

Advancing Interreligious Action

A Ten-Year Assessment of
GHR FOUNDATION
FUNDING on IRA



Overview

The USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC) was enlisted to review GHR's ten years of work to advance Interreligious Action (IRA). This report summarizes the key findings from CRCC's review and analysis such as 1) the construction of the organizational ecosystems to facilitate IRA, 2) the creation of a body of evidence to support the assumption that IRA programs make a difference in efforts toward sustainable development, 3) the cultivation of an ethos of accompaniment between GHR and its grantees and 4) a unique ability to bridge the goals and resources of high-level development actors with the needs and local knowledge of organizations working at the grassroots. CRCC's review concludes with recommendations for how GHR might evolve this work to reflect GHR's core values and its vision for the future. While the report is about the work undertaken as part of IRA, we hope the lessons may be useful to GHR as a foundation more broadly.





Background

GHR partnered with CRCC to develop a learning assessment and portfolio review of the Inter-religious Action (IRA) funding that GHR undertook beginning in 2009 to the current grants that remain active in the portfolio through Fall 2020.

CRCC's analysis is organized around two major goals of GHR's interreligious action initiative funding:

- Assess GHR's investments in inter-religious action within the context of faith as a powerful lever in achieving global development goals.
- Enable a responsible exit from this body of philanthropic work that shares a reservoir of knowledge with broader audiences to encourage adaptations in practice and that enhances investments by other funders in this arena.

This analysis is intended to assess the activities undertaken in GHR's IRA portfolio, which was guided by GHR's stated priorities. GHR funding has worked to ensure the uptake of IRA approaches through grantmaking that has focused on various efforts to achieve this goal:

1. Support and learn from interreligious grassroots projects (2009-12)
2. Influence multi/bi-lateral funders and large-scale INGOs to invest in IRA (2012-17)
3. Influence private funders and large-scale INGOs to invest in IRA (2017-19).¹

While initiative goals aimed at influencing funding for the most part, at the heart of GHR's effort was a desire to institutionalize IRA as an approach within the development sector—that is, IRA should be integral to development strategy rather than peripheral to it.

CRCC's review is designed to identify significant learnings as well as barriers and facilitators in GHR's IRA investments that may be useful in understanding the effectiveness of the work in the past. In addition, this review highlights lessons that can be carried forward as GHR evolves this funding strategy and reimagines it for the future.

¹ This period included an emphasis on nexus organizations that have the potential to scale their deployment of IRA in the development fields in which they work. These organizations are natural 'hub' organizations, which work across fields, donors and geographies and exert a wide breadth of impact.



Methodology

CRCC's approach to this learning exploration is to let the themes and findings emerge from the materials, rather than be guided by a hypothesis that predetermines our assessment and evaluation. In this way, we think of our work as a "grounded approach," drawing on grounded theory in sociology, which relies on the systematic gathering and analysis of data to drive the construction of theory using inductive insights.

CRCC's work is team-based and interdisciplinary, engaging journalists, anthropologists, sociologists and religious studies scholars, who pair academic rigor and methodology with applied research and evaluation tools. Our approach is to understand the philanthropic vision of the funder and the overall framework they use to understand their grants. Then CRCC undertakes a deep dive into the portfolio through a comprehensive analysis of grant materials, including concept notes, proposals, funding recommendations, reports, publications and evaluations.

In this instance, the CRCC team 1) reviewed all grants and supporting documents shared by GHR; 2) did a first pass and clustered the grants around emerging themes; 3) conducted a thematic analysis based on the heterogeneity of grant outputs and outcomes using grant documents and interviews with key personnel; 4) convened CRCC team members for an internal discussion of findings; then 5) presented these findings to GHR for feedback.

We presented our initial findings to the GHR team in July 2020. This presentation was followed by a meeting with GHR in August to do a deeper dive into GHR's reflections on our initial findings and to determine CRCC's next steps for additional work, including the creation of three case studies of organizations that illuminate important themes that emerged from CRCC's learning exploration. The three case studies explored within this review are:

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), a humanitarian organization, which was selected because the GHR investment helped JRS to radically redefine themselves organizationally around reconciliation and interreligious action.

Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP), a Nigerian non-governmental organization (NGO), which was chosen as an emergent nexus organization that might have relevance for those engaged in efforts to enlist faith-based actors in peacemaking and development work in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and largest economy.

Religions for Peace (RfP), which was selected because it has been critical for building interreligious action infrastructure, represents a substantial investment from GHR and, under new leadership, might evolve and harness those investments in ways that can support future funding initiatives involving additional organizations.

The preparation of these case studies included interviews with key informants from these organizations and their partners on the ground, as well as a deeper exploration of GHR documents, including internal reports relating to the organizations' development and goals.

In total, CRCC conducted 12 interviews with key informants from these and other organizations, including GHR staff, who were important in shaping the IRA funding or that were recipients of those funds.²

² A full list of interviews is in Appendix B.



IRA Portfolio³

The central activity of CRCC’s learning exploration was determining what GHR invested in and what resulted from those investments. The portfolio includes a range of grants, varying both in scale and duration. Forty-six grants were made to 20 organizations from 2009 to the present, with some grants still active, as of Fall 2020. GHR’s grantmaking within the scope of CRCC’s analysis represents a total of approximately \$17 million in funding, with the largest grant of \$1.6 million and the smallest of \$25,000. Grant periods ranged from two months to five years.

GHR clustered its grants into five areas, reflecting the desired outcomes that anchor GHR’s theory of change:

Desired Outcomes

- 1. Development actors employ inter-religious action approaches** (doing IRA more and doing it well). This work encompasses advocating for and enabling organizations to incorporate relationship-building between and among religious actors as a component of development or peace-building work. It can also include practical policy-change initiatives that foreground the work of faith actors and the knowledge they possess about their communities.
- 2. Inter-religious action is piloted in diverse social and geographic contexts** (showing the broad utility and adaptability of IRA strategies). This entails a two-pronged effort to bring religious actors together to build relational capital while also delivering on human development or peace-building goals.
- 3. Funders skillfully invest in inter-religious action** (funding IRA more and funding it well). This work requires relational and expert engagement to bring other funders on board. It is largely a function of the non-grantmaking activities of GHR staff.
- 4. Evidence base justifies and contextualizes IRA value-add** (establishing IRA standards and practices). These efforts focus on creating research and evaluations that illustrate how interreligious action is beneficial to development initiatives.
- 5. GHR effectively deploys IRA approaches across its broader program work** (leading by example). This presents an opportunity to embed IRA into GHR’s different priority areas, where appropriate and feasible.

³ In 2017, GHR hired ChangeCraft to conduct a review of IRA funding. Pages 4-7 of ChangeCraft’s report from May 2017 detail the origins of the IRA portfolio and situate it within GHR’s philanthropic context.

The IRA grantmaking utilized four support strategies to achieve the desired outcomes that describe how the program goals are being implemented or supported at the grant level. These support strategies align with the philanthropic classification system for support strategies as noted in brackets below.⁴

Supporting Strategies

- 1. Building field and community infrastructure to support inter-religious action. [Network building and collaboration, Capacity Building]** Developing networks among faith actors, the public sector and NGOs so that these organizations and individuals can work together on issues of common concern. Nurturing social cohesion by building community infrastructures to resolve conflict, especially in locations where conflict involves religious tensions.
- 2. Developing leadership and capacity via organizations and individuals (religious actors, women, youth). [Leadership and Professional Development]** Building organizational capacity to enable work with diverse faith actors, or increasing the organizational capacity of faith-centered organizations already doing this work.
- 3. Developing tools (how-to manuals, knowledge hubs) to support the practice and evaluation of inter-religious action [Program Support].** Building tools, capacity and knowledge for faith actors to use in their peace-building or development work, including better design, monitoring, evaluation and evidence-gathering for interreligious action programs.

- 4. Generating evidence of the value of inter-religious action approaches in certain contexts (child marriage, governance, peacebuilding, economic strengthening) [Research and Evaluation].** Producing evidence from research in action and funding evaluations that organizations can use to telegraph the effectiveness of their work to government agencies and other NGO partners who might not currently understand the important role that faith actors play in development and peace-building activities.

It is worth noting that while GHR eschewed a geographic focus to limit IRA grantmaking, there was clustering of grants that reflected implicit geographic priorities. The largest pool of funding was designated for global grants. These were given mostly to create networks or build evidence and evaluation tools for IRA work in largely US-based organizations. The next largest pool of funding was for grants in Nigeria, followed by Kenya, then Central African Republic. Future grantmaking efforts by GHR might benefit from the creation of more explicit geographical priorities and strategies. This would serve to focus program officers' efforts in ways that an implicit or diffuse geographic preference would not.

⁴ For more on this, see Candid Philanthropy: <https://taxonomy.candid.org/support-strategies>

Total Grants by Geographic Location

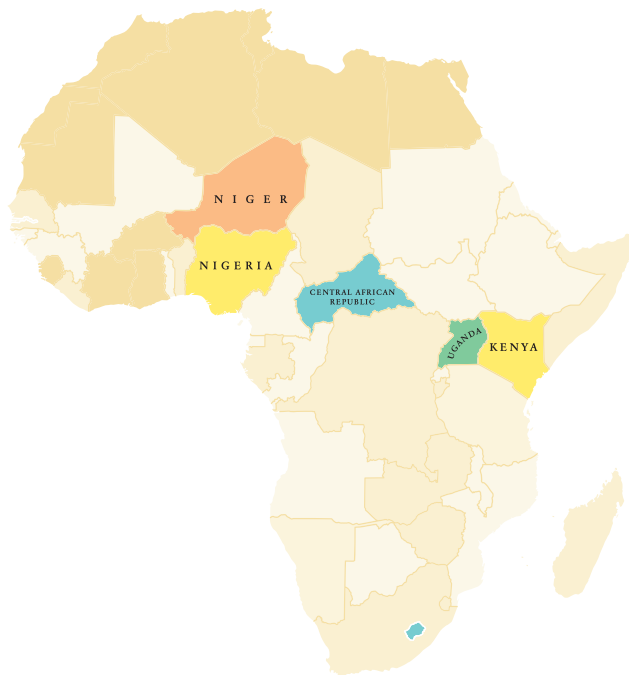
Region

Global	\$5,741,203
Africa	\$596,220
East Africa	\$30,118
Middle East	\$200,000

Country

Nigeria	\$5,097,868
Kenya	\$2,948,030
Central African Republic	\$1,360,000
Niger	\$600,000
Myanmar	\$400,00
Uganda	\$59,703

Total of all grants \$17,033,142





Notable Grant Accomplishments

Our review of GHR’s IRA portfolio reveals six areas of notable accomplishment, which we will highlight in the list below and analyze in greater detail in the following pages. We clustered these accomplishments into six areas, reflecting our understanding of their similarities. We then cross-referenced these categories with the corresponding outcomes and strategies that were articulated in GHR’s theory of change. The IRA portfolio’s notable accomplishments map to all but one of the outcomes and support strategies in the theory of change⁵:

- I. Organizational Infrastructure to Support Interreligious Action**
Aligns with supporting strategy #1: Building field and community infrastructure to support inter-religious action;
- II. Building Capacity and Knowledge for Religious Actors**
Aligns with supporting strategy #2: Developing leadership and capacity via organizations and individuals (religious actors, women, youth);

⁵ These findings from CRCC do not include any substantial data on outcome #3: funders skillfully invest in inter-religious action. This could be a function of the material CRCC reviewed for this report, which was largely grantee documents. We assume that much of the work for this area was done through non-grantmaking activity of GHR staff. The report notes constraints on the effectiveness of this work due to the limited staff time allotted to IRA in general.

III. Delivering Community-level Trainings to Promote Development and Contribute to Peace

Aligns with outcomes #1 and #2:
Development actors employ inter-religious action approaches and Inter-religious action is piloted in diverse social and geographic contexts;

IV. Developing Relationships and Networks Among Religious Actors, the Public Sector and NGOs

Aligns with supporting strategy #1:
Building field and community infrastructure to support IRA;

V. Fostering Better Design and Evidence-based Evaluation for Interreligious Action Programs

Aligns with supporting strategies #3 and #4:
Developing tools to support the practice and evaluation of inter-religious action and generating evidence of the value of inter-religious action approaches in certain contexts; and

VI. IRA Working Across GHR’s Funding Areas

Aligns with outcome #5: GHR effectively deploys IRA approaches across its broader program work.

The following, more detailed analysis of these six areas of accomplishment highlights exemplary cases that illustrate our main points about GHR’s IRA portfolio. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list of grantees that fall under each area of accomplishment.

I.

Organizational Infrastructure to Support Interreligious Action

From CRCC's perspective, GHR funding was designed to help build the capacity of organizations that are committed to working with religious actors on development, peacebuilding and the promotion of social cohesion. It should be noted that at the time GHR's IRA funding began, there was a renewed understanding, particularly in the United States after 9/11, that religion plays an important role in the lives of many people in the world. This understanding entails a concomitant appreciation for how religious communities, leadership and organizations can support a variety of policy initiatives, especially in the developing world. Though not universally held among international development actors, this view of religion's role in social change became more mainstream during the George W. Bush administration, which established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

Jesuit Refugee Service is perhaps the most successful example of an organization that remodeled itself to fully incorporate reconciliation and interreligious action into its operations. A grant to JRS in 2015 enabled an internal review of policies, the adoption of satisfaction measurements, the hiring of a new chief mission and identity officer and the consolidation of JRS's advocacy and communications departments into one combined initiative headed by a new director. These changes lay the foundation for GHR's investment in JRS's faith-based reconciliation work with refugees and their host communities. For more on the JRS example, see the case study insert.

Religions for Peace grants enabled the organization to build capacity on multiple fronts, following an internal assessment and reorganization. RfP convened exploratory stakeholder meetings and training events in Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Central African Republic (efforts to establish an interreligious council in CAR were diverted to Togo). RfP also convened a high-level forum in Abuja, Nigeria that strengthened RfP's relationships with their affiliated members and hosted a general assembly meeting where new officials were elected. Religions for Peace was also able to set up an interreligious council in Myanmar that launched significant programmatic work on child protection. A partner of RfP, the African Council of Religious Leaders, was able to engage in strategic planning, update its organizational constitution and governance structures, refurbish office space, build interreligious councils in Togo, Mali, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Burkina Faso, and develop regional hubs in Central Africa, South Africa and East Africa.

Three other organizations also grew in their capacity as a result of GHR funding.

- **The Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics Trust (CICC)** has been active in interreligious peace work since the 1990s, including a key partner in a GHR funded project with CRS to engage faith actors in the prevention of child marriage. GHR believed that direct investment in CICC would be a step toward long-term local ownership of inter-religious work to address key development challenges along the Kenya coast and to catalyze important social change. With funding from GHR, CICC established four resource centers, held planning meetings with 113 clerics, opened two county offices, established a baseline to track organizational capacity, and conducted training for its board of directors.
- **The Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI)** conceived the idea of hubs to aggregate relevant academic and evaluation tools and research to support IRA during a 2014 convening of GHR's IRA grantees. GHR offered an initial grant to develop JLI into a volunteer, committee-led project nested within Tearfund in the UK. With funding from GHR, JLI has become a robust repository of information on critical issues in which religion and development intersect. JLI has evolved into a freestanding

organization to ensure full and appropriate engagement of the capacities of faith-based groups in the achievement of the SDGs through effective partnerships with public sector and secular entities, as well as among religious groups themselves. The Knowledge Partnerships and Learning Hubs are enabling the engagement of the capacities and assets of faith groups to realize a world without poverty.

- A capacity-building consultancy with the **Tony Blair Institute for Global Change** was an element of the planning grant for the fellowship program developed by the **Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP)**. This bolstering of COFP's capacities enabled COFP to implement and launch the program more effectively.

II. Building Capacity and Knowledge for Religious Actors

This funded work involved building out training programs that enabled participants to learn about religious “others” and deepen their knowledge of their own traditions while also acquiring skills and developing projects to advance peace and development goals in their communities. Andreas Hipple describes this undertaking as “[Giving] people tools and ways to embrace interreligious collaboration around development issues... and normalize the idea that you work across religious divides and help to increase religious literacy effectively, respectfully and lovingly.” Each grant worked on building interreligious understanding in order to undertake development work in an interreligious context, with varying degrees of emphasis on those two components, toward the ultimate goal of advancing social cohesion.

The initiative funded through the Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace, Building Commitment Against Violent Religious Extremism Through Dialogue and Action In Nigeria, showed that influential local organizations are especially important in promoting interreligious action, as there is significant capacity to be found in Nigerian NGOs. COFP is an important Nigerian nexus organization, as it operates nationally with real influence on a range of other organizations; indeed, this ongoing grant will involve the development of several partnerships that could have lasting impact on COFP (and vice versa). Building the conflict-management skills of community leaders and providing opportunities for collaboration to solve common challenges improves trust and security, the necessary elements for lasting peace. This improvement in social cohesion highlights the fact that investment in influential faith actors as conflict negotiators can have ripple effects across their communities.

The third and final module of the COFP training program, which will have trained approximately 100 fellows by June 2021, includes skill-building to identify personal prejudices that influence program outcomes, conduct conflict analyses and design programs that build or support social cohesion.

GHR partnered with Mercy Corps to build social cohesion and peace in Nigeria through their Supporting Harmonious Association, Religious Participation and Engagement for Northern Nigeria (TARE) and Inter-Religious Peacebuilding in Northern Nigeria (IPNN) projects. The IPNN activities revealed that ongoing, low-level conflict is thwarting Nigeria’s economic development to an enormous extent. Both initiatives emphasized practical action and dialogue to address the root causes of violence. TARE worked to build the capacities of local people, faith-based organizations and religious institutions to reduce conflict under the guiding assumption that there is a central role for religion and religious leaders in peacebuilding, security and development, particularly through communicating and working with youth. Subsequent to the interreligious activity funded through TARE, the localities where participants undertook peace-building initiatives saw a 22 percent decline in young people’s participation in violence. Research funded through the IPNN found that religious leaders have great potential to influence people’s attitudes and behaviors. The influence of religious leaders who received mediation training was mentioned in the final grant report as one of the reasons for the reduction of conflict.



Catholic Relief Services (CRS) developed a curriculum for interreligious engagement and dialogue with faith leaders through their Capacity for Interreligious Community Action (CIRCA) project. This work trained 118 participants: 45 Muslims, 71 Christians, and two adherents of traditional religion. Training included a strong relational approach for engaging in dialogue as personal, theological and development action. Religious leaders were engaged and trained, and their organizations with development staff initiated concrete development programs that were in line with their organizational goals. While these trainings produced personal, professional and development outcomes that were beneficial, they had limited impact on the cultures and operating procedures of the organizations involved in the trainings.



III.

Delivering Community-level Trainings to Promote Development and Contribute to Peace

Projects funded training and capacity-building programs that focused on building capacity and knowledge among a diverse array of actors and stakeholders at the community level as well as delivering programs to impact:

- vulnerable youth
- trauma
- conflict reduction and peace-building
- social cohesion
- vocational training

In total, the grants reported trainings, workshops and meetings for 34,216 participants.⁶

GHR viewed these grants as piloting projects to test IRA assumptions and explored the conditions under which IRA added value, in order to learn lessons and refine or improve the thinking that guided subsequent projects. It is unclear whether the grantees saw themselves as piloting novel approaches; instead, many saw these programs as opportunities to develop organizational capacity for IRA, enable leaders to implement IRA learning and training or to respond to the needs of the communities they serve.

Grant-funded projects like Catholic Relief Services' Central African Republic Interfaith Peacebuilding Partnership (CIPP) showcase the interconnectedness of these types of efforts. This grant to promote social cohesion helped to develop a community of practice that oper-

ates under the auspices of the CIPP Consortium (made up of CRS, Islamic Relief, World Vision and Aegis Trust). It offered social cohesion training and activities as well as various capacity-building programs. It also developed programs on trauma healing and recovery, livelihood security, youth vocational training and employment and savings groups, and a peace education traveling exhibit. In addition, through other grants, CIPP also coordinates parallel social cohesion activities, offers support to business associations and micro enterprises, and has developed family and child protection programs. A report on CIPP's training initiative observed:

The goals of the trauma healing intervention workshops were to train local laypeople (non-clinicians), religious leaders and business leaders to provide an intervention that decreased psychological distress and increased receptivity of participants who were invited to attend a peace education workshop. The evaluation was designed to assess the outcomes of each program independently and in tandem. The evaluation found that both interventions significantly reduced the level of distress of the participants. The order in which the workshops were delivered to participants (i.e., trauma healing prior to peace education or peace education prior to trauma healing) did not significantly affect the positive outcomes.

⁶ This number is based on the identifiable numbers in final grant reports, and several grantees did not report the numbers of people attending major meetings, conferences, trainings and workshops. It also includes a few programs like the Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry trainings in CAR which were part of pre-existing programs that predate GHR funding.

Both the peace education and trauma healing workshop activities provided a shared experience among women and men of Catholic, Protestant and Muslim faiths and traditional beliefs.⁷

In the Central African Republic, Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry (LPGM), a relatively small NGO, adopted a best-in-class community savings and loan program called Savings for Change that was originally developed by Oxfam and piloted by Mercy Corps. The LPGM program expanded the Evangelical Lutheran Church's Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) and was able to convene and train Muslim and Christian community members, particularly women. Conflict resolution and social cohesion work was less important to the members of the VSLA, whose members viewed conflict reduction as external to their mandate.

As described in the final report, the VSLA program was incredibly successful in terms of changing financial behavior. Funds that were deposited by VSLA members in 2016, 2017 and 2018 totaled approximately \$1.4 million. More than \$200,000 in interest was earned from loans made by the individual savings groups over the same three-year period. The program trained nearly 12,000 individuals.⁸ A beneficiary of the program said:

When I was 32 years old, I was begging, like most of my kind, asking for money from villagers who laughed at me or sometimes insulted me, which made me sicker (trauma). Being married, my wife was doing the small business to support our little family. The appearance of the Village

Savings and Loan Association program caught the attention of my wife, who joined the Sara Si Mo Ga Zo association. From time to time I represented her at the meetings, when she was unable to attend. At the end of the first cycle, my wife helped me initiate a revenue generating activity, with part of her capital from sharing. I began selling essential items like sugar, soap, coffee and salt. Part of the profit from my activity was spent on savings in my association every week. At the end of the cycle, my wife and I mobilized our income to invest in the construction of the family home. To this day my business flourishes, and so does my wife's, because I have a small shop in the village. And my wife buys some agricultural products that she stores in the house, reselling them at times of shortage with a higher profit. We can now ensure our care, the schooling of our children, and project more significant investment prospects. Thanks to the AVEC (VSL) Program I went from being a paralyzed beggar and unworthy person to a responsible person worthy and respected by everyone in my village and renowned in the surrounding communities. May God bless those far or near who support the initiative of the Village Savings and Loan program in the Central African Republic.

Water projects in Myanmar (RfP) were developed in 2013 against the backdrop of rising interreligious tension and conflict between Buddhists and Muslims in the Meikhtila area. This violence resulted in the displacement of Muslim populations in the Thiriminalar quarter, which had limited water resources and damaged infrastructure. The straining of resources as a result of the conflict threatened to exacerbate the growing tensions. An interfaith committee was established in the conflict area by Religions for Peace-Myanmar. A Muslim woman who had received peacebuilding and leadership training

7 "Operational Research Report: Mental Health Intervention of Trauma, Depression, and Anxiety and Promoting Peace in the Central African Republic," page 5. This report is an assessment of the CIPP training.

8 These numbers reflect the total of the VSLA program, not only those created by LPGM. In 2016, there were already 322 groups. By the end of 2018, 119 new groups had been created, according to the final LPGM report.

from RfP took the lead in advocating for peace. Partnering with Buddhist women, the initiative engaged Buddhist communities and local township authorities to upgrade water infrastructure and provide equitable access to water for all religious groups. According to RfP, the trust and partnerships built during this initiative continue to bring people together to discuss common challenges and find solutions through collaboration.

Catholic Relief Services engaged in several development projects as part of the work GHR funded through the Capacity for Inter-Religious Community Action connector initiative. After training in interreligious dialogue and engagement, community-based projects were undertaken. Managed through the Islamo-Christian Dialogue Commission of Niger, additional projects developed income generation projects for youth and women, early childhood education centers in Egypt, potable water and micro-finance projects in Kenya (in partnership with

Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics and the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya), a poultry and farming program in Tanzania, water and sanitation projects in Nigeria, and a honey processing plant in Uganda.

The malaria prevention program in Nigeria (through the Nigerian Interfaith Action Association) equipped faith leaders with tools and knowledge to enable them to teach their congregants and other community members how to reduce the scourge of malaria by taking concrete actions such as using mosquito bed nets correctly and consistently, and seeking treatment as recommended. The project developed an intentional process, built into the multi-faith training system, that allowed participants to reflect on their interfaith engagement using “action-together” models to systematically promote mutual understanding—or “pluralism in action.” The project was ultimately a success, though progress was hampered by delays in the procurement of mosquito nets by the Nigerian government.



IV. Developing Relationships and Networks Among Religious Actors, the Public Sector and NGOs

Notable in the grants are also a host of convenings, ranging from international conclaves to meetings of local stakeholders. Some of these grant-funded activities were embedded within other grants as a means of strengthening organizations, growing networks, and sharing evidence and research. Additionally, some of the work of initiating and building these networks was facilitated by non-grantmaking efforts of GHR program staff, such as helping to make introductions between individuals and organizations working on similar issues or within a shared geography. As Mary Dalsin of GHR noted, “You can’t run with these conversations [program development/design] not including these very key actors that are already doing this work. We would help network them.”

Networking is a preliminary and necessary stage in the more time- and trust-intensive process of building strong, sustainable interfaith collaborations. In particular, it helps to build an initial level of trust and commitment, allows for the sharing of mission goals and programs that could be of mutual benefit, and offers organizations and their leadership exposure to the common challenges and resources available in the field. As such, GHR’s non-grant making activities that help grantees foster opportunities for networking have a vital role in eventually enabling successful inter-religious collaborative engagements. “There’s so much there about relationship building and networking and connecting,” said GHR’s Kerry Medek. “If you can’t be out and about and doing it, it’s really difficult.”

The Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding was awarded a small grant to convene members of its global grassroots peacebuilding peer network, Peacemakers in Action. “Peacemakers in Action was started in 1997 to highlight individuals driven by faith, pursuing peace despite the risks to themselves, document their work and provide recognition of that work,”⁹ according to an internal GHR document. The program brought together members of participant organizations to help build capacity and relationships across the network in order to create a sense of community and shared work. It also enabled Tanenbaum to develop a monitoring tool for the peacebuilders to begin to understand where and how they have impact.

The United States Institute of Peace was awarded three grants to support its Generation Change fellowship program, providing youth peacebuilders with the opportunity to attend and present at the General Assembly of Religions for Peace in Abuja, Nigeria. GHR’s grantmaking also provided several years of funding for a delegation meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India.¹⁰ USIP participants noted that the access to these global platforms and networks helped them reimagine their work beyond the local context and begin to see themselves as leaders on a larger scale.

Several grantees as well as GHR program staff noted their participation in the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, along with various other meetings and conversations with government agencies in the United States and Germany. In addition, the World Bank Conference on Religion and Sustainable Development engaged with GHR staff and IRA grantees to elevate the work of faith actors in development to a larger platform.

⁹ 11926 Grant Funding Recommendation.

¹⁰ Brie Loskota, executive director of the USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture, took part in both of these convenings, given CRCC’s role as co-designer and implementation partner for USIP’s Generation Change Fellows Program.

V.

Fostering Better Design and Evidence-based Evaluation for Interreligious Action Programs

To support the wider uptake of IRA strategies, some grant-making focused on generating evidence from research and evaluation that organizations can use to telegraph the effectiveness of their IRA work. The IRA portfolio contains a lot of activity in this area, laying the groundwork for future IRA efforts. Gathering information, creating tools to implement new knowledge and making these resources more widely available are the foundational work in this category.

The Center of Excellence for Multi-religious Cooperation received a grant to create a knowledge hub that researches, documents, evaluates and shares experiences, lesson learned and best practices related to multi-religious efforts to transform conflict and advance development, particularly within the 90 national inter-religious councils (IRCs). Religions for Peace conducted a study of its 90 regional and national IRCs to obtain empirical evidence of the effect of interreligious action. As a result, the Center of Excellence for Multi-religious Cooperation has produced and workshopped background papers to provide religious communities and organizations with tools to promote positive discussion and advocacy and to develop programming on various issues. For example, it produced and shared a series of papers (“Welcoming the Other,” “Conflict Prevention and Transformation,” “Just and Harmonious Societies,” “Human Development that Respects the Earth” and “Religious and Multi-religious Education”) with more than 700 religious leaders and faith-based organizations. In Myanmar, “Welcoming the Other” was used as a guide to develop social cohesion initiatives to repair relationships between Muslims and Buddhists in areas where there has been social unrest.

The Alliance for Peacebuilding and the Tanenbaum Center launched efforts to build evaluation capacity for interreligious peacebuilding work. It should be noted that the Alliance for Peacebuilding undertook additional work, including a literature analysis of faith and peacemaking theories of change, to encourage better project design as an essential component of the evaluation process. Religions for Peace and the Joint Learning Initiative created clearinghouses for evidence, knowledge and scholarship on interreligious action, though their websites can be difficult to navigate, and information is not always easily accessible.



VI. IRA Working Across GHR's Funding Areas

While there were not many grants in the portfolio review that reflect the incorporation of IRA approaches across GHR's funding areas, it may be that such grants are counted and housed within other program areas, that these opportunities weren't fully realized, or that IRA was not well-understood across the organization. One notable exception was the effort to build the interreligious knowledge and capacity of Catholic sisters. In particular, a 2013 grant to the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) and a later grant to the Association of Consecrated Women of Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) provided training opportunities to Catholic sisters in interreligious dialogue and the care that must be taken when working with diverse religious populations where Catholic sisters are present. Additionally, the grant to Catholic Relief Services to support Capacity for Inter-religious Community Action (CIRCA) created a partnership between CRS and the Association of Sisterhoods in Kenya (AOSK) to include Catholic sisters in training and development projects. GHR staff members noted ongoing conversations among program staff about including religious actors in the work of changing the system of alternative care for orphans.





Challenges to the IRA program

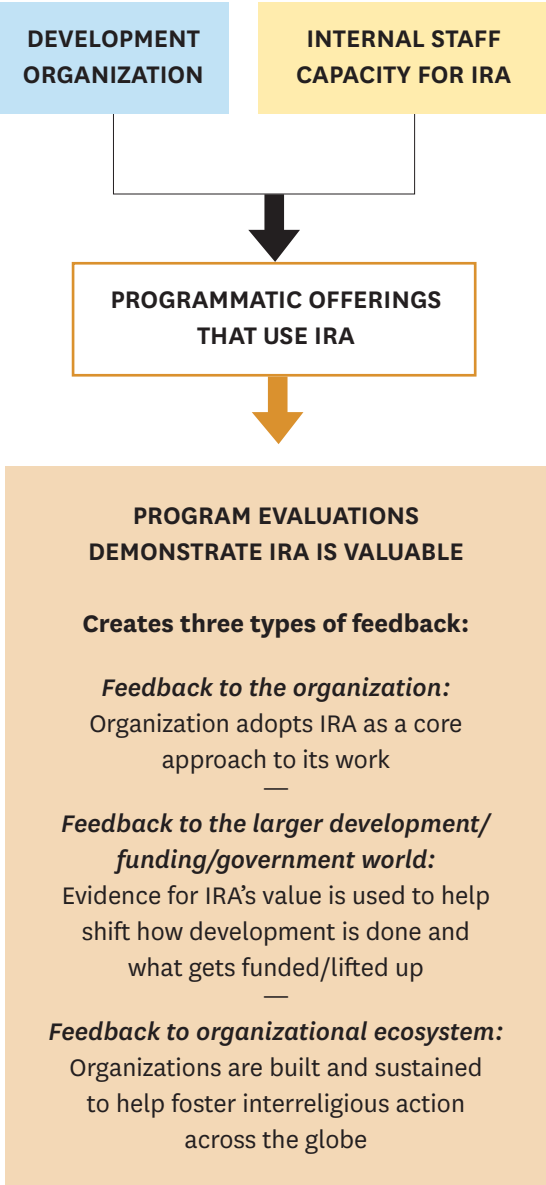
While the IRA portfolio has racked up some notable achievements, it did so despite the challenges it faced. This next section speaks to issues our research uncovered including lack of an explicit theory of change and lack of common definition of IRA work amongst the community, while also highlighting general strengths and weaknesses relative to how the initiative change and where it struggled.

Implicit Theory of Change

The notable accomplishments above point to the efforts made to realize the outcomes and support strategies of Interreligious Action at GHR. While not articulated explicitly in a strategy document, the grants in total paint a picture of an implicit theory of change that can be broken into a central assumption with five distinct but interconnected areas of application (see diagram right). Below we unpack how this theory could play out and highlight the utility of uncovering a theory of change early in planning.

IRA was designed to enable development organizations to work with religious populations to do development work in a new way. The key assumption was that, in order for this collaborative work to occur, development organizations would need to have the internal capacities to work competently with religious groups in a way that enabled dialogue and relationship-building.

Organizations partnering with faith-based actors would not only deliver programs and services but also adopt this collaborative approach and incorporate it into their own practices. Such organizations would then change the way that they operate as well as the programs they offer and would be able to document that body of work. The documentation of collaborative work with faith groups would then be useful in changing the way that development is conceived and undertaken by governments, funders and NGOs.



Following are the six subsidiary assumptions in the implicit theory of change that threads through GHR's IRA portfolio:

- The majority of the world is of faith, faith actors are trusted members of their communities and faith shapes people's decisions and behaviors. Thus, faith shows up as a vital factor in development, which means that engaging with people through the dimension of faith is necessary for sustainable change to take root.
- Strong organizations and strong (trained and knowledgeable) interreligious actors will lead the way for development, self-sufficiency and peace in a given region or area.
- Local training, education and knowledge-building will contribute to the self-sufficiency of the population and peace in communities.
- Interreligious actors and programs add particular value to these efforts.
- These efforts would form the basis for evidence of IRA's value. This will enable various actors in NGOs and governments to take faith actors working together seriously.
- Local work, networks, evidence and organizational capacity will bubble up to larger-scale efforts and coalesce into a field.

An illustration of how the application of these assumptions is intended to shape on-the-ground development work in which Catholic Relief Services articulates its hopes for its GHR-supported efforts:

If local faith communities and their leaders, including Muslims, Christians and other cultural groups, engage in personal healing, rebuild internal group cohesion, and participate in intergroup dialogue, training and practical initiatives to meet shared needs, then, over time, mutual understanding, tolerance and trust will be enhanced, because healing, reconciliation, joint decision-making and action represent opportunities for positive interactions that can break down stereotypes and hostility, contributing to peace and security.

As Andreas Hipple noted, "Inter-Religions Action fundamentally is about people of different faiths, working together on issues of common concern to make progress on those issues, as well as to create a space for trust-building that can advance and strengthen social cohesion." That work can involve faith actors working across their own faith, with different faiths and with people of no faith.

There is a tension here, in which the desire to see results in terms of development outcomes within the timeframe of a grant (“evidence of progress”) strains against the fact that those outcomes are more sustainable over a longer term if they are preceded by the often incremental process of relational trust-building (“how change actually happens”). The foundation acknowledges this tension and emphasizes patience; however, even a ten-year initiative might not produce the kind of deep engagement and lasting change that the Foundation desires. Hipple also remarked that creatively working with this push-and-pull between the exigencies of development and the lived realities of human communities actually enables not only greater social cohesion but better development, even if it might elongate the time-frame.

“If you have stronger social cohesions from trust-building,” Hipple said, “then you are actually going to get more done on the development side. But perhaps the time-frame for that is beyond the scope of a foundation to think about.”

Overall this implicit theory of change represents a tremendous amount of work across different types of organizations: changing their organizational framework of priorities, building their internal capacities, enabling them to deliver programs and training aligned to IRA’s methods and goals, then documenting all of this work to advocate for a shift in funding and priorities in the larger development world. When viewed from this perspective, it is not difficult to see how IRA was a heavy lift for one foundation, even over the course of a decade.

Defining IRA

The language of interreligious action is not organic to those doing the work funded by the grants in this portfolio. In many ways, that novelty was an asset, as it enabled organizations to mold IRA into something that made sense in their context. In other ways, the lack of grounding of IRA language and concepts sometimes made it difficult for outsiders (from secular development workers to local faith leaders) to understand what GHR was trying to advance. This abstractness even challenged GHR’s staff, each of whom had a distinct definition for IRA.

These observations from our portfolio review and key informant interviews left us with some enduring questions about the meaning of IRA in different contexts and the parameters of the IRA portfolio. For example, does IRA mean:

- fostering an appreciation and knowledge about the religious “other” independent of development imperatives, project actions or outcomes?
- advancing the role of religious actors in doing work related to development, peace-building and social cohesion?
- advancing a particular way of engaging across faith divides that adds value to an activity or outcome?

As yet, there is no Rosetta Stone to facilitate the translation of IRA imperatives into the vernacular understood by the diverse array of stakeholders in GHR’s initiatives. It was unclear from the learning exploration if grantees saw themselves as partners in a larger effort to pilot and advance the centrality of IRA within their spheres, or if IRA represented an opportunity for them to carry out work that might be valuable without being connected to a higher-level goal to transform how development was conceived and carried out. In fact, different grantees created their own understandings of IRA, tailored to their unique organizational and operational contexts. For the Alliance for Peacebuilding, interreligious action was seen as a component of peacebuilding work:

Interreligious action for peacebuilding (or interreligious peacebuilding) is defined broadly as peacebuilding initiatives that involve religious actors and institutions, focus on religious narratives, target religious dimensions of a conflict, or promote peace within (intra-religious) between (interreligious) religious groups. Action may take place at any level or scale in support of solidarity, cooperation, prevention of conflict, or conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Inter-religious peacebuilders are those who define themselves as religiously motivated and who work, either at the political leadership or grassroots level, to prevent or end a cultural, structural and violent conflict, with a particular emphasis on religious pluralism. They may operate out of a religious or faith identity (in coordination with or despite other identities) or leverage religion as a catalyst for conflict transformation. Therefore, inter-religious action for peacebuilding is the engagement of actors from different faiths, institutions, identities, narratives and groups to support peace, whether or not the conflict involves religious groups or identities and whether or not the methodology or operation of the intervention is religious or secular [emphasis added].

As Catholic Relief Services understands it, IRA is part of peacebuilding:

Interreligious peacebuilding brings together individuals, groups and institutions of different faiths and cultural traditions, and draws on their spiritual values. It engages in processes of dialogue, mediation, reconciliation, mutual problem solving and practical actions that promote greater mutual understanding, respect and social equity to achieve harmonious coexistence for the common good. The effort involves identification of commonalities, modification of misconceptions and acceptance of differences. It often strives for individual transformation and healing, as well as work to build greater cohesion within groups. These endeavors recognize that religion can provide a prophetic voice for justice and peace, while acknowledging that it can also be manipulated to promote disharmony and dominance.

These multiple definitions reflect part of GHR's approach to IRA, which was a continuation of the Christian-Muslim cooperative funding that preceded it. It was an attempt to broaden the conversation as well as the work. And in keeping with the organization's ethos of openness and adaptability, GHR was not heavy-handed or rigid in defining the central concept of its key philanthropic initiatives. GHR had an intentional and implicit understanding that bringing various actors together would produce relationships and engagement that would create sustainable development and peacebuilding practices.

“I think everybody can define [IRA] for themselves and I think that’s okay,” said GHR’s Kerry Medek. “But if I were to define it, I think that it is the bringing together of at least two or more members of the different faiths to reflect together, to spend time together, to encounter... It’s about creating space and intentionality of encounter across religious lines to understand one another in that way. And there’s a belief that that understanding will lead to attitude change, behavior change, perception change, just a host of things that change the next action that you take in a positive way.”

Perhaps if the IRA initiative were to continue, it would be worth refining and defining the idea, after a decade of work organized around it, in order to provide a common touchstone for everyone with a stake in the ongoing projects of human development and social cohesion.

Assessing IRA’s Strengths and Weaknesses

In many ways, interreligious action was conceptualized 1) to advance the role that religions play in development, humanitarian work and peacebuilding, particularly in African countries, and 2) to advocate for a relational approach to engagement across religious lines because GHR believed that would generate greater social cohesion and lead to better development outcomes. These two imperatives offer a unique and valuable way of doing work that benefits communities in terms of actual development and peacebuilding outcomes, while advancing the conditions that contribute to long-term social cohesion. This section highlights where IRA was able to achieve change and where it struggled.

Who was engaged: The IRA work funded by GHR both reinforced traditional religious authority and also broadened the circle of those who are considered faith leaders and religious actors. Efforts were made to engage high-level religious actors to serve as signalers and modelers of what is religiously exemplary. Cardinal John Onaiyekan, founder of the Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace, is an example of such a

religious exemplar. Like Cardinal Onaiyekan, these actors tend to be men in traditional positions of power within institutional hierarchies. If they were the only actors engaged through IRA work, this would signify a limited view of religious leadership. GHR, however, opted to make its work with faith actors an intentional effort to uncover non-traditional or overlooked leaders—in particular, youth and women. This more equitable framing of faith actors enables youth and women to participate in development activities, though often at more local levels. Even when women and youth were engaged, there were many instances in which men determined how women would be able to participate in a given project.

IRA appeals differently to the different subgroups that were impacted by the programs that GHR funded. Those in pastoral roles expressed a deep appreciation for opportunities to experience interpersonal engagement and reflection. Those whose work focused more directly on the nuts-and-bolts of human development appreciated that GHR’s IRA initiative funded programs like Catholic Relief Services CIRCA project, which helped grantees hone practical skills to help improve their communities through grassroots projects. While the idea of interreligious action represented a holistic approach to development for GHR, various actors noted that discrete elements of the IRA approach were most valuable to them.

Context. Relatedly, IRA can have a range of meanings and applications in different contexts. In particular, there may be differences in how interfaith action is undertaken when religious actors are part of an ongoing conflict, when particular faith groups see themselves as victims in a conflict they are not a part of, or—conversely—when diverse communities in a given context enjoy a degree of harmony. In sum, the broad and somewhat amorphous notion of interreligious action would benefit from greater clarification to help those interested in implementing IRA initiatives to understand how to do so in their particular context.

Localization. Localization has become an important way to reform humanitarian and development work, enabling local communities and governments to build the capacity for development work and to design projects that reflect local contexts. USAID set out a goal to localize 30 percent of its foreign aid by 2015. In this context, religious actors play a particularly valuable role, as they have a unique understanding of the communities in which they are embedded.

Development activities funded by GHR occurred at the local, community level. Even when the coordination of activities was in conversation with broader state or regional efforts, the impacts of training, development, peacebuilding and other initiatives were experienced by people at the grassroots. Additionally, many of the networks that were created or supported by GHR funding—for example, the Tanenbaum Center’s work with peacebuilders and Cardinal Onaiyekan’s fellowship program—were intended to help uplift the work of the people and communities most in need. In fact, GHR-funded IRA programming was particularly valuable and impactful when it delivered programs at the local level. These projects, however, were limited, and many initiatives did not live beyond their implementation if they were not connected to an organization’s ongoing priorities. Ensuring a commitment to long-term engagement around evolving community needs is something to consider as GHR thinks about building organizational capacity.

Capacity building projects. While much of the IRA development work and network-building were grassroots-oriented, efforts around capacity-building at the organizational level emphasized country and regional actors. This was particularly true for funding that built the infrastructure to support interreligious action undertaken by Religions for Peace and the African Council of Religious Leaders. One notable exception was the Mombasa-based Coast Interfaith Council, which operates at the county level covering one region of Kenya.

Increasing organizational capacity met with limited success when training individuals was the primary mode of capacity-building. Training is effective at improving individuals’ knowledge, skill-sets and networks. However, the benefits of individual training are limited when it comes to changing organizational practices. And the joint training of staff from different organizations did not produce long-term cooperation outside the scope of the project that was implemented as an element of the training program. These two issues highlight organizations’ resistance to changing their practices, even when there is an openness to learning new ways of doing things. Expectations about the impact of training on organizations should be curtailed appropriately. If organizational transformation is desired, training might be a tool toward that end, but it must be only one component of a larger intervention if organization-level change is the desired outcome.

For Whom. As GHR set out to build support for religious actors working together to foster social cohesion and promote development, often across religious and communal divides, there was a sense that evidence would play an important role in bolstering that support. The Alliance for Peacebuilding, however, found that before organizations could provide robust evaluations of their work, they needed support on the front end to design effective programs that could be evaluated. This points to a lack of initial assessment around the knowledge and capacities of local religious actors and their organizations. Significant support was needed to build their capacity before their local know-how could be leveraged to build effective programming that would create the desired evidence of impact and change.

Further, there was an assumption that if there were empirical evidence for the effectiveness of IRA, this data would help move governments, other funders and NGOs to be open to collaboration with on-the-ground religious actors, whose embeddedness in local contexts would enable them—and, by extension, their funders and collaborators—to have a positive impact on social cohesion. Work to strengthen

evaluation and expand the evidence base to support interreligious action generally targeted NGO leaders, funders, evaluators and academics. The body of evidence to support these claims was amassed and made available through innovative projects like the Joint Learning Committee, which created online repositories of evidence to support these assumptions. It was also advanced through the non-grantmaking activities of GHR staff, particularly in Washington, D.C., where Andreas Hipple became well-known as an advocate for religious actors in development and peace-building conversations.

Yet, the existence of this evidence and efforts to make it more accessible were not enough to create the desired realignment in the development world, primarily because there was no accompanying analysis of who needed what sort of evidence in order to make a particular decision. Indeed, the work was guided by a “if you build it, they will come” notion of how change happens that was proven false by events as they actually unfolded. Future efforts in this arena would benefit from 1) building organizational capacity to deliver effective programs with evaluation as a component, 2) a power analysis of what evidence would be useful to the various actors in a given sphere and what barriers the organization might face to transmitting evidence, 3) a clear articulation of what success would look like if the evidence were used and 4) a greater investment in staff time to make these connections and adaptations.

Caution about Gender and Sexual Violence

GHR engaged women, youth and children as both faith actors and beneficiaries in the IRA funding. CRCC believes it is worth a word of caution about how religions and gender-based and sexual violence intersect. Interfaith modes of engaging with gendered issues such as women, girls, sexuality and violence can reinforce sexist and patriarchal notions that it is the responsibility of women and girls to protect themselves from sexual aggressors, or that simply promoting “family values” and respect for elders is an effective mode of combatting sexual violence. While exploring scripture or religious teaching may promote interreligious engagement, those texts or traditions can be patriarchal and may become instruments of harm rather than help. In our review of Catholic Relief Services’ Dialogue in Action program we saw, in the evaluation grant provided to the International Center for Research on Women, that the interreligious dialogue approach did not directly address cultural norms and practices related to marriage, kinship and gender relations. Culture overrides everything, including religion, especially in rural areas. The involvement of a Catholic partner (CRS) in a predominantly Muslim area was viewed suspiciously by some communities, who feared that they were being proselytized. The issues of gender and sexual violence thus may also reinforce where an IRA approach would benefit from specificity and nuance, including the recognition of IRA’s limitations in places where religious actors harm vulnerable populations. This story has a positive outcome that should also be mentioned. Responding to these findings, CRS and CICC engaged traditional and religious leaders and target populations (parents, youth, boda-boda drivers) to become change agents in ensuring protection of vulnerable girls against early marriages.

Strategy Issues

IRA's broad uptake as a development strategy was hampered by:

- the diffuse variety of organizations and partners engaged;
- the lack of a shared definition of IRA across organizations;
- desultory approaches to IRA;
- being relegated to the status of a sub-conversation about the role of religion in development, peacebuilding and social cohesion;
- a general lack of organizational adoption;
- a loosely organized interreligious infrastructure;
- the lack of GHR staffing to advance the efforts beyond grantmaking, particularly advocacy with other funders and partners.

When this funding began, interreligious action was a central organizing principle for only a few organizations. As IRA evolved as a strategy, Jesuit Refugee Service became one of a handful of organizations to fully adopt the approach and position these notions as the guiding lights of its operations. In that way, JRS provides an example of the potential that IRA represented. JRS, however, is an outlier; IRA was not broadly adopted by other GHR partners.

IRA is a stateless idea. It falls between many other priority areas in philanthropic fields where actors are also fighting for recognition. In the development world, IRA is often viewed as a means of implementing larger development priorities or programs, or as a subject for organizational or individual training. In the peacebuilding arena, IRA is viewed as an option primarily when religious violence is a component of the conflict situation being addressed. For those interested in promoting social cohesion, IRA is one of any number of considerations that may potentially contribute to harmony and stability. And, finally, in the arena of regional security or stabilization, these types of community-level engagements are viewed as part of the soft, nebulous side of efforts to reduce conflict.

While these multiple potential intersections with other thought-streams in the development world might seem like assets, the indeterminacy of IRA made it hard for a constituency to coalesce around this work. And without a broad range of organizations championing IRA, there were few people to advocate seriously and consistently for the types of realignments necessary to change funder practices to support it. Instead, organizations that believed in the potential of IRA were able to approach GHR for funding, but seemed rarely able to convince others beyond the GHR orbit of the strategy's importance.

Ultimately, these efforts did not coalesce into a larger movement or field, which would require many more years of effort and investment. We believe that field-building is a less helpful goal because the aspiration to establish a philanthropic field can become an end in itself; meanwhile, effort and investment in places where the need is greatest is diverted to support the staffing and strategy required to get the grand project off the ground.

GHR staff have occasionally used the terms “field” and “field-building” to describe the work under the IRA portfolio. The Bridgespan group was asked by the James Irvine Foundation to articulate an approach to assessing the strengths and needs of a field. They developed the Strong Field Framework (see table below), which is designed to help “improve the overall infrastructure of a field, enabling the organizations within it to achieve greater social impact... Importantly, however, the goal of field-building is not to make each organization follow the same strategy or approach; rather, it is to enable a variety of organizations to operate and collaborate more effectively, whether their efforts center on specific aspects of the field or are more broadly focused.”¹¹

For IRA, an initial assessment of the field revealed that it may not have had the components necessary for a field. Specifically, there was a lack of shared definition as to what IRA is; as

noted above, organizations developed their own definitions. It is speculation, but it may be that some organizations adopted GHR’s language as a means to secure funding. Also, as noted earlier in this report, there was a nascent organizational infrastructure for this work that was essentially being built “while the bridge was being crossed.” There was no clear theory of change, shared methodology, or analysis of power to determine who needed to be moved for change to occur. Many of the methodological and training resources for how to do IRA stayed within the organizations that created them, hindering the standardization of approach and the sharing of best practices. Thus, champions for this work did not emerge, and the ultimate vision of what success would look like remained murky.

It should be noted that the infrastructure developed and nurtured under the IRA banner was also being used to make the case for the value of the work to external entities that

The Strong Field Framework

Shared Identity Community aligned around a common purpose and a set of core values			
Standards of Practice	Knowledge Base	Leadership and Grassroots Support	Funding and Supporting Policy
Codification of standards of practice Exemplary models and resources (e.g., how-to guides) Available resources to support implementation (e.g., technical assistance) Respected credentialing/ ongoing professional development training for practitioners and leaders	Credible evidence that practice achieves desired outcomes Community of researchers to study and advance practice Vehicles to collect, analyze, debate and disseminate knowledge	Influential leaders and exemplary organizations across key segments of the field (e.g., practitioners, researchers, business leaders, policymakers) Broad base of support from major constituencies	Enabling policy environment that supports and encourages model practices Organized funding streams from public, philanthropic and corporate sources of support

¹¹ <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/philanthropy/the-strong-field-framework-a-guide-and-toolkit-for> page 3.



needed to be brought along. In sum, the fruits of this work are realized over the long term. As GHR seeks to shift and pivot, there are a few relationships and organizations that have been deeply invested in and that are just beginning to realize the fruits of these investments—in particular, Religions for Peace, the Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace, Joint Learning Initiative and Jesuit Refugee Service.

The strategy was able to produce an increase in funded organizations’ capacities to work with religious actors and to deliver programs that advance human development goals. It advanced the discussion about the role that religions play in promoting development, peace and social cohesion. It was able to build infrastructure to support this work, including development organizations, program design best practices and tools to support evidence-gathering and evaluation. And through non-grant-making program staff activities, GHR was able to carry the banner of this work to critical partners like USAID and the UK Department for International Development.





Redesigning for Greater Impact

As GHR explores the next phase of its work related to religions, peace, development and social cohesion, it would be good to consider the following components that were factors in the IRA analysis. Lessons learned from the IRA initiative are tactical considerations for the next strategy as well as core organizational tenets that are worth carrying forward in future funding.

The Tenets GHR Embodies in the Work

IRA exemplified the organizations' deeply held values through how it implemented its program. As GHR looks to the future, it might imagine the legacy of the IRA portfolio as an expression of the organization's deeply held values. In particular, IRA and work with religious actors represented a commitment to hope, witness, rootedness in community, creating partnerships based on trust and accompanying organizations as they do their work in a relational way.¹² GHR might consider institutionalizing these tenets in the following ways:

Subsidiarity (enabling decisions to be made at the smallest, lowest level of competent authority rather than dictating decisions from the top down). GHR's IRA initiative has brought credibility because of its focus on subsidiarity—empowering local decision-making. GHR is well-respected for how it invests in organizations doing the work on the ground at the community level. Those relationships add valuable knowledge to partnerships at the global level like the Vatican that GHR might want to engage. “Inviting and encouraging and amplifying the voices of the people actually doing the work so that they're the ones who are ultimately defining and refining what change is,” Andreas Hipple.

Accompaniment (being present through the difficult work of evolving organizational practices without being heavy-handed or dictating priorities). GHR's philanthropic orientation as exemplified by the IRA portfolio is one of accompaniment. It stands uniquely situated, bucking the trend in philanthropy toward top-down dictation of goals, outputs and outcomes, and embodying a different type of work that is relational, not transactional. The value of this was resounding across many of the grant reports and interviews, where GHR staff were praised for their partnership and accompaniment approach.

¹² In these ways, it is reminiscent of an embodied approach to a dialogue of life. In 1984, the Pontifical Council on Interreligious Dialogue detailed a Catholic approach to dialogue that avoids the pitfalls of being “just talk.” Instead, dialogue is a four-tiered way to engage life, action, exchange and experience. Dialogue of Life: People strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations. Dialogue of Action: Collaboration for the integral development and liberation of people. Dialogue of Theological Exchange: Seeking to deepen understanding of religious heritages and to appreciate the other's spiritual values. Dialogue of Religious Experiences: Where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches (for example prayer, contemplation, faith).

Living transformation (desiring for people impacted by development challenges to experience the world they seek to create as they do the work of creating it). This approach is an appreciation for not simply doing good development work but for doing work in such a way that enables people to experience a different world—one of mutuality, respect and shared investment—while producing valuable outcomes. This stands in stark contrast to an outputs- or efficiency-driven approach to philanthropy or development.

Bridging religious competency (equipping people with the skills and tools to build bridges between different religious communities). The IRA strategy enabled GHR to articulate the value of religious communities working together to solve common challenges and to do so in ways that advance social cohesion. There are very few funders that value interreligious activity as a fundamental good and who have the competency to work across religious lines.

These tenets that CRCC surfaced in our exploration of the IRA portfolio mirror the values that GHR articulated for itself:

- 1) Lead with love
- 2) Partner boldly
- 3) Reimagine what is possible
- 4) Navigate and adapt

GHR was overwhelmingly acknowledged by grantees as an ideal funder, whose values are clear and embodied in the way in which the Foundation carries out its work. It should be a point of pride for the Foundation, especially in an era when foundations are being pushed toward greater standardization and bureaucratization, that GHR's values-led approach resists these trends and is highly prized by grantees. In fact, GHR staff received glowing praise from grantees for the way in which they conduct themselves in the grantmaker-grantee relationship. As GHR pivots toward a new strategy, how GHR conducts itself as a foundation should be given special attention. Being a relational grantmaker that centers the needs of the people doing the work—rather than being a top-down grantmaker that dictates what the field should look like and produce—is unique in a broader philanthropic culture that is struggling with the imperative to be more quantitative and outputs-focused. We commend GHR's approach of co-creation with grantees, of being flexible and responsive to their needs while helping them imagine what is possible.

Narrow the Scope and Focus to Enable Deeper Learning

The IRA strategy required too much explanatory and organizational effort—from the need to build infrastructure to the need to define the approach and align organizations to it, all while building the evidence of its effectiveness and seeking buy-in from more organizations and funders. The lack of a geographic focus and a plan to phase these priorities added to the complexity of the task. The next strategy would benefit from narrowing the scope of the effort so that deep learning can take place. Building on that deep learning and importing lessons into new areas over time can help create momentum and a track record of success. Doing so will also help GHR's staff to establish reasonable milestones that can be achieved as learning, growth, adaptation and alignment take place. Define an achievable ultimate goal and ideal state of affairs that are attainable within the timeframe of your anticipated funding.

GHR might consider making a more focused effort to work within the Catholic ecology of organizations. A focus on Catholic organizations might more easily leverage the “Francis moment,” an openness at the highest levels of the Vatican toward interreligious engagement and peace-building and an emphasis on integral human development. Pope Francis’ latest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* (“All Brothers”), shares his increasing alarm at the growing close-mindedness, violence and conflict he observes around the world. He uses the parable of an injured stranger by the road and says that humans have two choices facing them: to pass by or to stop and help. *Fratelli Tutti*’s origins are rooted in the Pope’s earlier environmental encyclical, *Laudato Si* (“Praise Be To You”), which examines humanity’s relationship to nature and to each other. *Fratelli Tutti* lays out a vision for human solidarity with a focus on dialogue, an “open heart” and social friendship, along with a reminder that all religions are called to the service of fraternity. Francis specifically calls for engaging in a “better kind of politics for the common and universal good” of all humankind.¹³

This strategy offers the benefit of being more clearly defined and provides some more sharply delineated targets and potential champions, as well as a fresh opportunity to articulate an ideal organizational state, which were struggles in the original IRA strategy. This ecosystem of organizations would have enough commonality that they could collectively advance this work beyond their own organization’s goals and agenda, though the fruits of those efforts may take a long time to realize.

It should be noted, however, that not all organizations will be willing or interested in evolving with GHR. Some organizations are able to deliver high quality programs targeting people outside of their organization and to build staff capacity to carry out those programs and partnerships in a competent way. Yet, may not be able or perhaps willing to incorporate the ideas and methods of IRA into their core organizational practices. As GHR hones its approach, it will need to decide whether programmatic excellence, organizational transformation, or field-building is the goal.

The Francis moment is clearly an opportunity worth leveraging. It might be tempting to situate this work within the Vatican itself, opting for high-level access at the expense of the local knowledge and relationships that were built through the grantmaking done under the IRA initiative. We view that as too limiting; in fact, that strategy would jettison some of the most valuable aspects of IRA: the deep understanding and appreciation for what is happening on the ground in places where help is most needed. We view a relationship with high-level actors as a unique leverage point for GHR because GHR is able to be a bridge between these actors and communities in some of the world’s most underserved regions. GHR’s credibility lies in its multi-leveled access, deftly helping a grantee navigate the requirements for a potable water

¹³ Fratelli Tutti (3 October 2020): Francis. Retrieved October 20, 2020, from http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

project in a rural part of sub-Saharan Africa and intimately discussing the values and methodologies for sustainable development with the Vatican.

In addition, an orientation toward working within the Catholic ecosystem might also enable GHR to tackle issues within the Church that would leverage the origins of the initial IRA funding, when it was launched under the banner of Catholic-Muslim common action. There is anti-Muslim bias within Catholic spheres, which could be a challenge for the new initiative to consider.

Use language and ways of framing ideas that are more familiar to organizations and actors with whom you would like to partner.

The IRA language presented a barrier for organizations that might have been aligned to the work but did not understand GHR's way of describing it, as noted in this report. Rather than inventing a new set of terms, GHR might find language that is organic to those doing the work. Funders can be committed to their own framing of ideas and terms of art, which organizations might adopt out of financial considerations or opportunism, rather than true philosophical alignment. Organizations may not even be aware of the larger strategic goals they are ostensibly working to advance. Before deciding on phrasing, test whether the language under consideration resonates with the actors currently in or proximate to the work that would be funded.

Create a power map and analysis of those who are in positions to facilitate the strategy's goals as well as those who might present bottlenecks or opposition to your goals.

There may also be beneficiaries who are impacted by your work who are not able to advocate for themselves. The IRA strategy operated under the assumption that if you build the tools and evidence, funders, organizations and even the larger fields that intersect with IRA will be moved by the evidence to change the way they do business. Instead, advocacy, diplomacy, organizing and amassing influence and power are all key elements of the process of effecting change. GHR will have to find an approach that matches its organizational culture as it navigates the fraught waters of change-making.¹⁴

Invest in staff time to carry out the work.

All of this requires not only astute grantmaking but also staff time to make connections, represent the work and advocate in the halls of power. Another limitation of IRA was the lack of staffing support to advance the work. GHR staff have a heavy lift, involving the creation and maintenance of networks, bridging between organizations and helping to advocate for the inclusion of interreligious work within professional, funding and policy circles. All of that requires dedicated staff to undertake those tasks, in addition to the grant-making work. GHR's deeply embedded tenet of accompaniment also necessitates careful attention to how all of its work is carried out using relational and diplomatic tactics, rather than heavy-handed, top down hegemony. Appropriate staffing will be a critical element of the success of the new strategy.

¹⁴ It might be worth engaging with Anthony Thigpenn's work on power analysis, which is detailed in his book *Power Tools: A Manual for Organizations Fighting for Justice*.



Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Woven throughout this report are several findings and recommendations worth collecting and restating below:

FINDINGS

While GHR eschewed a geographic focus to limit IRA grantmaking, there was clustering of grants that reflected implicit geographic priorities.

As a strategy, IRA suffered from a few flaws that inhibited its uptake. Most notably, IRA is a stateless idea without a pre-existing constituency.

While the idea of interreligious action represented a holistic approach to development for GHR, various actors noted that discrete elements of the IRA approach were more valuable to them.

Localization has become an important way to reform humanitarian and development work, enabling local communities and governments to build capacity and design projects in ways that reflect local contexts. Influential local organizations are especially important in promoting interreligious action. GHR-funded IRA programming was particularly valuable and impactful when it delivered programs at the local level.

Investment in influential faith actors as conflict negotiators can have ripple effects across their communities.

The localities where participants undertook peace-building initiatives saw a 22 percent decline in young people’s participation in violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future grantmaking efforts by GHR might benefit from the creation of more explicit geographical priorities and strategies.

Narrow the scope and focus of the new strategy, especially in the beginning, to enable deeper learning. This entails making hard choices about pursuing a strategy of organizational transformation, program/service delivery, field-building/realignment around particular ideas or advocacy.

Clearly communicate the larger goals of the strategy so that grantees can contribute to those goals, not only to their discrete programmatic outputs.

Ensuring a commitment to long-term engagement around evolving community needs is something to consider as GHR thinks about building organizational capacity.

The broad and somewhat amorphous notion of interreligious action would benefit from greater clarification to help those interested in implementing IRA initiatives to understand how to do so in their particular context.

Continue to foster GHR’s relationships with local actors who can both deliver on development and social cohesion outcomes, and provide critical insight to larger policy-making efforts that operate globally.

Culture overrides everything, including religion, especially in rural areas.

The issues of gender and sexual violence may also reinforce where an IRA approach would benefit from specificity and nuance, including the recognition of IRA's limitations in places where religious actors harm vulnerable populations.

Do not shy away from grappling with the areas/issues where religious actors contribute to problems and reinforce harmful norms.

Clearinghouses for evidence, knowledge and scholarship on interreligious action were created, but the websites where this information is housed can be difficult to navigate, and information is not always easily accessible.

Ensure that a focus on the availability of information is paired with efforts to ensure the usability of information.

Create a power map and analysis of those who are in positions to facilitate the strategy's goals as well as those who might present bottlenecks or opposition to your goals.

The benefits of individual training are limited when it comes to changing organizational practices. And the joint training of staff from different organizations did not produce long-term cooperation outside the scope of the project that was implemented as an element of the training program.

If organizational transformation is desired, training might be a tool toward that end, but it must be only one component of a larger intervention to inculcate sustainable organization-level change.

GHR is recognized and valued for its relational, accompaniment approach

Invest in staff time to build relationships with grantees and to help advance strategic goals with funders, government agencies and other partners to bring them on board.





Conclusion

This review provides an opportunity for the Foundation to take stock of the accomplishments and activities it has catalogued through \$17 million in investment over a decade. We urge GHR to take the time to reflect on the insights and recommendations offered here—to take a step back so that you might then take a purposeful step forward. We invite GHR to grapple with important questions that emerged from CRCC’s analysis:

- How will GHR continue to bridge the resources available through its high-level access to the Vatican and other global human development actors with the needs and knowledge of those working at the grassroots?
- How will you focus your strategy so that you can undertake work of lasting value and build on those accomplishments over time?
- How will you conceptualize the entire range of activity that you do beyond project development and grantmaking?

It is clear to us that GHR offers something of unique and important value, not just in what you do, but in how you do it. We hope that uniqueness and value will be enhanced by the analysis and recommendations that we offer here.



CASE
STUDY

1

Religions for Peace

Introduction

Religions for Peace (RfP), founded in 1970, is an international coalition of representatives from the world's religions dedicated to promoting peace. The International Secretariat headquarters is in New York City, with regional conferences in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas. As of August 2019, Azza Karam became the new Secretary General, succeeding William F. Vendley. RfP comprises 90 national and six regional Interreligious Councils (IRCs), each of which is built on the principle of religious representativity, reflecting the fabric of multi-religious demography on those levels. Each IRC also includes networks of women and youth at their respective national and local levels (these are the Women of Faith Network (WoFN) and Interfaith Youth Network (IYN)) as well as their religious constituencies.

As described by program staff, the programmatic approach of RfP is that with a network in place, shared problems and challenges for peace are identified by the multiple stakeholders in order to explore ways of assessing the assets (material, spiritual and social capital), roles, responsibilities and capacity-building requirements to address shared challenges.

The strategic priority areas for RfP's goals of peace development include: Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies; Gender Equality; Sustainable Environment; Freedom of Thought; Conscience and Religion; Interreligious Education; Multi-religious Collaboration and Global Partnerships.

GHR Investments

According to all data shared by GHR with CRCC, to date, the total value of GHR's grantmaking to RfP is approximately \$3.4 million. The smallest of these grants was \$75,000 and the largest was more than \$1.6 million.

GHR's Investment in RfP can be broadly disaggregated into three (sometimes overlapping) areas. These include:

Capacity Building (C): Grants made to strengthen the organizational infrastructure of interreligious councils, particularly the capacity of religious leadership to understand the fundamentals of governance, resources management, administration, financial and project management. The scope of this capacity-building also includes fundraising, managing donor funds, project implementation and monitoring and evaluation. There is also significant investment in supporting leadership renewal, leadership transition and the development of strategic plans at the international and regional levels of RfP and its member councils. This work sometimes included the production, sharing and workshopping of lessons learned and best practices as organizational tools for developing future programming.

Networking and Collaboration (N): Grants made to establish interreligious councils and develop relationships between national and regional leadership around particular action areas through meetings, workshops and conferences.

Development grants (D): Grants for training and capacity building around peace and development work, including services for vulnerable children, maternal health, orphaned children, Covid-19 response as well as training for interreligious councils, women and youth in advocacy work.

RfP-Myanmar Case Study

Among the RfP grantees, RfP-Myanmar reflects multiple aspects of GHR's grantmaking strategy and also raises important issues and ideas related to how GHR may decide to pursue similar projects going forward.

Background

Religions for Peace International sponsors many peacebuilding initiatives that are then implemented by its national and regional affiliates. Religions for Peace-Myanmar (RfP-M), one of these national affiliations, was established in 2012 as a local non-governmental organization that would guide the formalization of an Interreligious Council of Myanmar.

Rev. Kyoichi Sugino, Deputy Secretary General of RfP-International, first made forays into Myanmar to explore the potential for the program development in 2000. At the time, the country was still under military governance, and there was limited space for civil society groups to operate freely. However, soon after the dissolving of the military junta in 2011, RfP-M was established to facilitate the creation of an interreligious council (IRC), which would be the first interreligious institution in the country. From the outset, RfP-M's decision to be attentive to the fraught context of Buddhist-Muslim relations in Myanmar has proved to be an important feature of enabling collaborative success.

The stated purpose of RfP-M is "to offer a platform for religious leaders to partner on joint advocacy, coordinated program response and training, mobilization of local communities around issues of public concern, and channeling resources through local congregations and other faith groups." The organizational structure of RfP-M consists of three leadership and implementation levels, which reflect the particular operational principles of RfP-International. At the very top of the leadership structure is the "Core Group," consisting of leaders represent-

ing key religious demographic segments in the country.¹ The meso-level consists of the executive council appointed by RfP-M's leadership, the leadership of the Interfaith Youth Network and Women of Faith Network. The third organizational level consists of the local implementation bodies and secretaries general, as well as the broader network of partner organizations like Caritas (Karuna) and other local NGO entities that implement programming.

GHR Funding

GHR made a seed grant of \$200,000 to RfP-M for the purpose of supporting staff time, operations, travel and the direct implementation of a project on “advancing inter-communal harmony and social cohesion through interreligious cooperation for the protection of vulnerable children” in six regions of the country. The grant facilitated training sessions about maternal health, child protection and children’s wellbeing.

According to Rev. Sugino, this initial grant reflected two of the funding priorities of GHR: interreligious action and services for vulnerable children. The latter was explicitly framed as a development goal that was expected to be a common purpose grounded in moral reasoning and shared across religious and local groups, which provided the foundation for an interreligious institutional structure. Ultimately, the aim was to create a social infrastructure that would be continuously repurposed and revitalized to support ongoing development aims and purposes. This aim aligns with RfP’s organizational principle of “cultivating a habit of collaboration.”

For example, although the Buddhist NGO Ratana Metta, one of the core Buddhist leadership organizations of RfP-M, had an extensive child wellbeing and protection program, the organization had no prior experience working at the interfaith level. Because of its connection to RfP-M and the related organizational infrastructure, Ratana Metta was able to establish the Myanmar Interfaith for Children platform in 2014.

In 2015, GHR made a second, two-year seed grant of \$200,000 to enable RfP-M to institutionalize organizational procedures that were put into place during the first grant and streamline systems to maximize effectiveness. These processes included building the capacity of RfP-M’s governing body to ensure proper program and financial management, as well as bolstering RfP-M’s multi-religious network through the development of a website and social media platforms. Specifically, the grant was meant to provide targeted support to senior religious leaders on the fundamentals of governance, and training for staff on secretariat administration, financial and project management, fundraising, project implementation and monitoring and evaluation, all with a view toward allowing RfP Myanmar to be self-sustaining.

In addition to technical capacity development, the program supported interfaith dialogues in six locations and engaged interfaith leaders in development activities and humanitarian aid relief, which represented a continuation of the programming for vulnerable children that was funded by the first grant. Since the vulnerable children’s program ended, RfP-M has participated in other GHR-funded programs, including initiatives focusing on peace and reconciliation, environmental degradation and, most recently, humanitarian responses to the COVID-19 pandemic .

¹ These included, for example, the Myanmar Council of Churches, which coordinates Protestant churches; the Catholic church, with 16 dioceses across the country; and the Islamic Center of Myanmar. It is interesting to note that Buddhist representation at this leadership level came not from the religious monastic council, but rather from the nationally recognized Buddhist NGO Ratana Metta, as monastic institutions (Sangha councils) were perceived as relatively disengaged from social welfare development goals.

Lessons Learned

GHR has made significant investments in different local branches of RfP, particularly through grants that are intended to build both the internal capacity of these organizations as well as the relationships and networks that connect them to other stakeholders, both religious and non-religious. Taken as a group, the results of these grants represent opportunities that can be developed further as the needs and priorities of the foundation evolve over time. In this final section we describe five insights gleaned from across the RfP grants that can inform how GHR might continue to develop relationships with grantees like RfP in the future.

1. Building Organizations and Networks

Taken as a whole, the grants awarded to RfP organizations were intended to develop the internal capabilities and missions of the organizations and to nurture relationships and networks with other actors/stakeholders that were also working (or had the potential to work) at the intersection of development and interreligious work. According to the reports we analyzed, these efforts were successful across the board. Local RfP organizations were able to clarify their mission and develop their capacities to do the work they intended, and relationships and networks took shape as intended. The results of these efforts represent untapped potential that the organizations can utilize in their ongoing and future work. Thus, while these organization- and network-building efforts are essential for doing work “on the ground,” they are not sufficient in themselves. In order to accomplish development and/or interreligious goals, these capacities and relationships need to continue to be nurtured, developed and utilized in specific initiatives intended to achieve particular goals.

2. Local Knowledge: Understanding Context and Conditions

A crucial insight that emerged from our interview with Rev. Sugino was the importance of knowing and understanding the local context and conditions in which the RfP Myanmar project was

developed. Sugino reported that the project as funded was 15 years in the making, as it was neither safe nor conducive to success for the project to be launched any earlier. Thus, knowing when it is a good time to do interfaith work and when it is not, based on an analysis of the particular circumstances, is key to a project’s success.

Another benefit of deep local knowledge is the ability to capitalize on existing elements of the local (or national) culture and conditions. For example, the RfP Myanmar project was able to leverage two different pieces of local knowledge. First, Myanmar has a longer history of inter-faith education, which provided an opportunity for RfP to appeal to and build on that history in pulling together a workable inter-religious network of actors. Second, RfP-M identified a local Buddhist NGO—Rattan Metta—that had been successfully working in the area of vulnerable children. RfP-M was able to include this organization in their collaborative network and structure their inter-religious efforts to complement what Rattan Metta had already accomplished.

3. Accompaniment, Subsidiarity, Relational Funding and a “Culture of Collaboration”

A grantee’s ongoing, active involvement with the Foundation—through the program officer—allows for a deeper understanding of grantee activities and challenges and provides a sense to the grantee that their needs around a particular project will be met. This relationship is, of course, a two-way street: The grantee needs to accurately report on their activities, needs, networks and collaborations, with the understanding that this reporting contributes to a larger pool of knowledge that will inform the Foundation’s decisions and grantmaking, and ultimately help the grantee as well. In turn, this relational knowledge-sharing contributes to the development of the “habit of collaboration” (in the words of Religions for Peace) that is necessary for grantees to accomplish both their short-term goals and their longer-term impacts.

4. Solving Shared Problems

Success at interreligious engagement is more likely if competing groups have an opportunity to focus on solving a common problem. That is, CRCC has found that most religious or religiously motivated groups are less interested in interreligious work per se than in focusing on particular problems, through which other stakeholders (including those from different religious traditions) can be enlisted as co-laborers. The success of such an effort is partly dependent on all parties having a good understanding of the local context and the opportunities that lie therein (see our remarks on the importance of local knowledge above). But success is also dependent on finding a real-world problem to address that all groups can agree needs solving, and on leveraging the internal capacities, relationships and networks that have already been built.

Thus, there is a dual focus of funding for GHR: Interreligious activities grow out of an individual organization's collaboration with other groups, who are all working toward solving a development priority for the Foundation (e.g., vulnerable children or COVID-19). This focus on a particular problem that affects the larger population thus enables a "habit of collaboration" to emerge between different stakeholders, including otherwise competing religious groups, and has potential to keep things innovative and evolving. Interfaith collaboration is thus built upon an extrinsic goal in which all the partners are invested. The so-called "collaborative advantage" of interreligious work is an outcome of the actors' coming together for a common cause or goal.

5. Success of Interreligious Collaboration Attracts Other Funders

As reported by RfP Myanmar staff, initial grant funding to lay the necessary organizational groundwork and develop relationships and networks with local stakeholders proved necessary to establish a track-record of effectiveness in their efforts. This, in turn, enabled RfP-M to pursue and attract other funders whose interests intersected with those of RfP. In turn, because the effectiveness of interreligious collaboration for achieving certain development goals was demonstrated, it became possible—indeed, easier—to encourage other funders to take up IRA work. For example, RfP-M was able to successfully approach other granting organizations (such as USIP and UNICEF) and government agencies (the US Department of State as well as the foreign ministries of Sweden, Norway, Japan and Germany) to support their programs, and thereby support interreligious infrastructures and priorities.² Indeed, after the initial GHR funding, RfP-M created, with funding from other agencies, an interfaith Advisory Forum on National Reconciliation and Peace that meets annually. As Rev. Sugino put it: "GHR helped consolidate the interreligious structure in the country and quickly position them to go out for additional funding and donors." These investments were made because (1) funders were committed to a particular development goal and found IRA collaboration a useful tool for doing the work effectively on the ground and (2) because funders found in RfP-M a functioning collaborative leadership culture that was able to carry out the work with other partners.

2 With the technical guidance of RfP, seven proposals were submitted and five were successful (RfP-M received funding from the US State Department, USIP and the RfP Japan, which funded three projects). These new projects more than doubled the organization's budget. The projects enabled RfP-M to obtain its official registration as a national NGO and to open its own US dollar bank account, which allowed it to become more independent in the management of its finances.

6. Short-term Outputs and Long-term Impacts

Finally, all of the above highlights the underlying tension between the desire for short-term outputs (i.e., achieving the specific goals of a particular grant) and the hope for outcomes that may result from the project over the long term. Thus, while the particular outputs of a grant are obviously of interest to the funder, how are the investments in organizational and collaborative development viewed by the funder after the grant period has ended? In the case of RfP, most of the funding went to efforts to build the different RfP organizations and their networks so that they would have the necessary capacity and relationships to accomplish other development-oriented work.

Conclusion

The efforts that GHR has made to build the capacity of RfP organizations (and other organizations) represent the necessary prerequisites for accomplishing larger development and inter-religious goals. Still, meeting these initial needs is not sufficient for long-term success unless these organizations are continually nurtured so that they can establish a track record of fruitful collaboration. Thus, continuing to support and develop the capacity of organizations like RfP over the longer term is essential as GHR reaches toward a variety of development and interreligious goals.



CASE
STUDY **2**

Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation *for Peace* (COFP)

“If religion is not about good relations among human beings, religion is nothing. If our religion does not lead us in this direction, it is not sacred and noble.”

CARDINAL JOHN ONAIYEKAN
Founder, COFP

Introduction

Cardinal John Onaiyekan is one of the most widely respected religious leaders in Nigeria, and COFP is the most trusted Christian organization among Nigerian Muslims according to Nuruddeen Lemu, director of research and training with the Da’wah Institute of Nigeria, a component of the Islamic Education Trust. In a region where diverse and often conflicting communities are deeply anchored in religious faith, COFP’s fellowship program has become a key peacemaking initiative in one of the most volatile and economically pivotal countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Overview of the Nigerian Context and Current Challenges to Peacemaking

Nigeria, which was granted independence from the United Kingdom in 1960, was cobbled together from more than 250 ethnic groups by the British during the colonial period. The country today comprises about 200 million people, making it the most populous nation in Africa and the 7th most populous country in the world.¹ The Nigerian populace is divided roughly evenly between Islam and Christianity, with an additional minority (5 percent) adhering to traditional beliefs and practices such as Ifa, and another small segment (less than 5 percent) identifying with Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism or no religious tradition at all.²

Nigerian Christians are predominantly Protestant, with numerous indigenous evangelical

denominations such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Winners Chapel, Mountain of Fire and Miracles and Christ Apostolic Church. Missionary-era denominations include the Church of Nigeria, the second-largest province by membership (18 million) in the Anglican Communion, after the Church of England. Catholics compose roughly a quarter (about 20 million) of the total Christian population.³ The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), founded in 1976, originally comprised the Catholic Church and mainline Protestant groups, but has since expanded to include indigenous evangelical denominations and independent Pentecostal churches. Cardinal Onaiyekan served as the president of CAN from 2007 to 2010.

The Sultan of Sokoto, a hereditary position, is the grand Sheik of the Qadriyya Sufi order and serves as the spiritual leader of Nigerian Muslims as well as the head of Jama'atu Nasril Islam, or the Society for the Support of Islam, the Muslim counterpart to CAN. Muhammadu Sa'adu Abubakar III became the 20th Sultan of Sokoto after the death of his brother in 2006.⁴

While Christianity is the majority religion in the southern part of the country, there are also significant Muslim minorities in the south, and religiously mixed families are not uncommon, particularly in southwest. Since 2002, the Islamic militant group Boko Haram has waged violence in the northeast, killing thousands, kidnapping young women and girls, displacing at least 2 million people and destroying schools, churches, mosques and civic infrastructure.

The Nigerian Middle Belt is religiously diverse, with some cities in the region—particularly Jos—witnessing periodic bouts of religious strife stoked by ethnic and political rivalry.⁵ The long-simmering farmer-herder conflict in the Middle Belt has become Nigeria's gravest security challenge, now claiming far more lives than the Boko Haram insurgency.⁶ This conflict—a product of rapid population growth, internal displacement due to climate change and rivalries over scarce resources—has displaced hundreds of thousands and sharpened ethnic, regional and religious polarization.

Background of Cardinal Onaiyekan and COFP

In response to these ongoing challenges to peace and social cohesion, COFP was established in 2010 by Cardinal Onaiyekan to promote inter-religious dialogue and negotiation among faith communities in Nigeria. The organization does this by equipping faith leaders and their communities with skills that enable them to prevent and transform violent extremism in their localities.

“We must find a way to meet without clashing,” Onaiyekan said in an interview for this report. “Every effort to relate well with Muslims is always worthwhile. We must be able to reconcile the reality of pluralism with the excellence of our own religion.”

Headquartered in Abuja, the foundation's mandate is to build and strengthen the processes of intra- and inter-religious dialogue and action as well as to enhance partnerships between local faith groups in order to promote societal harmony. In line with the social teachings of the Catholic Church, COFP's guiding point of reference is the *Nostra Aetate* (“In Our Time”) Declaration of the Second Vatican Council, promulgated in 1965, which calls on all Catholics to enter into “dialogue and collaboration” with people of other faiths.⁷

“If I am recognized as a major actor of inter-faith actions,” Onaiyekan said, “it is because I pursue peace not as a hobby but as an expression of my mission.”

The value of Cardinal Onaiyekan's reputation as a bridge-builder and peace-maker in Nigeria cannot be overstated. “The Cardinal is the only Christian leader in Nigeria whom the Sultan of Sokoto trusts to represent his interests,” according to Nuruddeen Lemu, the director of research and training for the Da'wah Institute. That reputational capital made COFP an attractive “nexus organization” for GHR—an influential organization capable of creating useful linkages between community-based initiatives and global development actors (Tony Blair Institute and KAICIID, for example).

COFP has also been a leader in elevating women to positions of authority in a region where patriarchal traditions continue to dominate religion and politics. Sr. Agatha Chikelue, COFP's executive director, is responsible for realizing the vision of the organization's founder through her stewardship of its activities and resources. With training in public administration and international affairs, and a Master's degree in peace and justice studies from the Kroc Institute at the University of San Diego, she is widely recognized as a leader in her own right.

"When I met him, the Cardinal said, 'My daughter, I want to build your potential,'" Chikelue recalled.

Chikelue's work for the COFP fellowship program and the Women of Faith Peacebuilding network, another COFP initiative, has nurtured her growth as an organizer and activist. Her proximity to the Cardinal has also allowed her to see what peacebuilding through faith-based action looks like in all its dimensions. Guests of the Cardinal's hospitality are educated as thoroughly as fellows in COFP's peacebuilding program.

"What they have learned at the Cardinal's dining table is more valuable than what you learn in seminary," Chikelue said. "I myself have learned so much from him and become a better Christian."

The initial idea for the fellowship program emerged in a similarly informal setting. As Chikelue recalled, she and GHR's Andreas Hipple struck up a conversation about her work during a Religion for Peace workshop that they were both attending. Chikelue was the director of the liaison office of the Archdiocese of Abuja at the time, creating networks and partnerships between the Archdiocese and government officials, NGOs and philanthropies to advance peacebuilding efforts.

"Andreas said you should set up a structure to sustain peace work after the Cardinal is no longer there," Chikelue said. Thus COFP's fellowship program was born.

The Fellowship Program and COFP's Partnership with GHR

While COFP's efforts initially focused on high-level exchanges between Christian and Muslim leaders in Nigeria, it became apparent that for peacemaking to have any hope of success, programming would have to focus more closely on the communities where the sources of conflict were most obdurate.

"The problem is local pastors and local imams," Cardinal Onaiyekan said. "We needed to reach out to these religious leaders—this was the missing link in our work. The fellowship program—[which is open to all religious actors]—addresses this."

In 2017, GHR gave COFP a planning grant of \$57,600 to develop a fellowship program to train religious leaders (pastors, imams, women religious and others) to engage in meaningful interfaith dialogue and undertake collaborative peacebuilding actions to ease sectarian conflict and promote social cohesion and sustainable development.

COFP launched the fellowship program in 2018 with a three-year \$525,000 grant from GHR. Three cohorts of 30-35 fellows per cohort are trained in each year of the program (July 2018 to June 2021). Members of each cohort are gathered for three one-week training workshops during the year of their fellowship. The trainings offer religious leaders and other religious actors the opportunity to increase their capacity for peacebuilding and conflict resolution and enhance their knowledge and experience in creating constructive dialogue to address common challenges to peace.

Networks and Collaborators

During the planning phase of the fellowship project, the Catholic University of Nigeria (Veritas University) partnered with COFP to design the course guide and develop the training process. The Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria supports field research and training for fellows. Tony Blair Institute for Global Change conducts leadership and monitoring and evaluation training during the fellowship program and also provided capacity-building consultancy to COFP during the planning process. The Da'wah Institute of the Islamic Education Trust contributed trainers and connections with Muslim communities in Nigeria. In addition to the practical aspect of partnering with a diverse array of stakeholders, COFP's partnerships are intended to model the kind of collaborative approach to problem-solving that the fellowship program inculcates in participants.

Key Findings and Recommendations

GHR's funding for the fellowship program ends in June 2021. While COFP has begun to develop additional funding sources for the program—and while networking among program participants and an increase in COFP's reputational capital are positive developments—at this point, it would be premature to draw conclusions about the program's outcomes relative to peace-making and social cohesion in Nigeria.

That said, the process of developing the fellowship program has highlighted some of the challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding in Nigeria, as well as some of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach to peacebuilding that the fellowship program embodies:

- Over the ten years since COFP was founded, the number of NGOs hosting leadership training and opportunities for dialogue has dramatically increased in Nigeria. Most of these organizations aren't connected to

one another. COFP could serve as the nexus organization / common touchpoint for this constellation of NGOs doing similar work.

- The insight that sparked the fellowship program—that engaging local religious leaders is essential for peacebuilding—commends an even more granular focus on all of the dimensions of community life in efforts to promote sustainable development and nurture societal harmony.
- Combine the classroom training model with a consultancy component that meets people where they live, work and worship. This allows for a community-centered, bottom-up approach to peacebuilding and development.
- Resist the tyranny of short-term quantitative outcomes. Instead, define social change with a view toward community life in all of its dimensions and give it time to develop organically.
- This will require patience and a commitment to accompaniment on the part of GHR. Over the long term, nurture COFP as a learning organization—committed to an ongoing process of internal and external evaluation and adaptation—that is capable of seeding other learning organizations.
- As part of this process of accompaniment, encourage COFP to broaden its funding streams beyond GHR. Shifting away from a classroom training model toward a leaner, more adaptable consultancy model would enable COFP to sustain peacebuilding projects over the longer term, allow the organization to diversify its funding and continue to grow its network of peer support. This would also enable COFP to facilitate the connections between alumni and other organizations doing peacebuilding work.

Much peacebuilding work remains to be done in Nigeria. With help from GHR, COFP could be instrumental in creating partnerships and community-based approaches to the land disputes at the heart of the ongoing farmer-herder crisis in the Middle Belt. COFP could consult with other global actors with experience in transportation and logistics to help rebuild physical

infrastructure and provide security and transportation for Catholic sisters and others working to help ravaged populations in the northeast. Finally, COFP should create opportunities for collaboration, ongoing formation and spiritual renewal for the priests and Catholic sisters who are the front-line workers in its development and peacebuilding efforts.

One of CRCC's informants remarked, "If you want to make change in Africa, you have to make change in Nigeria." The relationship with COFP offers GHR the opportunity to explore innovative approaches to some of humanity's most obdurate social problems in ways that, while keenly focused on local contexts, could also shape development and peacebuilding efforts at the Vatican, across Africa and beyond.

Seeing the universal within the particular is one of the distinctive features of the Catholic social teaching in which COFP is rooted. By helping to ensure that COFP's pursuit of its mission endures well beyond the lifetime of its founder, GHR can contribute to the manifestation of this teaching in the wider world.

"The purpose of the (COFP) foundation is to keep this work going as part of the Archdiocese of Abuja," Cardinal Onaiyekan said. "You carry out the mandate of preaching the gospel to all nations by asking, How do we spread peace and joy?"

Notes

- ¹ World Development Indicators Database: Nigeria.
- ² "Nigeria," Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project.
- ³ "Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.
- ⁴ "From Nigerian Soldier to Sultan of Sokoto," BBC News.
- ⁵ Adam Higazi, "The Jos Crisis: A Recurrent Nigerian Tragedy."
- ⁶ "Stopping Nigeria's Spiraling Farmer-Herder Violence," International Crisis Group.
- ⁷ Pope Paul VI, "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions."



CASE STUDY **3**

Jesuit Refugee Service

“We don’t serve people because they are Catholic; we serve people because we are Catholic.”

Background

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) was founded in 1980 by Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, in response to the post-Vietnam War refugee crisis in Southeast Asia.¹ Fr. Arrupe sought to develop a responsive humanitarian organization that is “human, pedagogical and spiritual,” reflecting its Catholic and Ignatian roots.² The organization’s work now spans across 10 regional offices and 56 countries, aiding more than 680,000 people.³ JRS has a “focus for meeting needs that others do not meet, going to places that others don’t go.”⁴

JRS sees reconciliation as a “journey to create right relationships” among the refugees they serve, between refugees and host communities, and among JRS’s teams around the world. Such reconciliation is rooted in justice and sought in dialogue among diverse religions, cultures and groups.”⁵ The Ignatian roots of the organization are foundational to its reconciliation work. The Society of Jesus, established by St. Ignatius of Loyola in 1539, centers the idea of “accompaniment” in its ministries. The Jesuits believe that each human should be respected because they are made in God’s image and have their own unique talents and gifts (*Cura Personalis*).

Jesuit spirituality is experiential and deeply connected to Catholic social teaching around the creation of communities of welcome for those who have been marginalized and rejected. The Jesuits’ last two General Congregations, in 2008 and 2017, centered reconciliation as a core mission and expression of the Society of Jesus.⁶

1 <https://jrs.net/en/about-us/history/>

2 Interview with JRS staff

3 <https://jrs.net/en/where-we-work/>

4 Interview with JRS staff

5 <https://jrs.net/en/programme/reconciliation/>

6 <http://www.sjweb.info/35/>; https://jesuits.eu/images/docs/GC_36_Documents.pdf

Pope Francis, a Jesuit, in his latest encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (“All Brothers”), reinforces the importance of reconciliation because “social friendship and universal fraternity necessarily call for an acknowledgement of the worth of every human person, always and everywhere.”⁷

JRS’s program areas also reflect a core Jesuit value—Unity of Heart, Mind and Soul—that emphasizes a holistic approach to “accompany, serve and advocate” for refugees.⁸ JRS builds bridges by creating safe, welcoming spaces for refugees through reconciliation, education, livelihoods, advocacy, emergency assistance, pastoral care and psychosocial support, health care and protection.⁹ JRS’s faith-based identity is seen as an asset in its humanitarian work, as faith is a central piece of most refugees’ lives and provides a “common language” for the organization to communicate its values and express its work both in refugee and host communities around the world.

Capability Assessment and Strategic Review

“We were at a moment as an organization where we were opening a lot of doors and saying, ‘How do we make this work?’ The work in the field is good, but a lot of the thinking was running on fumes because nobody had really thought about anything different for a long time.”

The capability assessment and strategic review grant gave JRS staff the opportunity and space to examine their organization, review their core functional capabilities and deepen their understanding of the inter-faith dimension of

their work. JRS staff said that timing was a crucial element in this process: JRS was at the right moment in its history, the Jesuits were centering reconciliation as an expression of their mission and the Catholic Church, under the influence of Pope Francis, was emphasizing the need for inter-faith understanding and sensitivity.

The grant from GHR allowed JRS to carefully examine its own structure and assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to its evolving humanitarian work. JRS wanted to undertake this study in the wake of increasing humanitarian demands and refugee displacement. The process was explicitly participatory, involving all JRS regions as well as the international office in Rome. Internal and external consultants specializing in organizational management, systems, finance and human resources were engaged. The senior leadership team (SLT)¹⁰ spearheaded the process and identified priority areas that were championed by one or more regional directors to ensure process buy-in and engagement at the global level.

During the SLT team meeting in May 2016, the International Director took the lead of the process and proposed to have a period of discernment for each member of the SLT to “thoughtfully and calmly” evaluate the recommendations for each of the priority areas.¹¹ This delayed implementation by six months, but facilitated “outstanding ownership of the process and the support of the study and its findings by all the regions.”

Key elements that emerged out of this process for JRS included:

- Seeing accompaniment, reconciliation and peace-building as the model for all organizational relationships, including funders, staff and the communities that JRS works with in the field;
- Defining key relationships within JRS and between the SLT, global and regional staff;
- Centering the needs of forcibly displaced people first;

7 http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

8 http://www.creighton.edu/fileadmin/user/Student-Services/SLIC/LEAD_Center/Jesuit_Values_PDF.pdf

9 <https://www.jrsusa.org/>

10 International Director, the Deputy International Director, and 10 regional directors

11 Mission and identity activities, programs, finance, fundraising, human resources, advocacy, communications, management and administration

- Enhancing the organizational capacity to work in multi-faith and multi-cultural environments by developing and deploying capacity-building tools and drawing on diverse faith and cultural traditions. JRS staff, teachers, and religious leaders should be assets for faith-based reconciliation in their work and communities that they serve;
- Actively engaging the faith and cultural traditions of the communities that the organization serves;
- Hiring a mission and identity officer to spearhead the organization’s inter-religious efforts.

The process that JRS underwent is a potential model, particularly for faith-based humanitarian organizations, to conduct a strategic review and capability assessment to enhance their capacity to work in multi-faith and multi-cultural environments while staying rooted in their mission and values. “The focus on the inter-faith dimension helped JRS to reflect deeper on this topic. In general, although many JRS programs have inter-faith and peace-building components, they tend to be secondary and indirect objectives—implementing a humanitarian project in such a way that also hopes to improve relations across conflict lines.”¹²

Faith-Based Reconciliation

“The whole Jesuit ethos is to seek justice and reconciliation in other cultures and religions.”

The GHR-sponsored capability assessment and strategic review was foundational to the implementation of JRS’s faith-based reconciliation (FBR) program. Faith-based reconciliation is a “process of building right relationships with attention to the shared values of truth, justice,

mercy and peace.”¹³ JRS saw its FBR program as an expression of its mission to build bridges between communities through its work and “reflect the priority given by the Jesuits to reconciliation articulated as rebuilding right relationships.”¹⁴ The two primary objectives of the FBR grant were to strengthen institutional capacity by continuing to develop resources for training assessment, project design monitoring and evaluation of FBR initiatives and to pilot these resources in selected locations: Mai-Aini and Dollo Ado in Ethiopia and Adjumani in Uganda.

Under the umbrella of FBR is a range of work. There is reconciliation work that is done within communities, such as the Muslim community in Southern Ethiopia, and between communities, (e.g., host and refugee communities) or between faith communities in a refugee settlement. Interfaith or interreligious approaches are prioritized where “possible and appropriate.”¹⁵

The “faith-based” piece of reconciliation was critical to JRS because of its Catholic and Ignatian roots as well as shared values among its staff and refugee and host communities. Staff said that the FBR grant really enabled JRS to examine how they engage, the methodologies they use, the ways they draw upon faith and how they make reconciliation intentional.

So, I think our faith, the way that JRS lives its faith with the reconciliation program, it is deeply formed by it, very deeply formed. But then it has served as a kind of springboard to open up to other faiths as well and to learn from them, you know?

JRS has “always done reconciliation [work]” but staff indicated that, 20 to 30 years ago, the work was primarily with Catholics.¹⁶ In the past, JRS’s humanitarian work tended to respond to “short-term crises or responding after a crisis report,” such as the aftermath of the Rwandan Genocide. But their mission has changed as ongoing crises have required longer-term responses, and the needs of refugees have changed as they are displaced from home for years or permanently.¹⁷

¹² Capability Study Final Report to GHR

¹³ Faith-Based Reconciliation Program application to GHR

¹⁴ Faith-Based Reconciliation Program application to GHR

¹⁵ Interview with JRS staff

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

The FBR approach that JRS is working with now is different from what it did in the past. FBR is now a wide lens through which JRS sees all of its work. Reconciliation is no longer something that just happens when there is fighting among groups; rather, it is a piece of every intervention that JRS undertakes. Conflict assessment is now integrated into the design of every program initiated by JRS.

A critical element of JRS's FBR approach has been the establishment of an interreligious advisory committee composed of leaders in peacebuilding who come from a variety of faiths. The committee has provided not only technical insight into how to develop training programs; members have also participated in activities on the ground and have enhanced programs and relationships for JRS in refugee and host communities. One committee member who is also an imam has been incredibly effective in the field because he shares a "common language" and experience of faith with the local community and also has brought an outsider perspective as an academic practitioner with expertise in reconciliation.

JRS's two-pronged approach to strengthen its organizational capacity to develop FBR resources for training assessment, project design and evaluation, then to pilot these resources, has begun to pay early dividends. Local coordinators have bought into the FBR approach and are seeing it work at the local level. One coordinator said that JRS's FBR work is "about quality not quantity" and gave an example of how JRS and faith leaders in Adjumani, Uganda are navigating the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on faith communities through a JRS-sponsored radio talk show. The popular radio show has featured different faith leaders talking about a variety of topics that are pertinent to the refugee and host communities, including faith and reconciliation from Islamic and Christian perspectives. The local coordinator said that faith leaders feel re-engaged and told her, "We still have the power. We are still there. We're still important."

Shared Learnings

"Love is better shown in deeds than in words."

Several high-level learnings emerged from interviews and a review of JRS and GHR documents. While not exhaustive, the learnings below encompass both funder and programmatic practices and are lessons that might be useful for GHR to understand (1) its grantmaking approach, (2) the impact of its IRA investments in JRS and (3) how other organizations that seek to integrate reconciliation and interreligious action into their work might benefit from JRS's experience.

Funder Flexibility and Accompaniment

GHR's partnership approach to grant making and its positive effect was a clear theme that emerged in interviews and grant documentation. This was not the typical Pollyanna-ish type of praise for a funder, but a genuine expression of how GHR's flexibility and accompaniment has made JRS a stronger and more responsive organization in the long term. Staff expressed that GHR gave JRS space to "explore a topic" and trusted the organization to make the right decisions.

GHR's "accompaniment" partnership approach complemented JRS's Ignatian values, which was expressed in interviews and reports. "They've been so flexible, so encouraging, so open with ideas and, this is the other thing, they're not only, 'Let's give you money.'" "They come up with ideas without imposing, 'Why don't you try this?'" JRS appreciated that this relational partnership approach encompassed the entire lifecycle of grantmaking from design to implementation. One outcome of this method was the use and integration of principles-focused evaluation for JRS work. Principles-focused evaluation "makes principles the center of evaluation and examines (1) whether principles are clear, meaningful and actionable and, if so, (2) whether they are actually being followed and, if so, (3) whether they are leading to

desired results.”¹⁸ This type of evaluation approach is particularly useful in evaluating complex interventions such as the ones JRS uses in its humanitarian work. Principles-focused evaluation is “a new way of doing monitoring and evaluation which is really deeply qualitative but really shows it’s a way of charting emergent outcomes in reconciliation, relationship dynamics, and doing, if you want, change across such a wide variety of contexts.”¹⁹ GHR’s understanding of JRS’s needs commended this type of evaluation approach, and JRS brought in a principles-focused evaluation consultant to meet with key JRS staff. This consultant is now working with JRS in a process to design JRS’s monitoring and evaluation programming.

GHR’s “accompaniment” approach with JRS enabled the organization to take a step back from its rapidly expanding humanitarian portfolio to understand the role of reconciliation and interreligious action in its work. By centering reconciliation at the heart of the organization in a deliberate and thoughtful way, JRS has the potential to sustainably maintain the principles that the IRA initiative fostered far into the future.

Integrating Reconciliation into the DNA of an Organization

One of the biggest challenges that JRS faces is the ongoing need to sustainably integrate reconciliation into the DNA of their organization and their work. “JRS has observed across settings the need to be more intentional in cultivating positive and reconciled inter-group relationships within its teams and to challenge stereotypes and prejudices that at times might threaten to affect its services.”²⁰ As one staff member said, “Buy-in, that is your gateway.” There is a need to accompany staff on the ground doing reconciliation work because it is difficult. JRS is using

¹⁸ <https://aea365.org/blog/pfe-week-principles-focused-evaluation-by-michael-quinn-patton/>

¹⁹ Interview with JRS staff

²⁰ Faith-Based Reconciliation Program application to GHR

resources developed from its FBR grant to build staff capacity and knowledge and is disseminating this knowledge to its field staff to ensure that this work is not centralized by a few experts in the international office.

Related to staff training and capacity building is the need to retain talent and knowledge to continue this work. Building strong relationships with refugee and host communities requires trust and long-term investment from local staff. In interviews with JRS staff, they acknowledged that there is a high turnover rate for staff:

So, what I’m trying to do is find a way of keeping them in different positions within JRS to really build our reconciliation team because it depends so much on the how; because reconciliation can be so many different things to different people because of the faith aspect. We need people who really buy into and know what we’re doing and then who can’t give that up.

Integrating reconciliation into the DNA of an organization such as JRS is a long-term strategy that requires constant investment and prioritization by the organization in internal systems, human resource management and intervention design and implementation.

Local Judgement, Discernment and Implementation

One of the key learnings emerging from interviews and reports is that FBR and interreligious work require local judgement, discernment and implementation. This learning applies to staff as well as the communities they serve. Top-down approaches do not work and could actually amplify local conflict and trauma for refugee communities. JRS’s motto is “global platform, local judgement.” Community-based approaches are essential to sustainable FBR interventions.

An example of how this works at the field level is how JRS works with local faith-leaders. Religious leaders are incredibly influential in host and refugee communities. By strengthening

religious leaders' capacity, you strengthen community capacity. A local JRS coordinator told the story of how religious leaders worked with local Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) youth who were boycotting national exams being held on their observed Sabbath (Saturday). The SDA religious leaders convinced the youth that God had given them this opportunity in their lives, and that they should take the exams. As the youth said to the JRS coordinator: "Religious leader, they never lie. Whatever they say, it's the truth."

Incentive workers—refugees that cannot work legally in the country they are located in—are also critical to the FBR interventions. JRS "employs" these workers, who are community leaders, members of women's associations and youth, to have a local presence in the community and "become a reference point for people when the conflict breaks out. Before the police come in and beat people up, they run to our guys, they're there, and we're building their capacity."²¹

Holistic Accompaniment

JRS believes in "accompaniment" of the whole person, which includes their beliefs and faith community. Faith is a core element of most refugees' identities and is important in different dimensions of their lives. JRS staff said that this "accompaniment" approach is one of the greatest assets that they bring to their humanitarian work. Religion and faith are often viewed suspiciously by many non-governmental organizations that work in humanitarian and development spaces, but this view is not shared by refugees or host communities. An international staff member who was teaching local staff in Afghanistan related this story:

So, one really interesting discussion [happened] in a workshop I had for our Afghan team. So, some guy was saying, "No. Leave religion alone. This is a terrible idea. Totally terrible. Can't you see what religion has done for our country? It has let us down completely, and if you start talking about religion, you're going to get this cleric and this cleric telling you your interpretation is wrong. So, leave it alone." Now, another guy in the workshop just put up his hand and said, "Sorry. I teach an adult literacy class to illiterate men, refugees, and if I want to make any point, if I want to explain something, if I want to get them to listen, I talk about the Quran and the Hadith because this is what they know. This is what they're going to listen to."

The importance of religious literacy is another critical piece of holistic accompaniment. Religious literacy, for JRS staff, means having knowledge of not just the faith tradition(s) of the communities that you are working in, or of your fellow colleagues' beliefs, but also having some knowledge of your own faith. It enables you to have a common language, some shared values and understanding with local refugee and host communities.

Gender and Power

An uneven gender and power dynamic in FBR was another key learning to emerge from discussions with JRS staff and a review of grant documents. Male religious leaders are typically at the forefront of many reconciliation and interreligious activities in their communities. More work needs to be done to engage and elevate the voices of women and women faith leaders in reconciliation work in host and refugee communities. As one staff member stated, "Anything that can put more resources in the hands of women, who need them, will use them well, will put food on the table, will educate their children, all the things we know happens, and I think in some ways, especially in more traditional settings, the

²¹ Interview with JRS staff

reconciliation work has the opportunity to do that because knowledge is power.”

Local women’s associations and female elders are always being called upon to resolve conflicts in refugee and host communities and, unfortunately, they typically are trying to persuade women to accept an unjust solution. JRS brought in an imam in one case to engage with local women:

And they were asking him, “Did we do right?” And this imam says, “You know in this case, the Quran clearly says is, for example, it is the husband who has the duty to look after the woman. So, why should she be giving him her money?” Then he’s like, “And you know what the Quran says about women and how women were respected.” And the women said, “We never knew our religion loves us so much and respects us so much.”

Centering women and elevating their voices in FBR work is essential to successful and sustainable reconciliation interventions and increased social cohesion in refugee and host communities.

Conclusion

“This has been a game changer for us, we’re really grateful.”

GHR investments in JRS have tilled fertile ground and strengthened a faith-based humanitarian organization that shares many values with the Foundation. JRS’s integration of FBR is a potential model for other organizations to enhance their capacity to work in faith-based reconciliation and interreligious work in the humanitarian and development sectors. The high-level learnings that emerged from these grants are also useful for GHR as it seeks to integrate best practices and lessons learned from its IRA initiative into future grantmaking.

Appendix A: Table of Grants

<i>Name</i>	<i>Request Title</i>	<i>Approved Amount</i>	<i>Grant Term (months)</i>
African Council of Religious Leaders, Religions for Peace	Scaling up Faith-Based Organization (FBO) Efforts to Orphans in East Africa	\$ 75,000	6
African Council of Religious Leaders, Religions for Peace	Strategic Planning and Capacity Building for Inter-Religious Councils	\$ 30,118	12
African Council of Religious Leaders, Religions for Peace	General Assembly of the African Council of Religious Leaders	\$ 75,000	3
African Council of Religious Leaders, Religions for Peace	Building Interreligious Mechanism for Social Cohesion in Africa	\$ 521,220	36
Alliance for Peacebuilding	Effective Interreligious Action in Peacebuilding Program (EIAP)	\$ 804,654	36
Alliance for Peacebuilding	Building the Capacity for Effective Design, Monitoring and Evaluation of Interreligious Action in Peacebuilding	\$ 59,915	3
Alliance for Peacebuilding	Building Capacity for Effective Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation – EIAP Phase II	\$ 600,000	36
Association of Consecrated Women of Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA)	Training on Interreligious Dialogue	\$ 37,846	2
Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace	Planning Grant: Building Commitment and Resilience Against Violent Religious Extremism in Nigeria	\$ 57,600	6
Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace	COFP Fellowship Program	\$ 525,000	38
Catholic Relief Services – USCCB	Dialogue and Action: Reduction of Child Marriage in Kenya: Phase II Design	\$ 116,847	6
Catholic Relief Services – USCCB	Capacity for Interreligious Community Action (CIRCA)	\$ 600,000	36
Catholic Relief Services – USCCB	Dialogue and Action Project: Phase II (DAP II)	\$ 599,305	36
Catholic Relief Services – USCCB	Central African Republic Interfaith Peacebuilding Partnership (CIPP)	\$ 1,000,000	60
Catholic Relief Services – USCCB	Dialogue and Action Project III (DAP III)	\$ 649,097	34
Catholic Relief Services – USCCB	Sustained Capacities for Interreligious Community Action II (CIRCA II)	\$ 600,000	36
Center for Faith and the Common Good	Joint Learning Initiative for Faith and Local Communities: Scale-Up of Activities	\$ 225,000	31

Name	Request Title	Approved Amount	Grant Term (months)
Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty	Implementation of 2009-10 Nigerian Interfaith Action Association (NIFAA)-led Muslim-Christian faith leader training program in three Nigerian states in support of the Nigerian National Malaria Control Program and overall evaluation of the program	\$ 1,066,750	12
Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics Trust	Training and Administrative Financial Support	\$ 41,500	9
Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics Trust	Capacity Strengthening for Interreligious Action (CSIA)	\$ 450,000	36
Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace	Academy for International Conflict Management	\$ 70,000	4
Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace	Youth Exchange with His Holiness the Dalai Lama	\$ 330,400	24
Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace	Generation Change Exchange 2019	\$ 165,200	12
International Center for Research on Women	Final Phase I assessment of the Catholic Relief Services Dialogue and Action program in Kenya	\$ 80,484	6
International Center for Research on Women	CRS Dialogue and Action Project Phase II (DAP-II) Planning and Support	\$ 35,797	5
Interreligious Council of Uganda (IRCU)	Training ACWECA-nominated sisters at the Interreligious Institute for Peace	\$ 21,857	12
Jesuit Refugee Service International	Capability Study	\$ 252,698	12
Jesuit Refugee Service International	Faith-Based Reconciliation Program	\$ 661,842	30
Joint Learning Initiative for Faith and Local Communities	Religion and Sustainable Development: "Building Partnerships to End Extreme Poverty" Conference	\$ 30,000	14
Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry	Community Action for Reconciliation and Economic Development	\$ 360,000	35
Mercy Corps	Providing joint activities to young people in two neighborhoods in Lebanon at the center of sectarian violence to address social and economic needs and build on common interests	\$ 200,000	12
Mercy Corps	Interreligious Peacebuilding in Northern Nigeria (IPNN)	\$ 688,000	47
Mercy Corps	Supporting Harmonious Association, Religious Participation and Engagement for Northern Nigeria	\$ 812,000	35
Nigerian Interfaith Action Association (NIFAA)	Faith Summit for Children	\$ 98,500	4

Name	Request Title	Approved Amount	Grant Term (months)
Nigerian Interfaith Action Association (NIFAA)	Faith in Action: Building on the Promise	\$ 800,000	29
Religions for Peace	Center for Excellence for Multi-religious Cooperation and Conflict Transformation and Development	\$ 1,632,950	36
Religions for Peace	Protecting Vulnerable Children Through Interreligious Cooperation in Myanmar	\$ 200,000	24
Religions for Peace	Strengthen and Scale Multi-religious Action for the Common Good	\$ 515,819	24
Religions for Peace	Strengthening Interreligious Collaboration in Myanmar	\$ 200,000	24
Religions for Peace	Partnerships for Peace and Prosperity in Africa: Abuja High-Level Forum	\$ 99,349	4
Search for Common Ground	Building the Common Ground Approach to Global Religious Engagement	\$ 300,000	36
Tanenbaum Center For Interreligious Understanding	Strengthening the Role and Recognition of Women in Interreligious Peacemaking	\$ 67,725	15
Tanenbaum Center For Interreligious Understanding	Peacemakers in Action 2019 Working Retreat	\$ 25,000	7
Tony Blair Faith Foundation	Nigeria Imam Training Project	\$ 341,827	13

Appendix B: Interview Sources

CRCC is grateful for the insights and time of the following individuals who participated in interviews for this report:

- **Joseph Atang**
Nigeria Country Specialist, KAICIID, October 4, 2020
- **Sr. Agatha Chikelue**
Executive Director, Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace, July 29, 2020
- **Mary Dalsin**
GHR Foundation, October 19, 2020
- **Andreas Hipple**
Executive Director, A Better Way Foundation, October, October 6, 2020
- **Nuruddeen Lemu**
Director of Research and Training, Da'wah Institute of Nigeria,
Islamic Education Trust, September 29, 2020
- **Kerry Medek**
GHR Foundation, October 20, 2020
- **Cardinal John Onaiyekan**
Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace, Sept. 30, 2020
- **Deepika Singh**
Director of Programmes, Religions for Peace, October 6, 2020
- **Fr. Tom Smolich, SJ**
International Director, JRS, September 30, 2020
- **Danielle Vella**
Reconciliation Director, JRS, September 29, 2020

Two individuals wish to remain anonymous.

GHR Foundation

GHR Foundation exists to be of service to people and their limitless potential for good. Alongside our partners around the world, GHR re-imagines what's possible when pursuing change across our areas of impact: Education, Global Development, Alzheimer's Prevention and more. Recognizing that faith actors are leading a growing effort to do development differently, we are working together to build transformational coalitions fueled by faith and innovation.



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Center for Religion and Civic Culture

As a research center at the University of Southern California, the Center for Religion and Civic Culture is committed to developing knowledge about how religion shapes people and the world. CRCC's work is grounded in the empirical study of religion, bringing together a creative team of researchers, journalists and religious leaders in a collaborative environment. Our goal is to bring academic research and community knowledge together to create positive impact in society.



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