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IDD Research Fellow attends workshop on Charities and Legitimacy

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Oliver Walton, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre Research Fellow, recently attended an International Workshop on **Charities and Legitimacy (http://www0.hku.hk/ihss/Istanbul%20Website/index.html)** . The workshop, which was organised by the University of Hong Kong, featured a range of papers from anthropologists, historians and political scientists, focusing on contemporary and historical case studies of charities and NGOs across Asia and the Middle East. **Oliver Walton's paper (http://www0.hku.hk/ihss/Istanbul%20Website/abstract/Abs_Oliver%20Walton.pdf)** focused on NGO legitimacy in conflict-affected regions, drawing examples from Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Palestinian Territories.

The workshop involved a visit to two Turkish NGOs who were engaged in development and humanitarian work. The first organisation, Kimse Yok Mu, was established in 1999 after the Turkish earthquake, and now works in over 80 countries, conducting a range of humanitarian and developmental activities. The second organisation - the IHH Humanitarian relief foundation - works in over 130 countries and is best known for its involvement in the 2010 'freedom flotilla' to Gaza, which was raided by Israeli forces. Although both organisations were formally secular, both had a strong Muslim ethos. Although in many respects similar to more established international NGOs from Western Europe or the US, these organisations supported Islamic activities such as wedding ceremonies, circumcisions, and the distribution of meat. Both organisations were growing rapidly with the support of the Turkish government, drawing most of their resources from the Turkish population.

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