

Muslim Platform for Sustainable Development

Asia Consultation Feedback

16 August 2016

Bangkok

1. Introduction

Throughout 2016, Islamic Relief Worldwide has been consulting with Muslim civil society organisations around the World about the need to set up a global network to support Muslim engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approved in September 2015 by the United Nations. Governments are responsible for the development of plans to deliver on the SDGs and multi-lateral and bi-lateral funders are committed to supporting such plans. The concern within the Muslim World is that the Agenda 2030 discourse is somewhat secular and alienated from mainstream faith discourse, which is likely to lead to disengagement or distrust, between faith based organisations- in particular Muslim civil society organisations- resulting in a fractured, disengaged and uncoordinated effort to deliver the SDGs.

The Regional consultations organised in 2016 for Asia, Africa, Middle East and Europe are aimed at the following:

1. Understanding the challenges and opportunities for FBO engagement on the 2030 Agenda in the Muslim World and what resources are available.
2. Understanding what a platform might realistically achieve and what appetite there is amongst Muslim CSOs to engage with the process.
3. What structure a platform might take and what actions are needed to establish and maintain it.
4. What resources are needed and available and what policy areas need to be prioritised.

Participants in the Asia Consultation

| Country | Name of organisation | Name | Position |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Pakistan | HelpingHands | Mr. Irfan Khurshid | Senior Advisor International Affairs |
| India | Islamic Relief India | Akmal Shareef | Country Director |
| Malaysia | Universiti Sains Malaysia | Dr Wan Norhaniza | Lecturer |
| Thailand | Asia Muslim Action Network | Mohammed Abdus Sabur | Secretary General |
| Indonesia | University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta | Dr Rahmawati Husein | Lecturer |
| UK | Muslim Aid | Fadlullah Wilmot | Regional Programme Manager for MiddleEast & Africa |
| Malaysia | Islamic Relief Malaysia | Zairulshahfuddin bin Zainal Abidin | Country Director |
| UK | Islamic Relief Academy | Dr Muhtari Aminu-Kano | Head of Research & Development |
| UK | Islamic Relief Worldwide | Atallah FitzGibbon | Policy & Strategy Manager |

2.1. Understanding the challenges and opportunities for engagement on the 2030 Agenda in the Muslim World and what resources are available.

Participants were divided into two groups to conduct a SWOT Analysis, the table below highlight the results of this process

| Strength | | Weaknesses | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 1 | Group 2 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASEAN & Asia • Mobilisation • Common interests for all • A growth in Muslim perspectives in decision making at all levels (local-Global) • MFBOs have strong constituencies and ideological links to a whole sub-set of society • A wealth of experience and current programmes that can be drawn on • Strong past traditions and literature to back • Global presence • Acceptance • Institutions & scholars • Faith-based inspiration • Research work • Global partnership between FBOs • Social inclusion • There are NGOs who are well equipped to contribute • Availability of technology and the know-how | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More awareness by FBOs of the importance of raising and amplifying their voice • Increasing number of Muslim organisations involved in development • Added value of Muslim FBOs to development • More awareness of the importance of development • Growing awareness of philanthropy in Muslim countries • Growing middle class in many Muslim countries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of conscious efforts to take up issues affecting people • No coordination • Lack of knowledge of global decision-making and processes (meaning that before can begin we need capacity building, advocating trust building before action) • Lack of Awareness about 2030 Agenda • Lack of Tenacity • Lack of Funding • No Marketing geared at them • Dialogue and sharing of experience • Not enough investment is discourse- development • Limited recognition of this area of work • Poor capacity • Technology changing aid access • Poor civil society culture • Limited opportunity and platform for working together • Not main streamed • No organised efforts to build capacity of small NGOs and replicate them • Lack leadership & courage to share credits • Lack of empowerment amongst the researchers & practitioners • Lack of agreed priorities • Not ready to share resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of creativity & innovation from FBOs • Lack of capacity for advocacy • Muslims do not challenge neo-liberal economic model • Muslim international FBOs not working with Muslim CBOs • Lack of financial registration and legal requirements • Huge competition for funding between Muslim FBOs for funding from Muslims • Approach of Muslim FBOs to development is still charity based • Lack of capacity to formulate development in Islamic perspectives • Muslim FBOs still young and focus mainly on disaster response • Muslims focusing more on worship & religiousness than development |

| Opportunities | | Threats | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 1 | Group 2 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common realisation is growing for forming a common platform • Resources within the community (zakat & sadaqah) • Growing population • Young population-providing leaders • Doors open given the vast arena • Representation • More discussions • Islamic financial institutions (Zakat, waqf, microfinance) • Collaboration with other FBO/I's • Shared policy staff- growth of analysis of the political process to wider constituencies • Counter narrative to that of islamophobia • Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Available researchers (universities) ○ Policy makers ○ Budgets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More women engaged • More youth engaged • Increasing willingness of donors and agencies to work with Muslim FBOs • Increasing number of Networks & platforms • Enabling environment is more favourable (local-national-regional) • Modern technology makes it easy to share info + reach diverse audience • Increasing number of Muslim professionals • Legally binding UN regimes such as climate agreement present advocacy opportunities • Well defined Islamic teaching and approaches to environmental conservation • Negative attitude to Muslim FBOs by some governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political actors/volatility/issues • Religious divisions • Country of claim • Lack of confidence in the UN/governance by Muslim people of faith • Fear of institutionalisation of faith groups by UN, states, world and regional backers • Limited space • Resource constraints • Duplication of existing organisations • Initiatives collapses due to the lack of dynamism and creating new generation of leadership • No connection between local/national and international institutions • Different mandates • Misunderstanding • Islamophobia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change affects Muslim countries disproportionality • Muslim attitudes increasingly inward-looking & rigid • Islamophobia • Economic crises • Increasing divisions amongst Muslims • Conflict in Muslim countries • Legal & financial movement & restrictions due to counter terrorism measures • Shrinking civil society space in Muslim countries especially for Muslim FBOs |

2.2. Current Engagement and Resources of Muslim FBOs devoted to SDG Delivery

The Participants were then given all 17 SDG's and were told to highlight the main three focus areas their respected organisations tackle as well as any other focus areas, see illustrated below.

| Organisation | SDGs | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| | No Poverty | Zero Hunger | Good Health & wellbeing | Quality Education | Gender Equality | Clean Water & Sanitation | Affordable & Clean Energy | Decent Work & Economic Growth | Industry Innovation & Infrastructure | Reduced Inequalities | Sustainable Cities & Communities | Responsible Consumption & Production | Climate Action | Life Below Water | Life on Land | Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions | Partnerships for the Goals |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| Muslim Aid | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | | | | | | | █ | | | | |
| Muhammadiyah | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | █ | █ |
| AMAN | | | | █ | | | | | | █ | | | █ | | | █ | |
| IR Malaysia | █ | █ | █ | █ | | █ | | █ | | | | | | | | | |
| USM | | | | █ | | | █ | | | | █ | | █ | | | | █ |
| Helping Hands | █ | | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | | █ | | | | | █ | |
| IR India & Nepal | █ | █ | | █ | █ | █ | | | | █ | | | █ | | | | █ |

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| █ | First Focus Area |
| █ | Second Focus Area |
| █ | Third Focus Area |
| █ | Other Focus Areas |

Reflection on gaps.

It appeared from the focus areas identified that the work and discourse of participating Muslim FBOs was mainly focussed on poverty alleviation and education with a lesser focus on WASH, Peace building and climate change. Specific gaps appear to be the development of discourse and work on structural issues related to sustainable economic growth, sustainable energy and inequality.

3.1. TOR for the Platform

Participants felt that the platform should identify a vision and mission and therefore came up with the below:

Vision

Muslim CSO's play a constructive and contributory role in achieving the SDG's

Mission

Creating a space/platform for:

| Mission Objectives | Potential activities |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring Representation of Muslim Community perspectives at national, regional and global forums | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website representation of Muslim perspectives Scope out major forums and meetings MPSD should provide representation to Participation in policy/planning, monitoring processes and benchmarking at national level Have one annual meeting for members |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in, clarifying and agreeing a discourse for development on the various SDGs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring discourse is developed and shared on the various development themes to ensure Muslim perspectives are heard. Agree global priorities with other regional groups. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building capacity and mobilising engagement of Muslim Faith-based organisations in implementation of the 2030 Agenda | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure national and regional meetings annually ideally through national MFBO Umbrella groups. Sensitising Faith leaders to the importance of the SDGs and the process. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy at global, regional and national levels of Muslim faith based perspectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing messaging on key areas Holding Governments to account for setting targets and work plans |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research. Collaboration and sharing of research on the various focus areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide 5-6 scholarships annually Mapping and sharing research being done amongst the regions. Promoting regional conferences such as the USM. (Malaysia) |

Specific Areas for Development of Discourse within the SDGs

The table below highlights the SDGs participants felt the platform should address and in what capacity

| SDG Themes | Sub themes |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Poverty & Food Security | |
| Health | Women & Health Children & Health |

| | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Education | Female Education |
| Gender | Crosscutting |
| Climate Change | Crosscutting |
| Inequality | Crosscutting |
| Economic Growth | Crosscutting |

The discussion then moved on to the principles/values which define the platform:

- Inward & outward focused
 - Ensuring we have important things to say
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Humanitarian imperative and not secular
- Inclusiveness
- Building on existing activities
- Creating space for Civil society

3.2. What Structure and form might a Platform take?

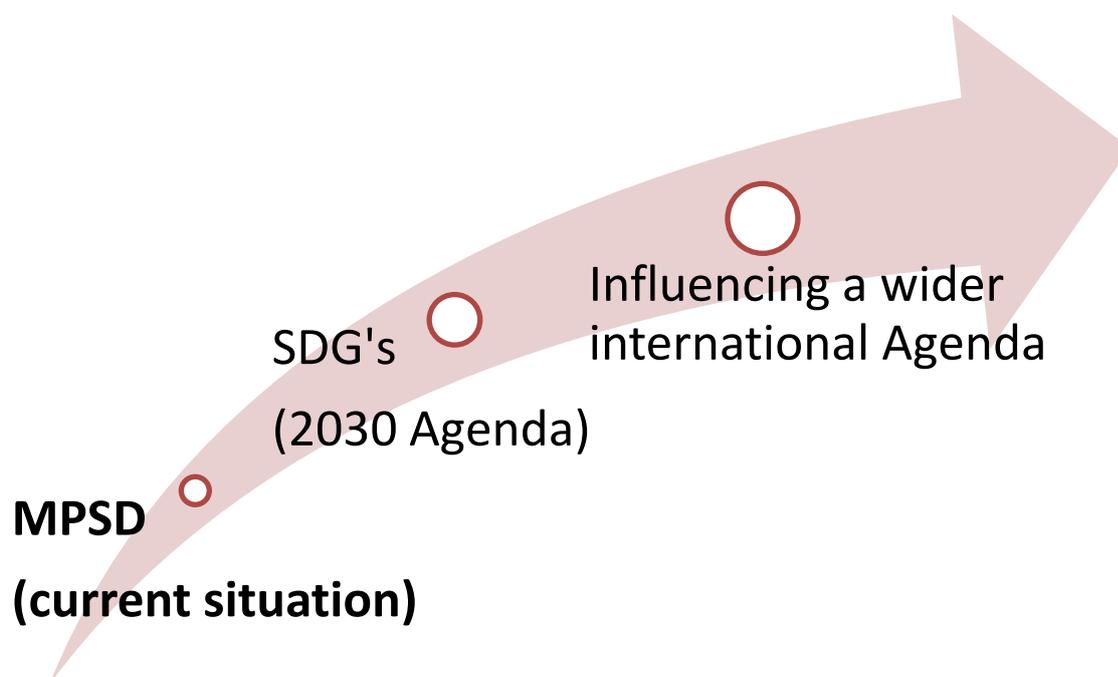
There was discussion generated around the name of the platform and its breadth as well as the role the platform will play. The main points were captured below:

- The participants thought the name Muslim Platform for Sustainable Development was broad and there needed to be more focus
- The name Muslim CSO Platform Membership was suggested
- The platform should be mainly for CSO's- Faith-based/inspired development actors
- There was also discussion around the role academic institutions should place
 - It was agreed that universities should hold an associate membership/partner status
- There were discussions around what we mean by Muslim CSO's given that many CSOs that reside in Muslim country do not announce they are faith based/inspired
 - Consensus was that these organisations will still be approached and welcomed
- Screening will need to be taken place using the Istanbul principles
- Existing National Faith Platform's should focus on being a key driver and advocate within the national level
 - Holding governments to account. What are respective countries planning and implementing at a national level and how can FBOs play a part
- The national and regional networks, made up of representatives a national and regional level will play a more influential role at a national level and a lighter role at an international level

The coordination Committee drawn from nominated regional networks will deal with the international sphere and overall planning

4. Next Steps for the Platform

The next discussion points highlighted the foresight of the platform and what we envisage the platform achieving, using our current situation as leverage for bigger things to come. The diagram below highlights the trajectory.



As a follow up, the participants recognised two further functions of the platform:

- Being an inter-religious forum
- Being an intra- religious forum

As part of the participant's commitments to ensure the platforms success, participants agreed to provide the following about their respected country at a national level:

- Country situation on the state of SDG planning and implementation
- FBO activity on SDG's
- Advocacy opportunities and messaging
- Recommendations for national advocacy

Given that one of the main outputs of these consultations and an aim of the initiative is to develop an online platform, substantial discussion was generated about the content and what it should look like.

- Content
 - Platform vision & mission
 - Background
 - Contact
 - Report on the Asia consultation meeting and others

- Interactive section where members can comment and discuss issues
- Integrated to Facebook and other social media mediums
- Updated event sections highlighting events taking place around the world with regards to SDGs
- Resources
 - International Islamic Climate Change Declaration. An excellent example of discourse on one of the SDG areas that was developed collaboratively
 - CPDE process and resources. MFBOs should engage with them regionally as part of the interfaith engagement

5. Conclusion

The Asia Consultation represented the first of several planned consultation meetings, setting the foundations of an online platform which can change the way Muslim NGOs interact and share resources and best practices around the world. The platform will help provide the sector with a Muslim discourse aimed at amplifying the voice of many marginalised organisations around the world towards the collective goal of achieving the SDGs.