



Faith-Based Organisations and Religious Leaders: Partners in Humanitarian Action?

Workshop on

Reaffirming Global Solidarity, Restoring Humanity

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Round Table 2

Good morning, I'm Danny Sriskandaraja, I'm Secretary General of Civicus and I've also had a privilege of serving with Kristalina and His Highness on the High-Level Panel over the last few months. Can I add my thanks to you all for coming this morning and to our hosts for continuing the discussion that we began with publication of our report a few months ago?

The last thing we wanted, as Kristalina has said, was for our report to gather dust, so conversations like these are incredibly important in trying to build momentum around some of those recommendations that we make, and as someone who works for a civil society alliance it is also great to be part of this conversation because, as you all know, many of the most active civil society organizations and actors around the world are themselves faith-based or religious-based organizations and so it's great to be talking about the role of faith-based communities and organizations in delivering humanitarian action. I want to focus this panel on partnerships.

As you'll see, it's about talking about partners in humanitarian action. I thought I'd begin by citing or reciting part of a poem that I read on the plane over last night. It is called *Insults to the Poor* and it's written by Admiral Ncube, an aid worker in Zimbabwe. It goes something like this.

*Decades ago, I heard life was simple and it was so.
Where there was need, a hand would help.
Where there was a tear, a heart would ache.
Willing hands and hearts would meet the lack.
Charity they called it, for it was so.
Now an industry of sorts – an insult to the poor.
Now in my day I see things do change.
Experts have risen who have not been poor.
Whose studies and surveys bring no change.
Whose experiments and pilots insult the poor.
Whose terms and concepts, tools always change.
An industry of sorts – an insult to the poor.
What greater insult could there be
when a fellow man calls me just a beneficiary.*

I could go on, but I'll stop there and I'll tweet the link if you'd like to read the rest of the poem.

I think, Professor Archer, you reminded us wonderfully this morning about three potential roles for religious-based organizations to play in humanitarian action, around the importance of voice, of mobilisation and moral authority. I wanted to add two more, as perhaps things that we could consider in this panel discussion. One was around meeting that lack that Admiral Ncube talks about.

As the Co-Chairs have said, and many of the previous panellists have said, we should have enough money to meet the lack and yet we don't, and our intuition, as His Highness has said, is that religious-based communities and religious-based financing instruments might well hold a key to creating not just more financial flows, but perhaps more stable and engaged financial flows to address humanitarian need. And so, I think, there's perhaps

a contribution of religious-based communities to develop and invest in those financial mechanisms that might address the humanitarian financing gap.

But then the second aspect I think perhaps that religious-based organizations can play is to deliver the meaningful change so that people can't be called just beneficiaries and I think we've heard it already in the previous panel. Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle talked about localization and local actors, Elhadj As Sy talked about long-term accompaniment, Justin Dillon you talked about partnership, and so I think these are themes in which religious organizations and communities are expert. They don't treat people generally just as beneficiaries. They are meaningful and powered actors and I think we in the humanitarian world perhaps can draw some lessons there and inspiration there for how we turn people from beneficiaries and restore their humanity.

So there's some questions I'd love our panellists talk a little bit about. What does that partnership mean in a meaningful way, around empowerment, from both sides of the house if you will. We've got eight people scheduled to speak and I'm going to throw caution to the wind of diplomatic protocol and I'm going to ask the three leaders who come from religious communities to go first and perhaps talk about your experiences and then I'm going to call on my colleagues from the implementing agency side of the house, if you will, and perhaps can I begin with His Excellency Ambassador Stefano Ronca, who is the ambassador of the Order of Malta to the Italian Republic and Head of Delegation for the Order for the World Humanitarian Summit.