

SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN MUSLIM FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS (FBOS) RESPONSE TO INTERNATIONAL DISASTERS: CASE STUDY OF THE GIFT OF THE GIVERS FOUNDATION

S. Khan, A. K. Gabralla and AFM Ebrahim

Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) are known to respond to international disasters faster than some afflicted nation states can. Muslims of Indian origin in South Africa are known to be a minority group and since the dawn of democracy has made a significant humanitarian response to a wide range of international disasters. Whilst the community has a variety of FBOs serving its social welfare and religious needs, in recent years several specialised FBOs have emerged focusing on humanitarian aid assistance to disaster hotspot areas in the globe. This paper examines one such organisation which has been acclaimed to be the forerunner in providing humanitarian aid assistance within and outside of South Africa. The paper provides overview of FBOS and interventions in national and international relief activities, the socio-historical context and typology of FBOs and a brief profile of FBOs in South Africa. Thereafter the paper provides focus on the Gift of the Givers Foundation (GGF) in South Africa, its origins and structure, the extent of services provided in disaster hotspot areas in the globe followed by highlighting some distinguishing characteristics of the GGF.

Keywords: FBOs, Disaster Relief, Religion and Development, Humanitarian Aid, Faith based giving, Muslims of Indian Origin.

Introduction

Muslims in South Africa constitute a heterogeneous group with diverse socio-historical backgrounds. As a community it reflects the same diversity that characterises the rest of the South African population. Each of these groups has different historical contexts that draw on their normative and value systems from the universal principles of Islam. Muslims of Indian extraction may be classified into two distinct groupings. The first being those from the sub-continent of India who were lured by the British colonialists from 1860 onwards to work on the sugar plantations of the Natal colony as indentured labourers (Ramphal, 1985: 109; Meer, 1980: 1). These Muslims came from Malabar, on the west coast of South India and Hyderabad in the south. Around this time, a second group of Muslims classified as the passenger group followed their indentured counterparts. They were mainly Sunni Vhoras from Surat and Memons from Kathiawad and Kutch. Their history and origin vary from that of the indentured Muslims. The passenger Muslims comprised predominantly the merchant class Indians and referred to by the

Address for communication: **S Khan**, School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, *E-mail:* khans@ukzn.ac.za, **A. K. Gabralla** and **AFM Ebrahim**, School of Theology and Religion, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, *E-mail:* abdallakhair@live.com, ebrahima@ukzn.ac.za

colonialists as “Arabs” because of their distinct code of dress. As traders they enjoyed certain privileges from their colonialist masters, since they were free citizens of the British Empire. They were excluded from the full application of the Indian Immigration Law (Sulliman, 1997: 108).

The so-called “Arab” merchants of Durban supplied merchandise to many of the stores owned by their relatives or village contacts in the smaller towns of the Colony. They penetrated many of the remote areas of the country and rendered commercial services to communities around them (Sulliman, 1997: 109). The presence of transport networks, the railway, and the rapidly developing mining industry attracted this group of Muslims to the Transvaal. Small businesses were then set up in the city of Johannesburg including outlying towns such as Pietersburg, Nelspruit, Potgietersrus and Volksrust (Nadvi, 1988: 149). Despite the diverse historical backgrounds of Muslims of Indian origin in South Africa and their ideological, cultural and linguistic differences, the community has continued to thrive, making a distinct presence in the country especially in the Provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

In the field of philanthropy Muslims of Indian extraction made an indelible contribution to various aspects of community life both within and outside of their community. This in part is due to the institution of charity being a basic article of faith and every Muslim who owns surplus wealth is compelled to contribute two and half percent of their income towards the upliftment of the community amidst other forms of charities. These religiously ordained forms of charity were used to establish different forms of community infrastructure (mosques, cemeteries, orphanages, old age homes, community centres, educational institutes, schools and charitable institutions). The more affluent Muslims of Indian origin, being better endowed through business and commercial interests contributed a larger share in respect of Islamically ordained charities as compared to their indentured counterparts. Given the underdevelopment caused by colonialism and apartheid the, need for Islamic forms of charity helped to establish a sense of community. Under apartheid and the implementation of the Group Areas Act, large sections of the indentured Indian Muslims were relocated to state owned housing estates with little or no community infrastructure and this dealt a major blow in the form in which religiously ordained charities were directed and utilised. The more affluent Muslims of Indian extraction who relocated to racially defined suburbs were able to recover from the devastating effects of such dislocation in a shorter space of time as compared to their indentured counterparts who were dumped into sterile, mono-functional and mono-lithic townships. Until today, many within this grouping has not fully recovered from this devastating effect of relocation and resettlement although as at 1997 a total of 1328 community based, religious and social welfare organisations served the Muslim community as a whole (Khan, 2011).

However, in the post-apartheid era, after four decades of international isolation, South Africa has entered the global stage as an important nation state. This changed the philanthropic landscape within the Indian Muslim community who had seen the opportunity to make a philanthropic contribution beyond the borders of South Africa. It is against this context that this paper profiles the Gift of the Givers Foundation as an international disaster relief organisation that has come to be widely supported both within and outside of the community including the state. Its origin however, is within the Indian Muslim diasporic community. In order to place the origin, nature and organizational structure of Gift of the Givers Foundation in perspective, it is important to provide a brief conceptual framework on the nature and role of FBOs from an international perspective, so that some comparison on its *modus operandi* can be drawn.

This paper is informed by a number of methodological approaches and sources of information. The profile of the Gift of the Givers Foundation was constructed through content analysis of thirteen volumes containing 3 500 press articles, news reports, radio and television interviews, mercy mission statements, annual reports, appeal letters, appreciation letters and statements of awards. For purposes of in-depth content analysis, 380 articles were selected for analysis. In addition through snowball sampling technique a total of 60 donor respondents and equivalent number of volunteers were identified and interviewed on the different aspects of the organisation.

Considering that Muslim FBOs are not a homogeneous grouping, this paper focuses on only one organisation among South African based Muslim FBOs which has its origin within the Indian diasporic community. It examines its role towards humanitarian aid in times of disasters within the broader international context of the NGO sector. For analytical purposes, reference is made to Muslim FBOs as formulated by De Cordier (2009: 609) who defines it as non-governmental organisations that are founded on the initiative of Muslims, that mobilise most of their support among Muslims, and whose action vary in degrees taking various forms which are inspired and legitimated by the Islamic religion or at least certain tenets thereof.

The structure of this paper commences by providing a brief characteristic of FBOs, followed by a scan on the role and challenges of FBOs in disaster and development oriented projects. Thereafter, the paper provides an overview of the prevalence of South African FBOs followed by an examination of the origins of the Gift of the Givers Foundation. Its organisational structure, nature and extent of humanitarian aid activity are thereafter discussed. The paper concludes by examining some of the distinguished characteristics of the Gift of the Givers Foundation that makes it a forerunner amongst the various FBOs engaged in humanitarian aid during times of disasters which carries the label of being “proudly South African”.

Characteristics of FBOs and Intervention in National and International Disaster Relief Activity

In the past two decades faith based organisations (FBOs) have exploded in growth throughout the world as a sub-category of the civil society not-for-profit organisation sector (Marshall and Keough 2004). Notwithstanding such growth, the majority of research on the influence of faith on health and human service provision has been largely conducted in the United States, and these studies have focused almost exclusively on the activities of Christian FBOs. The state of current research raises a number of questions on the diversity of FBOs, its nature, extent, role and scope in developing, developed and underdeveloped countries (Flanigan 2008: 2). However, what is common in all of these contexts is that they have grown out of religious organisations inspired and governed by religious authorities and form part of the several million NGOs in the world (Berger 2003). More specifically, FBOs can be defined as non-profit, voluntary organisations whose identity and mission are self-consciously derived from the teachings of one or more religious or spiritual traditions which seek to realise collectively articulated ideas about the public good at the national or international level (Orji 2011: 473).

FBOs have historically played and continue to serve an important role in responding to humanitarian needs in times of disasters. They make up a good share of the NGO sector and are characterised by one or more of the following characteristics: affiliation with a religious body; a mission statement with explicit reference to religious values; financial support from religious sources; and/or a governance structure where selection of board members or staff is based on religious beliefs or affiliation and/or decision-making processes based on religious values (Ferris 2005: 311).

FBOs enjoy a number of characteristics that distinguish them from other forms of community based organisations. Spiritual and moral values form an important, distinct and supplementary dimension to FBOs profile compared to the secular development discourses of other community based organisations. As a result they have significant ability to mobilise adherents towards philanthropic giving. Habib, Maharaj and Nyar (2008: 81) in their study noticed that citizens across the globe tend to feel more comfortable in directing their philanthropic gestures through the medium of religious institutions. Clarke (2006: 846) and Smith and Sosin (2001: 664) observe that FBOs are highly networked; both locally and internationally and in many cases interface with their faith-based sister organisations. They operate within a political context and are less dependent on donor funding as they have a well developed capacity and expertise in key areas of development practice. As such, they are stakeholders in the development process and have recently drawn significant attention in development policy. Since the concept 'development' is itself a normative ideal and moral cause, having much in common with the faith

discourses from which it has traditionally remained aloof, the importance of FBOs in development practice cannot be ignored (Clarke 2006: 845).

The capacity of FBOs to mobilise resources is known to be even much greater to that of state departments and provides even more aid during times of disasters than many governments do. This is so because a large amount of giving is inspired by religious beliefs. Different religions emphasise that giving is associated with a deep sense of responsibility, duty and commitment in order to realise spiritual salvation. As such *Zakah*, *tzedalah*, *dana* and tithes are forms of religiously compulsory giving for Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Christians respectively which are encouraged by religious leaders of all faiths. It helps to cultivate the habit of charity resulting in their adherents to give more time and money to faith based and secular initiatives (Habib, Maharaj and Nyar 2008: 27).

FBOs are known to be active in most countries afflicted by disasters caused by natural hazards, persecution, and war (Redwood-Campbell 2008:56). One of the major reasons for such an increase may be attributed to the demise of communism opening new spaces for proselytisation, the spread of democracy in poor countries, technological change and economic integration. In short, globalisation has created fertile grounds for the rise of NGOs at a broader level. According to the Yearbook of International Organizations, there were about 26,000 international NGOs by the year 2000, compared to 6,000 in 1990 (Ferris 2005: 311). Given the growing number of humanitarian aid organisations and the wide range of activities that they engage in, to make any universal typological analysis of its nature and structure is difficult. Similarly, it is difficult to draw any typology of FBOs considering the diversity of humanitarian activities pursued by them (Smith and Sosin 2001: 651-652).

While numerous FBOs concentrate their activities on the local level, many tend to make significant contributions within the international humanitarian community. This tradition has existed long before International Humanitarian Law was formalised into treaty law setting the rules of engagement for consolidating relief efforts amongst different stakeholders in disaster afflicted environments.

Despite their record in humanitarian aid work, the contributions made by FBOs during times of disaster and development have largely been ignored but since the 1980s the relationship between religion and development has received some scholarly attention. At the turn of the millennium, research interest on the relevance of faith in developmental related activities has witnessed an upward turn (Kniss and Campbell 1997: 94-95). Notwithstanding the increased scholarly attention that FBOs are receiving, the study of FBOs in development related contexts can be complex given that they vary in nature, size, scope, ideology, structure and even have covert proselytisation objectives masked in the name of humanitarian work. Hence the prospect of a universal typology of FBOs emerging through research is in itself an ambitious study. The Faith and Technical Education Network (2003: 4)

however provides a broad typology that classifies FBOs into faith-permeated, faith-centered, faith-affiliated, faith-background and faith-secular partnership programmes with a view to help differentiate the work of different FBOs.

Historical Context and Typology of FBOs

FBOs have their roots in a particular religion. With the passage of time, communities that conform to religious norms and values to secure their social existence have formed basic organisations to take care of particular needs of individual members of their community. Many have taken the form of places of worship, educational institutes, community centres and social welfare institutions (children's homes, old age homes, community centers and the like). These are formed in a spirit to maintain the essence of their religion. Examples of these are the missionary and religious authority organisations which have persisted even in the face of persecution and even at times when religion had become marginalised in the lives of people (Clarke 2006: 836-839; Ferris 2005: 313-316).

Generally, disaster relief, welfare and development activities are included in missionary FBOs' programmes. FBOs, however, provide care and render aid to those who suffer devastation from natural catastrophes, persecution, evacuation and war. Hence it is not surprising that synagogues, Churches, Mosques and Temples have often become places of refuge for the poor, the marginalised, the alien (foreigners) and the persecuted in times of human crisis. This is because the principle of justice for destitute and marginalised humans is central to the teachings of these religions.

Islam for instance, which came into existence in the middle of the seventh century, encourages its adherents to provide assistance to the needy as an act of faith. Prophet Muhammad initiated the idea of public endowment for the common good which was the first idea of its nature perhaps in human history. Hence in the golden age of Islam (8-17 century), 30 types of charitable services were offered to human beings as well as animals (al-Suba'i, 1987:121- 128). One unusual example is the charitable institution which replaced the lunch boxes of students when they broke. This saved the children from being punished by their parents for their carelessness. Another is the provision of secure pastures for the ageing and ailing animals. A historical example of this service is the Damascus green pasture that was situated where the metropolitan stadium currently stands.

Christian FBOs flourished in Europe and North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in their local communities. Later Christian FBOs sought to Christianise undeveloped communities overseas by providing basic necessities, which were urgently needed, provided they accepted Christianity as their newly found religion. These missionaries then reported the poor conditions of these communities to their wealthy constituencies in the west resulting in aid relief to flow to these underdeveloped communities as one of the flagship Christian FBO missionary agenda to the needy (Ferris 2005: 314).

In the nineteenth century major secular organisations were formed which were devoted purely to humanitarian aid purposes. Examples of these are Red Cross Movement, anti-slavery organisations, Save the Children, and Oxfam. Despite the emergence of such secular humanitarian aid groups, Faith-Based groups continue to constitute a large share of humanitarian aid organisations as part of their missionary programmes.

This is most notable during and immediately after World War ²², with Christian FBOs in the forefront of humanitarian aid programmes to assist those who had been afflicted by war and post-war social and economic traumas. In the 1950s and 1960s Christian FBOs in the main lobbied for the establishment of the United Nations and advocated for the inclusion of human rights references in the United Nations Charter (Ferris 2005: 315). FBOs throughout the 1950s and 1960s played a significant role in providing aid to agencies around the world that served the social and physical well being of refugees. One 1953 analysis found that 90 percent of post World War II relief was provided by religious agencies in war stricken regions and localities (Ferris 2005: 315). However, more recently, FBOs can broadly be classified by five typological manifestations (Clarke 2006: 840-845) viz., theological bodies, charitable and development organisations, socio-political organisations (faith-based political movements), missionary/ propagation organisations, and armed faith-based organisations.

Considering that FBOs serve as humanitarian aid organisations with a religious fervour and orientation, there is a clear differentiation in their constitution as compared to their secular counterparts; although in many respects they share similar objectives for the provision of humanitarian assistance. They are all subject to the same set of political, social and economic dynamics and confront similar challenges when undertaking humanitarian aid activities. According to Ferris (2005:316) two facts distinguish FBOs from most secular humanitarian organisations. The first being motivation by faith and second is that they are backed by a faith-based constituency. Hence, faith appears to be the strongest most important variable influencing the continued existence of FBOs.

In examining the distinction between FBOs and secular organisations Smith and Sosin (2001: 658) suggest a closer look on the nature of an FBO as against a secular organisation or even amongst FBOs in terms of the following:

- Who wields authority,
- The classification of the resources it uses, and
- The culture that the organisation adopts.

Notwithstanding attempts at making a distinction between FBOs and secular organisations, it must be noted that with the continued dominance of a rigidly secular aid regime amid fears of religion's 'darker side', the extent to which FBOs can really profit from their faith based constituencies and provide alternatives appears severely limited. This may be due to the fact that through their integration

into the mainstream NGO sector, FBOs have essentially become secularised. They are challenged to transform the aid process so that it does not merely pay lip service to 'cultural authenticity' but actively cater for religious needs while safeguarding against the perceived dangers of religion (Palmer 2011: 107). On the other hand it may be asserted that while many International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) avoid taking part in religious and cultural events during times of disasters, on the contrary facilitating the afflicted communities' conformity to religious rituals helps to promote the spiritual well-being of beneficiaries. This is especially so in light of the fact that disaster afflicted communities are vulnerable to feelings of helplessness and their spiritual well-being helps to instill a spirit of hope in post-disaster recovery attempts.

Fisher (2008) on the contrary asserts that the degree to which FBO service provisions differ from secular NGOs remains under dispute in the scholarship. Those skeptical of service provision by FBOs maintain that there is a lack of empirical evidence to suggest that services provided by FBOs are more effective than those provided by secular organisations.

FBOs and Disaster Relief in South Africa

South African FBOs constitute 12% of the total number of non-profit sector organisations in the country representing nearly 12000 FBOs (Swilling and Russell 2002: 57). Given the racial and religious diversity pervading South African society, it is not atypical to find a diverse number of faith-based and disaster relief organisations. Historically, the atrocities of colonialism and apartheid shaped and styled these organisations. They have responded to poor social and economic conditions within their respective communities given the inequality prevalent during these years. As consequence, much attention was focused on intra-community issues by providing safety nets against poverty. In times of natural disasters within the country, many FBOs from diverse backgrounds are known to have provided material resources beyond their religious and racial communities. However, all of these have changed after the advent of democracy in 1994 due to an increasing trend in international networks and links prompted by globalisation.

In a national study of philanthropy undertaken by Everatt and Solanki (2005) across all faith groups, it becomes evident that South Africa has emerged as a nation of givers with its highly networked social giving structures in the country. The study claims that 93% of the respondents gave time, money or goods to a humanitarian cause or an individual. 89% of the respondents who conform to religion or faith confirmed that their religion and/or faith require them to make regular payment or contribution making it an important motivating factor in so far as social giving is concerned. Despite such an overwhelming response, interestingly it was noted that only 3% of the respondents stated that they gave because their God told them to do so and 6% gave because God would bless them. While 68% of

the givers were motivated by feelings of human solidarity, the study also confirms that 80% of the South African givers gave money to religious bodies followed by organisations working for the poor. 29%, gave to organisations that support children, 14% gave to causes which include HIV/AIDS, people with disability and the homeless. Notably, a significant 65% of respondents were motivated to give to local cause, but significantly less to international causes (Everatt and Solanki 2005: 18, 28, 49, 54).

South Africa is a predominantly Christian country where 79.8 percent of South Africans follow the Christian faith (Statistics South Africa, 2001). However, there are many small faith-based communities (Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, to mention a few) who play an important role during times of disasters. Many Christian FBOs, both national and international, contribute a great deal to disaster relief projects. The South African Council of Churches (SACC) which was established in 1968 is believed to be the largest faith-based organisational forum in the country with 26 Christian FBO members and 36 partners. A total of 94 percent of SACC partners are to be found in the developed and wealthy countries of the world (mainly in Europe and North America). (<http://www.sacc.org.za>, Accessed September 25th, 2009). SACC is known to support displaced individuals, families and disaster victims more rapidly than the government (Habib, Maharaj and Nyar 2008:96). SACC are known to include HIV/AIDS education in their educational programmes.

Jewish institutions of charity primarily support the less privileged sectors within the Jewish community, providing family counselling, care for the elderly and handicapped, burial services, etc. In addition, Jewish institutions of charity support projects associated with HIV/AIDS, poverty alleviation, environment, and animal rights. For example, The Chevrah Kadisha (Holy Society) which was established in 1888 as a faith-based organisation renders various services from its centres in Johannesburg and Cape Town. The Jewish community also established the Ma Africa Tikkun initiative in post-apartheid era. Tikkun managed various projects including farmers' projects and HIV/AIDS care programmes in Orange Farm and project for elderly in Alexandra (Habib, Maharaj and Nyar 2008: 99-100).

Hindu charitable organisations in South Africa are active in disaster relief, social welfare and development programmes. Some examples of Hindu FBOs and their projects are exemplified in the works of the Divine Life Society (DLS) which was established in 1949. It provides health outreach programmes, establishes training centres for the underprivileged and building and renovating schools and homes in disadvantaged communities. The International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISCKON) was established in 1966 in New York City and supports community based projects such as HIV/AIDS, orphanages, old age homes and relief centres whereas the Ramakrishna Movement provides mobile clinics with volunteers, doctors and medicines in needy communities.

An analysis of David's (1997) Directory of Muslims Institutions and Mosques in South Africa reveals that some 43 Muslim FBOs offer relief services during time of disasters both within and outside of the borders of South Africa. These FBOs exist besides the many charitable, social welfare and cultural organisations that are prevalent in the different parts of the country. Some examples of leading South African Muslim FBOs that engage in disaster relief activities are the South African National Zakaat Fund (SANZAF) (1974), Mustadafin Foundation (MF) (1986), the Islamic Relief Agency (ISRA) (1987), Crescent of Hope (CH) (1992), the Gift of the Givers Foundation (GGF) (1992) and Al-Imdaad Foundation (AF) (2003). These organisations are known to be in the forefront of disaster relief activities in the country. However, the most profiled Muslim FBO in the field of disasters is the Gift of the Givers Foundation.

Origins of the Gift of the Givers Foundation

The Gift of the Givers was inspired by the motivation of Dr Imtiaz Ismail Sooliman. He was born in Potchefstroom on 7th March 1962 in the North West Province of South Africa. He originates from a trading class Indian Muslim family who owned businesses. Ethnically, as a Muslim of Indian origin, his early forbears are classified as Memons originating from parts of the Indian subcontinent were most of the early merchant class Muslims found their way to the Natal Colony in search of economic opportunities on the footsteps of their indentured Indian counterparts who arrived from the 1860s onward. Much of his early childhood education was achieved in his place of birth including his high school education. Inspired by his family doctor, a Dr Ismial Haffijee, he studied medicine at Natal University and qualified as a medical doctor in 1984, serving his internship at the Kind Edward Hospital VIII in Durban. Thereafter, he was in private practice based in Pietermaritzburg until 1993.

As a medical doctor, Dr Sooliman was closely involved in the activities of the Islamic Medical Association (IMA) which was established in 1981. As a young doctor he had an opportunity to visit the Nacala Hospital in Northern Mozambique in 1990 which was ravaged by severe drought and gripped by civil war. He was touched by the human suffering and indignity endured by human beings and the sight of two thirsty children digging half a metre into the ground to reach drinking water - an image that is reported to have changed his focus from being a private medical practitioner to championing the cause of human suffering. On his return home from neighbouring Mozambique, Dr Sooliman devoted much of his time to fund raising projects to assist the people of Mozambique (*The Star*, 17th January, 1997; *Cape Argus*, 29th November 2004). According to the *Cape Argus*, (29th November 2004) he arranged for 30 boreholes to be sunk and raised R1m in cash in a relief campaign over just one week. This was the first major humanitarian project, according to Dr Sooliman, that he had undertaken in his life.

Dr Sooliman, while on a humanitarian mission to Bangladesh in 1991, made a stopover in Istanbul, Turkey, where he met with an eminent Muslim cleric and his followers in Istanbul. The cleric known as *Shaykh* Safar Effendi, a spiritual leader, is known to have made an impressionable impact on Dr Sooliman's understanding of the spirit of Islam and its common goals resulting in him making a second visit in 1992 merely to learn, seek advice and guidance from this spiritual master. On completion of his spiritual encounter with this master, Dr Sooliman decided to accept him as his spiritual leader and guide. Dr Sooliman was advised by his spiritual master that he should persevere in his noble relief work to serve humanity in the light of Islamic teachings that emphasise that humanitarian service has to be unconditional; non-political; impartial; non-sectarian; and to reach across race, religion, culture, class and geographical boundaries and to serve with compassion, kindness, mercy and to uphold the dignity of all human beings (*The Natal Witness*, 28th August 1995; *Daily News*, 8th February 1995:1; *Al-shahid*, 1996:27-29 and *Sowetan*, 3rd December 1999).

With such profound advice and divine inspiration, Dr Sooliman was touched by his spiritual master who later advised him to form a humanitarian aid organisation called *Waqful Waqifin* translated in English as "Gift of the Givers". The spiritual leader further directed Dr Sooliman to start charitable activities of the newly founded organisation in his home country South Africa. The divine instruction was for Dr Sooliman to:

"Go back and concentrate more on your black people. They really need help. Your aim must be purely humanitarian - without looking for any benefit" (*The Natal Witness*, 28th August 1995).

This in essence was the origin of the Gift of the Givers which was established on 6th August 1992, founded on divine inspiration and spiritual guidance based on the principle of serving all of humanity. Having drawn inspiration from Islamic sources, the Gift of the Givers relies heavily on the teachings inculcated by Islamic ethics on humanitarian aid activities and the compassion demanded by Islam for the common good of its adherents and all of humanity. The vision of the Gift of Givers focuses on the ultimate goal of assisting humanity only for the pleasure of Almighty God which is an important teaching of Islam. It finds its basis in the divine promise of this being attained when believers perfect their character by believing in the oneness of God and in performing righteous deeds in this worldly life.

Amongst Muslims, it is widely known the act of charity constitutes a basic tenet of the faith and its adherents have to conform to a compulsory form of charity known as *Zakah*. This act of charity makes up the fourth pillar of Islam and is highly revered by those professing faith in their religion. Apart from *Zakah*, there are other optional charities (i.e., *Lillah*, *Fitra*, and *Sadaqa*) that become due for specific religious purposes and situations. However, *Zakah* constitutes the primary act of charity (Qu'ran 2:43) and those professing faith are religiously compelled to

donate two and a half percent of their surplus income to needy causes within the community. Optional forms of charity, however becomes due on specific occasions including in times of human disasters and crises. It is within these religious prescriptions that the Gift of the Givers draws its organisational resources that characterise it as a FBO.

In addition to the philosophical and spiritual teachings of Islam, the Gift of the Givers also emulates the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad who is known to have informed his followers that the “*best among people are those who benefit mankind*” (Qu’ran 3.110). This saying has been adopted as the motto of the Gift of the Givers as it is known to command great compassion and at the same time it demands people with a very high level of commitment to serve humanity.

Insofar as the founder of the Gift of the Givers is concerned, the founder’s spiritual orientation has had an indelible impact on how this organisation evolved over time. Dr Sooliman is known to have professed that:

“Life is only truly beneficial if you help others. Helping people is extremely fulfilling to me, and the primary aim of my foundation is to do just that” (Maritzburg Sun, 14th October 2005).

This statement actually speaks for itself as it suggests that the Gift of the Givers serves all of humanity which is the driving force behind the organisation although it has been inspired by deep Islamic principles, ethos and teachings.

If one considers the following verse, which the Gift of the Givers flags in its fundraising paraphernalia and on its official website, then it further confirms that the Gift of the Givers is founded on principles beyond those normally interpreted within narrow theological circles which provide exclusive understanding to benefit Muslims only (www.giftofthegivers.org).

“O Mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Almighty is (he who is) the most righteous of you.” (Qur’an, 49:13)

The above Qur’anic verse provides ample meaning on the principles guiding the humanitarian activities of the Gift of the Givers making it a FBO. It seeks to unite all human beings even in times of adversity such as disasters, accommodate religious diversity as a fact of life and is characterised by the principles of righteousness.

Organisational Structure of the Gift of the Givers Foundation

The Gift of the Givers, given the scale of humanitarian aid activities undertaken, can only achieve these on the basis of a large human resources network within an organisational structure which is discussed in much detail below. Nonetheless at the helm of the organisation is the founder who appears to be a hands-on-person

publicised widely for the work he is undertaking. Often, newspaper reports provide him with much public exposure being at the helm of the organisation more than the organisation as a whole and very little is mentioned on how the organisation operates or the contributions made by other members of the organisation. From the media image created on the founder it appears as though he is the only person who gets things done within the organisation. Excerpts such as these attest to such an assertion:

- “Sooliman recounts condition in Lebanon” (*Public Eye*, 24th August 2006).
- “Imtiaz is the giver of the gifts” (*Maritzburg Sun*, 14th October 2005).
- “Dr Sooliman Sufi-mystic’s gift to shattered” (*Cape Argus*, 29th November 2004).
- “One man humanitarian mission pays off” (*Sowetan*, 3rd December 1999).
- “Service is second nature to Sooliman” (*The Star*, 17th January 1997).
- “Benefactors who are never forgotten” (*The Natal Witness*, 31st October 1995).
- “Bosnia crusader Sooliman shares top achievers award” (*Sunday Times*, 17th September 1995).
- “City man is a real achiever” (*Durban Bureau*, 14th September 1995).
- “Dr Imtiaz Sooliman made the headlines with his aid project that took a mobile hospital to Bosnia” (*The Natal Witness*, 28th August 1995).
- “Doctor of mercy gives his life to the poor” (*Daily News*, 8th February 1995).

These newspaper articles are often followed by a photograph of the founder and seldom reflect the rest of his team members. Very little, if not hardly any coverage is provided of expert, prominent or magnanimous contributions made by other members of the founder’s team. The founder’s leadership of the organisation may be described “ambassadorial like”. This is evident in the many awards and acknowledgement letters which the organisation has received placing the founder at the centre of organisational life. This is also exemplified by the numerous recognition that the founder has received in his life time for his leadership quality in pursuing humanitarian aid work as compared to the organisation or the diverse South African communities that make substantial contributions to humanitarian causes through the Foundation. An analysis of recognition awards suggest that more than the 86% of awards, acknowledgements and appreciation letters received from the highest political office in the world and within South Africa, endorse the outstanding humanitarian contribution pursued by the founder (<http://www.giftofthegivers.org> Accessed 25th October, 2009).

The impression created of the founder by the media is not atypical and befits that of a charismatic leader. Such an assertion on face value would be incorrect if one delves deeper into understanding the profile of the founder. In the works of classical sociologist Max Weber such a leadership profile would aptly be described to constitute elements of religious virtuoso – a personality type that strives for perfection within an existing religious tradition (Swatos, <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/>

ency/Virtuoso.htm Accessed 18 August, 2013). Considering the profile of the founder is characterised by a strong commitment to fulfil to the utmost demands of his religion and adhere to the guidance derived from his spiritual master based in Turkey, his leadership style cannot be considered as charismatic in the least. For the simple reason in charismatic authority, according to Weber the leader introduces some innovative product or possesses some gift or a special charm that provides an individual power over others. In this study, the founder clearly derives his leadership values from a religious tradition. However, this does not mean that religious virtuoso cannot be extended to such extremes that it could take the form of charismatic leadership if the followers reject the persons claim to legitimacy.

Whether the founder can be perceived as a charismatic leader or his leadership style containing religious virtuoso, it may also be argued that by virtue of his status he may be considered elite as well. Sociologists distinguish between two types of elite the first being those who are recognised as having reached the highest level in a particular branch of activity and the second are those who occupy the highest positions of a social organisation that has an internal authority structure. When applied to the field of religion, a distinction can be made between those who are recognised as exemplifying the highest values of the religion and those who occupy the highest positions of formal authority in religious organisations or institutions. In contrast virtuosos can be distinguished from those who hold high positions of authority in hierocratic organisations that seek to monopolise the distribution of religious benefits within societies (Sharot 2001:11-12).

Table 1 provides a comparison of three South African Muslim FBOs response to international and regional disasters since the advent of democracy in the country.

It will be noted from table below that the Crescent of Hope (1992) and the Islamic Relief South Africa (1994) have provided disaster intervention programmes at a global level, no different in nature and extent to the Gift of the Givers. Despite their exemplary contribution to humanitarian aid activity they receive very little public accolade for their sterling aid work.

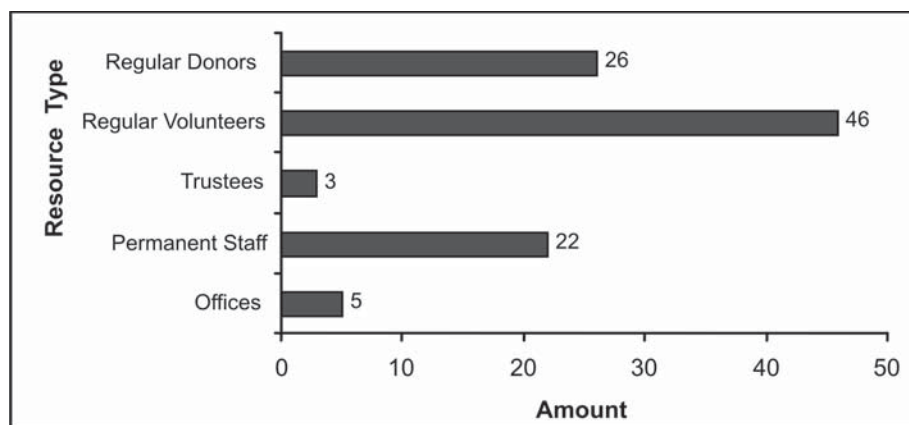
In so far as the organisational structure of the Foundation is concerned, Graph 1 illustrates its organisational resource in terms of the number of offices, permanent staff, trustees, regular volunteers and regular donors that ensures its current operations. (Communication with Ms Razia, Gift of the Givers, 14 October 2009).

It can be noted from Graph 1 that for the five offices managed by the organisation, it is resourced with a set of core dedicated staff on the average of four persons for each of its administrative units. Considering the extent of the organisation's operational activities, the average number of permanent staff appears negligible. Nonetheless, these administrative centres are supported by a dedicated team of regular volunteers who make up the human resource for the number of humanitarian aid projects implemented from its different administrative centres. Policy decisions are entrusted in the hands of three trustees and the founder serves

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF THE GIFT OF THE GIVERS FOUNDATION TO OTHER MUSLIM FBOS TO INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL DISASTERS

<i>International and Regional Disaster Areas</i>	<i>Crescent of Hope - Established 1992</i>	<i>Gift of the Givers - Established 1992</i>	<i>Islamic Relief South Africa - Established 1994</i>
Afghanistan	X	X	X
Africa	X	0	X
Bangladesh	X	0	X
Bosnia	X	X	X
Goma	0	X	0
India	X	X	X
Indonesia	X	0	0
Iran	0	X	0
Iraq	0	X	X
Kashmir	X	0	0
Kosovo	0	X	X
Lebanon	0	X	X
Mozambique	X	X	0
Niger	0	X	X
Pakistan	X	X	X
Palestine	X	0	X
Sri Lanka	0	X	X
Somalia	X	X	X
Sudan	0	X	X
Turkey	X	0	0

Source: Extracted and adapted from the organizations official websites



Graph 1: Organisation Resource of the Gift of Givers Foundation

as the director of the foundation. However, when compared to other Muslim FBOs in the country, the number of trustees serving the foundation appears negligible. Gauging from its donor support base, the organisation has only twenty-five regular donors. However, this precludes support from a wide section of the population who are not repeat donors but only respond in times of disaster when a call is made for resources.

Nature and Extent of Humanitarian aid Activities Undertaken by the Gift of The Givers Foundation

Gift of the Givers humanitarian aid activities can be classified into two broad categories comprising humanitarian aid projects and disaster relief operations. Since its inception, the extent of aid provided has grown both in depth and breadth although the extent of amounts expended cannot be ascertained in detail due to the organisation not making its financial records made known public at the time of the study. Nonetheless over a fifteen-year period (1992-2007) the organisation's humanitarian aid profile embraced a diverse number of projects of which nineteen comprised humanitarian aid programmes. Of these projects, disaster response and rehabilitation tops the focus of the organisations activity followed by hospital support, primary health clinics, bursaries and scholarships, counselling services, education support and nutrition programmes. These programmes have been serviced for more than a decade with consistency. Newer programmes and projects focussing on winter warmth support, sports development, computer literacy, cultural activities and road safety is only beginning to take form.

An analysis of the amount of cash resources expended on disaster relief projects as depicted in Table 2 for the period 1993-2006 varies. However for the periods 2003-2005 the amounts expended has been phenomenal.

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES IN RAND VALUE EXPENDED ON DISASTERS ONLY

<i>Year</i>	<i>Currency in South African Rands (ZAR)</i>
1993	6,000,000
1994	2,000,000
1995	Not available
1996	3,114,000
1997	Not available
1998	Not available
1999	270 000
2000	2,000,000
2001	4,800,000
2002	1,500,000
2003	68,000,000
2004	12,000,000
2005	20,000,000
2006	5,000,000

Insofar as disaster relief is concerned, the activities of the organisation have been widely directed to international causes. Over the years, the organisation has directed its resources to both human and natural disasters and the proportion expended on these two categories are almost equal with 51% directed to the former and 49% to the latter.

It must be noted, that although there are specialised regional and international relief giving organisations within the Indian Muslim diaspora, the mobilisation of resources during times of disasters is a community activity involving the support of other smaller FBOs in different localities within the country. Given the extent and size of Muslim FBOs in the country and the administrative and volunteer infrastructure at its disposal primarily amongst the more established ones, networking and mobilising of resources in times of disasters takes place within hours of a disaster occurring. Hence, as a community, South African Indian Muslim response to disasters has been spontaneous and this readiness maybe attributed to the good credibility and networks established in the community by regional and international humanitarian aid organisations.

In terms of the area of focus, the foundation expends more than fifty percent (53%) of its resources on locally related disasters as compared to 47% on disasters at an international level. This trend suggests that the foundation has a high visibility in humanitarian aid activities at a local level whilst at the same time maintain an international focus. Over the years (1993 – 2006), the organisation has expended approximately R64m on local disasters and R58m at an international level.

Some Distinguishing Characteristics of Gift of the Givers Foundation as a Fbo

It is difficult to distinguish between the characteristics of Gift of the Givers and the rest of South African Indian Muslim charitable and humanitarian aid organisations. This is more so as approximately 1328 community, social welfare and humanitarian aid organisations are known to serve the community and beyond (Khan and Ebrahim 2006: 199), and a common motivation for each one of them is striving for the common good and betterment of humanity as mandated by divine Islamic teachings. Each of these organisations has pre-defined objectives and within this framework they have over the years perfected their engagement in their respective fields of humanitarian aid work.

However, in the field of disaster and humanitarian aid, the Gift of the Givers stands out similar to organisations such as the Mustadafin Foundation, Africa Muslim Agency, Crescent of Hope, South African National Zakaat Fund, al-Imdad Foundation, Islamic Relief South Africa and the Islamic Medical Association. Each of these organisations have over the years, in their own right, undertaken sterling humanitarian aid work which is exemplified by the nature and extent of local community support by way of resource mobilisation. Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting in this case study aspects which make the Gift of the Givers an

organisation of choice amongst, donors, patrons, and the state and other organs of civil society. Parts of this section are constructed from the findings of the field research in which respondents have provided positive perceptions on the reasons as to why they sustain a close working relationship with the organisation.

In the volunteer study, two questions were designed to identify any common reason/theme that differentiated Gift of the Givers from other humanitarian aid organisations. An overwhelmingly 57 out of 60 respondents identified seven factors which are grouped for purposes of analysis, which characterised Gift of the Givers and distinguished it from other humanitarian aid organisations in the country. These are:

- Excellent management of the organisation
- Promoting the most deserving projects
- Excellent leadership of Dr. Imtiaz Sooliman
- Adherence to strong ethical principles
- The quick turnaround times in responding to disasters
- Its appreciation of the role of well-wisher/ volunteers
- The professionalism with which it presents itself.

Whilst it may be argued that the aforementioned characteristic may pervade other similar organisations undertaking humanitarian aid activity, what is different in this instance is that these respondents have a close association with the Gift of the Givers as volunteers and hence have an informed opinion of its strengths and religious ethos.

The South African and international media plays a significant role in providing an exceptionally high public profile on the different humanitarian projects initiated by the Gift of the Giver since its establishment in 1992. Complimentary writings about Gift of the Givers in the South African media can be counted in the hundreds. KwaZulu-Natal newspapers take the lead. This is besides several broadcast news reports, interviews, statements, campaign programmes, etc., in leading broadcasting institutions.

The foundation has expressed its acknowledgment and gratitude to the media industry on many occasions, stating:

There has been extensive cover over the years with prime time coverage in several mainstream and community media in South Africa ... Special words of gratitude to all media who have covered our various activities and have directly and indirectly increased support for humanitarian activities the world over. Some of these media institutions went beyond the expectations for actual partnership with Gift of the Givers in campaign for its projects and contributing in kind. Stations like Voice of the Cape, Radio 786, East Coast Radio, Radio 702, The Voice and Lotus FM have even run campaigns at no cost. To all the editors in print, television, radio and electronic media, on behalf of the affected men, women and children of the world we say "thank you" (<http://www.giftofthegivers.org> Accessed 25th October, 2009).

In the case of East Coast Radio, the partnership with Gift of the Givers is official. The following statement attests to this:

“Gift of the Givers is the official partner to East Coast Radio Winter Warmth campaign for a second successive year” (<http://www.giftofthegivers.org> Accessed 25th October, 2009).

Apart from the partnership with East Coast Radio, a wide range of media institutions positively recognise and promote the work undertaken by the Gift of the Givers. It appears the partnership with most of these media institutions is motivated by the love of common good to the human race in times of disasters which the organisation professes to uphold. The foundation also enjoys the privilege of adequate international media exposure.

Gift of the Givers portrays itself as a proudly South African non-governmental, humanitarian, disaster relief organisation with an Islamic ethos. The foundation has also declared its indiscriminate policy by providing service to all of humanity. It serves a diverse racial, religious, cultural, class groupings and has extended its networks across different geographical boundaries. Public acknowledgment of this can be found in the fact that both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities in South Africa consider the Gift of the Givers as one of the reliable institutions to make available ones charitable contributions.

A Pietermaritzburg citizen Bee, B. stated in *The Natal Witness*, (26th January 2005)

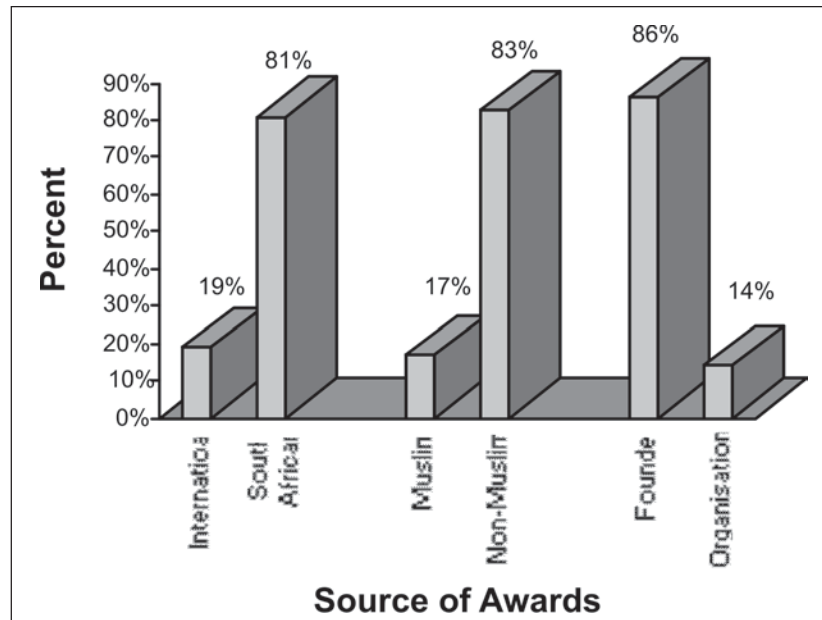
I was very glad to read that the Gift of the Givers Foundation had given some Christmas food parcels to the more unfortunate exiled Zimbabweans since this proves that what was becoming a fixed idea - that the charity was only for Muslims is quite wrong....I sent my contribution because the Gift of the Givers was so quick to send help.

Donations originate from various sources such as companies, private businesses, individuals, etc. Most donors however prefer to remain anonymous and can be relied upon for spontaneous contribution as soon as a disaster occurs. However, Gift of the Givers also has visible donors which it considers as close partners especially during times of emergency. For example, when a storm destroyed the settlement at Impendhle near Pietermaritzburg in December 1994, Dr I Sooliman stated:

“We heard the reports on television news and immediately started fetching wholesalers from their homes to open up their shops and donate food items” (*The Citizen*, 28th December 1994).

Since its establishment, Gift of the Givers prides itself of having been recipients of several local and international awards from both Muslim and Non-Muslim communities. In addition, the organisation and the founder pride itself for being recognised for its sterling humanitarian aid work in times of disasters.

It is noted from Graph 3 that the majority of awards received by the organisation is within the boundaries of the country (81%) as compared to only 19% at an international level. This suggests that the Gift of the Givers is widely acknowledged by South Africans. Interestingly, despite the organisation having an Islamic ethos, 83% of the awards received originated from Non-Muslim sources. Instead, only 17% originated from the Muslim community. Earlier it was mentioned that the



Graph 2: Source and Recipient of Awards

organisation derives its credibility from the leadership quality of the founder and this is attested to by the number of personal recognition he has received for his humanitarian aid activities. Of the awards presented, 86% was awarded to the founder as compared to 14% to the organisation. The former confirms the charismatic leadership provided by the founder and the positive impact it has on the organisation's ability to sustain its humanitarian aims and objectives (Gift of the Givers Foundation Project, Awards and Achievement Brochure, 2007).

Considering that the Gift of the Givers is a relatively new organisation, it has over a short period of time established partnerships and collaborative relationships with different stakeholders in its effort to provide humanitarian aid work in disaster afflicted areas and engage in poverty alleviation programmes and projects. Some of the success of Gift of the Givers can be traced back to these strong partnerships it has established. These partnerships play a major role in surmounting obstacles in its ability to respond to disasters with spontaneity. A distinguishing feature of the Gift of the Givers is its close collaboration with the South African government. Such collaboration is quite evident, particularly in the civil service related departments, such as the Departments of Health, Education, Local and Provincial Governments, etc. This is beside the departments that offer diplomatic and logistic support such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and South African Rescue Services. These collaborative relationships with the state is evident in the extent of

moral and material support cited in various press-releases, credential letters, entertainments, awards and celebrity appearances made by the founder with different political actors and during important state sponsored functions. Interestingly, the organisation does not interface with like organisations in disaster hotspot regions both within and outside of the country. In the period 1993-2006, it experienced only four obstacles of the twenty-nine disaster relief operations undertaken - all of which were eased through diplomatic intervention from the South African government within short notice of a disaster occurring. At a global level, of interest is that Muslim FBOs are often negatively perceived in so far as disaster intervention programmes are concerned since the 9/11 bombing. Despite the declaration of the so-called coalition war on terror by the American administration and its alliance partners, one finds that this humanitarian aid organisation escapes such political impunity in disaster hotspot regions.

Within the South African context the Gift of Givers has formed strong partnerships with the state, educational institutions and organs of civil society in pursuing its objectives. In the year 2003, the government granted the foundation R60m. This was the only organisation in the history of post-apartheid South Africa to receive sixty million rand from government to roll out 204 000 emergency food parcels in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape” (<http://www.giftofthegivers.org> Accessed 25th February, 2009). One reason why the government has expressed such confidence in the organisation may be attributed to the organisational credentials it has acquired locally and internationally to work in partnership with NGOs in the delivery of its development programme in impoverished areas in the country. At an international level the Gift of the Givers has established a standing amongst a diverse community of humanitarian aid organisations. Carrying a Proudly South African sticker on its development aid package makes the country’s presence felt in the different disaster hotspot areas of the world. South Africa given its political isolation of the past and providing such solidarity in times of human disasters can only express to the world that despite its domestic poverty woes it can lend support to nations in times of dire need. The support of the South African government is explicitly acknowledged by Gift of the Givers in the following statement: *‘several of our projects have been carried out in partnership with the South African Government with whom we have an excellent working relationship. We have been the guests of several governments in the course of fulfilling our humanitarian responsibility.* (<http://www.giftofthegivers.org> Accessed 25th February, 2009).

The way in which the founder of the Gift of the Givers interfaces with bureaucratic authority of other social actors (organs of state and civil society) reminds one of Weber’s analyses of types of authority that is used to obtain certain objectives. Here one needs to emphasise from a Weberian perspective, how bureaucratic authority is used by the founder as a rational way of achieving his religious virtuosis. For an action to be rational, it has to be the best means of

satisfying the desires of the agent, given his beliefs. In particular, they will include beliefs about the opportunities available to the agent. In fact rational choice theory is often stated in terms of desires and opportunities rather than desires and beliefs (Elster 2001: 23).

In its attempts to achieve the goal of fighting poverty in under privileged communities in Africa, the Gift of the Givers formed a partnership with University of Kwa-ZuluNatal in the Faculty of Agriculture. The rationale for such a partnership is its belief that the Pietermaritzburg-based Faculty of Agriculture has an excellent research facility to help with food security and production issues in poverty stricken areas. The foundation awarded the faculty an initial contribution of R1.3m for scholarships and bursaries. The long term benefit that it anticipates from such an investment through graduates is to develop a cohort with expert knowledge in the science of agriculture which will ultimately benefit farmers in the African continent. Its motivation is founded on the assumption that if farmers in the continent are successful in diverse agricultural activities, then the continent will achieve a sense of food security. (*Capital Pulse*, February 2006; *The Mirror*, 20th November, 2005).

Conclusion

This paper provides insight into the role that FBOs play in providing humanitarian aid assistance in times of disasters. There is increasing evidence globally that the FBO sector constitutes a substantial share of humanitarian aid organisations focussing on disaster related issues. Broadly their *modus operandi* is similar to the NGO sector except for the fact that it is characterised by strong religious motivations that determine their aims, objectives and the ease with which they mobilise resources in times of disasters. Given recent escalations in the extent and nature of natural and human related disasters it comes as little surprise that this sector has taken a lead in disaster response initiatives as their aims and objectives are often founded on religious principles to aid humanity in times of distress. In the South African context the Gift of the Givers is one such humanitarian organisation although founded on a religious ethos has managed to engage with its community, state, and organs of civil society, educational institution and network at local and international level to meet its humanitarian aid objectives. It has branded itself as a humanitarian aid agency of choice amongst a wide spectrum of South African society.

Through the case study analysis, the paper highlighted the difficulty in identifying any rigid typology for FBOs. The case of the Gift of the Givers Foundation illustrated that as much as its origin and orientation is derived from the Islamic faith, it was widely supported by other faiths as well. This was evidenced from the number of awards the founder of the organisation has received over time from other faith groups for being the ambassador of humanitarian aid in the country. The fact that the Gift of the Givers Foundation solicits the majority of its funding from the Muslim community (91.2%) and secured only 17% of its recognition

awards from within it are in itself a strong indicator of donor motivation for such support. Since many forms of charity are religiously ordained for Muslims, this comes as little surprise as the giving of charity is often perceived for the pleasure of God when a humanitarian call is made to help those in distress.

A distinguishing feature of the case study is the close collaboration and engagement that the organisation has with the state which facilitates its humanitarian aid intervention programmes in disaster hotspot regions. Whilst this may have very positive impacts on the organisations ability to achieve its humanitarian aid objectives, on the contrary it brings into question the extent to which it sustains organisational autonomy and independence especially in light of the fact that humanitarian aid work demands subscription to a set of apolitical value system. However, it would appear from a Weberian analysis that the founder uses rational bureaucratic authority in pursuing his organisational objectives, even though if compromises are made for the betterment of humanity.

Finally, the case study highlighted the importance of religious virtuoso in the organisational life of FBOs engaged in disaster related humanitarian activities. At the same time it may be argued that whilst charismatic leadership has many advantages towards building and branding an organisation of this nature, it is questionable as to whether an organisation such as this can sustain itself over time in the absence of such a public personality which has been widely analysed by Weber in his discourse on the sociology of religion. Such form of leadership is in contrast to secular humanitarian aid organisational culture which places much emphasis on the collective achievement and recognition of its members as compared to any single person in order to allow for the nurturing of different layers of leadership in preparation for succession planning in the absence of such charismatic leadership.

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