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Strategic Plan Update

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THE
WORLD
FEDERATION

OF KHOJA SHIA ITHNA-ASHERI MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

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BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

In 2003 the World Federation (WF) commissioned its first Strategic Plan (SP) which set out to determine the needs of the grass root community members through a worldwide series of interviews. In 2006 with WF looked launched a study to better understand how the implementation of the SP was progressing. During this study it was determined that the working relationship between the WF and the Regional Federations (RF) were not efficient. As a result the 2006 Conference passed the following resolution, commonly known as the "devolution" resolution as it passed responsibility of the implementation of community projects from the WF to the RF:

"This Conference hereby resolves that the Executive Council be authorised to enter into memorandum of understanding with its members to develop a clear and detailed framework which will delineate the role of World Federation and its working relationship with its members, and implement such measures in consultation with leadership of its members, in this respect including but not limited to dissolution, merger, and or reorganisation of its boards and / or workings of The World Federation if necessary."

The Executive Council met immediately on 17 September 2006, and the following resolution was subsequently passed:

"In accordance with resolution passed at the Tenth Triennial Conference in September 2006 in Dubai this Executive Council hereby resolves that the Secretariat of the World Federation be authorized to prepare and take all necessary measures for execution of such Memorandum of Understanding with its Members as are necessary to develop a clear and detailed framework which will delineate the role of the World Federation and its working relationship with its Members and in conjunction with the Office Bearers take such measures in this respect including dissolution, merger and / or reorganization of its boards and report the progress to the Executive Council at its next meeting."

The purpose of this paper is to understand how the devolution process has proceeded to date, identify its successes and shortcomings, and offer some suggestions on how to move forward.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed multiple types of research:

Desktop Review

The desktop review including a review of the following documents:

- 2003 Strategic Plan: Creating Futures Together
- 2006 Strategic Plan Update
- 2006 Triennial Conference Resolution Paper (The 7'S Paper)
- CoEJ Responses to 2006 Resolution Questionnaire
- NASMICO Responses to 2006 Resolution Questionnaire
- Strategy for Capacity Building
- Hexagon Poster



Online Survey

In addition to the desktop research an online survey was developed to better understand how the community leaders feel about the devolution process. This online survey was made available to all the office bearers of the WF, Africa Federation, CoEJ, NASIMCO as well as the Executive Council of the WF and Assistant Secretary Generals (ASGs) of the World Federation and their regional counterparts. A total of 21 responses were received from the online survey.

Direct Interviews

The study also interviewed, either over the phone or in person, office bearers of the WF, CoEJ, Africa Federation, NASIMCO as well the ASG's.

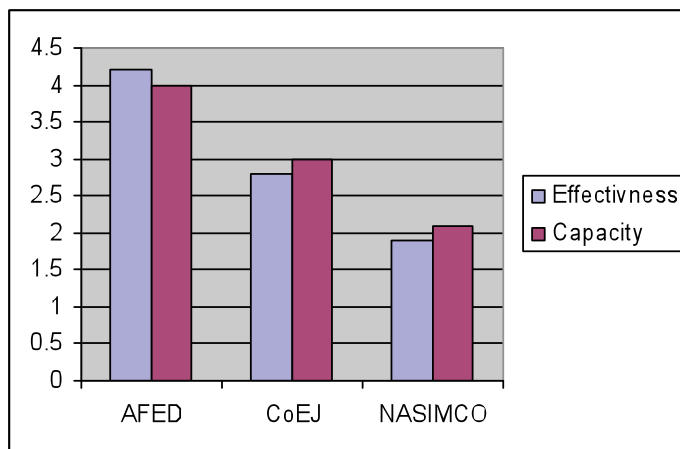
FINDINGS

The results from the various areas of research are presented below. With respect to the online survey, it sought to understand how effective the new departments which have replaced the Boards and Desks of the WF are with respect to delivering projects by the RFs. The survey also asked the respondents whether they thought the regional RFs have the capacity to deliver the work in each department. Both effectiveness and capacity were measured on a scale from 1-5 with 5 being the highest score.

The interviews added additional commentary and feedback. The pertinent points made in the interviews are also shared below.

Health Department

The Medical Advisory Board (MAB) is now covered by the Health department of the WF. The chart below shows the average score from the online survey respondents with respect to their opinion on how effective the regional federation has been in completing health projects and whether the regional federation currently has the capacity to deliver health related projects that were once covered by the Medical Advisory Board.



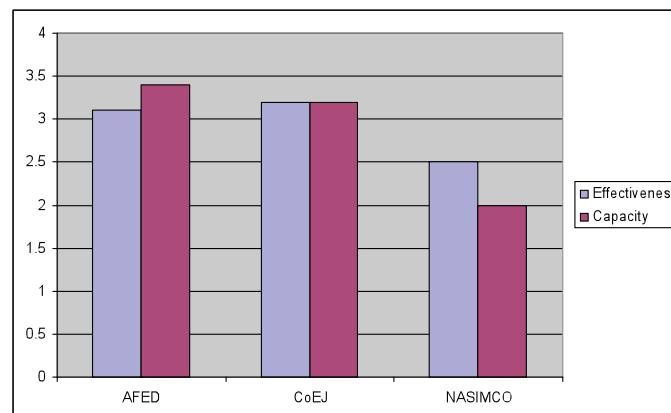


Traditionally, one of the main functions of the MAB was to facilitate medical treatment for those who could not afford or have access to advanced medical services in their home regions. While most community members living Europe and North America have access to medical treatment, Africa Federation has taken the lead in locating and coordinating overseas medical treatment for community members in Africa. This sentiment was confirmed in interviews with WF and with Africa Federation.

While 76% of the respondents indicated the new structure was more efficient, several comments suggested that the system could be improved by blending the previous structure and the new structure. One respondent said that the new structure is "better working. But I believe there has to be mixture of both [previous and new structure] and one cannot just have a blanket rule for all."

Islamic Education

The Islamic Education Board (IEB) is now covered by the Islamic Education department of the WF. The chart below shows the average score from the online survey respondents with respect to their opinion on how effective the regional federation has been in completing Islamic education projects and whether the regional federation currently has the capacity to deliver Islamic education related projects that were once covered by the IEB.



While 64% of the respondents indicated that the new structure is more effective than the previous one, the individual comments indicated that the new structure has the potential to be more effective, but in reality is not. Some of the more pertinent comments are shared below:

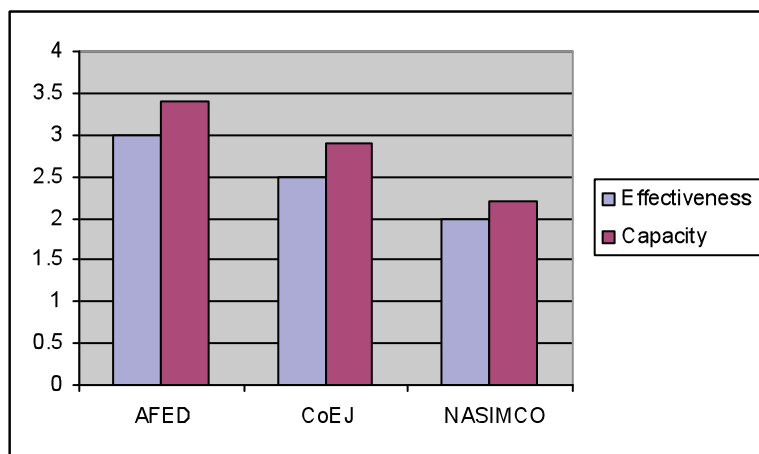
- "The new structure can be more effective but because of the apathy and clear understanding of the needs of the people / institutes, this has not been successful. With current changes in the delivery areas, we hope this will change."
- "The new structure can be more effective in the region provided the region had its own desk to work with [the] WF"
- "The Islamic Education department has been initiating projects just like the old IEB but in a smaller scale. The department should invest in capacity and resources with the Regional Federation to implement programs"



- “The new system has advantages - the work is now better spread out and all of the pressure is no longer on the IEB. However, IEB has become very dependent, has to be an onlooker whilst regions and jamaats play politics (the bad kind), and the delivery is very, very slow. Sometimes there is no motivation with regions in their handling of projects. Simple things need to be explained again and again. Things are held up due to conflicting protocols. Emails are not answered. Suggestions are made to regions but not followed. Previously IEB would just do it and be out of the red-tape. We have also lost touch with the people. This is ironic - the people look to us to be the people that CAN deliver but we are trapped and CANNOT reach the people!”

Education Department

The Careers, Education, and Training Advisory Board (CETAB) is now covered by the Education department of the WF. The chart below shows the average score from the online survey respondents with respect to their opinion on how effective the regional federation has been in completing education projects and whether the regional federation currently has the capacity to deliver education related projects that were once covered by CETAB.



Similar to the Education Department, 69% of respondents indicated that the new structure is more effective than CETAB, but additional comments in the online survey suggested otherwise. Follow-up interviews clarified that this particular department has not fared well under the new structure. Education programs for our community vary dramatically across the regions. While most regions have some type of scholarship or financial assistance programs, additional services such as training, workshops, and networking opportunities are not available to our community worldwide.

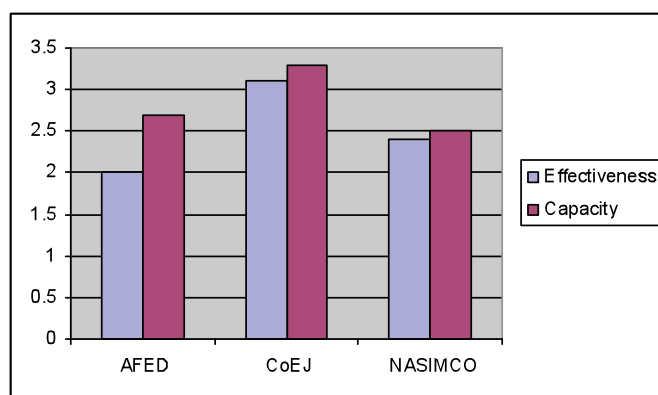
Most recently, the WF Education department has focused, almost exclusively, on collecting payment from delinquent loans made to former students many years ago. This focus inevitably hampers the WF's ability to push an agenda to help community member's access to education and jobs. Some of the more pertinent comments received include:



- “European educational needs are very different than North America and Africa. We have worked very well in delivering the needs of the European community. There needs to be an assessment of what the actual needs are of each region and in Europe in partnering with WF - to ensure we are able to deliver it properly rather than ad hoc projects. In education, I feel there has to be more collaboration amongst the regions and WF. There is much that can be done and we need to prioritise the same.”
- “I don’t think this department has achieved anything substantial this term. I used to see and feel so much was happening in education but now where is the delivery? By taking away boards we assumed WF would not 'deliver' but merely strategise and the delivery would be done by others. But what has happened is that WF may or may not have strategised and no one has delivered”
- “Budget was lost in Education and this way Education unlike CETAB never had a budget and as such little control in helping student with fees unless consult with office bearers - an area which needs revisiting.”

Family Affairs Department

The youth, women and seniors desks are now all covered by the Family Affairs department of the WF. The chart below shows the average score from the online survey respondents with respect to their opinion on how effective the regional federation has been in completing family affairs projects and whether the regional federation currently has the capacity to deliver family affairs related projects that were once covered by youth, women and senior desks.



Only 53% of respondents felt that the new structure was working better than the previous system. That is the lowest score of any previous Board or Desk. Overall the sentiment was that in this particular department the work of the community has suffered under the new devolution system.

- “The department is too broad and there is no focus - youth desk, senior’s desk and women were three groups that were each doing good work, targeting one sector each. By putting them into one big department we have lost focus. I believe this department is quite dead now, I don’t think the department heads are even in their roles anymore. This was because they felt that all of their work was taken away by force and given to the regions who have not delivered anyway.”



- “Very poor area within WF and not well thought out. An area which has not performed well and has least mention perhaps due to the little work it does.”
- “COEJ was doing a lot more before the new structure came in. The structure has not delivered.”
- “This area is weak at the WF level. We need to develop this further at our level”

ZCSS

ZCSS was not one of the Boards that was part of the devolution process and was therefore not included in the online survey. Since ZCSS is one of the successes of our community a meeting was held with the ZCSS team to better understand how they do work with the regions and Jamaats and what best practices can be gleaned from them to help in moving the WF forward. These lessons helped develop some of the recommendations in this report.

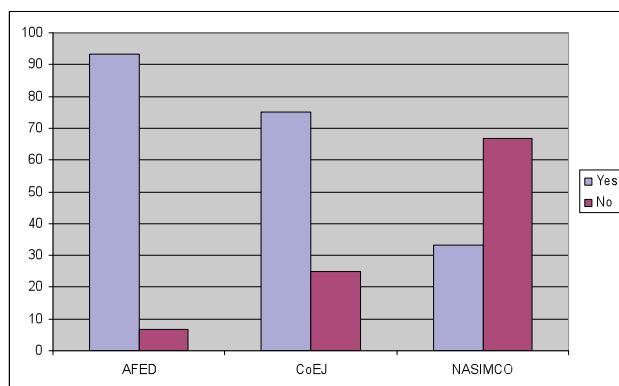
Relief

Relief work was historically carried out by the Secretariat and has now been formalized into a Relief Department. Since there was no regional devolution for this type of work, Relief was not included in the online survey. For this study an interview was conducted with the Relief ASG to better understand their best practices in working with regions and these lessons helped develop some of the recommendations in this report.

Human and Financial Resources

To deliver projects regional federations need to have sufficient financial resources and human (volunteer and staff) resources. To better understand their current situation, the online survey asked respondents whether the regions have sufficient resources to deliver on projects.

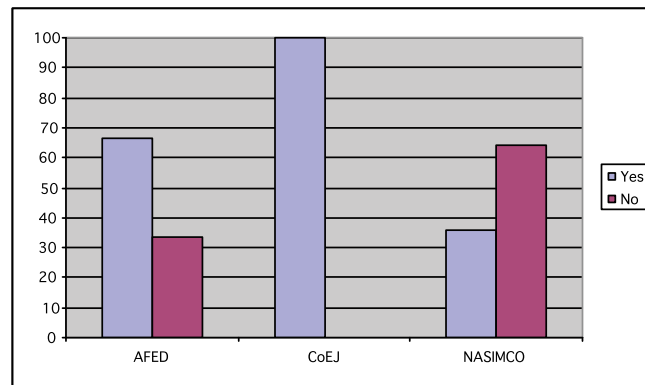
In response to whether the regions have sufficient financial resources to deliver projects the following answers were given:



Based on the above chart, most respondents felt that both AFED and CoEJ have sufficient financial resources to deliver projects. On the other hand, most respondents felt NASIMCO doesn't have the financial resources to deliver its projects.



When asked the same question with respect to human resources the following answers were given:



Based on the above results, 100% of respondents felt that CoEJ has sufficient access to human resources to deliver projects, 67% of respondents felt AFED had adequate access to human resources, and only 35% of respondents felt NASIMCO has sufficient human resources.

CHALLENGES

The devolution process has not been smooth and while mistakes have been made there have been several successes during this process in select regions and departments. While several people suggested that it would be much more streamline and simple for the WF to do community projects directly and dissolve the regional federations, this is not politically feasible nor would it provide our grass root community members with services designed for their local community. On the other extreme, there are those that advocate the WF should not be involved in project delivery at all and simply be a fund raising, policy making and resource allocating body. This too is not an option for the WF today as for many projects the WF is the only body that has the capacity to deliver projects and there has been little thought as to what a “policy making body” really means. The way forward is to strike a balance where the WF and the regions work in a collaborative way and complement each others strengths.

As the data from the online surveys have shown us, not every region is the same and the work of every department is different. The Health needs of our community vary dramatically between Africa and Europe. The Education issues facing our community in North America and Europe are very different. The capacity of NASIMCO and AFED are very different. Even the capacity of regions within specific departments is different. For example, it appears that CoEJ is stronger in delivering Education projects than Family Affairs projects. Given the diversity in projects, regions, and capacity of regions, there is not a “one size fits all” solution to our institutional structural issues. One respondent summed up this sentiment nicely in the following statement:

“I think in essence the spirit of the resolution was a good one. However, more thought needed to be put into how it would work...I say - delegate only when there is the competence, capacity and willingness on the part of whoever is picking the work up. Don't just delegate to score points.”



In addition to the challenges associated with differences across regions, the unfortunate reality of our institutions is that they are mired in a culture of petty politics, territorialism and mistrust. Whether it's a relationship between a regional federation and the WF or between a regional federation and a local jamaat, there are many examples of worthwhile community work not getting done due to these personality issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the above challenges, the following are some recommendations that can help our institutions work more effectively together to deliver services to our community members.

Building a Team Culture

The Strategic Planning Update paper presented at the 2006 World Federation Conference in Dubai described how volunteers and leaders at Jamaats, regional federations and the WF often times do not seem themselves on the "same team" and sometimes they see each other on "opposite teams". The 2006 paper presented some changes one of which is again presented here in addition to some new options to help promote a team spirit within our institutions.

1. **Human Resources Officer:** As a community we have achieved a great deal with limited financial resources because of the volunteering spirit of our community. Our volunteers are our most valuable resource, but we do not take care of this resource. One respondent said "there is no structured or systematic or strategic direction for deploying and harnessing human resources effectively and productively." Just like we have a treasurer to take care of and raise additional financial resources, the WF would benefit from a Human Resource Officer who would help develop, maintain and train our base of human resources at a global and regional level. Additionally this officer would help solve the many personnel issues that arise within the WF and between the WF and the regional federations.
2. **Joint Personnel Appointments:** One of the recurring frustrations on behalf of the ASGs is that often times they try communicate with the regions and they get no response – either by email or by phone. This is caused because all volunteers do not believe they are on the "same team". One way to solve this problem is to have the WF and the RF jointly appoint teams in each department. Using the Education Department as an example, the office bearers of the RF and the WF would work together to appoint the department head at the WF and RF level keeping in mind to appoint people who know each other and are comfortable working with each other. In other words, the heads Education Department, at the WF and RF level, are appointed by the same people and hence are one team and work in the same department. The additional benefit to this idea is that it forces the office bearers of the WF and RFs to work together – something which does not always occur. This structure would also help solve problems that arise when a person needs to be replaced since its is not seen as a slight against one particular organization as all volunteers were jointly appointed.
3. **Travel Policy:** In our community it is the personal relationships that really help get things done. It is important for the WF's ASGs to travel and visit the regions not



only to see the work in progress but to spend time with their teammates and develop stronger personal relationships that will help the work together more effectively. One of the reasons CoEJ has flourished under this new structure is that their volunteers have excellent personal relationships with the volunteers at the WF and communicate effectively. A CoEJ volunteer expressed that the new structure “has worked well because we worked very closely with the WF. The constant communication allowed this to happen and we worked as one team rather than two organizations.”

Rebranding ASG

The introduction of the ASG position at the WF needs to be re-examined and modified to be make them more effective and productive. The following ideas would help strengthen the position of the ASG.

1. **Budget:** A recurring frustration by the ASGs is that they do not have a budget. For example, if a proposal comes in to do a Tabligh project, the Islamic Education ASG cannot look at his budget to see if there is money for the project. Instead, each project needs to be approved by the office bearers – who often times cannot agree whether a project should be funded or have the necessary Tabligh background to properly evaluate the project. Each department should have a budget, just as the previous boards and desks did. Not only will this help the ASG in doing his/her job better, but free up the limited time of the office bearers. If the office bearers cannot provide annual budgets, then more informal semi-annual budgets or even quarterly budgets would help the department heads.
2. **Authority:** In addition to having a budget, the ASG’s need to have the authority to form teams which will help them deliver work and train the next set of ASGs. They also need the authority to independently initiate projects that fall under their overall strategic objectives without having to wait for office bearer approval. Instead of asking for permission to work on a certain project, ASGs should be notifying office bearers of the projects they are working on. Again, this empowerment gives the ASG the authority to do his/her work more effectively and efficiently while saving the office bearers their time by not getting intimately involved in the nitty gritty details of projects. The previous boards and desks made dramatic changes to adopt this new structure, the office bearers also need to embrace change and empower the newly created ASGs.
3. **Title:** The title “Assistant Secretary General” is not an accurate description of what our ASGs do. In reality, they are department heads and a title that reflects this responsibility should be given to them as this will better communicate their responsibilities to the community and other groups, either within or outside our community, they may interact with.

Other Recommendations

Below are some additional recommendations based on the feedback from this study:

1. **Re-creating NASIMCO:** The data from the study and interviews reveals that NASIMCO’s operations and capacity are severely limited. This is a tremendous



challenge and opportunity for our North American communities. The office bearers of the WF and NASIMCO should work closely together to create a complementary structure at NASIMCO. With modern communication technologies NASIMCO should no longer be limited due the great distances between Jamaats in North America. NASIMCO can also create clusters of Jamaats which are regionally nearby (i.e., create regional clusters within NASIMCO) to spark new activity.

2. **WF Project Delivery:** The WF cannot completely exit the project delivery space as ZCSS and Relief are already directly implementing projects. With respect to other departments, the ASGs should identify projects which are not being handled by regions effectively (either due to insufficient capacity or internal politics) and still pursue those projects while giving appropriate notice to the RFs that WF will be handling a project in their region and setting out a timeline of when to handover the project to the region in the future. The grass root community should not suffer because projects cannot be handed over to the RFs effectively and due to politics and territorialism the WF cannot carry out a project in a region. The notion of the "WF going behind the back" of a RF is not a worthwhile sentiment if the RF cannot or will not deliver a project for the good of the community.
 - a. For example, the data shows that in all regions the capacity to carry out Family Affairs work is limited. In circumstances such as these the WF should first seek to create the capacity at the regional level to deliver these projects, but at the same time not delay delivery of these projects and carry them out directly. In fact, having the WF deliver projects directly is one method to develop capacity at a regional level.
3. **Professional Development:** These courses have been a bright spot for our community. More of these courses need to be delivered to our community leaders, volunteers, and members. The benefits will be to create more efficient and effective working relationships and environments within our community institutions and help cure the disease of petty politics, territorialism and mistrust that runs rampant in our organizations.