



Integration of religious education in humanitarian situation: The role of faith based organizations and faith leaders

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Abstract: Inspired by the Islamic faith, Islamic Relief Kenya has been able to support the Government of Kenya's goal of education for all through funding partnerships with the United Nations, international donors and extensive networks with religious and Faith-based organizations (FBOs) working among and with refugees living in Dadaab refugee camp of Kenya, the second-largest refugee camp in the world. Dadaab Refugee Camp is hosting forcibly displaced people whose children are more likely to be enrolled in religious cultural Qur'anic schools known as *Duksi* prior to enrolling in the formal education system. Islamic Relief works through religious leaders to develop advocacy tools based on Islamic teaching to promote the integration of conventional state education with the cultural religious education system in a bid to enhance access to conventional education for the children living in Dadaab.

Although the integration model of religious education / *Duksi* School was piloted by Islamic Relief, all other faith based organizations including Lutheran World Federation (LWF) adopted the same approach and model in their education programmes in refugee operations in Dadaab. This process initially funded and facilitated by UNHCR and the Government of Kenya has emerged as a successful, integrated approach merging religious and formal education in humanitarian and emergency situations.

Keywords: Integration of religious education, *Duksi* School, Faith-based Organisations (FBOs), Islamic Relief

INTRODUCTION

There has been a continuous shift in public discourse concerning the role of Faith-based organizations and their collaborations with local communities in public service delivery, which has culminated in the recognition of Faith Based Organizations' unique position to provide critical links to local communities in the context of humanitarian response. Islamic Relief Kenya (IRK) is a faith based organization whose mission, vision, principles and core values are driven by the values of the Muslim faith. As a humanitarian relief and development organization, IR Kenya collaborated with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to support the provision of health and education programmes in Dadaab refugee camp. Education is a basic human right, enshrined in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1951 Refugee Convention. Despite significant investment in the education sector over the years, access to education for refugee is still limited.

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In times of displacement, access to education for children tends to deteriorate, albeit being a force to foster social cohesion, provide access to life-saving information, address psychosocial needs, and offer a stable and safe environment for those who need it most. Education also helps people to rebuild their communities and pursue productive, meaningful lives. To ensure the right of education to the Dadaab refugees, IR Kenya involves religious leaders in most of the programme implementation to foster sustainable and inclusive development. For instance, IR Kenya's education programme integrates primary education into existing community-managed religious schools.

BACKGROUND

Company History

Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) started its work in 1984 in the UK and has since expanded to many parts of the world. Inspired by Islamic humanitarian principles, it seeks to help people in need in any part of the world irrespective of their colour, creed or race.

IRW was established in 1984 by Dr Hany El-Banna and some fellow students from the University of Birmingham in the UK in response to the famine in Africa. Launching an appeal, they went from door to door and from mosque to mosque asking for financial help, which was spent for food for people affected by the famine.

In 1985, Islamic Relief's began its first project – sponsoring a chicken farm in Sudan. That same year, its founders hired a small office in Mosely, in Birmingham. After that IRW grew rapidly, and over the next five years, it started working in Mozambique, Iran, Pakistan, Malawi, Iraq, Afghanistan, and in many countries, by responding to emergencies and distributing clothes, food, offering health support and so on.

Today, by the grace of God, IRW is a truly global organisation, working in more than 40 countries providing emergency aid, carrying out long-term development, and campaigning for change. They are signatories of the Red Cross Code of Conduct, an international standard on working with people affected by emergencies in a non-biased manner, and they have acquired NGO status with the UN's Economic and Social Council. They have signed a Framework Partnership with the European Commission Humanitarian Aid department, and a partnership agreement with UNHCR that reaffirmed both organisations' principles of giving aid without discrimination.

Their international headquarters are based in Digbeth, in Birmingham, UK, but they have offices in countries including Australia, Bangladesh, Germany, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mali, South Africa, Sweden, USA and many other countries.

The slogan of IRW is 'Faith inspired action'. Inspired by the Islamic faith and guided by their values, they believe that people with wealth have a duty to those less fortunate – regardless of race, political affiliation, gender or belief.

The Board of Trustees (BOT) of IRW is responsible for the governance of the organisation. The BOT monitors management directly or through board sub-committees. The Board evaluates the performance and the progress of their work to alleviate poverty and suffering, approves new policies and procedures, appraises the Executive Management Team (EMT) and can make appointments to and dismissals from these (IRW, 2017).

Islamic Relief Kenya

Islamic Relief Kenya (IRK) started operations in Kenya in 1993 on a one-to-one orphans sponsorship programme through a local CBO in Mandera County, Northern Kenya. It opened its full-fledged office in March, 2006 at the height of drought in the Horn of Africa. Since, then

IRK has been providing humanitarian and developmental assistance to vulnerable communities. Over these years it has implemented various developmental and relief activities in the region. This has remarkably changed the lives of the vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. In January 2010, IRK extended its operation to Wajir County, neighbouring Mandera. Again, in October 2011, the programme was extended to Garissa County, with a focus to primarily support Refugees at the Dadaab Camp and host communities at the neighbourhood. They allocate the resources regardless of race, political affiliation, gender or belief, and without expecting anything in return.

The vision of IRK is written as 'Inspired by our Islamic faith, we envisage a caring world where communities are empowered, social obligations are fulfilled and people respond as one to the suffering of others'. To achieve their vision they have some mission statement stated below:

- Enable communities to mitigate the effect of disasters, prepare for their occurrence and respond by providing relief, protection and recovery.
- Promote integrated development and environmental custodianship with a focus on sustainable livelihoods.
- Support the marginalized and vulnerable to voice their needs and address root causes of poverty.

They remain guided by the timeless values and teachings provided by the revelation contained within Qur'an and the prophetic examples, most specifically: Sincerity- *Ikhlas*, Excellence- *Ihsan*, Compassion- *Rahmah*, Social Justice- *Adl*, and Custodianship- *Amanah*. IRK is run and managed by the BOT for Kenya and a SMT headed by Country Director.

Current Operations

IRK has tailored its programs towards emergency response, recovery, and livelihood support. The programmes are aligned to respond to and comply with government developmental policies (such as Vision 2030), community focus, regional vision as well as global millennium development goals. The focal programme areas since February 2006 have included: Nutrition and Health, Water and sanitation, Orphans sponsorship, Livelihoods programmes and Emergency and Relief Supplies. IR has ensured that its programmes target those who are most vulnerable in the most disadvantaged areas. Now it is operating its activities under the following heads:

1. Child Welfare & Education Programme: Under this programme, IRK is operating the 'Child Welfare Project', which seeks to cater for the many poor widows and orphans in Northern Kenya by ensuring they are economically empowered, the children are protected and educated. Under this project, IRK has initiated three programme activities namely, Orphan one to one orphan sponsorship, Child Protection & Education. By executing this project, IRK is playing an integral role in supporting the government of Kenya in advancing the child protection agenda.

2. DRR & Livelihood Programme: Since 2006, this programme has addressed short-term emergency needs, medium- term rehabilitation programmes and the longer term strategic needs of the poor through development of disaster risk reduction (DRR) interventions. In an effort to increase the resilience to shock through re-building the asset level of drought affected Households, IRK has been supporting farmers along the riverine with irrigation along River Daua. Also supporting the pastoralists in protecting the main herds of livestock against drought

shocks and support widow, poor and vulnerable mothers through micro-finance.

IR has and is helping farmers by providing pump set (with initial running cost), intensive training on Good Agronomic Practices, open more land for irrigation and support in ensuring the right crops are planted and sustained to maturity and proper water management system is instituted.

3. Health and Nutrition Programme: The Health and Nutrition programme seeks to promote the health and nutrition status of vulnerable people in North Eastern Province, Kenya and especially the women and children. By implementing this programme, IRK is supporting the Ministry of Health (MOH) to Scale up Nutrition through the implementation of High Impact Nutrition Interventions (HiNi) in Mandera and Wajir counties. The activities and interventions implemented by the organization are in line with the National Nutrition Action Plan.

4. Orphan Micro-Enterprise Project: The Orphan Micro-Enterprise Project (OMEP) is a Shariah Based Micro-Credit Project (interest free Loan). This project has been implemented by the IRK Child Welfare Department in Mandera County. Its beneficiaries are orphan from the 1-2-1 Program in the Child Welfare Department. The project was planned in such a way that when the child exits the 1-2-1 program the families have established viable enterprise to sustain the family basic needs (food, education and medication of their children).

5. Seasonal Programmes: Under these programmes, IRK is operating below stated two programmes:

Ramadan Programme: The programme's objective is to contribute to the reduction of sharing supplementary food amongst the Supplementary Feeding Programme (SFP) beneficiaries within the month of Ramadan food pack distribution. The beneficiaries were composed of moderately malnourished children under five, pregnant and lactating mothers admitted in the SFP, the orphans and people affected by HIV/AIDS.

Qurbani Programme: IRK organizes annual Qurbanis and distributing the meat to the poor. The programme is implemented during Eid-UI-Adha and is aimed at improving food security of the poorest of the poor, most vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals including malnourished children (under 5 years), pregnant and lactating mothers, people living with HIV/AIDS, orphaned and vulnerable families, the elderly without bread winner, disabled individuals with vulnerability and moderately malnourished individuals admitted in Islamic Relief Kenya Supplementary and Therapeutic Feeding Programme.

6. WASH Programme: The Water and Sanitation (WASH) programme aims to facilitate rehabilitation / expansion, training of water resources management committees, water quality monitoring, hygiene promotion campaigns and training communities on good hygiene and sanitation practices.

Operations in Dadaab Refugee Camp

Dadaab Refugee Camp in Garissa County of Kenya is the second-largest refugee camp in the world and was established in 1991 by the Government of Kenya to host refugees displaced by the Somalia civil war. As of April 2017, the Dadaab hosts 245,126 refugees across five camps named Dagahaley, Hagadera, Ifo, Ifo II and Kambioos. Over the years, the camp has also hosted displaced people of other nationalities from the Horn of Africa, Great Lakes and East Africa regions who had fled intense famine, drought and conflict. The UNHCR and implementing partners such as IR Kenya have been providing protection and assistance to refugees in Dadaab for more than 25 years, with the camp population reaching its peak of 485,000 people in 2012 following famine-induced displacement of people from Somalia. However, with a rise in the number of people forcibly displaced by conflict and violence, issues

of insecurity have been on the rise as well. The Government of Kenya, stating its cardinal responsibility of providing security for all Kenyans, announced the decision to close Dadaab Refugee Camp in May 2016. But after signing a tripartite agreement among the Governments of Kenya, Somalia and UN, a National Task Force on the Repatriation of Refugees from Dadaab Refugee Camps was created to formulate and oversee the implementation of a comprehensive voluntary repatriation plan that ensures the safety and dignity of returnees. However, this plan remains to be implemented fully and the Government extended the Tripartite Agreement in November, 2016 (company website).

A key area of IRK's work is in Dadaab refugee camp where they are running a hospital and six health centres in Ifo sub camp, home to 70,000 people. They are also providing primary and early education for 40,000 children through 10 schools in Ifo camp 1 and eight schools in Ifo Camp 2. The services are available to both refugees and the host communities. Promoting and protecting women's and girls' rights is a key priority. They are training women in business development, management and leadership skills; prioritising the training of female teachers and providing sanitary towels in schools in Dadaab to ensure that young girls don't miss out on their education. They also have a sexual and gender based violence clinic in Dadaab where they treat women affected by violence and provide evidence needed in court for prosecutions.

PROBLEMS AND DISCUSSION

Education is a basic human right, enshrined in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (Detrick, 1999) and the 1951 Refugee Convention (Zimmermann, Dörschner, & Machts, 2011). Despite significant investment in the education sector over the years, access to education for refugee is still limited.

In times of displacement, access to education for children tends to deteriorate, albeit being a force to foster social cohesion, provide access to life-saving information, address psychosocial needs, and offer a stable and safe environment for those who need it most. Education also helps people to rebuild their communities and pursue productive, meaningful lives.

Given the importance of education, UNHCR in partnership with International Non-Government Organizations including Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) commenced education programmes in Dadaab including pre-school, primary, secondary, adult literacy, special needs education, vocational training and scholarships opportunities for tertiary education. At present, there are 35 primary schools and 7 secondary schools in Dadaab refugee camp, all of which follow the Kenyan curriculum. Formal pre-schools are attached to the primary schools with additional community based facilities. An open door policy has been established to ensure every child is admitted for primary education.

The refugees in Dadaab are mostly from the neighbouring country in Somalia. According to their faith and culture, children attend Quranic schools (*Duksi*) before they begin formal education. As a result of displacement as well cultural sensitivity, some children enrol in *Duksi* schools late and remain enrolled up to age ten. Consequently, children's formal education gets further delayed and children face challenges in catching up with the formal curriculum. Furthermore, many of the refugee children who arrived in the camp since its inception received little or no education in their home country creating a challenge for their re-integration into the formal school system – especially if they have lost more than three years of education.

Islamic Relief Kenya has been managing 20 pre-primary and primary schools in Dadaab refugee camp in partnership with UNHCR and the Government of Kenya. In the course of IR's

work, it has been observed that many parents are reluctant to send their children to pre-primary or primary education, and that many children drop out of school if there is no religious education as part of the pre-primary or primary educational curriculum.

To address this issue, IRK conducted a number of meetings with community leaders, parents at the camp, Government officials, faith leaders, and related people. As a result of those meetings [Shuratic decision making system (Mohiuddin, 2006)], IRK introduced religious school programmes alongside formal primary education into the existing community-managed religious schools called *Duksi* to meet emergency educational needs by adapting existing practices in an innovative way to ensure the access and retention of children in pre-primary education. This program was piloted in 5 schools through a co-fund from UNHCR and Islamic Relief USA received in 2012. In 2014/2015, IRK enabled the upgrade of two more *Duksi* schools to enrol 1,863 (744 girls) against the initial target of 1,000 children.

In *Duksi* school children receive religious education alongside acquiring key reading and writing, sciences and math skills to accelerate basic education and catch up with formal primary education. IR Kenya has completely restructured the preschools curriculum to adopt the cultural sensitivity to ensure a child-friendly educational environment and to improve the enrolment rate and retention of children to complete the primary education cycle through establishing their parents' trust.

Through the pilot project, *Duksi* schools were successfully integrated as learning institutions for both religious education and formal education that have satisfied the high expectations among key stakeholders including UNHCR and other active education partners in Dadaab refugee camp.

Unique approaches of *Duksi* model adapted by other INGOs

Over the years, a number of International organizations have attempted to improve enrolment rates of refugee children living in Dadaab using different strategies. Unfortunately, the approaches tested did not receive the necessary community buy-in. Being a faith based organization, IR Kenya engaged religious leaders to help promote the value of education and appoint female teachers from within the refugee communities to ensure community-led integrated education. Now the religious leaders and the parents agree that formal education and religious education can coexist and complement each other.

The followings are the unique features of this integrated model-

1. Engage religious leaders to sensitize communities about the education needs of children.
2. Accelerated learning programmes along with religious education for older learners to catch up on formal primary education.
3. Inclusion of female teachers into the Qur'ānic schools to act as role models for school-going girls.
4. Capacity building of un-trained teachers at *Duksi* schools on pedagogical approaches to enable them to manage classrooms.
5. This approach encouraged trust from the refugee communities in the education system and increased access to education among boys and girls as well as retention rate.

To ensure the success of IRK's integrated education model, a strong relationship with the Ministry of Education was fostered through the Dadaab District Education Office and the Department of Refugee Affairs at the county level. Both were engaged for technical advice on the project execution. Government support and cooperation was a key success factor in IR

Kenya's education work. Furthermore, the impact achieved inspired other organizations, including the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), to adopt a similarly integrated approach in their education programme in Dadaab refugee camp.

Overall Objectives of the *Duksi* Model

The overall goal the *Duksi* model is to increase awareness and access to formal education among children living in emergency and humanitarian situation in the Dadaab Refugee Camps in the northern part of Kenya.

The Specific objectives of the model include the following:

- To integrate the informal *Duksi* schools into the formal education system
- To improve access to formal education from the *Duksi* children/student learning perspective by integrating formal early childhood education with informal Islamic education.
- To create a conducive and safe learning environment for children through construction/rehabilitation child-friendly *Duksi* schools and facilities.

ALTERNATIVES

To solve the above stated problem, IRK initiated the following alternatives:

Implementation Strategy, Methodology and Sustainability of the Model

The main implementation strategy of *Duksi* model is close collaboration with the beneficiary community, UNHCR, the Ministry of Education, INGOs, Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) and Community & Religious leaders controlling admissions of children in different sections of the refugee camps. Considering these as guiding principles, IRK carried out its education strategy by integrating *Duksi* system into Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE).

The following specific partnership and collaboration strategies were followed during the implementation stages:

- The successful partnership has been made among Ministry of Education, teachers both secular and Qur'ānic, as well as the *Imams*, *Ulamas* and the larger community.
- The Learning curriculum has been agreed by all stakeholders including the Ministry of Education's ECDE programme, INGOs, UN Organization and Faith Based Organizations and Faith Leaders. The joint team including IR Kenya and *District education department* jointly monitored the implementation of the education model.
- The Teachers of all *Duksi* school have been trained professionally both in national curriculum and religious education to ensure successful implementation of the model.

The above mentioned approaches are known in Dadaab refugee camp as 'Islamic Relief Integrated education model during emergency and humanitarian situation'.

Community Engagement and Right Based Approaches

The following approaches were considered during development of the model along with integrating national curriculum and religious educations:

- **Community participation:** The model is being implemented with full involvement and participation of the communities.
- **Right based Programming:** The refuge right issues were considered during the model design stages.
- **Child participation:** Child protection issues have also been considered and oriented among all stakeholders.

- **Conflict Sensitivity:** Conflict sensitively was also considered as the project implemented for internally displaced people.

CONCLUSION

There is a need to continue to re-think the balance of cooperation between Faith Based Organizations and local communities as humanitarian needs grow in complexity and the humanitarian landscape and environment is ever more dynamic. IRK believes that collaborations between Faith Based Organizations and local communities [participative management system, (Koontz, 2013); Strategic Decision making (Fortaine & Ahmad, 2013)] have the unique capacity to mobilize communities and humanitarian stakeholders toward meaningful resilience, emergency response and long-term development interventions. They continue to look at how various religious concepts can improve their programmes and lead to more community-owned and sustainable development. Successful development models such as the integration of formal education with religious/cultural education systems for the provision of education in refugee contexts, or the *Shariah* compliant micro-finance model currently being implemented continuously demonstrate the valuable role and work of Faith Based Organizations in addressing the needs of communities. While inspired by faith and the positive impact of religiously-sensitive programs, IRK continues to offer development and relief assistance regardless of religion or ethnicity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you mean by Integration of Religious Education? How and why the integration of religious education in formal and non-formal education model have been developed and contextualized during a very humanitarian emergency situation?
2. What was the role of faith based organizations and faith leaders to implement the model among refugee populations successfully?
3. How the Faith Based Organizations, UN Organizations, Faith Leaders and Corporate Sectors have seen established partnership and collaborations to develop and implement the model successfully?
4. With the help of the case, explain how the management can be successful in an adverse situation like Dadaab refugee camp to implement their programmes.

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