Trans-Faith Humanitarianism: Muslim Aid and the United Methodist Committee on Relief

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This paper explores the hypothesis that Muslim Aid (UK) and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) (US) are significant organisations in the emerging ‘faith and development’ interface, and pioneering exponents of multi-national, cross-cultural and trans-faith humanitarianism. The two organisations began working together in Eastern Sri Lanka in 2006 after fighting led to 57,000 fleeing the primarily Muslim town of Muttur. The two NGOs combined resources to provide assistance to the refugees with funding from the United Nations’ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and later promoted the sustainable return of the refugees to their original homes, with funding from the OHCHR and other sources. In June 2007, the two organisations signed an agreement at the House of Commons in London to formalise and expand their cooperation. Based on fieldwork in the UK, the US and Sri Lanka, the paper examine will examine: 1. The history of Muslim Aid and UMCOR (especially in the context of relevant Islamic and Christian theology); 2. The origin and the development of the partnership; 3. The achievements (tangible and non-tangible) that resulted from the partnership including the positive outcomes as perceived by three distinct groups (staff/officials, volunteers/supporters and beneficiaries/project-affected persons); 4. The challenges, problems and failings as perceived by the same three groups; and 5. The lessons that emerge for the organisations themselves and for other development organisations.