For Better for Worse

The Role of Religion in Development Cooperation

Swedish Mission Council

Edited by Robert Odén

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Acknowledgements

Putting together an anthology like this takes a lot of engaged and knowledgeable people. First and foremost a big thanks to all the authors, for writing and sharing their knowledge and experiences.

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Preface

The Swedish Mission Council (SMC) was founded in 1912 following the 1910 mission conference in Edinburgh, and has since then been working in the intersection between religion and development. Religious actors – whether Muslim, Christian, Hindu or any other confession – have always been, still are and will continue to be key to development. This is an insight made by the SMC during more than 100 years' of practical experience with development cooperation among and together with religious actors. It is also a conclusion to be drawn from an increasing amount of research. Being able to relate to religion and religious actors is decisive to anyone who wants to make a difference in development cooperation. It is therefore encouraging to see that the interest in the role of religion in development is growing, internationally as well as in Sweden. It is not only an interest of religious actors and faith-based organisations, but a concern for religious and secular organisations alike. The SMC is working to raise the awareness of, and strengthen the capacity to relate to, religion and religious actors in development. In order to be successful, this must be done as a joint venture, between everyone working towards a sustainable world where people can live their lives in dignity. As a source of knowledge and inspiration, the SMC is now happy to present the anthology "For Better for Worse: The Role of Religion in Development Cooperation".

Anders Malmstigen
Secretary General,
Swedish Mission Council

Introduction

Robert Odén

"Given that religion is an integral part of the lives of billions of people, it can be considered a human resource of significant importance. Since it is widely accepted in policy circles that development, if it is to be effective and lasting, should build on people's own resources, it makes sense to include their religious or spiritual resources and not material and intellectual ones only."

Gerrie ter Haar in *Religion and Development*
– ways of transforming the world[1]

Few things are as natural to humankind as religion. Religion and spirituality has been around since time immemorial and, opposed to what has long been a popular theory, religion still is and will also remain a major factor in the future, for societies and people alike.

Religion affects the way people think, act and understand the world they live in as well as permeating the cultures and the fabrics of our societies. Sometimes, the role of religion is an asset for people and societies, sometimes it is a problem. For those having the ambition to contribute to a positive and sustainable change in societies and in people's lives, understanding religion becomes nothing less than a necessity. In development cooperation this has always been a well-known fact for some, and is now an insight being made by an increasing number of people working with development in different ways and capacities; for example in research, government agencies and in secular as well as religious NGOs.

And the change has been remarkable; twenty years ago, this was in many ways a non-issue, but today it is more and more an issue to be reckoned with, an issue to be found on many an agenda. There are and have recently been quite a few ongoing processes relating to religion and development at different levels: at intergovernmental and international levels, for instance within the UN-system or the newly established Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD); at governmental levels in for example Norway and Germany; and at various organisational levels in many different countries. Nevertheless, there is work to be done when it comes to the analysis of religion as a factor in development, which when compared to, for example, gender issues, is still very far behind.

There are of course many reasons to understand and relate to religion and work for an increased knowledge about the role of religion in development cooperation. Among the major reasons are questions linking to sustainability and the effectiveness of development cooperation, as well as to questions concerning respect for people's identities and cultural

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1 Haar, Gerrie ter (ed.), Religion and development: ways of transforming the world, Hurst & Co: London, 2011.

expressions. The first aspects are related to in the above quote by the Dutch professor of sociology, Gerrie ter Haar. "Given that religion is an integral part of the lives of billions of people", she writes, "it can be considered a human resource of significant importance". This should then be seen in relation to the firmly established idea that sustainability in development can only be built on the foundations of people's own resources. It has to be grounded in people's own ideas and realities. The aspect of respect for identities and cultural expressions is partly about a different thing. This underlines that religion is not primarily a tool for development cooperation strategies and methods. Religion is about people, about faith and hope, about longing, and the meaning of life itself. It is not to be instrumentalised for development purposes in every situation. Nevertheless, for any of these reasons it is essential that we have a proper understanding of religion and what it means to people and societies in the different contexts that we relate to.

This anthology has been written in order to offer the reader inspiration and knowledge, to introduce religion and development to people who might not be very familiar with these perspectives and at the same time contribute to the discussion with the profound knowledge of some of the most relevant academics and practitioners within their respective fields; knowledge that will also be of great interest to those of us who have been working with these questions for a long time. If you are working in the international development sector, if you are connected to a secular or a faith-based organisation, if you are dealing with development issues as a decision-maker within politics or as a civil servant, if you are a student or simply have an interest in international development issues, then this book is written with you in mind.

The genre(s) of the articles in this anthology could best be described as a resourceful mix. Some of the articles are written in a rather traditional academic style, although accessible to most, while some have a more popular approach. To a certain extent, this is mirrored in the style of the language as well as in how the authors have dealt with formalities, such as biographies and endnotes. All the contributors have been free to choose their literary style of writing as long as they share their insights and knowledge with us. The ambition has primarily been to contribute with an accessible anthology on an important subject.

When it comes to the themes of the articles, we have chosen to present a broad variety of subjects. As previously stated, religion concerns most areas of life, and this is a way to reflect that. Religion concerns the life of the entire society as well as the most private aspects of the lives of us as individuals, from peace and conflict to climate change and the HIV epidemic, from the influence of growing religious movements such as the Pentecostal to masculinity norms and women's rights. All this and much more is to be found in the following contributions.

An introduction to the articles

The first article, written by Petter Jakobsson, is in itself doing what the anthology in its entirety does; namely looking at religion and development from a broad perspective. This is done in a way that makes reading the article a good introduction to many of the central ideas, issues and questions relating to this field. The article puts religion and development into context by sketching a brief history of how the issues have developed, as well as highlighting some of the discourses surrounding them. In the article, the author relates to a number of practical examples and through these he shows the great need to relate to religion and religious actors if we want to work for effective and sustainable development. The article is entitled "Religion as a resource in development cooperation".

  Religious organisations have always been central actors in aid and development cooperation. When looking at the modern history of it, churches and Christian organisations were pioneering the field in the global north from a very early age. But somewhere around the 1950s onwards, the picture began to change. The religious actors continued to be of great importance, also in the Nordic countries. But as the secular states became interested in becoming involved, and government agencies such as Sida (in Sweden) and Norad (in Norway) were established, conditions changed. One of the most obvious changes concerned what is formulated in the second part of the title of this book, namely "[t]he role of religion in development cooperation". Before state funding of development work, explicitly religious aspects of the work of the churches were not necessarily separated from what could be seen as purely developmental aspects. With state funding, separating the two came to be considered a necessity. Another aspect of this is that a secular ideology grew strong and eventually became an unquestionable norm. But few things are everlasting. For some time now, we have been talking about the "return of religion" and there is, as stated above, a growing awareness that religion is still a factor to be taken into account. One example of an interesting national process reflecting these insights about the relationship between religion and development recently took place in Norway. In 2011, the then Norwegian minister of development, Erik Solheim, initiated a project focusing on the challenge of taking religion more seriously in Norwegian foreign policy. The minister called for increased knowledge among Norwegian diplomats and aid workers of the religious dimension in contexts where Norway was involved, and he underscored the importance of the relationship between solid contextual knowledge and a more effective development policy. An important question to be asked in relation to the Norwegian process is: what can other countries learn from this example? In order to give a basis for such a reflection, the article by Jørn Lemvik tells the story of the Norwegian process under the title "Religion and development – the Norwegian story". Parts of the recent Norwegian process on religion and development are also discussed by Tomas Sundnes Drønen in his article "Mission and development: Old stories or new possibilities?" Taking

his starting point in the Norwegian process, Sundnes Drønen also goes back in time sketching some of the historical background of today's development cooperation, briefly looking into the churches and the early mission movement. Relating to the context of Cameroon, he then widens the discussion to include some of the most relevant yet difficult questions debated within development cooperation, namely: who are the right partners in development cooperation? This is a decisive question when it comes to issues concerning sustainable development and here it is especially discussed with relation to religion and religious actors.

As the awareness of the role of religion in development cooperation has been growing in Norway and a number of other countries such as Great Britain, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany, it is now also growing within Swedish development circles. This is the case when it comes to faith-based organisations as well as secular organisations and, for instance, the Swedish government agency Sida. But even though we can talk about an increased awareness, there is still a long way to go before we are able to relate to religion with a level of professionalism equal to, let us say, gender issues. According to sociologist of religion, Josephine Sundqvist, there is a noticeable need for melioration when it comes to the context analysis on the role of religion. There is, she claims, an increased donor interest to understand the role of faith in development, but nonetheless, "religion is still being viewed by many in the Swedish development context as potentially divisive and politically sensitive". The reason for this, she argues, is a lack of contextual analysis on the role of religion, which tends to make policy makers view religion "either in an over-generalised and simplistic way, or as being counter to modernisation and counter to the kinds of development that are being promoted by the Swedish Government". In this anthology she contributes with an article entitled: "The need for contextual analysis on the role of religion in the Swedish development cooperation." In the article, she also underlines the importance of not limiting the discussion about religion in development cooperation to a discussion about the role of Faith-based organisations (FBOs). Religion is also a societal phenomenon relevant to focus on beyond the functions of the FBOs. It is present everywhere and tends to influence "norms and politics at all levels, and is a key dimension of poor people's lives".

As much as the role of religion in development needs to become a natural aspect of the work and analysis of secular NGOs, FBOs and government agencies such as Sida, it is also critical that it is included at inter-governmental levels within organisations like IMF, the World Bank and the United Nations. Azza Karam serves as a Senior Advisor on Culture at UNFPA and coordinates the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging with FBOs for Sustainable Development. She has contributed to this anthology with an article entitled "The United Nations, faith-based organisations and development post-2015". Religion and development from the perspective of the UN has, she writes, "varied records of partnership and engagement with FBOs and religious leaders". A strong UN voice and actor in this respect

is and has for long been the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) that has a legacy going back to the 1970s on issues relating to health and religion. Over the years, others have followed, cultivating partnerships with FBOs and religious leaders; among them UNAIDS, UNICEF and UNHCR. Karam is very clear on the importance and potential gains of the UN working with religious actors, and in her article she is sharing points of caution and lessons learned going forward together with faith actors. She is also sharing her experiences and analysis around the participation of FBOs in the post-2015 development agenda. She shows that the involvement of faith actors varied greatly due to a number of factors, such as the size of the FBOs and their responsiveness and interest in the issues being focused on, as well as the outreach done by the different UN agencies. She also gives attention to the fact that the majority of the faith-based actors involved in the process were heavily dominated by Christian and Western-based NGOs; a fact that of course should be looked upon as problematic. In her contribution, she also argues that outreach to faith-based actors should be part of a broader attempt to integrate issues of culture in different development processes.

The question of "who to partner with" is a question that most development practitioners struggle with once in a while. It is a question reflected upon in the above mentioned article by Tomas Sundnes Drønen, and it is in one way or another also dealt with in many, if not all, of the other articles in this book. Religious organisations and actors are, to say the least, abundant, and it is not always easy to navigate the religious landscape. A term often used in this anthology and elsewhere when talking about religious actors in development cooperation is the term Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs). The roles of FBOs in development cooperation are often discussed and debated, but as Kjell Nordstokke puts it in his contribution, the "reference to FBOs has often been linked to the assumption that they represent some added values when comparing with similar secular organisations: for instance that they are more holistic in their approach, more grass root-oriented, less bureaucratic, and therefore more effective in their work". Even though there are good arguments as well as research supporting such claims, the reality we relate to is complex and there are many nuances to be taken into account, for instance when considering cooperating with or supporting an FBO. Even the term FBO is in many ways problematic as the "FBOs are extraordinarily heterogeneous in the ways in which faith identity plays out in their work". In his article, Nordstokke helps us to navigate the world of faith-based organisations. He presents some of the historical background, and as part of that points out differences between Europe and the USA, especially when it comes to understanding what role faith is expected to have. He also sketches some of the presumed advantages of the FBOs as well as problematizing the term as such. Nordstokke argues that the term has the potential to be helpful, but that a "greater precision regarding its meaning is required". As a means of doing that, he presents a number of typologies that will help us to place different kinds of FBOs

along a scale; as analytical tools for discussing the characteristics of different faith-based organisations. Furthermore, Nordstokke introduces the concept of religious assets, which is also a potentially useful tool for FBOs to gain better understanding of their assets. The title of the article is "Faith-based organisations and their distinct assets".

The world is constantly changing and so are the forms, shapes and expressions of religion. Being aware of that and being able to understand the changes is crucial for every actor who wants to be part of reducing poverty and creating sustainable change. Within Christianity, one of the most dramatic changes of the last few decades is the incredible growth of the Pentecostal-charismatic movements that are now counting around 600 million adherents, with a majority of the churches in the global South. In the contribution by Päivi Hasu, we are presented some of the major features of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity with special relevance to development. Hasu compares the development implications of the so called "third-wave" Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity and the legacy of classical Pentecostalism, where holism and social work have played an important role. She shows that there are similarities but also important differences where "classical Pentecostalism facilitates development projects aiming at a better life collectively for the people, by way of the notion of holistic development and social responsibility". On the other hand, in third-wave Pentecostalism, "the prosperity gospel and the possibility of miracles are rather perceived as avenues to prosperity, and take centre stage. This form of Christianity involves dynamics which have the potential to improve both individual and collective well-being; however, it also presents features which obscure the social factors that produce destitution and block perceptions of the role of human responsibility in their elimination." In her article, Hasu focuses especially on the context of Tanzania and also relates to examples connected to joint projects of Finnish Pentecostal organisations and their African partners aimed at social development. The article is entitled "Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity and development: Views from Africa".

Religion is often associated with armed conflicts; sometimes correctly, sometimes as a result of a poor analysis of the contexts in question. In an article by Isak Svensson entitled "The role of faith-based mediation in internal armed conflicts" the author states that a "proper, informed, and balanced analysis of the religious dimensions is a crucial aspect of any diagnosis of a conflict situation" and points to the need for an analysis based on the recognition of the duality of religion. Furthermore, many studies are focusing on the negative aspects of religion, where religious traditions are utilized in a way that make them conflict-prone. In this contribution, Svensson has chosen to explore the other side of religion, the potentially positive aspects where religious traditions can be an important part of shaping or contributing to peaceful solutions to armed conflicts. Svensson discusses religions as a resource, as well as the limitations of religious peacemaking and exemplifies with cases from both Christian and Muslim contexts.

One of the most urgent issues in our time relating to sustainable development is the issue of climate change. Climate change has a very real impact on the world today, and the people affected the most are the people already heavily struck by poverty and injustices. In his article "Another way of thinking: Religion, values and climate change", Henrik Grape emphasizes that the question of climate change is not only about the environment, but to a large extent it is also about justice and equity. Grape stresses that the solution lies in the transformation of the entire society and accentuates the need for a new way of thinking; a new discourse that mirrors what he, with the terminology of the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss, calls a deep ecological movement, in contrast to the shallow ecological outlook which tends to dominate the discussion on climate change today. Grape points to the faith communities as potential contributors to, and facilitators of, parts of the process necessary for finding the alternative visions and long-term thinking. Part of the potential of faith communities is to be found in the theology and values of the different religious traditions; values that quite often are found to be similar. "It should be clear to decision-makers today", Grape writes, "that faiths could, and maybe also must, play an important part in designing the global community. If we leave out the faiths, the process of transformation will be much harder to realize."

The authority of religious leaders in many societies' makes them important, not least in relation to questions concerning "moral" issues, family-related issues and value-based matters, such as sex, the roles of men and women, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the roles and rights of children. One such area where religious leaders have the potential of being central agents of positive change is within HIV-prevention. In a contribution by Elisabet Eriksson, the author focuses on the role of religious leaders in relation to the HIV epidemic. She takes her starting point from two of her studies made in the South African context: one interview study and one questionnaire study conducted among religious leaders from three different Christian traditions: Catholic, Lutheran and Pentecostal. In her studies, she explores their attitudes to, and involvement in, HIV prevention for young people. The author notes that there are differences in how the leaders from the different traditions work with and relate to HIV-prevention, but concludes that generally they were positive about training on HIV-related issues and that it is likely that training would lead to increased involvement in HIV-prevention. "Religious leaders in South Africa do talk to their parishioners and young people about the risk of HIV infection", however, religious values, traditions and understandings can sometimes be a challenge for some of the religious leaders. But, Eriksson writes, "In spite of these challenges, religious leaders may be able to address sensitive issues of HIV prevention when these topics are framed within the broader Christian values and theological understanding." The article is entitled "Religious leaders' response to HIV prevention in South Africa".

Another area where religion and religious actors may have a similar role as discussed above with HIV-prevention is the area of gender violence and of

masculinity. One of the most experienced and innovative religious actors in this field is the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research in South Africa. Gerald O. West is a senior professor at the Ujamaa Centre and has contributed to this anthology with the article "Recovering the biblical story of Tamar: Training for transformation, doing development". As an expression of the principle of building on peoples own resources, the Ujamaa Centre is working with so called contextual bible studies. For the Ujamaa Centre, working with biblical texts such as the one about the rape of Tamar, is not about doing missionary work; it is, according to the author, about "doing the work of social transformation and development". In many communities it is not possible to exclude religion when working for social change. "[S]ocial change requires religious change" West writes, and continues: "This is a central tenet of the Ujamaa Centre's theory of change. Religion cannot be left 'as is' while development work is done. In order for development work to be done, religion, which is part of the very fabric and scaffolding of life for millions of Africans, must be transformed, otherwise it gets in the way of social transformation. CBS [i.e. Contextual Bible Studies] is about religious change." The article is simultaneously practical and theoretical in nature; practical as it introduces a concrete method (contextual bible studies) for working with transforming values and attitudes, and theoretical as it goes into detail explaining the thinking behind the method, with a special focus on the theory of change.

Gender issues are strongly intertwined with religion, and studying the track record of religion and religious leaders in relation to gender equality is often rather discouraging. The fact that religion has become an issue at the development agenda is good, but can also be complicated when it comes to women's empowerment and gender equality. In the article "International development engages with religion: How to achieve positive outcomes for women", Emma Tomalin is exploring the ambivalence of the "turn to religion" within development and what it means for the goals of women's empowerment and gender equality. Tomalin states that "although there is ever more need for development donors and organisations to consider religion as a relevant factor in pursuit of gender equality, there is no clear route to achieving this. Religion and religious institutions may have the potential to be empowering and status-rising to women in some situations but not so in others." A newfound eagerness to listen to the religious voices, the author reminds the reader, carries with it the risk of consolidating a male norm as the dominant perspectives often tend to be male perspectives. Tomalin also discusses a "preference for gender equity based on the idea of the complementarity of male and female roles, often stressed by religious actors, as compared to the emphasis within development policy and practice upon gender equality". Even though it is sometimes possible to start a dialogue about ending gender discrimination with references to ideas about gender equity, Tomalin is emphasizing the need to keep the overall goal of gender equality fully in sight. In her contribution, Emma Tomalin makes references to Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam as well as to Christianity.

In the article "Religious communities – a resource or a liability for development?" Auli and Mika Vähäkangas are discussing religion and development from the perspective of communality. The focus of their analysis is on the religious community rather than on the role of the FBOs. In the global south, religious conviction is usually expressed and lived out in a communal way, "the vitality of religions is based on their communality", which is rarely the case in the individualised north. And this is something that has consequences for development issues. The authors argue that the role of the religious communities in development are multifaceted and that the aspects of communality is contributing in ways that are, with the words of the title, sometimes a resource and sometimes a liability for development. Auli and Mika Vähäkangas are, among other things, discussing the role of religious communities as strategies for survival, pointing to a number of examples of what this can look like; for example, systems like the rambirambi in Tanzania and different expressions of ecclesial diaconia. "The survival of an individual", they write, "is greatly enhanced by communal support that functions like insurance." They also give examples of when religious communities become liabilities for development. Relating to the concept of communality, the authors also discuss the concept of development as such, viewing it from an African perspective. They write: "When defining development, the starting point has often been the western idea of seeing development mostly as economic, and the goal has therefore often been the modernisation of the whole society. The idea of modernisation has marginalised global southern views on development that build on more holistic communal views, and which also emphasise qualities other than economic goals." In other words, development can be seen as something more than increases in material and even physical well-being. This "includes cultural, linguistic, intellectual and spiritual dimensions. One of these dimensions is communality."

  The final article is written by Henni Alava and it draws on the author's research in northern Uganda and could be considered a kind of a case study. Alava is discussing some of the pros and cons of partnering with churches in development and takes her starting point from the question: "what should an organisation take into account when considering whether to provide development funding to a long-established church, or a CSO affiliated to such a church?" A central aspect, she writes, is the unique historical, social and religious "embeddedness" in local societies that characterises many of the churches. With embeddedness, the author is referring to "the consequences of churches having been present in the societies they work in for long periods of time". Churches are for instance "naturalised as parts of the local landscape", they are "interwoven or accommodated into the lifeworlds of their members" and "deeply integrated with other societal structures". These points all make churches valuable development partners, but at the same time, the author shows, the very same aspects can sometimes create challenges for the donors or partners. Alava also points to the colonial background of many African churches and a tendency in the

North to therefore view them negatively, "as foreign impositions". What is important, though, is to realise that the initially colonial project often has become an integral part of the life of many local adherents; Christianity has become African. The title of her contribution is "Embeddedness – the paradox of development through the grassroots of churches".

Religion as a resource in development cooperation

Petter Jakobsson

Summary

Religion has long been a blind spot in development assistance. In the Swedish context, religion has been relegated from the public sphere to the private. A glaring lack of references to religion is evident in analyses by Swedish aid organisations and Sida of development needs or conflicts in countries where development assistance work is performed. Religious activities have also carefully been separated from State-funded development cooperation. At the same time, religion constitutes an indispensable part of life for most people in the world. In poor countries, religious leaders are often trusted above others. Faith-based organisations, to a large extent, provide social services in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa. Throughout the world, religion has become more visible. Conflicts are increasingly framed in religious and political terms, while religion has been politicized. The lack of skills relating to religion threatens the effectiveness of Swedish development aid. Increasingly over the last twenty years, actors in the world of development assistance, such as UNFPA and the World Bank, have become aware of the need to seek religious leaders' cooperation in influencing people's position and appealing to their ethics. Faith-based organisations are sometimes regarded as a practical tool for implementing a desired agenda through their extensive network of contacts in developing countries; but even within groups of the same confession, there are often different views on human rights. Cooperation is not always easy even when a faith is shared. Basing itself on a series of real situations, this text will highlight some problem areas in religion and development and will point to the need for increased religious knowledge as a means to improved development assistance effectiveness.

Religion and the effectiveness
of development assistance

Duncan Green, strategic adviser to Oxfam Great Britain, writes about the positive impact of mosque reconstruction in his blog, *From Poverty to Power*.[1] We read that after the 2004 tsunami, many coastal communities in Indonesia were destroyed. Large-scale humanitarian efforts were made to address the needs of the affected population, and reconstruction work gradually took shape. In some villages in the province of Aceh, Oxfam contributed to the reconstruction of mosques, even though this was not part of a typical model of humanitarian work. Elsewhere, work followed a standard agenda, focusing on material needs, such as housing, water and sanitation. It turned out that communities whose mosque had been rebuilt

recovered faster, with members quickly resuming their social functions. Reconstruction of the place of religious meeting had a positive impact on the reconstruction of society more broadly.

This example from Indonesia highlights the importance of religion in development. When development cooperation considers religion and religious practices and structures, it improves conditions for the effectiveness of interventions. Sweden, with other countries in northern Europe, is among the most secularized in the world; its knowledge and awareness of religion's potential role in people's daily lives is generally weak.[2] There are good reasons to believe that this is also true of development cooperation more broadly and that this limits the effectiveness of Swedish development assistance. The above example illustrates how knowledge about religion and how respect for human religious needs produces better outcomes for people who are the target group in development cooperation. Development cooperation that does not respect the role of religion in people's lives distances target groups and risks marginalizing people from development.

Since the early 90s, current material has been produced to address questions of religion and development, not least through various initiatives within the UN system. However, many countries have also pointed out that religion has been a "blind spot" in development cooperation, and initiatives have been taken to remedy this. This recent awakening can now be seen in Sweden. Some initiatives have been carried out to deepen knowledge or begin research. However, the effectiveness of Swedish development cooperation is at risk as long as this lack of knowledge persists.

Katherine Marshall, former World Bank employee and head of Religion and Development, describes how she travels through the parched Mauritanian landscape, together with the country's minister of agriculture. They discuss the importance of camels, a subject of interest to the minister. Marshall asks whether there are other animals that are important for the development of rural areas, such as donkeys. The minister emphatically states that there are no donkeys in Mauritania. When they reach their destination, a farming town in Senegal Valley, it turns out that there are many donkeys wandering around and laboring; but in the minister's mind, they are not important. In his opinion, donkeys are not even present, and therefore, they cannot contribute to development.[3]

Marshall's story illustrates how important factors in development can be wholly obscured for lack of interest, knowledge or vocabulary to describe the complex reality. Religion has been a blind spot in development cooperation, despite its presence in people's daily lives, just like donkeys in Mauritania. Official actors, such as the World Bank, regional development banks and national development actors have rarely had a policy on how to view religion's role in development. Neither have they identified religious

leaders' and structures' specific and unique contribution to development. Marshall tells that an account of the first fifty years of World Bank history contains only one reference to religion.[4] However, in the last ten to fifteen years, religion has emerged as an issue on the international development agenda.

The return of religion

Religion has become an increasingly significant element of great geopolitical events since the early 90s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, new nation-states have emerged, formerly ideological conflicts have now taken on an ethnic or religious character, and camps of ideological tensions have moved, in some cases, from a political left-right scale to one of a variety of other scales, where religion is a factor. Examples include globalization, anti-globalization, rich-poor, North-South, East-West and traditional versus liberal values.[5]

For a long time, religion has also shown its importance in development cooperation through its service to poor people throughout the world. For example, a large part of education and health services in poor countries has been provided by so-called faith-based organisations. It is also significant that a series of important initiatives in recent years have brought together leaders and personalities of various religions to discuss global problems such as poverty and the climate crisis, from a holistic perspective as believers and bearers of an ethical tradition. Religion is an inspiration to many movements working tirelessly for objectives such as poverty reduction, debt cancellation and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Religious actors are, for better or worse, impossible to ignore as important official actors.

Discussion about the importance of religion has also arisen in Sweden. This has happened, in part, as a reaction to the supposed polarization between the Muslim world and the West, tensions surrounding the growing Muslim population in Western Europe and more pronounced Islamophobia and xenophobia. Of course, the events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent "war on terror" is one aspect of this.

Finally, faith-based organisations have also intensified discussions internally, as they need to formulate their identity in a changing landscape of development assistance with dwindling State budgets for aid, changed global power relations and Christianity's new geographical focus. The world's fastest growing churches are in developing countries, and this has changed the balance of power within Christianity. In discussions, faith-based organisations have often emphasized their own added value as religious actors in a religious world.

Religion back on the agenda for debate on development assistance

The World Bank's revised policies

As mentioned above, during its first fifty years, the World Bank had no explicit or conscious policy on its relationship with religion or religious representatives. Therefore, there is little written about how the Bank has worked with religious actors or considered religion's role in development cooperation. The World Bank has focused on cooperation with States and on issues of a technical or material nature, which illustrates the absence of religion as an issue in development cooperation.

In the 90s and first decade of the new millennium, the World Bank increased its emphasis on the fight against poverty and on the participation of target groups. Religious leaders have played an important role in civil society's criticism of the World Bank, which possibly generated this change in the Bank's emphasis. Katherine Marshall writes about Jubilee 2000, a campaign for debt cancellation clearly linked to the work of faith-based organisations:

> The result was a transformation of thinking and practice on international debt and progress towards debt restructuring that was barely thinkable only two years before. Relationships with religious organisations will never be quite the same.[6]

An important step towards changed relations between the World Bank and religious leaders was a meeting initiated by then Archbishop of Canterbury, George C. Carey, held in February of 1998 with then World Bank Director J.D. Wolfensohn and representatives of nine world religions. This resulted in the formation of the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), whose main function has been to build awareness of the importance of religion to development, and to bridge the gap between religion and development theory. The organisation has also helped to involve religious actors in the preparation of important documents such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and World Bank country strategies.[7]

The UN involves religious leaders

"Today, there is an urgent need to rebuild bridges and to enter into a sustained and constructive intercultural dialogue, one that stresses common values and shared aspirations. Religious leaders can play an important role in such an exchange. They can stress the core beliefs and ideals found in all the great faith traditions: compassion, solidarity, respect for life and kindness towards others."[8]

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has worked with faith-based organisations for over thirty years, but cooperation intensified during the 2000s. The UNFPA's areas of intervention include sexual and reproductive health, gender and HIV/Aids. These are some of the hottest topics from a religious perspective. It is interesting that the UNFPA includes gender, cultural understanding and a rights-based approach in its methodology, including the role of religion under cultural understanding.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo became a place for the UN system to meet with religious actors and, since then, the UNFPA has collaborated with religious leaders to change attitudes and behaviors. The UN system has identified religious structures as some of the most important channels for producing change, and has seen the importance of including religious leaders in messages designed to avoid the perception of UN initiatives as strange or threatening.

Out of the 2005 terrorist attacks in Madrid, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) was born.[9] The name paraphrases Samuel P. Huntington's Clash of Civilizations. The initiative was led by the Prime Ministers of Turkey and Spain and supported by then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Its purpose has been mainly to overcome divisions among Christian parts of the world and to counter Muslim extremism.

In summary, the UN system has identified religious leaders as key actors for reconciliation and relationship building.

Initiatives in Europe

In the 2000s, meeting spaces emerged in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Norway for State development actors and faith-based organisations. Furthermore, a series of research projects were begun to clarify the role of religion in development cooperation. This has led not only to a growing interest in the subject but also to a deeper consideration of the issues. A wealth of material is available to researchers and professionals, such as extensive research materials developed by the University of Birmingham with funding from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the *Religion and Development: Practitioners' Guide* produced by the Dutch Knowledge Centre Religion and Development (KCRD) and a report on religion and development prepared by the Norwegian Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights, and commissioned by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[10] Much of the work done in these countries is directly transferable to the Swedish context and has spurred interest on the topic in Sweden, as demonstrated by conferences and seminars held in recent years.

When religion promotes development

A large majority of the world's population describes itself as religious, and religious leaders are among the most trusted groups of people in the world.[11] Even without a careful definition of religion, it is clear that belief systems supply narratives placing men and women in context and

offering a holistic view of their role and path in existence. Among other things, religion gives meaning and offers language for that which lies beyond the rational. Religion's "narrative capital" orients people in life and influences their decisions. Knowledge about the importance of religion is relevant to anyone wanting to contribute to human development. Religiously motivated acts such as giving gifts; visiting the temple, mosque, church or synagogue; participating in worship services or meetings; and praying or meditating are a natural part of most people's lives and daily routine. The secularization, or relegation of the religious from the public and collective sphere to the private one, experienced by Europe in recent centuries, is an isolated phenomenon in global terms, without parallel in most other parts of the world.

Religious networks are the most extensive ones among known social structures. In almost every city, town or village there is at least one religious gathering place, and most of the world's population participates regularly in meetings at such places. Religious structures are not only among the most pervasive for spreading ideas, information and education, but also for preserving traditions and values. In places without other civil society actors, there are usually still religiously based structures organizing people for education, ethical reflection and social engagement, among other things.

Social services
Religious actors are among the sectors providing the greatest proportion of social services. For example, faith-based organisations provide 40 – 70% of all health care in a number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa.[12] All the great religions have compassion for poor and vulnerable people as well as structures for providing help and support, especially with regard to the provision of basic services, such as schooling and health care, services upon which religious actors take a strong position.

Politics and advocacy
Religion is now regarded as politicized, and this politicization takes several forms. The most prominent example, although not the only one, is the common perception of the Islamization of politics in the Middle East and North Africa. However, even in the West, primarily in the US, policy discussion has taken on a religious hue. The War on Terrorism following the events of 9/11 has often been described in religious terms as a "crusade" or "just war". A presidential campaign without the element of religion is unthinkable in countries as diverse as Nigeria and the United States. In the events before, after and during the fall of the Wall in 1989 and 1990, religious groups played a major role in the democratization of Eastern Europe, but they have also played a central role in democratic processes in regions such as Southern Africa and Latin America.

There are several examples of how social movements have allied with churches.[13] For example, in the so-called anti-globalization movement, churches have taken action and offered a platform for engagement. Churches and other faith-based organisations have played a major role

addressing other international justice issues as well, such as disarmament or the financing of climate change adaptation for poor countries. Spiritual values and religious leaders have also often played a crucial part in the environmental movement, which has been making an impact globally since the 60s.

There is a significant difference between religious elements in Islamist movements in the Middle East and the War on Terrorism on the one hand, and religion as spiritual inspiration for environmental or social movements on the other. Nevertheless, it can be said that religion plays a big role in all of these contexts.

A long-term perspective

A special characteristic of religiously motivated commitment is its persevering, long-term approach. In Swedish debate, the business sector is often criticized for its quarter-length perspective, while politicians are blamed for acting according to the duration of their terms in office. Different religions view time differently, but all share a long-term perspective. When the belief in a higher power motivates action, human life seems shorter. Stable religious institutions stand as guarantors of continuity in development cooperation, in contrast to many other organisations.

Hope and inspiration

One of religion's basic functions is to give hope. In Christianity and Islam, for example, the promise of heaven is important, and most other belief systems point to the possibility of eternal life. This hope is sometimes accused of generating passivity and of shifting focus away from life's challenges and the historical context. Just as often though, people's conceptions of the good or perfect inspire action and change. People who are poor or otherwise marginalized often perceive their situation as hopeless; then, religion can be the force to keep hope alive. This aspect of religion, which is difficult to evaluate and measure, is possibly one of its greatest contributions to development, even if it is one of the least explored or documented.

It is important to be aware that aid recipients often hold a value system based on a religious understanding of the world and that this may give rise to seemingly irrational decisions and to priorities that differ from those predicted on the basis of a Western development model.

When religion inhibits development

"We must keep religion out of the conflict. This is about power and politics and must be resolved by political means. The moment we start appealing to the authority of God and the Holy Scriptures as the basis for our decisions, the dialogue ends. We must keep religion out of the conflict!"[14]

Bernhard Sabella, representative
of Palestinian Christians in the West Bank

The problems with religion are obvious. The above quote from the conflict between Israel and Palestine illustrates how religion can cement a conflict and preclude dialogue. However, religious knowledge is important, even where religion has a negative effect. If donors consider religion irrelevant, then in the worst case scenario, aid can make the situation worse, thus reducing overall aid effectiveness.

Religion is often perceived as a value system based on the belief in a higher power, which thereby sets itself above other values or motives. This space does not allow for discussion of all the negative aspects of religion or of the question of whether religion generates conflict or serves as a tool in conflicts arising instead from socio-economic conditions. Still, it is important to highlight and reflect on elements of these questions. It is clear that religion plays a role in the emergence and formulation of the problem in many conflicts, e.g. by helping to define different ethnic groups. Thus, it marks boundaries and motivates conflict.

Religion elaborates a values system that regulates ethical positions in all areas of life. These concepts or beliefs are rooted in communities that formed thousands of years ago and can thus contribute to maintaining unjust structures. Religion is used to legitimize views that reach far beyond the individual's or group's mandate.

Religion and gender issues have a very complicated relationship. In many ways and too often, traditional religious practices reinforce patriarchal structures. Both men and women practice religion, but the religious power structures sometimes consolidate inequality between the sexes. Often, men are the religious leaders, and women are the religious practitioners. There are many examples, in Christian history as well, where religion has incorporated itself into a mundane exercise of power and become part of an oppressive power structure. Theology has been formulated to support a regime of rulers and subjects, men and women, indigenous people and colonial masters and black and white, for example. Similar processes can be found in different world religions.

The combination of religion and the exercise of power often leads to repression and discrimination against those who do not share the beliefs of those in power. In part, this gives religion a mandate to exercise power and legitimizes oppression; in part, this excludes from power practitioners of other faiths.

Since religions commonly base themselves on old sources and traditions, they change slowly, often resisting social change. Both Christianity and Islam have formulated theologies and later political ideologies to oppose forms of development that, since the Enlightenment, have characterized the West and later also other parts of the world. This can be seen in the emergence of the term "fundamentalism" in the early 1900s in American debate about school instruction on the Biblical creation story and evolution. This discussion continues a hundred years later, demonstrating how religion has been mobilized to counter the accelerating change in society's values and opinions.

Religion can offer people an escape from reality or at least help them to take their focus off their circumstances, considering the material world as subordinate to the spiritual one. Today, it is in poor and developing countries that Christianity is growing the most and that Islam is taking root and becoming radicalized. Some of the growing churches have a weak message in terms of socio-economic change. More importantly, several of them ignore structural problems and consider most development-related issues, such as the right to work, health or safety, as matters pertaining to the relationship between the individual and God.[15]

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that religion's greatest advantages and disadvantages for development are closely linked. Religion has historically been one of the most dynamic forces for challenging and changing established social structures. The strength of conviction that causes people to go to war is also the most powerful force mobilizing social movements. While religion's focus on the spiritual or transcendent can turn people's energy away from the socio-economic, the hope and inspiration it offers can help people, despite marginalization and poor prospects, to live on and to stand up for their rights.

Areas of tension
In Uganda, church leaders have been proactively tightening legislation that already significantly restricts the rights of homosexuals. Meanwhile, some grassroots groups within churches defend these rights, and international NGOs support organisations for LGBT people. On her September 2015 visit to Diakonia in Stockholm, Diakonia's country director for Uganda, Annabel Ogwang, talked about using theologically-based arguments to discuss LGBT issues: one must lead a Bible study to reach opponents and effect change. Discussing the issues from a rights perspective makes dialogue impossible.

Individual or collective rights
Where religion generates conflict or seems counter-productive to development, this is usually due to a conflict between individual and collective rights. The question has been debated on different levels, mainly whether human rights, as expressed in the various UN declarations, are Western in character or universal. A strong focus on individual rights sometimes clashes with a religious or traditional approach, where the individual identifies primarily as part of a collective and where collective rights therefore have precedence over individual ones. Most actors in development cooperation look to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the basis for their work, while some religious leaders have questioned its universality.

Gender, SRHR and LGBTQ
With a number of issues, the relationship between religion and the international development agenda becomes complicated. In several cases, this is due to the tension between individual and collective rights. This

tension is present in issues such as gender, sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and the rights of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ). Many religions establish and reinforce values that are relevant to these issues, and that is precisely why it is impossible to change attitudes and values on the issues without taking religion into account. Numerous cases demonstrate the importance of involving religious actors in these highly complex areas and building skills in addressing religious issues. For example, UNFPA reports show the importance of cooperating with religious actors to succeed in interventions in family planning and reproductive health.[16]

Interventions in these areas also raise a number of questions about ethics and principles: about which compromises a donor can make to achieve certain objectives and about how flexible a donor can be with its principles in order to collaborate with people whose basic values are not shared. In a partnership among organisations that do not share the same basic values but that still see advantages to cooperation, the question is whether the work helps to legitimize a structure that, in itself, is perceived as oppressive, or whether the synergies are so valuable that both parties still choose to work together. The answers to these questions can only be reached by the organisations discussing them, and through a careful analysis of the particular context.

A current example is the cooperation between Swedish churches and sister churches in several African countries, where the churches have worked together for development for many years, but where different positions on LGBTQ rights have now generated conflict among the churches. Many churches have chosen to continue working together, nonetheless, discussing the issues more in depth. Also, financial support has moved from central organisations to sister churches closer to the grassroots level that share a rights perspective.

Religion and conflict

Many cases have been taken to illustrate religion's negative role in armed conflict. It is also clear that religion-relevant skills and knowledge are essential to the efficiency of development interventions in conflict areas. Just as many cases reveal religion's role in the emergence of conflict, many cases also demonstrate religion's importance in post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction work. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission included much religion in its work and borrowed language from the Christian faith. In several Latin American countries, such as Peru, El Salvador and Mexico, the Catholic Church has played the role of mediator between groups in conflict. In Southeast Asia, in contrast, some branches of Buddhism have taken on a more nationalistic character and contributed to ethnic violence, as in the case of violence against the Muslim minority Rohinga people group in Myanmar/Burma. Meanwhile,

elements of Buddhism, which is traditionally non-violent, oppose violence and emphasize social justice.

Religion and the environment

Most religions contain narratives and theology that describe man's relationship to creation. In some cases, Christian theology has legitimized the over-exploitation of natural resources. Throughout history, however, various alternative viewpoints have been expressed, and the second half of the 20th century has seen the emergence of an environmentally aware theology focusing on stewardship and ecology. There are also examples of environmental work taking inspiration from other spiritual traditions and of religious leaders' crucial role in generating commitment. In work on the environment and climate change, religious knowledge can streamline and enhance development efforts.

Atallah Fitzgibbon of the Muslim Charities Fund (UK) describes how fishermen in Tanzania systematically destroyed sections of coral reef by fishing with dynamite. The business was profitable in the short term and viable for poor fishermen, and several projects had failed to stop the operation. It was only after intensive cooperation with local imams, who could discuss the situation in religious terms and explain the practice as haram, or sin, that local fisherman put a stop to blast fishing and adopted alternative, sustainable fishing practices.[17]

We can conclude that interventions must make use of religious language if people who understand themselves in the context of a religious narrative are to make different choices and change their behavior and lives.

A holistic view of humankind

Believers often claim to have a holistic view that does not reduce a person to a merely economic agent or spiritual being but rather sees him or her as an integrated whole. They also describe development as a process that simultaneously affects a person's spirituality and circumstances. Faith-based organisations have access to language that describes human complexity in a way that is sometimes missing or obscured in secular development cooperation. However, a strict division between the spiritual and material among donors forces faith-based movements to apply that same division in their work when, for example, governments cannot fund what could be perceived as religious activities.

The incompatibility of these different ways of describing the world affects the dynamics between partner organisations in the North, where the money is, and those in the South. Several cases illustrate how partner organisations in the South have quickly adapted to the use of the language of the North. On the basis of studies conducted in various developing countries, such as Pakistan and Tanzania, the British government's Religions and Development Research Programme concluded that there

is very little difference between secular and faith-based development organisations in the countries, and that this can be attributed to an adjustment by organisations in the South to the expectations of partner organisations in the North.[18] Thus, development cooperation in the South risks becoming alienated from people's daily lives as organisations adapt to the dualism that exists in the North. Religion stays off the agenda even when organisations are faith-based and wish to integrate the spiritual and material in their interventions. Similarly, religious leaders are alienated from development cooperation that is perceived as secular. If organisations that fund development cooperation had more skills with religion and greater tolerance for "religious language", then they could establish a holistic view that could better include people who describe themselves as religious.

All development cooperation is value based. Value-neutral development is an illusion. Swedish International Development Cooperation also affirms that views and values are sometimes so internalized that they are perceived as universal and beyond question. For example, people in Sweden often express a very strong belief in democratic or "Swedish" values without defining or even discussing these values.[19] For a person to start engaging people with strong religious convictions, it is important that he or she first scrutinize his or her own values and learn about their origins.

A holistic perspective and dual agenda
There is a split relationship between faith-based organisations in the South and government-funded development cooperation in most countries in the North. On the one hand, there is a long tradition of cooperation that goes back to the first missionary efforts, sometimes under colonial flag. Much of post-World War II development cooperation began with or has been based on earlier missionary efforts. On the other hand, there is scepticism of faith-based organisations and fear by State funders that organisations will follow a dual agenda, joining humanitarian or development work with proselytism. In consequence, the work is divided into State and privately funded components. Where religion forms an integral part of how people understand themselves as human beings, this division is perceived as unnatural. Although differentiation in funding is necessary, an overly anxious attitude combined with religious blindness and ignorance of faith-based organisations' work on the part of funders poses an obstacle to effective development cooperation.

It is also important to see religion not only as means to achieving a development agenda, but also as a value item in itself. The critical intersection of the traditional development agenda and the holistic view of man and development lies where a person enjoys the right and opportunity to develop as a whole person, both spiritually and materially, according to his or her own understanding of value in these areas. This requires openness and reorientation among development actors that have been shaped by traditional Western development theory.

Analysis and reflection are also necessary to understand the clash

between a holistic approach and one that divides religion from other aspects of human life. In the latter, religion can be seen as a special interest or non-essential aspect of life; in the former, religion is inseparable from human existence. Unless actors in development cooperation adopt language and practices to accommodate this holistic view of humankind and development, without necessarily agreeing with it, the work will suffer.

Many traditional religious activities can be described as constructive development. The building up of social structures and organised civil society is itself a positive force for development, while literacy and education are aspects of development that are often directly linked to religious education.

Are believers better at dealing with believers?

Several Swedish aid organisations partner with the Uganda Joint Christian Council. Various centrally placed bishops in Uganda have supported a bill that, under certain conditions, could deliver the death penalty to practicing homosexuals. How should the organisations proceed? Should they break off the relationship, overlook the position or start up a discussion? Swedish representatives obviously regard the Ugandan church leaders as "not yet completely clear about their views on gay rights" and as insufficiently aware of human rights. The Ugandans, on the other hand, question the authenticity of their Swedish counterparts as Christians.

In the debate, Western faith-based organisations often emphasize the value they add in the form of access to the religious sphere and structures in developing countries. It is sometimes held that people of the same religion would be on the same wavelength and share the same fundamental values. However, there is no clear connection between faith and values. It is important not to generalize about opinions held in a religious group. Ideologies and values pertaining to various issues may differ just as much within a group of believers or even among members of the same religion, church or denomination as among any randomly selected group of people anywhere.

Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that people holding religious convictions are better positioned to speak with other religious people than are people of no religious faith, even if they do not share the same faith and values. Since values, theological interpretations and traditions vary even among groups of the same denomination, there is absolutely no guarantee that churches or other religious structures in developing countries can be unidirectional communication channels for development organisations in the North, be they secular or faith-based. Approaches that seems obvious to faith-based organisations in the North are not necessarily accepted by their counterparts in the South.

There is also a risk that partner organisations in the North unknowingly take on a paternalistic approach in their relationship with more conservative partners in the South, hoping that these partners in the South eventually change and adopt values similar to their own. This again highlights a lack of religious knowledge and holistic perspective, which risks placing

organisations in a minefield of economic power relations, paternalism and unhealthy expectations.

In 2011, Bishop Joshua H.K. Banda of Zambia's Pentecostal movement visited Sweden. He is also chairman of the Zambia National AIDS Council and traveled to Sweden by invitation of the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU by its abbreviation in Swedish). In conversations between him and representatives of Swedish organisations, it became clear that he well knew the position of most Swedish organisations, faith-based or not, on issues such as gay rights and contraception. He was not prepared to promote these views but was still willing to work towards a common goal, reducing the spread of HIV, provided the Western partner organisations were open to dialogue and respected his and his church's position.

Bishop Banda's position brought critical issues to the forefront. How should an organisation in the North that is convinced of certain principles collaborate with a partner in the South that is equally convinced of opposing principles? How should the organisations cooperate constructively when their value systems clash?

When partner organisations from the North meet with people in the South who may not share all of their values, it is challenging for the organisations from the North to engage the people with respect and to identify opportunities for dialogue and constructive cooperation without feeling the need to betray their own values or to sweep disagreements under the carpet. Partners can sometimes obtain good outcomes out of different value systems. However, without an in-depth knowledge of religion's role in forming values, organisations in the North either alienate people in the South with their agenda or lose influence by betraying their own values. Thus, a lack of knowledge and respect can exclude some people from development cooperation or cause them to suspect partner organisations in the North of pushing them to change their values. At the same time, it is important for the organisations in the North to be clear about their own values and opinions.

A deeper knowledge of religion's role in development cooperation is critical to assessing whether a partnership should continue or conclude when partner organisations hold conflicting values and opinions.

In the UNFPA's 2008 report, Culture Matters, we read,

> Religion is an important part of culture and vice versa, and harmful cultural practices rooted or assumed to be rooted in religious values and/or interpretations may be some of the most difficult to change. However, when attitudes and beliefs are respected and evidence is presented, most religious leaders are open to the idea that specified areas of development will improve the health and well-being of their constituents, as well as the exercise of their right to health and other interrelated rights.[20]

Over time and through communication, people's attitudes change; but, as noted earlier, it is well known that, in aid work, organisations in the South are often quicker to adapt their language than really change their values.[21]

Nonetheless, all major world religions are dynamic environments with continuous theological reflection in the face of change. For example, today, all world religions contain feminist theological traditions. Religion in the North has also been influenced by theology and cultural expressions in the South. Thus, religious communities are dynamic, but it is not constructive for organisations in the North to think that they can or should control these dynamics or that their own opinions are superior in the long run. On the contrary, this would risk rendering dialogue impossible and countering development. Although religious leaders sometimes obstruct changes in attitudes, they can also play the greatest role in generating them, provided the issue is approached in a way that is acceptable from a religious perspective. This further illustrates the importance of religious knowledge for effective development cooperation.

Lizette van der Wel, then head of Religion and Development at the Dutch Inter-Church Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO), offered an example of the role of faith in development involving Pentecostal churches in Zambia:

> In cooperation with the ICCO, congregations carried out work aimed at men, addressing their role as fathers and breadwinners. The material's language was adapted to the target group and based on very traditional Christian values of the man as the head of the family and responsible to God. Despite the choice of words and values that had seemed strange in a European context, both secular and non-secular, the project achieved very good outcomes. More men took on greater responsibility for their families, the spread of HIV decreased in the group, and the men performed better in the role as fathers.[22]

This example demonstrates how good development outcomes were achieved, even when the partner organisations' values differed. The message did not scare off the target population but rather addressed the issue according to the people's own values. Without sensitivity to religion, this would have been impossible. At the same time, one might argue from the Dutch organisation's perspective that such an education cemented patriarchal structures and therefore actually counteracted development.

In conclusion, faith-based organisations in the North have unique relationships with religious networks in developing countries, but relationships and communication between believers are complicated. Reflection and in-depth knowledge are needed to conduct effective development cooperation that takes into account target groups' different conceptions of development.

Summary, conclusions and the way forward

Religion is often a blind spot or non-issue in development assistance, although it has recently come to the fore. This religion-blindness leads to the neglect of elements that are crucial to development and to ignorance of religion, its role and proper ways to interact with religious people and

groups. At the same time, we have concluded that religion is an important factor in development. So, this weak point must be addressed and resolved. Religion needs to feature prominently in development actors' analyses of countries, regions and political processes. Several European countries, such as Great Britain, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Norway, have invested a great deal in interdisciplinary research in the field. The results should be presented in Sweden, hopefully to motivate similar efforts in the Swedish context. There is a need among both faith-based and secular organisations as well as NGOs and government agencies for a deeper understanding of religion's role in development cooperation. The discussion cannot be limited to faith-based organisations.

For religious knowledge to increase, members of both faith-based and secular development organisations must adopt a professional approach to religion. A comparison with the level of knowledge and professionalism in addressing gender issues makes this apparent. Today, few development organisations fail to take gender issues seriously, but, historically, in many cases, these issues have been addressed by people under a social mandate to privacy or with emotionally charged bias from their own circumstances, which hindered the work. It is similar with religion today. Many people describe how difficult it is for them to discuss religion without considering their own personal experiences, which creates tension. Religion and faith are personal and often emotionally charged issues, but, regardless of their background, people need to adopt a professional approach to religion as a phenomenon and function. This applies to both believers and non-believers.

To be able to engage people who express religious beliefs, it is crucial closely to examine one's own values. Civil society organisations must come to a deeper understanding of their own values. To facilitate this, they must develop ways to integrate religion into their ongoing development cooperation work. One example of this is the *Religion and Development Practitioners' Guide*, developed by the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development (KCRD) in the Netherlands as a resource for development cooperation.

Discovering that people of the same religious confession do not necessarily share their values is something felt deeply by many faith-based organisations. Determining how to work with religious people of other cultures is a constant challenge that requires a careful assessment of the value of cooperation despite differing views on individual and collective rights, for example. Again, this requires that practitioners in the North examine their own values and combine clarity with humble openness. The legacy of colonial history makes it even more important to take this position.

A more in-depth knowledge of religion's role in everyday life and identity-building should lead to increased openness to a holistic view of man as a spiritual and material creature. The division of the spiritual and secular that characterizes most Westerners' way of thinking must be tested against the holistic perspective held by many people living in developing countries. It is no threat to development but rather a condition for inclusion.

Religion and development
– the Norwegian story

Jørn Lemvik

Summary

Norway has been a Christian country for centuries, and from an early age, the church has been one of the actors shaping Norwegian society. In the 19th century, revivals took place in the country, resulting in the establishment of mission organisations who carried out mission work in poorer countries around the world, focusing on two major aspects: evangelism and development work. In the 1960s, the Norwegian government wanted to take a more active part in development work, and established the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) as an office responsible for funding development work. A major precondition for money channelled through the Norad system was that it should be used exclusively for development work. The word "religion" was a non-word to both the Norwegian government and to Norad for 50 years. In 2010 the Norwegian Minister for development declared that "Norway takes God seriously", and he put religion back on the agenda. In the countries where development work takes place, the populations are, to a great extent, religious, therefore development work needs to relate to both religion on a wider scope, as well as to religious leaders. Digni, an umbrella organisation for the long-term development-work for twenty Norwegian mission organisations and churches,[1] is responsible for pushing this agenda in Norway. Since 2010, conferences have been organised, networks have been established, and the work on religion and development has become a public issue – something to be discussed as part of the development discourse. In most recent years, Digni has been part of the establishment of international networks on religion and development – networks where the UN, the World Bank and others have been involved. The aim of these efforts have been to create a stronger awareness among the politicians and bureaucrats on the importance of religion when development issues are focused. It has been equally important to create safe spaces for different kinds of development actors from the global South and the global North to meet and exchange experiences, learn from each other, and look for possibilities to establish projects or programs where it is possible for different actors to cooperate – all in order to make it possible for all persons on earth to live dignified lives.

Background

Historically speaking, Norway is a Christian country, since Christianity was brought to the country from England circa 1030 CE. In the sixteenth century, the Lutheran Reformation of the Church also reached Norwegian shores, establishing the Church of Norway, which in turn introduced the first pillars of the Norwegian School system, as well as the health system.

The church has, then, been one of the cultural backbones of the Norwegian society since the z6th century.

From around 1840, Christian revivals took place in many areas of Norway; one of the results of these revivals was the establishment of mission organisations such as the Norwegian Missionary Society and Norwegian Lutheran Mission. These organisations sent missionaries to preach the gospel and to "do good deeds,"[2] and they had a great impact on the lives of thousands of people in the countries where they worked.

The influence of the church in Norway diminished during the 20th century. From being a visible and decisive power in society, the church has slowly developed into a privatized and rather quiet institution. At the same time, a strong belief in rationalism, science and secularism has developed. Along with these new systems of thought and belief, comes the concept that as society develops, there is no more need for any god, and no more need for religion. It is only in the "under-developed" societies that one needs to hold on to faith.[3]

The 1960s

After World War II, Norwegian society developed rapidly. From being a poor and war-stricken country, the economy developed, and people had access to better jobs with higher salaries, better standards of housing, and most Norwegians could afford the new technologies of the 1960s, including cars, refrigerators and televisions. Without stating that there is a causal link, it is observable that as the economy and faith in the future developed, the influence of the church as an actor in the society became less important – and faith was pushed more and more into the private spheres of life.

In the 1960s, a new government office was set up: The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). This office was established to focus on development work – more specifically to fund development work which was taking place in the poorer parts of the world. The Church was already one of the big actors in these poor countries.[4] Mission organisations and some churches were running schools and hospitals, as well as being involved in agricultural activities, and they often had a special focus on marginalized and "forgotten" ethnic groups.

Norad funded the projects, while the various churches and Christian organisations did much of the work; it was the churches and Christian organisations who gained the trust of the local people where development activities were taking place. There was a strong partnership between Norad and the various churches. With the establishment of the Norad office, there was, however, one change: before, the Church and missions had been free to do the mission work the way they wanted; they had been carrying out development work and they had been preaching the good news of Jesus Christ to the people. Now, however, a condition was implemented by Norad: that development and the preaching work should not be mixed; more specifically, that there should be no preaching of the gospel in the development projects funded by the Norwegian Government.

The Church organisations, seeing the immense benefit of having funds for the development work, accepted this condition. With the government money in addition to their own funds, they were able to reach much wider. The deal with Norad was that the operating organisation should cover 20% of the cost, and Norad would cover the remaining 80%.[5] As a result, the work of the missions – and of the local churches – was now split in two. Development projects were doing development work, and the gospel work was carried out separately; in this area there was less money, salaries were lower, and equipment was lacking. In short, a materialistic difference between the church employees involved in development activities and the employees doing evangelistic work developed. More serious was the divide, incomprehensible to most local church leaders and members, between development and preaching. The local thinking was most often: man is one, and man cannot be divided into a Christian and a neutral part. The calling from God is to do good work and preach the good news – it goes together. If you are a Christian, you are a Christian when you are in church and you are a Christian when you are a professional development worker. However, the conditions were set by Norad, and they were accepted by the Norwegian Churches and mission organisations, and the local churches were not asked to present their opinion on the matter, neither to the partners nor to Norad.

Since the conditions were set in the early 1960s, the word 'religion' did not reappear in government documents. This was the case in spite of the fact, agreed to by most politicians, bureaucrats and development workers, that religion was one of the most important aspects of society in the local context where development activities took place. The overall view from the Northern governments was that they knew what was best for local people. Strangely enough, this was not contested, neither by the mission organisations nor by the churches.

In 2010, Dr. Arne Olav Øyhus, a professor at Agder University, conducted research into the White papers of the Norwegian government from the 1960s onwards: he found that the word 'religion' did not appear in the papers. Øyhus's conclusion was that this had been a willed government policy, otherwise the word would appear every now and then, at least by accident. Coming from an anthropological background, Dr. Øyhus said that even anthropologists doing field work, evaluating development activities performed in local villages, managed to present reports where the religious dimensions were missing. This is an important observation as most of the communities where development work took place were highly religious. Religion usually played, and plays, a major role in the lives of most of the local people. It affects how people think and behave, and it decides between what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. It sets the patterns of roles between men and women, as it determines most of the many practices linked to rites of life.

A new turn

In 2010, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Development called for a meeting with around thirty NGOs. The topic on the agenda included the question: what can we do to better reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)? All of the invited organisations presented their answer to the question posed, mostly indicating that if they received more money they would be able to do a better job.

Digni discussed their frustrations, stating that "unless we relate to religion, we will never reach the MDGs. In every local village, in every slum, there is one issue, which is relatively certain: people believe. Therefore, if we are going to reach the MDGs, we have to start relating to religion. This does not mean that we have to agree with religion, or accept what it says – but we have to relate to it. The religious leaders are gatekeepers to local societies, and if we want to see changes then we have to deal with these people and their faith." This short speech was met with a stunned silence – the unspeakable word of religion had been spoken, and nobody really knew how the Ministers would react. However, at the end of the meeting, the Minister of Development asked Digni to continue challenging the government on religion as it was very important. As a result of Digni highlighting the issue, religion was back on the agenda, and was to be discussed more openly than before.

Digni followed up the MDG meeting with a letter to the Minister of Development, Erik Solheim, stating that there was a need for space to talk about religion in development: so far there had been no such discussions, at least not publicly, and the need to develop a way to talk and discuss issues of religion was obvious. Secular people felt insecure when religion was put on the table, and Christians had their own way of approaching and communicating about the issue. As a result of the MDG meeting, however, it was now evident that there was a need for a common language and some guidelines on how to deal with religion in development.

Together with the Islamic Council, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Norwegian Church, Digni followed up the MDG meeting with a conference on "Religion and development" in 2010, where The Minister of Development, along with Dr. Katherine Marshall and several others who were competent in the field, participated.[6] The focus was on religion and development.

The Minister of Development, Minister Solheim, really understood the importance of the role of religion in the everyday life of people who lived in areas of the world where Norway were running or funding development activities. He did a great job to lift religion and its role in development, for example writing an article for the biggest Norwegian newspaper, Aftenposten, titled: "Norway Takes God Seriously". It should be noted that this was the first time in Norwegian history that a minister stated this in public. Minister Solheim followed his article by asking the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights to run a two-year project, focusing on religion and development.

Digni clearly had an agenda in pushing for the acceptance that religion plays an important role in society, which was to see a shift from the old paradigm which suggested that mixing religion and development was unprofessional, to a new paradigm which suggested the opposite, i.e. that professionalism must mean dealing with religion when carrying out development work. The media and various academic bodies challenged Digni, and other organisations interested in lifting the issue of religion, by accusing them of trying to increase their own profits and focusing attention on themselves. However these accusations were rejected, and it was made clear that the intention was to have a much bigger focus on the importance of religion, specifically how faith influences the lives and actions of people in countries where development projects are being carried out in general.

In 2011, Minister Solheim gave an interview in which he said that organisations who do not take religion seriously in their work would be liable to losing support from the government. This immediately meant that religion was not only on the table – and on the Minister of Foreign Affairs' agenda for the annual meeting with all the ambassadors – but it was also a necessary part of the conversation on development activities for all organisations involved in these kinds of activities. In less than two years, the non-word "religion" (in relation to development work) was suddenly being highlighted as something so important that it might actually stop funding from the government unless it was dealt with properly.

This is an interesting story in many ways because it shows a shift from a place where religion was a non-issue to a place where it became a huge focus. This is not the end of the story, however. Minister Solheim left the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs. The new Minister, although positive, did not have the understanding or incentive that the previous Minister had. In the space of a year, the left-wing government had to leave their offices after losing the 2013 election to their right-wing counterparts. Their first important action within the field of development work, was to remove the post of Minister for Development. Since 2013, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has been assigned the duty of dealing with Foreign Affairs and Development.

Since 2013, there has been a push from the NGO sector to reinstate the position of Minister of Development. There is no criticism as to the competence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs; it has not been a criticism of persons, but the civil society is experiencing challenges on structure and capacity, as well as representability internationally, and one of the issues which has suffered as a result is the focus on religion and its role in development work. With a model from the US in mind, several organisations have wished to establish an office on religion within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but this has not happened.

Cooperation between Christian organisations in Norway have been established; these networks are trying to highlight the issue of religion and its role in society. Other networks have also been set up in Scandinavia to focus on the same area. In addition, there is an ongoing cooperation

between the UN Inter-Agency Task force on FBOs and Sustainable Development and Digni, focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals and religion.[7]

Furthermore, within the last few years, an interesting development has begun in Norway. Organisations with no religious ties have approached Christian organisations like Digni in order to develop strategies and cooperation on issues such as religion and violence against women, religion and power, as well as religion and sexuality.

On an international level, some initiatives have been started by different organisations focusing on the wide topic of religion and development, approaching it from different angles. The World Bank is looking at religion and business – a moral imperative to fight extreme poverty, and the so called Joint Learning Initiative is working on documenting the role of religion in development through carrying out research or compiling existing research results together. The World Council of Churches and the Act Alliance has also been active in setting up workshops and networks focusing on religion and development.

Furthermore, Germany, through the federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, saw the need to coordinate this work, and in 2015 they began the job of establishing a secretariat with the task to function as a hub for the coordination of activities dealing with religion and development.[8]

It has also been documented in various reports that there is a lack of literacy among the politicians and bureaucrats in the North. A lot of work is currently being carried out to create training courses on religion for these groups of people.[9]

In short, since 2014 the work on religion and development has been increasing, and lots of effort has been invested to ensure that this important aspect of people's lives is integrated when development activities are planned.[10] Religion as part of the development work is now being recognized and established as an issue which has come to stay, opening up new possibilities for greater success in the endeavours to create a better world.

Mission and development: Old stories or new possibilities?

Tomas Sundnes Drønen

Summary

In 2011, the then Norwegian minister of development, Erik Solheim launched a project focusing on the challenge of taking religion more seriously in Norwegian foreign policy. The minister called for increased knowledge among Norwegian diplomats and aid workers of the religious dimension in contexts where Norway was involved, and he underscored the importance of the relationship between solid contextual knowledge and a more effective development policy. In this article I wish to draw attention to some of the historical factors that have come to influence the relationship between religion and development in the Norwegian context through one historical and one contemporary example from Norwegian involvement in church activities in northern Cameroon. The article then reflects upon who the right partners in development work are, and argues that religious organisations often have the 'groundedness' and contact with the local population that the large development agencies lack. In the concluding remarks it is argued that three aspects of development work are of importance in this setting: that the goal of development work always should be 'positive change'; that development work always is about 'practice'; and that development work should be about 'democracy and human rights'.[1]

Introduction

When the Norwegian minister of development, Erik Solheim, together with the former Prime Minister, Kjell Magne Bondevik, launched the project 'Religion and Development' from the stage in the House of Literature (Litteraturhuset) in Oslo in March 2011, it appeared that the former political opponents could finally embrace each other in a project with deep roots in shared personal experiences. For a historian, the setting was a fascinating sight: one representative from the urban labour movement (Solheim), and one representative from the lay Christian rural missionary movement (Bondevik), who both spoke the same language of solidarity and commitment through private as well as government-funded development work. The fraternisation on stage summarized many of the historical and sociological analyses which trace the present Norwegian development policy to both the labour movement and the many Norwegian mission organisations.

The project 'Religion and Development' (2011–2012) was launched as a response to the challenge of taking religion more seriously in Norwegian foreign policy. In an article in a Norwegian newspaper, the Minister called for increased knowledge among Norwegian diplomats and aid workers of

the religious dimension in contexts where Norway was involved. He also underscored the importance of the relationship between solid contextual knowledge and a more effective development policy.[2] Through public meetings held around the country, the project first of all gave us the opportunity to wind up some historical threads related to our national role as a donor country.[3] Secondly, it gave us the opportunity to test out some ideas about the role religion has played in the Norwegian activity, through missionary organisations and through secular aid projects. Finally it gave us an occasion to 'think big' about Norway as a small global actor, and in the following I will share some thoughts about the Norwegian mission movement's historical and contemporary contributions to development aid and community building.

Some historical considerations

It should by now be unnecessary to repeat that the large number of missionaries who travelled from the very marginal nation of Norway in the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries has left deep traces in our collective global consciousness. Berge Furre points to the fact that Africans were much closer to him than people in Oslo in his rural childhood, due to the vivid information transmitted by the missionaries who regularly visited his village. The Sunday school songbook which contained a variety of mission songs was reprinted in its thirty-fifth edition in 1949 (with a total of 730,000 copies),[4] and the mission exhibition 'Africa is calling' was visited by approximately one million people, almost one third of the Norwegian population in the early 1950s.

But what does this say about the content of the missionary work? It first of all tells us something about the commitment for the world outside Europe for much of the Norwegian population. It shows that Norway was a much more important international actor, with influence through numerous personal relationships, than what is normally visible through macroeconomic historical analyses. It also means that Norway was participating in a colonial civilizing mission that changed the African continent in a fundamental way. Whether the involvement of the missions in this project was positive or negative will depend on who you ask, both in Norway and in the countries where the Norwegian missionaries established their work.

Anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff have characterised the British Protestant missionary influence in South Africa as 'colonization of consciousness', a process where the locals imitated religious practices and adopted the technology that the Europeans brought with them.[5] Such a description opens the way for many interesting theoretical perspectives on the cultural meetings which took place, but how does such a characterisation affect our image of the locals who welcomed the technologically-superior Northerners? The Comaroffs' reflections are not only interesting from a historical perspective; many would argue that current development policies face the same question: despite our good intentions, how can we avoid development projects being perceived as neo-colonial practice?

Our notions of missionaries and gentiles

The social and religious currents that made traders, missionaries and administrators invade the African continent in the 1900s constitute a complex and colourful mosaic. Local historical case studies give a more nuanced picture than what can be derived from the Comaroffs' recently quoted and most famous one-liner. In Cameroon, the first missionary was a freed slave from the sugar plantations in Jamaica. Joseph Merrick was a charismatic Baptist minister who went on a mission tour to England and inspired churches to send missionaries to the coast of Cameroon where he had begun his work. Europeans eventually took over most of the mission work, but the social profile that Merrick had laid down as the cornerstone of the missionary activity was important also in the years that followed.[6]

When the first Norwegian missionaries came to northern Cameroon in 1925, they quickly found out that the Muslim political establishment was not interested in the message of salvation from Europe. It turned out, however, that the marginalised Kirdi population, i.e. those ethnic groups that populated the area before the Muslim Fulani from Nigeria invaded the area, was ready to accept the strangers from the North. Through the missionary schools, with their focus on vernacular languages, the local population realised that the new religion not only concerned a possible next life, it could also be used to claim local political independence on this side of eternity. A somewhat unexpected consequence of this awakening met the missionaries when a local teacher one day found shade under the thatched roof of the empty school. The students had gone on strike. The Dii pupils refused to limit their education to learning only the Mbum language. They insisted on learning also French – so that they later could communicate with (and be employed by) the French colonial administration. In the missionaries' annual report, we read that: "It is with great grief that we introduce the French language in our schools."[7] That the mission work was also a process of democratisation that created a civil society outside the traditional religious leaders' control was an unexpected spin off of the missionary zeal to convert people to Christianity.

To claim that the white man's burden was divided equally between traders, missionaries and the colonial administration would be a major exaggeration. The reason why the Norwegian missionaries in Cameroon were well-received among the Kirdi population was that they were perceived as an unusual group of whites who were in opposition to both the French administration and the Muslim leaders. Much has been written about the Norwegian missionaries' fight against the local slavery,[8] a practice which the French administration, for purely strategic reasons, chose to ignore. It is both amusing and interesting to read French reports from the period which on the one hand describe some of the Norwegian missionaries as troublesome, ignorant peasants, and on the other hand show overt admiration for the culture and language-skills of yet other missionaries; individuals who are considered Trygve Lie's (The first UN Secretary-General) personal 'eyes and ears'. It is obvious that the missionaries raised both theological and political capital through their fight against slavery,

but it is also beyond doubt that the missionary movement had human rights issues high on their agenda, albeit in a somewhat narrow European-Protestant packaging.[9]

Mission and development

Returning to the stage at the House of Literature, and questions concerning the 'Religion and Development' project: what role does religion play in development today, and does the mission still have a role to play in today's globalised world? As to the first, I think there is general consensus that in many of the countries where Norway is involved in development work, religion plays an important role, both in the lives of individuals and in the practical organisation of society. It is also clear and beyond doubt that many of the churches once founded by the Western missions, today provide society-oriented services that we in the West expect the state to take care of. Paul Gifford (SOAS, University of London) refers to statistics indicating that 70% of all nursing and care of HIV and AIDS patients in sub-Saharan Africa is carried out by churches or Christian organisations.[10] If Norwegian government aid aims at helping those who need it the most, local churches and mosques have a network of services which by far extends that of the state in many of the world's poorest countries. Madagascar is an example of a country where the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) is involved in several development-projects, and where the state apparatus lacks management and resources to reach those who need help the most. The Lutheran church, which was started by Norwegian missionaries, has more than two million members and administrates a series of diaconal projects where 'dignity' and 'empowerment' are important slogans.

In her study of Norwegian missionary work in Cameroon, Marianne Gullestad points out that in the tension between conveying 'pity' and 'compassion', the missionaries sought to practice the latter, but often ended up with the former.[11] A sustainable development-oriented relationship requires an equal partner in the recipient countries, not a bank account for the indulgences of a Norwegian goodness regime – which Terje Tvedt often, and with some degree of accuracy, reminds us. If the goal of Norwegian development assistance is to fight for the oppressed, to provide dignity, and help create jobs and development in the various countries where we are present, every good effort should be guided in this work. Norwegian Mission organisations have a very limited capacity in the face of major social challenges in the countries in which they are involved. But they have very valuable contacts through locally based religious networks, light-footed organisations which are familiar with the local challenges and who master the language and culture, are what is needed in order to create sustainable development.

Who are the right religious partners?

When the report that the reference group had worked with for eighteen months was to be submitted to the Norwegian Minister of Development, I was asked to represent the scholars in the group and indicate which

religious partners we should work together with in the future. Much had transpired in Norwegian politics since the project started. Erik Solheim had been forced to leave the ministerial post and was replaced by Heikki Holmås, self-proclaimed atheist with little experience of international development work. What message should I, as a researcher and former missionary, deliver to a new minister who knew very little (compared to his predecessor) about the mission movement, and who probably was quite sceptical about it? After a few more rounds with the material provided by the group, I concluded that the answer ought to be as simple as it was difficult: We ought to support those organisations and those milieus which deliver the best products, which can provide qualitatively verified results of their work, which are able to initiate change that is locally based, and which are able to reproduce this 'best practice'.

I tried to establish certain clarifications on the question of 'best practice' by drawing attention to some examples that I have experienced both as an individual and as a professional. The last fifteen years I have spent approximately half of my time outside Norway, mostly in Cameroon, where I worked as a teacher at a theological seminary for several years, and where I also conducted several fieldworks. During that time, I travelled quite extensively around the country and met several 'white elephants' – ruins of development projects left standing as examples of Western benevolence and naiveté: the French leather-factory which was the only factory for miles, abandoned after a few years of production because there was no infrastructure and market for the products that were produced; the Danish water towers that worked perfectly well, but where no villages could afford to buy diesel because they never agreed on how to split the bill; the rusty tractors in the 'Rogaland farm', a project initiated by former Norwegian Bishop Bjørn Bue, which provided potatoes for most of southern Cameroon while the missionaries were still in charge and could order tractor parts directly from friends in Norway. They were all of them good projects, which in theory could have created lasting growth with strong local support; but neither French private initiative, the Danish government aid nor Norwegian missionaries managed to create projects that had local roots strong enough to produce long term sustainability.

While living in Cameroon, people often asked me what were the main challenges connected to life in Africa – and I never answered that there was not enough leather for sale, that we had no water in the tap (although it happened), or that there were few good potatoes to be found at the market. The main problem was that many of my friends and acquaintances died of AIDS. When I look back today I would estimate that nearly one third of the people I met on a daily basis are now dead. Every night when I turned on the TV, the state channel (CRTV), sent long info-commercials against AIDS, and I could read billboards from UNICEF and the Bill Gates' foundation wherever I went. But not once did I experience a reasonable conversation on the subject, even if one person that was employed in my house actually was HIV-positive. I knew – and he knew that I knew. And yet the topic was taboo.

Then one Sunday something strange happened. My congregation was visited by the national church president – who for the occasion entered the pulpit with a red ribbon attached to his cassock, and he delivered a brand new message. For the first time I heard a pastor in northern Cameroon speak openly about AIDS, about transmission, prevention, consequences and morality. The rest of the church was as surprised as I was – we had all been part of a historic event. What had happened? After countless projects in schools and in different parts of the health sector, the Centre for Intercultural Communication in Stavanger had applied for money from the Foreign Ministry for a new project: 'All against AIDS'. And because the centre had good contacts with the church leadership, they managed to start the project by gathering all the pastors for a two-day seminar, and they managed to get the church president to chair the meeting. It felt like witnessing a quiet revolution. A theme that until recently had been a taboo, was now preached about from all pulpits in northern Cameroon.

Last time I visited Cameroon, I asked one of my old acquaintants, a woman of nearly fifty years, how her health was. The answer I got was as follows: "Thank you, I'm fine. Every third month I visit the hospital to take the HIV-test. Now they offer it for free," While this might not seem highly significant to some, it was an extraordinary thing for me to hear.

What is my point in this context? That only a Norwegian centre with close ties to a mission organisation was behind the miracle in Northern Cameroon? Not at all. All efforts that had been put into play in Cameroon to combat the AIDS epidemic had obviously helped to achieve this result. However, in this particular context, regarding this sensitive theme, it was essential that it was the religious leadership that showed the way forward. Anyone who has spent some time in Africa knows all about the conspiracy theories which circulate and are related to the AIDS pandemic; how, for example, all unnatural deaths are connected to a magical or religious explanation. They know about the importance of reproduction and the almost divine status of the male sperm. In such a context, it was particularly important that people with spiritual credibility and ritual authority led the way. In such a context, it was important that the agents of change had 'street cred', and that ordinary people listened when they spoke and were willing to change their behaviour because they thought it was the best thing for them to do.

Then we have to ask the pertinent questions: is this about faith? Is this about religion? Before we answer those questions, we have to agree upon what religion is. Regarding this question, I agree with the majority of the authors in the final report from the group (Religion og utvikling).[12] Religion in this context is not primarily about faith; religion is a discursive practice. Religion is a way to explain the mysteries of existence. Religion is the language we use to justify our choices. Religion is the words we use to legitimise our actions. Religion is the language in terms of which we think and reflect – because this language connects us with the forces responsible for our existence: the forces which my ancestors lived closely intertwined

with; the forces that will help my child succeed in school, help her get a job, help her get married and be blessed again with children of her own. These are the reflections of the majority of the world's population – and if we want to work together with them to improve the social conditions under which they live, we must take this knowledge seriously.

In this particular context, with this specific challenge, it was essential that the organisation that was behind the development project had local knowledge of the relationship between religion, health and sexuality, and knew the language which connected the different parts of the project into a greater whole.

Much of the same dynamics that I have described so far were highlighted as key success factors in a NUFU[13] funded research project at School of Mission and Theology on the reintegration of child soldiers in Uganda.[14] In order for the former child soldiers to be resettled in their villages, they were subjected to a purification ritual organised by a local religious authority. Most often it was traditional religious leaders who carried out the ritual, but recently several pastors have conducted similar rituals in the churches with a slightly different content. Any development project that specialises in trauma care and understanding of social processes – but that ignores the religious aspect that these cleansing rituals represent – will most likely fail to give these young people an opportunity to return to something close to a normal life in the village.

So who are the right religious partners? We should cooperate with those organisations that have the trust of the population, and who share our values to a sufficient extent. We must, as the Norwegian report points out, find the right (but difficult) balance between principles and pragmatism. We need to work with organisations that are willing to change – but it also means that we must be willing to look at things in our projects that we initially did not intend to change. If we are not willing to meet our partners with such a minimum of openness, we cannot expect our partners unconditionally to accept the ever-changing directives from changing donor-regimes.

In addition, we should focus our collaboration on religious organisations that are eager to learn more; partners who are willing to produce new knowledge about the field in which they operate, and who are willing to share this knowledge with us. We should expect critical self-reflection related to the projects we are involved in, together we should search for the most important values in the projects, and together we should ask ourselves why people through just this project are willing to change their behaviour in order to achieve what we jointly experience as improved living conditions.

In order to summarise the missionary organisations' contribution to a public debate about aid, I would like to highlight three main points:

1. Development is about positive change. But all development presupposes that people are willing to change, are able to implement change, and that change is physically possible. Churches, temples and mosques can be

key agents of change in civil society projects, and mission organisations involved (together with local churches and NGOs) can bring about change in attitudes and values. This is an activity that the missionary movement should not apologise for being part of, but they must aim at carrying out their practice in a way that clearly shows respect for the traditions and beliefs of the people they work with. Awareness of the fragile balance between will to involve and will to impose may not always have been good enough in either church or mission, but when secular development actors accuse mission organisations of implementing change, the criticism is too superficial. Development always implies change.

2. Development is about practice – and faith, religion, practice and action are closely connected. When people in the Bara region in Madagascar suffer from stomach infections and high infant mortality, it is closely connected with how they follow the traditional way of treating their water sources, their waste and their sewage. The solution is simple: toilet and drinking water must be physically separated. In order to fight the AIDS pandemic in Cameroon, knowledge about sexually transmittable diseases must be connected to changes in attitudes and actions. But how to achieve such changes? How to give legitimacy to changes in established patterns of behaviour that are passed from generation to generation? Here the Christian faith and values, together with the local church leaders, give legitimacy to simple measures which within a short period of time may reduce child mortality and HIV infections. Not only churches or mission projects can cause this change, but knowledge of local values and patterns of behaviour are essential for creating lasting change. Religious organisations and leaders often have the moral and spiritual legitimacy that is necessary to change behaviour which is grounded in tradition and religious beliefs. Church and mission also have community-based networks and staffs who share the worldview within which the local population operates. Both religious and secular agents of change intervene in people's life-world and imagination with a desire to change it for the better: in this case, reduced child mortality and reduced HIV transmission.

3. Development is about democracy and human rights. Civil society is under pressure in several countries that Norway defines as partners in developing projects, and Christian churches have not always been in favour of change related to issues like gay rights and full equality between the sexes, issues which have been important for Norwegian policy makers. But the Christian churches are very important arenas for the development of 'basic skills' that are necessary in order to develop democratic institutions. The churches run schools which are key institutions in the fight against illiteracy. High schools and universities encourage pupils and students to think critically and encourage young

people to make independent decisions. The churches also challenge people to take part in organised activities where democratic elections and economic transparency are integral parts of both professionally developed and international church bodies, as well as small church choirs and Sunday schools in rural areas. And the churches' women's organisations in Cameroon and Madagascar have trained hundreds of thousands of women in democratic processes and in establishing income-generating activities.

The Norwegian government, in terms of being an important secular development agent, is indebted to the work that a variety of mission agencies have carried out through history in order to establish good relations with marginalised peoples in other parts of the world. We are also indebted to these organisations because they have managed to shed light on individuals and populations who do not share our material wealth or our access to a free civil society. These organisations' knowledge about values and lifestyles should be a resource also for the professionalised development aid as NORAD represents today. To quote Wilfred Cantwell Smith:

> I'm not saying that religion is a good thing. I'm saying that it is a great thing. It can make you better or it can make you much worse. But it means that you take the question of how to live your life seriously.

This insight into different peoples' way of thinking – insight into their spiritual worldview and their traditional values, which play a central role in religious people's decision making – is important in the current debate about development. Human actions are motivated by several elements; the desire for a predictable financial future, the wish for their children to have good health, in addition to the desire to respect the moral and ethical legacy that previous generations have left us. Over time, the understanding of this heritage changes along with developments in society, but changes need legitimacy, and this legitimacy to change the framework of the social space in which our lives unfold often rests in the hands of religious leaders. As long as people define themselves as religious, development and change cannot be dissociated from a religious understanding of the world.

The need for contextual analysis on the role of religion in the Swedish development cooperation

Josephine Sundqvist

Summary

This article aims to explore the role of religion in the Swedish Development Cooperation. Faith-based organisations (FBOs) have historically been social movements in development and in the forefront of service delivery and social justice, but religion as a societal phenomenon has until recently not been sufficiently taken into account by donors in international aid. But this is changing and religion is increasingly more visible in development policies. This raised interest at the global level can partly be explained by a shift in global politics and partly by a discursive transformation, a religious turn, within the social sciences, predominantly in Development Studies. Scholars and policy makers have also started to explore and analyse the influence of religion in development cooperation. It has been found that that although FBOs have gained increased visibility, religion as a societal phenomenon has remained an invisible factor. Additionally, most analysis on religion has, until recently, taken its point of departure in the Global North. Most development actors, including the Swedish Government Agencies, have failed to comprehensively understand or recognize the importance of religion outside the dialogue with the Christian Aid Organisations. For those of us aware that religion influences norms, societies and politics at all levels and is a key dimension of poor people's lives in all developing countries, this may sound surprising. The lack of knowledge about religion, religious practices and beliefs has been a hindrance to the development process. If there was a greater understanding about the role of religion in the context of development, better results would be achieved and development work would be relevant and thereby more efficient.

Introduction

Globally, the role of religion in public life has been radically reassessed. Religious agents have been experiencing somewhat of a renaissance as a consequence of a significant shift in global politics. The 9/11 attacks, and the new era of global terrorism, has led to a growing recognition of the role that religion plays in global politics, development and humanitarian assistance at the structural level. The subsequent 'war on terror', the Islamic State (IS) events in the Middle East and attacks by Boko Haram in Nigeria in parallel with growing xenophobia and islamophobia in Europe and elsewhere have all brought religion, in particular Islam and conservative forms of Christianity, to the center of foreign policy in general. Religion is today a key societal factor to consider in the shaping and implementation

of foreign policy and human rights agendas in connection to development cooperation globally. Sweden is currently moving in the direction to further support rights based development work and development programs aiming for freedom of religion and belief, interfaith dialogue and/or faith-based agents as part of the Swedish Development Cooperation. On behalf of the Swedish government, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has taken a step in the direction of incorporating a directive on this, as part of the Sida strategy on democratic support to both faith-based and secular development agents. But a broader contextual analysis on the role of religion is still to be developed.

Christian FBOs have always played an important role in the Swedish Development Cooperation. Since the establishment of Sida, they have received a considerable amount of financial support. Swedish International Development Assistance is today channeled through these organisations as part of the Sida Civil Society Program. At present, four of the 14 core partners to Sida are Christian faith-based. Religious organisations (FBOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and their global partners have in this context been considered legitimate actors in the local scene as voices of the poor and have long and extensive experience in development work.[1] Over recent years, other FBOs like Islamic Relief have also entered the scene and started to channel Sida grants; in the case of Islamic Relief, through their membership in the Forum Syd.

Point of departure – defining religion

So who are the religious agents and what do we mean by religion? What do we find if we go beyond the formal structures of the FBOs in the Global North? Firstly we must take into account what role religion plays to the poor person's identity by applying an intersectional approach. As a religious person or group you might be part of the country's political and economic elite, or you might be a marginalised actor in political opposition. Working with a Rights-based approach in development implies that we have to be sensitive to the context: we need to avoid broad generalisations on religion. Secondly we have to be clear on how we define religion. In Sociology of religion we have historically classified religion into two main types: functional or substantive. Each represents a very distinct perspective on the nature and/or function of religion. For those who focus upon substantive or essentialist definitions, religion is largely about the content and religious beliefs. Examples include belief in gods, belief in spirits, or belief in something known as the sacred. For those who focus on functionalist definitions, religion is largely about what it does and what particular role religion has either in your social life or in your society at large. Hence we need a deeper and better informed discussion on both the content and the function of religion.[2]

One of these functions is the political role religion might play. It is extremely difficult to draw any clear line between development work and mission work because it takes place in the context of collaboration and

partnership between FBOs and religious groups in the Global North and the South. Therefore scholars such as Tønnessen invite us to see diaconia as an integral part of mission as well as mission as integrated in diaconia, rather than simplifying and asking FBOs to downplay their faith or organisational set-up of religious values. When analysing the function of religion, it is not enough to look at the definitions of an organisation in the Global North; one must also look at the international structures through which it works. Only by looking at the networks and structures in the Global South is it possible to gain a deeper understanding of the role of religion in international aid.[3]

There are numerous available developed typologies for a more structural analysis on religion in development. I argue that faith and religion are multi-dimensional concepts (in a similar way as political ideology), and can be expressed through a number of organisational features. Studies from development work with Christian FBOs reveal that faith can make a difference in: (1) Structural affiliation and governance; (2) Values and staff motivation; (3) Mission; (4) Strategy and theory of development; (5) Selection of partners and choice of beneficiaries; (6) Faith practices and teaching in programming; (7) Staffing and leadership; (8) Organisational culture and decision-making; (9) Constituency and sources of funding; and (10) External relationships. Other typologies also look more into the function of faith in the work of FBOs more broadly: Faith-permeated organisations; Faith-centered organisations; Faith-affiliated organisations; Faith-background organisations; and Faith-secular partnerships. Another way to analyse religion is through an analysis of varieties of public performance of religion,[4] or through models classifying actors depending on how faith plays out (*Passive, Active, Persuasive and Exclusive*).[5] Unfortunately, most tools and typologies are too focused on the FBOs, and take its starting point in the Global North. Hence we need to develop new tools for analysing the role of religion in the Global South and in relation to other societal processes.

Religion through structures more than through individuals

When religion is discussed, policy makers and scholars often fail to pay attention to the political and religious role religious organisations (FBOs) might play. This includes question on what role religion and faith will play for secular development initiatives and how it all plays out in the Global South. There is a tendency among policy-makers and researchers to confuse individual promotion and inclusion of private beliefs with contextual analysis of religion and religious actors more structurally.

So how come the development work of FBOs is so highly valued when channeling development assistance, while religion as a societal phenomenon is kept out of the picture? I would argue that the secularization norm in the Swedish society has fostered a kind of religious illiteracy that is widespread today. Many have lost the terminology for talking about beliefs and religious

issues in a contextual and structural way. Hence many regard religion as having relevance only at an individual level rather than at structural level which would never be the case when, for example, analysing gender, trade relations or political ideologies. So the key explanation is that we are lacking experience and deeper contextual understanding. Until now, there has been neither a comprehensive policy in place within the Swedish Government, nor any common research initiative exploring the role of religion; hence, there is an urgent need for contextual analysis on the role of religion in Swedish Development Cooperation. Deeper knowledge and more informed analyses have to influence practical action, especially at the Swedish embassies in the recipient countries in the Global South.

In order to recognize the impact of religion, one needs to look at the role of religion through structures rather than through individuals. One must move beyond a focus on international FBOs and how they define themselves, focusing instead on their partners and their cooperating structures as well as the societal contexts in order to gain a more thorough understanding of the impact of religion in the Global South. Religion is not an isolated factor in the private sphere but a key dimension in the public sphere.[6]

Religion and development politics are closely linked in complicated ways, making this a very complex issue to analyse.[7] This is because development cooperation takes place in the context of collaboration and partnership between religious actors in the Global North and the South through global networks. The development work of FBOs is also based on a holistic approach. As most religions do not make a separation between the material and the spiritual realm of life, development is often not solely looked upon as material progress and economic growth, but in a more multi-dimensional way. In many cases, religious actors utilise social capital generated through religious practice and belief for social development and it becomes hard to separate the two. However, in order to follow guidelines and to survive in a secular aid context, many FBOs (both Christian and Muslim) in Europe have downplayed their faith identity and not developed these aspects of their work. Sida has engaged in informal dialogues between Sida civil servants and FBO representatives on the matter of how to combine and/or separate development work and faith but until now there is still a prevailing uncertainty from both parts (Sida and FBOs).

From religious taboo to increased interest?

The modernization thesis whereby religion was supposed to decline in importance has been proven wrong over and over again. But have we moved away from a religious taboo in humanities and social sciences to an increased interest? Or are we still stuck in prejudiced views on religion globally? Today growth of followers within the world religions is largely taking place in the Global South. The PEW Forum has shown that around 62% of the world's Muslims live in South and Southeast Asia, with over 1 billion adherents. Indonesia is the home of 12.7% of the

world's Muslims. Brazil and Mexico have the world's third- and fourth-largest Catholic populations. Next comes the Philippines and United States. By all accounts, Pentecostalism and related charismatic movements represent one of the fastest-growing segments of global Christianity. Tens of millions of Latin Americans have left the Roman Catholic Church in recent decades and embraced Pentecostal Christianity. With 300 million followers worldwide, of which a large amount are based in Africa and Latin America, Pentecostalism is now a global concept.

If you also include other Protestant Charismatic movements we're talking about a global movement of 500 million with elements such as spiritually renewing "gifts of the Holy Spirit" with speaking in tongues, divine healing and prophesying.[9] Indeed, in five nations (Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Kenya and the Philippines) more than two-thirds of Protestants are either Pentecostal or charismatic. In Nigeria, Charismatic Christians account for six-in-ten Protestants.[10] Even though indigenous and ancient beliefs and traditions are still influential and integrated in contemporary religious life to a high extent, the religious landscape is very different today. Nevertheless, the development aid has, to a large extent, kept old perceptions and views on religion, which would never be the case when analysing market and private sector development. Due to global transformation it is no longer correct to say that Christianity is mainly driven from the West or that Islam is influenced solidly from the Middle East. Both world religions are transformed and highly influenced by social and political change taking place in South America, Africa and Asia, outside the "North and the West".

There is an increased donor interest to understand the role of faith in development. But according to my interpretation of current development discourse within Sida,[11] religion is still being viewed by many in the Swedish development context as potentially divisive and politically sensitive. In other words, religion as a phenomenon and FBOs as actors are still viewed as bringing considerable tensions, and if Sida supports one group, this could potentially upset another. Religious agents are also perceived by many as primarily competing for followers, thereby generating or contributing to conflicts within society.[12] So why are some still perceiving religion as so sensitive and so problematic? I argue that because of a lack of contextual analysis on the role of religion, policy makers tend to view religion either in an over-generalised and simplistic way, or as being counter to modernization and counter to the kinds of developments that are being promoted by the Swedish Government. Gender equality as a mainstream perspective in the Swedish Development Cooperation is a good example of this.

Religion is also looked upon in a personal way, whereby the personal belief of a policy maker or development worker becomes central to the handling of the role of religion and religious actors in practice. Religion must therefore be better analysed in a more nuanced way without making broad generalisations and simplifications; the contextual analysis of religion should never be limited to a personal matter of a desk officer.

Obviously different faith-based agencies will come to different decisions on how to handle faith in these critical areas; this is what theory of change is all about. Some will interpret faith more broadly or narrowly than others. Religion and religious agents will often do harm but also contribute a lot to development and there is no clear solution one way or the other.

The conclusion is that the contextual analysis of the role of religion in development cooperation is a major requirement for understanding the context and thereby for reaching sustainable results. When a society is changing and becomes globalized, urbanized and further developed, religious life also changes, yet does not diminish in importance.[13] It is true that development research with a focus on social capital, human development and human rights perspective has discovered this by placing religion and religious actors' within civil society politics but this is only one aspect of religion. FBOs have gained increased visibility, financing and growth.

There are several examples of this at a global level, not least by the initiation of the global Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics (DDVE). DDVE, founded in 2000, is working with FBOs to reduce poverty in developing countries.[14] The World Bank established a dialogue as far back as 1998 between faith leaders and the development agencies. As a result the World Bank published a series of studies called 'Voices of the Poor' that added weight to the role of religion in development and especially the work FBOs do in the developing world. Other European government aid departments are also seeking to develop their understanding in this area. Sida has initiated a number of seminars[15] and workshops[16] to explore the 'The Role of Religion in Development Cooperation', at the Sida Partnership Forum as well as a public seminar at the Sida headquarters: a so-called "Development Talk".[17] The United Nations Commission on Human Rights appointed a Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance in 2000, and the UN Human Rights Council extended the mandate for the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief in 2013.[18] Furthermore, through the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations has started to more actively promote cooperation with faith-based organisations in the areas of health, social policy, poverty reduction and gender. Additionally, Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in the Global South have benefited FBOs, enabling them to step in as key actors, thus ensuring social service delivery and realisation of health and educational rights for poor and socially excluded groups within development countries.

How should we interpret this development? Firstly, the assumption that increased modernization would lead to secularization needs to be reconsidered. Religion still seems to be an issue of social and political importance, however now appearing in new arenas than earlier in history. As a sociologist of religion, I would argue that it is a two-sided process. Religion influences society but society also influences religion. Societal change has a huge impact on religion and religious actors; hence we need an improved understanding of the interaction between religion and current

social transformation. A key factor is that religious actors are situated in separate social, political and cultural spheres, thereby world religions should not be grouped together.

Statistics from the World Value Survey reveal that independently of specific religions and religious practice, values will differ across different countries. Confucian Asia, Protestant Europe and the English-speaking West are dominated by secular-rational and self-expression values. Similarly, survival and traditional values are predominant in Africa and South Asia;[19] therefore an informed analysis can only be accomplished by studies on how the place of religion in the public sphere is negotiated within, for example the social sector, cultural practice, the political system and the media. Religion should not be looked upon as an isolated static factor. To quote Beckford "the greatest challenge for social scientists today is to realise that religious movements, far from being necessarily deviant or marginal, are an integral part of social and cultural change".[20] Since religious agents are not simply the effects of external forces but also observers and critics of their own development, we should be open to the possibility that the conventional boundaries between religion, politics and ideology could be re-drawn in order to better understand particular situations in development processes.[21]

The role of religion in development
– from a policy issue into a research question

My personal view is that the role of religion in Swedish Development Cooperation has evolved from a policy issue into a research question. In fact the notion and norm of secularism in development work in the Swedish context was first questioned by the FBOs themselves. So while development researchers in Sweden kept regarding religion as a marginal phenomenon within Civil Society discourses and development, religious actors themselves stepped up and started to jointly explore this perspective.[22]

In this process, there is a contested notion whether FBOs ought to be as generalised as they are in today's development discourses. Too often, sweeping and excessively generalized descriptions appears. As we know from the development dialogue, there are some core arguments for supporting FBOs. In fact what we have seen over recent decades is that FBOs often have the strength of commitment to increase development and fight poverty. For example, FBOs have some of the largest distribution systems in place for reaching the poor: the health infrastructure at the Panzi hospital in the DRC was in place long before the greater UN humanitarian operations started because of a well-established partnership between Pingstmissionens Utvecklingssamarbete (PMU InterLife) and Communauté des Eglises de Pentecôte en Afrique Centrale (CEPAC) that goes back as far as the 1930s.[23] Fighting poverty is at the core of most of the major religious traditions in the world. There are several practices and

beliefs within Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism, for example, which are focused very much on improving the life of the poor. It is also argued by some that FBOs hold the potential of empowering socially excluded groups, when offering socially excluded opportunities to enhance their human capital and acquire skills of political participation.[24] In this way, FBOs can provide the necessary tools for both stability and social change since they carry the potential of demonstrating pragmatic solidarity with the poorest while at the same time advocating on their behalf for the best social services.[25]

On the other hand, religious actors and communities with strong social capital also hold the danger of exercising tight control over their members, resulting in increased levels of conformity and inclusion/exclusion mechanisms and potential restriction of other human rights.[26] In this regard, religiously generated social capital can also reproduce, rather than tackle inequalities, as those with access to decision-making processes and resources build on and strengthen their position to the exclusion of those who do not. One interesting question is therefore: who benefits from the social capital that is generated by FBOs and religious actors more broadly? While there is considerable evidence which indicates that religion is a major generator of social capital, there still remain a variety of questions as to what extent religious social capital has social benefits outside the congregation and the surrounding setting itself, and its relationship to the state and wider society in different contexts.[27]

However, even though the discussion arises as a policy issue on the role of FBOs in development, the discussion should not be limited to that area. Religion as a societal phenomenon is still relevant to focus on beyond the function of the FBOs.[28] Statistics from the PEW Forum on religion and public life reveal how important religion is to a majority of the people in developing countries. For example, belief in only one God and Muhammad as His Prophet is a unifying foundation for Muslim identity around the globe.[29] In sub-Saharan Africa, overwhelming percentages say religion is very important to them. In Senegal, Ghana, Cameroon, Guinea Bissau, Kenya and Tanzania, 95% or more share this assessment. Similar attitudes are widespread among Muslims in Southeast Asia, where nine-in-ten or more in Indonesia (93%) and Malaysia (93%) attest to the centrality of religion in their lives. In the South Asian countries of Pakistan and Afghanistan, overwhelming percentages (94% and 92%, respectively) say religion is very important to them.[30] In sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia and South Asia, at least eight-in-ten Muslims in every country surveyed say that religion is very important in their lives.[31]

This is also evident from my own empirical study in Tanzania where religion is central to development in all areas of society, not only concerning religious beliefs and values, but also in social service delivery. Through Public Private Partnership between religious organisations and local governments, religious organisations are responsible for delivering about 40% of all health care services.[32] Similar numbers are valid for the

educational sector. In political life, religious actors are closely linked to the Tanzanian Government in complex ways; for example, both umbrella organisations for Islam and Christianity have jointly developed *"Preacher's Guides"*[33] with the Tanzanian Government on how to instruct religious leaders to incorporate public messages and information into religious preaching. In the private sector, leading companies such as *Azam Ferries* are encouraging travellers to participate in Muslim prayers and to follow the five pillars of Islam while enjoying the ferry ride. Hence one of the main arguments in this article is that religion is more or less present everywhere, and that religion influences norms and politics at all levels, and is a key dimension of poor people's lives. A fundamental principal in the Right-based approach is the question of legitimacy. If we are serious about hearing the voices of the poor, some of the voices will likely contain religious messages. It is therefore time for all actors within the Swedish Development Cooperation to ask if the civil society partners in the Global South truly reflect the voices of the marginalised people. If not, how can new ways be found to initiate a better dialogue with religious actors on the ground?[34]

As I have argued, FBOs are widely present almost throughout the world, and they are often well-established community organisations, particularly in places with the weakest-level government structure or with the weakest infrastructure. However there has been too much focus on the added value of working with FBOs in terms of gained infrastructure, social service delivery, and global networks while tending to ignore their function as critical collective voices from the ground. As a critical voice or value guardian, religious actors can act as defenders of, and advocates for, various human values. If the value guardian role comes into conflict with the existing political regime and is actively expressed, it can turn into a direct political role: in theological language, this is often called a prophetic-critical role. Within Sociology of religion studies, this has been labelled a prophetic or political diaconia, as it means to demand political action and is an unexplored field within the Swedish Development Cooperation.

In summary, it is not possible to make any broad generalisations on the role and function of religion since it differs from one societal context to another. If Swedish Development Cooperation wants to make a difference, it has to better understand the contexts in which faith and religion are significant for people. By understanding the role of religion, political processes and societal developments can be better understood. It is crucial for Sida and other development actors to develop tools for enhanced analysis on the role of religion in development cooperation. One way to address this is to add religion as a main factor in Sida's guide to power analysis and create guidelines for deeper analysis on religion among Sida's core partner organisations. Sida has already made a first step in the right direction by including the need for a contextual analysis of religion in the Sida Civil Society strategy for 2016 – 2019.[35]

Policy recommendations

A more systematic approach and understanding of how and why people engage with religion is a prerequisite if development actors in the Swedish Development Cooperation want to achieve improved societal change and impact in development cooperation. Religion as a driving force can take many different forms of expression, from counter-hegemonic movements for radical social change, to fundamentalist projects striving to establish or strengthen conservative social orders. In order to strengthen the Swedish Development Cooperation, I would suggest the following:

- To further mainstream religion as a factor in Sida's guide to power analysis.
- Integrate methodologies for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of policies with a greater focus on religion in the Swedish Development Cooperation.
- Contextual analysis on the role of religion should not remain limited to FBOs but should be considered a priority mainstream issue for all actors within Swedish Development Cooperation, including in country strategies at Development Units/Sida offices at the Embassies in the fields.
- Earmark research funding for the study on the role of religion and religious actors in development policy and practice in the framework of Swedish Development Cooperation
- Bridge the gap between policy and practice and the North/South divide by analysing the role of religion jointly with researchers from developing countries through mutual research collaboration with African and Asian universities.

The United Nations, faith-based organisations and development post-2015

Azza Karam

Summary

The chapter examines the relationship between the United Nations and faith-based organisations (FBOs) regarding development issues. FBOs are key actors in the development sector, as for instance shown in a study by the World Health Organisation, indicating that FBOs provide an average of 30 to 40 percent of the basic health care in the world. At the same time, the United Nations and its different agencies have varied experience of partnership and cooperation with FBOs. There is not yet a unit in the UN system which oversees cooperation with faith-based actors. During the preparations of the Post-2015 development agenda, which involved broad consultations, including civil society participation, the level of involvement by faith actors varied. This was due to different factors like the size of the FBOs, responsiveness and interest by the FBOs themselves and the outreach done by the different UN agencies. Both UN agencies and FBOs identified the need to have consultations regarding the nexus between religion and development. This required "safe spaces". As a result, the so called "DUF" (Donors, UN and Faith-Based Organisations) consultations on the theme "Religion and Development Post-2015", took place. The chapter ends by highlighting points of caution and lessons learned as FBOs and secular institutions continue working together in the development field. In the chapter it is argued that outreach to faith-based actors should be part of a broader attempt to integrate issues of culture in development processes: "To situate the religious domain as a separate domain of development not interlinked with culture, is to risk committing another error of omission which we will have to seek to rectify – perhaps too late."[1]

Introduction

As an international and intergovernmental body which has succeeded in extending its influence and infrastructure to encompass a huge range of mechanisms which serve almost 200 countries' governments; which convenes, develops, deploys, plans and coordinates critical international conventions and interventions responding to a multitude of human needs, the United Nations (UN) is unparalleled. But the realities around the UN have changed: from a world in which nation-states made decisions to govern every aspect within their own boundaries and organised their own armies, to a world where non-state actors, various peoples, and a plethora of other multi-state bodies, proliferate. In fact, nation-state boundaries are being redrawn in several parts of the Middle Eastern region – a process which is crafted, influenced and hastened by non-state actors. At the same time, geopolitical alliances, governance regimes, and even the very

direction of international development aid are all shifting, challenged by mass migration and displacement of peoples, unknown since the end of the Second World War. The very air we breathe and the environment around us, including plants and animals, are facing drastic changes in basic survival patterns. Humanitarian disasters are increasing, and many more climate change related disasters are anticipated.

One of the many changes becoming increasingly difficult to ignore, especially for longstanding secular organisations, is the extent to which religion is surfacing as a critical broker of human, ecological and governmental existence. Religious institutions, religious leaders (male and female), faith-affiliated and faith-inspired service delivery mechanisms, government-sponsored faith-based service partners, even government affiliated faith-based advocates, and international Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) with local offices are all part of the faith-based infrastructures. Most of these are tightly interlinked within the so-called 'communities', and yet it is often astounding how some of the secular developmental entities will seek to overlook this genre of community.

There are some incontrovertible facts about FBOs, be they churches, mosques, temples, or developmental Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The following features are only some of these:

1. FBOs are the oldest social service providers known to humankind. In fact, they provide social services including health (clinics and hospitals), education (schools and religious classes) and nutrition and sanitation. Today, green worship spaces and even pilgrimages are being championed by FBOs in different parts of the world. A study – albeit contested – published by the World Health Organisation in the early part of the Millennium, alerted development practitioners with one of many subsequent reality checks for many of those working in the health and development fields in particular. According to these studies, FBOs provide an average of 30 to 40 percent of basic health care in the world.[2] This figure is expected to be much higher in contexts where conflicts and/or humanitarian emergencies are active (e.g. Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria), where organisations such as IMA World Health inform us that almost 75 per cent of the basic health care can end up being provided by FBOs.[3]

2. FBOs are the first recourse spaces/places in times of emergency; whether natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, or man-made disasters such as armed conflicts and/or uprisings. In contrast to other NGOs, especially international ones, the local religious institutions do not have a time-bound exit plan.

3. We also know that religious institutions are capable of significant social mobilization, in addition to a distinct moral standing. We refer not only to the convening capacities inherent in raising and utilizing legions of

volunteers (which no other institution can boast worldwide), but they are also owners of the longest standing and most enduring mechanisms of raising financial resources. In times where traditional 'secular' development is confronting its strongest set of resource challenges, these capabilities cannot be underestimated.

4. Unlike many other NGOs, religious institutions are often to be found in the remotest corners of a country, either in far-out rural communities, in depressed urban slums, or both. This does not mean they are not also very much present in major cities and with access to international hubs as well; many of them have that too. The point is that unlike many secular non-governmental entities, FBOs have *presence* in multiple sites and spaces.

5. In spite of the largely western European claims of 'separation of church and state', religion and religious actors are interlinked with political developments elsewhere in the wide world. For example, the Vatican is not only politically (and financially) connected, it is in fact, uniquely, a city state. Hinduism, Islam and politics have long flirted with one another in one of the worlds' most populous countries (India) for at least a century. The former Bush Administration in the United States had certain links to Evangelical Christianity, coining the phrase 'the religious right'. In Arab countries, religion was not only part of national political dynamics, in some contexts, it defined the very boundaries of political discourse itself, even at the height of leftist nationalist regimes (e.g. in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Morocco).

Given the realities of service provision, resource capacity and political presence, not to mention potential of faith leaders and organisations to mitigate or aggravate a variety of conflicted intra and inter-communities, being knowledgeable of the work of FBOs is necessary if we are to benefit from the social capital available for sustainable human development, human rights, and peace and security. An informed and systematic outreach to key partners in the world of religion is essential.

The UN and FBOs in development partnerships: multiple roads, not all well-paved

This brings us to the question of how it is that FBOs engage with the United Nations system around development issues. There is no coordinated global faith-based engagement around the diverse development priorities, nor is there a blueprint for how outreach to FBOs takes place. While humanitarian relief, climate change, poverty and some health angles (e.g. malaria, TB, HIV, maternal health) bring many of them on board with legitimately impressive track records of care and organisation, some areas remain highly contentious and see little coordination, activism or visibility; na-

mely, issues pertaining to gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health. These are the single-most contentious areas of rights in the entire development agenda. Faith-Based organisations themselves are divided on the positions towards specific sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues. The tensions between faith-based/faith-inspired women activists and more secular-leaning women activists on these issues remain unresolved and indeed can be heightened, particularly at the global level where intergovernmental negotiations and outcomes take place. Many of the differences in positions between faith-based/faith-inspired organisations and groups, including around contentious issues, is not dependent on the faith itself, e.g. it is not Muslim-Christian or Christian-Buddhist. Nor are these differences uniformly along national lines (west-east, north-south). Instead, they are within each faith and within countries, which is also important to realise for national advocacy purposes. In other words, within one country, the position that a government will adopt in inter-governmental negotiations is dependent on the strength of the advocacy by and for rights actors within that country.

Track record

At the same time, the United Nations itself has varied records of partnership and engagement with FBOs and religious leaders. Indeed, some, like United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), have a legacy which goes back to the 1970s around research aimed at ensuring that the language of UN advocacy – in this case around health – is strengthened by the teachings of religion. Others, like the World Bank, International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) cultivated these partnerships largely around advocacy, care and service delivery respectively, more towards the late 1990s and into the Millennium. Yet others began relatively recently (i.e. well into the mid-2000s), to investigate the potential and/or publicly note the importance of actual outreach to and partnership with faith-based entities – e.g. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Department of Political Affairs. An important nuance here is that the experience of outreach to and with faith-based actors can differ within the one office/entity/body/agency. Consequently, the overall approaches towards such partnerships vary widely. Most UN development agencies and humanitarian relief actors are relatively more cognizant of the potential and value of such partnerships.

No matter what the level of experience, transparency of the track record or even acceptability of the discourse of partnership, there is little dispute that the UNFPA has raised the visibility of this "conversation" within the UN system. UNFPA has been a driving force behind convening the UN system to call for a collective platform within the broader organisation to reflect critically, and in a studied manner, on the purpose, objectives, methods, lessons learned and *pros and cons* of such engagements. These

efforts are visible in a myriad of ways, and from the outset were enabled thanks to support of one donor government: Switzerland; and are now continuing with support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). UNFPA was the first UN entity to undertake a 'mapping' of its own engagement with FBOs, focusing on the years from 2000 to 2007. This inspired other UN sister agencies to undertake similar (and far more detailed and well-constructed) accounting of their respective outreach with FBOs and wider religious communities. UNFPA launched the UN's first Global Interfaith Network and database for population and development issues, in 2008.

Also in 2008, UNFPA's then Principal, Dr. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid,[4] invited the United Nations Development Group peers to formalise the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging with FBOs for Sustainable Development (IATF-FBO), which regularly convenes several UN agencies. It also hosts several policy consultations with FBOs, academia and think tanks, around issues common to the development-religion-politics nexus. Many of these consultations are documented in print by UNFPA. Thanks to the IATF-FBO, in 2010, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) expanded its yearly Report of the Secretary General on Interreligious and Intercultural activities to include representation of the work carried out by this wider network of UN agencies. In addition, UNFPA, together with UNAIDS, and UNHCR, are convened under the auspices of the UN System Staff College (UNSSC) for a yearly Strategic Learning Exchange in which both UN staff as well as partner FBOs meet to share and critically assess concrete case studies of partnership and lessons learned. This is undertaken with the express objective of enhancing the delivery towards common goals and seeking to identify and overcome challenges.

Post-2015 development agenda engagements

In the uniquely designed mass outreach from the UN to civil society in the run-up to the post Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) global efforts,[5] the outreach to faith actors can only be described as "largely varied", given the huge diversity of FBOs themselves, which are by no means a homogenous block. On the global level, the 'engagement' of/with FBOs and the United Nations, tends to be informed by the following dynamics:

(a) The size of the organisation
The bigger the FBO in question, the more they have been active in UN-related outreach with civil society. Of particular note are organisations which have long partnered with diverse UN agencies on specific issues, such as World Vision on child rights and maternal health, and Islamic Relief on humanitarian relief and emergency support in countries.

(b) Heavily dominated by Christian and Western-based NGOs
Christian NGOs have a relatively longer history of centralised organisation

and presence at the international level (and a longer track record of providing social services in countries other than their own, in many cases preceding or coterminous with colonial presence). Thus, they are the most visible at the international 'policy tables', conferences and meetings, including at the United Nations. The fact that most of the biggest Christian NGOs have headquarters in western capitals can only have helped their process of outreach, both to their donor government members of the UN, as well as to the civil society access to, and activism around, the UN's global outreach. Even the World Bank, which reopened its office on faith engagement in 2014 (after a relative lull in its original pioneer outreach in the 1990s), when co-hosting an event in May 2014, convened the western, largely Christian entities (with nominal representation from these entities' counterparts in sub-Saharan Africa).

(c) Dependent on the responsiveness of the FBOs themselves

This feature also reflects the extent to which some FBOs consider(ed) the MDGs to be part of their own agenda setting and responsibilities. Some have been more willing to engage, and have articulated the MDGs or reference thereto, in their own strategic and policy frameworks. It is noteworthy, and possibly not a coincidence, that those FBOs are also the ones likely, once again, to be headquartered in the western hemisphere, and also relatively more comfortable 'taking on' human rights language and issues. Many of these FBOs build and work through deep and longstanding partnerships with local NGOs, and in many cases (as in the case of Tearfund and Bread for the World), the entire development model is to build capacity and work through local churches or NGOs. Nevertheless, while serving large segments of the local populations at the most micro community levels, many other FBOs – and religious leaders – have no interest in, nor resources for, presence in western headquarters. They (will) rarely feel the need to accommodate MDGs or related discourse in their own agendas or outreach; yet they are critical development agents. In some ways, as is the case with many other NGOs, FBO engagement with the global development agenda to date, is arguably almost class-based. The 'elite' FBOs are the ones at the table.

(d) Dependent on the outreach done by the different UN agencies/offices themselves

Some UN agencies have sought FBO input, deliberately organised outreach to their FBO partners, included them in programme roll-outs, and developed some sort of guidelines for such engagement. Notable in this regard – from a New York based perspective – are more operational agencies such as UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNEP and UNFPA. Other UN offices have, at different moments, selectively reached out to some religious leaders and engaged them in certain advocacy efforts and/or in certain mediation initiatives, when deemed advisable. UNHCR and the Alliance of Civilizations are worthy of note here. Most recently, in 2015, even the most

reticent of UN offices on this matter, UNDP, has hosted its second global meeting of FBOs around poverty eradication and environmental concerns.[6]

(e) Lacking in a centralised institutional focus
There is no unit in the UN system which reviews all outreach to/with faith-based entities. While there have been plenty of efforts to advocate for such a mechanism over the years (largely by faith-based organisations themselves), it has proved challenging for a number of reasons, some of which are the following:

- The difficulty of outreach to all the world of religion/religious representation: religious communities are large, complex, very differently structured and even more diversely led and represented. To attempt to engage with all of this world in a fair, equitable, representative and efficient manner, is not a simple matter.
- The world of the United Nations itself is complex and offices for partnership tend to be focused on specific modes and themes of outreach – as per the mandates granted by member states – and even those are organized in diverse ways with different objectives. Existing offices which aim to liaise with broad civil society units are multiple, and tend to be tailored per the mandate of the entity they are housed within (e.g. the Partnerships Unit; UN Department of Public Information; the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) related unit in UNDESA; UN development agencies in their plurality; the UN Alliance of Civilizations, the Post-2015 groups, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging with FBOs for Development, etc.). To date, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging with FBOs for Development is the only UN system-wide entity which convenes multiple UN offices, bodies and development agencies, specifically around engagement with faith actors.

(f) Partly as a result of the above, UN-FBO outreach is also challenged by the multiplicity of outreach and the crisis nature of some of them
Ebola is a most noteworthy instance of this. It was realised that even though advocacy for engagement with FBOs (and a long track record thereof around health issues in particular) has been in place for some years, when the Ebola crisis hit in three West African countries, no-one in the UN or in the FBO community involved with these policy advocacy efforts appeared to be able to immediately provide a vetted and comprehensive list of credited faith-based health care providers in those three countries. Similarly, the rise of ISIS/ISIL/IS presented both the UN and FBO partners with practical as well as moral dilemmas, not least of which included questions such as who were these, after all, 'faith actors'; should they be engaged; what should the manner of engagement be, etc. The calls for a 'safe space' bringing together Donors, the UN and FBOs to consider strategic value-added of faith-based engagement around human development

With many of these considerations in the minds of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force members,[8] a request was made by the UN Development Group in 2012 and 2014,[9] to convene a series of consultations which would help identify the particularities of religious development organisations vis-à-vis the UN's Post-2015 processes. The various consultations called for more deliberations around the nexus of religion and development, which would seek to engage multiple stakeholders, systematically and simultaneously convened.

This call was repeated during two meetings convened by and at Wilton Park in the United Kingdom in 2011 and 2014, which brought policy makers, academics and NGOs together to focus on the dynamics of religion, foreign policy and social development. Together with intergovernmental organisational representatives present at these meetings, donor governments were quick to point out the potential value of a "dialogue with the UN" on issues of religion and sustainable human development, particularly as Post-2015 deliberations appeared to require more attention by both foreign policy and traditional development desks.

This call was further reinforced when, during the UN Staff College-sponsored trainings,[10] the same demands for a 'safe space' to engage in and around the Post-2015 agenda were reiterated: this time by the partner FBOs themselves. The reasons for the articulation of a 'safe space' as opposed to an ordinary consultation, rested on the realisation that no conversation about any aspect of religion could avoid political sensitivities, especially when based on contemporary real-life situations in diverse contexts. As the fuller report illustrates, religion and religiously tinged issues intersect with every facet of political, economic, legal and social dimensions. Thus there was – and continues to be – a shared need for 'safe spaces' wherein discussions can take place among key development policy makers at the global level; to unpack, identify, and reconstruct an experience-based understanding of the nexus between religion and development.

Hence the evolution of the DUF consultations: bilateral Donors, UN entities (including counterparts in the World Bank), and Faith-Based organisations. *"Religion and Development Post-2015"* became the theme of these DUF dynamics. The first DUF took place in New York, on May 12-13th 2014, hosted by the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development. It was chaired/convened by UNFPA, and was co-sponsored by George Mason University as well as the City University of London, and Digni.[11] DUF I was attended by representatives of major donor organisations (including from Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, the United States, and the United Kingdom); several FBOs (including World Vision, Danish Mission Society, Digni, and Islamic Relief International); as well as a select number of international researchers on Gulf development. The same format took place in DUF II, which focused on governance, conflict and peaceful societies, and gender equality.

The DUF consultations have enabled diverse participants to build on their connections and discussions, including the realisation of the following:

- Discussion of respective concerns, experiences, and current milestones in the dynamics of religion and development;
- Consideration of the impact and/or requirements of such partnerships given the Post-2015 process and the newly termed Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (the SDGs);
- Consideration of the opportunities to both create and consolidate joint efforts towards calling for specific development priorities/goals (bearing in mind the systematic emphasis on, and intersections with, human rights and gender equality issues). Suggested thematic areas which continue to require more dedicated focus and collation, and management of knowledge both within the UN and with faith and secular civil society partners, focus around women's empowerment, governance, and conflict, peace and security concerns.
- The creation of an informal, loose, and growing global network of development peers as 'advisors' on religion and development dynamics in different institutional contexts, with the possibility of sub-networks focusing on specific thematic interventions/areas to be formed spontaneously and led by interested parties.[12]

Points of caution and lessons learned going forward[13]

There is certainly much to celebrate in the hard work it took both FBOs and secular institutions over the last half a century, to arrive at a relative "normalisation" of multi-lateral outreach to faith actors in the development field. This is exemplified in many ways by the more active role played by the World Bank since 2014; however it would be wise to pay heed to certain concerns. Rather than detail all of them, I name some of the most salient in the following:

(i) Overemphasising religious leaders and religious leadership

There is no doubt that religious leadership is critical. But they should not be made to exemplify all religious communities, actors and organisations. The world of faith is vast, and even the processes of identifying and 'naming' leadership differs from one faith community to another. Not only that, but in fact, religious leaders are largely men; speaking from a relative global and multi-faith level, women are rarely assigned these traditional leadership roles.

Thus, to limit the outreach to religious leaders is, at once, to:

- unfairly and unrealistically burden the very same religious leaders with the task of speaking for billions on all things;
- over-represent and eschew the religious representation to Christian elements (given the relative ease of identifying those "leaders");
- risk a gender imbalanced representation of faith communities and human lives as a whole;
- effectively exclude and silence gender equality from the discourse of

"common concerns": the fact is, when they come together across diverse religious groups and countries, religious leaders rarely, if ever, agree to unabridged versions of 'gender equality';

• Render the engagement of and with religion, a siloed one: i.e., the outreach to religious leaders becomes a track in and of itself, instead of an attempt to tackle social exclusion by 'building the broad church of all civil society actors'; this becomes the 'club' of religious leaders.

(ii) 'Over-moralising' the development agenda and partnerships

By seeking to give the world of faith a role which is primarily 'moral' in nature and even labelling it as such, we are effectively reinforcing the role of religious actors as a 'moral compass' to international development efforts. While this may indeed be consonant with the role that religious leaders apportion themselves, this does not necessarily affirm the international human rights agenda. In fact, by prioritising "the moral narrative" of religion, we risk compromising on the universality of human rights. Not all those who would occupy the moral space agree with the value or relevance of human rights. While we may appreciate and hold diverse and contentious views on universal human rights, given the serious threat posed by religious extremism and sectarianism which is increasing the contentious spaces in civil and political discourse, now is not a wise time to ignore or walk away from the value of universal values, including justice, security, and equity for each and every individual and community.

(iii) Increasing the rhetoric of religion does not automatically lead to social inclusion

Elevating the value of morality and those who speak in its name, is not the same as ensuring inclusive civic discourse, engagement and equitable access. To name religious leaders, for instance, as the upholders of all that is "moral", which could thus hold political and civic leaders accountable, may well be possible; but it is nevertheless to elevate religion onto a pedestal. To elevate the role of religious actors is not to level the playing field of development cooperation. The lack of levelling the playing field between religious social service providers and "behaviour changers" on the one hand, and international lawmakers and secular service providers on the other, is where the real gaps in international development have been for the last 70 years.

To seek to increase the recognition of the value of religion in public life is critical and necessary in an international development culture characterised by a hegemonic secular western ethos. This ethos has increasingly come under attack. Its upholders, (invariably women's rights and human rights actors) are at best struggling to find common ground between faith and rights in many non-western countries. Thus, there is little question that there are potential advantages to bridging these discourses. But again, as the experience of the Middle Eastern and some Eastern European

and South Asian regions continues to demonstrate, expanding the space for religion is not necessarily an expansion of the public space for all. In fact, there are legitimate concerns that religious rhetoric, especially that upheld and characterised by traditional religious institutions, is not about systematic and non-judgmental inclusion, but in fact, can be about specific and demarcated territories of identity.

(iv) Avoid prioritising moral agency over service provision

Moral agency is not automatically translated into providing for the less privileged regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, religion and class. Faith-based development organisations and religious institutions uphold and invigorate a centuries' old tradition of actual social service to communities. In fact, the credibility of any faith institution is significantly enhanced through its social service community outreach.

As an international secular development and humanitarian community, there is a natural affinity with service provision – after all, that is what the UN (and the World Bank and other such development institutions) work with governments to enable and enhance. Thus, it would make sense that the emphasis on building and strengthening systems of service provision should continue to inform and guide the faith-based outreach. In other words, we partner because we serve the gap in basic needs better and more efficiently. But that has to be distinguished from "we partner because you are moral agents". Both are important, but they are not the same. What needs to be avoided is the prioritisation of moral agency over actual service provision. The latter also requires putting money where our mouths are.

(v) Potentially compromising the "Chosen Ones"

It is a fact that in the shifting sands of contemporary geopolitics, multilateral mechanisms such as the UN are not as powerful – or effective – as they may have been created to be. Even attacks against United Nations' offices and officials are, unfortunately, not uncommon. While this vulnerability of the UN may not be universal, it must nevertheless be factored into an analysis of its role in a changing global landscape. In turn, who the UN reaches out to in the larger and more complex world of religion has to be evaluated with the same level of realism. The question must be asked: do we add value, or do we possibly dent the credibility of the religious leader(s) we seek?

(vi) Self-reflexive or changing 'The Other'?

Some of the attempts at outreach to faith-based communities tend to be informed by a vague notion that 'we' (read: the UN and other secular development actors) will somehow succeed in 'changing them' (read: religious institutions). At least we should try. This also happens with some religious actors: 'they (read the UN) will eventually see the light if we keep talking to/working with them'. These approaches miss an important point:

it is not necessarily about changing one another's ways or beliefs for that matter. The genius is that it ought to be about what we learn about ourselves, our own institutions, attitudes, perspectives and approaches, through working together. For we have little control over our own institutions, let alone over others. However when it comes to accountability, each institution ostensibly has its own complex processes and mechanisms: so why attempt to change the other, rather than looking within?

LESSONS: WHAT TO AVOID

Over-reliance on 'religious leaders': realise that while faith matters, this is the age of crumbling legitimacy of religious institutions.

Siloed faith outreach: this may feed into a sense of entitlement by some religious groups, and claim to exclusivity from other civil society groups.

Over-moralising the role of religion actually limits and does not accurately portray the various developmental capacities of religious/faith-based NGOs.

Priorities

The above dynamics continue to inform the needs of the global discussions and engagements around the religion and development nexus. At the same time, efforts around the UN and wider multi-lateral system to engage with religious actors continue to both intensify and multiply. This underlines the need to ensure systematization of principled approaches of partnership, knowledge-building and management around these endeavors, as well as pragmatic risk reduction strategies which all sides need to consider.

Last but by no means least, outreach to faith-based entities needs to be part and parcel of a broader, better coordinated and coherent attempt to integrate issues of culture in development processes. To situate the religious domain as a separate domain of development not interlinked with culture, is to risk committing another error of omission which we will have to seek to rectify – perhaps too late. A simple reality to underline why religion and religious actors have much to do with culture and sustainability of human development lies in the cold-blooded efforts of radical groups like the so-called Islamic State to industrialise the sale of some of the world's oldest cultural heritage to finance its existence, while destroying centuries of the global heritage of humanity, and beheading those they deem not of their own faith. Can we, as developmental actors with any level of integrity and seriousness, witness this and say that religion and culture are not connected?

Lessons: What to Seek/Ensure
Principled approaches to partnerships in line with existing guidelines and requirements of other civil society organisations.

Building knowledge and documentation around engagements is a constant process which is deeply contextualized – no one size fits all.

Outreach to FBOs is part of broader cultural sensitivity in all development processes and outcomes.

Faith-based organisations and their distinct assets

Kjell Nordstokke

Summary

The term FBO (Faith-Based Organisation) has gained worldwide attention and importance over recent decades. It concerns the distinct role and capacity of organisations that in one way or another are rooted in religious faith, and that are organised with the purpose of delivering services related to health, social welfare or development aid. The reference to FBOs has often been linked to the assumption that they represent some added values when compared with similar secular organisations: for instance that they are more holistic in their approach, more grass-root oriented, less bureaucratic, and therefore more effective in their work. For that reason many FBOs, such as church-related development agencies, have received substantial funding from public donors. This article presents the historical background of this development, pointing at differences between Europe and the USA, especially when it comes to understanding what role faith is expected to have. This leads to the construction of different typologies, due to the fact that the term FBO is in itself not clear, as research has documented. More precise analytical tools are therefore needed when discussing the strengths and the opportunities of faith-based organisations. A special reference in this regard is made to religious assets, as recent research has formulated this concept, based on the assumption that this expression is particularly helpful in mapping and analysing the distinctiveness of FBOs in their concrete performance. This may be a useful tool for Christian FBOs, such as those engaged in international diakonia, to gain a better understanding of their assets.[1]

Introduction

In the English-speaking world, the term Faith-Based Organisation (FBO) has become increasingly common in public discourses during the last few decades. This is due to a growing recognition of religious actors' role in society, both nationally and internationally, and especially in relation to international aid.

In this article I will point out some of the reasons why FBOs have received this position in international development work. I will also present some of the critical remarks that some researchers have made regarding the use of this term, and also some of the attempts at setting up a typology that would facilitate a better understanding of the diversity among FBOs. From there, we will briefly look at FBOs' role as providers of health care and present the term RHAs (Religious Health Assets) which, in recent years, has been used to document and analyse the distinctive character of faith-based health services, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where churches and

missions are still responsible for maintaining up to 50% of such services.

Although our main focus is international aid, and thereby the role of FBOs from the Nordic countries such as mission organisations and specialised agencies within the international community, for instance Norwegian Church Aid, these considerations may also be of relevance for our national arenas. In Norway, for example, there are around 150 diaconal institutions involved in health and social work.[2]

Should they be described as FBOs? Is it meaningful to talk about distinct religious or even diaconal assets in their work, for instance when referring to the City Mission? Would diaconal organisations in Scandinavia profit from applying insights from the discussion regarding FBOs and RHAs that is engaging scholars and practitioners, for instance, in Southern Africa?

The return of religion in the public arena

In February 1998, leaders of several world religions met at Lambeth Palace in London upon the invitation of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, and James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank. This meeting can be viewed as a sign of the reorientation which was about to take place in the relationship between international development actors and religious leaders. It implied a new understanding of religion and religious actors' role in development, and with it a growing interest in faith-based organisations and their specific contribution.[3]

After the meeting in London, the dialogue was followed up in several arenas. In 2001, the World Bank invited religious leaders to contribute to the thinking behind their annual publication World Development Report. Katherine Marshall was appointed director of a new unit in the bank, Directorate on Faith (later renamed the Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics – DDVE). In a number of countries similar initiatives were taken up: authorities in the Netherlands established the Knowledge Forum on Religion and Development Policy where national leaders of FBOs were invited to participate and to explain the distinctive character of their action; in Switzerland, the authorities initiated a process of elaborating a working paper on the *Role and Significance of Religion and Spirituality in Development Co-operation*. When the final report came in 2005, Walter Fust, Director-General of Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC), wrote in the preface:

> Religion and spirituality are sources of world views and views of life; they constitute creative political and social forces; they are forces for cohesion and for polarization; they create stimuli for social and development policies; they serve as instruments of political reference and legitimacy. Development co-operation cannot afford to ignore religion and spirituality.[4]

There were various reasons for this new interest in the role of religion in development, and for FBOs as development agents. Many had come to the conclusion that decades of aid had not delivered the expected results and

they held the opinion that this was because government-run development work had proved to be ineffective and greatly prone to corruption. Western aid was also criticised for all too often focusing on the transfer of knowledge, technology and capital, without sufficiently taking into consideration local cultural and religious conditions and the worldviews of ordinary people. Critics argued that development aid could largely be characterized by 'secular reductionism' and 'materialistic determinism',[5] and without understanding of the multidimensional character of social change processes. For most people in the global South, existence is understood holistically. Values are perceived not only as tangible, but equally as spiritual. More importantly, the material and the spiritual are intertwined. Welfare, therefore, should be understood as well-being in its broadest sense.

This analysis is in line with a general critique of modernity and its secularization project. In many ways it reflects the phenomenon that often is portrayed as the 'return of religion'. In Europe, where the religious had mainly been limited to the private sphere, societies experienced what has been described as a 'deprivatisation' of religion;[6] a move towards post-secular society with new space for religious actors in civil society. In other words, both new ideological trends and new social practices were introduced. This may be illustrated by the mood that was created when entering a new millennium, an event that many experienced as a transition into a new era. When the United Nations announced the global millennium goals (MDGs), some observers commented that this was done 'with quasi-religious or spiritual significance.'[7] The church-initiated Jubilee 2000 campaign for debt relief, formally established in 1996 and greatly inspired by the biblical notion of the Jubilee when those enslaved because of debts are freed, set the whole world in motion with activities in more than 60 countries and the collection of 24 million signatures. It also motivated politicians and aid bureaucrats to renew their moral responsibility and engagement. The aforementioned dialogue in London in 1998 was significantly motivated by this commitment.

Yet other events also contributed to this development. In January 1980, US President Ronald Reagan gave the green light for Christian aid organisations to have access to public aid funds, both in the domestic and the international arena, and it was publically stated to be politically desirable that FBOs would increase their involvement in the public sphere.[8] This can be seen as a revitalization of public religion in the United States, with conservative Christian groups taking a leadership role in their interaction with governmental authorities. In October 2004, the green light was given for FBOs to access funding from USAID, which had already established a Centre for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. The political instructions of the Bush administration made it clear that there would be no restrictions regarding projects that promoted religious and moral views. On the contrary, FBOs managed to influence the USAID policy with the result that restrictive criteria in efforts to combat HIV and

AIDS were introduced; for instance, that the use of condoms should not be promoted.

The situation is somewhat different in Europe. Although FBOs enjoy growing confidence over their relationships with governmental development authorities, the 'mainstream Christian Churches' are the governments' preferred partners due to their clear requirements regarding professional competence that include a commitment not to use public funds in order to promote their own religious interests.[9]

The presumed advantages of FBOs

Faith-Based Organisation is today a widely recognised term. Most of these organisations are rooted and operate locally, in a great diversity of organisational forms and action areas, ranging from traditional health institutions to specialised ministries within international development work including organisations such as World Vision, Christian Aid and Norwegian Church Aid. Quite often they will seek partnerships with local FBOs. Although our main references here are Christian organisations, it should be kept in mind that the term FBO also includes groups of other faiths, such as Islamic Relief in the UK for instance.

International aid FBOs are presumed to represent a distinct identity that is expressed when implementing their work. Governmental funding agencies will often ask NGOs to articulate this distinctiveness and the kind of professional competence it implies. They may, for instance, be asked to state what 'added values' their work provides. In this respect, some FBOs would prefer the term 'core values', because these reflect what is considered to be at the heart of the organisation and not what may be considered as supplementary in regard to what they stand for or something added to what they do. The term 'value' may itself sound problematic to some, especially if it is fixed in an economic way of thinking. It has, however, become more common to disconnect the concept from this backdrop and relate it to ethical reflection and moral action.

FBOs are believed to have a particular expertise when it comes to addressing religious traditions and religion's role in promoting development. It is further presumed that their social character will keep them close to people at the grassroots level, making them able to communicate in a way that connects with people's basic worldview and values when they are involved in projects and programmes. FBOs are known to represent broad social networks, as is the case of Christian churches that are often members of global ecumenical organisations. Their advantage is, therefore, both the ability to motivate and mobilise people for action at the grassroots level, and to be engaged in advocacy at national and international levels. They often enjoy confidence and moral authority among the poorest, but also with political leaders. Their grassroots approach allows them to offer marginalised people a stable social framework for promoting their rights when struggling for a better life. In many places the churches represent the only functioning local social structure that may support and give

sustainability to development initiatives. Isolated projects will often fail without such social and moral support.[10] In the complex tension between religion and development, FBOs may play an important role as bridge builders.[11]

Conflict intervention and peace building represent another area where FBOs may take a leading role in promoting processes of dialogue and reconciliation. Very often social and political conflicts have a religious undertone, and it has been shown that religious leaders have a key role in such situations. FBOs may possess a specific competence in calling such leaders to responsible action. This has also been of great importance when dealing with moral issues related to the AIDS pandemic and in efforts to eradicate harmful practices such as female genital mutilation. In such involvement, one of the strengths of the FBOs is that they are not perceived as external actors, but are rather seen as related ministries in the sense that they operate within the same horizon of interpretation as the religious leaders. Their social rootedness in the context will likely contribute to sustainability and continuity even after a specific project has been implemented. In other words, the effect can be expected be more lasting.

These alleged advantages have caused FBOs to have easier access to public development funds now than a few decades ago. A side effect has been that FBOs' prestige has increased significantly in political circles. NGOs in general and FBOs in particular are expected to be more mobile and efficient than public development actors, and it is considered to be easier to check how they spend the money they are receiving. At a time when the media is constantly looking for failed development projects, it may appear convenient for aid bureaucrats to fund NGOs they trust rather than projects run by public authorities.

This also corresponds to the attention that those involved in development work now give to civil society. It is widely believed that a strong and multiform civil society contributes to building democracy because horizontal structures of society will be strengthened, with the consequence that people may be mobilised and empowered in the struggle for better living conditions. Civil society can thus contribute to development from below, and to social processes that foster participation and transparency in a way that is not expected to be the case when development projects are initiated from above, for example by governmental authorities. Civil society includes religious actors and local FBOs, and it is assumed that religious leaders when mobilised to act within the framework of civil society, will become more open-minded and dialogue oriented. This may also have the effect that local religious tensions are downplayed and extreme positions abandoned. Religious leaders, together with local FBOs, are therefore considered to play a key role in development work. Governmental development policies frequently refer to civil society and the importance of mobilising its actors.[12] It can therefore be argued that the popularity of FBOs is not only based on the outcome of their actual work,

but equally due to their expected role in achieving strategic goals regarding the building of a functional and sustainable civil society. For that purpose stable grassroots actors are essential.

While politicians often unequivocally affirm the role of FBOs, especially in international development work, researchers have begun to ask critical questions, both about the applicability of the term in general and whether it really can be documented that FBOs are more effective and value oriented than other agencies. Rick James, who works with the International NGO Training and Research (INTRAC) in Oxford, argues that the term FBO is

> highly problematic. For some people FBO smacks of right-wing American politics. For others it is the foreign language of the aid industry. For many, the term 'FBO' conceals much more than it reveals. It gives the impression FBOs are the same. Yet FBOs are extraordinarily heterogeneous in the ways in which faith identity plays out in their work.[13]

This evaluation confirms the assumption that there is a distinction between Europe and the United States in the understanding of FBOs, causing James to assert that many

> FBOs in Europe, particularly Christian ones, have been reticent to articulate too close a connection to their faith identity. They have been anxious to portray their professionalism in development and understandably want to avoid the inherent dangers of a faith connection being abused to manipulate staff and exclude others of different faiths, or no faith.[14]

It has also been asked whether the term FBO is usable in analysing and evaluating development work. Firstly, FBOs encompass a vast diversity of organisations that vary even in the way they express their 'faith-base'. Secondly, the understanding of 'added value' varies to such an extent that it makes it difficult, at least from the point of view of the researcher, to establish manageable methods and criteria to explain what makes the FBOs one distinct group different from other actors engaged in development work.

Carole Rakodi, who is director of the Religions and Development Research Programme at the University of Birmingham, concludes that there is 'no universally accepted definition of an "FBO" and systematic data is lacking, so precise estimates of the share of development activities contributed by FBOs are impossible.'[15] Rakodi bases her opinion on research undertaken in Tanzania, where her impression is that the distinction between FBOs and other development actors is an artificial one. This sharpens the suspicion that the concept of FBOs is shaped by Occidental thought and expresses a reaction against secularised development work. It must therefore be asked whether the term makes sense in a context like Tanzania where religious faith will mark the value system and practices of any organisation. What ultimately determines whether an organisation should be characterised as a FBO? Is it a matter of historical background and what motivated the founders and made

them formulate the goals of the organisation? Does it relate to the phrasing of statutes and planning documents that express a religious foundation and purpose? Or can the distinctiveness of a FBO be verified in its praxis?

It is clear that the discussion on religion and development is greatly influenced by the context in which it occurs. In Europe religion is normally understood theoretically, as world religions, as well established systems with dogmas, rites and leaders, are taught in schools. In other parts of the world, religion primarily manifests itself as religiosity, as shared practice, as a horizon for values, beliefs and attitudes, as a source for fear, but also for hope. This makes the religious or spiritual realm far more important in most areas of human life than would be the case in our secularised context. The religious experience may, however, express ambiguous attitudes in the sense that it can both resist and promote social transformation. It is therefore evident that development work cannot ignore religion and spirituality, and that it is within this broader cultural and social framework that the work of FBOs should also be understood.

Typologies of FBOs

We have seen that researchers working on development aid have asked critical questions regarding the term FBO. Such questions are raised as part of a more general discussion on religion and development, and we have seen that the context plays an important role in the assessment of FBOs. This is important to keep in mind when the concept of FBO is frequently used, especially referring to Christian organisations engaged as service providers of health or social work. This is most evident in the USA. In Europe, the term FBO still seems mainly to be reserved for agencies involved in international aid, but it is likely that the use will be widened to include actors within the national arena.

We have noted a correlation between political agendas and the way the term FBO is used. The problem with FBO is not only sensitivity to what may be perceived as political correctness, but rather the juxtaposition of the words 'faith' and 'organisation'. The reason being that for many, the first will be perceived as too open in the sense that it includes an endless variety of phenomena and social practices, while the second is a term that defines and points towards an intended activity. On the other hand, it may be considered useful to have such a concept that seeks to hold together an open and more limited perspective on social action. This view convinces many to conclude that FBO continues to be a helpful term, but a greater precision regarding its meaning is required. Therefore typologies of different characteristics have been developed in order to place different FBOs along a scale.

Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh have studied hundreds of faith-based institutions providing education, health and social services in Philadelphia in the United States. They have looked at a number of elements that indicate the faith-based identity of each of them: key documents such as statutes and strategic plans, ownership, board composition, criteria for

appointing leaders, general employment policies, the space for religious practices and rites, the use of religious symbols, and religious references in programmes and reports. They ended up with five types of organisations:[16]

1. Faith-permeated organisations, the connection with religious faith is evident at all levels of mission, staffing, governance and support.
2. Faith-centred organisations were founded for a religious purpose, remain strongly connected with the religious community through funding sources and affiliation, and require most staff to share the organisation's faith commitments.
3. Faith-background organisations tend to look and act secular, although they may have a historical tie to a faith tradition.
4. Faith-secular partnerships present a special case in which a secular (or faith-background) entity joins with one or more congregations or other explicitly religious organisations.
5. Secular organisations have no reference to religion in their mission or founding history.

A decisive factor in this typology seems to be the extent to which the religious is expressed, from permeating the activities and programmes at one end of the scale, to more or less being completely absent at the other. In their conclusion, the authors express the hope that this typology will provide greater clarity in understanding FBOs, and it seems that in particular they have in mind politicians, as well as public and private donors, who 'may end up overstating or understating the role of faith in program outcomes.'[17] The research clearly documents the complexity of FBOs and the many elements that must be taken into account in assessing their religious identity. On the other hand, this kind of typology is not entirely convincing as it is elaborated according to a principle of seeing the religious element as something to be measured quantitatively. Far more interesting would be to focus on the qualitative, trying to find out what difference the religious identity can make in the concrete performance of the work and what kind of energy it brings when realising aims and goals. This approach may have resulted in another typology that would provide better insight for FBOs such as providers of health care.

Gerard Clarke, who works at the Centre for Development Studies at Swansea University, has also developed a typology of FBOs involved in development work. He lists five types:[18]

1. *Faith-based representative organisations* or *apex bodies*. By this is meant religious entities or organisations in a broad sense who are engaged in relief work, such as the Church of Sweden. This type also includes organisations like the World Council of Churches.
2. *Faith-based charitable* or *development organisations*. This category refers to specialised development organisations such as Norwegian Church Aid. The largest single Christian organisation within this group

is World Vision International, based in the United States and with a clear evangelical character. Another important agent is the ecumenical ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together).

3. *Faith-based socio-political organisations.* These are religiously inspired social movements and organisations, and appear as political parties or action groups.

4. F*aith-based missionary organisations.* Mission work has traditionally included development work. It is wrong to think that this fourth type of FBO is about to disappear, even though their strength in Europe has been considerably weakened in recent decades. In the United States they play a considerable role. In 2001 alone, 350,000 US citizens travelled overseas for a shorter or longer period under the auspices of Protestant missionary activities. They brought with them gifts worth $3.75 billion (US).[19]

5. *Faith-based radical, illegal* or *terrorist organisations.* This last group includes extreme, sometimes illegal, organisations that have grown to have considerable strength in some countries in recent years. In some Muslim countries these have come to play an important role as social actors.

In addition to presenting the FBOs in this way, Clarke emphasises the need for taking into account how the religious substance is expressed and thereby its ability to create distinct characters in the performance of the work in which the organisation is involved. The 'faith' element is therefore not perceived as a kind of 'add-on' in development work, almost as an independent sideline activity. 'It is an essential part of that activity, informing it completely. This makes the FBO both distinct (to the extent that faith values imbue its very identity), and yet reflecting the broader non-governmental response to poverty and development, sharing many of the same values.'[20]

According to Clarke, this occurs along four main lines through 'which FBOs deploy faith through social or political engagement or link faith to developmental or humanitarian objectives':[21]

1. *Passive:* faith is subordinated to common principles and plays a relatively modest role when it comes to motivating and determining the action.

2. *Active:* faith plays an important role as a motivator and in the choice of partners, but without the non-believers being discriminated against.

3. *Persuasive:* Faith has a clear role in partner selection and in the formulation of goals and objectives; converting people is perceived as part of the goal.

4. *Exclusive:* faith is essential as motivation and the basic point of reference in determining goals and means.

It is not difficult to see the similarities between the first list of types,

elaborated by Sider and Unruh, and the four main lines presented by Clarke. When holding them together, it becomes easier to spot the strengths and weaknesses of FBOs in different contexts. An organisation with a passive use of its religious tradition can have difficulties in communicating with partners in contexts where faith and spirituality play an important role. If the aim is to mobilise religious leaders in Africa to stand up against female circumcision, FBOs representing Clarke's third and fourth categories may turn out to be more credible and therefore more effective in their work. Clarke also comments that public authorities so far have had stronger sympathy for the first category, but it seems that they are becoming more open to support the other three.[22] On the other hand, such support may serve to strengthen actors that represent reactionary views, for instance regarding the role of women in society.

A more qualitative assessment of FBOs is found in Rick James' lists of 'distinctive organisational features':[23]

1. Structural affiliation and governance.
2. Values and staff motivation.
3. Mission.
4. Strategy and theory of development.
5. Selection of partners and choice of beneficiaries.
6. Faith practices and teaching in programming.
7. Staffing and leadership.
8. Organisational culture and decision-making.
9. Constituency and sources of funding.
10. External relationships.

Each of these features represents an area where the distinctive identity can be expressed as active competencies and resources, and thus help the organisation to ensure its ability to meet contextual conditions to achieve goals when performing its work.

FBOs and health

Health has become increasingly important in international development and poverty alleviation. Partly this has to do with global epidemics that are given broad coverage in media, as was the case with the swine flu, but even more it relates to global initiatives to fight diseases like AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. It appears that efforts related to health in many political circles are less controversial compared to other issues, as it also seems easier to expect verifiable outcomes within this field. It is therefore not surprising that the vast majority of the global millennium goals address health or include health components. Health projects will therefore often have easier access to governmental funding.

FBOs have traditionally played an important role in promoting health and in running health institutions. This is especially true in Africa thanks to the work of Christian missions; it has already been noted that around

half of all health institutions in sub-Saharan Africa even today are run by Christian FBOs. The situation for many of these institutions is, however, extremely difficult. While in the past they could count on financial and technical support from mission partners in the global North, this support has been reduced in recent decades or even brought to an end. After independence, most African countries developed ambitious plans for building public health systems that depended on international financial support. Today much of this funding has dried up, and the quality of health services in many places, especially for the poor, is alarming. Moreover, many health workers seek employment opportunities abroad, for example in the UK or in Australia.

This situation has renewed the discussion about the relationship between advanced and expensive medical institutions on the one hand and primary health care on the other. In most countries only the elite can afford to be treated in well-equipped hospitals; the majority of the population will depend on more elementary service providers, such as a local clinic or dispensary run by the local church. In this context, FBOs often play an important role in providing both medical treatment and links to local networks supporting preventive measures and care.

This has been clearly documented in relation to the AIDS pandemic. In many places religious leaders have taken a leading role in 'breaking the silence' about HIV-infection and its real causes and consequences, and many of them have provided an example by taking the HIV test and encouraging others to do the same. They have also spoken out against prejudices and tendencies to stigmatise people who are infected by the HIV virus. The ecumenical network has invested heavily in mobilising FBOs to work with religious groups and above all with religious leaders, and there is no doubt that this work has produced significant results – with mind-sets and attitudes having been changed – and the social and moral environment has been enabled to address this challenge in a better way.[24]

When it comes to caring for those who have developed AIDS, religious networks and FBOs assume an important role. In contexts where it is unrealistic to expect that health institutions will offer enough beds to accommodate the sick, home-based care is the norm. Very often such care is organised by local churches and FBOs. In many places they also support child-headed households, whose numbers have increased dramatically lately because both parents have died of AIDS. These examples demonstrate the importance of active networks, and that FBOs are trusted when it comes to mobilising such networks.

Religious Health Assets (RHAs)
With all this in mind we now turn to a different approach to this issue with the introduction of the concept Religious Health Assets (RHAs). As we have noted, the term FBO seems to refer more to religious traditions and the self-understanding of an organisation, and less to the 'religious capital' that in various ways is expressed (directly or indirectly) in the work

being carried out. The term RHA focuses on such assets and how they can be mapped and evaluated.

The importance for such a measure can be seen in the shift from a needs-oriented to an asset-oriented approach in development work, particularly in community development, and in a parallel move from needs-based to rights-based development work. Today, a group or organisation that proposes a development project is expected not only to describe the needs and challenges in a given situation, but also to identify the assets they possess that qualify them to take an initiative on. These assets could include previous experiences, competencies, organisational infrastructure, and human and material resources. When external funders are asked to support a project, the presentation of such assets will often be decisive when it is considered to be feasible or not. Consideration over funding also takes into account that the local partners will be recognised as rights-holders able to take a leading role in the struggle for a better world for them to live in. It can therefore be argued that both approaches, the asset-oriented and the rights-based, can contribute to overcoming the traditional division of donors and recipients in development work and to establish a more honest understanding of the role of power in this relationship.

Some scepticism has been expressed regarding the term asset, for instance related to its frequent use in economics, and it is therefore frequently interpreted foremost to refer to financial resources. But there is also a clear tendency to use the word in a broader meaning, particularly for describing social and human resources. This use has also been expanded to include the religious, with the assumption that there are 'religious resources' or even a kind of 'religious capital' that it is up to the religious actors to manage in a responsible and credible manner. The term thus has a broader meaning than values; assets may be tangible and refer to visible resources such as buildings and staff, and to structures that organise activities of different kinds, such as care groups, but also to intangible elements such as ceremonies and rites that include prayer and blessing. In other words, when assessing what contributes to health and healing, a far broader variety of elements should be considered as assets than is normally the case.

Especially in Southern Africa, but also in the United States, researchers have been engaged in mapping and describing RHAs, mainly from the perspective of social sciences. Several projects have been done under the auspices of ARHAP (The African Religious Health Assets Programme – now named IRHAP, African replaced by International), which includes the University of Cape Town (UCT), the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN), the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS), and Emory University in the USA as participants. The Carter Center in Atlanta has supported this programme financially to bring together scientists, NGOs (including FBOs), health practitioners and health policy makers.[25]

The South African James R. Cochrane and American Gary Gunderson have undertaken the task of describing and analysing RHAs. In a recent book

they advocate a shift of language away from focusing on deficits to instead focus on assets when speaking about health issues: 'Before diagnosing what is not there in a person, family, local community, or society that should be – a "needs-based" approach – an asset-based approach asserts that it is important to understand what is there of crucial significance for the health of the public.'[26] Processing the vast research material made available by ARHAP, the two authors have elaborated what they call an RHA matrix built around two basic distinctions: tangible or intangible RHAs, and proximate or distal health outcomes. The matrix, developed partly from a South African perspective, plays the role of demonstrating the complexity of religion in the context of health, and the diverse and widespread ways in which religion is part of the picture. Further, it highlights phenomena not normally counted or measured in health data, and points to the internal sources of belief and action. The RHAs matrix is presented as follows:[27]

Intangible	- Prayer - Resilience - Health-seeking behaviour - Motivation - Responsibility - Commitment/Sense of duty - Relationship: Caregiver & 'Patient' - Advocacy/Prophetic - Resistance – Physical and/ or Structural/Political	- Individual (Sense of Meaning) - Belonging – Human/Divine - Access to Power/Energy - Trust/Distrust - Faith – Hope – Love - Sacred Space in a Polluting World - Time - Emplotment (Story)
Tangible	- Infrastructure - Hospitals – Beds, etc. - Clinics - Dispensaries - Training – Para-medical - Hospices - Funding/Development Agencies - Holistic Support - Hospital Chaplains - Faith Healers - Traditional Healers - Care Groups - NGO/FBO – 'projects'	- Manyano and other Fellowships - Choir - Education - Sacraments/Rituals - Rites of Passage (Accompanying) - Funerals - Network/Connections - Leadership Skills - Presence in the 'Bundu' (on the margins) - Boundaries (Normative)
	Proximate	Distal

Here, assets are mainly used heuristically and primarily as a method of investigation. It should, however, be noted that many of these assets are often ignored when health work is planned and evaluated, and also in

most research on health services. To uncover more knowledge about this matter is particularly important in sub-Saharan Africa where, as already mentioned, religious actors play a central role in health care. However, in other contexts this approach will certainly also give new insight to issues of health and healing.

In search for diaconal assets

The question to be raised as we come to the conclusion of this article is whether the term 'assets' may be useful in other areas of action where FBOs are engaged, as for instance in international development work. Some of these organisations understand themselves as diaconal, as is the case of Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), which is interpreted as an expression of its church-based mandate and also functions as an explanation for its commitment to work with faith-based, mainly church-related partners in the global South. It remains rather unclear, however, how the diaconal identity is expected to influence the work of the organisation. Much importance is given to the professional quality, and the impression may be given that professionalism is conceived of as secular competence that should not be mixed up with religious concerns and values. Yet NCA and similar organisations are challenged by the 'return of religion' in today's world and they are convinced of the importance of communicating their concerns and objectives in contexts where faith and spirituality are recognised as important elements in processes of transformation. The question therefore is whether a clearer perception of the diaconal identity of these organisations can contribute to reformulating the understanding of the distinct role and capacity they represent, while fostering a more holistic professional approach.

Within the ecumenical movement 'diakonia' is understood as the 'responsible service of the gospel by deeds and by words performed by Christians in response to the needs of people'.[28] The Lutheran World Federation Handbook on the subject, *Diakonia in Context*, does not give a precise definition, but maintains that diakonia 'is a theological concept that points to the very identity and mission of the Church' and implies 'a call to action, as a response to challenges of human suffering, injustice and care for creation.'[29] Both references affirm the profound relationship between what the churches are and what they do when involved in diaconal action. This clearly indicates that the way of being church will contain resources and assets that are at hand when performing diaconal work.

Little or practically nothing has been done so far in mapping and studying such diaconal assets. Better insight in this matter would give diaconal actors new knowledge and a better understanding of their distinct role and core values as agents of transformation, reconciliation and empowerment. It could also deepen the relationship with their partners in the sense that they could discover shared assets and develop strategies of how to activate them.

Today international diaconia is presented as faith-based and rights-

based.[30] These two elements may be perceived as contradictory, as if the first refers to the internal motivation while the second points in the direction of external factors such a human rights and political justice. From a diaconal point of view this is not the case. Both 'faith' and 'rights' are internally and externally based, and it belongs to the distinct nature of being church to be committed by faith to struggle for justice. The diaconal assets that will facilitate this vision, however, need to be identified and mobilised. In many places this is already done in the being and in the doing of local churches and diaconal agencies. Yet it continues to be an important task to develop a disciplined and systematic reflection on this practice.

Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity and development: Views from Africa

Päivi Hasu

Summary

Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity has been expanding rapidly across the world with an estimated 600 million plus devotees globally in 2011.[1] Many of the new churches are independent yet are likewise transnational, often spreading extensively through migration and media dissemination. This form of Christianity is appealing to a diversity of adherents, from the urban upper-middle classes to the rural poor. While rural-urban migration has generated new circumstances in which the old moral norms no longer apply, faith in the Holy Spirit provides emotional security in a world afflicted by insecurity. The content of this kind of gospel has significant consequences in terms of human development. I begin by examining the gospel and the development work of the Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania, a partner church of Fida International in Tanzania. This is followed by analysis of differences within Pentecostal-charismatic approaches locally, exemplified by the Efatha Ministry, with specific reference to the concepts of holism, spiritual warfare and the prosperity gospel. It is argued that the legacy of classical Pentecostalism facilitates development projects aiming at a better life collectively for the people, by way of the notion of holistic development and social responsibility. On the other hand, the third wave of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity aims at societal change through the transformation of individuals, though it has features that undermine human responsibility and agency as avenues to better life and development.[2]

What is Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity?

Historically, Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity can be divided into three stages: classical Pentecostalism, charismatic movements within the large denominations and most recently, the neo-charismatic movement also referred to as the third wave.[3] In this chapter I use the concept Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity to denote all three waves based on common features such as the centrality of the Holy Spirit and its gifts.

The revival movement which started at Azusa Street, Los Angeles, in 1906 is usually considered the beginning of classical Pentecostalism with its emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues (glossolalia), salvation and the importance of spreading the gospel. This tradition is characterized by such large denominations as the Assemblies of God, the International Pentecostal Holiness Church and the Pentecostal Church of God. Classical Pentecostalism emerged in Europe with the spiritual work of the Norwegian Methodist pastor, Thomas Barrat. Like North American Pentecostalism, the churches born as the consequence of Barrat's work were also characterized by their emphasis on salvation

hereafter but, unlike the north American Pentecostal churches, were independent and congregational. Moreover, social work for the poor, the homeless, children and the elderly was central in Barrat's activity,[4] and Nordic Pentecostalism has always been characterized by its element of social responsibility. As the result of Barrat's work, Pentecostalism also appeared in Finland around 1911, and the following year the first missionary was sent to Kenya.[5] At the time there were no Pentecostal congregations or missionary organisations in Finland, a situation that changed in 1927 when the Finnish Free Foreign Mission (FFFM) was founded.[6] Since 2001, it has operated under the name Fida International, carrying out activities in sixty countries.

Nordic Pentecostal missionaries arrived in former Tanganyika during the 1930s when the Swedish Free Mission (Svenska Fria Missionen) and the FFFM started their work by establishing churches, hospitals, orphanages, schools and clinics around the country.[7] These initial engagements provide examples of the ways in which spiritual and physical well-being were thought to be conjoined, in what is currently referred to as the holistic approach. The present Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania (FPCT), which in this chapter serves as the example of the legacy of first-wave classical Pentecostalism, emerged from these early foundations.

The second wave of Pentecostalism is considered to consist of the active charismatic movements arising in, but remaining contained by, mainstream denominations since the 1960s. In his study of the charismatic movement in Finland, Harri Heino has suggested that its influence within the Finnish Lutheran Church started to increase around the turn of the 1970s.[8] A few years later a revival movement, also called neo-Pentecostalism, emerged around Niilo Yli-Vainio.[9] The charismatic movement within the Lutheran church has been labelled the "Spiritual revival within our church" (*"Hengen uudistus kirkossamme"*) and emphasizes spirit baptism and renewal by the Holy Spirit alongside its gifts of glossolalia, prophecy and healing.[10] This renewal was later shaped to align better with the Lutheran Church when the features of Pentecostal revival faded away.[11]

The so-called third wave, also coined as a neo-charismatic movement, started to build in strength at the end of the 1980s, and today it covers a broad range of independent churches outside the large denominations across the world.[12] In Finland, for example, the new, African-initiated, diaspora churches can be counted as one instance of the third wave, while Nokia Missio, which grew around the preaching activities of Pastor Markku Koivisto, operated initially within the Lutheran church and, after some dispute, continued as independent "New Hope Congregations". However, in this chapter I concentrate on comparing the development implications of this "third wave" and the legacy of classical Pentecostalism.

In Africa, classical Pentecostalism started expanding more rapidly around the end of the colonial period in the 1950 – 60s, and the third wave of Pentecostalism a couple of decades later. In 2006 it was estimated that Pentecostals of the classical tradition and the third wave amounted to

about 107 million in Africa while the revival movements within the Roman Catholic Church and the various protestant denominations included about 40 million people. In this respect, the leading African countries were Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa, where over twenty per cent of the population were estimated to adhere to various Pentecostal-charismatic churches. In Tanzania this figure was around ten per cent but there is a good reason to believe that the figure might be higher now.[13]

The legacy of classical Pentecostalism:
holism and social responsibility

Finnish Pentecostal churches have mainly emerged from the legacy of classical Pentecostalism where holism and social work have played an important role. Unlike third-wave Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity where holism is mainly associated with the spiritual and physical well-being of individuals, in the legacy of classical Pentecostalism collective holism and social responsibility are imperative. Consequently, it is worth examining what collective responsibility, social work and development have meant in the case of Finnish Pentecostalism.

Finnish Pentecostal churches founded the FFFM in 1927 to be responsible for their missionary work. The experiences of the missionaries soon indicated that practical measures were also called for in the mission field to meet the needs of the people. Consequently, hospitals, schools and orphanages were founded even before official development cooperation started, and in 1974, a development cooperation wing (Lähetyksen Kehitysapu, LKA Finland) was started alongside the FFFM with responsibility for this social work. On the other hand, the real trigger for humanitarian aid was the famine in Ethiopia in the beginning of 1980s. The FFFM and the development wing had been parts of the same entity since the beginning, and in 2001, began operating under the single name of Fida International.

Until the radical austerity measures of the Finnish government in 2015 which resulted in reducing support to civil society organisations, Fida and the Pentecostal churches had about 260 staff members working in sixty countries, of which about seventy representatives work in development cooperation or humanitarian aid.[14] Fida's development cooperation was extended to almost forty countries and was part of the partnership program of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was among the first organisations to receive government support in 1974, is committed to international agreements such as those concerning the standards of humanitarian aid, and reports to the Foreign Ministry about its use of funds. In the field, Fida collaborates primarily with the local Pentecostal churches and other NGOs. The guiding principle of Fida is to strengthen its partners to act for the benefit of their own communities, and its aim is to reduce poverty and enhance human rights. Development cooperation is supposed to be carried out regardless of the beneficiaries' religion, ethnic background or gender. Fida International declares that its activities are based on Christian values

and a holistic view of human beings; in Fida's view, "humans are formed in interaction with the surrounding society, nature and in the best case also with God".[15] According to the long-standing Executive Director, Arto Hämäläinen, European Pentecostals have supported the idea of holism for a long time even if material circumstances have limited the execution of the social work of the church. In contrast, emphasis on spiritual work and proclamation were for a long time characteristic of North American Pentecostalism.[16]

Fida in development cooperation in Tanzania

Right from the start, the aim of Nordic missionary work was to establish local churches and perform social work: that is, to combine spiritual and development work, with the latter concentrating mainly on education and health care. In Tanzania, Fida's partner is the FPCT, which has similar kinds of values and the same holistic view of human beings, something which is partly due to its Nordic roots and historical connection to Swedish missionary work. The FPCT is one of the largest Pentecostal churches in the country, with 185 local churches in 2012 and 250,000 adherents, making it more extensive than, for instance, the Assemblies of God.

Today, the constitution of the FPCT outlines that apart from spiritual work, the objective of the church is to "provide special social welfare and community activities as well as facilities, hand-in-hand with the government". Such services "include relief services, education, health programs, orphanage care and service camps for the destitute". A further important objective is

> to maintain a necessary linkage with other Missionary organisations in Nordic and other countries, and to make provision for other possible interactions with other organisations in the social welfare agenda, including the need to solicit resources for the support of these objectives; and to receive donations, contributions, grants, offerings, loans, or such like in pursuance of the objectives.[17]

The FPCT collaborates both nationally and internationally with Pentecostal churches and NGOs including Fida International and the Swedish Pentecostal Mission in Finland (Finland's Svenska Pingstmission, FSPM). The church refrains from direct political action but works with the authorities in pursuing "human and societal welfare, peace, unity and social security for the purpose of human deliverance from an oppressive environment and from spiritual bondage."[18] Like Fida, the approach of the FPCT is drawn from a holistic view of human beings, meaning that spiritual and physical well-being are seen as interconnected and inseparable. This view is echoed in all the church's work and development projects.

The organisation and functioning of the FPCT can be tracked to the Nordic practice of maintaining the relative autonomy of the local churches. Consequently, many of the social projects are based on their own initiatives and needs. The church is composed of eight departments – of which the health

care department is the largest – a form of organisation that reaches all the way down to the local churches.[19] The church maintains several hospitals, health care centres and clinics which provide both treatment and preventive care.

The department of education has responsibility for about 230 schools nation-wide including primary and secondary as well as vocational levels. Furthermore, the department is planning to initiate university-level programs. Generally, the objective is to provide teaching in areas where "the people are poor and do not have a religion,"[20] with the rationale being that Christian confession brings about the potential for development. Apart from providing secular education, the FPCT runs four colleges offering diplomas in theology as well as eight Bible schools. The media department runs a college producing TV and radio programs and offering courses in media and leadership. Furthermore, the church has two bookshops and printing presses producing spiritual and educational materials that are also published in Braille.

The women's department is operative in all local churches. Its projects include social work for orphans and the sick but it also supports small scale entrepreneurship. FPCT's engagements with children and youth include spiritual and social work, and in the 1990s the idea emerged to start centres for urban youth to provide educational and free time activities. Consequently, the FPCT and Fida founded the Empowering Churches for Youth Ministry program and started youth centres in several urban areas offering secondary education for school drop-outs as well as courses, adult education and free time activities. The underlying idea is that at these centres "the morally exemplary youth can influence those young people who do not attend church. The aim is to reach youth regardless of their faith."[21] According to some FPCT leaders at the local level, the aim is to attract new members to the church.

As these examples demonstrate, the holistic view of human beings is firmly connected to social responsibility in classical Nordic Pentecostalism, clearly exemplified by the joint projects of Finnish Pentecostal organisations and their African partners aiming at social development.

Third wave Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity
and the well-being of individuals and society

The content of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity no longer solely reflects the legacy of classical Pentecostalism where one finds an emphasis on asceticism, austerity, rationality and work: features often considered to enhance development. On the contrary, in third wave Pentecostalism the prosperity gospel and the possibility of miracles are rather perceived as avenues to prosperity, and take centre stage.[22] This form of Christianity involves dynamics which have the potential to improve both individual and collective well-being; however, it also presents features which obscure the social factors that produce destitution and block perceptions of the role of human responsibility in their elimination.

Third wave Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon which has spread rapidly from one society to another, a mushrooming that has been facilitated by the extensive use of media in the dissemination of religious ideas. This form of gospel is also spread by mobile preachers, global networks and conferences, and facilitated by the mega-churches' operating in the manner of large corporations. It is further characterized by principles and modus operandi which are remarkably similar regardless of the churches, societies and cultures in which they operate,[23] though with local specificities. Common features include the importance of the Holy Spirit and its charismata, such as glossolalia, prayer healing, miracles and prophecy, personal salvation and adult baptism, as well as a worldview which distinguishes between the satanic and godly forces and entails the idea of deliverance from the demonic powers.[24] Salvation is a broad concept embracing general spiritual and physical well-being as manifested in freedom from sickness, poverty and misfortune, also involving freedom from sin and evil.[25]

Many people find the spontaneity, emotionality and spirituality of charismatic Christianity appealing; spiritual powers and the esteem resulting from them are available to all, regardless of gender or social position. For instance, in many Tanzanian Pentecostal-charismatic churches, services are characterized by praise and worship accompanied by music and dance, independent and polyphonic prayer, and the raising of arms and speaking with tongues induced by the experience of the Holy Spirit. Many churches and congregations have several choirs and bands. Preaching and proclamation are focused on personal transformation and breaking with the past; testimonies of the born-again about the transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit are an important form of witness.

Conversion and becoming saved tend to transform social and family life in ways that may increase well-being at home. On the other hand, personal decisions to become saved may sever ties and social obligations within extended families, with the nuclear family becoming the prevalent domestic model. This shift is also associated with changed relations between the spouses, as decisions about family well-being, management of the household economy and expenditure start to be made together; scholars have observed that the role of the husband in the family changes with changing moral codes because money is no longer being spent on alcohol, cigarettes and extra-marital relations.[26] These kinds of factors, together with the equality brought by acknowledgement of women's spiritual powers, may enhance the standing of women. However, family values and moral codes tend to be conservative in their underpinnings and still influence perceptions of the kinds of economic activities that may be appropriate for women outside the home.

At the heart of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity lie ideas of personal conversion and salvation as well as breaking with the past life. In this religiosity, the possibility for societal development lies in the potential spiritual transformation of individuals, in the life of whom the satanic influences are displayed in such sins as greed, lying, foul play, adultery,

drinking, smoking, envy and pride. At the level of the society, sin and satanic influence are evident in forms such as political corruption and bribery, while on the personal level conversion signifies leaving sin behind by way of refashioning of the self. Accordingly, societal development is also seen as being enabled by the spiritual transformation of individuals.

In light of this, scholars have directed attention to the holistic transformation of consciousness and the fashioning of an individual and her subjectivity.[27] From the point of view of development, changes in self-understanding and the transformation of the individual from poverty-afflicted victim to self-conscious agent provide important potential for increased well-being.[28] According to Marshall, the most important techniques of the self are bodily asceticism, fasting, prayer, tireless Bible study, permanent self-examination and, above all, public witness.[29] Prayer is a central technique of the self, in which, through personal communication with God, the convert articulates desires and fears, plenitude and lack. Indeed, prayer is the discursive form that directly precedes glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, a trancelike state in which the individual experiences the Holy Spirit.[30] The second important technique of the self is the regular study of the Bible since it forms the foundation of all knowledge and the source of ethical and moral codes for human life; a third is giving testimony about the miracles and the functioning of the Holy Spirit in one's life: this is the obligation of every Christian.

These testimonies are often constituted by narratives of healing, sudden prospering and conquering witchcraft and other satanic forces. Testimonies and their narratives are interpreted as proof of a spirit-afflicted world and a moral universe wherein good and evil are in constant rivalry, and where increased spiritual, physical and social well-being are the consequences of becoming saved. By means of these three techniques of the self, a converted and born-again Christian maintains the connection with the source of salvation. Becoming saved is therefore not a once-and-for-all state of affairs, unchanged and permanent. As spiritual warfare between good and evil is persistently present in the moral universe, the born-again Christian must continuously recreate and maintain this connection in order to secure general well-being.

Even though Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity focuses on spirituality oriented towards salvation and life hereafter, the right to a spiritually and materially abundant life and well-being in the here-and-now are crucial too – connoted in Tanzania by the Swahili concept uzima, or fullness of life. In this setting, the spiritual dimension is an essential aspect, surpassing even a focus on political views, development action and the fight for social justice in society.[31] This is at least partly the consequence of the emphasis on individual spirituality. Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity has been criticised for withdrawing from secular affairs such as political participation and activism. It has been suggested that this form of religiosity attributes social ills to spiritual causes, particularly the inadequate spiritual status of individuals.[32] Consequently, African Pentecostalism has often been

considered apolitical because of its focus on personal salvation instead of societal changes or political reforms. In his seminal work on African Christianity, Paul Gifford has suggested that Pentecostalism is plagued by spiritualization of the economy and politics, and that spirituality is often given precedence over both.[33]

Having addressed the relationship between individual and societal transformations from the point of view of increased well-being and the possibility of development, I now move on to the implications for human agency and well-being of the idea of spiritual warfare.'

Third wave Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity
and spiritual warfare

The two most important features of third wave Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity are the prosperity gospel and spiritual warfare between good and evil – the godly and the satanic powers – although their relative importance varies.[34] This understanding of spiritual warfare is based on chapters such as that in the Book of Ephesians;[35] warfare is manifested in human life, and the health and prosperity of a Christian may be endangered because of the action of demonic forces. Given that spirits and witchcraft are part of the traditional African worldview, Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity, with its understanding of human life as a battle field of spiritual warfare, has considerable resonance.[36] Its remarkable success in Africa can therefore be partly explained by its capacity to take the local cosmologies seriously. Despite the emphasis on breaking from the past which is so much a feature of this type of Pentecostalism, the dualistic nature of spiritual warfare paradoxically means that traditional categories remain part of the worldview of the people. Rather than causing the local spirits and witches to disappear from the Christian cosmos, their demonization means that they continue to be considered as requiring counter measures. Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity thus takes these categories seriously, unlike many other forms of Protestant Christianity which often label and dismiss these kinds of worldviews as superstition.[37]

Just as conversion and becoming saved do not necessarily imply increased rationality or once-and-for-all deliverance from the spiritual powers, explaining human life in terms of satanic powers that threaten human well-being is a problematic phenomenon from the point of view of human development. When sickness, poverty, misfortune and destitution are explained by external spiritual forces, attention is diverted away from human responsibility and structural factors in society whereby the deprivation is created and maintained. This feature is one of the most problematic in the third wave of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity from the point of view of pursuing well-being and development in society.

The prosperity gospel, wealth and poverty

The second feature separating organisations such as Fida and the FPCT from the third wave of Pentecostalism is the prosperity gospel, which Fida, for instance, refutes. The prosperity gospel, also called the health and wealth gospel, represents a form of faith in which God is thought to have responded to all human needs by way of Christ's suffering and death. Consequently, a true Christian automatically has the right to health and wealth, both of which should be achievable in this life. Everything material in this world is the property of God, and all true Christians, as children of God, have gained the right to this inheritance by positive confession of faith.[38] Several American televangelists influenced the emergence of this doctrine; established names include Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, A.A. Allen, Oral Roberts and T. L. Osborn. Allen for instance taught that God is the God of prosperity and all those who want to have a share of this must support the servants of God. Oral Roberts, on the other hand, added the idea of the "seed of faith": a Christian would prosper by planting a "seed" of faith, the "yield" of which he would later harvest many-fold.[39] T. L. Osborn is known for his "give and you will be given" thinking, with the importance of tithes being supported by the Book of Malachi.[40] Giving in order to receive is also described in Second Corinthians: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.

These early Christian teachings are being re-interpreted in the prosperity gospel. Giving is a precondition to receiving: in other words, the success of a born-again Christian is dependent on the gifts given to God, that is, the church. Consequently, Christians are being encouraged to donate plentifully, and many churches and their leaders have managed to amass considerable fortunes, including valuable properties and luxury cars, enabling them to indulge in opulent lifestyles which are frequently the subject of Tanzanian media reports.[41] The source of the affluence lies partly in the self-sufficiency of the churches and the donations made by adherents, as exemplified by the Efatha Ministry (discussed below), whose leader has specifically emphasized that they do not receive external funding. However, it is also common for African preachers to create transnational networks of relations, friends and influence that potentially increase their income and bring other material resources. In either case it is obvious that significant flows of wealth are transmitted from adherents to church leaders.

The reaping of material wealth means prosperity in this life; thus the aspiration is not just salvation in the hereafter. In this approach, God has created everything for the use of human beings and no one should have to face deprivation and poverty. A Tanzanian preacher, Christopher Mwakasege, framed this notion in the following way:

> God is not poor and therefore he did not create man in the image of the poor. Do you think God put these things, food, clothing and soap in the world for Satan and his people? Do you think that once we are in heaven we still need food, clothing and soap? God gave these things for us to use now. God is the one who gives man the power to gain wealth.[42]

The message of prosperity resonates with traditional African thought and worldviews in which religion is connected with material well-being; religious thinking deals with the good life here and now: health, wealth and success in life. Prosperity is therefore not just about material well-being but also about health, with sickness being interpreted as the outcome of demonic action. For this reason, deliverance and prayer healing take centre stage in many churches.

It has been debated among scholars whether Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity indeed has an impact on poverty reduction and increased well-being.[43] Gregory Deacon, on the other hand, has pointed out that the prosperity gospel does not significantly change or improve the possibilities of subsistence but, at best, merely offers the means to endure poverty and destitution.[44]

The prosperity gospel from Ghana to Tanzania

As described above, the expansion of the prosperity gospel is based on internationality, the global mobility of preachers, networks and conferences organized by the mega-churches. The following example illustrates the operations of the prosperity gospel in an independent and rapidly growing Dar es Salaam church which was established in 1996.[45] The Efatha Ministry is located in the suburb of Mwenge, and led by Josephat Mwingira who aspires to being called an apostle and prophet. Today, Efatha has over 200 churches in Tanzania and 15 outside the country in Africa, the United States and Europe, under a well-organized spiritual and administrative leadership assisted by both spiritual and economic advisors; a registered company, the Efatha Foundation, was created to take care of investments. Efatha runs agricultural projects and owns large tracts of land in various parts of the country along with the valuable plot in rapidly growing Mwenge where the main church has been built. Other businesses include the Trenet TV station, a bank and an insurance company. Meanwhile, a training centre has been established for educating church servants together with a nursery school, primary school and secondary school. Efatha is also active in social media and appears in a blog, Facebook and Twitter while Mwingira's preaching can be followed on TV, radio and YouTube.

In 2007 I attended a week-long international seminar organized by Efatha featuring Mensa Otabil, a Ghanaian preacher and friend of Mwingira, one of the most notable Pentecostal preachers in Africa. In Ghana, Otabil is a religious superstar but also an internationally recognized teacher and media personality. He has worked as a business consultant, is a board member in several Ghanaian and international companies and chancellor of the university that he has established. In Tanzania, his teaching was based on the Book of Genesis where God is described as a working God who created human beings in his own image, as working and creative people. According to Otabil, Africa is the most blessed continent in the world and Africans pray more than anybody else but are nevertheless the poorest. Why is this? Otabil answered as follows:

I am fed up with underdevelopment! I believe God created us for something better... We will see strong business men. We are not going to sit here and only receive investors from outside. We will also see Africans to invest. The days of small business are gone. You will see big money; you will see millions of dollars! --- Get ready! You are going to see a new story in Africa. The old picture is gone and the new picture is there! You will see churches do things that you never thought churches would do. Preachers doing things you did not think preachers would do. -- Many of us Africans have grown up in an atmosphere of poverty and scarcity. Atmosphere of little thinking. Atmosphere of inferiority complex... Africans think that we do not deserve much...When a black man sees the white man he instantly thinks the white man is wiser. That is why the government goes to foreign consultants... When god raises a leader among us we want to bring him down... The inferiority complex must change. Africans think that we do not deserve much. It started from the past, before the white people came, with our own forefathers... They made us believe we were nothing. But then the white men came and the colonialism. And we were told we are nothing. The white men left. Then we got independence but our leaders told us we can have nothing. From past to the present we have been reduced in value. In that atmosphere nothing grows... Break the fear, be bold, be strong. God will change the atmosphere! In this church I sense that this is a new atmosphere. God has brought you into the new. Forget about the old! In the past it was illegal to be prosperous in Tanzania. Those days are gone forever![46]

Otabil's understanding of well-being and development are not based on miracles or the logic of giving in order to receive, as is the case with many other preachers of the prosperity gospel. Otabil does not consider underdevelopment to be caused by either God or Satan but rather sees it as the consequence of human action; problems with development and well-being are not caused by demons, witches or the curses of the ancestors; nor are they caused by slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism or the actions of the International Monetary Fund in any simple sense. Furthermore, the problems cannot be solved by way of tithes or godly miracles. According to Otabil and his teachings, underdevelopment is at least partly caused by deep-rooted cultural ideas and practices, and it can be solved only if Africans tackle the problems and find the solutions themselves.

The teachings of Otabil during the days in Dar es Salaam can be considered revolutionary according to Tanzanian standards. First, Otabil emphasizes explanations based on detrimental cultural practices and traditions. Second, he does not attribute explanatory power to godly miracles or satanic actions: revolutionary thinking in Tanzanian charismatic Christianity. During the seminar at Efatha, Otabil's friend and fellow preacher, Pastor Randy Morrison, also placed a perplexing question in front of his Tanzanian audience: "Why do you give so much credit to Satan?" This is a revolutionary question in a context where godly miracles on the one hand and satanic agency on the other are significant elements

when conceptualising human fortunes and misfortunes. It also raises the possibility of a fundamental cultural rupture by urging disregard for spiritual agency, an important factor in Tanzanian worldview regardless of religion.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described some development projects instigated by Pentecostal organisations and churches, and outlined the most important features of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity relevant to well-being and human development, focusing on the dimensions of holism, individualism and social responsibility. The latter has long been a distinctive feature of Nordic Pentecostalism but Pentecostalism has undergone significant transformations during the past decades. In its "third wave", the spiritual universe, spiritual warfare, deliverance and the prosperity gospel have risen to positions of prime importance. However, when human life and its challenges are explained in terms of spiritual factors, attention is easily diverted away from human agency and inherent socio-structural factors that negatively influence well-being and development. Meanwhile, prosperity gospel doctrines that emphasize the logic of giving in order to receive may not necessarily function as empowerment in the lives of lay Christians but rather may be employed in order to secure the accumulation of wealth for the churches and their leaders, while negatively impacting on the lifeworlds of the givers.

On the other hand, the spirit of liberation theology is sometimes formulated within the frame of the prosperity gospel. These teachings emphasize the importance of discarding detrimental cultural practices while encouraging empowerment by way of education and rational economic activity in line with African identity and biblical interpretation.[47] The potential for development and political influence inspired by the third wave of Pentecostalism is associated with its emphasis on well-being in this worldly life. So far – apart from a few exceptions – the societal and political activism of these faith communities in such countries as Tanzania, where the emphasis is on spiritual work, has been relatively modest. Concurrently, public debates about the content of religious doctrines and practices, and their social and societal implications, remain remarkably scarce, perhaps because of the felt need to defend freedom of religion and social peace. However, in Tanzania the authorities customarily organize consultations with the leaders of the largest denominations and faith communities about various reforms and development projects that the government plans to undertake. It remains to be seen whether and how Pentecostal-charismatic faith communities will direct their collective responsibility for social and societal development through political advocacy and social work.

The role of faith-based mediation in internal armed conflicts

Isak Svensson

Summary

This article focuses on faith-based mediation, that is, activities by religious organisations or actors, aiming at managing or resolving armed conflicts and crises. Faith-based mediation is an important part of religious peacemaking. This analysis shows some of the main strengths as well as weaknesses of faith-based mediation. Concerning the possibilities, we can see that faith-based mediators, commonly as insiders in contexts of conflicts have unique sources of information and in due to their long-term presence also a high degree of credibility. This can also create certain possibilities in terms of unique entry-points, giving them access to the main and key actors in conflicts. Moreover, faith-based mediators may have a practice of mediation which reaches deeper levels in the human interactions, through the ability to communicate with parties in conflict on the basis of religious foundation. Another key asset of faith-based mediation is their access to international networks. But there are also weaknesses. There is sometimes an inability to fundamentally challenge existing power structures, such as patriarchal structures in conflict societies. Further, there can sometimes be a lack of leverage to influence the parties in a conflict as well as an inability to work effectively once religion has been politicised. The chapter concludes that there is a need for further research about the effect of religious peacemaking in general, and faith-based mediation in particular.

Introduction: The case for a religiously informed conflict analysis

One of the major positive news stories in recent years – during an overall relatively dark period from the perspective of peace – was the announcement of restorations of relationships between Cuba and USA; a deal reached in the end of 2014 and implemented during 2015. One particularly interesting feature of the break-through in this enduring interstate rivalry was that it was partly mediated by Vatican diplomats. Pope Francis supported the initiative through letters to the parties, and the bishop of Havana seems to have been instrumental in bringing the agreement into reality. In other words, one of the historical enmities seems to have de-escalated through a process under the auspices of a faith-based actor. This illustrates an important (but actually rather under-studied) role that religious clergy, societies and networks can have in context of political tensions and armed conflicts: to act as go-betweens and bring the parties together in order to find resolution to their contrasting aspirations.

Religion is an essential part of many of today's armed conflicts, but

poorly understood. A proper, informed, and balanced analysis of the religious dimensions is a crucial aspect of any diagnosis of a conflict situation. Such an analysis should be based on the basic recognition of the duality of religion: the fact that religious traditions can play, when it comes to the issues of political violence, both a constructive and a destructive role. Research has called this the 'ambivalence of the sacred'.[1] The negative aspect of religion – the conditions under which religious traditions are *utilized* in way that make them conflict-prone – has been dealt with in previous literature quite extensively. This chapter is limited to the other side: the potentially positive side of religious traditions in shaping or contributing to peaceful solutions to armed conflicts. It will discuss both the resources and the limitations of religious peacemaking. The empirical findings reported here originate from a previous study, in which the details of research design and coding decisions are explained.[2]

Does religious peacemaking in general, and faith-based mediation in particular, matter? Do these types of interventions create conditions for more peaceful developments in the areas of conflicts and violence? There are several reasons to expect this to be the case, and I will try to clarify what those are more precisely in this chapter. At the same time, it should be recognised upfront that the answer is still largely unknown. In other words, it is still an open empirical question whether religious peacemaking can have any significant and positive effects. Too little research has been done (with proper methodological tools) of the effects of faith-based mediation and religious peacemaking, and thus, the jury is still out on whether religious peacemaking can live up to its potential.

Religious peacemaking includes a set of interventions, initiatives and activities aiming to create conditions for the prevention of violent conflicts, the de-escalation of armed dynamics, and the resolution of contradictions between belligerent actors in societies.[3] Faith-based mediation is part of this wider concept of religious peacebuilding, which has been defined as "a range of activities performed by religious actors for the purpose of resolving and transforming deadly conflict with the goal of building social, religious and political institutions characterized by an ethos of tolerance and nonviolence."[4] Sampson has identified four broad roles for third parties – that of the advocate, intermediary, observer and educator – played by religious actors in conflicts.[5] An interesting example of broad faith-based intervention is the Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone that was engaged in different types of peace-related work, such as conducting nation-wide thanksgiving services; holding pre-mediation consultative meetings with the key actors; providing relief food to civilians; distributing the peace agreement and organizing related dialogues to share experiences of its implementation.[6]

One distinction that can be made in this context is *structural* religious peacemaking and direct religious peacemaking. Processes of building societal structures through education, creating long-term relationships between individuals and groups of different faiths through, for example,

ecumenical or inter-religious dialogue, working against governmental or international structures of injustice and imbalances, and campaigning against the military-industrial complexes, are all examples of activities that can signify structural religious peacemaking. Most of the contemporary activities and engagements of religious actors can be sorted into this category. It directs attention to the underlying structures that can increase the risks for violence or wars in the longer term. The other general form of religious peacemaking is operational or direct religious peacemaking. Here, the attention is focused towards specific armed conflicts, and the time-focus for interventions are more short-term. Under direct religious peacemaking, faith-based mediators can be sorted as one important feature.

Resources of faith-based mediators

Faith-based mediators have a set of advantages that can make them particularly suited to act as intermediaries or mediators in internal armed conflicts; one of which is that they are usually insiders. Being present in the particular context in which a conflict arises provides faith-based mediators with some important advantages that they can utilize in their peacemaking processes. In particular, as insiders they can have informational advantages in that they have information about the parties in conflict, about their resources and intentions, and the wider context, such as support from the wider population for the sides in conflict. Moreover, their credibility can be higher, due to the fact that they will always maintain their presence in the conflict, and not withdraw as outsiders may do. Previous research has found that insider-partial mediators have been instrumental in advancing dialogue processes between antagonists in the direction towards peace.[7] An empirical example can be mentioned here: Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and other Shiite religious authorities actively mediated in the escalating conflict in Iraq, between the Iraqi government and rebel-groups such as the Al-Mahdi Army. In this case, the ayatollah could utilise his religious authority in order to help to bring about a peaceful settlement.

Another resource, and one closely related to their role of insiders, is that they may have unique entry-points. Appleby notes, "religions inhabit a unique social location, display a powerful and pervasive institutional presence, and exercise significant cultural power. Their daily contact with the masses, long record of charitable service, and reputation for integrity [have] earned religious leaders an unparalleled legitimacy."[8] Religious leaders, or other types of religious actors, generally have (but of course not necessarily so) a very high degree of legitimacy and credibility amongst populations in general, but also in relation to belligerent actors engaged in armed conflicts or violence. This legitimacy can give them unique opportunities to get access to actors in the society suffering from political conflict: "due to this legitimacy, religious leaders and faith-based institutions often have a unique advantage to resolve conflicts."[9] Examples of faith-based mediators that, to some extent, had unique entry

points into conflicts, include the Lutheran World Federation, working in Guatemala in 1994 – 1995; the Catholic peace organisation 'Pax Christi', that mediated between the government of Uganda and rebels groups in the country in 2006 – 2007; and the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Alexey, who facilitated talks between the Russian government and parliamentary forces during the violent governmental crisis in Russia in 1993.

Faith-based mediators should also be well-positioned to tap into the deeper resources of spirituality. The religious traditions pertain strong and enduring practices of creating meaningful lives for their followers. The religious peacemakers can build on these emotions, perceptions, and cultural practices when trying to create space for dialogue and peaceful interaction. The peacemakers then seek to "'exploit religious convictions, qualities, and behaviours for the purposes of peacebuilding."[10] In particular, faith-based mediators have the possibility to communicate to the parties in conflict and to other key actors in conflict society from a religious basis. By trying to connect to cognitive structures, underlying cultural assumptions, and deep-rooted sentiments, the peacemaking practice can be more effective in the longer run, but potentially also bring about more fundamental change at deeper levels. On this line of thought, Assefa suggests that "[r]eligious peacebuilders are much more likely to lead conflict parties to reconciliation and internal transformation [...] because they have the language, the concepts, and the legitimacy to talk about [the root causes of conflicts] than secular actors generally have."[11] Thus, there are several spiritual resources that faith-mediators can utilise in their peacemaking practices. These include values, rituals, and historical examples from the religious tradition, but also theological interpretations and dogmatic authority.[12] Powers identifies the willingness to engage in self-sacrificial work and the role of religious precepts as some of the most important religious resources for strategic peacebuilding.[13]

One important structural characteristic of many faith-based mediators is their access to international networks. Most religious traditions have transnational dimensions.[14] These transnational linkages can be beneficial for conflict resolution by providing opportunities for faith-based actors to be the bridge between the local and the global. Powers suggests that many religious institutions are "relatively unique transnational actors", with a "global reach."[15] The Catholic community 'Sant Egidio' successfully mediated the conflict in Mozambique and its "transnational reach" was essential to the outcome of their efforts.[16] Sant Egidio has also engaged themselves as faith-based mediators in Burundi, Guatemala, Algeria, Liberia, Serbia and Uganda. In Serbia, Sant Egidio was able to mediate the first official agreement between Serbia and the Kosovar Albanian community (on education), and this can be seen as a partial success, although this agreement failed to lay the basis for more permanent settlement of the conflict.[17] Thus, the international dimension seems to be important. Yet, their international character is built on networks that

largely fall outside the realms of inter-state relationships. This implies that although many of the faith-based mediators have an international character, an engagement of a faith-based mediators does not necessarily imply that the rebel-side gains international legitimacy. As governments engaged in internal armed conflicts are usually anxious about transferring legitimacy to the non-state actors (the rebels) in the context of internal armed conflicts, faith-based mediators have the possibility to bring an international dimension without necessarily internationalizing the conflict.[18] For example, the World Council of Churches (WCC), which was one of the groups that mediated in the peace process in Sudan during the 'first' Sudan Civil War, had an advantage over other mediators: they were "nonpolitical, although multinational organisations", and their mediation intervention consequently did not "confer any political recognition of sovereignty or legitimacy upon […] groups either implicitly or explicitly."[19]

Limitations of faith-based mediators

We have now identified some of the possible key assets of faith-based mediators. Yet, there are also some potential disadvantages with faith-based mediators, which it is also important to identify; one of which is the problem that faith-based mediators may not always be able to challenge existing power-structures, for example, the patriarchal structures in conflict societies. Although not necessarily so, it is not uncommon that faith-based actors are traditionalists, and therefore they may not be able to bring about a more profound type of societal change. The cultural heritage that provides the faith-based mediators with the underlying legitimacy and moral authority, and gives them potential access to key actors in conflicts, can at the same time make them re-produce (and strengthen) existing social patterns of gender-based and other forms of hierarchies. The pertinent but largely overlooked role played by Muslim women in local peacebuilding processes, would need to be examined in more depth in future research.[20] Also within the Christian traditions there are several Churches that strengthen, rather than weaken, traditional and partly negative gender-based roles.

   Another is that, if the parties do not want to find a solution, faith-based mediators do not always have leverage to bring parties closer to an agreement. This may be an implication of their organisational character: most contemporary faith-based mediation interventions have been carried out by individual characters or civil society organisations. Yet, faith-based mediators also come in different forms. To some extent, this is also a reflection of how different religious traditions are organized. The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), has been very active as a faith-based actor trying to mediate in conflicts including in the Philippines (primarily in 1993-1996 and 2000), where the OIC established a history of mediation engagement in the conflict in the southern Mindanao region between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) dating back to 1973.[21] OIC have also been active in various mediation

attempts in Afghanistan in 1993-1995 and 1998; in Somalia from 1992-1993; Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1993 and 1995; and Yemen in 1994.

Another limitation with faith-based mediation is that they (not exclusively, but predominately) seem to function in conflicts where religion has not been politicized and drawn into the conflict escalation process. We could expect them to have a particular function in religiously defined conflicts. Yet, empirically, this is not the general trajectory of faith-based mediators but, by contrast, it is rather uncommon. About two-thirds of the faith-based mediators occur in conflicts with a non-religious issue at its stake. In these conflicts, religion has not been drawn into the dynamics, and the conflict has therefore not escalated to a religious sphere. Once such escalation has occurred, it seems less likely that religious actors can play a role. Yet, even if that general trajectory holds true, there are exceptions. Muslim intellectual and scholars, including Sheik Metwali al-Sharaawi (a national celebrity known for his television talk shows on religion), facilitated dialogue in 1993 between the jihadist al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya and the Egyptian government. In 2004, In the Patani region in Thailand's deep South, members of three local Islamic Committees mediated talks between the Thai government and insurgents.

Broader religious peacemaking processes

Faith-based mediators sometimes engage in activities that fall outside the concept of mediation (strictly speaking) and engage in carrying messages, train conflict parties and facilitate the process of conflict resolution in various ways. Historical examples that could be mentioned in this regard include message-carrying and facilitation efforts in the Biafra conflict in Nigeria by some prominent Quakers, including David Curle.[22] Another example is the facilitation and training conducted by the Mennonites in Liberia and elsewhere,[23] as well as the Catholic Bishops-Ulama Forum in the Philippines, where members of the Forum acted as advisors and bridge-builders in peace negotiations.[24]

Faith-based mediation could to a larger extent be incorporated in broader religious peacemaking processes. One religious peacemaking approach used by some faith-based actors, which has been called the 'dialogue strategy',[25] is the re-formulation of the religious content from a militant religious ideology,[26] towards interpretations characterized by tolerance, compassion, and justice. Likewise, it has been pointed out that religious leaders can re-define sacred spaces and in doing so, decrease risks of violence and armed conflicts.[27] The ways in which this can be done effectively have not been examined in previous research, and the praxis has not been developed sufficiently. Therefore, there is room for advancing the strategies and particular tactics for successfully winning the hearts and minds in the ideological battle between hawks and doves within the different faith-traditions, and thereby taking back the religious arguments from militants.

More research needed

What is the effect of faith-based mediation? Unfortunately, we know very little about the answer to that question. One of the major obstacles is the lack of systematic examinations of the effects of religious peacemaking. Abu-Nimer suggests that "religious peacemaking has not yet developed systematic methods to capture its micro or even macro effects or impacts. A majority of the evidence provided by practitioners and evaluators depends on anecdotal data and lacks comprehensive and systematic designs."[28] One of the reasons for why religious aspects of conflicts have not been properly described and explained is that scholars of religion specialize in particular cases where religious conflicts manifest themselves, but do seldom make explicit comparison with other contexts. There is also a lack of grounding in knowledge about conflict dynamics. Scholars of peace and conflict, on the other hand, have hitherto mostly shunned religious dimensions of conflicts (and ideological aspects overall), instead focusing their attention on material and more easily measurable aspects of conflicts. Faith-based mediation is rarely studied beyond historical accounts of some particular cases: "the literature on religion and peacemaking tends to focus on a narrow set of factors, and consists largely of case studies of successful interventions by Western religious actors. There is a need for studies that apply a wider analytical perspective while also drawing on less successful cases."[29] As a peace researcher, I must admit this is disturbing and depressing.

Systematic research on the outcome and impacts of religious peacemaking in general, and faith-based mediation in particular, is much-overdue. The blame for why this is not done falls equally on the research community (which has tended to neglect and ignore religious peacemaking initiatives) as well as the community of faith-based actors (which never seem to bother about assessing their impact in a systematic fashion). The cost for this lack of knowledge is, of course, substantial: we do not ultimately know whether religious peacemaking is beneficial and effective, or if these kinds of engagements can be (under some circumstances) detrimental to the advancement of peace. If peace-makers really want to contribute to peace, then they first need to understand whether and how their engagement actually influences the dynamics of war and peace. This should be a top priority for scholars and practitioners alike.

Another way of thinking: Religion, values and climate change

Henrik Grape

Summary

Climate change is a priority issue for the international community to solve. For more than twenty years, the discussion on climate change has been ongoing with little progress. The question of climate change is not only environmental, to a large extent it is also about justice and equity: the solutions lie in the transformation of society, and the way we approach the idea of development which must be replaced by another way of thinking. The world needs a deep ecological movement in order to bring about change. Today, it is mostly a shallow ecological outlook that dominates the discussion on climate change, but to achieve a transformed society we need another way of thinking which include alternative visions and a strategy of long-term thinking. Faith communities are often contributing with visions of a good and equitable life and they also often have a long term perspective that involves future generations and sometimes also other species living on this earth. Therefore, the interreligious dialogue on climate change could contribute to a more united way of meeting the threat that climate change is to planet earth. In a time when religion often seems to be a problem to the development of a peaceful community, this article considers the possibilities that faith communities have to offer and contribute towards developing a sustainable future.

Climate: facing the biggest challenge of our times

Sometimes, it is easy to describe contemporary times with strong words, and we often have a tendency to think that the time in which we live is unique and special. However, we may discover that questions we currently think are big issues have in fact, with hindsight, been exaggerated in their scale. Climate change is not one of these issues. This is especially true as we are facing more and more signs that the climate changes predicted by scientists are materialising in our world. For example, we see it in extreme weather events which have taken place globally in recent years, and it is more evident that predictions made by scientists in the past are coming true.

However, now is the time to face the challenge of climate change and work towards solving the issues quickly. The twentieth-century was a century of rapidly expanding development, increased use of natural resources, fast-growing economies and growing populations. During the last century, fossil fuels became the number one energy source, replacing the human power that built civilizations for the last 10,000 years. In a very short time span, the population of the earth swelled from approximately 1.6 billion in 1900 to approximately 6 billion by the year 2000. At the same time, and to meet the demand, food production and the use of fossil fuels have

intensively increased and have become an integral part of the development of the economy of the world. Today, we know that the main reasons for climate change is the use of fossil fuel together with unsustainable land use. The way we use these resources must be reconsidered and potentially phased out which is a real challenge.

We have filled the atmosphere with greenhouse gases to a level that the atmosphere has not experienced. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which consists of more than 2,000 researchers on climate-related science, gives a broad and well-reviewed picture of the problem in their 5th Assessment Report, published in 2013/14.[1] For example, in their climate models, it is clear that we are facing a huge task to turn the emission curves from increasing to decreasing by creating a low-carbon society.[2]

Some say that we have entered a new geological epoch. The geological age Holocene, which we have been living in for approximately 10,000 years, is characterized by a rather predictable climate. Because of that, humanity has had the opportunity to develop cultivation. This is what made it possible to build societies where we could develop our cooperation and create infrastructures of different kinds. The Holocene epoch is the period when we developed our philosophical thinking, creating systematic models of how we think – and now know – the world is built. We know it from the ancient Greeks, the eastern traditions of religion and philosophy, and the different ideational traditions from all over the world that are important for how we organise our different societies.

During the twentieth-century this development has skyrocketed. As discussed, the consumption of natural resources has dramatically increased during the last 100 years, along with the amount of energy used. The extraction of raw materials has grown radically which is also a result of the growing population. Altogether, this means that we have exceeded the limitations of our planet.

The possibilities of us continuing to carry and maintain the stability of the earth are under threat. The way we have previously understood human history is now changing. Some have suggested that this radical change is a result of leaving the geological epoch of the Holocene and entering a new geological time called Anthropocene. Nobel Prize laureate Paul Crutzen sees the influence of human behaviour on the Earth's atmosphere in recent centuries as so significant that he describes it as this new geological period, and this underlines the serious situation that we are in today. This is exacerbated by our use of natural resources: in a report from 2015, Oxfam suggested that the 10% of the richest people in the world are responsible for nearly 50% of the emissions of carbon dioxide. The poorest 50% are responsible for around 10% of all emissions from their lifestyle.[3] Therefore, those who are affected most by climate change are the same people who have contributed least to the emissions of greenhouse gases: the poor.[4] This must be taken into account when we are discussing climate change; the discussions must incorporate a perspective on justice and equality

for society as a whole. After all, we only have one earth and we are all responsible for it regardless of wealth or status.

There are many problems that we are facing today when it comes to the limitations of the earth, for example, biodiversity, the nitrogen cycle, fresh water, ocean acidification and so forth, and this means we need to keep a broad perspective on the possibilities and limitations of solving climate change issues. We are also aware that time is precious and we must act on climate change quickly to avoid the most dangerous scenarios. Time is a challenge as every ton of greenhouse gas loaded into the atmosphere jeopardizes our future, and future generations as well. At the same time, climate changes have a great impact on many other systems, such as the water cycle, animal ecosystems and food production: for example, wheat and other food harvests become endangered when extreme weather events become more frequent. There are also knock-on effects: when homes are destroyed because of erosion, flooding or droughts, this can lead to larger problems such as health, homelessness and economical issues, and lead to an increase in refugees or environmental immigration which in turn, can increase the risk of conflicts and problems of a different kind. It may be so that the conflicts we are facing already today, to some extent, have some origin in climate change, and it is more than a qualified guess to say that in a climate constrained future, this will be the case. This is why we must urgently address the issue of climate change: it must be a top priority for the international community to work towards solving.

Climate: not only environment

From a Swedish context, climate change tends to be thought of as an issue which affects only the environment. 'Climate' and 'environment' are often used interchangeably, and it is true that they are closely linked but in reality, the issue of climate change is more complex and broad. If we narrow the understanding of climate change, it becomes easy to forget the systematic impact that climate change has on the whole planet. If we speak just about waste treatment or ecologically produced food, forgetting the full scope of climate change, we will lose the fight and get locked in by the details. In the same way, religious communities must rephrase the basis for their involvement in climate change issues, and not focus on only the creation or the value of nature. As faith communities, we must explore our rich traditions and the multitude of ways in which we express our wonder in the gift of life, the solidarity and interdependence of all life and the importance of justice and equity.

Leaders and communities around the world need to participate in and promote discussion of the values that lead us to the choices we make, which in turn affect the climate. Faith communities could be a much more active agent in this discussion; religious and faith-based values are often implicit within our society, and they are often the basis for decisions which we make. In a time where we have knowledge about how we are negatively affecting the earth, we cannot live with values that are risking the future for the coming generations and for other forms of life.

In his book *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy,* Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss wrote about a deep and shallow ecological movement.[5] Using his understanding, I would assess that our current age is a shallow ecological movement. For example, being "green" is mostly associated with a positive change towards helping our climate: we are involved to a high degree in fighting pollution and emissions of different kinds, which has successfully lowered acidification and helped to restore part of the ozone layer. However, this is a shallow movement which does not focus on deeper issues: it is often about resource management and resource allocation. Yet, the fact that we are sorting waste and recycle much more today is positive news, and there is also clear development that issues of climate finance and burden sharing are being included in negotiations around climate change. This is truly a step in the right direction but is still not enough to solve the problems we are facing today: we still need a deeper ecology movement.

A deep ecological movement, according to Næss, asks deeper questions about how we organize our society compared to shallow ecological movements. We have to address not only the symptoms, but look to the causes, the roots of the problems associated with climate change, which also affect how we understand and construct our societies. For example, a deeper ecological movement has to look at the idea of justice when it comes to the distribution of resources, and the economic system must be a servant to the planet and those who are sharing the gift of life on the planet, not the opposite. Quality of life, meaning, diversity and democracy are central concepts to a deep ecological understanding of sustainability.

During the twentieth-century, focus was shifted onto questions about sustainability and development. *The Limits to Growth* was published by international think-tank, the Club of Rome in 1972, and was seen as a sign of the change in the un-reflected optimistic view on development, as it was known in the industrial world.[6] In the same year, the first global UN meeting on environment was held in Stockholm which partly focused on how to stop harmful emissions. The second global UN meeting on environment in 1992, held in Rio de Janeiro, did have a wider scope and many important decisions on sustainable questions were made, and consequently addressed with the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (also known as Agenda 21).

It might be the case that the twenty years between the two meetings actually made it possible to take these steps. During the interim period, the world had experienced the first oil and energy crisis, major nuclear breakdowns in Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, the end of the Cold War, a reunited Germany, and the breakdown of the Soviet Union. All of these might have contributed to the fact that the Rio summit delivered so many important decisions. Just ten years later at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (or, Earth Summit 2002) in Johannesburg, South Africa, the world was experiencing a less positive situation after the

9/11 attacks in New York and the subsequent war in Iraq and Afghanistan. With a focus on fighting terrorism, the sustainable development agenda was not a priority: this was clear in the discussions held in Johannesburg which did not prioritise climate change.

On a political level, the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change is still the strongest tool that we have to fight climate change, and as a platform to discuss the issues associated with climate change. It is a framework that aims to mitigate the effects of climate change and to transfer resources for adaptation. The UNFCCC was signed in 1992 and entered into force in 1994. Three years later in 1997, the Kyoto protocol was signed and it eventually came into force in 2005. The countries that signed the protocol were, at that time, those that were responsible for 61% of the greenhouse gas emissions. However, not all of the countries that are part of the UNFCCC have obligations in the Kyoto protocol: for example, under President Bush, the USA, who are one of the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases, refused to sign the Kyoto protocol because they argued that it was unfairly weighted towards developed countries and not developing countries, and that it would negatively affect American businesses and the economy. Those who did sign the Kyoto Protocol agreed to decrease their emissions of greenhouse gases between 2008-2012 by at least 5% less as compared to the levels of 1990. However critics suggested this was not ambitious enough and would not prevent the dangerous effects of climate change.

In 2009, the UNFCC meeting in Copenhagen was expected to deliver a new treaty following the Kyoto Protocol. After years of increased focus on climate change including a 4th Assessment Report from the IPCC which made clear that human induced climate change is a contingent threat, the Stern report entitled The Economics of Climate Change, and the awareness raised by Nobel Peace prize winner Al Gore in his documentary An Inconvenient Truth, there was great hope that meeting in Copenhagen would deliver powerful tools to help decrease greenhouse gases, as well as provide funding for the adaptations required to do so. The meeting ended up in an epic fiasco, and the tools were not put in place for such change.

In the years after the Copenhagen meeting the UNFCCC process has been, to a great extent, about building trust again between the parties. The Climate Convention, step-by-step with different tracks, built an agenda that pointed to 2015 and the COP 21 (Conference of Parties) in Paris.

The momentum to build a new climate regime was prioritised by governmental and non-governmental actors. The fail of Copenhagen was nothing that the world wanted to see again. There are many different details that contributed towards making Paris a very important mark in the work to avoid serious climate change: one is the price drop of renewable energy like solar and wind; another is the serious natural disasters that are linked to a climate scenario like typhoons in Asia and thunderstorms like Sandy in the North, as well as several instances of record-breaking temperatures and the surprisingly rapid melting of the polar ice sheds in the Arctic.

Another thing that made the world move for climate action is that, due to bad air quality in the huge urban areas, China lowered their exploitation of coal and invested much more in renewable energy, but also entered an agreement with the USA to work towards lowering the climate impact. Added to that was a movement of divestment or disinvestments in fossil fuels during 2014 and 2015, meaning that fossil fuel became a risk investment for the financial markets. Even Pope Francis came to the scene with his encyclical letter Laudate Si that is a strong document for action on climate change.

There are many more reasons that the outcome of Paris was better than expected. Some brief points include aims such as:

• Keeping the average temperature rise 1.5 or as low as possible under 2 degrees, which show higher ambitions and in-line with scientific recommendations;
• All countries have targets for decreasing greenhouse gases. (Kyoto only developed countries);
• Requirement for Parties to communicate emissions targets every 5 years which prevents staying at lower ambitions if the development goes faster than predicted; and
• Committing $100 billion dollars in the Green Fund yearly by 2020.

The Paris Agreement is a framework that requires active partners. It is a good basis from which to start, and it needs to be filled with actions. The coming challenges are to ensure speed in the work of the different nations in implementing the Paris agenda.

Deep and shallow ecological movement – the relation to climate change

Returning to the idea of deep and shallow ecological movements put forth by Næss, it becomes obvious that most of the efforts we see on national and international levels could be identified as shallow ecological movements. To some extent, this explains why the changes expressed in the reports from the IPCC are not being carried out: because they do not go far enough.

To address the climate challenge, we must focus on the causes of the climate change, not only the use of fossil fuels and land use. We also have to look at the driving force behind our demand for energy and food. This, then, is also about consumption, production patterns and economic instruments, but even more importantly, it is also about our own system of values and ethics which form the basis of our decisions. Since there are earthly limitations which restrict us when it comes to the use of resources and the impact of humanity, we are in need of a transformation in our way of living together. We are in a position for the first time ever when humanity is behind the steering wheel for the future of the whole planet. Thus, we must move beyond the shallow approach to climate challenge, and instead address the situation with a deeper ecological movement.

We are in great need for an understanding of how our value systems are pivotal for the rapid change that we need. The classic industrial capitalistic system that was the foundation behind the development of the last century does not work in this new era. The same is true about the Marxist solution from the twentieth-century. The Marxist alternative is also founded on the never-ending natural resources that should be exploited by man. We are now in a position where we know that we are not just only pushing the boundaries, we are also transgressing the boundaries for what the earth can bear. Our views on nature and its resources that we have held since before the age of industrialization are not sustainable anymore.

Similarly, our economic models' way of defining growth is no longer sustainable. There must be an equity horizon in this discussion which takes into account the difference between the "haves" and the "have-nots". We cannot have a discussion about the future of the planet without a serious discussion of the right to a decent life for everyone on the planet. Unfortunately, discussions around climate change do not take this stance into perspective. Instead, it is often focused on mitigation of emissions and visible issues, and so the issue of justice is easily forgotten. It may be easy to say that we have to lower the emissions, but we have to define what we stand for. If we mean the whole population, we are all responsible for those emissions. For example, it is clear that countries with larger populations have bigger emissions, but if we look at emissions per capita in different countries, the picture is different.

China, as the largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world, is per capita more or less equal to Sweden. India is a large emitter as a country, but the per capita emission is much lower. The same does not apply to the USA or Australia who are much higher with regards to emissions per capita.[7] Similarly, if we look at communities within countries, the trend is the same: the more money, the larger the contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. For example, a poorer, single Swedish mother contributes least but a man with high income is responsible for the highest GHG emissions.[8]

The pictures that emerges is one of humanity standing in front of a global challenge where we need to put the fundamental questions on the table to be able to solve multiple questions. The challenge is, in a short space of time, to transform development on earth including: the phasing out of fossil fuels; the creation of long-term sustainable methods of food production; changing patterns of consumption; and changing the model of growth. To succeed, we have to move from a shallow ecological movement to a deeper ecological movement.

The contribution of religions to the transformation of a global sustainable and equitable society

Based on all of this information, it is clear that the climate crisis we are facing cannot be solved only with technological innovations or political decisions. Technological development is important, but it has to be based

upon an understanding of the seriousness of the situation, and not on creating products for profit. Political decisions are necessary, but can be hard to implement if there is no kind of value-based ground that supports the decisions. Therefore, value-based movements are necessary to uphold technological and political decisions. In a world where about 80% of the inhabitants regards themselves as belonging to a religion, world religions can play a crucial part in helping to create a more sustainable and equal world. However, it is also important not to see religion as an instrument to reach such goals. The contributions frozm faiths are inherent in each particular faith, and as such are an expression of the religion itself. In the different faith traditions, there are paths that can help to push the agenda for a more sustainable and just future. It is a very simplified way of reasoning to say that faith and religious thought structures could themselves influence and change minds when it comes to climate change, but there are tools in the different faith traditions that could contribute to the necessary transformation that is needed for the protection of this earth.

Over the course of history, the impact of religions on building societies is clear. Value systems often stem from the religion of that society. In some parts of the world, this is more obvious than in others. Institutional religions with churches and denominations, and those who are in the public space representing religion, have, in some parts of the world, become marginalized in the official building of the society. However this does not mean that their values and their presence in the society has less impact on the society as whole. In Sweden for example, the biggest church is the Church of Sweden, a Lutheran church. It is probably considered to be an institution of lesser importance in terms of influencing societal structures than it used to be. Since the Reformation in the sixteenth-century, church and state have been closely connected. However, since the twenty-first century, the bonds between state and church have dissipated. At the same time, this change has resulted in a church much more active in political debate; this is the case when it comes to more humane politics on refugees, criticism when the societal institutions fail in welfare security, or the recently published bishop's letter on climate change.

At an international ecumenical level, churches have a long history of being active on climate change and sustainable development, and this activity has also increased over the last decades. This is due to a stronger connection between environmental issues and questions about peace and justice. For a long time, the World Council of Churches have put climate change high on the agenda and they continue to do so. However, questions about environment and climate change are not only relevant to Christianity; the global threat of climate change also gives an opportunity for different religions to come together, and start a dialogue from their different traditions about the importance of living in consonance with the earth, and how to share the resources of the earth in a sustainable and equitable way. At the moment, headlines in the Western world are

mostly about the violence connected to different kind of fundamentalist movements. But there are also movements that underline the possible contributions from faith communities to create a more sustainable world where faiths can serve as catalysts to the transformation of the world that is necessary.

The ecumenical dialogue on climate

Christianity has a long history of contrasting interpretations of its texts and traditions. However, during the last century, the ecumenical movement has grown, with an emphasis on affinity and a will to find new ways forward to achieve more. One of the things which has come out of this idea of working together with different traditions is the issue of climate change and the environment, and what we tend to call creation theology: it is central to the Christian faith that the world is created by God. This is as central as Christ is incarnated in this created world. Interpretations of creation and incarnation are different across Christianity and lead us to the many ways of relating to creation and the way we look at our neighbour. At the same time, it is a very good ground to start thinking together and acting together in a context where the creation is threatened by human rampaging and where human rights to water, food, air, etc. are violated as a result of the abuse of creation, often because of greed.

My experience from ECEN (*European Christian Environmental Network*) and the WCC working z on climate change is that the ecumenical interaction on climate and environment is rather uncomplicated. We have some nuances or subtle differences in our work on climate change, but we have a common direction along with the understanding that creation is an important part of expressing our faith. To a large extent, we work together on practical things: how do we manage our resources? Do we leave a big ecological footprint when we are heating our churches? Do our lifestyles express the care for those most affected by climate change?

At the same time, there is an ongoing discourse and understanding that we cannot leave the created world when we practice theology: the faith that we have is not passive, it includes action. In the multitude of Christian traditions, emphases may differ, and perspectives on where to start are not always the same, but focus on climate change and environment is consistent. One of the most common ways of starting the involvement in "green issues" is to pick up the tradition of stewardship: these often start with the creation stories in Genesis and discussions about the role of man as stewards of the earth.

Even if we have different motivations for our commitment to be active in climate change issues, it doesn't affect the cooperation when it comes to action. Some may see diversity as divisive, but in this case diversity serves as factor of success. Just as stable ecosystems are characterized by a great variety, nuances in faiths can serve the transformation to a sustainable future.

The interreligious window of opportunity is open

The idea of globalization which has evolved over the last century, and which continues to grow, has resulted not only in a great flood of information and the free flow of capital, but also in the highlighting of commonalities between different faiths. Migration due to different reasons has led to different ways of expressing faith, and is no longer bound to geographical areas which has been the case for a long time. This has resulted in religion appearing more obvious, and so many have discussed the idea of the "return of religion." The question is, was religion ever gone? Maybe in some areas of the Western world, or in the dictatorships of Eastern Europe, the aim was to leave religion as a part of ancient times, but that never really happened, and globalization has shown that religion still has an influence on society and faith must be taken into account when we create a more sustainable world.

In a context where faiths meet each other, where people practice their faiths beside each other and live together in a global world, the dialogue between faiths is even more important, not only when it comes to the content of each other's faith, but also in what way we shall build a sustainable society. The huge challenge of climate change demands that humanity must come together in a way we have not seen before, to transform our society into a low carbon society, and this must be addressed quickly. This is where religions and faiths could play a central role in finding a common vision which energizes the process. It should be clear to decision-makers today that faiths could, and maybe also must, play an important part in designing the global community. If we leave out the faiths, the process of transformation will be much harder to realize.

Relationship

Human life is characterized by our relationships with others; relations to family, to neighbours, to country, to culture. In spite of the diversity of faiths there are similarities: one is the common idea of being in a relationship, that is, a relationship with life itself and to the transcendent or the divine. With that kind of relationship, a responsibility follows; a responsibility to your neighbour and to future generations is something that many religions share and it is an important part to help achieve the changes we need to overcome the climate challenge. But inside many faiths, there is also a sense of justice or equity: justice between all that has been given the gift of life. There is, according to the Interfaith Climate Manifesto, a "reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life and a sense of humility regarding the place of humans [which] helps us to see the importance of what happens to people far away and other species. This creates incentives to work for justice."[9]

It seems that we have lost the sense of interdependency that many religions include in their worldview. Interdependency is another way of underlining that life is about relations and this is something that different religions share in different ways of expressions. At the same time, this is

in many ways related to science of ecology. Ecosystems build on relations between different parts, species and individuals in the ecosystem. In indigenous spiritual traditions, the interdependencies are often expressed in different ways, but it is also present in most of the other religions of the world.

Awe and reverence

Another contribution from faith communities to the climate challenge is the concept of awe and reverence that different faith traditions bear. In the Abrahamic faiths, the idea of creation is something that is looked at in awe. For example, in Psalms it is written:

> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour.[10]

This is also echoed in the creation stories in Genesis. In a time when creation is often seen as a resource for man to use, and in reality is abused and overused, we are in need of a way of regarding the complex earth and all her ecosystems with awe and wonder. Sometimes, the concept of holiness could serve as a momentum; holiness that makes man take a step back and look at the wholeness of the planet could be an important contribution from faith communities today, when the dominant view on the planet is the one that speaks of ownership and the possibilities to expropriate the resources that are left. These are just a few ways that the family of faith could play a more important part in the work to transform our world into a safer, low carbon society.

Religious institutions – faith communities

The ways of expressing faith differs around the world, as does the way in which the different religions are structured in different societies. Christianity has a long history of building hierarchical structures and they have been involved in building societies over many centuries. They are often very well-organised, and often there are close links to those in power. In the Scandinavian countries, we have a long history of close connections between church and the regent/government sharing the power in the society. Today, this is less so the case. One reason is that in a globalised world, migration between countries and continents creates a society with a mixture of religious identities, and a democratic country must practice freedom of faith. From my Christian identity, it is important to support a society which is open to diversity of faiths.

Religious institutions have developed structures that are somehow similar to the structures of society, and since the Western way of organising society is more or less the normative model for the global society, interreligious dialogue is often imprinted by the Western way of organised religious

institutions. We are often looking for hierarchies like the ones we find in Christianity, but that is not always to be found. As a result, often when we gather together to create interfaith dialogues on climate change, it is dominated by different Christian denominations. That may be because of the similarities with the global way of organising society, but it is important to remember that we do have different ways of structuring our faith communities. Because of that, it may be more preferable to stress the fact that we are looking for an interfaith dialogue rather than an interreligious dialogue; even if the content may be the same, it might focus more to the values we are sharing than to the way our different institutions look.

Conclusions

Climate change is one of the main challenges of our time. We need to make a real change to avoid a potentially difficult future which will affect future generations. This means we need to be innovative. We need political decisions. But we also need visions and long-term aspirations. Religions have the potential to play a central part in bringing the people of the earth together, to create a permanent and sustainable common vision, which helps to bring about the radical change so desperately needed to protect the earth.

We have been, and still are, too focused on political agreements and governmental action. Those are still very important, but our action needs to be quicker. We also need to create an environment of change, a spirit of willingness to transform. To do that, we need a value-based and idea-driven platform: faith communities could be that platform. Faith communities can ensure that justice and equity are part of the dialogue when it comes to addressing climate change. For a long time, faith communities have brought visions for the possibility of change, and that is still one of the assets of faith communities. With a vision of peace, a vision of living in consonance with each other and in harmony with the creation, faith communities could challenge the situation of despair that a climate-constrained world currently sees.

Faith communities can also bring hope, and for many, the origin of hope is in the transcendent. A people of faith are a people of hope, and hope is a first step to walk the path of transformation. In the words of St Augustine, "Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage; anger at the way things are, and courage to see what they do not remain the way they are." Faith can be the carrier of hope and its beautiful daughters: anger over the inequalities and greed that destroys the earth and the possibilities for future generations, but also courage to start the transformation needed for a more just and equitable world.

Religious leaders' response to HIV prevention in South Africa

Elisabet Eriksson

Summary

Faith-based organisations (FBO) and religious leadership are increasingly regarded as important partners in the response to the HIV epidemic. Religious leaders have an exclusive authority that plays a central role in providing moral guidance within their communities. However, religious leaders have faced difficulties in talking about HIV prevention in their congregations. This chapter is mainly based upon a questionnaire study among religious leaders in South Africa, and explores their attitudes to, and involvement in, HIV prevention for young people.

The questionnaire survey was conducted among religious leaders in 2008, when they convened at regional meetings in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The questionnaire included socio-demographic data, previous HIV education and attitudes to HIV prevention for young people, policy issues, and questions on stigma. The participants were affiliated to the Catholic Church, the Lutheran church, and the Assemblies of God. The main findings revealed that religious leaders regarded themselves as responsible for educating young people about HIV, and were interested in topics concerning young people's sexuality. However, only 39% reported that their church had run a life-skill programme for youth in the last six months. The results indicated that religious leaders who had participated in HIV training were more likely to have arranged a life-skill programme for young people and also more likely to have taken an HIV test.

Religious leaders were positive about further training on HIV-related issues, and if learning opportunities are offered to them, this might increase their involvement in HIV prevention among young people.[1]

Introduction

My interest in the topic of HIV prevention can be traced back to 2000 during an internship at Medical Assistance Programme (MAP) International in Kenya. During my 4 months in the country, I followed the work of this non-governmental organisation (NGO) when they ran training sessions for religious leadership about the HIV epidemic. In one of these courses, I observed how difficult it was for religious leaders to talk about HIV and AIDS. It seemed that the Catholic nuns were more comfortable talking about sexuality and HIV prevention than the male priests who relied on the Bible to find guidance for the discussion.

During my work and studies, it became clear to me that young people in faith communities wanted information about HIV from their churches, but what did religious leaders teach young people, and how did the young people perceive their messages? That was the main question for my thesis

in International Health at Uppsala University, Sweden. The following article will focus on the role of religious leaders in relation to the HIV epidemic. More specifically, the article will focus on the situation in South Africa where two studies (one interview study and one questionnaire study) were conducted among religious leaders to explore their attitudes to, and involvement in, HIV prevention for young people.

Brief background to the HIV epidemic

HIV infection and AIDS is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus; characteristic of the virus is that it is stored in the body's genetic makeup. HIV infection heals therefore not spontaneously, but the individual with HIV carries the virus for life. It may take several years from the actual infection until one gets sick. The clinical picture of this later phase may be partly attributed to the virus itself, but is mainly due to the symptoms of other infectious diseases you get, because HIV attacks and breaks down the immune system. It is these secondary infections that occur because of the severe immune deficiency underlying the disease condition known as AIDS. Unless antiviral medicines for HIV are given, about half of those living with HIV will develop AIDS within ten years. There is currently no treatment that can cure HIV. However, there are effective HIV drugs that significantly reduce the amount of circulating virus and are effective in preventing disease progression if treatment is started in time.

In 2014, 36 million people worldwide were living with HIV. In the same year, about 2 million people became newly infected with HIV. Sub-Saharan Africa is the most affected region, with 25 million people living with HIV. In 2014, around 10.7 million people living with HIV had access to antiretroviral therapy in the region and tuberculosis was the leading cause of death among people living with HIV.

Rationale for including faith-based
organisations in the HIV response

Governments and development agencies increasingly regard faith-based organisations (FBO) and religious leaders as important partners in the response to the HIV epidemic. Christian faith communities exert a powerful influence in the communities where they operate and have credibility in the society, which is perhaps one of their major assets. Local churches are also present in both urban and rural areas and their extensive networks can be valuable in delivering health services. Since the mid-1980s, FBOs have provided care, treatment and support to those affected by the HIV epidemic, including orphans and vulnerable children. A World Health Organisation (WHO) report in 2007 from Zambia and Lesotho estimated that 30–70% of health care services in Africa are run by FBOs.[2] However, some challenges for the FBOs in their response to the HIV epidemic have been noted. For example, many faith communities face problems with administration and financial resources, and documentation of good practices has been limited.

HIV prevention messages to young people

Since the discovery of HIV, it has been considered vital to increase the knowledge about the virus so that young people may reduce their risk behaviours and avoid contracting the disease. However, because of the relation between HIV and sexuality, and because sexuality is a sensitive topic, there have been many public debates concerning the content of education programmes. Initially the abstinence, faithfulness, condom use (ABC) approach was common in HIV education programmes. However, this approach has been criticized for a number of reasons. From a gender perspective, it has been argued that women may abstain until marriage and be faithful to their partner, but still lack control over condom use. The approach is therefore less applicable to them. Furthermore, those with negative attitudes towards condom use have only supported the messages of abstinence until marriage and fidelity within marriage, sometimes called "abstinence-only programmes". Previous research on abstinence-only programmes and on condom promotion has contributed to tensions between religious groups and public health advocates. Critics from religious groups have argued that abstinence-plus programmes, which promote sexual abstinence as the safest behaviour for preventing HIV infection but also encourage condom use by young people if they engage in sexual activity, may encourage young people to become sexually active at an earlier age. The debate regarding the abstinence-only versus the abstinence-plus programmes has been especially intense in the United States. Contrary to what some may fear, sex and HIV education programmes aimed at reaching young people, including information on contraceptives and condom use, do not increase sexual activities among youth.[3]

Religion and young people

In countries where religion is influential in local communities, religion and relationships – including sexual relationships – comprise two important components of social life for young people. By providing individuals with education, rules, rituals and social networks among peers, as well as across generations, the local faith communities create a structural social environment where young people can be socialized. The churches may serve as a social entity for those youth who attend religious services, and may provide them with a sense of belonging, which is important during adolescence. Furthermore, for religious youth the context of their faith communities may influence their choices on HIV prevention. Research from Africa has focused on how religious affiliation influences the risk of HIV infection with denominational variations. Studies from South Africa, Malawi, and Zambia found that members of denominations with restrictive attitudes towards premarital sex have a lower risk of HIV, due to reduced number of extramarital partners, when compared to other denominations. Also, affiliation to conservative religious groups is associated with a delay in sexual initiation, but the likelihood of condom use after sexual debut is reduced.

Religious leadership and HIV prevention

It is recognized that religious leaders have a unique authority that plays a central role in providing moral and ethical guidance within their communities.[4] However, religious leaders have faced difficulties in talking about HIV prevention in their congregations. In the early years of the epidemic, many religious leaders thought that AIDS did not affect them or the members of their churches. When people living with HIV were found to be members of their own churches, many religious leaders reacted with denial. As a result, many people living with HIV experienced stigma in various forms from their churches. Religious leaders can play both a facilitating and a hindering role in the creation of supportive social spaces to challenge stigma.[5] For example, religious leaders have provided pastoral care to individuals and families living with HIV. Religious leaders who have contributed to addressing stigma within their own communities are those who personally live with HIV. Before 2003, very few religious leaders in Africa lived openly with HIV, fearing stigma and discrimination. In 2003, African religious leaders who were positively living with HIV founded a network and sought to address these issues. Partners to the network outside Africa proposed a global expansion, and in 2008 the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV (INERELA+) was launched.

Religious leaders in South Africa do talk to their parishioners and young people about the risk of HIV infection. However, findings from the first interview study among religious leaders found that they are often caught in the dilemmas of balancing their theological understanding with resistance from the congregation members, who may not want to hear about HIV or AIDS.[6] Religious leaders may also face conflicts within the church hierarchy and some expressed feelings of isolation when they addressed issues of HIV. Although the respondents in the interviews mentioned different activities for creating awareness among young people, for example in youth groups, lack of funds and trained staff were the major barriers to increased involvement in HIV prevention. In spite of these challenges, religious leaders may be able to address sensitive issues of HIV prevention when these topics are framed within the broader Christian values and theological understanding.[7]

A gender perspective on the HIV epidemic and religion

The HIV epidemic is recognized to be gendered. Women are disproportionately affected in terms of sexual violence, the lack of women-initiated prevention methods, stigmatization faced by those who are living with HIV, as well as women being the primary caretakers for HIV-infected relatives and family members. The relationship between gender, especially gender inequalities, and HIV prevention has become a major concern in addressing the epidemic. The WHO defines "gender" as referring to "the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women."[8] Social factors

such as power imbalances and harmful social gender norms increase the vulnerability of both women and men to HIV infection. However, the consequences of gender inequalities in terms of low socioeconomic status and unequal access to education sometimes affect women more than men. Women also have little capacity to negotiate safer sex and access the health services they need. The social factors mentioned here are examples of structural gender inequalities in the society, as well as gender inequalities in intimate relationships.

Violence is deeply gendered, with men aged 15–49 years disproportionately engaged in violence both as victims and perpetrators. Furthermore, findings from South Africa have confirmed the association between violence and HIV infection. Women in South Africa who have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence, or who are in relationships with low equality, are at greater risk of HIV infection than women who do not experience these situations.[9] Explanations for violent behaviours among men could be found in the way boys are socialized within the context of contemporary South Africa. Although since the ending of apartheid in 1994 male adolescents have grown up within a democracy, the new politics have not removed notions of patriarchy and men's dominant role in public life. During apartheid and the fight for liberation in the 1980s, violent behaviour among men increased, and violence is reinforced in the post-apartheid system. Male adolescents are socialized in this context. Employment is a key component of male identity; however, as many of these adolescents lack working opportunities, their male identity is therefore also lost.[10] The dominant ideals of masculinity include demonstrations of toughness, defence of honour, and gaining high status when fighting, which may lead to risk-taking behaviour. Different power values in men and women as well as culturally based expectations of men to demonstrate their "manhood" in relation to women are gender norms that increase both men's and women's risk of HIV.[11] Furthermore, the notion of sex being commonly viewed as a male domain where women are expected to be submissive, legitimates men to control women in intimate relationships.

Religion is one factor influencing the construction of gender roles, and perhaps it is especially important in countries where the majority of the population identify themselves as religious. Religion is often described as a factor that legitimizes gender inequalities and therefore, as outlined above, especially increases women's vulnerability to HIV infection. Within Christianity, gender inequalities are often mentioned in relation to patriarchal structures in the churches, and the dominance of men in leadership positions. Patriarchy within Christianity has a long tradition and can be traced back to the background culture that informs the Bible, which was patriarchal. Through history, theology has taken patriarchy to be the ordered structure of humans, and in that way legitimized patriarchy.[12] The overall patriarchal context has also shaped attitudes towards human sexuality, and men have been socialized to be dominant in sexual relationships.

In Africa, African women theologians have raised their voices against the oppression of patriarchy that women experience in the wider society as well as within the faith communities. In 1989, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians was launched as a community of African women theologians who came together to encourage research on women's experiences of religion, culture, politics and socio-economic structures in Africa. Members of the Circle have promoted the teaching of gender issues in theological curriculums, encouraged research on HIV and AIDS in relation to religion, and invited African male theologians to address ideals of masculinity that can be harmful in relation to HIV.

Theoretical framework

The African Religious Health Asset Framework[13] offers the possibility to study the individual in the context of the broader community and in relation to public health. This framework is developed by the African Religious Health Asset Programme which uses the concept 'religious health asset'. Religion may operate in various ways defined as both tangible and intangible religious health assets. Hospitals, clinics and home-based care may be termed direct or tangible religious health assets. However, religion can also have more indirect effects on health or health-seeking behaviour. Education, volunteerism, the individual sense of meaning, and the building of social capital are some examples of less visible religious health assets. To illustrate the framework in this study, faith communities can be viewed as 'tangible assets' such as a meeting place for intergenerational groups. At church and in youth meetings, young people receive education on various topics from their religious leaders, who in that way may influence community norms. This education is an example of 'intangible health assets'. Messages from religious leaders may influence reproductive health norms such as the timing of marriage, the use of contraceptives, and beliefs about sex before marriage.

The aim of the questionnaire study was to analyse attitudes to, and involvement in, HIV prevention for young people among religious leaders from three denominations. The questions examined here can help to guide interdisciplinary collaboration between religious leaders, health professionals, and HIV educators, to more effectively address HIV prevention for young people in faith communities.

Study setting

In 2015, the South African population reached 54 million people and in the same year approximately 6.1 million people were living with HIV, indicating that 11% of the total population is HIV positive. For women in their reproductive age, approximately one-fifth are HIV positive. KwaZulu-Natal, the province where the study was conducted in the region of Durban and Pietermaritzburg, is the second largest province in the country. The HIV prevalence in the age group 15-24 years is higher in KwaZulu-Natal (15.3%) than the overall HIV prevalence in the same age group in South

Africa as a whole (8.5%). Most people are infected during unprotected heterosexual intercourse, and this is also the most common mode of transmission among young people. The majority of South Africans (79.8%) are affiliated to Christian churches, and young people participate in various activities within these organisations from the early years of Sunday school to the stage of entering marriage.

Characteristics of the denominations included in the study

This study includes three Christian denominations that represent Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Within the Protestant churches, one Lutheran denomination and one Pentecostal denomination, Assemblies of God (AOG) have been included.

The most hierarchical church is the Catholic Church and its religious leaders tend to follow the church doctrine, whereas, religious leaders in the AOG are more independent in relation to church doctrines. In the Catholic and Lutheran churches, the ordained priests head one or more congregations, defined as a parish. Lay ministers lead the congregations in the parish when the priest is absent; therefore, lay ministers sometimes have similar roles as the ordained priest. The dean is the head of the parish priests. Within the AOG, the pastor leads one congregation and can be assisted by lay leaders, often called elders.

Regarding Christian norms of sexuality, Christianity in its various forms adopts the stance that sexual intercourse is reserved for the context of heterosexual marriage. Married partners are expected to be faithful to one other in a life-long commitment, and young people are taught that sexual abstinence prior to marriage is a Christian virtue. However, there are some variations in teachings on sexuality among different denominations.

According to the teachings of the Catholic Church, marriage is a sacrament ordained by God. Sexual intercourse is primarily meant for procreation and is only acceptable within marriage. As a result of the teaching of "Natural Law", any artificial birth control methods will "deprive the nature" of man and woman, and is therefore not allowed. However, the church recognizes "the weakness of men" and has compassion for those who find adherence to the teaching of the church on sexuality difficult or even impossible. Nevertheless, it is the duty of the priests and leadership in the Catholic Church to ensure that members know these teachings on marriage and contraception. From a contemporary Lutheran Christian perspective, the goal should be to save all human life. Therefore, members should strive for abstinence before and faithfulness in marriage, but individuals must also be practical and protect life with available appropriate methods, including condoms. Pentecostal churches and their leadership are more independent compared with both Lutheran and Catholic churches. Therefore the teachings in these churches may be more dependent on the individual religious leader.

Official policies on HIV within the denominations

Catholic social teaching underpins the HIV prevention messages of the Catholic Church which strongly emphasises sexual abstinence before marriage and does not encourage condom use. In later years, the Catholic Church in KwaZulu-Natal has adopted a life-skill education programme for young people called 'Education for Life', to help young people adhere to the prevention messages from their church. The Lutheran church has a policy on HIV that promotes the ABC approach (Abstinence, Be faithful, Condomise). The policy within the AOG encourages sexual abstinence for youth, and condoms are only encouraged for discordant married couples.

Results and background data of participants

The questionnaires were collected from religious leaders (n=215), from three denominations in 2008, when they convened at regional meetings in KwaZulu-Natal. To be included in the study, participants were expected to serve as a priest, deacon, or as lay minister in one of the three denominations. Only 29 were female and served as ministers (5) or lay ministers (24). The majority (66%) were 50–79 years old and worked as a priest/minister/pastor (53%). Almost half (48%) of the religious leaders had education from a university, almost a third from a seminary (32%), and 20% had primary or secondary level of education. Religious affiliation was almost equally divided by the three denominations: Catholic (31%), Lutheran (38%) and Assemblies of God (31%). The majority (70%) had worked 0–19 years in their current position and were married (64%).

Policies on HIV

Regarding policies, only 46% of the religious leaders in the survey answered that their denomination had a policy on HIV, and 42% responded that their local church had one. However, committees working on HIV issues in the local churches were more common, as reported by 54% of the religious leaders. Concerning denominational variations, more Catholic (57%) and Lutheran (43%) leaders reported that their local church had a policy on HIV compared with AOG (25%) leaders. Similarly, more Catholic (56%) and Lutheran (74%) compared with AOG (27%) leaders reported that their local church had a committee working with HIV-related issues.

Education on HIV among religious leaders

Over half (60%) of the religious leaders had received some training on HIV prevention, most commonly from their own denominational institution (47%), or from health institutions (33%) or other FBOs (33%). Only 21% of the respondents had received training on HIV during their theological training. The majority (73%) expressed interest in further training if they were offered a course on "pastoral training in HIV/AIDS". Also, the majority (>97%) of the religious leaders were interested in topics in such a training course that are important for HIV prevention, for example education for youth on sexuality, HIV prevention and life skills, and

counselling for people living with HIV. However, condom use as an HIV prevention topic was of interest to only 65% of respondents. In an open-ended question on other possible topics of value to include in a training programme, the following issues came up: Christian understanding of sexuality and sexual relationships, Christian understanding of sickness and death, family life, cultural morals in the modern context, human rights, attitudes towards people living with HIV, women and children abuse, and medical and financial issues regarding HIV. Furthermore, the impact of previous training on HIV with involvement in HIV prevention was analysed. The result showed that religious leaders who had received training on HIV and AIDS were more likely to report that their church had run a life skills programme for young people in the previous 6 months. Also, these religious leaders were more likely to have taken an HIV test themselves.

HIV prevention within faith communities
Religious leaders agreed or strongly agreed that ministers (94%), youth leaders (93%) or a specialist on HIV (95%), were responsible for educating about HIV prevention to young people who attended church. Religious leaders agreed or strongly agreed to the following HIV prevention messages to young people: preach abstinence from premarital sex (98%), educate on sexuality and life-skills (97%), reduce the number of sexual partners (82%), and inform youth about condoms (69%). Respondents who would include messages on condom use to young people varied with denomination: Catholic (63%), Lutheran (84%), and AOG (56%). A majority of religious leaders (78%) agreed or strongly agreed to the statement: 'Youth aged 15-24 years in my congregation/s are sexually active before marriage'. More Catholic (86%) and Lutheran (90%) respondents supported the statement than AOG (52%) respondents. With respect to youth programmes, 39% of the respondents reported their church had run a life-skills education programme for youth in the last six months.

Gender issues in HIV prevention messages to young people
Religious leaders' advice to a girl and a boy aged 17 who occasionally have sex was examined. With respect to leaders from different denominations, certain differences in attitudes emerged: Catholic (14%) and AOG (32%) respondents were more negative to contraceptives than Lutheran (46%) respondents. Similarly, fewer Catholic religious leaders (38%) would advise a girl to use condoms and contraceptives, than Lutheran (85%) and AOG (66%) leaders. In addition, fewer Catholic (33%) and AOG (60%) respondents would advise a boy to use condoms than Lutheran (86%) respondents.

HIV related stigma
Questions measuring stigma revealed that the large majority (88%) of the religious leaders were positive about letting a colleague who is living with

HIV continue to work as a minister. The majority (65%) of the religious leaders knew a church member who was HIV positive.

More Catholic (77%) and Lutheran (70%) leaders than AOG (46%) leaders knew a church member who was HIV-positive. Concerning HIV testing, more than half (58%) of those surveyed had taken an HIV test, and among those who had not been tested, 63% answered that they were willing to go for an HIV test.

Discussion of findings

Identifying asset in HIV prevention for young people

We started this chapter from the premise that FBOs and religious leaders are important actors in response to the HIV epidemic. Further, that religion may present what has been described as both a tangible and an intangible health asset. Inspired by the African Religious Health Assets Framework, the following section discusses the identified assets important to HIV prevention for young people in faith communities.

Firstly, the local church in its own right is a tangible asset, as a meeting place for young people. Furthermore, it was found that religious leaders do talk about sexuality and HIV in their churches. Secondly, the large majority of religious leaders thought that it was their responsibility to educate young people about HIV. This felt responsibility is an important starting point to facilitate HIV education in faith communities. Third, more than half of religious leaders had received some training about HIV, most of them from their own denominational institution. Thereby the faith communities show that they value educated leadership on these issues. Moreover, religious leaders were positive about further education defined as "pastoral training in HIV/AIDS", and about topics important for HIV prevention. This is essential as the results indicate that religious leaders who were trained about HIV were also more likely to report that their church had run life skills programmes for young people. Also, these religious leaders were more likely to have been tested for HIV. As HIV testing is a vital component in the overall prevention strategy in South Africa, religious leaders could become role models and encourage young people to go for HIV testing.

Challenges for HIV prevention in Christian communities

Although we used an asset approach as a point of departure for this study, the findings also highlight some of the dilemmas for faith communities in effectively responding to the HIV epidemic. As the African Religious Health Assets Framework mainly looks at resources already existing in the community, this framework is less useful when discussing problems in HIV prevention for young people. In the following section we therefore move beyond the asset framework and draw attention to the challenges for faith communities on the topic of HIV prevention.

Regarding HIV prevention messages and young people's sexuality, the strong emphasis on premarital sexual abstinence may not reflect the lived experiences of young people. Rather, the focus on abstinence appears to

be based on the traditional Christian values about sexuality. The view that sexual intercourse is primarily meant for procreation and only acceptable within marriage forms the basis of the HIV prevention messages of most faith communities. However, to delay sexual debut until marriage may be difficult for South African youth due to the increased age at marriage. With a median age of first marriage of 25 years in women and 31 years in men in rural KwaZulu-Natal,[14] the period between sexual debut and formal marriage has been extended. Furthermore, the literature suggests that the HIV prevention messages or abstinence messages are inappropriate for young people who may be sexually active.[15] This study reports diverse attitudes towards condom use among religious leaders. Additionally, the support observed among some of the Catholic leaders for condom use, given to young people whom they knew were sexually active, indicates that these leaders did not adhere to the policy of their denomination. In this way, religious leaders appear to promote abstinence-plus programmes, even though they themselves may not express it in the same way. Appreciation of the diversity of views and of religious leaders who advise the use of condoms needs further recognition.

To summarize the discussion on prevention messages, young people in faith communities need messages that correspond to their current life situation. Young people who are in relationships and want to live in line with the core values of their church may need encouragement and support to do so. However, the faith communities also have to acknowledge that not all young people choose (for whatever reason) to follow their church's traditional values regarding sexuality. Different messages are therefore needed to protect the health of young people.

Few religious leaders reported that their church had run a life skills programme in the previous 6 months, even though they believed that young people in their churches were sexually active before marriage. Further, the study highlighted an advantage for young people in the Lutheran and Catholic churches versus the AOG, concerning HIV prevention efforts.

There may be several reasons for the differences between the denominations response to the HIV epidemic. One of the fundamental differences among theologians is between those who read the Bible as literal truth, and those who take a more historical or contextualized view. The different interpretations have differing views about how the scriptures should be applied to contemporary issues. Another difference lies in the understanding of the HIV epidemic. For some Christians, HIV prevention is understood as a moral issue, while for others, it is a public health problem, a gender issue or a social justice problem. How the denomination is structured may also influence how policies are followed in the local church. In this study, religious leaders' unfamiliarity with policies on HIV in their own denominations indicates that policies on HIV need to be strengthened through the denominational structures.

Holding judgemental attitudes towards people living with HIV is one main barrier for successful responses to the epidemic. Though not all

respondents agreed that a minister who is HIV positive should be allowed to continue his/her work, a majority supported the statement, which suggested less judgemental attitudes towards people living with HIV. More Catholic and Lutheran respondents knew someone in their congregation who was living with HIV than members from the AOG, and respondents from these denominations more often reported their local church had policies and committees on HIV indicating these denominations work more closely with people living with HIV.

This study is not without limitations. First, low attendance of religious leaders at the regional meetings contributed to the small sample size. In these congregations, many women are lay leaders and do not attend regional meetings, which resulted in few female participants. It is possible that the low number of female participants has biased our findings, however, the results reflect the current situation in South Africa with predominantly male church leadership. Therefore, further investigation and comparison of HIV prevention messages between female and male lay leadership is warranted. Secondly, participants were reached at regional meetings and it is possible that religious leaders answered the questionnaire from the official standpoint of their denomination, or felt pressure to do so.

Conclusion

Faith communities in South Africa have the potential to increase their involvement in HIV prevention as religious leaders recognise young people as sexually active, and feel that they have a responsibility to educate them. Furthermore, religious leaders show interest in discussing topics regarding young people's sexuality that may have an impact on young people's health. Although most faith communities do not run life-skill education programmes, there appears to be an advantage for young people in the Lutheran and Catholic churches concerning HIV prevention efforts. To strengthen the capacity of faith communities in their HIV response, I suggest that religious leaders, including lay leaders, need further learning opportunities, better knowledge about the policies of their denomination on HIV, and skills to initiate HIV prevention programmes for young people. Furthermore, positive attitudes towards HIV testing indicate that an increased advocacy of HIV testing from religious leaders is feasible.

Recovering the biblical story of Tamar: Training for transformation, doing development

Gerald O. West

Summary

The Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research in South Africa has worked for many years with the biblical story of the rape of Tamar, who is the daughter of King David, as a resource for engaging communities of faith in the area of gender violence and in the area of masculinity. This chapter focuses on the Ujamaa Centre's 'theory of change', reflecting on how our work with this biblical story offers critical capacity for social transformation. The chapter delineates the various elements that constitute the Ujamaa Centre's theory of change, before going on to explain the particular 'structural' understanding of social change that the Ujamaa Centre works with and how the Ujamaa Centre understands the relationship between social change and religious change, using two Contextual Bible Studies on the 2 Samuel 13 as an example. The chapter concludes with some reflection on the importance of recognising how religious faith inhabits the intersections between various social struggles, enabling developmental practitioners to become more holistic in their work.

Introduction

In 1996, what was then the Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB) and is now the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research (Ujamaa Centre), the Centre began doing 'Contextual Bible Study'[1] work on the biblical story of Tamar, the daughter of King David.[2] While King David is a familiar figure in Christian churches and faith-based organisations, his daughter who was raped within his household by his son is less well known. Tamar has been deliberately marginalised in the formal liturgical life of the church, with her story hardly ever being read on a Sunday within church lectionaries.

It is important to note at the outset, that by working with this biblical text the Ujamaa Centre is not doing missionary work; it is doing the work of social transformation and development. The Ujamaa Centre does its Contextual Bible Study (CBS)[3] work within community-based organisations that invite the Ujamaa Centre to work with them as they struggle to use their faith resources – like the Bible – for the transformation of their communities. In the case of this particular CBS on the story of Tamar, it was a cross-sector of rural and urban African women who asked the Ujamaa Centre to work with them on the pressing issue of gender-based violence. The work that was done together has generated a series of CBS on what has become known

as the Tamar Campaign which focuses on gender-based violence, and a series of CBS focussing on men, which has become known as a Redemptive Masculinities series.[4]

Since 1996 the Tamar CBS has been taken up all around the world, particularly in contexts where the Bible continues to be a local community-based resource. Major international ecumenical networks like the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the related Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA), and significant continental African ecumenical organisations like the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) have adopted the Tamar CBS as part of their own gender programmes. In addition, the Ujamaa Centre has trained trainers from these and many other faith-based organisations, enabling them to use CBS methodology for the construction of their own 'local' CBS resources.[5] More locally within South Africa the Ujamaa Centre has produced research on the impact of the Tamar CBS for the Foundation for Human Rights.[6]

The Ujamaa Centre has recently embarked on a research project to document how and with what effects the Tamar CBS and related gender CBS work has been used in various contexts around the world. This is an important element of the Ujamaa Centre's work, rooted as the work is in the praxis cycle of action-reflection-action-reflection. Gathering an account of what the CBS work of the Ujamaa Centre has enabled elsewhere in the world will add to the Ujamaa Centre's own understanding of how and why its CBS work has the capacity to facilitate local community-based social transformation.

Central to the CBS work of the Ujamaa Centre is a 'theory of change' that draws deeply on the praxis cycle. From the praxis cycle the Ujamaa Centre has come to understand how and why its CBS work enables local faith-based formations to use the Bible for survival, liberation, and fullness of life – to resist the forces of death and to align with the God of life. This essay elaborates on what we in the Ujamaa Centre have discerned to-date about our theory of change, using the Tamar CBS as an example.

Theory of change

The Ujamaa Centre's theory of change is founded on the foundational tenet of liberation theology: the epistemological privilege of the poor.[7] The knowledge of the poor is vital to any project of social transformation. Development cannot be done without the presence of the poor themselves. They are the agents of their own development and they have assets; among these assets is religion.[8] Faith, and faith-based resources like the Bible, are potential assets which the poor (and other marginalised sectors) can deploy in projects of social transformation. By engaging with gender-based violence, it is the presence and participation and knowledge of the habitual victims of gender-based violence – women – which provides the starting point of social transformation. Their epistemology is fundamental to an analysis of gender-based violence and their epistemology provides the

necessary 'logic' for the forms of action which they might choose to take as part of a transformative project.

For these reasons, the Ujamaa Centre privileges organised communities of poor and marginalised women in its gender-based work. The use of the term 'organised' is deliberate. The organised poor and marginalised are central to our theory of change. By being 'organised', poor and marginalised sectors have already constructed their own safe and sequestered sites, and have already begun to assemble their own discourse concerning their oppression and marginalisation. They have already forged a vocabulary for talking about their realities, and they are in (partial) control of their own space.

Here, the Ujamaa Centre's praxis is informed by the work of James Scott. The organised marginalised have "a shared interest in jointly creating a discourse of dignity, of negation, and of justice". "They have, in addition", Scott continues, "a shared interest in concealing a social site apart from domination where such a hidden transcript can be elaborated in comparative safety".[9] As Scott indicates, a safe social site enables an articulation. Put differently, the question posed by Gayatri Spivak, of whether or not the subaltern can speak,[10] should be recast as a question which takes space seriously. A more appropriate question would be: 'Where can the subaltern speak?' For as Scott so eloquently argues, subordinate classes are less constrained at the level of thought and ideology than they are at the level of political action and struggle "since they can in secluded settings speak with comparative safety".[11] Human dignity, even in the most damaged and denigrated subaltern, demands some form of 'speaking'.[12] How the subaltern speaks depends almost entirely on local 'sectoral' control of space.

This is why women's faith-based groups are such important sites for dealing with gender-based violence. These are sites that have already been established by women in the face of patriarchy, with particular faith-based symbols and rituals playing a significant role in securing these sites.[13] CBS work only takes place in such sites when and if the Ujamaa Centre is invited by those who control particular sites to enter their site and to collaborate with them.

Such sites are already full of resources and assets. The constraint on marginalised African women is not their lack of assets, but how some of these assets, like the Bible, have been used by the dominant patriarchal structures and systems that govern their lives. The Bible is interpreted by institutional patriarchy, including the church, as consisting of a singular voice and conveying a singular message. This is where and why the Ujamaa Centre is invited to work with such women's groups. The resources of biblical scholarship enable the Bible to be read as a text with divergent and even contesting voices. We read unfamiliar biblical texts and we re-read familiar biblical texts in unfamiliar ways. The resources of biblical scholarship enable the detail of the Bible to be visible, unconstrained by the dominant theological frameworks of institutional religion (or the

naive and uncritical notions of religion prevalent in 'secular' development agencies).

The story of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22 is a good example. This text has little or no presence in the public life of the church anywhere in the world. Most lectionaries do not include this portion of the Bible in their set readings for a formal Sunday service. In our experience with this biblical text among women, we regularly find that they are unaware that this story is in the Bible, and although this story is a "text of terror,"[14] it has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to evoke the voice of a biblical woman and the kindred voices of contemporary women who share her experience of violence and abuse. As the Ujamaa Centre has often been told: "If this story is in the Bible we will not be silent." Recovering Tamar's voice – a remarkably articulate voice – has provided additional vocabulary – sacred vocabulary – with which contemporary women can tell their own stories and work together to bring about the transformation of the patriarchal systems that both construct and condone gender-based violence.

As previously mentioned, James Scott offers a thick description of how marginalised sectors, like women, construct their own discourse among themselves, describing how the first articulation by a member of the group has the potential to set in motion a "crystallization" whereby the other members of the group recognise "close relatives" of their own experience, connecting them to a "single power grid".[15] Adopting a theoretical stance similar to that of Scott, John Holloway describes how the revolt of the dignity of the marginalised "derives its strength from the uniting of dignities. Dignity resonates. As it vibrates, it sets off vibrations in other dignities, an unstructured, possibly discordant resonance".[16] Drawing on the work of Jean and John Comaroff, James Cochrane describes the "incipient theology" of marginalised and traumatised sectors as residing in the continuum between the conscious and the unconscious, "the realm of partial recognition, of inchoate awareness, of ambiguous perception, and, sometimes of creative tension: that liminal space of human experience in which people discern acts and facts but cannot or do not order them into narrative descriptions or even into articulate conceptions of the world".[17] "Through a long process of self-constitution that depends upon a history of growing consciousness through communicative action", Cochrane goes on to argue, organised groups like faith-based women's groups develop "a foregrounded subjectivity", with the capacity both to speak to one another and to speak to others outside the community.[18]

Offering a similar analysis from within trauma theory, Philippe Denis argues that safe space which facilitates both "the elaboration of the painful experience and its validation through empathetic listening" enables a narrative of the traumatic experience to take shape.[19] "Perhaps", continues Denis, "with difficulty and not without tears, they find the words to tell their story".[20] When somebody tells a story within the carefully facilitated processes of CBS, "the incoherent succession of events, perceptions and feelings that characterised the original [traumatic] event is reorganised

into a coherent narrative".[21] In the presence of the organised group a resource they have to offer is that of 'validation', for validation "usually happens in a safe environment", and that when it does, the "[v]alidation of our experience by others allows us to open ourselves to a painful memory, explore it and work through it".[22] Even those most 'atomised' and traumatised by gender-based violence are enabled by safe and sacred space and the resources of CBS to give 'voice' to their embodied trauma, and in so doing to contribute to the formation and mobilisation of the group.[23]

The dignity of Tamar, present in her gracious and caring attitude to her brother, present in her analysis and articulation of why her brother should not 'force' her, present in her refusal to be silenced after she has been raped, invokes and kindles the dignity of contemporary women who have come to connect with her story in the Bible. Tamar's 'discourse', evident in what she says and does, offers additional resources for the articulation of contemporary incipient women's theologies, which, when corporately constructed within a safe and sacred space, offer resources with which to confront the dominant forces of patriarchal control of the Bible, the church, and society at large. In terms of our theory of change, the participatory CBS 'processes' and 'products' (see below) provide an array of additional assets or resources which organised groups of women can combine with the assets they already have and with which they can work for social transformation.

Social change

In the late 1980s the South African biblical scholar Itumeleng Mosala argued that a 'critical' reading of the Bible enabled a critical 'reading' of context.[24] Put negatively, Mosala is concerned that "unstructural understanding of the Bible may simply reinforce and confirm unstructural understanding of the present".[25] CBS is a response to this recognition, offering a critical-structural-systemic pedagogical framework with which to re-read the Bible. The dominant framework within which the Bible is read by the church, civil society, and even development agencies is as a book with a singular voice and a singular message focussed on the singular individual. Biblical scholarship knows a quite different 'text'. For biblical scholarship, the Bible is a historically, geographically, and ideologically diverse text, with any particular text being constituted by redactional layers, each of which has its own distinctive social location and ideology.[26]
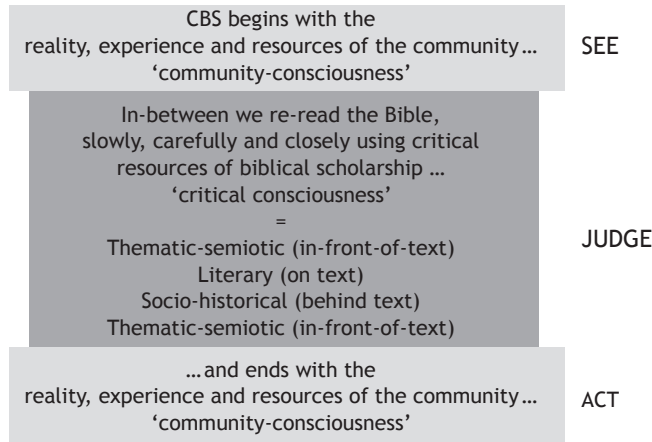
Contextual Bible Study offers such detail to communities of the poor and marginalised, but in a manner that is pedagogically enabling. There are various ways of describing CBS praxis, but one way of conceptualising our work is to recognise a series of interconnected 'movements' that shape the collaborative interpretive-reading process. The overarching movement is that of 'See-Judge-Act', a process formed in the worker-priest movement in Europe in the 1930–40s.[27] This movement begins within the organised formations of the poor and marginalised as they analyse ('See') their context, 'from below'. This analysis of 'reality' is then brought into dialogue with the 'prophetic' voices of the Bible, enabling 'the God of life' to address

('Judge') the social reality. Through this dialogue with the Bible 'the shape of the gospel'[28] is used to plan a series of actions (Act) that will bring about transformation of the social reality, so that all may have life, and have it abundantly.

Within this overarching movement there is another movement, from 'community-consciousness' to 'critical-consciousness' to 'community-consciousness'. The 'See' moment of social analysis generates a particular contextual concern that becomes the 'theme' for the Bible study. The engagement with the Bible (the Judge component) begins with a community's 'thematic' appropriation of the biblical text being used (community-consciousness), allowing every participant to share their particular understanding of the text. This moment not only makes it clear to the participants that the Bible study belongs to them, it also offers a reception history of that text's presence in a particular community. The Bible study then moves into a series of re-readings of the text, slowing down the process of interpretation, using the resources of socially engaged biblical scholarship (critical-consciousness). The particular sets of 'critical' tools that are used by biblical scholarship are offered to the participants as additional resources with which to engage the biblical text. After a series of 'critical-consciousness' questions, the Bible study moves back into 'community-consciousness', as the participants appropriate (en-Act) the biblical text for the particular social project identified in the 'See' moment.

With respect to the particular critical resources of biblical scholarship, there is another layer of movement. The movement begins within the 'See' moment with an initial thematic 'in-front-of-the-text' engagement with the text ('community-consciousness'), bringing the generative contextual theme of the community workshop into dialogue with a particular biblical text. The interpretive process then slows down, entering the 'critical-consciousness' moment via a literary engagement with the text. Though a form of 'critical' engagement, the choice to begin critical engagement 'on-the-text' is deliberate because it offers an egalitarian entry point to 'critical-consciousness', enabling all participants to engage with the detail of the text. In most cases, literary engagement leads 'behind-the-text' to a socio-historical engagement with the text, as participants probe the world that produced the text, seeking for lines of connection between both the literary dimensions and the socio-historical dimensions of the text and their contextual realities, seeking lines of connection between contemporary communities of faith and struggle and 'biblical' communities of faith and struggle. While these dimensions of the biblical text are the focus of these second and third moments, the process moves in the fourth moment back 'in-front-of-the-text' (into 'community-consciousness'), as the participants now appropriate this critically reconstituted text for their particular project of social transformation ('Act'). Together, as the Tamar CBS examples that follow in the next section illustrate, these concentric and intersecting movements constitute 'the Contextual Bible Study process' (see the diagram below).

CBS begins with the reality, experience and resources of the community ... 'community-consciousness'	SEE
In-between we re-read the Bible, slowly, carefully and closely using critical resources of biblical scholarship ... 'critical consciousness' = Thematic-semiotic (in-front-of-text) Literary (on text) Socio-historical (behind text) Thematic-semiotic (in-front-of-text)	JUDGE
...and ends with the reality, experience and resources of the community ... 'community-consciousness'	ACT

As already indicated, when it comes to working (critically) with the biblical text, CBS incorporates four 'critical' moments within a coherent movement. The first moment is 'in-front-of-the-text', a direct and unmediated semiotic-thematic encounter between text and reader. The second moment and the third moment introduces or offers (more) critical modes of reading into the CBS process, beginning with literary analysis and then socio-historical analysis. The fourth moment returns to appropriation, but appropriation of a 'different', historically distanced, text. That appropriation which takes place demonstrates the presence of what Michel Foucault refers to as a 'heterotopia'. Through distantiation (to use Paul Ricoeur's phrase)[29] the text becomes (more) 'other', and therefore a potential heterotopic site. As Foucault observes, one of the features of a heterotopia is that they "are most often linked to slices of time", which "open onto what might be termed ... heterochronies".[30] However, because Foucault believes, incorrectly, that time, unlike space, "was detached from the sacred in the nineteenth century,"[31] betraying his European social location (and the social location of many development agencies) – he is unable to recognise that sacred heterotopias are sites that connect across sanctified time, so that, for example, a CBS can connect contemporary South African women with the biblical Tamar.

Implicit within these CBS processes, facilitation 'practices' are vital to CBS community-based work, enabling both 'group process' – the active participation of each participant – and the CBS process – the slow but steady procession through the three movements of CBS process.[32] Part of the 'conversion' of the socially engaged biblical scholar is becoming 're-schooled' as a facilitator, collaborating with other community-based facilitators so as to enable participatory transformation.

So CBS begins and ends under the control of a particular local community, who use the resources of the CBS, along with a range of other resources,

to plan for and implement community-based action. The socially engaged biblical scholar is already involved in the struggles of, and work with, particular communities for survival, liberation, life, and so the invitation (and motivation) to do CBS together comes from within this larger praxis. More than half a century of liberation hermeneutics has demonstrated the usefulness of the critical capacities of biblical scholarship to particular liberation struggles. More than twenty-five years of CBS has demonstrated the usefulness of this particular form of liberation hermeneutics to a range of social struggles (both in South Africa and beyond).

CBS processes are focussed on generating a critical-structural-systemic interpretation of the Bible, reinforcing and providing additional critical tools to the capacities already present in the organised community-based group. As Mosala made clear, such structural interpretive resources are crucial not only to a reading of the Bible but also to a reading of reality. The unstructural-individual focus of the dominant forms of Christianity are the default orientation within the church, civil society, and development agencies. And yet religion and the Bible are far more complex, requiring a more critical engagement. CBS does this, and in so doing provides an array of additional tools for a particular community-based group to engage both with a significant faith resource – the Bible – as well as with the structural-systemic dimensions of their realities and so too of the potential areas of social change with these realities.

Religious change

What Mosala is saying, in other words, is that social change requires religious change. This is a central tenet of the Ujamaa Centre's theory of change. Religion cannot be left 'as is' while development work is done. In order for development work to be done, religion, which is part of the very fabric and scaffolding of life for millions of Africans, must be transformed, otherwise it gets in the way of social transformation. CBS is about religious change.

The emphasis on the concept 'contextual' within 'Contextual Bible Study' is a recognition that religion must serve context. "True service submits itself to the cause which it serves, deeming that cause holy".[33] This is why the notion of the 'shape' of the gospel was so important to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Albert Nolan argued that what was determinant of the Christian faith (and indeed any faith) was that its 'shape' ought to be 'good news for the poor' (Luke 4:18).[34] The significance of faith for social change is that it should offer a particular shape or trajectory to social change, from the prophetic perspective of the poor and marginalised. And just as CBS offers a set of tools for a structural-systemic interpretation of the shape of scripture, so it offers a set of tools for a structural-systemic analysis of South African reality and a set of tools for a structural-systemic trajectory for social change. Method not content is the crucial concern here; CBS does not offer fixed biblical content, it offers a set of methods that are useful for biblical interpretation, social analysis, and social change.

Among the contextual realities that demand social transformation is the ongoing problem of violence against women and children. Colonialism, apartheid, and patriarchy have wreaked a vortex of havoc on African women and children. And while the Bible has voices that collude with and even inspire these destructive forces, the Ujamaa Centre has been working with 2 Samuel 13:1-22, an unfamiliar text in the liturgies and lectionaries of almost every Christian church, but a text that has demonstrated its capacity through CBS processes to empower women in their struggle against gender-based violence. The CBS we use has the following shape:

2 Samuel 13:1-22 is read aloud, preferably dramatically. After the text has been read a series of questions follow.

1. *Read 2 Samuel 13:1–22 together again in small groups. Share with each other what you think the text is about.*

Each small group is then asked to report back to the larger group. Each and every response to question one is summarized on newsprint. After the report-back, the participants return to their small groups to discuss the following questions.

2. *Who are the main characters in this story and what do we know about them?*
3. *What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar?*
4. *What does Tamar say and what does Tamar do? Focus carefully on each element of what Tamar says and does.*

When the small groups have finished their discussion, each group is invited to present a summary of their discussion. After this report-back the smaller groups reconvene and discuss the following questions.

5. *Are there women like Tamar in your church and/or community? Tell their story.*
6. *What resources are there in your area for survivors of rape?*

Once again, the small groups present their report-back to the plenary group. Creativity is particularly vital here, as often women find it difficult or are unable to articulate their responses. A drama or a drawing may be the only way in which some groups can report. Finally, each small group comes together to formulate an action plan.

7. *What will you now do in response to this Bible study?*

The action plan is either reported to the plenary or presented on newsprint for other participants to study after the Bible study.
   Questions 2, 3, and 4 are 'critical-consciousness' questions, slowing

down the reading process by inviting a re-reading of the literary features of the text (and through them opening up space to explore behind-the-text). On either side of these questions that explore the detail of the text are questions that embed the CBS in 'community-consciousness'. Among these questions each does its own critical work. Question 2 moves the CBS from the spontaneous and varied responses of the participants to a more considered focus on the detail of the text. A focus on character is form of analysis that anyone can do, and yet it is a form of critical analysis, enabling a recognition of the literary dimensions of the text.

Question 3 builds on this preliminary literary analysis, using the theme of gender-based violence to give shape to how the characters are analysed. Participants are enabled, via this question, to recognise the relational dimensions of patriarchy. Patriarchy is not about individual 'bad men'; it is about the structural-systemic systems that support male power. Question 3 probes this matrix of male power. Question 4 then shifts the focus from male power to female agency. Tamar is a 'victim' of rape; but she is much more than this, she is an articulate agent who talks back to power and acts against power. Through her speech and action, male power is both delineated and resisted.

More recently, we have constructed a variation on this CBS where we take up the challenge of the many women we have worked with to do work with 'their men' around notions of masculinity. The advent of HIV and AIDS and the more recent roll-out of ARVs (antiretroviral drugs) has enabled men to take responsibility for their sexuality and their masculinity. The Ujamaa Centre has been invited into this space, where we have worked with local communities in a quest for redemptive forms of masculinity. At the moment its form is somewhat flexible, but a relatively stable version of it is as follows:

1. *Have you heard this text (2 Samuel 13:1-22) read publically ... on a Sunday? Share with each other if and when and where you have heard this text read.*

2. *Who are the main characters in this story and what do we know about them?*

3. *What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar?*

4. *How would you characterize Amnon's masculinity in this text? Consider:*
   What prevents Amnon initially from acting on his love for Tamar (v2)?

   What is it that changes Amnon's love (v1) to sickness/lust (v2), and then enables him to act on his sickness/lust (v4-6)?

   How does he react to Tamar's arguments (v14)?

How does he behave after he has raped Tamar (v15-17)?

5. *What kind of man does Tamar expect or hope Amnon to be? What kind of man could Amnon be according to Tamar? What kind of man does Tamar want? Consider:*
   What does she say (v12-13,16), and what do each of the things she says tell us about her understanding of what it means to be 'a man'?

   What does she do (v19), and what do each of things she does tell us about her understanding of what it means to be 'a man'?

6. *What are the dominant forms of masculinity in our contexts (in various age groups), and what alternative forms of masculinity can we draw on from our cultural and religious traditions?*

7. *How can we raise the issue of masculinity in our various gender and age-groups?*

Questions 2 and 3 are the same as in the Tamar CBS and accomplish similar critical capacity building. Question 4 in the Redemptive Masculinity version is another critical question, probing notions of 'masculinity' in this biblical story (and providing resources for an analysis of masculinity in contemporary South African society). Question 4 also juxtaposes Amnon and Tamar, deconstructing the dominant stereotypes about male self-control and rationality. In this biblical story it is Tamar who is self-controlled and rational and Amnon who is emotional. Question 5 is also a critical question, allowing each of the elements of Tamar's argument to deconstruct dominant notions of masculinity and to reconstruct alternative masculinities.

These two Contextual Bible Studies inhabit the dialogical space between the epistemology of our primary dialogue partners – women who have experienced abuse – and the detail of the text made apparent through the critical capacities of biblical scholarship. Each CBS has the capacity to explore the personal-psychological and the social-structural dimensions of each of their respective areas of focus, namely gender-based violence and masculinity. In both cases, the sets of critical-consciousness questions are followed by a set of community-consciousness questions where participants are able to apply and practice the critical tools they have acquired through the critical consciousness questions. If the CBS site is a safe and sacred space the resources of the CBS processes can be combined with the resources the community-based group already has to plan for and implement forms of action for social change.

CBS is not about knowing one's Bible better. CBS is about changing an unjust world, using the Bible as a potential 'weapon' of struggle.[35] CBS is also uniquely placed to recognise and participate in the intersections between the related struggles of the poor and marginalised.

Intersecting struggles

The Bible is already a significant resource in many African communities. CBS comes alongside this community-based resource and 'redeploys' it for social transformation, liberating it from it the dominant and normative theological paradigm, a paradigm that emphasises the personal and individual dimensions of faith. The poor and marginalised already know the God of life, but their Bibles are more ambiguous. The dominant theologies of our time tend to draw on those trajectories within the Bible that blame the poor for being poor, blame the unemployed for being unemployed, blame the HIV-positive for being HIV-positive, blame the abused for being abused, blame the disabled for being disabled, etc.[36] CBS recovers other biblical trajectories, those that situate the poor, the unemployed,[37] the HIV-positive,[38] the abused, the disabled, etc. within particular social and theological structures and systems, enabling these blamed sectors to understand the structures and systems that marginalise them. By doing so, CBS releases the blamed/stigmatised, both theologically and socially, enabling them to reassert their dignity and to work for structural and systemic change.

The theological system that is used to individualise and so blame the woman abused by gender-based violence is the same theological system that is used to individualise and blame the unemployed person and the HIV-positive person. CBS 'reveals' this theological system, exposing it as just one theological system, not 'the' theological system. CBS deconstructs the dominant theological systems and offers other more redemptive theological systems, following other trajectories in the Bible.

The very act of interpreting the Bible in other ways develops resilience among the poor and marginalised. Because the Ujamaa Centre works with a wide constituency, most of whom are from marginalised communities, we can reflect across our work more generally on the kinds of capacities that CBS offers. Among these is the capacity to recognise that our socio-cultural, Christian, and biblical traditions are not monovocal; they are contested. Psycho-social resilience has been recognised as a substantive resource in trauma theory. The work of the Ujamaa Centre indicates that building the capacity of marginalised sectors to interpret the Bible from and for their own experience, recognising that there are contending biblical theological trajectories or voices, nurtures what we might call the 'interpretive resilience' of those struggling to live abundant lives in the context of gender-based violence (and other forms of oppression) in a context like South Africa.

Conclusion

CBS is a resource for recognising and reading the neglected trajectories of the Bible, those that focus on the structural and system dimensions of life. And while social activists and development agencies are adept at analysing society in structural and systemic terms, they tend to revert to a default individualist understanding of the Bible. But CBS is not simply another

tool for development practitioners to wield in their work. CBS requires the presence of the poor and marginalised to activate and authenticate it. Tamar tells her story of gender-based violence in 2 Samuel 13:1-22. CBS offers a safe and sacred framework for millions of contemporary Tamar's to tell their stories and to work together, with those who are willing to come among them, for social transformation.

International development engages with religion: How to achieve positive outcomes for women

Emma Tomalin

Summary

In this paper I develop two lines of enquiry to explore the impact of the 'turn to religion' in development policy and practice on the goals of women's empowerment and gender equality. The first of these highlights that the positive impact of the fact that religion is beginning to be taken 'seriously' in international development, may be limited by a lack of clarity about, and attention to, the gender implications of engaging with religion. I conclude that although there is ever more need for development donors and organisations to consider religion as a relevant factor in pursuit of gender equality, there is no clear route to achieving this. Religion and religious institutions may have the potential to be empowering and status-raising for women in some situations but not so in others. The second line of enquiry addresses an issue that international development actors are likely to encounter when engaging with faith communities around gender matters. Where international development actors stress gender equality, some religious actors approach this debate through emphasising gender equity based on the idea of the complementarity of male and female roles (i.e. they are equal but different). I conclude that although it is possible in some settings to begin a conversation about ending gender discrimination which could usefully make reference to equity, this must be done without losing sight of the overall goal of equality. More generally, there is a need for development actors to acquire a fuller understanding of what constitutes women's empowerment and status-raising in different contexts, and an openness to include a diversity of views and strategies even when they might seem initially to be in tension with secular feminisms.

Introduction

My aim in this chapter is to explore the impact of the 'turn to religion' within development policy and practice on women's lives, in particular the implications for the goals of women's empowerment and gender equality, which are at the heart of modern development aims. While much religion as it has been understood and practised throughout history, and across the globe today, would seem to support patriarchal values that have the potential to oppress women and limit their life chances, the recognition that religion also offers the potential to empower women, both in their spiritual lives as well as their social lives, has been the focus of scholarship emerging from within feminist theology, religious studies and, increasingly, feminist work within the social sciences. This body of research recognises not

only that religion can be significant for women in terms of their religious beliefs and participation, but that this is not separate from their social, economic and political roles in society more broadly. Thus, in contexts where religious traditions are both patriarchal and socially powerful, the impact of religion on all aspects of women's lives is far-reaching. With regard to the achievement of gender equality, conflict between religion and gender justice has implications for a range of issues relevant to women's lives and for gender relations in general, including reproductive rights, sexuality, marriage, legal equality, violence, women's civil status and harmful traditional practices. Moreover, the rise of religious extremisms and fundamentalisms across a variety of faith traditions and geographical areas has exacerbated the risks for women in ways that can be harmful to their physical and mental health.

In such contexts it can often be unappealing or impossible for women to turn their backs on religion when it is disempowering and to instead pursue secular feminist strategies.[1] While much feminism across the globe since the 1960s has tended to be secular in orientation, stemming from the belief that religion is unlikely to be able to provide women with resources to better their lives, this model has been rejected in many contexts for being inappropriate and ethnocentric.[2] Instead, women have developed various styles of 'religious feminisms' that aim to reinterpret religious traditions in ways that promote greater justice. Although many of these religious feminisms have taken shape in developing contexts, they have tended to be overlooked by the international development community until recently.

In this paper I develop two lines of enquiry. The first draws attention to the fact that while religion is beginning to be taken 'seriously' in international development, the positive impact of this can be inhibited by a lack of clarity about, and attention to, the gender implications of engaging with religion. As Pearson and Tomalin have noted "there is an anxiety that in the rush to engage with a hitherto neglected group of stakeholders, the painful journey over the last 35 years to mainstream development gender equity objectives into overall development strategy is being sidelined".[3] As I will argue, the need for development donors and organisations to consider religion as a relevant factor is ever more important, but the empirical evidence suggests that there is no clear route to achieving this. Religion and religious institutions may have the potential to be 'empowering' to women in some situations, but not so in others. Considerations of how development research, policy and practice engage with religion are just as important as arguments about the need to engage with it in the first place.

My second line of enquiry addresses an issue that international development actors may encounter when engaging with faith communities around gender matters. Where international development actors stress *gender equality*, it is not uncommon to find that some religious actors, although not all, approach this debate through emphasising *gender equity* based on the idea of the *complementarity* of male and female roles. These are based upon religious understandings of the difference between men

and women and their divinely ordained roles and responsibilities. Instead of a focus upon equality per se, this is qualified by a claim of men and women being equal but *different*. Is this evidence of the intractability of secular and religious positions about how to approach and overcome gender discrimination, or can there be a practical way forward that can facilitate greater gender justice for women in all settings?

Development, religion and gender: progress and pitfalls

Western donor driven development, emerging after WWII, has had an uneasy relationship with religion and it has been largely ignored within development research, policy and practice. There has been an underlying assumption that religion will disappear as societies modernise but also that it is problematic, since it supports worldviews and practices that often run counter to progressive and egalitarian development goals, such as gender equality. 'Gender and development' (GAD) programmes that aim to pursue equality for women and to secure their human rights also tended to ignore or reject religion, either for being irrelevant or because patriarchal religious teachings and practices are considered to be one factor amongst many that contribute to women's unequal treatment.

One of the earliest critiques of this, from within development studies, can be found in a special issue in 1999 of the Oxfam journal *Gender and Development*, comprising a collection of articles focussing on the links between 'religion, gender and development'. The collection emerged against the backdrop of questions about why "much development thought has dismissed religion, its rituals and its customs, as at best irrelevant and at worst a barrier to economic, social, and political 'progress'."[4] This, it was argued, "has had, and continues to have, a dramatic negative impact on economic, social and political development, and the attainment of equality for women."[5] If we ignore religion then we are unlikely to be able to take full account of the different factors that impact upon gender inequality. Moreover, in highly religious settings it can be more useful to work within religious frameworks and to seek to uncover teachings and practices that promote the equal treatment of men and women.

Over the past decade or so this neglectful attitude has receded to some degree, and religious issues are being given more consideration through the direct engagement of development donors with faith-based organisations and religious leaders – which recognise the significant social capital afforded to women via involvement in religious associations – as well as consideration of the role that religion can play in women's empowerment, both positively and negatively. For instance, the pioneering 'culture matters' work of the UNFPA[6] represents one of the first responses by a mainstream development-related institution to engage with faith actors "in the areas of population and development, including human rights, reproductive health, women's empowerment, adolescents and youth, humanitarian assistance, and HIV and AIDS."[7] At the civil society level, the international feminist organisation Association of Women in Development (AWID) now

has 'challenging religious feminisms' as one of its five priority areas, which involves working within a human rights framework whilst recognising that 'religious feminisms' can play a role in the pursuit of human rights in contexts that are dominated by conservative religious views.

This 'turn to religion' in development policy and practice can be seen as a response to, as well as a part of, a broader global 'resurgence of religion' that has been building momentum since the 1970s, if not earlier. However, has the turn to religion been a positive move, as many argue, or has there been a 'rush to find to find the religious'[8] that could be problematic for gender equality? In the following sections I will explore some of the debates that have emerged in response to the question. Engaging with so-called 'religious feminisms', for instance, offers an alternative to western secular feminism that is potentially more culturally appropriate in some settings. However, concerns that such a 'turn to religion' in development runs the risk of essentialising women's identities as particularly religious, of privileging a religious approach above others and of engaging with traditions and cultures that may undermine women's rights, otherwise urges caution.

Against the backdrop of such competing claims, what challenges and opportunities are likely to be encountered by development research, policy and practice in negotiating the relationships between religion, gender and development? What tools and strategies might be employed to navigate this terrain? Where do we need to direct future research so that engagement between development and religion can result in positive outcomes for women and gender equality more broadly?

The potential benefits of engaging with 'religious feminisms'

Engaging with so-called 'religious feminisms' offers an alternative to secular feminism that is potentially more culturally appropriate in some settings. My research around the campaign to permit women's full ordination (the *bhikkhuni* ordination) in Thai Buddhism provides one example of the potential benefits of this kind of approach. In Thailand, the *bhikkhuni* ordination is not available to women and instead they are only permitted to ordain as white robed *mae chi*, which is often considered to be a 'lesser' form of ordination, where women keep only 8 precepts rather than the 311 of the *bhikkhuni*. Thus, the highest spiritual goals of Buddhism have been denied to women and the best they can hope for is to be reborn as a man and then to pursue enlightenment in a future life. While permitting the *bhikkhuni* ordination would have a positive impact for many 'religious' women (e.g. those who are already ordained as *mae chis* or novice nuns and are currently prevented from fully ordaining), it would also have a positive impact on the roles and status of lay women. Many of those who support this campaign do not make a clear distinction between the social and the religious. They argue that the powerful image of the orange-robed

male monk (*bhikkhu*), as well as negative teachings about women (e.g. that they are a lesser rebirth than men due to negative karma accumulated in previous lives), contribute towards 'broader social attitudes that increase women's vulnerability to risks such as domestic violence, sex trafficking or HIV'.[9] Moreover, with women as strong leaders in Buddhism, teachings that undermine women's equality with men would be more likely to be challenged.

Thus, an important dimension of the campaign for the *bhikkhuni* ordination in Thailand is its potential to rebalance the institutionalised hierarchy, which is very much part of lived Buddhism but also of Thai society more broadly. The intrinsic inferiority of women is reinforced within the structure of everyday public Buddhist practice and custom where:

> Men perform all the public roles of Buddhism, ordained as monks or as lay officiants, leading the chanting, conducting rituals, and participating as members of the wat (temple) committee. In addition, the organisation of space in the meeting hall clearly denotes the differential status distinctions between monks and lay persons, elders and younger people, and women and men. Monks sit upon a raised platform, denoting higher status. Elderly men sit closest to the monks, followed by younger men. Women sit around the perimeter. The elderly men make merit by placing food in the monks' bowls first, followed by the younger men. Not until the youngest boy has made his offering will the most elderly woman lead the other women to make their offerings.[10]

Thus, development actors wishing to promote gender equality as a human right could benefit from knowledge about locally embedded ways in which gender inequality can be understood and approached. Peach, for instance, writing about the problem of sex trafficking in Thailand, argues that although there are aspects of Thai Buddhism that support women's oppression, there are also positive images and representations of women that can be brought to the fore and that "may provide a foundation for transforming the negative cultural attitudes that contribute to trafficking."[11] She suggests that "reinterpreting sacred Buddhist texts is more effective for women sex workers than international women's human rights law [since] Thailand does not have a long-established tradition of human rights."[12] She argues that:

> Since this approach works within 'established religious and cultural paradigms' it minimises the potential backlash from conservative and anti-feminist elements within the society which may regard international human rights strategies as meddling by western outsiders.[13]

This idea of the potential benefits of engaging with religious actors within religious spaces in order to shift negative cultural attitudes toward women

is also a focus of work I have undertaken around the 'dowry problematic' in South Asia.[14] A precise definition of dowry is difficult since it has undergone distinct transformations over time, and it can encapsulate a range of different practices of marital gift-giving. Srinivasan and Lee[15] suggest that dowry in India grew from a number of different ritual exchanges including "traditional upper-caste practices of kanyadhan (literal meaning: gift of the virgin bride), *varadakshina* (voluntary gifts given by the bride's father to the groom), and stridhan (voluntary gifts given by relatives and friends to the bride…)." More recently, however, dowry has evolved and today involves substantial transfers of wealth from the bride's family to the groom's. This 'new' or 'modern' dowry is pernicious for no longer being voluntary but also because it is often seen as a *condition of marriage*, and requests for dowry often continue long after the actual marriage has taken place.[16] These shifts in dowry practice have been seen to be damaging for women in leaving them vulnerable to violence and 'dowry murder', as well as underpinning and exacerbating dangerous gender hierarchies.[17]

The main focus of academic research and activism to end dowry injustice in South Asia has been upon legal solutions, as well as the ways in which modern dowry practices are a product of various interconnecting social and economic factors including modernization, sanskritization (the emulation of upper caste practices by lower castes) and the patriarchal family. The secularism of the Indian feminist movement has tended to mean that there has been little attempt to engage with religious discourses, other than with respect to highlighting the malign and objectionable manifestations of dowry. Religion is viewed as 'backward', intrinsically problematic for women and incompatible with progressive feminist values.[18] However, it is arguably crucial to view the dowry problematic as underpinned by a gender regime that disadvantages women and to which cultural and religious values contribute, both in terms of sustaining troubling gender hierarchies as well as offering potential ways of mitigating them.[19]

However, it is important to find a balance in identifying links between religion, culture and dowry. Dowry is not a religious practice sanctioned by the Hindu tradition but its patriarchal values have produced, for example, a preference for sons and male succession, which privilege the male subject. Instead,

> Dowry arguably 'feeds' from these 'traditions', which aim to ensure that male needs and desires define and dominate women's lives and roles (see also Knott 1996). These prominent dimensions in Hinduism have contributed towards the social conditions that have allowed modern dowry practices to flourish, where male authority and superiority are underpinned by wifely submission, compliance and duty (or stridharma).[20]

Fieldwork undertaken by Bradley on relationships between gender, religion and development in rural Rajasthan[21] draws attention to the ways in which women who had experienced dowry violence sometimes engage

in rituals to the goddess Sita, to acknowledge her courageous struggle to overcome injustice:

> In lives where very few opportunities for social interaction exist, because time is largely used in domestic tasks limiting women's movements outside the home, rituals present important opportunities for female collectivity. Out of these moments of sharing and social intimacy can emerge possible solutions to the challenges women face.[22]

Sita is one of the main characters in the Hindu epic the Ramayana. She is kidnapped by the demon Ravana, eventually rescued by the monkey god Hanuman and then upon her return her husband – the king Rama – doubts her chastity while she had been away and she is subjected to a 'trial by fire' to prove her innocence. Bradley tells us that the Rajasthani women she spoke to aimed with emulate Sita's strength in their own struggles to overcome violent marriages. They can see the negative impact of religion on their lives, for instance, in regard to compulsory heterosexual marriage and dowry. However, at the same time they turn to religion in an attempt to make sense of their suffering.[23]

Thus, religious rituals can provide spaces for reflection and strategy building, and women-only rituals provide insight into how women perceive and criticise practices such as dowry.[24] However, these religious spaces are often ignored or not noticed by anti-dowry activists and NGOs working around women's empowerment when they could provide a way of generating "further momentum, turning the resentment expressed into defiant actions calling for change to both their marginalization as well as their religious traditions."[25] The social spaces created by rituals are

> cracks in the patriarchal system which offer NGOs the opportunity to appreciate the experiences and agency of women whose lives they hope to affect, and can also enable more effective communication between those active in anti-dowry campaigning.[26]

Many, including those working for gender equality, have welcomed the fact that over the last decade or so, development actors are showing a far greater interest in this kind of engagement, involving working with faith actors and funding faith-based organisations (FBOs). Religion is an important part of the lives of many women and men in developing countries, and FBOs or religious social movements can often be at the forefront of challenging and transforming harmful gender stereotypes and practices. Others, however, are more cautious arguing that there has actually been a 'rush to find the religious' that may have negative impacts on gender equality where there is a desire to engage a group of stakeholders that have until now been neglected, but without fully considering the gender consequences. Also for projects that specifically focus on women's rights, this recent 'turn to religion' has meant that there is often the assumption that "a feminist re-

engagement with religious texts within a religious framework is a panacea for altering gender bias in laws, policies and practices."[27]

The 'rush to find the religious'?

The 'turn to religion' may have negative gender related consequences, which have yet to be adequately considered by development practitioners and policy-makers. Little research has been carried out to-date on the gender-related implications of current development policies and practical initiatives that actively engage with religion. Cassandra Balchin gives an example that perfectly illustrates the issues here:

> I recall the fury of a women's rights activist from the Mindanao region in the Philippines in the 1990s. A foreign bilateral agency had apparently gathered local ulema in order to produce a statement supporting women's reproductive rights from an Islamic perspective. Although this was not a normal sphere of the local ulema's concern, the statement was duly issued, but more importantly, the gathering facilitated networking among the ulema that subsequently contributed to the formation of a political grouping that promoted a fundamentalist vision of Islam. In other words, a development approach reinforced conservative interpretations of religion and strengthened the power of those who do not have pluralism and equality at heart.[28]

As Balchin warns, "this rush to 'find the religious' is rarely backed by sophisticated knowledge of the diversities among religious groups"[29] and we often find the uncritical adoption of dominant (usually male) perspectives and voices within religious traditions as though they are representative of the tradition as a whole. This runs the risk of marginalising other voices and positions that may not have such a prominent public presence, specifically feminist or gender sensitive interpretations within religious traditions. Considering the highly patriarchal nature of most religions, women's participation in religious institutions (e.g. churches, mosques) and faith-based organisations is likely to be marginal. Even when women do have opportunities for leadership in FBOs, this does not necessarily challenge traditional gender regimes. Moreover, access to services or assistance may also be conditional "on conforming to the FBOs interpretation of religiously appropriate gender roles and behaviour."[30] Thus, while religion can provide women with coping strategies and concrete support services, this may also involve gender costs.

This 'turn to religion' is part of a broader 'global faith agenda' that has risen in significance since at least 9/11, but critics argue that there is a tendency now to promote religion at the expense of other identities and approaches. As Pragna Patel writes, "cohesion' and 'preventing violent extremism' initiatives in the UK have increasingly favoured the contribution of faith-based organisations thereby effectively removing funding from 'secular organisations for Black and ethnic migrants, secular women's refuges for

Black and minority women, disability groups and rape crisis centres."[31] She argues that this "has encouraged the development of faith-based initiatives including the creation of Muslim women-only projects, without any reference to the politics and ethos of such projects", [32] and that "the emphasis on funding faith-based groups have led some previously secular Black and minority organisations to re-fashion themselves as faith-based groups [...] reinforcing the view that questions of identity within minority communities can be reduced to questions of religious values."[33]

In these discourses, FBOs and religious leaders are often typified as being close to the grassroots and therefore in a position to reflect women's best interests, as well as providing support for their 'spiritual development' alongside their 'material development'. This may be true of some, but the ways in which others "seek to impose their own values and ideologies rather than respond to so-called local gender agendas"[34] should not be overlooked. This points to the importance of grounding engagement with religion (in terms organisations or leaders) in empirical knowledge of the location and of not ignoring the gender politics of particular religious institutions or FBOs and the broader social, political and economic context in which they are embedded.

Also, the fact that a certain FBO might challenge problematic gender relations in some issues, yet on other topics reinforce them, is a further consideration for development practitioners. To give one example, a situation arose in Malawi where Muslim, Catholic and Protestant FBOs opposed harmful widowhood practices, while at the same time opposing a government campaign promoting condom use.[35] This does not mean that such faith actors should necessarily be avoided, but that strategic and supportive alliances may sometimes be beneficial with respect to some issues and not others. However, partnering with faith actors in areas where there is agreement can mean that there is a possibility of dialogue in areas where there is disagreement.

This takes me to my second line of enquiry where I will examine in more detail one potential clash of ideas between secular development actors and faith actors. I will discuss statements about a preference for *gender equity* based on the idea of the complementarity of male and female roles, often stressed by religious actors, as compared to the emphasis within development policy and practice upon gender equality. To what extent is this evidence of potential incompatibility between secular and religious positions about how to approach and overcome gender discrimination? Is there a practical way forward that can facilitate greater gender justice for women in all settings?

Equality, equity and women's human rights
One dominant feminist critique of patriarchy in religious traditions draws attention to the ways in which many faith actors claim that men and women have different roles and responsibilities according to the core teachings of their religion and that this allows gender discrimination and oppression to thrive. Responses from within religious traditions have not

been uniform. Some have addressed this critique by finding resources within their religions that support *gender equality* (i.e. that men and women should have an equality of opportunity regardless of their sex or gender), arguing that where it appears that men and women have different roles and responsibilities is a cultural layer and not an authentic reading of the religious tradition. Others, however, have responded with the claim that although they reject gender discrimination, their traditions teach that men and women have *different but complementary roles*, and that the emphasis should be on *gender equity* (understood as valuing men and women's different roles equally, therefore not offering them equality of opportunity) but not on per se.

Approaches to gender inequality that emphasise the equal but different/ gender equity avenue are risky since they rely on an understanding of fixed roles for men and women that are reducible to biology, and in settings where men's roles are more highly valued than women's this entrenches unequal power relations in the family, confining women to the private sphere thereby denying them access to financial independence and a political voice. It is important to remember that the idea of 'equal but different' has also been applied historically to justify separate treatment of races while asserting that these differences were to be treated equally under the law. This approach to racial difference today is unquestionably unacceptable and few would publically advance it.

This equal but different/gender equity approach has been criticised for being essentialist, and stands in tension with the idea of gender equality as a human right expressed in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, and in Gender and Development (GAD) approaches more broadly. CEDAW – an international 'bill of rights' for women – defines discrimination against women in the following terms:

> Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.[36]

However, such an emphasis upon the differences between men and women is not only found within some religious feminist discourses, but also within secular feminist theory and activism. While there is debate about the extent to which these differences are innate or socially constructed, styles of 'difference' or 'cultural' feminism emphasise the physical, social and psychological differences between men and women, and demand that the "law adapt to include women on the basis of their differing characteristics and also their innate right to equality with men."[37] This move towards appreciating difference has led some feminists to also use the term 'equity' to refer to a recognition that equality might not be enough since it fails

to do justice to the different starting points that men and women have in aiming for the same goals. They argue that the fact that men and women have different needs should be considered.

While this focus on equity might appear to have a strategic value (i.e. as a means of eventually ensuring equality of opportunity) others are concerned that "equity is a subjective term that can mean different things to different people",[38] and can be used as an excuse to allow gender discrimination to flourish. In an article that examines the 'equity or equality' debate in the context of CEDAW, Facio and Morgan, are highly critical of attempts by those apparently interested in securing justice for women to do so by replacing equality with equity.[39] They argue that in the months leading "up to the Fourth World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing in 1995, as well as in the conference itself there was heated discussion about the use of the concepts of equality and equity in the conference's draft, Platform for Action."[40] Relevant for our purposes here is their observation that "those who first proposed the use of 'equity' rather than 'equality' were fundamentalist Islamic forces and the Vatican, including its followers in Latin America."[41] They forcefully argue that:

> None of these groups have distinguished themselves for their respect for women's human rights. So why should we think that their proposal to replace equality with equity was made because they want a better world for women? To the contrary, these groups argued, for example, that it would be better to use equity instead of equality with respect to inheritance rights because the term equity would permit parents to be more "just" in the division of their property: sons could inherit the lands and means of production because they will be the providers, while daughters could inherit the kitchen utensils because they will be the queens of the home.[42]

These are complex and varied debates, to which I cannot do justice here. However, to sum up, while some argue that discourses about equity are strategically useful as a means of bringing about equality of opportunity, others are critical of this and argue that "the problem with this reasoning is that it flows from a narrow and incorrect understanding of equality."[43] Facio and Morgan, for instance, argue that CEDAW is focused on a notion of substantive equality rather than formal equality, where the former recognises that equality of opportunity requires that difference be considered and therefore people do not always have the right to equal treatment. The latter, by contrast, requires equal treatment at all times regardless of difference.[44] They explain that Article 3 of CEDAW, for instance, which is based on the notion of substantive equality,

> establishes that the State is obligated to create the social and economic conditions and the services, such as childcare centers, safe transportation, security against sexual and gender violence, access to information, etc., that are required, whether due to women's biological conditions or gender, to enable women to take advantage of the opportunities offered.[45]

Thus, intrinsic to equality and human rights frameworks is the recognition that men and women should not necessarily be treated exactly the same, because they are not exactly the same, but that when they are treated differently, this must be done for the sake of enhancing their opportunities and enabling their flourishing. In settings where women have few rights, and where religiously conservative voices are powerful, it can be dangerous to replace equality with equity due to the fact that equity can provide a means for maintaining difference and hence discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics. As Dairiam writes, the idea of equity can "also be used against women" and "we will be retracting the hard won conceptual gains made in our understanding of equality twenty years ago if we now say the concept of equality is not useful. Equity cannot stand alone or be used interchangeably with equality."[46]

Encountering religious views about equity and the complementarity of male and female roles

The question remains, however, about the ways in which development actors who emphasise equality can engage in useful dialogue with religious actors who emphasise equity in order to bring about gender justice. Is the idea of equity simply a thinly veiled excuse for continuing to marginalise women, or can it reflect a serious attempt to reduce gender discrimination? While there is no one answer to this question, it is the case that although religious feminisms may not exactly and immediately map onto human rights or GAD goals, they can enable women to negotiate patriarchal religious boundaries in ways that are culturally appropriate, and which also help improve their lives. Serious engagement with religion in pursuit of gender equality needs to recognise that it cannot be assumed that there is a unified feminist vision. However, in many contexts there is a genuine commitment to exploring women's empowerment within a religious framework, even if by western feminist standards, the goals might sometimes seem quite modest or even not far-reaching enough. It is possible in some settings that to begin a conversation about ending gender discrimination could usefully commence with reference to equity.

This does not mean abandoning the goal of gender equality, just that there might be different routes to achieving it and different ways of talking about it that make sense within certain religio-cultural frameworks. Development actors need also to be attuned to who is using the equity avenue and for what reasons. Is it being used to promote the 'equal but different' agenda that is likely to end up promoting male advantage, or is it being advanced by women in order to gain recognition and reward for the roles they perform, as well as to begin to raise their status in order to work towards equal rights, status and opportunities with men? As Bradley argues with respect to the women's rituals providing a way for women to challenge patriarchy in Hinduism, although "the views expressed by women within religious spaces may not represent outward challenges to

the totality of their religious culture", they "should certainly be understood as the first step in resisting the dominance of patriarchy."[47]

Conclusion and recommendations

In this paper I have developed two lines of enquiry in order to explore the impact of the 'turn to religion' in development policy and practice on women's lives, in particular the implications for the goals of women's empowerment and gender equality that are at the heart of modern development aims. The first of these highlights the positive impact of the fact that religion is beginning to be taken 'seriously' in international development may be limited by a lack of clarity about, and attention to, the gender implications of engaging with religion. Moreover, as Sholkamy cautions "using religion as the pathway to gender justice is not a smooth strategy. It can work well but may cause stumbling when the pathway becomes more important than the destination."[48]

Following from this, although there is ever more need for development donors and organisations to consider religion as a relevant factor in pursuit of gender equality, there is no clear route to achieving this. Religion and religious institutions may have the potential to be empowering and status-raising to women in some situations but not so in others. Considerations of *how* development research, policy and practice engage with religion are just as important as arguments about the need to engage with it in the first place. Taking this into account, then, *my first recommendation* is that in order to engage with religious actors and institutions in ways that do not jeopardise the pursuit of gender equality, a thorough understanding of the religious dynamics in a particular setting needs to be achieved. This should include not always engaging with so called 'religious leaders' who are typically men (although this may sometimes be necessary and important to do), but seeking out other representatives, who may be women or groups of women, and not formally recognised as leaders. Another significant point here is to also use knowledge of the local religious dynamics to understand when not to engage with religious actors around gender issues, and instead to pursue secular strategies.

My second line of enquiry has addressed an issue that international development actors are likely to encounter when engaging with faith communities around gender matters and which has caused significant concern amongst human rights and GAD professionals. Where these actors stress *gender equality* some religious actors approach this debate through emphasising *gender equity* based on the idea of the complementarity of male and female roles. Instead of a focus upon equality *per se*, this is qualified by a claim of men and women being *equal but different*. Human rights and GAD activists are critical of replacing equality with equity, not least because, as Dairiam points out, "during the debates when the Beijing Platform was drafted in 1994/1995, Muslim countries and the Holy See and its followers from Latin America strongly argued for the use of the term equity and resisted the term equality. For them, women and men could not be valued

equally."[49] This raises the question then of the extent to which development actors who emphasise equality can engage in useful dialogue with religious actors who emphasise equity in order to bring about gender justice?

The importance of dialogue between religious and development actors is taken up by Deneulin and Banu,[50] who suggest that while there are increasing numbers of development initiatives which seek to engage with women's rights in Muslim contexts without much dialogue, these initiatives have been influenced by western feminism and have tended to work with a westernised elite in Muslim settings thereby marginalising the majority of "Muslim women, [and] in particular Islamic female leadership."[51] They argue that while secular women's rights NGOs tend to stress "individual liberty, including sexual liberty, and participation of women in economic and political affairs",[52] female madrasas in Pakistan typically adopt a different view where the focus is on women's interests being "best served in a stable family unit [...] [where] the emphasis is not on equality but on equity."[53] These different understandings of female empowerment and status-raising suggests the need for 'dialogue', where each group attempts to understand the other point of view and following which combined activism to improve gender relations is likely to be more successful than a situation where neither side is willing to compromise and pursues separate agendas.

Following from this, *my second recommendation* is that there is a need for development actors to acquire a fuller understanding of what constitutes women's empowerment and status-raising in different contexts, and an openness to include a diversity of views and strategies even when they might seem to initially be in tension with secular feminisms premised on female and male equality in all spheres of life. Research that addresses this could assist development actors in modifying their language and expectations in different contexts so as to be supportive of modes of female empowerment that are culturally embedded and appropriate, therefore achieve the best outcomes for women at any particular time but without losing sight of the ultimate goal of equality of opportunity. Moreover, research that addresses both the tensions as well as instances of successful interaction between secular and religious actors around gender concerns, could be useful in highlighting areas where they are likely to agree as well as potential flashpoints to be carefully negotiated or even avoided. It is possible in some settings that to begin a conversation about ending gender discrimination could usefully make reference to equity, but as Facio and Morgan (somewhat reluctantly) suggest, "for those who still are not convinced that equity is not a good substitute for equality, perhaps the best option would be to use both of the concepts but very carefully."[54]

Religious communities – a resource or a liability for development?

Auli and Mika Vähäkangas

Summary

This chapter explores the relationship between religion and development from the point of view of communality. Here, religious communities are understood as churches, local parishes, Muslim communities (umma), and local communities that adhere to traditional religions. In the global south, the vitality of religions is based on their communality. There, it is natural that a person belongs to a religion where religious conviction is expressed communally. The role of religious communities in development is multifaceted. When developmental goals match the basic values of the religious community, the community can advance development remarkably. In such a case the developmental change can have a very long duration. However, the religious communities can also become obstacles of development when sustaining structures of oppression in the community or opposing renewals that would improve the well-being of the community. From the African point of view, development can be seen as wider than only increases in material and physical well-being. One of these dimensions is communality. Western individualism is not generally seen as something to strive after. If wishing to disengage from the colonial attitudes towards the recipient countries, western countries should recognise better than before the role of religion in the global south and engage in dialogue with local religious communities.[1]

Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to explore the relationship between religion and development from the point of view of communality. Here, religious communities are understood as churches, local parishes, Muslim communities (umma), and local communities that adhere to traditional religions. The difference between religious communities and faith-based organisations in relation to development is that the religious communities are faith communities that channel the living out of faith for their members, whereas faith-based organisations have been established in order to carry out limited tasks such as development cooperation or humanitarian aid. Religious communities may have visions, missions and identities that include work for development: this is the case with many African Churches. However, then development is just one dimension of the activities of that community. Faith-based organisations that are involved in social work differ from churches involved in the same activities in that they are not simultaneously religious communities, but rather specialized organisations providing services in limited areas. From the point of view of communality, this is important because by definition, religious community

is communal, whereas faith-based organisations base their communality e.g. on cooperation with local religious communities.

As this chapter has been written from the Finnish point of view, we approach this topic with a focus on the area of Africa which lies south of the Sahara; traditionally, this is the major area receiving Finnish development aid. The majority of the poorest of the world are found there, so one can assume that the need and provision of aid will be concentrated there also in the future.

There are three notable religious groups in Africa south of the Sahara – Christianity, Islam and traditional religions. Even if the African traditional religions can no longer claim any major portion of the population, they still have a strong influence within Christianity and Islam. Traditionally, religion has not been separated from the other spheres of life, and in most of the languages, there was no word for religion before the advent of Islam and Christianity. The religious dimensions of the worldview are tightly interwoven in the whole of the culture. Therefore, conversion to Christianity or Islam did not delete the traditional African religiosity but it rather survives alongside and within the missionary religions. In Islam, this means that African Sufism has absorbed many pre-Islamic traditions. In Christianity, churches established by western missions have adapted African elements both in their practical life and their theology. Additionally, in many countries, a notable portion of the population, and in some cases the majority of the population, belongs to the African Instituted Churches where one tends to treat even more themes central to African traditions.

Africa is still today predominantly agrarian even though urbanization is proceeding fast. In the countryside, the village communities often consist of one ethnic group with all, or at least the majority, having a common religious background. In that case, the whole village is literally a religious community. In many cases, when there are religious differences, they also reflect ethnic lines of demarcation. In the cities as well as in some rural communities, the religious situation is pluralistic, and the religious communities find themselves in a situation of competition. According to a poll published by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, between three quarters to almost hundred per cent of Africans consider religion as important in their lives. In comparison, the equivalent figure in Sweden is less than ten per cent.[2] Africa is a very religious continent and one cannot understand it without grasping religions and their influence. Western Europe is globally exceptional because the role of religion elsewhere, especially in the majority world, is much more central.[3] Therefore, the results of this chapter are partly applicable to other countries that receive Finnish development aid. From the point of view of Finland, it is relatively difficult to realise that our secularised way of life is globally an exception.

The role of religion in the global south

The role of religion in the global south, i.e. former colonies of the western countries, differs from that of Western Europe. In Western Europe, religiosity has been privatised as a result of modernisation. Many people

consider themselves as spiritual rather than religious often meaning that they believe in something higher in their own manner.[4] This kind of spirituality does not necessarily require any community, and it may also be formed according to entrepreneur-customer relations like in meditation or alternative healing. At the same time, western conceptions of religiosity and spirituality have been individualised in a manner that only personal feeling or intellectual assertion is counted as genuine religious conviction. To adhere to a religion because of belonging to a social group is considered as superficial and inferior.

In the global south, the vitality of religions is based on their communality. There, it is natural that a person belongs to a religion where religious conviction is expressed communally. In traditional forms of religion, one does not generally pay much attention to the extent of individual internal commitment of the believer. However, the wave of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity sweeping over the global south has changed this situation in many places. Despite the Pentecostal emphasis on individual conversion, communality tends to occupy a central place in these churches. A major difference in comparison to the traditional forms of religion is that one belongs to them as extended families whereas one belongs to these Pentecostal-Charismatic churches as individuals or as core families. Belonging is therefore not supported by the extended family any longer. In some cases, conversion to Pentecostalism may even break the relations to the extended family which leads to an increased importance of the faith community in the life of the convert.

The role of religious communities in development is dual. On the one hand, religious communities support development, and on the other hand, they can block development. Earlier literature on religion and development has not dealt sufficiently with the role of religious communities in development. The research on religion and development has mostly concentrated on faith-based organisations in a narrow manner, and therefore regarded the organisations only from the point of view of distribution of aid.[5] It is meaningful to explore the relationship between religion and development also through a deeper analysis of the religious communities.

Western development is not sufficient

When defining development, the starting point has often been the western idea of seeing development mostly as economic, and the goal has therefore often been the modernisation of the whole society. The idea of modernisation has marginalised global southern views on development that build on more holistic communal views, and which also emphasise qualities other than economic goals. Even the human development index that was introduced to balance the one-sidedness of the economic perspective does not take into account cultural, intellectual and spiritual dimensions. When treating the issue of poverty, the northern point of view has often been only economic development and the eradication of absolute poverty or improvement of material and social life conditions.[6]

In the south, one has emphasised the idea of considering a person lacking a community as poor. Cameroonian Jesuit, Engelbert Mveng, captures this phenomenon in the concept of anthropological poverty, by which he attempts to also cover the immaterial dimensions of poverty. Mveng constructed the concept on the Greek word anthropos (human being) because he attempted to depict poverty through a holistic view of human being. A person without close human relationships, or a people whose culture or language has been marginalised, suffers from anthropological poverty in spite of economical or physical well-being or good availability of social services. One can therefore be economically rich while suffering from anthropological poverty because one misses something that is essential to human well-being.[7] Such African communal ideologies as Tanzanian Ujamaa or the popular South African Ubuntu-philosophy have strong affinities to Mveng's interpretation of anthropological poverty. Both of these ideologies emphasise the importance of communality and that an individual is valuable only as a part of community. One has pointed out that both of them, however, have some problems. For example, during the rule of Julius K. Nyerere in Tanzania, Ujamaa-ideology was partly forced on the population as Ujamaa-socialism, which led to an economic catastrophe and suffering. Likewise, Ubuntu often remains an empty speech, as theory without application.[8]

The typical western tendency to ignore religion and spiritual values in the perceptions on development is visible also in Finland's Development Policy Program that directs the execution of Finnish development aid.[9] It is hardly a coincidence that the program is quite one-sided in the sense that it pays little attention to the activity and role of the global south.[10] Religion and culture in general is marginalised. Using Mveng's approach, one could state that Finnish development aid attempts to reduce material poverty but may cause more anthropological poverty as a collateral damage.

Religious communities as strategies of survival
In poor countries, the survival of an individual is greatly enhanced by communal support that functions like insurance. When life is going on as usual, the task of the member of the community is to help other members both economically and psychosocially. When (s)he meets with problems or great needs, (s)he can count on communal support. In Tanzania, this support is visible for example in the rambirambi-system. The wider and more reliable the communal networks of a person are, the better his or her chances of survival are.

Rambirambi is a system of exchange rooted in Tanzanian cultures. In it, one supports the one in need in turns. Typically it would be a matter of times of transition in the life, like weddings or funerals. Additionally, the community would stretch its helping hand to cover large costs related to illness, school fees and other inevitable or generally useful needs. This kind of help creates an invisible web of gratitude and indebtedness because this is not a case of selfless help, but rather a matter of getting oneself insurance

to cover future financial problems. This system of exchange is not strictly arithmetical, however, but the need and ability of each member is taken into account. The system is owned completely by the community and it is built on mutual trust. The collector of rambirambi who acts on behalf of the one in need, drafts a list of the names of the donors with their signatures when ambulating from door to door. In this manner, the donor can trust that the funds will reach the one in need and not end in the pocket of the collector.

All over the world, among the poor, there are systems of exchange that resemble rambirambi.[11] These systems can be completely informal or they can take the form of a funeral society where the members of the society can cover the funeral costs against an annual fee. This is very common for example in Southern Africa; usually the systems of exchange are based on the natural contact networks. Therefore, they tend to cover the extended family and often also the religious community. In many cases, the extended family and the neighbours belong to the same religious community.

For example a parish is a community that extends the person's contacts beyond the extended family and neighbourhood, even beyond the ethnic group or even nationality. Especially in the cities, and particularly among the newly arrived without any family members in the city, the role of religious communities and the importance of the religious community increases. When other communities are missing – in the case of a jobless person or even a micro-entrepreneur which might mean the working community is missing – the faith community takes over the role of the extended family and the neighbourhood: this can also apply to African immigrants in western countries. Churches and other religious communities are a very important actor in the integration and assistance of newcomers. Churches of African origin in Europe do not only fix the holes in the safety net of the society, but they also replace some welfare services which immigrants might otherwise avoid either because of their strangeness or because of shame. One does not often know about them and one is not used to them because back home in Africa the government usually does not come to the rescue of the poor.

In poor countries lacking the societal safety net, where life is a constant struggle of survival to find food, shelter, health services and education, support can be found only in the communities. It is the secret of survival in a very nasty world. Religious communities improve the chances of their members exactly as communities.

Most religious communities in Africa extend the concept of help beyond the mutual through diaconia (or its non-Christian equivalents). However, the diaconia carried out by a poor church cannot rely on paid positions of deacons and deaconesses, diaconal centres or charity campaigns. When the members, depending on the day, month or year, can likewise be a helper or a recipient of help, even ecclesial diaconia often resembles networking mutual help. A good example of such ecclesial diaconia is the 'Women for Christ', small groups where women that are in need in times of illness or

other crises are assisted. Each woman knows that when helping others that are in case of need, means she will also be helped.[12] In these organised diaconal groups it is the law of reciprocity that rules, and the Christian message of selfless assistance does not surface in the same manner as in the official diaconia of the parish.

This kind of networking in mutual help leads to a strong local communal ownership of the very limited funds rotating in the system. It is not distributed for little reason. In the local parishes, diaconal committees tend to cross-examine the one needing assistance on their needs and conditions, especially when it is a matter of a person from outside of the community. This is a way of ensuring that the recipients of the help really are the ones in most need and not the ones making the greatest noise of their needs.

This kind of networking communal help is not unproblematic for economic development. It tends to discourage top achievements, especially within the extended family. If someone gets a well-paid job or succeeds with farming or business, the extended family will immediately be there to share the profits. There will be no accumulation of capitals, and this is fatal to the motivation of the diligent person: why should one work like a slave when the result is that in case of success, the extended family takes a share and you are back to square one? Often, one sees urban migration as the solution, leaving the extended family far behind. In the city, joining a religious community provides the needed security net but its demands on the member tend to be smaller. Many churches demand only tithes and possibly some additional collection. In some churches, prosperity Gospel has introduced a business logic according to which God rewards the believer in relation to how much (s)he invests in the collection. The result is that the poor are cheated: the pastor drives a Mercedes while the congregants are waiting for a divine miracle to fill their pockets with dollars.

A person in a vulnerable position is not only threatened by disasters and accidents from outside. When living on the edge, one does not need to waver a lot in order to fall into deep misery. Self-discipline becomes an important part of survival skills. For example, in the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania, most of the malnourished children come from homes where the father consumes a lot of alcohol.[13] The use of family assets on prostitutes considerably damages the family's economic situation, and additionally the father can contract HIV/AIDS and cause a total collapse of the family's economic and social fortunes. People tend to be very aware of the wrong choices in terms of family's survival chances. Traditionally, the village and family communities have provided their members with the moral support required in the form of social control. However, the downside of it has been that the person breaking the social norms has become a target of moralism and even ostracism, together with his family. When moving to a city, the support and control are lost. For example, young Tanzanian adults attracted to Zanzibar by employment in tourism industry talk much and willingly about how their joining a Pentecostal church protects them from decisions harming their life. Many of them already have experiences of rambling which

certainly does not help to eradicate their poverty.[14] Thus the social control and moral support provided by the religious community can help the coping and even social ascent of their members.

On the advantages of communality

It seems that the religious communities are able to respond to the challenges arising from the changing conditions in the society. This can be clearly seen, for example, in the way they reacted on the aids-pandemic which is also a major developmental challenge. Extended families and local parishes were unable to take care of the countless aids patients. In this situation some religious communities organised voluntary help. A good example of this is the voluntary work undertaken by a circle of volunteers that facilitate the hospice care at the homes of the aids-patients. These volunteers have been recruited from the local communities. One of the recruitment criteria is gender inclusion. Almost half of the active volunteers are men. Male participation has been seen to reduce the social stigma and to increase the respect for volunteer work. Male volunteers emphasise in their interviews how their increased status in the community motivates them greatly in volunteering.[15] Also research on western volunteerism has shown that social capital is one of the reasons for participation as volunteer,[16] and for these Tanzanian men this seems to be the strongest motivational factor. Social capital is expressed through networks, common values and confidential personal relations.[17]

In situations where traditional communities have overly stigmatised their members, like aids-patients, religious communities have developed even more official forms of peer support. These peer support groups provide their members the advantages of communality like social support and economic aid without the controlling and stigmatising dimension of communality. Such peer groups complement the religious communities' functions that support development, but they cannot be the only channel of religious communities' contribution to development.[18]

The advantages of religious communities become especially visible in situations where one can make use of the social capital of a relatively united community. Social capital creates social cohesion in the community which is a process whereby the whole society, individuals being a part of it, are bound together by specific values, behaviour and institutions. Social cohesion means consensus and cooperation.[19] Even though social cohesion is used as a term mostly on the level of the whole society, it can be applied in the analysis of local communities as well. Participation in the activities of religious communities is a way of adding social cohesion and decreasing conflicts.[20]

On the one hand, religion can have the independence needed for a constructive critical role concerning societal problems. At their best, religious communities function as a part of civil society that reduces the level of corruption in the society.[21] For many religious communities, good governance is an ideal. They have basic values growing out of faith that

can be useful for development like honesty or diligence. When these values are organically connected to the faith of the community, they have a great importance for the development of the community in the long run. Thus, at their best, religions represent that civil society that many western donors are willing to support. On the other hand, in the marketplace of religions, the leaders of different religious groups are constantly competing and seeking for new members, funds and influence. In this race the wealthy businessmen and women, as well as politicians, can be of great help. Cooperation with powers-that-be increases the visibility and influence of the religious leader but it also easily weaves him into the webs of corruption. Even though many religious leaders preach high morals, only a few ask the congregants about the source of the money brought to collection. Even a critical religious leader grows soft when sitting in the halls of the powerful.

In Africa, one often criticises how the elderly are frequently left alone or placed into care institutions in western countries. In many African countries there are versions of the adage "a human is human through other humans" meaning that human life is perfected only in a community. African communality can appear as ideal from the western perspective even though it contains the above problems. Even though it is clear that African communities emphasise communality, it is not a matter of a local specialty. Practically speaking, all traditional cultures have been strongly communal because surviving alone in the face of natural forces and hostile external human groups is almost hopeless without the help of a community.

Individuality is strongly related to modern time, industrialisation and urbanisation also in Africa. In modern context one can survive also alone. At the same time, humans are communal in their social needs. In western competitive societies, friendship and belonging to a group also need to be earned so, for example, an elderly person suffering from dementia, or a mentally-fragile, unemployed person does not have a great chance of participation. When regarding African cities, it seems that with the material advancement communality decreases. Therefore it appears as if increase of material well-being may lead some people towards anthropological poverty in the form of loneliness.

Religious communities as liabilities for development

In some cases, religious communities obviously become liabilities for development. This has been clearly seen in the churches' attitude towards the HIV-positive parishioners. For example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania applied church discipline against the "suspectible", i.e. HIV-infected members, and barred them from the Eucharist.[22] After the turn of the millennium the Tanzanian churches' and other religious communities' attitude towards HIV-positive members has gradually grown somewhat more open even though one cannot consider it completely accepting and supportive.[23]

Religious communities tend to become obstacles of development especially in such questions that challenge the communal traditions like

ordaining women into priesthood or local cultural traditions like female genital mutilation in many African ethnic groups. However, there is discord concerning female genital mutilation both between and within several religious communities and traditions. Such issues that challenge both the religious and cultural traditions of the area are naturally the most difficult, especially questions related to women's leadership and sexual health.

Several developmental issues relate to both religion and cultural traditions. Therefore it is possible to proceed with such issues only through cooperation with the local communities. Including the community in the planning, decision-making and execution of a development project does not guarantee its success even though it certainly improves its chances of success.

Also in cases when religious communities portray only bonding social capital (capital that strengthens the relationships within the group) and not bridging social capital (capital that builds bridges between different groups), the religious communities tend to slow down development.[24] When religious communities become exclusive, they no longer tend to contribute to development. Bridging social capital between groups is of special value for the development of social cohesion or communality within the society. Therefore, from the point of view of development, religious communities should not be too tight and exclusive.

Social control carried out by religious communities also has its downsides. It often includes plenty of faulty exercise of power which can especially affect women and youth negatively. For example, the unmarried youth's sexuality is under constant surveillance through the application of church discipline in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Girls getting pregnant outside of wedlock end up under church discipline thereby not being able to attend the Eucharist or other parish activities. Men impregnating these girls tend to avoid the discipline. Only public confession and repentance is the way out from under the church discipline.[25]

Alcohol occupies one of the prominent places on lists of sins in many churches, but few pastors are disturbed if a great part of the parish income can be traced back to the bar-owner's business. Likewise, a rich parishioner may keep concubines if his contribution to the parish economy is sufficiently voluminous. Especially in the countryside, social control concentrates the power of decision-making in the hands of senior males which may decrease attention towards the needs of other groups. The fact that, along with Islamic communities, Tanzanian churches preach against condoms, has not reduced the speed of spread of HIV; yet, the issue of condoms is culturally multifaceted. Traditionally their use is discouraged also because of the value attributed to conceiving children and not only because of theological reasons. The acceptance of condoms is often popularly misinterpreted as a licence to reckless sexual behaviour which would have contributed to the spread of the virus.[26]

Religious communities as channels of aid distribution

Finnish development cooperation began about fifty years before national independence. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (at that time the Finnish Missionary Society) initiated its work in today's Namibia in 1870 and in China in 1901, during the heyday of establishing mission societies in the western countries.[27] Many other Finnish mission organisations and churches followed suit. They founded and ran schools, medical clinics, hospitals and handicraft centres. At the time of launching governmental development cooperation, there was already a century of experience in development work in Finland. The local partners of the mission organisations, the local churches, had grown alongside the work. From the very beginning, Finnish mission has worked at the grass-root level in vernaculars. A great portion of the Finnish missionaries have spent remarkably long periods of time in the field. Because governmental development cooperation often functions in a foreign language and the length of contracts for the Finnish personnel tends to be very limited, it is no wonder that the religious communities appear as attractive channels of aid.

Distribution of large quantities of aid has also involved problems for the churches. The term "rice Christians" refers to the historical phenomenon of creating a wrong type of linkage between the missionary organisations' humanitarian aid and the recipients in China. Aid recipients perceived that they had to join the helping churches in order to receive aid and some joined them only for the time when material benefits were available.[28] So, it was not a case of volunteers joining in a specific religious community and participating in its activities but rather seeking of material benefits, in this case rice.

In spite of this phenomenon, there are examples of how, during times of persecution, those considered as "rice Christians" refused to leave their new faith and even faced death by not abandoning Christianity, even if it would have saved them from that fate.[29] This is a vivid example of how human emotions and values cannot be separated from material aid. The one being helped can experience that (s)he is really cared for as a human being. When we, the authors, were the recipients of help from the side of a Muslim missionary medical doctor in Tanzania, both of us were impressed by his selfless commitment. The doctor did not refer to anything religious in the course of treatment. The patient, Mika Vähäkangas, was, however, aware that the hospital was Islamic and the doctor was basically a religious actor. Even if this process did not lead to a conversion, that encounter made a permanent imprint.

Help from the religious communities is therefore never religiously neutral. The participation in aid is a way of reflecting their values. The recipients of aid are well aware of this when coming to the sphere of influence (even if not always to membership) of the religious community in order to receive help. Governmental development aid is religiously neutral unlike the often most efficient and most locally rooted channels

of distribution. Because religiously motivated charity is religious activity, governmental development aid is thus channelled to religious activity when the aid is channelled through religious communities.

Even if the aid were channelled through less efficient and more corrupted governmental structures, even that can have religious dimensions. The governmental structures of many poor countries advocate the dominant religion out of conviction or out of hopes of popular support. In countries where the membership of two religions is close to even, like in Nigeria and Tanzania, politicians often overtly or covertly make use of religion in their campaigns. On the surface, the actions of a governmental agency may appear to be religiously neutral while having a religious dimension: the resources channelled through the aid support a certain political actor which has its religious constituency.

Setting up their own western channels of aid is economically the most inefficient way of assistance when the locally exorbitant salaries of the westerners swallow the lion's share of the resources. Western secular models are based on ideological premises that tend to be foreign from the local point of view. Thus, aid always has religious implications in societies where religion forms a central part of public life.

Many a foreign donor agency has chosen to channel its aid through local religious communities thinking that this would improve the sense of local ownership and transparency.[30] This often resulted in a more efficient use of resources and reliability of the system. However, funds stemming from the west tend to be perceived as manna from heaven – limitless resources. For many, tapping into the limitless resources for private gain is not morally problematic. Using local religious communities may somewhat reduce the level of corruption in the projects. Firstly, the resources may be perceived as owned by the community and thereby the community is interested in monitoring their use. Secondly, that it is specifically a religious community that serves as the channel of distribution emphasizes the immoral character of embezzlement – it is like stealing from God Himself. However, even this does not lead to full reliability, especially if there is a perception that the foreign funds have no limits. The pastor or aid committee bursar living close to minimum subsistence may encounter a temptation too great to overcome. Religious communities are not corruption-free zones. Leaders of authoritarian religious communities especially have the possibility of using the credulity of the members for private gain. The members can, however, always leave the corrupt church whereas the possibility of opting out from a nation is a more complicated matter.

There are many examples of how aid channelled through religious communities has efficiently reached the people in need.[31] In such cases, inside knowledge of the community in general has been an advantage, and the aid has been directed to the needy speedily and efficiently. In communities, one knows those members who are attempting to benefit from aid without real need. Communal control rules out their receiving of aid.

Cultural brokers facilitate partnership

In transition from development aid to development cooperation, there are large unused human resources in the religious communities. In true development cooperation, the starting point is joint planning where the local needs are assessed from the local point of view. In development aid, one departs from the donor's point of view. For example, eager Finnish private donors wanted to build a kitchen in a Tanzanian school even though the school did not provide school lunches.

When the planning takes place between the representatives of two states, there is a danger of being too-far removed from the grass-root level. Both the foreign official in quick career rotation and the local elite can be very alienated from the lived realities of the poor segments of the population. In many religious communities there are many cultural brokers, persons with cultural literacy in both the donor and the recipient cultures. Long term missionaries know the language and culture as well as the power relations in the local church. Many local religious leaders have studied abroad, or at least they have a long experience of working together with foreigners. In a critical dialogue with this kind of intercultural worker, there is a chance of pinpointing the local communities' needs in a manner that leads to a more efficient action and locally meaningful results. A Tanzanian cultural broker, a faculty dean, sighed when commenting upon a project which had been planned, financed and organised by western countries: "It is a good project but one could have consulted us, too." He was frustrated by the fact that from his point of view, these funds could have been used still much better.

A more efficient utilisation of cultural brokers would lead to an improved sense of local ownership. With their help, the grass-root voices can be heard and the community involved from the early-planning stage. If the religious community has a democratic leadership culture, planning can take into account the hopes of the neediest. The weakest members of the communities do not know international languages, and as polite people they tend to answer the outsider in a manner they suppose will please the outsider. It will be easier for them to express their needs to their own pastor, priest, evangelist, imam or sheikh. When cultural brokers in leadership positions listen to the grass-roots, the poor that the development projects target can influence even big decisions and transform from aid recipients to participants in cooperation.

Excessive external aid creates dependency

One of the problems related to the economic assistance directed to and via religious communities is that they get passive. Too much external help, be it direct financial contribution or personnel resource, makes the recipient passive. Why should one strive towards anything if the foreigners take care of the problems, at any rate? That the global economic meltdown reduced the amount of aid seems to improve the independency and responsibility of development in the religious communities.

External aid can also lead to emergence of that kind of culture of dependency where the church or some other religious community channelling the help is regarded primarily as a source of material support. Often, the reception of international aid requires international connections. If you have no such connections, you cannot ask for aid from anyone. In this sense a missionary is in a superior position which easily leads to the malformation of power relations. This is so because even if the foreign church worker does not have any formal leadership position, his role can become very central in decision making. Furthermore, if the receiving of resources is channelled through the local leader, the growth of his authority is in no relation to his leadership capabilities. Channelling of resources becomes in such a case a way of rewarding the loyalty of the church members.

As mentioned above, if one pours too much money in the community too quickly, it results in mismanagement. Only patient long-time planning and grass-root level preparation can lead to development with lasting results. Several decades is a meaningful time span in assessing the results of development, not the five-year rotation of project budgets.

Concluding remarks

The role of religious communities in development is multifaceted. When developmental goals match the basic values of the religious community, the community can advance development remarkably. In such a case, the developmental change can have a very long duration. However, in another case the religious communities can become obstacles of development when sustaining structures of oppression in the community or oppose renewals that would improve the well-being of the community. Especially in African countries south of the Sahara, where societal and political national structures are often quite fragile, religious communities are the best functioning organisations. They are strongly connected and have credibility at a grass-root level. That is why they function as effective channels of development aid.

From the African point of view, development can be seen as wider than only increases in material and physical well-being. It includes cultural, linguistic, intellectual and spiritual dimensions. One of these dimensions is communality. Western individualism is not generally seen as something to strive after. If wishing to disengage from the colonial attitudes towards the recipient countries, western countries should better recognise the role of religion in the global south, and engage in dialogue with local religious communities. Engaging actors with deep local roots would facilitate the transition to development cooperation from development aid. A precondition for this is openness to true pluralism. Not everyone is like us, and they will not become like us. That should not even be the aim of development cooperation.

Embeddedness – the paradox of development through the grassroots of churches

Henni Alava

Summary

What should development organisations take into account when considering whether to provide funding to a long-established church in the Global South, or to an organisation affiliated with such a church? Drawing on research in Northern Uganda, this article suggests that the key to addressing this question is in recognition of churches' unique historical, social and religious embeddedness in local societies. From the point of view of donor organisations, this embeddedness is paradoxical: the same things that enable churches to 'deliver development' in an unusually effective and meaningful way, make churches appear as challenging grassroots partners for development. This is because the spiritual, historical and political embeddedness of churches makes the effects of their activities greater than of organisations lacking such embeddedness – whether those effects be 'positive' or 'negative'. The notion of embeddedness draws attention to the need for donors to cease to think of churches in negative terms, as foreign impositions. The history of missionary churches is inseparably embroiled in the history of colonisation. However, the religious faiths and practices initially brought by missionaries to many parts of Africa are now an integral part of the life of many local adherents. Church members experience churches as their own – often much more so than they do the UN, NGOs, or secular discourses of human rights and development.

Introducing the case and my analytical space

Some time ago, a Nordic development NGO (which I will call SecularNGO) contacted me for advice about whether or not they should provide funding for a church-affiliated civil society organisation (which I will call the Nodding Syndrome Assistance and Prayer Organisation, NSAAPO), in the Acholi sub-region of Northern Uganda. Since I had previously studied development aid in Northern Uganda, and since I had recently conducted ethnographic fieldwork at the church in question and knew a number of people involved with the organisation, I was uniquely well-placed to offer the organisation my advice.[1] In this paper, I draw on my research on churches and politics in post-conflict Northern Uganda to present the advice I offered this particular NGO in a generalised form. The question I ask and answer, is: *what should an organisation take into account when considering whether to provide development funding to a long-established church, or a CSO affiliated to such a church?*

I explore this question particularly through analysis of what the

potential development role of churches looks like when development is understood as fundamentally political, and when churches are understood as fundamentally political actors. Since the article draws from analysis of the Anglican and the Catholic Church in Northern Uganda, its analysis is particularly relevant for contexts in which churches have a long-established position, as is the case for missionary-established mainline (Catholic and older Protestant) churches in most of Africa.

I argue that the role of churches in grassroots development work in Africa is fundamentally paradoxical, and that the crux of this paradox is in these churches' embeddedness. By embeddedness, I refer to the consequences of churches having been present in the societies they work in for long periods of time, often since the time of colonialism. These consequences typically include the following (although there can of course be differences and tensions regarding any of these points in individual cases):

1. Churches, as physical places and as institutions, have become naturalised as parts of the local landscape.
2. The religious beliefs of churches have been comfortably interwoven or accommodated into the lifeworlds of their members.
3. Churches as institutions have become deeply integrated with other societal structures, including party politics, local administration, and family and clan structures, which often span generations.

All these points make churches uniquely valuable development partners because of their embeddedness, that is: 1) because they are considered natural parts of the landscape; 2) because their values are accommodated in local world views; 3) because they are deeply integrated in local society; and 4) because they gain meaning also through family networks and across generations. Churches may 'deliver development' in a way that development NGOs often cannot, particularly if they have been initiated, funded and/or staffed externally, and if their de facto accountability is to an external donor.

However, these same points also highlight the challenges involved in supporting development through churches. As I will argue, because of their embeddedness, churches may 'deliver development' in a way that is in fact counterproductive, or that contradicts the values of the donor agency. To highlight the paradoxical nature of embeddedness, I analyse the case of NSAAPO and expand on the rationale that lay behind the advice I gave to SecularNGO. In order to protect the identity of all the individuals involved, the account I provide is a largely fictional composition of parts taken from different cases, people, organisations and churches that I have encountered during my fieldwork. There are, however, two notable exceptions of what is not fabricated: first, the contextual set-up of the case study; that is, the historical and socio-political analysis of Uganda and Northern Uganda is factual. Second, Nodding Syndrome is an ailment which medical professionals are still uncertain as to the causes of, and it is a genuine

health concern in Northern Uganda.[2] Although the details of the study on NSAAPO have been made somewhat 'fictional' so as to avoid identification, they have been crafted so that they could well be true. In other words, while the case itself is fictional, the points highlighted by the case reflect genuine paradoxes of development through grassroots churches in Africa.

Before I engage in this analysis, I will offer a brief elucidation of the normative underpinnings of my analysis. First of all, I see politics – the process through which communities of human beings decide on how to share power and resources – as natural and inherently positive. In my understanding, there is no development without politics: it is impossible to change society in any way without this change being grounded in relations of power, and without this change also affecting those power relations. Hence, for me to say that development is political is not a value statement, rather it is a statement of fact. Secondly, I understand positive change in society as such change which increases the equality of all human beings, so that regardless of age, sex, religious or political affiliation, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or any other aspect of their being, every member of a community has equal freedoms, including the freedom from repression, violence and discrimination, and equal access to services provided by the state or by other service-providing organisations such as churches or NGOs. Finally, I see the Western idea of a strict separation between state and society, and between religion and politics, as a culturally specific notion. In my understanding, there is nothing inherently better or worse in basing society on religious ideas than there is on grounding a society on an ideology that espouses a 'rational', secular or atheist understanding of state and society, and demands a division between religion and the state. A secular state can be just as repressive of individual freedoms as a religious one – and conversely, religious ideas can be personally and collectively just as empowering as secular ones. With these basic premises made visible, allow me to move to analyse NSAAPO as an institution embedded in Acholi society.

NSAAPO: a Christian health-delivery and deliverance organisation in Acholi[3]

The "Nodding Syndrome Assistance and Prayer Organisation" (NSAAPO – this is a pseudonym, as are the other names used in this fictional case study: see endnote #3) was established by a group of active members of "Mainline Church Acholi Parish", with the assistance of "Missionary", a foreigner from "NordicChurch" who visited Acholi Parish in 2008. At this time, Northern Uganda was recovering from almost 20 years of war between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan government. Despite the end of armed conflict there were many development problems, one of the most acute of which seemed to be that there were an increasing number of children suffering from unexplainable bouts of uncontrollable, seizure-like nodding of their heads and sometimes their whole bodies. The

mysterious symptoms eventually led most of the children to die, either because of malnutrition or following accidents caused by the seizures. In the absence of sufficient government health structures to address the particular needs of these high-need patients, members of Acholi Parish requested that Missionary sought funding which would enable the health clinic of the Parish to extend its services through a special program for children afflicted with Nodding. Missionary managed to secure such funding, and the following year, NSAAPO was established.

The aim of the organisation was to provide various forms of medical, social, psychological and financial assistance to families of Nodding victims. For these purposes, with funding from NordicChurch, NSAAPO hired a number of social workers, nurses, and experts on income generation and nutrition. In addition, following the mandate of the Church to pray for its members, members of the charismatic revival at Acholi Parish arranged Nodding victims from across the broader Acholi region to come together to Acholi Parish for special services at which NSAAPO staff, volunteers and local priests prayed for God to deliver the patients from the sickness. Because NordicChurch received funding from its Foreign Ministry, it gave strict orders that NSAAPO was not to use development money for these events, but should use its own income generation to fund the deliverance prayer sessions: a demand with which NSAAPO was happy to comply.

The project was a great success, and two years later, when Missionary from NordicChurch came back for a two-day visit at NSAAPO, she was extremely impressed with the professional capacity of NSAAPO's staff. NSAAPO was reaching all of its desired development outputs: through support for the families' ability to generate income and their increased know-how on nutrition, nodding-afflicted children were receiving the nutrition they needed, regular visits to the treatment centre had improved the children's medical status, and awareness-raising had lessened the stigma previously attached to the syndrome. However, despite the impressive development outputs of NSAAPO, two years later massive budget cuts to development funding in the Nordic country forced NordicChurch to stop funding NSAAPO. After a year of struggling with insufficient funding, NSAAPO stumbled across an advertisement by SecularNGO for funding to support health-related CSOs in Northern Uganda. NSAAPO's highly professional staff wrote an excellent application to SecularNGO, after which SecularNGO contacted me, an expert on churches and development in Northern Uganda, for advice on whether or not to give money to this Church-related organisation.

Having great respect for NSAAPO's work, I was happy to comply, and prepared for the meeting with SecularNGO by skimming through mounds of information that had been logged into my mind during the eight months that I lived within walking distance from the NSAAPO office and clinic while researching churches in the region; NSAAPO's mother church included. By the time I sat down for a Skype meeting with SecularNGO's staff, I knew I could warmly recommend funding the organisation. However, I also

had to acknowledge that the potential effects of funding NSAAPO were extremely complex. My scholarly urge to pay respect to complexity and nuance seemed at an angle with the straightforward analysis that I thought SecularNGO would want to hear.

In the following, I bring out a more nuanced picture of NSAAPO than that which staff of SecularNGO had time to hear. My description and analysis of the intricacies of the economic, social, religious and institutional politics surrounding the organisation seeks to highlight what I have termed the "paradox of development through the church." In my analysis, I draw analytical tools from my own research, as well as from the work of Ben Jones[4] and Catrine Shroff,[5] both notable scholars on churches and development in Uganda.

To fund or not to fund?

With emphasis on the positive, NSAAPO could be characterised like this: NSAAPO is a highly-respected civil society organisation in the small town where its work is focused. Its respectability draws from three things: first, the quality of its service delivery; second, the broad respect afforded to many of those sitting on its board of trustees; and third, its affiliation to Acholi Parish, one of the oldest, largest and most respected churches in the region. NSAAPO has a reputation as an unusually straight-backed organisation. Its affiliation with Acholi Parish has provided it with unusually stable institutional backing, as well as free land and access to free infrastructural and other support services that an independent NGO would have had to pay for. Many of its key members are known as people of integrity, who genuinely have the best interests of the community at heart. Many of them are known as active members of the church and the local community, and some of them also for their political activism. This is not considered particularly strange in the town, however, since it is considered perfectly normal and typical for lay leaders of churches to also adopt positions of authority in local administration or politics, and vice versa.

Such an introduction would be an honest assessment of the organisation to a potential donor, and it is in line with what I told the members of SecularNGO. However, the familiarity I had with politics and churches in Northern Uganda, and my familiarity with Acholi Parish, made me aware of complexities that complicated this simplified and positive image of the NGO in question. The case of NSAAPO illustrates the three different aspects of embeddedness I introduced above. Analysis of embeddedness highlights the paradox of development through the grassroots of the church; the same things that make NSAAPO able to do something more than an average NGO in the local community increase the risk that development through the organisation would in fact be counter-productive, and entrench negative dynamics and structures, rather than enabling positive change in the society.

Embeddedness, type 1:
Churches, as physical places and as institutions, have become naturalised as parts of the local landscape

The political economy of NSAAPO was complex. The organisation largely relied on support from external donors, but in crucial ways, NSAAPO's existence was made possible by the resources owned by Acholi Parish. Attachment with the Parish was, however, far from straight-forward. The organisation's office was built on land that had been disputed for decades. Opinions differed as to whether the particular plot of land was owned by Acholi Parish; by the local government; by the Pentecostal church in the neighbourhood which had at one point claimed it prior to the expansion of the Acholi Parish health centre; to Mr. Odongo whose great-grand-father had used this land as grazing land for his goats but who had given up the Christian God and turned to serving the ancestors; to Mrs. Acan whose brother had been the head of the parish council when he gave up the hut he lived in in order for the health centre be built; or to the NGO that had given funding for building the first part of the health centre. Whoever was the rightful owner of the land would have the right to demand compensation for its use. The dispute over the land was being fought out in court, although numerous potential parties to the conflict had not dared to be fully honest at the court due to pressure they had felt from powerful local politicians who had interests in land adjacent to the NSAAPO office.

Organisations, whether churches or NGOs, have offices; and to build offices, they need land.[6] This point is self-evident, yet often completely overlooked when thinking of development organisations. In the case of churches, these plots of land were often gifted to them during the colonial era, either by the customary owners of the land, or by the local colonial administration, or a combination of the two. On these plots of land, there are buildings, the number and flashiness of which depend on the amount of funding the churches have been able to gather either from foreign missions or locally: modest chapels or grand cathedrals; schools; health centres; parish halls and the like. In some African contexts, the land holdings and infrastructural property of churches can be substantial, and even where they are more moderate, churches everywhere are endowed with physical, material and financial resources. Churches own things, they sell things, they mortgage things. They have land titles, or they are in the process of getting them. These points, which make churches much more than just a religious community or an office with some staff, make it necessary to analyse the political economy of churches, and the political economy of development through churches. To put it simply, giving donor funding to churches enables them to become even more entrenched and naturalised in the landscapes. It allows them to repair roofs, to expand their premises, to build institutions, and to stake claims to the land on which they have built or which they have farmed. This may have considerable consequences in the local political economy.

Embeddedness, type 2:
The religious beliefs of churches have been comfortably interwoven or accommodated into the lifeworlds of their members

As part of the project funded by NordicChurch, NSAAPO arranged prayer services during which beneficiaries were prayed over by NSAAPO staff and volunteers. A number of the families who had benefited from the program told the visiting NordicChurch Missionary that the most important thing they had received from NSAAPO were these moments of community and prayer, during which they and their children were encountered with warmth, love and respect. The parents and nodding-affected children explained that NSAAPO was the first organisation they had encountered which acknowledged the vengeful spirits that were causing the nodding syndrome, and supplemented medical treatment with the healing power of prayer. For this, the parents were extremely grateful. Since Missionary embraced a holistic understanding of human development, she had no qualms with accepting that the beneficiaries of the project believed in spirits, nor that they employed a spiritual schema in interpreting health and sickness. She suggested, however, that NSAAPO staff downplay the role of prayer in their future funding applications, since secular funders would likely not appreciate 'non-rational' activities as part of NSAAPO's intervention regime.

Three relevant points fall under this particular type of embeddedness. First, taking spirituality seriously reflects and reproduces the spiritual, psychological and social embeddedness of churches in African societies. Acknowledgement of the wholeness of the human person, including of the spiritual and religious person, is what makes churches and their development interventions meaningful for many of their beneficiaries. Such a holistic view allows churches to address problems that fully secular approaches would be powerless in dealing with. The language and practice of NSAAPO, which sought to incorporate 'customary' Acholi cosmological understandings, Christian teaching and medical knowledge, made the language of NSAAPO resonate with its beneficiaries much more than the language of juridical rights, bacteria and disinfectants that 'secular' NGOs used. This made NSAAPO's work meaningful, in that beneficiaries and the local community developed a strong sense of ownership over NSAAPO's and the churches' work.

   Second, support for an organisation influences its ability to further its ideological and religious agenda. In Northern Uganda, donor support for NSAAPO can be seen to have entrenched a particular type of 'inculturated' Christian interpretation of Nodding Syndrome. This led some notable proponents of 'pure' (non-Christianised) Acholi customary worldviews to complain on local radio stations that NSAAPO's deliverance services were confusing the local spirit world, and hence causing more harm than help. Pastors of other churches were also annoyed, since their churches' NGOs

were not as successful in gathering funding, while the leaders of Acholi Church, through their influence in NSAAPO, gained visibility in the local public debate surrounding Nodding Syndrome. Indeed, institutional power, which churches in part gain through external funding, can affect their spiritual and moral authority. Additional funding may either strengthen churches' authority in the local context, or in cases where churches start to be increasingly seen as simply 'running after money', external funding can delegitimise churches in the eyes of local communities.

Third, and related to the previous point, one of the most important issues in which the embeddedness of churches is relevant for development relates to the way in which churches' religious teaching about gender and sexuality are accommodated with what are understood as 'customary' norms in local communities. For instance in Northern Uganda, support to the development efforts of churches may inadvertently entrench the patriarchal, heteronormative and gerontocratic structures churches in this region have espoused. That said, it is noteworthy that when churches do adopt a progressive agenda, for example regarding gender equity or sexual rights, their capacity to advance their viewpoint in local communities can be far greater than that of 'secular' civil-society organisations, precisely because of their spiritual and religious embeddedness in local communities.

Finally, an interesting observation to be made in this context is that I met only one person during my fieldwork in Uganda who made the kind of post-colonial argument against missionary churches that one encounters repeatedly in Development Studies and secular development policy and practitioner circles. This is not to say that such people do not exist in Africa: they certainly do. Rather, it is to highlight that there are many people, for instance in Uganda, who are deeply committed to churches, who see them as their own, and who feel no need for a postcolonial secular critique of Africa's missionary legacy. The dilemma for donors considering funding organisations in such contexts, then, is whether they should seek out and support those minorities who wish to outroot the colonial legacy of Christianity in Africa, or rather engage with churches, even when it risks entrenching their social standing in ways the donors are uncomfortable with.

Embeddedness, type 3:
Churches as institutions have become deeply integrated with other societal structures, including party politics, local administration, and family and clan structures that can go back generations

The leader of the charismatic revival in Acholi Parish, Ms. Atimango, had a special gift for prayer, and she was always present at NSAAPO deliverance meetings. The young woman had a burning desire to effect change in her society. After years of work in her church and in various civil society movements, she was approached by a government official who suggested she take the next step and move on to the really big arenas,

from which change could truly come about. Ms. Atimango agreed, and was preparing to run as the female candidate of the ruling party for parliamentary elections in her district. The chairperson of NSAAPO's board of trustees, Mr. Ojok, was resentful of the fact, and wished Ms. Atimango would withdraw from the prayer sessions, where she got far too much attention for Mr. Ojok's liking. His clan brother was high up in opposition politics. A major tug of war had been going on in the scenes of NSAAPO and within Acholi Parish over party political leanings: which politicians would be allowed to speak at church gatherings? If they were declined the right to speak politics, should they still be allowed to lead prayers?

Partly due to the historical interrelations between colonial and missionary organisations, churches across Sub-Saharan Africa are deeply intertwined with the state and with political parties, in a way quite foreign to 'Western democracies'. For example, during early independence in Uganda, certain churches were affiliated with certain parties, although in the contemporary setting, the growth of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity has changed the bigger picture. Still, today churches provide some of the most important arenas for politicians to address the electorate, and for the unfolding of public debates. Support for churches and church-related organisations is hence extremely political; as is of course the case also for support provided to 'secular' civil society organisations.

Understanding the 'organisational dynamics' within NSAAPO, however, requires not only an understanding of party political affiliations, but as Jones[7] has argued, knowledge of the long-standing personal relations and internal conflicts within and around Acholi Parish. In this context, what was particularly important were the relations between the families that had moved to live in the vicinity of the church in the early missionary era from far-off villages and the families whose forefathers had used the land of Acholi Parish for grazing. There were many tensions between these and other groups within Acholi Parish and NSAAPO, which provide a far more complex view of the power dynamics within the organisation that would come across to the potential donor in organisational documents. Those living near the church were broadly considered to have benefited more from the Acholi Parish and from NSAAPO than those living further away.

There was also growing frustration among youth in Acholi Parish. As Shroff has also discussed in another Ugandan context (see endnote #5), young people felt that the church elders systematically ignored them, pulling resources to their own organisations through their manipulation of their long-standing relations with foreign donors. All jobs, youth argued, were given to the ill-qualified relatives of those people sitting high up in NSAAPO and Acholi Parish hierarchy, rather than on grounds of merit. From the point of view of such youth, any money given to NSAAPO was money given to those who were already well-off; who already had access to jobs and security, in ways that the overwhelming majority of the

parish youth did not. For example, young women who disagreed with the patriarchal teaching of the Church would have risked losing any chance of gaining employment through Acholi Parish development projects had they spoken out against church elders. Hence whenever the staff of foreign donors came for their two-day visits, young volunteers of NSAAPO were careful to present themselves to the foreigners in an uncritical way that would look good in the eyes of NSAAPO leadership.

In conclusion: how to decide
whether to fund or not to fund?

There is absolutely no way that SecularNGO could have known even a modicum of these issues without my eight months of fieldwork. Foreign staff members of an international faith-based NGO that had worked extensively with this church and had lived in the town for almost five years, had, for instance, never heard about the court cases concerning the land on which NSAAPO's office was built – neither did they have a clue about the fact that the leader of the charismatic revival at Acholi Parish was planning to run for parliament under the ruling party banner. This, of course, is the case for all development work, whether done with local NGOs or churches: there is always more in the details than the donors will ever know.

What then would be the effect of SecularNGO providing funding to NSAAPO? Despite my extremely complex understanding of the local reality, I really could not say. All I could say was that as far as I knew, despite some people's reservations towards NSAAPO's activities, they were as respectable as any organisation I knew in the local context; I had great respect for many of their staff and trustees, and I had no reason to recommend SecularNGO against funding them. It turned out that the biggest problem for SecularNGO was not what they did not know about NSAAPO – it was that they did know that NSAAPO defined itself openly as religious.

The question for donors considering funding churches and church-related NGOs in the South then becomes: is the purpose of donor funding to promote Western secularism, employing Western terminology and values? Or is the purpose of donor funding to allow for people in the Global South to develop following their own trajectories, employing their own terminology and values? If it is the latter, then I see no reason why secular NGOs would not engage in partnership with religious organisations in Africa. Not to do so would imply a failure and lack of willingness of Western development actors to engage with the lifeworlds of hundreds of millions of Africans on what they feel are their own terms. On the basis of this analysis, I conclude by way of some tentative recommendations for donors considering development partnerships with churches or church-related NGOs in Africa.

Recommendations to donors and development NGOs considering working with churches or church-affiliated NGOs in the global South:

1. **Do not shy away from the fact that all development is inherently political**
   Development funding always impacts on the relative position of the funded institution in relation to other institutions and actors in the location; on the power dynamics within the funded institution; and the power dynamics within the communities of the 'project beneficiaries'. In this, churches are no different to other non-governmental organisations.

2. **Realise the importance of religion for others even if it has none for you**
   There is no word for 'religion' in many African languages. This reflects how 'religion' in many African worldviews is not considered something distinct from other things; what Westerners often understand as 'religious' cuts across the way of life and way of thinking of many of the recipients of Western aid. It is futile to imagine that 'religious' thinking would also not cut across development aid in such contexts, even if it is implemented by purportedly 'secular' local NGOs. It does. Development agencies would be wise to recognise this, rather than to vainly attempt to keep development 'secular'.

3. **Accept the paradox of churches' embeddedness**
   Churches' long-term presence in a society, and the religious and spiritual needs they are able to address, makes them much more deeply embedded in local communities than is the case for almost any other type of civil society actor. This has considerable benefits for donors. It also makes the politics of funding provided for such actors increasingly complex, but there is much reason to believe that the benefits out-weigh the risks.

4. **Show trust and commit for long periods of time**
   There is no way a donor can know all the intricacies of the paradox of churches' embeddedness. Donor funding will unavoidably have effects in local contexts which cannot be foreseen or analysed with any amount of assessment tools. Some of these impacts will go against what the donors would like to achieve. Donors would do well to accede to this reality, and to commit to long-term relationships with church organisations.

5. **Empower religious youth**
   Donors should provide funding for training church youth in ways that enable them to adopt increasing responsibility in their churches, and to also challenge church leadership in critical ways. Religion is bound to continue to be part of the problem of 'underdevelopment' in Africa in the future, but through the building of critical young mass within religious communities, religion can also continue to be part of the solution.

Endnotes

Religion as a resource in development cooperation
Petter Jakobsson

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Religion and development – the Norwegian story

Jørn Lemvik

1 Digni is a Christian membership based umbrella organisation funding development activities done by its members – all of which are Christian churches or mission organisations.

2 The focus of much of the practical work was usually on health, education and agriculture.

3 This has been the dominant view up to our days. It is only the last 10–20 years, where people have seen the "power of religion", and also experienced that most of the world is highly religious that religion is "back on stage". One of the challenges we hold in Norway, is that we do not clearly see that it is we who are the exception where religion is concerned, not the rest of the world.

4 Norway is predominately a Lutheran country, and most of the mission organisations were organisations with a Lutheran faith identity. But other churches had also come to Norway like the Baptists, the Pentecostals and the Methodists and these were equally actively involved in mission work.

5 Over the years this have changed to 10/90 – and with Norad providing 8% administration fee to the Norwegian organisation on top of the 90%.

6 Dr. Katherine Marshall was one of the key actors world-wide on the issue of religion and development. She worked with Dr. James Wolferson in the World Bank in the 1990s when Wolferson started discussions with the Archbishop of Canterbury on the importance of religion in development.

7 The first consultation was organised in New York City in 2014, documented in the report *Religion and Development Post –2015*. The next consultation was also organised in New York City in 2015. Spin-offs of these consultations were projects on gender (Bahaii), peace and reconciliation (KAICIID), finance (OECD), indicators (Salvation Army), and issues about "going local" (Digni). Documentation will be available during 2016. At the time of writing a new consultation is planned for in Nairobi in 2016.

Mission and development:
Old stories or new possibilities?

Tomas Sundnes Drønen

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The need for contextual analysis on the role of religion in the Swedish development cooperation

Josephine Sundqvist

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The United Nations, faith-based organisations and development post-2015

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1 All the opinions expressed in this paper belong to the author alone and are not representative of positions, attitudes or policies of any institution, board, government, staff or territorial entity.

2 There is a great deal of discussion and debate around the definition of an FBO. It is used herein to reference faith-based or faith-inspired non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with legal standing, which are working to advocate for and/or deliver development and humanitarian services whether nationally, regionally or internationally (or indeed at all those levels). In this article, FBOs are distinguished from individual religious leaders (RL) or local faith communities which operate in diverse contexts without being legally registered or established as a non-governmental entity.

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are universal and apply to all countries. For more information, see: "Post 2015 Development Agenda," accessed December 8, 2015, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015; and, "Sustainable Development Goals," accessed December 8, 2015, http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview/post-2015-development-agenda.html.

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9 The UN Development Group unites the 32 UN funds, programmes, agencies, departments, and offices that play a role in development.

10 These take place once yearly and are referred to as Strategic Learning Exchanges on Faith, Development and Humanitarian Relief. Various UN staff members are convened with common FBO partners to exchange experiences and address partnerships which help to address and assess the nexus between religion -development and humanitarian aspects based on real in-country situations.

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Faith-based organisations
and their distinct assets

Kjell Nordstokke

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Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity and development: Views from Africa

Päivi Hasu

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The role of faith-based mediation in internal armed conflicts

Isak Svensson

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Another way of thinking: Religion, values and climate change

Henrik Grape

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Religious leaders' response to HIV prevention in South Africa

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Recovering the biblical story of Tamar: Training for transformation, doing development
Gerald O. West

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International development engages with religion: How to achieve positive outcomes for women

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Religious communities – a resource or a liability for development?

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Embeddedness – the paradox of development through the grassroots of churches

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For Better for Worse

The Role of Religion in Development Cooperation

Can development cooperation be effective without a genuine understanding of religion and religious actors? Considering that religion is an integral part of life for a majority of the world's population and that sustainable change builds on peoples own resources, the obvious answer is no. Religion affects the way people think, act and understand the world they live in as well as permeating the cultures and the fabrics of our societies. Sometimes it is an asset, sometimes a problem. In both cases a thorough understanding and analysis of the world of religion is a necessity.

This anthology has been written in order to offer the reader inspiration and knowledge about the role of religion in development cooperation; to introduce the theme to those who might not be familiar with these perspectives and add to the knowledge of those who are already well versed within this field. Whether you are connected to a secular or faith-based organisation, dealing with development issues within politics or as a civil servant, if you are a student or simply have an interest in international development issues - this book is written with you in mind.

The contributors are some of the most relevant academics and practitioners within their respective fields. As religion concerns most areas of life, the articles cover a wide variety of themes: from peace and conflict to climate change and the HIV epidemic, from the influence of growing religious movements such as the Pentecostal-charismatic movement to masculinity norms and women's rights.

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