



EXPLORING AND WORKING WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

**AN ANALYSIS OF PRACTICES IN
SELECTED EU MEMBER STATES**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Around the world, faith-based organisations (FBOs) engage in a wide variety of activities related to development, ranging from health and educational services, disaster relief and financial aid to conflict resolution, social justice activism, human rights advocacy and women’s empowerment. They contribute – both indirectly and directly – to the promotion and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Some of the world’s largest development and humanitarian NGOs are faith-based. In many parts of the world, FBOs make up a substantial part of civil society. FBOs act both as service providers and actors of governance in their own right, participating in dialogue processes with bilateral and multilateral actors.

Among official development donors, there is increasing consensus on the importance of FBOs in development cooperation. FBOs are seen to bring an ‘added value’ to development cooperation, because of characteristics such as a widespread and long-term presence in even the most remote villages; a high degree of recognition, support, legitimacy and trust in the population; extensive networks and relations; and – not least – an ability to mobilise funds and resources.

This report provides a short introduction to the contemporary field of FBOs and an overview of selected EU member state cooperation with FBOs. The report was commissioned by DG DEVCO with the view to contribute to ongoing conversations within DEVCO on how to strengthen the institution’s understanding of FBOs and to improve the ways in which DEVCO works with these organisations.

Diversity of faith-based organisations

The term FBO typically refers to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that constitute themselves with reference to religious discourses, i.e. organisations that define themselves as religious, by referring to religious principles, traditions, practices, authorities, figures or concepts in relation to their organisational identity, rationale, activities, staff, funding sources, or target groups. It is primarily used in relation to organisations that are active in the field of

development and humanitarian aid, including the provision of health and educational services, financial aid, provision of emergency relief, conflict resolution and peace building, or social justice activism.

The contemporary field of FBOs is vast and extremely diverse, including a wide range of very different organisational types. Understanding this diversity is essential in order to be able to design adequate strategies for cooperation with FBOs. Common types of FBOs include individual congregations; local and national associations, charities and NGOs; political parties, organisations and movements; international development and humanitarian NGOs; representative councils, networks and alliances; and missionary organisations.

FBOs differ not only in terms of their organizational characteristics; they also differ with regard to their religious identity and the role they assign to religion in their activities. FBOs are, in other words, faith-based in a wide variety of ways. In some organizations, religion influences every aspect of organizational work, constituencies and identity; in others, it is relegated to the sphere of personal motivation and underlying values; and in most, it is somewhere in between these two extremes.

A third relevant divide within the FBO community turns on attitudes to gender equality, sexual orientation and gender identity. Many religious practices and structures are highly patriarchal, dominated by male leadership, and coined in a language that legitimizes discrimination, exclusion, and even violence against women, LGBTQI people and other marginalized groups and individuals. Among the world's FBOs, we find many examples of organisations working actively to oppose or restrict rights related to gender equality, sexual orientation and gender identity, and sexual and reproductive health rights, often from the perspective that such rights threaten deep-seated religious traditions and family values. At the same time, religion can be – and has historically been – a source of motivation for engagement in struggles for justice and equality. All over the world, religious leaders, organisations and individuals find inspiration in religion to fight for women's empowerment and gender equality, and we find strong

advocates of religious feminism and women's rights across all religious traditions.

Donor cooperation with FBOs

FBOs have been key partners in development cooperation since the establishment of contemporary governmental and intergovernmental aid agencies. However, it is only in recent years that development donors have started to reflect explicitly on the particular characteristics and value that may grow out of their faith-based identity and approach to development. For many years, official development cooperation paid little attention to the role and relevance of religion in development, reflecting a strongly secularist conception of religion as at best irrelevant, at worst an obstacle to development. This did not mean that development donors would not cooperate with FBOs, but when they did, they would do so *regardless* or even *despite* the religiosity of these organisations, not *because* of it.

The end of the millennium witnessed a sea change in the ways in which donors dealt with religion and FBOs. This was epitomized in the World Bank's 1998 Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics, but was also reflected in a wide range of other donor initiatives aimed at increasing attention to religion and strengthening cooperation with FBOs, including e.g. the formulation of policies and guidelines for partnering with FBOs, research and knowledge exchange on religion and development, as well as religious literacy training of staff in donor organisations.

This increased attention to religion and FBOs was facilitated by a number of developments and events making it clear that religion had not disappeared from the public sphere and that religious actors continued to play a very important role in shaping people's perceptions and practices, mobilising action, and providing support. Key among these were e.g. the involvement of religious institutions in processes of democratisation in Latin America and Eastern Europe, rise of faith-based activism such as the anti-debt campaign *Jubilee 2000* (and the subsequent *Make Poverty History* campaign), and the involvement of FBOs in responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Together with the World Bank and UN agencies, European donors have played an important role in directing attention to religion and FBOs in development cooperation. Based on an analysis of British, Danish, Finnish, German, Dutch and Swedish practices, the following section gives a brief description and concrete examples of how this cooperation plays out, with a view to identify key characteristics, trends, opportunities and challenges in donor cooperation with FBOs and, more broadly, attention to religion in development cooperation.

Practices of selected EU member states

Among the donors studied for the present analysis, we can identify three main **arguments for cooperating with FBOs**: First, donors consider religion to be important simply because it is important to people, illustrated in the oft-quoted fact that more than 80 percent of the world's population adhere to a religion. Second, and more specifically, FBOs are seen to have an 'added value' in terms of reach, legitimacy and sustainability, capable of serving not only as effective service providers but also as 'change agents'. Third, for some donors their cooperation with FBOs is also shaped by a desire to counter those aspects of religion that negatively influence the struggle for human rights, democratization and development.

For all donors, **concrete cooperation with FBOs** around specific programmes and projects is an important – if not the only – part of their increased attention to religion and FBOs. One common mode of cooperation is partnership and direct funding, typically in the form of long-term framework agreements or strategic partnerships with a few international FBOs. Donors also engage in more indirect cooperation with and funding to FBOs, insofar as their FBO partners often channel part of their funding to local partners in the countries in which they implement projects. Finally, donors also engage in dialogue and consultations with broader groups of FBOs, both at national and international level.

Donor cooperation with FBOs has historically centred on **health, education and humanitarian aid**. While activities in these sectors still make up a major – if not the main – part of cooperation, donors today seem to engage with FBOs on a much wider range of activities, reflecting greater attention to the potential role

that FBOs can play in terms of influencing local norms and practices, in particular in relation to gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and harmful practices. Peace-building, conflict resolution and prevention of violent extremism are also considered highly relevant areas of cooperation, in particular in relation to conflicts with a clear religious dimension. Most recently, the promotion of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) seems to be an increasingly important theme in donor cooperation with FBOs, reflecting broader trends in foreign policy.

The overwhelming majority of the FBOs that donors cooperate with are **Christian organisations**, both when it comes to direct and indirect support. Donors are aware of the skewed composition of their partner portfolio and have sought to address this bias in different ways, some more systematically than others. One approach has been to offer capacity building to smaller, non-Christian FBOs. More flexible funding modalities are also seen as a way of attracting other FBOs than the large, professional, often Christian, FBOs. Finally, some have made an explicit effort to reach out to non-Christian actors in fora for dialogue and consultation.

While only a few donors have developed explicit criteria for the selection of FBO partners, they all seem to share a set of more implicit **'red lines' for cooperation**. Proselytism is one such red line; affiliations with violent or militant groups and movements is another. Somewhat more intangibly, many consider **'respect for human rights'** as a red line that cannot be crossed, at least in principle. However, there is broad acknowledgement of the practical difficulties in measuring such respect. Furthermore, some also point to the potential benefits in engaging with organisations that are critical towards certain human rights, insofar as such engagement may contribute to gradual changes in these organisations' conceptions and approaches.

All donors acknowledge the importance of **institutionalizing and systematising attention to religion and FBOs** throughout their organization. In terms of organisational structures, one donor has established a specialised unit dedicated to the theme, while others have appointed individual focal points or resource

persons. One is in the process of establishing an inter-departmental network. However, only two donors have developed specific guidelines, policies or strategies for their work on religion and FBOs. Similarly, there is a lack of analytical tools to guide staff in dealing with religion and FBOs throughout the different phases of development cooperation, including the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes.

There is broad acknowledgement of the importance of more **systematic gathering of institutional experiences, best practices and lessons learned**. In interviews, several people point to the fact that there is a lot of relevant experience in the organisation, in particular at country level, but that there is no systematic collection and dissemination of these experiences throughout the organization. More broadly, several people also point to the need for continuous reflection and learning on their organisation's involvement with religion and FBOs, both in form of internal space within the donor agency and in dialogue with the FBOs themselves. Finally, several interviewees call for more evidence-based analysis and research on the role of religion in development, in particular in relation to the contributions and comparative advantages of FBOs.

Challenges and lessons learned

Donor representatives are generally optimistic about their organisation's involvement with religion and FBOs and see the potential and **opportunities** for cooperation that FBOs may bring through their widespread and long-term presence in remote areas; their high degree of recognition, support, legitimacy and trust in the population; their extensive networks and relations; and their ability to mobilise funds and resources. However, donors– and others – also point to a number of **challenges** in furthering this agenda.

For one, this notion of a positive '**added value**' of religion and FBOs that dominates narratives on FBO cooperation entails several risks. The emphasis on an 'added value' can lead to an overly instrumentalist approach in which cooperation with FBOs comes to be solely about the ways in which they can be used, to enhance existing donor agendas – not more fundamentally about the ways in which they may shape or challenge the ways in which these agendas are

conceptualised or carried out. The focus on the positive aspects, while often justified, also risks downplaying the complexities of religion and FBOs. There is no doubt that some FBOs sometimes – and perhaps even often – present ‘unique contributions to development’, but in some contexts, religious affiliation may also be a disadvantage. There is a need for more contextualised understandings of the various ways in which the nexus between religion and development plays out in different FBO, in different settings and different times.

The particular **constellation of donors’ partner portfolios** is another challenge. The vast majority of FBO cooperation is with international development and humanitarian FBOs, primarily from mainstream Christian denominations. Some donors are consciously trying to diversify their partner portfolio to include more non-Christian FBOs, including in particular international Muslim FBOs. But there is arguably also a need for normative diversification. Many of the FBOs supported are firmly embedded in the field of mainstream development and humanitarian aid, relying on values and approaches that are very similar to those of the donor agencies themselves. In many contexts, however, more conservative FBOs may in fact dominate the field, espousing values and approaches that resonate with local communities to a much higher degree than donors’ FBO partners. If donors want truly participatory and locally grounded development, they have to get out of their ‘comfort zone’ and find ways to approach some of these FBOs. Finally, there is a need for diversification in terms of attention to less organised forms of religion. The focus on FBOs risks overlooking religious voices, practices, and expressions outside of formal institutions and organisations, and there is a need for much more systematic, context-specific awareness and inclusion of these.

Third, cooperation between donors and FBOs tends to lead to little **rethinking of conventional development approaches**. In theory, many donors are open to the possibility that cooperation with FBOs can lead to ‘a more holistic approach’, but in concrete donor practices there are few signs of fundamental changes in how development is conceptualized or carried out. The present analysis indicates that recent decades have witnessed fundamental changes in the ways in which donors perceive FBOs and their role in development, insofar as FBOs are no

longer seen as basic service providers, but as key agents in changing norms and practices, e.g. in relation to gender equality, violent extremism or religiously related conflict. FBOs are, in other words, considered to be agents of change – but what donors expect them to change is religious norms and practices, not development norms and practices.

Finally, a fourth set of challenges concerns the **institutionalisation of attention to religion and FBOs**. Despite the introduction of a variety of initiatives in this regard – e.g. establishment of sector programmes, appointment of focal points, and introduction of religious literacy courses – all donors seem to struggle to ensure systematic attention to religion and FBOs in the everyday routines of the donor agency. This requires increased religious literacy of staff through regular, preferably obligatory, courses, but also the development of tools to facilitate the translation of this literacy into sustained attention to religion throughout the various stages of development cooperation, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 DONOR COOPERATION WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

Faith-based organisations (in the following FBOs)¹ have historically played a crucial role in provision of aid to the poor, reflecting the centrality of notions such as ‘compassion’, ‘solidarity’ and ‘care’ in almost all religions. Catholic orders have been the important providers of health and education services in Latin America and Europe, Buddhist monks have run hospitals and schools, and Islamic charitable systems have provided economic aid across the Middle East and North Africa, to mention only a few examples.

FBOs have been key partners in development cooperation since the establishment of contemporary governmental and intergovernmental aid agencies. However, it is only in recent years that development donors have started to reflect explicitly on the particular characteristics and value that may grow out of their faith-based identity and approach to development. For many years, official development cooperation paid little attention to the role and relevance of religion in development, reflecting a strongly secularist conception of religion as at best irrelevant, at worst an obstacle to development. This did not mean that development donors would not cooperate with FBOs, but when they did, they would do so *regardless* or even *despite* the religiosity of these organisations, not *because* of it.

Today, most of the major development donors acknowledge the importance of FBOs in development cooperation, including in relation to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals. FBOs are seen by many to bring an ‘added value’ to development cooperation, precisely because of their religious identity: A widespread and long-term presence in even the most remote villages; a high degree of recognition, support and legitimacy in the population; extensive networks and relations; and – not least – an ability to mobilise funds and resources. Together with the World Bank and UN agencies, European development cooperation agencies have played an important role in driving this process, issuing policies, formulating guidelines, training staff, and providing funding to FBOs.

The increasing attention to religion and FBOs in development cooperation is also reflected within the European Commission's Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO).² In April 2018, DEVCO, with the support of the Methodological and Knowledge Sharing (MKS) - programme, launched the Agora on Religion and Development: a safe learning space for DEVCO and other EU staff working on religion and/or external action to progress in understanding the nexus between religion and development. Within this framework, a number of seminars, training sessions and presentations have been organised, focusing on different aspects of the relationship between religion and development.³ The present report has been commissioned by DEVCO B1 with the purpose to contribute to this process of knowledge-building within DEVCO.

EXAMPLES OF DEVCO support to FBOs

There is no comprehensive or systematic overview of DEVCO support to FBOs. A few highlights: In the period from 2007 to 2016, 263 grant contracts were signed with FBOs, amounting to €150 million or around 9 percent of the total amount of the thematic programme on Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities. Furthermore, DEVCO also has a Framework Partnership Agreement with one FBO, *Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité Internationale (CIDSE)*.

Through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), a number of FBOs working on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) have been supported (Perchoc 2017a). Three regional intercultural and -religious dialogue projects are currently being financed by the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), and projects involving FBOs in countering violent extremism are supported under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP).

Geographic instruments managed by NEAR (European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA)) have also occasionally supported intercultural initiatives. DEVCO's dialogue platform with civil society organisations, the Policy Forum on Development (PFD), also includes a number of FBOs. EU DEVCO is also an informal observer in the network of donors and FBOs, Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD).

1.2 PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE REPORT

The overall objective of the report is to provide an overview of contemporary donor cooperation with FBOs, with a focus on selected EU member states.⁴ In doing so, the report seeks to contribute to the ongoing conversations within DEVCO on how to strengthen the understanding of the ‘religion and development nexus’, and how to build a more informed and strategic cooperation with FBOs, directing attention to related opportunities and challenges, as well as more broadly to contribute to building ‘religious literacy’ within the institution.

FBO cooperation is a key element in most donors’ work with religion and development, and as such, deserving of analysis. But attention to religion requires much more than cooperation with FBOs. A wide variety of religious expressions exist outside of the formal or organised FBOs, in the form of e.g. rituals, traditions, everyday practices, theologies, values and beliefs. Such expressions of ‘lived religion’ – as much as FBOs – influence conceptions and practices of development in different ways and need to be considered. While the present analysis focuses primarily on FBOs, it also seeks to direct attention to these more intangible or ‘unruly’ religious expressions throughout the report.

More specifically, the report seeks:

- to provide an introduction to the contemporary field of FBOs,
- to give a brief history of donor attention to religion and cooperation with FBOs,
- to provide an overview of selected EU member state activities and experiences, and
- to formulate recommendations for future involvement in this area (not included in the present version of the report).

The analysis of donor activities and experiences focuses on six EU member states – Britain, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden – assumed to be the most active in this area, based on the fact that these agencies are all members of (or observers in) the newly established Partnership on Religion and Sustainable development (PaRD), and thus can be assumed to have taken a conscious decision to engage in this area.⁵

The report is based on desk studies of available reports, articles, and books (including both academic and grey literature) as well as telephone interviews and email communication with representatives from the six donor agencies. The author also draws on experiences and information from her previous research and consultancies on similar topics, including in particular the report *Donor*

Engagement with Religion and Religious Actors, commissioned by the Danish NGO Network on Religion and Development (2016), and the report *Religion, human rights and democratisation: A mapping of faith-based organizations and donor initiatives*, commissioned by SIDA (2014).

2 FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION

Faith-based organisations are key actors in development and humanitarian aid. Basic issues that are central to the world of development and humanitarian aid – such as social justice, education, welfare and the meaning of progress, for example – are core issues in all major religions with intellectual and moral roots that can be traced back thousands of years (Marshall 2001:345). To mention only a few examples: Hebrew scriptures emphasised justice for the poor, and temples often served as sanctuaries for the persecuted or refugees. Christian faith and practice are also based on the values of charity and mercy, and Christian orders have long provided services to the poor, sick, and vulnerable (Ferris 2005:313). Likewise, Islam emphasises human dignity, giving, and assistance to the poor through charitable mechanisms such as *zakat*, *waqf* and *sadaqa*.⁶ Hinduism values compassion, non-violence, and service to the community. And concepts of tolerance, inclusion, and empathy for the suffering of others are central to Buddhism.⁷

Today, FBOs around the world engage in a wide variety of activities related to development and humanitarian aid, ranging from health and educational services, disaster relief and financial aid to conflict resolution, social justice activism, human rights advocacy and women's empowerment. As such, they also take other roles than mere service providers, e.g. by engaging in advocacy and participating in dialogue processes with the aim of influencing policy- and decision-making at various levels, making them actors of governance. Many FBOs contribute to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, actively and explicitly engaging in their promotion and implementation. Some of the world's largest development and humanitarian NGOs are faith-based; in fact, with an annual revenue of almost USD three billion, the Evangelical NGO World Vision may very well be the largest NGO in the world. In many parts of the world, FBOs make up a substantial part of civil society. In Lebanon, for instance, FBOs constitute around 20 percent of the country's NGOs (Chabaan & Seyfert 2012); in Pakistan, more than one-third of civil society is estimated to be faith-based (Iqbal & Siddiqui 2009:20), and in Rwanda, FBOs provide more than 25 percent of the country's health services (Kagawa et al. 2012).

The contemporary field of FBOs is vast and extremely diverse, not only in terms of different organisational types, but also in terms of the roles they assign to religion. Understanding this diversity is essential in order to design adequate strategies for cooperation. The typologies presented here are not meant to denote a conception of FBOs as fixed, static or homogenous entities, but serve instead to give a clarifying overview.⁸

2.1 CLARIFYING THE TERM

The term faith-based organisation (FBO) refers to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that constitute themselves with reference to religious discourses, i.e. organisations that define themselves as religious, by referring to religious principles, traditions, practices, authorities, figures or concepts in relation to their organisational identity, rationale, activities, staff, funding sources, or target groups. While the term can include all kinds of non-governmental faith-based actors, it has primarily been used in relation to organisations that are active in the field of development and humanitarian aid, including the provision of health and educational services, financial aid, provision of emergency relief, conflict resolution and peace building, or social justice activism. Synonyms and related terms include e.g. religious NGOs, religious actors, faith-inspired or faith-linked organisations and faith-based non-profit organisations (Haynes 2014:7).

The term FBO – and its synonyms, for that matter – is not unproblematic and easily definable, and some, among scholars as well as development practitioners, are weary of using this term, whether for theoretical, analytical or practical reasons. As noted by James (2009:4): “For many, the term ‘FBO’ conceals much more than it reveals. It gives the impression that FBOs are the same. Yet FBOs are extraordinarily heterogeneous.” The term is, in other words, simply too broad to be analytically meaningful or possible to operationalize (Hegertun 2012:126).

More specifically, much criticism turns on the FBO concept’s **reliance on terms such as ‘faith’ or ‘religion’**. Critics argue that these terms have grown out of particular historical and religious contexts, and are thus better suited to capture some worldviews, traditions and practices than others. The focus on individual faith and the importance of scripture, for instance, are aspects of ‘religion’ that are difficult to align with e.g. Daoism or Shinto traditions. Along the same lines, some reject the distinction between the ‘secular’ and the ‘religious’ that underlies the concept of FBO, considering this to be a Western construction with little relevance in other contexts. In many parts of the world, religion is inseparable from other aspects of life, making it impossible – and meaningless –

to distinguish between what is a faith-based organisation and what is not (Bouta et al. 2005:6).⁹

Another challenge is the **distinction between governmental and non-governmental** that underlies the notion of FBO. Sometimes, the line between what is a non-governmental faith-based organisation and what is a governmental religious institution are clear-cut: A Ministry of Awqaf is obviously a governmental institution, just like the Church of Denmark ('Folkekirken') and the Church of England are state churches, and as such governmental religious institutions. But in many contexts, the lines between what is 'governmental' and what is 'non-governmental' is much more difficult to draw. Some FBOs, for instance, may be formally independent NGOs, but in practice have very close relations with the regime, to the extent that they are perhaps better conceptualised as 'governmental NGOs', or GONGOs. And the other way around – in countries with a state religion, congregations are formally part of state structures, but the ways in which they function and the activities they engage in may be very similar to those of congregations that are not part of state structures. The Catholic Church as a formal church institution is intrinsically linked to the Vatican State and as such does not fall within the category of FBO as non-governmental organisation. However, many Catholic lay movements and organisations can be considered as FBOs as they operate as NGOs.

Apart from these conceptual and analytical challenges in using the term 'FBO', some critics point to more **practical challenges**. In certain contexts, it is problematic for an organisation to be classified as 'religious' or 'faith-based', and they may be prudent in using such terms due largely to the potentially negative connotations associated with religious references and the legal, social and political obstacles that may arise (Berger 2003:17). In particular since 9/11 and the 'War on Terror', some Muslim organisations are wary of flagging their religious identity, out of fear for being accused of terrorist connections. Similarly, for Christian organisations in Muslim-majority contexts – and for representatives of minority religions in any given context, for that matter – public and explicit display of one's faith can lead to accusations of sectarianism and mission.¹⁰

Despite these – very relevant – criticisms, the term has gained wide acceptance and use among organisations and donors, and alternative terms do not seem to overcome the criticisms.¹¹ Using the term, however, requires close attention to and understanding of the vast diversity of organisations that are commonly grouped together under this term. It makes little sense – analytically as well as practically – to try to apply a very steadfast definition of FBOs as a relatively homogeneous group of organisations with clear-cut boundaries. Instead, the purpose of the present chapter is to direct attention to the diversity and the

ambiguities surrounding the term, questioning in particular its underlying distinctions between the ‘secular’ and the ‘religious’ and assumptions of a homogeneous, monolithic field of organisations.

2.2 CATEGORISING FBOS: ORGANISATIONAL TYPES

The field of FBOs includes a wide range of different organisational types, ranging from large international NGOs and alliances with professional staff and million-dollar budgets to small voluntary associations and charities organised around the local mosque or church. Some organisations are independent, others are formally linked to broader religious institutions and structures. Some solely focus on development related activities, for others it is a secondary activity. Researchers and practitioners have advanced a number of different typologies and tools for classifying and categorising them.¹² The table below outlines a common typology of different organisational types and their purpose (inspired by Clarke and Jennings 2008).

Naturally, such generic typologies rarely reflect empirical realities on the ground; in different contexts around the world we find different types of organisations, shaped by the particular histories of these contexts. Similarly, individual FBOs do not always fit neatly into one category, but straddle more than one, or move between different categories over time (Clarke & Jennings 2008:25). Nonetheless, while not pretending to provide an exhaustive overview of all types of FBOs everywhere in the world, the typology may serve as an initial step in unpacking the concept of FBO. Apart from contributing to a better understanding of the diversity of the field, and thus increased capacities in navigating the field, this can also be a useful tool in concrete mappings of the ‘religious landscapes’ in particular contexts, ensuring systematic attention to a broad range of different actors of potential relevance to development cooperation.

Table 1: Organisational types of FBOs

Actor	Description
Mosques, churches, temples and other kinds of congregations	Organised groups of individual practitioners and religious leaders whose main purpose is to worship together, but who also engage in e.g. collection of alms and organisation of charitable activities.
Local and national associations, charities and NGOs	Organisations whose main purpose is to engage in aid provision at local or national level, e.g. through service provision and financial aid.
Political parties, organisations and movements	Organisations whose primary purpose is to gain or influence formal political power, but who also engage in aid provision, whether through a formal charitable wing or more informally.
International development and humanitarian NGOs	Organisations whose primary purpose is to provide development and humanitarian aid and whose scope is international.

Representative councils, networks and alliances	Networks whose main purpose is to represent and coordinate between religious organisations and institutions, but who also engage in aid provision.
Missionary organisations	Organisations whose main purpose is to actively promote their faith and seek converts to it, but which may also engage in aid provision as part of their missionary activities.

Individual mosques, churches and other kinds of religious congregations are arguably the oldest religious organisations engaged in aid provision and other development-related activities.¹³ While involvement in development-related activities is of course not the main purpose of these institutions, most do engage in some sort of social welfare activities benefiting the poor and vulnerable in the local community, often through the collection and distribution of alms. Some congregations also engage in broader social welfare activism. In Tanzania, for instance, it is estimated that the majority of faith-based social welfare activism is carried out by churches and mosques (Leurs & Mvungi 2011:28). In Myanmar, Buddhist temples are key providers of education for poor children, just like many temples serve as orphanages. Congregations are also involved in emergency relief and disaster management, e.g. through the provision of physical spaces for storage of supplies, coordination of relief efforts, distribution of supplies and a place for therapy and long-term healing (Sakhiyya 2011). The **religious leaders** of local congregations and schools are often important authorities in the community, and many engage actively in e.g. conflict resolution and peace building activities.

Local and national associations, charities and NGOs are organisations whose main purpose is to provide aid at local or national level. Some are small, informal associations and committees, run by dedicated volunteers or a few paid staff; others match large international NGOs in size and scope. Local and national FBOs have historically engaged primarily in activities related to health, education, provision of financial aid, and emergency relief. Some also engage in broader struggles for social justice, advocating for human rights, promoting gender equality and working for democratisation and good governance. The Sri Lankan Buddhist FBO Sarvodaya, for instance, has developed several programs on democratisation, good governance and interreligious co-existence. Another example is the Malaysian Sisters in Islam, working to promote principles of gender equality in Islam through training and international advocacy. And in Mexico, the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center, founded by Jesuits, provides legal aid in cases of human rights violations, including torture, arbitrary detention, and fabrication of evidence.

Among local and national-level FBOs, some are implicitly or explicitly connected to **political parties and movements**. Faith-based political parties and movements do not have the provision of aid as their main purpose, but work for the realisation of a religiously defined goal. However, many do have a charitable wing. In Pakistan, for instance, the country's many religious parties almost all have charitable wings. Al-Khidmat, the welfare wing of Jamat e-Islami, is the largest of these, engaging in health, education, emergency relief and other forms of assistance, running more than 500 schools, vocational training centres, clinics and hospitals (Iqbal & Siddiqui 2008:29).

Similarly, in Jordan, the country's largest NGO is the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Islamic Center Charity Society (ICCS), running hundreds of community centres, health clinics, schools and hospitals all over the country. While this constellation seems to be particularly widespread in Muslim-majority contexts today, we also find many examples of politically affiliated FBOs in other religious contexts. In India, for instance, a number of right-wing Hindu organisations consider their charitable and welfare activities as part of a political project to strengthen the Hindu nation (Jodhka and Bora 2009:25).

SOURCES OF FBO FUNDING

FBOs get their funding from a wide variety of sources, including:

- Collection of donations and alms from individuals
- Support from local businesses
- Funding from government
- Diaspora support
- Support from Western congregations
- Institutional funding from donor agencies

International development and humanitarian NGOs are perhaps the most visible FBOs, at least from a donor perspective. Like their local and national counterparts, they are organisations whose primary purpose is to provide assistance to the poor. They engage in a wide variety of activities, including basic service provision and humanitarian relief, but also – and to a much larger degree than local FBOs – in the promotion of human rights, women's empowerment, environmental activism, and other activities addressing structural inequalities. Some of these FBOs are among the world's largest NGOs: at the beginning of the millennium, World Vision, International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity (CIDSE), Association of Protestant Development Agencies and Caritas International have a combined annual income of approximately USD 2.5 billion, equating two-thirds of DFID's annual budget at the time. The majority of international FBOs are Christian (Hefferan et al 2009). A study of international FBOs in the UN system, for instance, show that almost 60 percent of FBOs with consultative status are Christian, while 16 percent are Muslim, 7 percent Jewish and only a few percent Hindu and Buddhist (Juul Petersen 2010; see also Carette & Miall 2017). However, the number of international, in particular Western-

based, Muslim NGOs seems to be growing. Islamic Relief Worldwide has experienced an almost exponential growth in the last decade, and is now probably the world's largest Muslim FBO. With an annual budget of GBP 120 million (2017), however, the organisation is still far beyond the main Christian FBOs.¹⁴

Representative councils, apex bodies and alliances are FBOs that consist in networks of religious institutions and organisations, established with the purpose of representing and coordinating between their members. At the international level, there is a predominance of Christian apex bodies, including e.g. ACT Alliance, the World Council of Churches, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the Lutheran World Federation.¹⁵ The picture is somewhat more diverse at national and regional levels, at least in Africa. Most East and Southern African countries, for instance, have both Muslim and Christian councils. Many of these organisations include a subsidiary organisation or department dedicated to development and humanitarian activities. ACT Alliance and World Council of Churches run expansive programmes on development and humanitarian aid, and are also actively engaged in international advocacy, in particular around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). National councils are also engaged in a variety of activities, including education, health programmes, and interfaith dialogue initiatives.

More loosely organised **networks and platforms for interfaith cooperation** are included in the category of representative councils, networks and alliances, but could arguably constitute a category on their own, insofar as their mandate differs from that of representative bodies. Interfaith FBOs focus explicitly on cooperation and dialogue between religions, and see the involvement in development and humanitarian aid as part of this effort. Religions for Peace, for instance, is a multi-faith coalition of representatives from a wide range of different religions, “guided by the vision of a world in which religious communities cooperate effectively for peace, by taking concrete common action” in areas such as poverty reduction, human rights promotion and conflict resolution.¹⁶ Other international interfaith organisations include e.g. the United Religions Initiative and the Network of Traditional and Religious Peacemakers.

Missionary organisations are FBOs whose primary goal is to spread messages of faith beyond the faithful, actively promoting their faith and seeking converts to it (Clarke & Jennings 2008:25). Christian missionary organisations are among the oldest – and most controversial – actors in the field of development and humanitarian aid, with histories that reach back centuries in many contexts. Recent decades have also witnessed a sharp increase in Muslim missionary organisations, committed to *tabligh wa-da'wa*, or preaching the message of

Allah. While missionary organisations engage in a wide variety of activities of little direct relevance to development and humanitarian aid, the vast majority also engage in activities around community development, education, public health, and agricultural development. The British-based FBO Serving in Mission, for instance, has worked in Nigeria since 1893, engaging in evangelism and capacity building and training of pastors, but also trauma healing and caring for the suffering (Odumosu, Olaniyi & Alonge 2009). Similarly, the World Muslim League, a Saudi-based missionary organisation, engages in emergency relief, education, health care and community development along with building mosques, distributing religious material and other activities to propagate Islamic teachings.

MILITANT OR VIOLENT FBOs

Across the spectrum of different organisational types, we find organisations that engage in militant or violent activism, whether directly or indirectly through funding of militant or violent groups. Among local and national FBOs affiliated with a political party, for instance, some are also engaged in militant political activism. The Hindu FBO Patit Pawan Sanghatana, which was established by the right-wing political organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, allegedly tries to mobilise Hindu youth and train them to be part of the militant Hindutva movement (Jodhka & Bora 2009:29).

Among international development and humanitarian FBOs and missionary organisations, certain Muslim FBOs have allegedly been involved in support to extremist Islamist movements. After the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington, for instance, a number of Muslim FBOs, including Al Haramain, the Revival of the Islamic Heritage Society, the Global Relief Foundation and Benevolence International Foundation, were designated by the US government, accused of funding or being otherwise related to Al-Qaeda.

2.3 THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN FBOS

2.3.1 A CONTINUUM

FBOs differ not only with regard to their organisational type and scope, but also with regard to their **religious identity and the role they assign to religion in their organisational activities**. FBOs are, in other words, faith-based in a wide variety of ways, blurring distinctions between the 'religious' and the 'secular' and questioning the usefulness of this as a key distinction in understanding FBOs. In some organisations, religion influences every aspect of organisational work, constituencies and identity; in others, it is relegated to the sphere of personal motivation and underlying values; and in most, it is somewhere in between these two extremes. These different types of religiosity cuts across religious traditions and organisational types: among international Christian FBOs, for instance, we find organisations that are almost indistinguishable from secular NGOs as well as

organisations that are actively and even aggressively missionary in their approach. Similarly, among other types of FBOs and other religious traditions, we also find organisations along the whole spectrum of religiosities. Thus, rather than assuming a fixed and well-defined role of religion in all FBOs, the religious nature and identity of this group of organisations is better understood as multidimensional, manifested in a range of different types and degrees of religiosity.

Researchers have suggested various ways of exploring the diverse roles of religion and the different types of religiosity in FBOs. Sider and Unruh (2004:116), for instance, suggest that the extent to which religion is expressed in different aspects of an FBO is best described by way of a continuum going from ‘faith-permeated’ to ‘faith-centered’, ‘faith-affiliated’, ‘faith-background’, ‘faith-secular’ and finally ‘secular’. Clarke & Jennings (2008:32) suggest a similar, but simpler, distinction between ‘passive’, ‘active’, ‘persuasive’ and ‘exclusive religiosity’, describing the degree to which religion shapes the organization’s approach to development and humanitarian aid. Rather than steadfast categories, such types of religiosity are perhaps better understood as points on a **continuum, ranging from passive to exclusive, from secular to faith-permeated.**

Minimalist religiosity	Maximalist religiosity
Religion as underlying values and motivation	Religion as all-encompassing
Secular development language and activities	Religious language and activities
Target groups not religiously defined	Target groups religiously defined
Religiosity not required for employment	Religiosity required for employment
Funding from religious and non-religious sources	Funding primarily from religious sources
Cooperation with religious and non-religious partners	Cooperation primarily with religious partners

At one end of the spectrum, we find organisations in which religion is almost invisible, relegated to the sphere of underlying values and staff motivations – what Lincoln (2003) calls a ‘minimalist religiosity’. Their mission is formulated in the language of secular development and humanitarian aid; their activities are indistinguishable from those of secular NGOs; their target groups are not religiously defined; religiosity is not a requirement for employment; funding comes from a variety of sources, including also institutional funding from secular NGOs and donor agencies; and the organisation engages in cooperation with both secular and faith-based partners, perhaps even prioritising the former over the latter. At the other end of the spectrum are organisations in which the role of religion is all-encompassing and visible, shaping all aspects of organisational identity and work – what Lincoln calls a ‘maximalist religiosity’. Their mission is formulated in a religious language; their activities are shaped by religious

traditions and practices; their target groups are religiously defined; all staff members are devout believers and religiosity is a requirement for employment; funding comes primarily or solely from fellow believers and religious institutions; and the organisation prefers cooperation with FBOs and religious institutions of the same faith.

KEY PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER WHEN EXPLORING THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN DEVELOPMENT¹⁷

Religions are internally diverse. Religions are not uniform but highly diverse, encompassing a wide range of different traditions. Even within specific traditions, there is diversity.

Religions change over time. Religions are not static but evolve and change over time as their followers – and critics – interpret and re-interpret doctrines in different ways

Religions are embedded in their context. All religions are shaped and influenced by the social, political, economic and cultural context in which they are embedded – just like they in turn shape and influence this context

Religious doctrines and practices are not always the same. Formal religious doctrine as presented by religious authorities can sometimes differ even substantially from the religious values and practices of lay people

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN EXPLORING THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN FBOs

- Does the organisation conceive its **mission** in religious or secular terms? Is the underlying **rationale** based on religious principles, concepts and ideas?
- Do the organisation's **activities** include explicitly religious activities such as distribution of religious material, celebration of religious holidays, organisation or funding of religious education? Does it include explicitly missionary activities?
- Are **target groups** defined religiously? Does receipt of aid or participation in organisational activities depend on religious affiliation?
- Are board, management and **staff** members of the same religious community? Is religiosity a **requirement for employment**? Are members of the organisation expected or required to follow religious practices and doctrines?
- Does the organisation receive its **funding** from a particular religious community? Are there particular religious restrictions on how the funding can or should be spent? Does the organisation primarily (or only) cooperate with fellow religious organisations?

2.3.2 KEY DIVIDES AND DISTINCTIONS

Apart from this basic distinction between minimalist and maximalist religiosities, a number of other distinctions, or perspectives, may be of relevance when exploring the role of religion in FBOs. One important distinction is that between **FBOs that engage in missionary, or proselytising, activities and those that don't**. While many FBOs employ a sharp distinction between mission and aid provision, others consider 'the saving of souls' to be an indispensable part of faith-based aid. But distinctions are far from clear-cut. World Vision, for instance, clearly disavows explicit proselytism in its activities, but gives staff the freedom "to share their faith when asked the reason for their work" (Thaut 2009:345). Similarly, other explicitly non-proselytising FBOs engage in what Bornstein has termed 'lifestyle evangelism' (2003), living the example of Christ in the hope that it will touch non-believers (Bornstein 2005:50).

Another key distinction is that between **FBOs that emphasise universality and non-discrimination in their definition of target groups, and those that emphasise intrareligious solidarity**. For many FBOs, universality and non-discrimination are indispensable principles, growing out of their religious convictions. For others, their religious conviction calls them to care for their own religious community, prioritising solidarity with fellow 'brothers and sisters'. Again, however, lines are blurred, and many FBOs display what we may call a pragmatic particularism or a principled universalism: In principle the organisations will help everybody, but in practice they work primarily among the own religious communities and therefore help primarily adherents of their own faith. Some advance what we may call a 'religious proximity argument', claiming that a common religion (much like a common culture) creates a symbolic sense of community among beneficiaries, NGOs, and other actors, something which in turn facilitates ease of access and provision of more culturally appropriate services (Palmer 2011:97). In this perspective, FBOs are better suited to work among 'their own' religious communities because they know the culture and the religion.

A third distinction, also of crucial importance to many donors, turns on **attitudes to gender equality and, often related to this, questions concerning sexual orientation and gender identity, and sexual reproductive health and rights**. Religion is often a source of strong and persistent resistance to gender equality. Many religious practices and structures are highly patriarchal, dominated by male leadership, and coined in a language that legitimises discrimination, exclusion, and even violence against women, LGBTQI people and other marginalised groups and individuals. Among the world's FBOs, we find many examples of organisations working actively to oppose or restrict women's rights and gender equality, often from the perspective that such rights threaten deep-

seated religious traditions and family values. At the same time, religion can be – and has historically been – a source of motivation for engagement in struggles for justice and equality. Religious leaders, organisations and individuals find inspiration in religion to fight for gender equality, and we find strong advocates of religious feminism and women’s rights across all religious traditions.¹⁸

3 DONOR COOPERATION WITH FBOS

3.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF DONOR COOPERATION WITH FBOS

The history of donor cooperation with FBOs is often told in terms of a process 'from estrangement to engagement' (Tomalin 2013). In some ways this is misleading, as donors have cooperated with (some) FBOs since the establishment of the international system of development cooperation. However, in most instances, this cooperation took place regardless of, or even despite, the religious identity of these activities. Heavily influenced by theories of secularisation and modernisation, donor agencies perceived poverty as a matter of material deprivation and its elimination a technical undertaking, and in this, they systematically ignored the role of religion (Clarke 2007:77f). Religion was understood as a conservative and traditional force, destined to withdraw and eventually disappear from public life as part of societal progress towards an increasingly modern society, and as such difficult to reconcile with or relate to development's logic of economic progress and bureaucratic rationalisation.¹⁹ In this perspective, it was difficult to see what distinctive qualities FBOs could bring to development cooperation.

Recent decades have, however, witnessed a sea change in the ways in which donors understand and approach religion and FBOs. Today, there seems to be broad consensus among most development donors, at least rhetorically, of the importance of cooperating with FBOs in development, not *despite* but *because* of their religious identity and the 'added value' that this presents to development.

This increased attention to religion and FBOs was facilitated by a number of developments and events making it clear that religion had not disappeared from the public sphere and that religious actors continued to play a very important role in shaping people's perceptions and practices, mobilising action, and providing support. Key among these were e.g. the involvement of religious institutions in processes of democratisation in Latin America and Eastern Europe, rise of faith-based activism such as the anti-debt campaign Jubilee 2000 (and the subsequent Make Poverty History campaign), and the involvement of FBOs in responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The World Bank's study 'Voices of the Poor' (Narayan et al. 2000) hammered home the point. Based on information from over 40,000 men and women in 47 countries, the study brought forth the – to many – surprising finding that many poor people reported to have more trust in religious leaders, institutions and organisations than in government,

concluding that “[f]aith groups can inspire confidence and trust and are often seen as more embedded in, and committed to, local communities. They are often the first groups, which people turn to in times of need and contribute to in times of plenty” (Narayan et al 2000:x). The significant value that people in the south put on religion and religious institutions prompted the author to call on FBOs to become “agents of transformation, using their influence to demand better governance and public accountability” (Narayan 2001:47).

3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF KEY EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

These developments, along with a number of other factors, have contributed to bringing religion and FBOs on the development agenda. One of the first **multilateral** donor initiatives was the World Bank’s Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics, launched in 1998, and calling for dialogue among faith and development institutions, with the effort to combat world poverty as the central focus. In 1999, the World Faiths Development Dialogue was established to support these efforts. In the years that followed, other multilateral donors took up the call for increased attention to religion and FBOs in development. Some of the most active were UN agencies such as UNAIDS and UNFPA, engaging with specific challenges around HIV/AIDS, gender and sexuality (Bartelink 2016a:104). In 2008, the UNFPA organised the first Inter-agency Consultation on FBO Engagement, which in 2009 led to the establishment of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development, aimed at mobilising FBOs around the Millennium Development Goals – and later the Sustainable Development Goals – and more broadly encouraging cooperation between UN agencies and FBOs.²⁰ Catalysed by the Inter-Agency Task Force consultations, an international network of scholars and practitioners, the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI), was established in 2012, with the purpose to build and collect evidence on FBOs’ role and contributions to development (Tomalin et al. 2018:12).²¹

A number of **bilateral** donors also engaged with the topic in different ways. In 2002, the Swiss Agency for Development Co-operation (SDC) organised a conference with the title ‘Religion and Spirituality: A Development Taboo?’, followed by a series of workshops with NGOs. In 2005, DFID produced a policy brief recognising the ‘growing interest’ of religion in development and arguing ‘for a more systematic understanding of the role that faiths play in achieving the Millennium Development Goals’ (Jones & Juul Petersen 2011:1295). The year after, DFID launched a GBP 3.5 million five-year research programme, Religions and Development, hosted by the University of Birmingham, with the objective to produce policy-relevant research on the role of religion in development. Various other bilateral donors engaged more or less systematically with the theme, hosting conferences and workshops, formulating policies and guidelines,

appointing focal points, introducing staff courses on religion and development, and launching consultations with FBOs. Most recently, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has become a key actor in this field, presenting a strategy for cooperation with FBOs in 2016, and establishing a sector programme on Values, Religion and Development in its implementing agency, the German Cooperation for International Cooperation (GIZ).

In April 2015, World Bank director Jim Yong Kim and the German Minister of Development Cooperation, together with a number of donors and FBOs, hosted the conference 'Religion & Sustainable Development: Building Partnerships to End Extreme Poverty', which gathered more than 140 international development policy makers, academics, religious leaders and FBO representatives. Building on this momentum, in February 2016, the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) was launched with the aim to "strengthen and institutionalise cooperation between governments, multilateral organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia, and religious actors working in the fields of development, peace, interreligious dialogue and humanitarian assistance."²² Today, the Partnership includes BMZ, Global Affairs Canada, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland, Norad, UKAID, USAID, and SIDA together with a number of intergovernmental entities, including the World Bank, the African Union, Islamic Development Bank, UNWFP, as well as more than seventy, primarily international, FBOs.

KEY EVENTS IN THE 'RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT' HISTORY

- 1998 Establishment of the World Bank's Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics
- 1999 Establishment of the World Faiths Development Dialogue
- 2000 Publication of the World Bank study 'Voices of the Poor'
- 2005 Launch of the DFID research programme Religions and Development at Birmingham University
- 2009 Publication of UNFPA and UNAIDS Guidelines
- 2009 Establishment of the UN Interagency Task Force
- 2012 Establishment of the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities
- 2014 Publication of UNHCR and UNDP guidelines
- 2015 World Bank conference 'Ending Extreme Poverty: A Moral and Spiritual Imperative' (the Evidence Summit)
- 2016 Publication of the BMZ strategy 'Religious communities as partners for development cooperation'
- 2016 Establishment of Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD)

4 ANALYSIS OF SELECTED EU MEMBER STATE PRACTICES

The last two decades have witnessed increased attention to the role of religion and FBOs in development cooperation. UN agencies have been key in driving this process, but bilateral donors, including EU member states, have also played an important role. The present chapter takes a closer look at the activities of key EU member state donors in this area, with a particular focus on Britain, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

4.1 RATIONALES FOR COOPERATION

As has been noted above, there is common agreement among donors on the need to take religion into consideration in development, not least through cooperation with FBOs. Among the donors studied for the present analysis, some have formulated and presented their rationales for this cooperation in official documents – DFID in its ‘Faith Partnership Principles’ (2012), and BMZ in its strategy on ‘Religious communities as partners for development cooperation’ (2016).²³ For other donors – the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Denmark – their rationale remains more implicit. Nonetheless, judging from interviews, the different rationales share a number of common features.

First, donors consider religion to be important simply because **it is important to people**, illustrated in the oft-quoted fact that more than 80 percent of the world’s population adhere to a religion. As noted in BMZ’s strategy: “A values-based development policy which takes the individual seriously also needs to take that individual’s worldview seriously. Most people’s worldview is defined, not exclusively but certainly to a major extent, by their religion” (BMZ 2016:11).

Second, and more specifically, all donors point to the potential of FBOs to influence matters related to development cooperation. While most acknowledge that FBOs also present a potential for negative influence on development goals – e.g. as a source of or contribution to exclusion, conflict, oppression, discrimination and radicalisation – attention typically focuses on the **positive contributions of FBOs**. FBOs are seen by the donor agencies to present an **‘added value’ in terms of reach, legitimacy and sustainability**. In terms of reach, FBOs are often part of larger infrastructures and networks, capable of reaching even the most remote areas of the world. They are seen to enjoy a high degree

of trust and legitimacy in the population, often higher than government or secular NGOs. As noted in BMZ's strategy, in Nigeria, for instance, 91 percent have great confidence in religious institutions, while aid agencies enjoy the confidence of 62 percent and national government 38 percent (BMZ 2016:11). Finally, FBOs are seen as proponents of long-term engagement and sustainability. A common perception of FBOs is that they are 'the first to show up and the last to leave.'

Third, for some donors their cooperation with FBOs is also shaped by a desire to counter those **aspects of religion that negatively influence the struggle for human rights, democratisation and development**. As noted in BMZ's strategy:

Sometimes, discrimination and other human rights violations are committed in the name of religion. That is precisely why we want to increase our dialogue with religious actors, including those who criticise human rights, and to find suitable players to work with in our programs. We want to help reduce the many misunderstandings about human rights by facilitating dialogue between religious representatives who take a critical view and human rights defenders (BMZ 2016:15).

While less common among other donors, at least judging from interviews, the representative from the Dutch Foreign Ministry also points to the importance of understanding 'the darker sides of religion': "Religious arguments are used against democratic values, even close to home. And because of a lack of knowledge about religion, people do not know how to react, how to counter these arguments. Not knowing about religion does not help our foreign policy."²⁴

4.2 COOPERATION WITH FBOS

All donors included in the present overview have well-established cooperation with FBOs, international as well as local, and most have had this for decades. The following section outlines some of the common types of FBO cooperation donors engage in, their criteria for cooperation, the kinds of organisations they typically cooperate with, and the kinds of activities they typically cooperate around.

4.2.1 TYPES OF COOPERATION

Cooperation takes different forms, including a) partnership with and direct funding to international FBOs, b) indirect funding and cooperation with local FBOs through their international partners, and c) dialogue and consultations with FBOs. In terms of **partnership and direct funding**, donors typically have long-term framework agreements or strategic partnerships with a few international FBOs (see text box below). A rough estimate is that funding to these

organisations makes up between five and 20 percent of all funding to civil society partners from donor agencies. In DFID, for instance, FBOs receive between 15-20 percent of funding (Schroeder 2016:33ff). In SIDA, support to Swedish FBOs makes up 10 percent of all funding to civil society. In Denmark, FBOs receive five percent of funding to strategic partners. Apart from these agreements, donors also support a number of FBOs directly through other funding mechanisms. DFID, for instance, supports more than 40 FBOs through its UK Aid Direct grants. Danida supports one FBO through a so-called ‘mini programme agreement’.

Country	FBOs
Denmark	Caritas, Danmission, DanChurchAid, ADRA
Finland	FIDA, FinnChurchAid, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, World Vision
Germany	Bread for the World, Misereor, Islamic Relief, German Bishops Conference, Justice and Peace Commission, Sant Egidio, Buddhist Global Relief
Netherlands	ICCO, Cordaid, Mensen met een Missie; Justitia et Pax, Pax, Prisma
Sweden	Church of Sweden, Diakonia, Swedish Mission Council, PMU Interlife
UK	Christian Aid, CAFOD, World Vision, Progressio, Islamic Relief

Donors also engage in more **indirect cooperation with and funding to FBOs**, insofar as their FBO partners often channel part of their funding to local partners in the countries in which they implement projects. While there are no systematic overviews of these organisations, the assumption is that many, if not the vast majority, of these are also faith-based. A representative from DFID notes: “Through country offices, we indirectly work with hundreds of FBOs. When we have looked at various programmes, the vast majority are often faith-based. Because most of the local organisations are faith-based”.²⁵ This seems to reflect the situation in other donor agencies.

Apart from – direct and indirect – funding to FBOs for specific projects and programmes, donors also engage in **dialogue and consultations** with broader groups of FBOs. Back in 2011, DFID formed a Faith Working Group, responding to claims by British FBOs that they were being overheard in development discussions. More than 40 representatives of British faith groups, civil society organisations and academics attended a workshop to identify key principles for good partnership between DFID and FBOs, resulting in the abovementioned ‘Faith Partnership Principles’. The working group is no longer active, but there are plans to revive it. As part of the development of the BMZ strategy for cooperation with religious communities, the BMZ established a similar sounding board in 2015. The group is still active and meets two-three times a year. In the

Netherlands, the Dutch Foreign Ministry had close cooperation with the – now defunct – Knowledge Center for Religion and Development, run by a number of Dutch FBOs.²⁶ And in Denmark, Danida has ad hoc consultations with the Danish NGO Network on Religion and Development. On an international level, donors engage regularly with a broad range of FBOs through their membership in PaRD. Some have also taken part in policy dialogues organised by the UN Interagency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development. At the donor-UN-FBO policy roundtable in New York in 2015, for instance, representatives from the BMZ and the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs were present.

4.2.2 CRITERIA AND CONDITIONALITIES

Few donors included in the present analysis have developed specific criteria for selection of FBO partners, and most refer to their agency's general criteria for cooperation with civil society actors. An exception is BMZ which has formulated set of specific criteria, including: respect for human rights standards and principles; focus on development; competency and capacity; network and reach; and moral authority and confidence (see text box). They are supplemented by three principles guiding this cooperation: respect and openness; no discrimination and no proselytising; and transparency, accountability and focus on results (BMZ 2016a:18).

BMZ CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF RELIGIOUS ACTORS

Respect for human rights standards and principles, that is, a clear commitment to the universality, inalienability and indivisibility of human rights, including the principles of non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and participation;

Focus on development, that is, an interest in improving the living conditions of all people while taking account of the limits of our planet – in other words, implementing the Sustainable Development Goals;

Competency and capacity, that is, the (technical and organisational) ability to implement agreed measures in the field of cooperation in question;

Network and reach, that is, the number of people, segments of society or regions (for instance in fragile states) that can actually be reached by the actor;

Moral authority and confidence, that is, the actor's real influence on the way local people think and act.

In its 'Faith Partnership Principles', DFID similarly outlines three broad principles for cooperation with FBOs, including transparency, mutual respect and understanding, but does not specify any criteria for selection of partners, neither

in terms of non-proselytism, non-discrimination or otherwise. However, the paper does recognise that there are 'contested areas' in which DFID may disagree with certain FBOs, and that "DFID needs to be clear and transparent about the situations when collaborative work with organisations may not be possible" (DFID 2012:8). Furthermore, the background paper to the Principles, 'Working Effectively with Faith Groups to Fight Poverty' (2011) does express concern about "activities that can be viewed as 'evangelism' or 'proselytism'" (DFID 2011:7), just like guidelines for funding applications note that "applications from organisations that include proselytising in their organisational objectives must be able to provide assurances that their promotion of religion would not influence the implementation of the proposed project, or lead to any form of exclusivity or conditionality."²⁷

While no other donors have formulated specific criteria for selection of FBO partners, interviews suggest that all donors do share BMZ, DFID and PaRD's concerns with regard to **proselytism**, seeing this as incompatible with common donor principles of non-discrimination and inclusion, and as such a red line that cannot be crossed in cooperation with FBOs. In practice, then, non-proselytism can be considered a key criterion for FBO cooperation among all donors. "We don't really have guidelines on this. But we don't finance the part of the work that has to do with mission. Our support must be rights-based. Printing bibles is not consistent with a rights-based approach," a representative from SIDA notes.²⁸ This does not mean that donors cannot or will not support organisations that engage in missionary activities, but that donor funding to such organisations cannot be spent on these activities.

Affiliations with **violent or militant groups and movements** is another red line for all donors. This is obviously not a criterion that applies only to FBOs; however, in the context of increasing Islamist extremism, there is – fairly or unfairly – a particular focus on Muslim FBOs in this regard. Most donors include criteria related to this aspect in their general guidelines for cooperation. In their 'Administrative guidelines for Danish organisations with humanitarian partnership agreements' (2015), Danida, for instance, writes that "[t]he partnership organisation must ensure that local partners and others that receive part of the grant funds are not included on the UN or EU list of designated terrorist groups" (Danida 2015:5). DFID is probably the donor agency with the most elaborate guidelines in this area. In its Due Diligence Framework, the agency has devoted an entire section to 'Counter-Terrorism Financing', noting that "we are working in areas where known terrorist organisations operate [and] there is an increasing risk that DFID resources could be diverted for use by terrorist organisations." The Framework outlines various steps to prevent this, including checks on implementing partners and their trustees against official

listings of terrorist organisations, assessment of partner organisation's risk management and internal controls, review of financial accounts for unexplained balance, and assessment of partner organisations' monitoring of local partners.²⁹

Finally, and somewhat more intangibly, many seem to share BMZ's insistence on '**respect for human rights**' as a red line that cannot be crossed, at least in principle. However, there is broad acknowledgement of the practical difficulties in measuring such respect. How much respect is needed in order for this criterion to be fulfilled? Is it, for instance, okay to cooperate with an organisation that generally respects human rights but disagrees with particular aspects of women's rights or rights related to sexual orientation and gender identity? Furthermore, some – including from BMZ – also point to the potential benefits in engaging with organisations that are critical towards certain human rights, insofar as such engagement may contribute to gradual changes in these organisations' conceptions and approaches. As noted in the BMZ strategy:

By working more closely with religious representatives, we want to encourage them to assume responsibility for addressing intolerance and extremism within their own group. This also includes critical debate within faith communities about issues that have a human rights dimension, such as the rights of (religious) minorities, LGBTI people, the empowerment of women, sexual and reproductive rights, and the fight against gender-based violence (BMZ 2016:15).

4.2.3 TYPES OF ORGANISATIONS

The overwhelming majority of the FBOs that donors engage with are **Christian**. As noted in the text box above, there is only one Muslim and one Buddhist FBO among donors' strategic FBO partners. While there are no systematic overviews of local FBOs supported indirectly by donors, anecdotal evidence suggests that this bias towards Christian FBOs is replicated at local level. A Danish Christian FBO funded by Danida for instance states that they "primarily work with FBOs, multi-faith organisations, NGOs and civil society organisations with a Christian presence, e.g. in their boards, and secular institutions." Similarly, a Swedish FBO says that out of 44 local and national partners, "38 would count as FBOs of which 31 are Christians and 7 are interfaith partners." This is arguably not only a bias in favour of Christian FBOs, but also a *particular* kind of Christian FBOs – namely FBOs from mainstream Christian denominations, often socially liberal and with an explicit interfaith or ecumenical approach. A person from DFID notes: "In Africa, we have good connections with the more formal Christian groups – but not the newer Pentecostal groups who in many countries make up the largest and most active faith groups."³⁰

Donors are aware of the skewed composition of their partner portfolio. As one person says: “There is a limitation in terms of the organisations we reach out to. We don’t actually reach out to all equally. We try to but we are not successful.”³¹ Some point to the lack of eligible alternatives as the main reason for the dominance of Christian FBOs. A representative from the Finnish Foreign ministry notes that in Finland, non-Christian FBOs are few and far between, and the ones that exist are still young and not very well-established, meaning that they would have difficulties in living up to the criteria for cooperation: “Should there be a Muslim organisation that comes from that background who wants to work and who fulfils all criteria, then certainly there should not be any prejudice.”³²

Donors have sought to address this bias in different ways, some more systematically than others. One approach has been to offer **capacity building to smaller, non-Christian FBOs**. A couple of years ago, DFID held a series of workshops directed specifically at Muslim FBOs, offering assistance in their grant application processes. BMZ is also planning “targeted action to help build the capacity of FBOs” in order to “find new partners and not limit our cooperation to large, well-organised agencies” (BMZ 2016:23). Smaller, **more flexible funding modalities** are also seen as a way of attracting other FBOs than the large, professional, often Christian, FBOs. UK Aid Direct (formerly Global Poverty Action Fund, GPAF), for instance, was launched with the purpose of reaching small or medium-sized organisations and “to ensure DFID is not just working with the ‘usual suspects’” (DFID 2012:4). Finally, some have made an explicit effort to **engage with non-Christian actors in fora for dialogue and consultation**. In consultations with FBOs around its strategy for cooperation with religious communities, BMZ, for instance, made a conscious effort to reach out to various Muslim organisations.³³

4.2.4 KEY THEMES IN DONOR-FBO COOPERATION

Donor cooperation with FBOs has historically centred on **health, education and humanitarian aid**.³⁴ While activities in these sectors still make up a major – if not the main – part of cooperation, donors today seem to engage with FBOs on a much wider range of activities, reflecting greater attention to the potential role that FBOs can play in terms of influencing local norms and practices. There are no systematic overviews of donor-funded FBO activities; however, anecdotal evidence seems to suggest increasing cooperation around e.g. peace-building and conflict resolution; gender equality and women’s rights; and the promotion of freedom of religion or belief.

FBOs are seen by donors to be key actors in changing norms and values around **gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and harmful practices**. A representative from the Danish Foreign Ministry notes that faith-

based organisations can play an important role “in handling value-related, religious challenges in relation to e.g. gender equality.”³⁵ Similarly, a SIDA representative notes:

Our FBO partners can have an impact in relation to values, for instance in relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights, or gender equality. Many of their local partners can be quite conservative. Through dialogue, they can have an impact on these actors – and perhaps engage in a more legitimate dialogue compared to others.³⁶

Peace-building and conflict resolution is also considered a highly relevant area of cooperation, in particular in relation to conflicts with a clear religious dimension. In the Netherlands, for instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has funded the FBO network Religions for Peace in its organisation of interfaith councils aimed at de-escalating religious tensions and countering extremism in different parts of the world. The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs funds the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. BMZ highlights Islamic Relief’s Resilience and Conflict Prevention in Dafur project as an example of how FBOs can contribute to conflict resolution:

[The project] has revitalised village committees (*jawiid*), which form part of a regional tradition. All affected groups were persuaded to join them – including women, which traditionally has not been a matter of course. The connecting elements are the shared Islamic values, reference to the Qur’an and kinship [...] Islamic religious leaders enjoy tremendous respect within these communities and play a crucial role when it comes to avoiding conflict (BMZ 2016b:34).

Finally, the promotion of **freedom of religion or belief (FoRB)** seems to be an increasingly important theme in donor cooperation with FBOs, reflecting broader trends in foreign policy. DFID, for instance, recently awarded grants totalling approximately GBP 12 million to two four-year consortia programmes on ‘Supporting tolerance and freedom of religion or belief’. The promotion of freedom of religion or belief is also a crosscutting theme in BMZ’s ‘Strategy for cooperation with religious communities’, and FBOs are seen as key players in this: “They can launch sensitization and dialogue processes among their members and act as role models for an unbiased exchange with representatives of other faiths and worldviews” (BMZ 2016:15).

4.3 INSTITUTIONALISATION AND SYSTEMATIC ATTENTION TO RELIGION AND FBOs

All donors included in the present analysis acknowledge the importance of institutionalising and systematising attention to religion and FBOs throughout their organisation. Sound processes of institutionalisation require efforts at different levels, including policy development, organisational structures, staff practices and knowledge. The following section gives an overview of the different donor initiatives in each of these areas.

4.3.1 GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES FOR ATTENTION TO RELIGION AND COOPERATION WITH FBOs

Only a few donors have developed **specific guidelines or strategies** concerning religion and FBOs, including DFID (2012) and BMZ (2016). The Finnish, Swedish, Dutch and Danish donor agencies do not have such documents and have no plans to develop such. Representatives from both DFID and BMZ point to the advantages of having formulated such documents, not least because the process leading to their formulation prompted the establishment of dialogue and close relations with key FBOs. As such, these documents are in themselves a result of cooperation with FBOs – and that is perhaps their most important contribution.

On the other hand, people in both agencies also point to difficulties in keeping such documents alive. The ‘Faith Partnership Principles’, launched at Lambeth Palace in London June 2012, were widely disseminated across DFID through training and events, and came to be well-known among staff. Today, however, the principles are “a bit like old news,” a staff member says, and it is unclear how the principles are used in or influence the daily routines of the agency. A joint review of the principles was foreseen in the document (DFID 2012:9), but this did not take place. There are, however, plans to “revamp our work on this,” a staff member says.³⁷ With regard to the BMZ strategy, a staff member from the sector programme on Values, Religion and Development also acknowledges the need for more concrete steps to ensure broader dissemination throughout BMZ and GIZ.

4.3.2 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

In order to anchor attention to religion and FBOs in the donor organisation, appoint responsibility, and ensure continuity, organisational structures need to be established. Among the donors studied in the present analysis, different models are used. In most agencies, attention to religion and FBOs is the responsibility of **individual focal points**, often with several other responsibilities. The focal points are typically placed in the civil society department, responsible for partnerships with international FBOs and for participation in PaRD. No donors have appointed several focal points throughout the various departments of the

organisation. In DFID, this model was tried, but with little success: “We had focal points in the past, but it didn’t really work, primarily due to time constraints”.³⁸

In BMZ and DFID, attention to religion and FBOs is institutionalised in **specialised units or programmes**. In BMZ, a sector programme on Values, Religion and Development has been established in 2016, employing four people to work full-time on this. The programme is placed in the implementing agency of BMZ, the GIZ. The programme has the responsibility to initiate piloting together with country offices and set up good practices with FBOs, to organise religious literacy training for staff, and to develop tools (e.g. FBO mapping). A similar model is employed in DFID, where three to four people in the Civil Society team, located in the Inclusive Societies Department, work with religion and development. They focus on embedding religion and FBO attention in the organisation through internal training and awareness-raising, review of project and programme tools, and consultations with FBOs.

At present, no donors have implemented the third model. However, in the Netherlands, there are plans to establish an informal **network of directors** from departments dealing with different themes (security, terrorism, humanitarian aid, human rights and development). The network is to meet twice a year, coordinated by the Unit for Strategic Advice. Responsibilities of the network will include general awareness-raising and strengthening of religious literacy throughout the organisation. Concrete activities will include a bimonthly newsletter facilitating sharing of information and experiences among staff, the development of a course for staff, in cooperation with Academy for International Affairs, as well as the development of tools.

4.3.3 DEVELOPMENT OF ANALYTICAL TOOLS

Across the different member states, there is broad recognition of the importance of assuring systematic attention to religion and FBOs in the various activities of the donor agency, and several people point to the relevance of developing tools for ensuring such attention throughout the various stages of development cooperation, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. One person notes: “Religion should be part of every analysis we make. Of course, we should be careful not to overemphasise religion, but we should never underestimate it either. It is about right-sizing religion, as [US scholar of religion and foreign policy] Peter Mandaville says. That is crucial, but of course it is difficult.”³⁹

Few agencies, however, seem to have developed such concrete tools, or, for that matter, to have integrated attention to religion and FBOs in existing tools. A cursory scan of different donor tools - e.g. poverty analysis or stakeholder analysis – shows that religion or FBOs are rarely mentioned. A representative

from DFID notes that while staff do ask him for advice when developing their 'country diagnoses' and project documents, there has so far not been a systematic review of the extent to which religion is adequately addressed in the various documents, something which he plans to do in the future.⁴⁰ Similarly, in GIZ there are plans to develop various tools in order to ensure greater attention to religion in country and sector strategies. This is also explicitly mentioned in the German strategy, which notes that systematic attention to religion will be integrated into analytical tools such as their 'brief political-economic analysis' and 'brief socio-economic analysis' (BMZ 2016:21). The future Dutch network on religion and foreign policy might also engage in such development of tools, e.g. in relation to embassy strategies: "Many embassies are writing their strategies right now – religion will surely appear in some cases, but it is not specifically mentioned or systematically integrated as part of the process of developing strategies. In the future, it would be good to include systematic attention to religion in the format."⁴¹

4.3.4 TRAINING AND AWARENESS-RAISING IN THE ORGANISATION

All donors acknowledge the need for greater 'religious literacy' among staff as a key element in ensuring institutionalisation of attention to religion and FBOs. While most concur that staff attitudes to religion have changed fundamentally over the past 20 years, perceptions of religion as 'a problem' or 'unnecessary' still loom large. As noted by a staff member in GIZ: "The majority of my colleagues still think that purely technical approaches are the solution."⁴² At the same time, lack of religious literacy can lead to "sometimes very naïve ways of cooperation with religions and religious leaders," the same staff member notes. Among donors, different models for promoting religious literacy can be identified, including a) regular in-house courses; b) external courses; and c) ad hoc training and seminars.

Only few donor agencies offer **regular in-house courses**. BMZ, for instance, specifically states that religious literacy training is part of the strategy for cooperation with religious communities (BMZ 2016). In recent years, GIZ has offered bi-annual religious literacy courses for staff, in cooperation with its Academy for International Cooperation. The contents of the course typically include basic information on religion and FBOs, concrete case studies and presentation of the various tools developed by the sector programme and other actors.⁴³ Most donor agencies also offer **ad hoc training and seminars** on issues related to religion and FBOs. The DFID representative, for instance, tells that he has organised several internal seminars over the years, including also targeted training of different staff groups in the organisation. In SIDA, the topic has been addressed once or twice as part of SIDA's Development Talks, but "there is no systematic or regular training – and there are no plans to do this."⁴⁴ Some

donors do not develop their own courses, but send staff to **courses outside of the organisation**. DFID, for instance, has sent staff to the UK Foreign Affairs course on religion and international affairs: “We would like all staff in countries with DFID programmes to go on the course. But as it is today, it is probably less than one percent that goes to the course. It is difficult to get people to go on a three-day course.”⁴⁵

4.4 KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING AND REFLECTION

Finally, a fourth aspect of donors’ cooperation with FBOs, and their attention to religion more broadly, is that of knowledge-building. How do donors make sure that knowledge and experiences are systematically gathered, disseminated, and used, ensuring continuous learning, reflection and improvement? A number of different approaches and initiatives can be identified, including a) Collection of best practices; b) Processes of reflection and learning; and c) Research and analysis.

4.4.1 COLLECTION OF BEST PRACTICES

There is broad acknowledgement of the importance of more systematic gathering of institutional experiences, best practices and lessons learned. In interviews, several people point to the fact that there is a lot of relevant experience in the organisation, in particular at embassy level, but that there is no systematic collection and dissemination of these experiences throughout the organisation. Nonetheless, few donors seem to have engaged in such systematic gathering of experiences. An exception is BMZ, which in 2016 published the document ‘More than anything. The contribution of religious communities and human rights organisations to sustainable development’, as part of its strategy for cooperation with religious communities. The document contains examples of ‘best practice’, gathered from projects implemented by GIZ and partner organisations. The Dutch Foreign Ministry has plans to engage in ongoing collection and dissemination of best practices through a regular newsletter, published by the yet-to-be-established network on religion and foreign policy. A representative from the Ministry notes: “We need to tell the good stories, we need to illustrate how combined efforts can benefit us all.”⁴⁶

4.4.2 PROCESSES OF REFLECTION AND LEARNING

More broadly, several people also point to the need for continuous reflection and learning on their organisation’s involvement with religion and FBOs, both in form of internal space within the donor agency and in dialogue with the FBOs themselves. DFID’s ‘Faith Partnership Principles’ called for the establishment of a forum for ‘open and frank debate’ on ‘difficult themes’ and ‘contested areas’ (DFID 2012:9). While the Faith Working Group is no longer active, a DFID representative notes that he and others continuously seek to establish ‘safe spaces’ for such reflection and discussion, using ‘friendly facilitators’ from

outside DFID. Such processes of reflection and learning can also ensure new perspectives and input to donors, challenging conventional conceptions of development. As noted in BMZ's strategy: "We regard our dialogue with religious actors as a chance to critically review our own understanding of development and our own way of thinking. We expect the same kind of openness from religious representatives" (BMZ 2016:18). As part of this ongoing dialogue, BMZ launched the initiative 'Religion Matters! Rethinking the challenges of tomorrow', inviting different religious leaders to give presentations to staff, "provid[ing] fresh input on values, religion and development in an informal setting."⁴⁷

4.4.3 RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Finally, research and analysis are a third important avenue for ensuring more systematic knowledge-gathering. Several interviewees call for more evidence-based analysis and research on the nexus between religion and development, in particular in relation to the contributions and comparative advantages of FBOs; a call which is echoed among a wide range of stakeholders (Olivier 2016:5). One of the most ambitious efforts to build such evidence-based analysis and research was DFID's GBP 5 million **research programme** Religions and Development carried out by the British University of Birmingham in the years 2005-2011, in cooperation with research institutions in Tanzania, Nigeria, India, and Pakistan. The purpose of the programme was to explore the different ways in which religion interfaces with and affects development, producing research and providing DFID with input to policies and programmes. A vast number of publications was generated as a result of the programme, including mappings of the FBO sector in the four countries, literature reviews, and stand-alone research publications.⁴⁸

Donors have also provided funding for **research centres and knowledge hubs**. The Dutch Knowledge Center on Religion and Development, funded by the Dutch Foreign Ministry and supported by a number of FBOs, sought to build knowledge on the nexus between religion and development, including through academic scholarship, development of methodologies and tools, as well as the organisation of workshops stimulating reflection and learning. In 2018, however, the centre was closed down, following cuts in funding from the ministry. The Joint Learning Initiative (JLI), which has received funding from, among others, DFID, is "an international collaboration on evidence for faith groups' role and contributions to local community health and wellbeing and ending poverty." Through a number of 'Learning Hubs', JLI seeks to provide "multi-religious, interdisciplinary, collaborative learning platforms for practitioners, policymakers, academics and other experts" in order to increase the evidence of faith engagement by mapping and assessing knowledge about the role and impact of FBOs in development.⁴⁹

Finally, donors regularly commission consultants to carry out research assignments on specific topics. GIZ recently established a **consultancy network, NEXUS**, in acknowledgement of “the rising need for professional consultancy in the field of religion and development for GIZ and other bilateral and multilateral institutions and organisations.”⁵⁰

5 CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

While donor representatives are generally optimistic about their organisation's cooperation with FBOs, and their broader work on religion and development, they also point to a number of challenges in furthering this agenda. The following chapter provides an overview and discussion of some of the most common challenges encountered, taking into account not only the input from donor representatives, but also broader reflections and experiences from academics, FBOs and other observers of the 'religion and development' agenda.

5.1 FBOS: PRESENTING AN 'ADDED VALUE' IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION?

Overall, donors demonstrate broad acknowledgement of the importance of religion and FBOs in development cooperation, based on assumptions of the importance of religion to people and communities around the world, and the potential of FBOs to contribute positively to development and humanitarian aid. Some donors also point to the importance of engaging with the 'darker side of religion' in order to better understand and react to the ways in which religious actors may challenge or even run counter to core values and practices. However, the rationale of a positive 'added value' of FBOs dominate narratives on FBO cooperation. Apart from the fact that such claims of an inherent 'added value' of FBOs are difficult to substantiate empirically, taking into consideration the wide variety of organisations included in the category, this rationale entails several risks.

First, and as has been pointed out by several observers, the emphasis on an 'added value' can lead to an overly instrumentalist approach. There is a risk that cooperation with FBOs comes to be solely about the ways in which they can be used, to enhance existing donor agendas – not more fundamentally about the ways in which they may shape – or challenge – the ways in which these agendas are conceptualised or carried out. This has been a common criticism from many FBOs. They argue that "their resources and social capital have been instrumentalized by global development institutions to achieve a secular development model rather than one that is more human-centred and takes the human relationship with the divine seriously" (Tomalin et al. 2018:6).⁵¹ Donors

need to pay attention to the meaning and significance of religion and FBOs beyond their direct relevance for their own policies and programmes, opening up to the possibility that they may fundamentally challenge existing agendas and conceptions of development. In this regard, the BMZ's strategy for cooperation with religious communities is promising: "We regard our dialogue with religious actors as a chance to critically review our own understandings of development and our own ways of thinking. We expect the same from the religious representatives" (BMZ 2016:18).

Second, the focus on the positive aspects, while often justified, risks downplaying the complexities of religion and FBOs. There is no doubt that some FBOs sometimes – and perhaps even often – present 'unique contributions to development.' Recent research has documented the admirable efforts of individual FBOs e.g. in the provision of health and education, conflict resolution, humanitarian relief and social justice activism, many of them pointing to the particular strengths and contributions that can grow out of a faith-based approach to such activities. But research has also documented the ways in which religious affiliation may be a disadvantage for organisations. In her analysis of two NGOs engaging on women's health in India, for instance, Anchita Ghatak argues that "although this work absolutely requires religious sensitivity from the programme and staff, it was in fact easier for the NGOs not to be identified as a religious institution when engaging with religiously sensitive issues – both in terms of community perceptions and also as it was helpful that the institution did not bring its own theology to the engagement" (Olivier 2016:6). Similarly, in their analysis of FBO involvement in the SDG consultation process, Tomalin et al (2018:7) find that some FBOs felt that "keeping overt religious language out of the SDG process was [...] important in a setting where religiously based conflict and tension is prominent."

Others note that the religious identity and approach of particular FBOs does not always resonate with beneficiaries of aid. Victoria Palmer, in her analysis of Islamic Relief's work in a Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh, describes how the refugees were disappointed in the FBO for not wanting to build a mosque in the camp. She quotes a refugee for saying: "We want Islamic Relief to establish a mosque inside the camp as we think they are Muslim and they should understand our needs. We can live without food but we can't live without our religion..." (cf. Palmer 2011:103). To these refugees, the non-proselytising, 'minimalist' religiosity presented by Islamic Relief did not resonate with their own religiosity. Such examples challenge notions of an inherent 'added value' of FBOs, calling for much more contextualised understandings of the various ways in which the nexus between religion and development plays out in different FBO, in different settings and different times.

5.2 WORKING WITH 'THE USUAL SUSPECTS'

The main vehicle for donor cooperation with FBOs is through direct funding partnerships with FBOs. All donor representatives interviewed for the present analysis express deep appreciation of these partnerships, emphasising the 'added value' of these partners in terms of their long-term engagement, reach and legitimacy, and only a few could point to stories of failure or disappointment. However, the current constellation of FBO partners raises a number of issues.

The vast majority of FBO cooperation is with international development and humanitarian FBOs, primarily from mainstream Christian denominations. This has consequences on the ground, insofar as these partners – naturally – often cooperate with local Christian or interfaith FBOs, meaning that “the growing mass of ‘other’ religious institutions such as charismatics, Pentecostals or sects without a clear hierarchy (and no northern-based office), [...] Islamic groups and others, are rarely present or represented” (Olivier 2016:9). Donors are aware of their skewed focus, and some are consciously trying to diversify their partner portfolio. In recent years, some donors have actively reached out to non-Christian FBOs, including in particular international Muslim FBOs, but the vast majority of partners, however, are still from mainstream Christian denominations. Enhanced interreligious cooperation is another way to diversify. In PaRD, efforts are made to enhance interreligious cooperation: “We do have the experience that the different world views and religious narratives correct each other and [the organisations] try to find out among themselves the best way of mutual learning and therefore build corrective measures themselves.”⁵²

Secondly, there is a need for 'normative' diversification. Many of the international FBOs supported are firmly embedded in the field of mainstream development and humanitarian aid, espousing a relatively 'minimalist' and 'liberal' religiosity, and relying on values and approaches that are very similar to those of the donor agencies themselves. In fact, one person interviewed for the present report referred to such FBOs as 'mini-donors'. While these FBOs are important and relevant partners for donors, they nonetheless represent a very particular segment of the FBO field. In many contexts, more conservative or religiously 'maximalist' FBOs may in fact dominate the field, espousing values and approaches that resonate with local communities to a much higher degree than donors' FBO partners. If donors want truly participatory and locally grounded development, they have to get out of their 'comfort zone' and find ways to engage with some of these FBOs. Such engagement, if genuine and respectful, may encourage reflection and change within the FBOs.

A SIDA representative, for instance, tells that cooperation with conservative churches around HIV/AIDS interventions in East Africa led to substantial changes in the churches' approach to and conception of HIV/AIDS: "HIV/AIDS is no longer seen as a 'punishment from God.'"⁵³ But it might also be an opportunity for donor reflection and understanding. Surely, there are FBOs with whom any dialogue is obsolete and even counterproductive. But among other actors, the criticism of 'Western', 'secular' or 'liberal' agendas may reflect a genuine feeling of distance and alienation from the international system of development and humanitarian aid. This criticism grows out of normative disagreements, but also concrete experiences of the irrelevance, inefficiency, and even hypocrisy of the system. This is something to be taken seriously – not to give way to their criticism, but to understand where it comes from.

Finally, there is a need for diversification in terms of attention to less organised forms of religion. The focus on FBOs risks overlooking other, less formal, religious expressions and different social realities on the ground – what we may call 'the lived religion' (Mandaville and Nozell 2017). The actors, practices and values that matter in lived religion can be very different from those of the formal, organised religion, and cooperation with FBOs is not always the most suitable or relevant way to ensure proper attention to religion. There is, in other words, a need for much more systematic, context-specific awareness and inclusion of other religious voices, practices, and expressions than the formal FBOs.

5.3 A 'HOLISTIC' APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT?

How – if at all – has increased attention to religion and cooperation with FBOs changed concrete practices and conceptions of development among donors? The present analysis indicates that recent decades have witnessed fundamental changes in the ways in which donors perceive FBOs and their role in development. FBOs are no longer seen as basic service providers, but as key agents in changing norms and practices, e.g. in relation to gender equality, violent extremism or religiously related conflict. FBOs are, in other words, considered to be agents of change and can be actors of governance. What FBOs are expected to change, however, is religious norms and practices, not development norms and practices.

In theory, many donors are open to the possibility that cooperation with FBOs can lead to a rethinking of conventional development approaches. DFID, for instance, affirms a "more holistic understanding of wellbeing in development that brings together social, economic, environmental and spiritual dimensions," going "beyond standard development indicators to include wider measures of the ability to flourish" (DFID 2012:7). Similarly, and as noted above, BMZ

emphasises a willingness to critically review its own understanding of development through dialogue and consultations with FBOs. As the representative from PaRD/GIZ puts it: “Real partnership is driven by the responsibility of mutuality and reciprocity.”⁵⁴

When looking at the concrete projects and programs of donor-FBO cooperation, however, there are few signs of fundamental changes in how development is conceptualised or carried out (Olivier & Wodon 2012). Despite the rhetorical willingness among donors to open up to more ‘holistic’ development, the sectors and activities supported are surprisingly conventional. The case studies mentioned in DFID’s Faith Partnership Principles, for instance, are all “activities in conventional relief and development sectors such as child protection, HIV awareness, disaster risk reduction, food security, livelihoods, and access to water, all of which have a strong focus on physical and economic wellbeing” (Schroeder 2016:73). However, while there are few examples of FBO-donor cooperation leading to a more radical rethinking of the doctrines and modalities of development cooperation, FBOs may push for more subtle, gradual changes. The active participation of FBOs in the dialogue around the 2030 Agenda, for instance, presents an example of how these organisations can influence global processes as actors of governance in their own right.

5.4 ENSURING SYSTEMATIC ATTENTION

Partnerships with individual FBOs are important and may contribute to increasing attention to religion in development cooperation, but there is a need to also ensure broader, institutional, attention to religion throughout donor organisations. However, despite the introduction of a variety of initiatives in this regard – e.g. establishment of sector programmes, appointment of focal points, introduction of religious literacy courses – a common challenge for donors is that they seem to struggle to ensure systematic attention to religion and FBOs at all levels of their organisation. In the words of Tomalin et al (2018:5), “considerations of religion, and the contributions of faith actors, are still a long way off being ‘mainstreamed’ in the way that gender analysis has been.”

Interviews point to several challenges with regard to institutionalisation, in particular when attention to religion and FBOs is centred on individual focal points. On the one hand, the motivation and work of dedicated individuals can be instrumental in raising awareness and driving the agenda forward, in particular in the initial stage. On the other hand, such individualised approaches are extremely vulnerable in the long run. Experiences from the Dutch foreign ministry are instructive in this regard. For many years, the Netherlands was at the forefront in promoting attention to religion and FBOs in development

cooperation, reflecting the tireless work of one individual in particular. “But when he left the ministry, the issue left with him,” a staff member notes.

Institutionalising attention to religion and cooperation with FBOs in specialised units or programmes seems to be a more viable approach. However, this can also pose challenges, and some people point to the risk of compartmentalisation. Attention to religion and FBOs is not only a civil society issue, but something to be considered systematically in relation to a broad range of sectors and themes, including also human rights, prevention of violent extremism, and climate change. In this regard, the Dutch model of a network of directors from different departments may be instructive, encouraging synergies and integration across different sectors. Most ideal, of course, would be a combination of the three, at once ensuring specialised expertise, broader synergies and ‘mainstreaming’ throughout the organisation.

Regardless of which model donors have chosen, many agree that the greatest task ahead is to ensure greater attention to religion in the everyday routines of the donor organisation. This requires increased religious literacy of staff through regular, preferably obligatory, courses, but also the development of tools to facilitate the translation of this literacy into sustained attention to religion in organisational practices. PaRD is doing important work, e.g. in terms of developing models for conducting country-specific mappings of ‘FBO landscapes’, but work is also needed at the level of individual donor agencies, ensuring systematic attention to religion and FBOs throughout the various stages of development cooperation, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

5.5 SUMMING UP

In her analysis of the ‘religion and development agenda’, the scholar Jill Olivier asks how genuine the newfound attention to religion and FBOs in the development sector is: “[T]here is certainly a massively increased visibility and surface-level collaboration. However, is this a publicity-level or a genuine acceptance?” (Olivier 2016:5). The present analysis does not give any definite answers to this question.

On one hand, the foregoing overview of donor practices gives grounds for optimism: across the board, there seems to be a genuine willingness and interest in increasing attention to religion and strengthening cooperation with FBOs, reflected in the wide range of initiatives that donors have launched – from the formulation of principles and strategies to the introduction of staff courses on religious literacy, establishment of organisational focal points and units, and enhanced focus on cooperation and consultation with FBOs.

On the other hand, the overview also points to a number of challenges and shortcomings in existing approaches, including a narrow focus on the positive contributions and 'added value' of FBOs; a lack of religious, normative and geographic diversity in donor portfolios; continued reliance on relatively conventional conceptions of development; and shortcomings with regard to systematic attention and institutionalisation throughout the agency.

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END NOTES

¹ A clarification of the term is provided under section 2.1.

² Within the European External Action Service (EEAS), recent years have also witnessed increased attention to religion in foreign policy. The EEAS has been a driving force in the establishment of the Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy, developed training modules on religion and foreign policy, set up a task force on culture and religion as well as a number of other initiatives to strengthen attention to the role of religion in EU foreign policy. For more information on the role of religion in the EU's external policies, see e.g. Bilde (2015) and Perchoc (2017b). On the EEAS and the promotion of freedom of religion or belief, see Foret (2017).

³ It is important to mention that DEVCO's focus on religion-related matters started before the launch of the Agora. The 2013 EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief also committed the European Commission/DEVCO to engage with and provide support for FBOs. The appointment of Special Envoy on the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU, Jan Figel, in 2016 and his attachment as Special Adviser to the Commissioner for development cooperation, Neven Mimica, also pointed to an increased interest in and commitment to the topic. Finally, before the launch of the Agora, DEVCO organised a first pilot workshop on religion and development for EU staff in 2017 which guided the elaboration of the Agora-concept.

⁴ The report does not focus on activities undertaken by DEVCO or other EU services.

⁵ Obviously, a full analysis of donor engagement with religion and FBOs would have required inclusion of the perspective of FBOs. However, due to the limited timeframe of the assignment this has not been possible.

⁶ *Zakat* is an obligatory alms tax that all Muslims are supposed to pay. *Sadaqa* refers to voluntary alms giving, and *waqf* is a charitable endowment, typically in the form of a building, plot of land or other assets donated with no intention of reclaiming the assets.

⁷ Similar concepts and practices can be found in virtually all of the world's religions, whether new or old, small or big. For an analysis of traditions of charity in some of the world's religions, see e.g. Ilchman, Katz & Queen (1998).

⁸ For a review of literature on development, religion and FBOs, see e.g. Jones & Juul Petersen (2011), or Fountain & Juul Petersen (2018). For an overview of thematic and geographic mappings of FBOs, see the bibliography, section 7.3.

⁹ One could also question whether it is meaningful to distinguish between faith-based and non-faith-based in the sense that all organisations are arguably faith-based, whether they are based

on a religious faith or a secular faith (in human rights, in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or something else). An emphasis on religious organisations as faith-based risks advancing an understanding of religious organisations as normative and ideological and secular organisations as neutral and objective.

¹⁰ In some situations, then, FBOs can be said to suffer disproportionately from the broader trends towards a shrinking space for civil society. This is particularly true for FBOs whose faith or political views are thought to go against those of the regime. In other situations, however, FBOs actually have more leeway than other civil society actors. In many countries, for instance, religiously affiliated organisations are regulated by different, and more lenient, legislation than secular NGOs. As such, the consequences of a shrinking civil society space for FBOs are complex and context-dependent. So far, analyses of the shrinking space for civil society have paid little attention to the consequences of this for FBOs (but see e.g. Howard et al (2014) for an exception); however, it is a topic that deserves much more in-depth attention than the present report is able to give.

¹¹ See Tomalin (2012) for a brief history of the term and its use. For analyses of the role of FBOs in development more generally, see Clarke & Jennings (2008), Bradley (2009) and Tomalin (2016).

¹² See Fountain and Feener (2017) for a criticism of this tendency to map and categorise FBOs.

¹³ While many typologies rely on a broad understanding of the term FBO that also includes congregations (e.g. Unruh and Sider 2005, Perchoc 2017), others do not. Clarke & Jennings (2008), for instance, include faith-based representative organisations or apex bodies, charitable and development organisations, socio-political organisations, missionary organisations and radical or terrorist organisations, but not congregations.

¹⁴ The Aga Khan Development Network is considerably bigger, with an annual budget of USD 950 million. However, this organisation does not consider itself to be faith-based.

¹⁵ There have been attempts at establishing networks and alliances of Muslim NGOs, including e.g. the Humanitarian Forum which, in cooperation with Western organisations and donors, offers capacity building to local and national Muslim NGOs. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has initiated an annual forum for NGOs from member states to increase cooperation, and the Cairo-based International Islamic Council for Dawa and Relief seeks to coordinate the efforts of more than 85 Muslim NGOs engaged in humanitarian relief. However, none of these networks are very active.

¹⁶ See the website of the organisation, <https://rfp.org>.

¹⁷ These principles are inspired by the work on religious literacy developed by Katherine Cash, FoRB Learning Platform.

¹⁸ At the 2018 European Development Days, EU DEVCO organised the panel debate *What's religion got to do with it?*, bringing together policy makers, development practitioners and academics to discuss how religion supports or challenges gender equality in the context of development cooperation. The debate can be viewed here: <https://www.eudevdays.eu/community/sessions/1361/whats-religion-got-to-do-with-it>. For further discussion of the intersections between religion, gender and development, see e.g. UNFPA/NORAD (2016) and King and Beattie (2005).

¹⁹ For further analysis of this, see e.g. ver Beek (2000).

²⁰ See Tomalin (2018) and Karam (2017) for analysis of the participation of FBOs in the consultation process around the Sustainable Development Goals.

²¹ See the website of the Joint Learning Initiative for more information, <https://iliflc.com/>.

²² See the PaRD website, www.partner-religion-development.org, for further information.

²³ See bibliography for links to the different documents.

²⁴ Interview, staff member from Dutch Foreign Ministry, 25.10.2018

²⁵ Interview, DFID staff member, 27.09.2018.

²⁶ For a history of the Knowledge Center, see Bartelink 2016b.

²⁷ The UK Aid Direct Funding Round One: Impact Grants Guidelines for Applicants are available at: <https://assets.digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk/media/544a3462ed915d137d000003/UK-Aid-Directfund-rnd-one-impact-grants-guid-for-appls.docx>.

²⁸ Interview, staff members from SIDA, 16.10.2018.

²⁹ The Due Diligence Framework can be accessed here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/365186/Due-Diligence-framework.pdf.

³⁰ Interview, DFID staff member, 27.09.2018.

³¹ Interview, DFID staff member, 27.09.2018.

³² Interview, staff member from Finnish Foreign Ministry, 02.10.2018.

³³ Interview, staff member from GIZ/PaRD, 24.10.2018.

³⁴ For a collection of best practices on religious engagement in humanitarian aid, see PaRD (2016).

³⁵ E-mail from Danida staff member, 29.10.2018. See also Danida 2017:13.

³⁶ Interview, staff members from SIDA, 16.10.2018.

³⁷ Interview, DFID staff member, 27.09.2018.

³⁸ Interview, DFID staff member, 27.09.2018.

³⁹ Interview, staff member from Dutch Foreign Ministry, 25.10.2018.

⁴⁰ Interview, DFID staff member, 27.09.2018.

⁴¹ Interview, staff member from Dutch Foreign Ministry, 25.10.2018.

⁴² Interview, staff member from GIZ/PaRD, 24.10.2018.

⁴³ Interview, staff member from GIZ/PaRD, 24.10.2018.

⁴⁴ Interview, staff members from SIDA, 16.10.2018.

⁴⁵ Interview, DFID staff member, 27.09.2018.

⁴⁶ Interview, staff member from Dutch Foreign Ministry, 25.10.2018.

⁴⁷ See

https://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type_of_publication/information_flyer/flyer/booklet_religions.pdf.

⁴⁸ See <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/departments/international-development/rad/publications/index.aspx>.

⁴⁹ JLI website, <https://jliflc.com/>.

⁵⁰ NEXUS concept note (unpublished).

⁵¹ It could, however, also be argued that the FBOs themselves have not always been very persistent in insisting on such alternative conceptions and practices of development in their cooperation with donors, but have instead adopted and internalised donor conceptions and practices, and as such actively contributed to this instrumentalisation of religion.

⁵² E-mail correspondence, staff member from PaRD/GIZ, 25.11.2018.

⁵³ Interview, staff members from SIDA, 16.10.2018.

⁵⁴ E-mail correspondence, representative from PaRD/GIZ, 25.11.2018

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