto the beliefs, rituals, practices and institutions of religion,

which have remained central to the social, cultural and moral life (Thomas, 2004). Using religion as a way of communication is very important to a successful approach to peacemaking and development. Even if the religions are different, faith-based NGOs are able to relate on a deeper level of respect because of the recognition of the religious customs. Making connection with religious traditions of a community build a unique bond between the individual, the community and the organization itself.

The bond of religious intimacy is very important because it creates a grassroots approach. As described to me by Dr. Andrea Blanch, director of the Center for Religious Tolerance and co-coordinator of the Abrahamic Reunion, solutions for conflicts can be approached in three manners. Track one is the diplomatic approach that works from the top down. Track two brings more people from the community, such as local leaders, to the diplomatic discussions creating more of a grassroots development. Track three is the real grassroots approach in the local community, which works from the ground up in order to solve solutions at its very core (Blanch). The grassroots approach has to take place in order for changes to occur. The faith-based NGOs work in the field of the local community to work with them and listen to the real issues at hand. Religious intimacy helps develop a relationship with the community, but the core mission to purely help create solutions for human kind's issues helps create real change. By working from the top down to create a solution to the problem, you could potentially be forcing people to accept things they are not willing to, instead of helping them develop and change on their own accords. The reason why faith-based NGOs and initiatives work so well is because it works to solve the community's issues through understanding, respect and a dedication to resolving conflict for all human kind.

Furthermore, sustainable peace is not possible until religion is brought into the conflict resolution equation. The Oslo Peace Accords of 1993 was the first direct agreement between Israel and Palestine to help establish a framework for future relations between Israel and Palestine. However, many believe this initiative failed because of the lack of religious participation. No religious leaders were involved with the peace accords and therefore did not set a stable foundation for the accords to work (Blanch). Although faith-based work is most successful at the grassroots level, it still needs to be prevalent at the diplomatic level. In places like the Middle East, people do not separate themselves from their religion. Religion forms day-to-day thinking and is apart of every interaction; people greet each other with blessings from God, talking about God with others, as well as talking with God in prayer. Religion is culturally relevant, which makes it crucial to have a religious aspect to peacemaking. It is also politically relevant as well because places in conflict, like Israel, are religious states. “It is pure folly that a western diplomatic process will bring peace in the Middle East” (Blanch). It is imperative that faith-based initiatives from faith-based NGOs are apart of the peacemaking process, as well as stages to development of a given country.

Faith-based NGOs also not only work with the community, but also allow the community to be apart of the work. Mr. van Gorp, the representative for the International Orthodox Christian Charities in Palestine noted the importance of having local staff work for the organization in Palestine. “IOCC's approach here in the Holy Land and elsewhere is very community based, participatory and utilizes local capacity & partners. Almost all IOCC staff is local staff from the country or area we are working in - with only a very few expatriate staff managers” (van Gorp). This not only helps give initiative for the

community to work for a solution, but it also helps the organization have a greater understanding of the culture and of the situation at hand because of the first hand community involvement. The IOCC also partners with the church as well as other local organization in the areas in order to assist IOCC efforts. Working with other community establishments, whether they are the Church or secular organizations, allows the IOCC to extend their network. The representative from the Catholic Relief Services also discussed the extensive Catholic community in the locations where CRS was extending their help. Although they aren't exclusively working with the Catholic community abroad, the Catholic Church's extensive network and strong allies helps CRS have a closer connection with the communities they are working with.

Not only must faith-based NGOs work at a grassroots level, but it is important that the work would be non-proselytizing too. Proselytization, or religious conversion, hurts the work in the community that has been, or is trying to be, established. One of the fundamental premises for grassroots work is that it is non-proselytizing because it creates conflict of authority through disrespect. Forcing people to change what is at the core of their culture and daily lives is hurtful to execution of the mission of peacemaking and humanitarian aid. Grassroots initiatives work with the community because they are able to change the way they themselves function through their own value of what is important to them. However if faith-based NGOs have a proselytizing initiative as well, it is acting from the top down because they are trying to change the community instead of the community trying to help and change itself.

One of the most important aspects of faith-based NGOs and faith-based initiatives is interfaith dialogue. The need for religious initiatives and discussions in the

peacemaking process is imperative. Interfaith dialogue is an important part in reaching out to the community and working at the grassroots level to find peace. As mentioned before, a community won't truly be able change decades of feelings towards one certain religion or ethnic group if they are forced to do it. However, if the community works from within to change their sentiments, a long lasting peace can be formed. Abrahamic Reunion is a program that initiates interfaith dialogue and activities between the Abrahamic faiths as a way of peacemaking in the Middle East. Interfaith dialogue allows for bonding first as a human race. In "Beyond the Conflict: Women Spiritual Peacemakers in the Holy Lands," Dr. Blanch discusses the *Women's Interfaith Encounter* (WIE) which is a program that work with women in interfaith dialogue. Firstly, the women are able to relate on a human level, such as talking about their children and family life. "The women are building trust on a human level. They start to do things together and creating relationships, and by the time they get around to politics and controversial issues, they've come to care about each other" (Blanch). Secondly, because of the commonalities in text and history, as well as the belief in the same God, Abrahamic Reunion is able to use those commonalities to initiate bonding between the individuals and communities involved in the interfaith activities. Faith-based NGOs play a large role in the forming of interfaith dialogue, as many of the organization emphasize the importance for this type of work. Interfaith dialogue is the first step to initiating change from a grassroots level to produce an everlasting peace.

Faith-based NGOs also make it a top priority to work with those organizations and faiths around them. Many of these NGOs work very well with those not of their faith because of the common goals they share. Mr. Fisher believes that the partnerships that

CRS holds with NGOs and organizations of other faiths are held together by common missions and goals. “[...] whether it be working with Buddhist or Jews, these religious differences do not change the goal of helping those in need” (Fisher). Because of the greater religious mission of helping those in need, the organizations make it imperative to work well and respectfully with other religions. Faith-based NGOs have also noticed that the fact that they are religious organizations often times is not even noted because they are, first and foremost, a humanitarian organization. The International Catholic Migration Committee representative, June Bloom, noted in her interview that the fact they are a Catholic organization doesn’t matter because the people realize the organization is there to help regardless of religious affiliation (Bloom). There is also the example of the IOCC that also works with organizations such as ACT (Action by Churches Together), which is a global network of the agencies and churches that belong to the World Council of Churches. Because the IOCC is a member of ACT, they have extensive cooperation with other NGOs of other faiths, however it is not common that they participate in partnerships. Their cooperation work with the Muslim Palestinian organizations in the area also remain purely no in a religious or political manner. These are ways of keeping good relationships with other faiths and organizations in the area.

However, there are instances when it is the government of a given country that does not work well with the faith-based NGO. The government might have a certain problem with a religion and are not accepting of organizations of that certain faith. Mr. Recant described a situation like this in his interview. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee has had instances where they work in Muslim countries to either help with disaster relief or Jewish communities in the area. Although, the government

didn't want a Jewish organization working within its borders, the community itself ended up enjoying the relationship it had established with the organization. However, although this does occur, there are more often times where the government respects the NGO and recognizes it as a humanitarian aid NGO before having a political agenda. They recognize the help for what it is. There are also instances where the organization worked in local communities where they haven't heard of the Judaism (Recant). Again, this highlights the point that although religion is a founding part of the faith-based NGOs, it does not discourage people from working with, or seeking help from them. These instances provide a good foundation for true understanding to flourish because if an organization works well with a community, they are able to give a good name to their respective religion.

Conclusions

Abrahamic faith-based NGOs are essential in the peacemaking and development processes. Some faith-based NGOs have become a model for the most effective work in relief and development, even more so than the secular NGOs. Although they have proven to be successful in their missions and in their practices, there is also a lot more room for growth. As a final question in the interviews conducted, the interviewees were asked where they viewed faith-based NGOs within the next 5 or 10 years. Because religion is such a crucial part of people's everyday life, it was agreed upon that faith-based NGOs would continue to grow and develop as the years go on. Specifically, the faith-based NGOs that continue to work with the local community and create changes from the bottom up will be the most successful and predominate.

As such, they [the large faith-based NGOs] are basically accountable only to themselves and their board of directors [...] For faith-based NGOs to be successful in the future, we need to continue to maintain our commitment to our mission/vision - and at the same time model the most professional, transparent and effective partnership and provision of relief and development assistance worldwide. (van Gorp)

The Abrahamic faith-based NGOs that remain faithful to their mission, to serve God and to serve others as we are all made in the image and likeness of Him, will continue to be successful in bringing peace and development to those who are in need. In the case of Catholic Relief Services, they believe that international faith-based NGOs will continue to be poised in responding to emergency needs, as well as being a part of the cutting edge international development progress in helping build up the infrastructure of countries (Fisher). Because of the wide, varied experience that the faith-based NGOs carry, other secular foundations and organizations will look to them for help. The principles have great integrity, and draws deeply into the field of need.

Many also agree that the current Obama administration will help the mission of faith-based initiatives. President Obama designed a plan to strengthen the constitutional and legal grounding of former President Bush's Office of Faith-Based Initiatives. The office's role is to work on behalf of those organizations that want to work on behalf of the United States communities. Furthermore, President Obama has created the Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, which will provide an opportunity for faith-based groups to connect with the local neighborhood and deliver social services. As Dr. Blanch described in her interview, Bush's administration viewed religion to an extreme, often times turning away support for faith-based work. However, although it will continue to be hard, President Obama has created a respectful, moderate, less polarizing stance in which faith-based work can grow and help others. "This will allow us to move forward in a productive way" (Blanch). As the administration is allowing faith-based NGOs to grow and become apart of the local community, many organizations feel that this sentiment will carry on internationally. Reuniting faith and the local community and using them to address the current issues that we have in our world today, is the most effective and crucial way to approach peacemaking and development.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Center for Religious Tolerance Interview

Dr. Andrea Blanch

April 2, 2009

- 1) How do you think the organization works with the community (ies) you are working with? Do the people relate well with your organization? Are there any conflicts of interests?
 - a. Track 3 has to happen in order to make changes. It has to last...and you have to work in the field.
 - b. We need to have religious discourse at top level too, but faith-based work is really working at grassroots level.
 - c. It comes in not proselytizing form...one of the fundamental premises for grassroots work is that it is non-proselytizing. Takes thing back instead of forward.
- 2) How does your faith-based organization work with other faiths in the area? Have there ever been and minor or major conflicts? Has it affected the work you do in the area?
 - a. Track 3 responses are fundamental and people respond very well.
- 3) Where do you see faith-based NGOs within the next 5 years? 10 years?
 - a. We are going in the right direction.
 - b. Obama's election will help a lot, because while bush was in white house, his views on religion were so extreme and he was willing to step over some constitutional boundaries that were troubling. It made people very scared of religion. (Thought it was going to be a fundamentalist Christian government). Obama is taking a respectful position (it will still be hard) and moderate position, less polarizing; it will allow us to move forward in a very productive way. You will see huge growth
- 4) Do you see that the commonalities in the Abrahamic faiths (especially the belief in the same God) make it easier in interfaith dialogue?
 - a. yes. It makes it so much easier. There are so many similarities in the faiths, the common text and history, the fact that in essence all of the faiths came from the same family. "Abrahamic reunion=family reunion. Especially when you are working with people on the orthodox perspectives, many more questions about monotheism.
- 5) What benefits do you see in interfaith dialogue in regards to peacemaking?
 - a. Primarily in middle east, but there are religious conflicts everywhere. She doesn't think that sustainable peace is possible until religion is brought in. Oslo peace accords (10 years ago)- general feeling that failed because there were no religious leaders involved. In Middle East, people do not separate themselves from the religion. People's religion forms their day-to-day thinking. (Talking with god, about god). Culturally relevant, there

- had to be religion in peacemaking. Sustainable peace has to have religious parts....you have to bring in contextual factors of religion.
- b. Israel IS a religious state. The truth is citizenship is mediated by religion. These things will not be resolvable without religious aspect.
 - c. Pure folly that a western diplomatic process will bring peace in Middle East.
 - d. Religion has to be present. (Track 1- diplomacy→ big diplomats...formal diplomatic) (Track 2- other people who get brought into dialogue...more a grassroots level) (Track 3- refers to real grassroots in local communities.... development part in the thesis.)
- 6) Do people respond well to this approach? How important is it to have religious representation of each religion during these activities (like the presence of a priest or rabbi?)
- a. In the Middle East, in particular, it's pretty hierarchical and patriarchal. There's a whole another realm, those discussions and those activities can be even more important in grassroots work than the dialogue or scriptural discourse. When women get together (as an example) they start by talking about the family, their children and connecting on a human level. Building trust on a human level. They start to do things together and share ideas on their religious issues, by the time they get around to politics and controversial issues; they've come to care about each other. The relationships allow them to see the thing that you have started with, how much you have in common, and producing a peaceful solution on the commonalities.

Appendix B
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Interview
William Recant
March 10, 2009

- 1) What is the importance of the idea of vocation to the work that you do with your organization?
 - a. No, in Judaism there is not very much based on vocation...strong belief on social justice, and volunteerism and community service...unlike Christian missionary work.
- 2) Does your organization work specifically with Jewish people, or does it provide relief to people of all faiths
 - a. The core of the organization is to help Jewish communities outside of north America
 - b. Since 1986, a section does disaster and relief work that helps everyone
- 3) An article I read discussed the fact that since Jews have a history of persecution and suffering that people of the faith are particularly sensitive to human suffering. Do you find this to be a true statement?
 - a. The reason that Jewish NGOs and Jewish people are involved are multi faceted...some has to do with historical background, most has to do with general concept with the light unto the nations—supposed to be out there and share you best with other...this is more the motivation
- 4) Much of my research conducted has shown that faith-based organizations work at a community base level. How does your organization work with the communities you are helping? Do people within the community relate well with your organization?
 - a. Every case....They have worked with Muslim countries, government didn't want to allow working with Jewish organization and the communities with the partners ended up enjoying the relationship and with the organizations. In local communities, some haven't heard of Jews before, work well. Really strong partnerships both locally and internationally.
 - b. Builds bridges
- 5) How does your faith-based organization work with other faiths in the area? Have there ever been and minor or major conflicts?
 - a. They stay away from governments, they are non-political...only humanitarian aid organization, and helps build a strong bond with the governments of the countries because they are humanitarian aid before anything else.
- 6) (next 5 or 10 years)
 - a. The organization is 95 years old....will continue to along the same path. A lot of what you see in faith expansion came from bush administration and the money they put into and the way they talked about faith based work.
 - b. Obama will probably help them in the coming years with his new policies.

Appendix C
Catholic Relief Services Interview
Dennis Fisher
April 1, 2009

- 1) What is the importance of the idea of vocation to the work that you do with Catholic Relief Services?
 - b. They never really heard of this term come up (although they recognize how this would be important). The terms that they hear more frequently are that it's their mission, or their commitment to social justice. Although the idea of political solidarity comes up often, to show that their religion does affect their decisions in their lifestyle. These ideas are important to how the staff works and why they were called to work at CRS.
- 2) How do you think the organization works with the community (ies) you are working with? Do the people relate well with your organization? Are there any conflicts of interests?
 - a. There are over 5,000 operations in 100 different countries, including the United States. The United States programs work specifically with Catholics, while the programs abroad are not focused on faith. These programs just work towards helping provide relief as well as establishing long term programs (like micro financing). Also the staff is a majority Catholic, therefore they create a strong, Catholic community.
 - b. However, there is a model of partnership overseas. CRS uses the extensive network through the Catholic Church; therefore they have strong allies wherever they are located in the world.
 - c. In some long term and relief projects, some partners are not catholic. The partnership is held together by common missions and goals, whether it be working with Buddhist or Jews, these religious differences do not change the goal of helping those in need. Generally they find that there are common grounds in the same times of values and principles in the partners.
- 3) How does your faith-based organization work with other faiths in the area? Have there ever been and minor or major conflicts? Has it affected the work you do in the area?
 - a. No major conflicts to report. Like stated above, the idea that they have common goals and values with the people and organizations that they are working with help provide an even playing field, often times preventing conflicts.
- 4) Where do you see faith-based NGOs (in respects to Catholic Relief Services) within the next 5 years? 10 years?
 - a. As far as CRS, sees this international faith-based organization as always being poised to respond to emergency needs, but also as being part as the cutting edge of international development to helping build up the infrastructure of countries.

- b. Donors like foundations (like the Gates Foundation) will look at them with their experience (with things as micro finance), and hopefully this will bring them more opportunities to help those in need.

The fact that they are faith based may not be a significant characteristic. It happens that they are faith based. The principles have great integrity, draws deeply into the field of need.

Appendix D
International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Interview
Jane Bloom
April 1, 2009

- 1) What is the importance of the idea of vocation to the work that you do with your organization?
 - a. The ideas of vocation are strong and prevalent because of the teachings of the Catholic Church. The idea of welcoming the stranger is very important and a main reason why people feel they can work with the ICMC.
- 2) How do you think the organization works with the community (ies) you are working with? Do the people relate well with your organization? Are there any conflicts of interests?
 - a. Neither. The refugees (hopefully) know the organization is serving as OPE. The fact that they are a Catholic organization does not affect how the refugees view them, it is not anything special.
 - b. There are times that, because of the teaching of the Catholic Church, they can't partake in certain humanitarian relief, such as HIV prevention methods. They have to make sure they stick to what the teachings are. However this does not mean that they don't help these people at all. For example, they do provide housing and food for HIV patients while they receive treatment.
 - c. Each case on its own needs to be decided, regardless of religious orientation.
- 3) How has globalization helped or hindered your work?
 - a. neither.....specifically by region and how globalization has affected that area.
- 4) Where do you see faith-based NGOs (in relation to your organization) within the next 5 years? 10 years?
 - a. Differs within regions and topics.

Appendix E
International Orthodox Christian Charities Interview (By Email)
Dick Van Gorp, IOCC Palestine.
March 8, 2009

1) What is the importance of the idea of vocation to the work that you do with your organization?

I am assuming that you mean my own personal vocation (or profession). In this regard, vocation is very important - as my work with faith-based organizations over the past 15 years is my vocation. More to the point, I regard my work as my calling and what I believe God wants me to do with the abilities and blessings he has given me to use in this life. The primary and fundamental reason that I am engaged in this vocation/work is founded in the Christian gospels and teachings of our Savior Jesus Christ.

2) How do you think the organization works with the community (ies) you are working with? Do the people relate well with your organization? Are there any conflicts of interests?

IOCC works very closed and well with the communities we serve. IOCC's approach here in the Holy Land and elsewhere is very community based, participatory and utilizes local capacity & partners. Almost all IOCC staff is local staff from the country or area we are working in - with only a very few expatriate staff managers. People relate very well to IOCC from the communities we serve, and our partnership with the Church and other local organizations in these communities assists our efforts. Conflicts of interest always occur, but nothing of great significance.

3) How does your faith-based organization work with other faiths in the area? Have there ever been and minor or major conflicts? Has it affected the work you do in the area?

IOCC is a full member of ACT (Action by Churches Together) which is a global network of the agencies and churches that belong to the World Council of Churches. Through ACT and the WCC, we have extensive cooperation with other faith-based organizations that are also members of ACT or WCC, including most major protestant churches/agencies and other Orthodox Churches/agencies. With other faith based agencies (such as Catholic Relief Services or World Vision) we have good relations through whatever non-government organization coordinating bodies exist in our location of work. From time to time we may consider partnership work with such organizations, but this is not common. IOCC generally stays away from cooperation with any fundamental oriented Christian or other faith based organizations. Here in Palestine, we often cooperate and have

relations with organizations who are primarily Muslim Palestinian - but do not have any religious or political focus.

4) How has globalization helped or hindered your work?

Difficult question. The answer is both. This would take a lot of time to write to.

5) Where do you see faith-based NGOs within the next 5 years? 10 years?

Personally, I fully believe that some faith-based NGOs can become a model for the most effective work in relief and development - even more so than the secular NGOs. However, my belief in this is related to those faith based NGOs who actually are constituency based and have an official mission and relationship to their denomination and constituency. Such as IOCC, Lutheran World Relief, United Methodist Committee on Relief, Catholic Relief Services, etc. There are thousands of other 'faith-based' NGOs in our world - including folks such as World Vision, Samaritans Purse, etc. These may be large and successful, but they do not have a constituency or denominational relationship. As such, they are basically accountable only to themselves and their board of directors. For IOCC, we are accountable to every Orthodox faithful sitting in a SCOBA church in the USA. For faith-based NGOs to be successful in the future, we need to continue to maintain our commitment to our mission/vision - and at the same time model the most professional, transparent and effective partnership and provision of relief and development assistance worldwide.