Should Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) Be Involved in Relief Aid?
A Look at FBO Relief Initiatives for Syrian Refugee Communities in Lebanon

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Central Argument:
FBOs perform an important role in disaster and conflict zones, particularly in religious societies, by providing quick calls to action and organizing field operations to deliver aid. Given the importance of religion in Lebanese politics and society, as well as the importance of religious identity to many Syrian refugee communities, overlooking religious identity—and by extension, the work of FBOs—ignores the meaningful work achieved by these organizations. Moreover, the mission statements and work in Lebanon of the IOCC and Islamic Relief Worldwide demonstrate that FBOs can commit to the International Red Cross principles of universality, impartiality, and fulfillment of the humanitarian imperative without compromising their religious character. In many cases, religion enhances FBOs’ capacity to succeed across these three principles.

Research Questions:
- Should FBOs be central actors in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon?
- Considering the relief efforts of the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) and Islamic Relief Worldwide, how can FBOs ensure that aid is universal, impartial, and fulfilling the humanitarian imperative outlined by the International Red Cross?

Important Considerations for Future Research:
The lack of independent studies measuring the effectiveness of Lebanon’s programs implemented IOCC and Islamic Relief Worldwide presents the primary challenge. In addition, I could not find testimonials from actual refugee communities on the work of the IOCC and Islamic Relief Worldwide. In the absence of these two sources, my conclusion still stands that FBOs have been effective in administering relief aid in compliance with the International Red Cross principles.

Outline:
- Background on FBOS
- Key terms
- FBOs in the Lebanese context
- FBO case studies:
  - The IOCC
  - Islamic Relief Worldwide

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