Religion and Development

Practitioners' Guide

Religion&
Development

knowledge centre

Religion and Development

Table of contents

Preface

Religion influences the way people see themselves, each other and the world around them. Especially in developing countries, religion often figures largely in everyday life. This is something that many Western development organisations used to underestimate.

Nowadays Dutch development organisations realise they must take religion into account. But what is the best way for them to do that? How can they incorporate religion into their everyday work? And how can employees of Dutch organisations take the role of religion into account?

The Knowledge Centre Religion and Development (KCRD) aims to share knowledge and stimulate religious empathy, by combining practical experiences with respect to religion in development processes with academic reflection. This book is the result of the knowledge, experience and insight that the KCRD has gained since its establishment in 2006.

This book is a *practitioners' guide* centring on practical experiences of development professionals, supplemented by theoretical considerations. The book does not provide cut-and-dried answers to questions, nor does it provide a ready-made approach. However, it does stimulate readers to reflect on the topic of 'religion and development'. We hope this book will appeal to employees of assorted Dutch development organisations. We encourage them to discuss the dilemmas and practical accounts contained in this book in more detail – and to raise their own dilemmas.

We suggest two approaches for continuing the debate revolving around the role of religion in development cooperation. Firstly, we welcome any and all comments and remarks about the book. Secondly, we provide educational courses and training programmes in which we discuss at length the recommendations, questions and dilemmas contained in this book.
For more information on what we offer, visit our website **www.religion-and-development.nl**.

We wish to thank all those who helped compile this practitioners' guide: the interviewees, the members of the sounding board group (Feije Duim, Özcan Hıdır, Piet Kuijper, Lisette van der Wel, Angélique Verweij), the initial readers, David Renkema, Gerrie ter Haar (KCRO consultant) and our trainee Marlieke van der Sar.

Welmoet Boender, Esther Dwarswaard and Mariske Westendorp
Knowledge Centre Religion and Development

I
Introduction

1 Purpose and target group of the practitioners' guide

It goes without saying that you bear in mind the religious convictions of the Islamic population in Mali when you're involved in setting up an educational project in their village. As a development-aid worker, there is no getting around religious beliefs either when health programmes are implemented or HIV/Aids information campaigns are carried out in developing countries.
However, attention for religion is not always an obvious course. For instance, should you consider religion when houses are built in the wake of a natural disaster or when the infrastructure is laid in a fragile state?
In situations like these there can be several reasons for not focusing on the role of religion, such as:

⋯⟩ You do not fully understand the context
⋯⟩ You do not consider religion to be relevant in that situation
⋯⟩ You do not want to mention religion explicitly for fear of polarisation and reinforcing a conflict
⋯⟩ You do not want to be accused of proselytism
⋯⟩ You have an aversion to religion
⋯⟩ You do not introduce the topic out of ignorance
⋯⟩ You have no experience with religion because of your secular background

Yet religion frequently does figure in these situations. This practitioners' guide explains how development workers can consider and handle the role of religion.

This book does not stand on its own: the website www.religion-and-development.nl/guide offers the possibility to share experiences and to pose questions. The detailed pages are presented in Dutch but you can react in English. The website www.religion-and-development.nl also contains an extensive documentation centre with recent publications on religion and development.

Tricky situations are inevitable when dealing with religion in developing countries. This might be due to a lack of knowledge. For instance, you are not exactly sure of how certain religious traditions or institutions work in your local context, or you do not know how they affect human relations.

Other times you may encounter clashes between different world views, or within religions. Moral values taken seriously by one religion can be interpreted very differently by another. Take, for instance, women's rights or ancestor worship.

When your views clash with those of your partner organisation in the South, the question is how much they can differ and still remain acceptable. But how can you answer this question? How do you handle the negative aspects of religion which are at odds with its positive effects? What should you know about religion and what questions should you ask? And where exactly do you stand? How much does your organisation's identity matter in your work? This practitioners' guide provides tips for contemplating these kinds of questions. This guide is based on the practice of Dutch development cooperation.

The pivotal recommendations in this book are:

⋯⟩ Be alert to religion
⋯⟩ Listen carefully and postpone your judgement
⋯⟩ Be aware of your own world view, particularly of your ideas about religion and development. Consider how your view influences your opinion of others.

These recommendations will help you develop religious empathy. This empathy is relevant for religiously inspired organisations and employees as well as for secular organisations. An ICCO employee expressed it aptly during the preparations for this book: *"Actually, we are all romantic idealists, both ICCO and Cordaid as well as Oxfam Novib and Artsen zonder Grenzen (MSF Holland). We all want a better world; we all want to free humanity from wrongdoing and suffering."*

This practitioners' guide has been written for Dutch employees of development organisations. It addresses them

directly, but also contains their input. As professionals they can share important practical experiences with others. We hope that this book and our website contain familiar examples for you. We invite you to reflect repeatedly on the topics of this guide, so that employees of development organisations can learn from each other.

2 Religion in development cooperation

Many development organisations stem from missionary work. These organisations, which operated mostly in colonies at the time, were traditionally accustomed to take religion into consideration. However, since the second half of the 20th century development cooperation has focused much less on religion. This has to do with the **secularisation theory**, i.e., the assumption that religion would lose its meaning in the public domain due to modernisation. The expectation was that – influenced by rationalism, science and technology – people would abandon religion over time, both in the Western world and in developing countries.

However, this secularisation theory appears to have been incorrect. In the Western world, new religious movements have sprung up in response to modernisation. Followers of these movements resist against the threat, as they see it, of their religion being pushed back into the private domain (privatisation). In developing countries, religion is still heavily interwoven with public and political life, says American development professional Scott Thomas. Consequently, no one can privatise religion. He believes that the secularisation theory cannot possibly act as a model for developing countries. [1]

2a On the agenda

Once the secularisation theory no longer appeared to apply, the topic of religion was put back on the international development agenda at the end of the last century. This is exemplified by the establishment of the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) in 1998. The WFDD arranged for dialogues between people of various religions and with international development organisations, such as the World Bank and the IMF. The big question was how religion and development interrelate. The WFDD also wanted to know what impact this relationship had on development policy decisions and on poor communities around the world. [2]

In the Netherlands, several development organisations are also engaged in the topic of religion. In 2005 partner organisations and scientists from the South recommended Dutch development organisations to come up with new strategies through which they could incorporate religious and spiritual dimensions of development into development cooperation. [3] In response to this ICCO, Cordaid, the Seva Network Foundation, the Islamic University of Rotterdam and the Oikos Foundation established the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development (KCRD) in 2006.

During a conference organised by the KCRD in 2007, the importance was stressed of approaching development as a whole instead of considering religion as a separate phenomenon in development processes. In other words, religion and spirituality should be taken into account as soon as a partnership is set up, whether it be for assessing situations or finding solutions to problems. This is particularly important when partner organisations in the South themselves draw attention to the importance of religion. [4]

So religion is again under consideration within development cooperation. This is important, because "for development cooperation to be effective, Dutch development policy may no longer be blind to religion," says Jan van Doggenaar, Foreign Countries Manager of ICCO and Kerk in Actie (Church in Action). [5]

2b A feeler for religion

Even though religion is put back on the agenda, Dutch development organisations do not automatically include religion in their work. During the first conference of the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development the participants came to the conclusion that Dutch society lacks a feeler for religion whereas it is a prerequisite for development cooperation. [6]

1   Scott Thomas, *The global resurgence of religion and the transformation of international relations* (New York: Palgrave, 2005).
2   For more information on the WFDD, go to www.interfaithstudies.org/network/wfdd.html.
3   ISS, Cordaid & ICCO, *Religion. A source for human right and development cooperation* (The Hague: BBO production, 2005). Go to www.icco.nl/documents/pdf/BBO-Rapport-180406_DEF.pdf.
4   Louke van Wensveen, *Transforming development. Exploring approaches to development from religious perspectives* (Utrecht: Knowledge Centre Religion and Development, 2007). Go to www.religie-en-ontwikkeling.nl/dialogs/download.aspx?oid=f870bf0d-beb2-4458-87a1-5b89cfbe17d7.
5   Jan van Doggenaar. Speech during an *Over de Dijk* (Beyond the Dike) meeting organised by the Eduardo Frei Foundation, Amsterdam, 13 December 2008.
6   The Hague, 3 November 2004.

Religion needs our professional attention, firstly because it is impossible to imagine everyday life of many people elsewhere in the world without religion. Religion and religious networks are firmly established in the South, reaching people at all levels of society. Countless religious organisations and communities commit themselves to improving the situation of the poor. Religion often figures in one way or another in central development themes, such as education, healthcare, agriculture, economic growth, poverty alleviation, democratisation and human rights. In some instances, religion can play a conflicting role causing the exclusion of people based for example on their political opinions or gender relationships. In these instances religion and power are closely related. On the other hand, religion can ensure harmony and mobilise people to care of their fellow man.

British development economists Séverine Deneulin and Masooda Bano confirm that religion figures greatly in developing countries. They say development workers cannot get around the following facts: [7]

···> "Religion is what guides many people's lives. Considering it as irrelevant, or as ideological indoctrination which has to be counteracted, is a strategy which is likely to jeopardize development efforts, if not fuel conflict."

···> "Recognizing that religion matters involves acknowledging its public nature and giving up attempts to control it following the model of Western liberal democracies."

···> "Religion is a political force in developing countries; trying to confine it to private sphere is likely to encounter opposition, if not to lead to a rejection of development models which do not recognize the inherent political nature of religion."

···> "It is paramount for development practitioners to understand how a religion works and how the religious believer sees the world and establishes development priorities and outcomes. This entails that what development practitioners conceive as valuable actions or desirable social change might not always be in tune with the views of religious believers on these matters."

···> "Dialogue and openness is essential for fruitful development interventions. This means that disagreements have to be worked through, for religion constitutes a Total way of life for religious believers and selective engagement is not an option."

The second reason why we must deal professionally with religion, is because religion also plays an essential role in Dutch society. Nowadays, religion is included in the public debate, such as with respect to sustainable development, social cohesion, solidarity, migration and integration.

Effectiveness
The first reason – the role of religion in the South – calls for effective development cooperation, as any disregard for the religious factor can make projects fail. A growing number of professionals believe that development cooperation should pay more attention to religious aspects within societies. Religion is the 'blind spot' in development cooperation: too much unilateral emphasis is laid on economic target figures and technical aspects. Changes cannot take proper root in communities because of this.

Research carried out by the World Bank, published in Voices of the poor, shows that religious leaders and organisations in poor communities, no matter where in the world, enjoy much more trust than other leaders and organisations. They are closer to these communities than other networks and, as a result, have much more influence. People in the community usually know their religious

[7] Séverine Deneulin & Masooda Bano, *Religion in development. Rewriting the secular script* (London, New York: Zed Books, 2009), 26.

These debates on effectiveness and identity converge on the issue of how you, as an employee of a development organisation, wish to cope with 'the other party', the cooperation partner and the target group. How do you succeed in what you want to achieve? What exactly is development? In other words: Are we doing the right things and are we doing those things the right way? Many people consider religion and spirituality important where their own development and that of their community is concerned. People's view on development can differ from a religious tradition and from a secular perspective. So you should ask yourself how you think religion and development interrelate. How and why can you, as a Western development worker, help to tackle deep-seated problems?

Whether you explore religion as a problem or as a solution, compassion is essential. Firstly, you must be alive to the mobilising role religion can play, both for better and for worse. It is also crucial for you to know your own world view and the position you take in the development chain.

leaders personally. Furthermore, such leaders often have the authority to implement any necessary changes. They can be an ally or a partner in the pursuit of development. [8]

Identity
The second reason – the role of religion in Dutch society – raises the question as to the identity of development organisations. Whether they are religiously inspired or secular, each organisation must ask itself questions, such as: What is our objective? What moral inspiration guides us in what we do or want to do? What do we expect of our partners? How do we reach groups of people with a different religious tradition? The presence or absence of an employee's religious identity and his motivation to work in a development organisation is also a factor.

[8] Deepa Narayan-Parker et al., *Voices of the poor. Can anyone hear us?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

3   Purpose of the Practitioners' Guide

The starting point for this practitioners' guide is that Dutch development professionals should be aware of the correlation between religion and development. Consequently, it contains recommendations for collecting context-specific knowledge, acquiring a context-specific attitude and for taking context-specific action.

As a Western development worker you cannot escape our secular world view. As we work and are socialised in a specific 'language domain', this book strongly emphasises language. For that same reason, the book also stresses awareness and consciousness-raising. Moreover, we give attention to specific approaches with regard to such matters as acquiring knowledge about the role of religion in a certain context; what kinds of interaction you can have with your cooperation partner; and dos and don'ts. In any event, reality is tenacious and unpredictable. Integrating religion and development cooperation is important, but not a panacea.

This book is intended for browsing and contains information you may need at some point in time. After Definitions and Terms (Chapter II), the book discusses three essential aspects within international cooperation: Know your context (Chapter III), Know your (conversation) partner (Chapter IV) and Know yourself (Chapter V). Chapter VI, Real-life dilemmas, discusses situations every development worker might come across. Each chapter of the book pursues questions you may ask (yourself) in a variety of situations. The book also encourages you to reflect on and discuss these topics, for instance via www.religion-and-development.nl/guide, and gives you starting points for clear and in-depth context analyses of religion.

Especially other people's experiences can help you in complex situations. We therefore interviewed 25 employees of various organisations: ICCO, Cordaid, Kerk in Actie (Church in Action), Seva Network Foundation,

Oxfam Novib and Hivos. Their experiences and perceptions provide insight into all sorts of situations, dilemmas and opportunities and are a valuable source for this book. [9]

This book provides no ready-made solutions. It does, however, pose certain questions and sets you thinking about sensitivity and attitude. One of the employees of a development organisation warned us in advance: *"We secretly hope for a very logical account. I don't think there is one, so forget it. Don't try to find one. Consider the practical experiences and what we can learn from them, and document that."*

This book is not a final product but the beginning of an open exchange of knowledge and experience. We hope that this book and the website will evoke many associations. Please feel free to share your observations and analyses with us.

[9]   Employees of the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development interviewed approximately 25 employees of the Dutch development organisations ICCO, Cordaid, Church in Action, Seva Network Foundation, Oxfam Novib and Hivos.

More reading material

Go to the documentation centre at **www.religion-and-development.nl** for case studies, analyses, training manuals and other relevant documentation.

More information on the correlation between religion and development cooperation:

···≳ Séverine Deneulin & Masooda Bano, Religion in development. Rewriting the secular script (London, New York: Zed Books, 2009).

···≳ Darren Noy, "This world and the next. The interrelationships of religion and development" (doctoral dissertation University of California, 2009).

II
Definitions and terms

1   A definition of religion?

Money: a blessing or a curse for aid

Wim Bossema, journalist for the Dutch national daily newspaper 'de Volkskrant', recorded the following dialogue between Jolke Oppewal and Henny Slegh, a couple committed to alleviating poverty and providing development aid in Mozambique. As an economy sector expert at the Netherlands embassy in Maputo, Oppewal is charged with steering Dutch budgetary aid. As a psychologist, Slegh advises the poorest people to make better use of government services. The conversation is about donations as a form of development cooperation and about corruption. Both agree that corruption is rife. However, they have different opinions on how to tackle this corruption, since they have different perspectives on the role of spirituality in society. [10]

(…)

Slegh: "But you put a lot of money into it [through Dutch budgetary aid] and you have no idea where it's going, which means that ordinary citizens just have to trust it will go towards what it is intended for."
Oppewal: "Not really. It's the same as with tax money or the salaries of civil servants: the government supervises that. Nowadays, the Court of Auditors publishes detailed findings on the web. At the end of the day, it's not us who should fight corruption, but the Mozambicans."
Slegh: "And yet, there is still the burning issue that people I work with do not believe that. (…). Here they say: Are you giving the civil servants even more money to support their families? All of you, up there in those meeting rooms, disregard the culture, the whole spiritual world – so highly important to most Mozambicans – as if it doesn't exist, doesn't matter. Whereas we citizens look more to that spiritual world for guidance than to government policy."
Oppewal: "It's not that I don't think the spiritual experience exists, but I do believe it is much less important than many people think. But it is true that the higher echelons are not very much in touch with spiritual aspects. Like today, nobody in the room started dancing or applauding after signing a contract for two million euros worth of budgetary aid."
Slegh: "What struck me in Mozambique is how important their culture is. Mozambicans process information quite differently than we do. They have a holistic worldview. They don't think in terms of cause and effect, but rather in circles. They have to support not only their living family members, but also the spirits of the family ancestors. If these spirits turn against you, you risk misfortune. Spiritual life is so important that everyone, high and low, consults a spiritualist to enforce luck and prosperity. If you want to intervene in a society, you can't ignore this. It astonishes me how the world of development aid consistently brings typically Western ideas and models into Mozambique."
Oppewal: "You have to distinguish between Mozambican citizens and authorities, of course. As foreigners we don't have to understand everything, just so long as we leave as much as possible up to them. But I am sure I could have a very good conversation on how to accomplish development and what role the state could play in development with someone whose spiritual motives I can't entirely understand."
Slegh: "I still think that donors do not understand how this government and its civil servants work. They always come here with a whole retinue of experts and development workers who think all those traditions and spirits are eerie and daft. How can you work together like that?"
Oppewal: As soon as the government engages in favouritism you cross the line and you have to stop granting the government financial support. The government in Mozambique might still be weak, but it has not collapsed. Quite the opposite: the economy there is reasonably prosperous. The government is able to sustain and improve education and healthcare. I strongly believe that a society is served by having a functioning government.

This dialogue demonstrates how two Dutch development professionals can have different views on religion and spirituality in a society. Where one argues that spirituality plays a role in all layers and facets of society, the other believes it depends on the place and the context in which one works (together). If we were to ask them how they would define religion and spirituality, they probably would give two different answers.

What is a proper definition of religion? Generations of scientists specialising in religion have wrestled with this question but have been unable to come up with an answer, as many definitions are products of time and place.

Still, it is important to ask yourself how you personally define religion. Do you think religion is **static** (unvarying rules or holy texts to which people relate in a certain way) or **dynamic** (dependent on time, place and how people interpret it)? Do you think mainly in terms of **personal interpretation** (individual pastoral spiritual care) or do you see it as a **political and social power** that extends over the social and political domain? And what, in your opinion, is most influenced by religion: **the individual conscience** or **the collective community**? No matter what your views are in this respect, they influence the way in which you deal with religion in your work as a development worker.

In the Western world, we distinguish between *religion* and *secularity*. Many people were brought up on secular thinking. Consequently:

- They are able to handle religion as a delimited phenomenon.
- They do not automatically base their thinking, doing and actions on (their belief in) a higher power.
- They principally consider it an individual choice to be accountable to a higher power.
- They consider religion mainly as a set of personal convictions belonging to one's private life.
- They stress the role of reason, science and technology.

So in the Western world emphasis is placed on personal interpretations of religion. Furthermore, 'religion' in the Western world is often seen as the same as the institutionalised and organised form (particularly Christianity, Judaism and Islam). In many non-Western contexts, however, religious thinking is all about transcendence: a higher power that exists above and beyond the world. Many people do not consider religion as a separate phenomenon but rather as an integral part of reality. In this context you cannot consider religion as a set of private beliefs that determines how people think and act. Séverine Deneulin and Masooda Bano put it as follows: *'Religion is not a set of private beliefs which may or may not instrumentally affect people's attitudes; it contains its own norms and values, which define the boundaries of the different social spheres and determine the way they function.'* [11] Deneulin and Bano argue that in a development context, religion should not just be studied in parts but as a whole. Religion and development are not two different, separate entities. The activities that development centres on, such as education, healthcare and advocacy, influence the way people see themselves as belonging to a religious community.

Amartya Sen (Indian economist) also says that religion and development cannot be separated from each other. In his opinion development can be seen as the increase in the amount of freedom for every human being to pursue what he believes is important, i.e., the freedom to realise one's own perception of the 'good life'. [12] However, this freedom is influenced by (political or religious) actors in society. Consequently, perceptions of the 'good life' can clash and may possibly cause conflicts.

[10] Wim Bossema, "Geld, tovermiddel of gif van de hulp" ("Money, a blessing or a curse for aid") , *De Volkskrant*, 25 February 2006. Go to www.volkskrant.nl/archief_gratis/article563248.ece/Geld,_tovermiddel_of_gif_van_de_hulp.

[11] Séverine Deneulin & Masooda Bano, *Religion in development. Rewriting the secular script* (London, New York: Zed Books, 2009), 60.

[12] David Renkema, "Religie als instrument voor ontwik-kelingssamenwerking" (Religion as an instrument for development cooperation"), in *Religie & Samenleving* (Religion & Society) 4, no. 1 (2009), 42.

2   Working definition of religion

Even though religion is indefinable, in order to have a manageable handle for it we present the differentiating of religion in four religious resources, as classified by Gerrie ter Haar (professor Religion and Development at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague) and Stephen Ellis (senior researcher at the African Study Centre Leiden). These are: religious ideas, religious practices, religious organisations and religious (or spiritual) experiences: [13]

- **Religious ideas:** The perceptions of the universe, the world, life, nature, evil, the sacred, up to and including the virtues and values that guide us in our actions. These perceptions, virtues and values are expressed in stories and tales. In many cases they are also laid down in doctrines and rules.

- **Religious practices:** The actions, customs, places and objects that link perceptible reality with imperceptible reality.

- **Religious organisations:** The religious movements, communities and organisations, their (possible) leaders and the networks in which they cooperate.

- **Religious experiences:** People's experiences in relation to the transcendent. The transcendent here is a generic term for, for example, the ultimate, the divine, spirits, ancestors and gods. Religious experiences can be at the root of transformations, both individually and collectively.

These four religious resources, as they are called, are used in this book as a working definition. Ter Haar and Ellis developed this working definition in an African context. These four aspects can relate differently to each other depending on local context and time.

2a   The working definition in practice: thinking,

acting, cooperating, experiencing

At least five questions arise when translating the working definition into practice: who, what, where, when and why? With whom do you cooperate or with whom are you in contact? What are they trying to d
Religious ideas pertain to what people think. If they believe in witchcraft, what does that mean in a certain context? Religious practices are what people do. People base their actions, such as religious rituals, on a certain belief. Because people do things together, religious structures and institutions emerge. To outsiders, religious organisations and religious leaders are the most visible. In addition, there is the religious experience. Believers have experiences as individuals, but the experiences only acquire significance in a certain tradition and culture.

This apparently simple phrasing of the four religious resources provides comprehensive answers to the question of how religion takes shape in a certain context. Infinite variations of religious ideas, practices, organisations and experiences are possible in time and space. Believers can also relate in various ways to a certain tradition. For instance, some people lay emphasis on believing, the individual conviction. The content is of greater importance than the group one belongs to. For others the emphasis of their religion is on belonging, being a part of things. This is the social side of faith: belonging to a certain group is more important than the content.
o and achieve? Where do they do that? When? Why? A sixth question follows automatically from these questions: how do you handle certain problems as a development professional?

When speaking with your (conversation) partners you may find that your perceptions and opinions differ. Therefore, it is important that you examine in what people think and what their ideas are in each and every situation. What are

[13] Gerrie ter Haar & Stephen Ellis, "The role of religion in development. Towards a new relationship between the European Union and Africa", *European journal of development research* 18, no. 3 (2006): 351–367.

they undertaking based on their ideas? How are they organised? And what spiritual experiences do they link to that?

Each religious tradition has a world view that lays a connection between the perceptible and the imperceptible. This world view is bound up with traditions and rituals. These traditions, although sometimes seemingly static, are dynamic and subject to constant change. The classification into religious ideas, religious practices, religious organisations and religious experiences can help employees of Dutch development organisations to obtain an insight into a partner organisation's religious world view.

3   Two sides of religion

Religion is not cuddly. It is often raw, demanding, provocative, and, as we know all too well, violent. Religion is fundamentally about love: love of God and love of neighbour. But it is also about passion, deep belief, and, for many, the very crux of identity and purpose in the world. Religion does indeed arouse passions. Figuring out how passion and diversity mix is rarely easy but never has the challenge seemed as important as it does today.
(Katherine Marshall) [14]

In this quote Katherine Marshall (senior fellow at the *Berkley Centre for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs*) summarises the two sides of religion, as if they are two sides of the same coin. Sometimes religion envelops people in communities, inducing them to take care of each other. But sometimes it also forms a collective identity that excludes people from all kinds of privileges.

Besides, religions also lend themselves to being used for power purposes. "*Because religion can be a substantial component of people's identity, it can also be easy to abuse that part of their identity,*" a Cordaid employee said when explaining how some politicians in Central Africa use religion as a means of exercising power.

Some religious groups even occupy themselves with proselytism. This can cause serious tension between and within local and ethnic groups.

The 'positive' side and the 'negative' side of religion are not two separate entities. "*Sometimes people can be played off against each another via religious ideology; at other times religion is a binding factor that enables positive action,*" say Henk Tieleman (professor of sociology of religion) and Ward Berenschot (political scientist). For donor organisations that cooperate with religious organisations, this can mean that religion causes all kinds of unintended side effects "*because cooperation legitimises a certain religious discourse, which – together with a nice dose of social services – can legitimise dubious power relations. The 'positive' and 'negative' sides of religion are not separate entities: as religious doctrines and social power relations are very closely interwoven and are interwoven time and time again, religion cannot be seen as a separate entity within a society alongside an economic, social, or political environment. The question as to what religiously inspired organisations bring about is therefore equally crucial and complex when identifying possible partners.*" [15] The following chapters explain how to handle this ambiguity of religion.

[14] Katherine Marshall, "Religious literacy crucial to understand Pakistan flood response, mosque debate", *The Washington Post*, 23 August 2010. Go to http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/georgetown/2010/08/religious_literacy_crucial_to_understand_pakistan_flood_response_mosque_debate.html#more. Katherine Marshall is a *senior fellow at Georgetown's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs; a Visiting Professor; and Executive Director of the World Faiths Development Dialogue.*

[15] Ward Berenschot & Henk Tieleman, "Religie als instrument? Over de desecularisering van de ontwikkelingssamenwerking" (Relgion as an instrument? On the desecularisation of development cooperation"), *Religie & Samenleving* (Religion & Society) 4, no. 3 (2009): 244-245.

4 The importance of real-life accounts for development activities

The preceding section provides a theoretical look at religion. However, in development cooperation one should not use a theoretical approach to religion, but rather collect and draw on real-life stories.

Wendy Tyndale (former coordinator of World Faith Development Dialogue) indicates how important it is to listen to the real-life experiences of spiritually and religiously inspired groups in the South who give their all for the poor. Their accounts show that spiritual and moral developments can lead to material growth. Therefore, you should use their insights when drawing up a development plan or when seeking alliances between various groups. [16]

Séverine Deneulin and Masooda Bano argue in favour of linking these concrete accounts on religion and development to accepted development theories, thus producing a new scientific view of this concept. To do this, the role of non-economical factors must be re-assessed. According to Deneulin and Bano the following three areas of tension have a significant influence on development thinking and development practice: [17]

···▸ The secularization theory has been a common feature of all social sciences in the twentieth century. According to the thesis, the significance of religion in society is assumed to disappear when societies modernize. They have argued that there is, however, a consensus about the empirical reality that religion is not losing its public significance.

···▸ The continuous argument about a religion's fundamental agreement gives religion a non-homogeneous character and leaves it vulnerable to abuses of power. They have argued that religion is best defined as a tradition, that never ceases to be redefined and reinterpreted in the light of the specific social and historical context in which humans live.

···▸ There is the contention that religions are prone to fundamentalist and violent expressions, and that, therefore, peace is best secured by keeping religion out of the public sphere. They have particularly emphasized the crucial role of the religious leadership in framing a possible violent response to harms inflected on them.

[16] Wendy Tyndale (ed.), *Visions of development. Faith-based initiatives* (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2006).

[17] Séverine Deneulin & Masooda Bano, *Religion in development. Rewriting the secular script* (London, New York: Zed Books, 2009), 52-72.

What is an fbo?

A matter of definition

We refer to religious development organisations as *faith-based organisations* (FBOs). But what are they exactly? FBOs have the same characteristics as NGOs, i.e.:

- Their aim is to aid the general good at national and/or international levels, initially by alleviating poverty.
- They have a formal organisational structure.
- They have legal status.

- They are not aimed at making a profit.
- They work independently of the government.
- They originate from the private sector.
- A staff of professionals or volunteers works within them.

As an additional characteristic, the identity and objectives of FBOs are based on at least one religious or spiritual tradition. Gerard Clarke and Michael Jennings (both lecturing at Swansea University, United Kingdom) define

FBOs as follows: *"A faith-based organisation is any organisation that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within that faith."* [18]

Specific features of FBOs are:

- They are linked (financially as well) to other FBOs and religious groups, as regards their target groups and their supporters.
- Their mission statement refers to at least one religious or spiritual tradition.
- Their policy is based on religion or on spiritual values.
- Religion is likely to be taken into account when selecting staff members.

Does a religious identity also involve different approaches and target groups?

Do FBOs have a different view of development? Do they take a different approach in their pursuit of development?

Firstly, FBOs do not have a (alternative) blueprint for development. There is no such thing as blueprints in this respect. And although the religiously inspired motivation of employees within developing organisations can be important – in any case to themselves – it does not mean that the motivation of secular colleagues is called into question or that their commitment would produce fewer or no results. Also, some FBOs are aimed at propagating their religious agenda by means of various degrees of proselytism (aggressive conversion zeal, see page 61).

There are various kinds of FBOs, differing in the extent of their religious inspiration. To clarify the nuances, theologians Ronald Sider and Heidi Unruh divide FBOs into several categories: [19]

- *Faith-permeated*: These are organisations that centre on the religious dimension, both in their organisation and in their projects.
- *Faith-centered*: These organisations provide religious activities and are governed by a religious disposition; however, they leave it up to the participants to join in or not to join in on religious projects.
- *Faith-affiliated*: These organisations are influenced by the religious background of their founders, but do not expect per se the same religious outlook of other employees or participants.
- *Faith-background*: At first glance these organisations seem to be secular, but they are historically linked to a certain religious tradition.
- *Faith-secular partnerships*: These are joint ventures between secular organisations and FBOs. Their management, organisation and projects have both secular and religious aspects.
- *Secular NGOs*: These organisations, their management, mission and projects have no religious footing.

This classification applies to FBOs both in the South and in the North. For example, some Dutch development organisations stem from Catholic or Protestant missionary work. Their current religious inspiration varies greatly.

The religious identity of organisations can differ in some aspects. British researcher Rick James distinguishes ten different aspects: [20]

- Structural affiliation and governance
- The values and motivation of staff
- The mission
- Strategies and theories of development
- Faith practices and teaching in programmes
- The choice of beneficiaries and partners
- Staff and leadership
- The organisational culture
- Constituency and sources of funding
- External relationships

The extent to which FBOs give these aspects a religious interpretation depends on the category to which they belong. For instance, faith-affiliated organisations can be reticent about incorporating religion into the organisation's mission statement. Faith-permeated organisations might only choose to enter into relations with partners with the same religious background.

The context in which you operate also determines the extent to which you present yourself as a religious organisation. In many countries religions are subject of political sparring, in which case organisations do not serve their own interests well if they explicitly declare themselves to be religious. An Indian partner organisation of ICCO and Kerk in Actie (Church in Action) deliberately does not present itself as being a Christian organisation, so as to avoid any aversion to it. Cordaid does likewise: when operating in Afghanistan it does not present itself explicitly as being Catholic in the interest of its Islamic partner organisations. The latter work there, by the way, under high security risk in extremely strained religious and political conditions.

More reading material

Go to the documentation centre at **www.religion-and-development.nl** for case studies, analyses, training manuals and other relevant documentation.

More information on religion:

┈┈▸ Wendy Tyndale, ed., *Visions of development. Faith-based initiatives* (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2006).

┈┈▸ Dennis de Jong et al., *Handout. Religion and development policy* (Utrecht: Knowledge Forum on Religion and Development Policy, 2008).

┈┈▸ Ritva Reinikka & Jakob Svensson, Working for God? *Evaluating service delivery of religious not-for-profit health care providers in Uganda* (Washington: World Bank, 2003).

[18] Gerard Clarke, et. al., *Development, civil society and Faith-based organizations. Bridging the sacred and the secular* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 6.

[19] Ronald J. Sider & Heidi Rolland Unruh, "Typology of religious characteristics of social service and educational organizations and programs", *Non-profit and voluntary sector quarterly* 33, no. 1 (2004): 109-134.

[20] Rick James, "What is distinctive about FBOs? How European FBOs define and operationalise their faith", INTRAC 22 (2009).

III

Know your context

1   Context analysis

Religion in context: The fight against HIV/Aids

"In Africa, nobody simply gets sick; it is always done to them as a punishment or in retaliation," says the Dutch doctor and epidemiologist David Warndorff in an article in the Dutch daily newspaper '*Trouw*'. [21] *"In Africa illnesses or premature death are related to limits being exceeded, to debts and negligence, and consequently to envy and witchcraft. Aids is a perfect example of an illness where this connection is made. With its lengthy incubation period years can go by between being infected and contracting the disease. Therefore no connection can be found between (biological) cause and effect, leaving plenty of room for supernatural explanations."* Warndorff says that any doctor who has worked in Africa will confirm that patients believe that successful medical care only suppresses the symptoms, be it malaria tropica, pneumonia or appendicitis. After being discharged from medical care in perfect health, they still go to the medicine man to determine the 'real' cause of the sickness and to have it 'treated'.

As Warndorff writes in this article, for many years most professionals in the fight against Aids in Africa did not realize this at all. Many experts mostly blame the HIV/Aids problem on the political misrule of African governments. Today, thanks to information provided on this disease, most people in Africa are aware of the existence of the HIV virus and how it causes Aids. They also know how one gets infected and how to prevent becoming infected.

As can be expected, those who are better educated are more knowledgeable in this respect. However, it is remarkable that the higher the level of education, the greater the chance of infection is. Occupational groups who have been well informed since the beginning of the epidemic and who have ready access to condoms are among the most heavily affected groups. So there is something wrong here.

The point is that the virus plays a subordinate role for the Africans. The big question for them is not how, but why some people get the virus and others do not. They know very well what causes the illness, but their actual question is: 'Why me? Why do I have symptoms indicating that I am infected and my neighbour does not, whereas he has more sexual partners than I have? What did I do to have the virus sent to me and not to him? What account is being settled here? Who has cast a spell on me?' In other words, the virus is no more than a (biological) go-between within a much greater interplay of forces. The causes of the disease are not related to risky behaviour – because the risks are everywhere – but instead are considered to be a response to bad doings in the past.

In his article Warndorff writes that cultural factors, particularly envy and witchcraft, are the main cause of the African Aids issue and it are those factors in particular that development workers and other experts take no notice of.

Besides, African culture has a number of conceptions and customs that help spread the virus. It attaches much greater importance to sex than Western society does. Sex is essential to good health, both for men and women. *"A human tragedy of unprecedented dimensions is occurring in Africa. It's enough to make you weep that we have hardly been able to exercise any influence there, despite all our efforts and considerable sums of money. I fear that this is because we did not include the most important underlying causes of the epidemic in our efforts to combat the disease. I also fear that in ten years we will be saying the same thing about the strategy we advocate today, namely administering Aids inhibitors – unless we give it a good rethink now,"* says Warndorff.

Context analyses help you assess which processes occur in a society so as to anticipate on them properly. Context analyses usually restrict religious aspects to the mapping of religious actors. The value of religious communities or ideas is generally not discussed explicitly. Including religious experiences, ideas and practices in the context analysis is not easy for a number of reasons:

- It is difficult to get a grip on comprehensive and abstract topics such as religion. This practitioners' guide helps you in this by designating religion as a social phenomenon consisting of four *religious resources*: religious ideas, practices, experiences and organisations (see page 16).

- It is not easy to talk about religion with partners or other people. It takes trust.

- It takes time to acquire sufficient knowledge and to build up a confidential relationship with the partners.

- Opportunities for acquiring knowledge about religion are often limited because, for example, you do not speak the language.

- It is difficult to determine whether you have acquired sufficient knowledge of a religion for a sound context analysis.

- Religion as a topic is often not included in development programmes and their related evaluation systems.

Acquiring knowledge is important for performing a proper context analysis. This chapter contains a number of questions that can help you understand the role, scope and relevance of FBOs. Some questions cannot be asked directly, for instance those that concern sensitive matters such as the abuse of power or corruption. Local information sources are crucial, of course, as they are familiar with local practices.

1a Specific context analyses: Drivers of change approach

Drivers of change are structures, institutes and actors within a society that influence development. Religious resources (religious organisations, ideas, practices and experiences) can also be drivers of change.
The drivers of change approach assumes that a development organisation carries out a specific context analysis before starting on a project or entering into a cooperation contract with a partner organisation. In this context analysis, the organisation must designate the drivers of change.

Within this approach religious resources must be considered. Attention should primarily be given to religious organisations and leaders as they generally know the mind of the people and also enjoy their confidence. [22] Occasionally, religious or religiously inspired organisations provide services in such fields as education and healthcare (service delivery). If their development goals correspond with those of your own organisation, you can very likely work together. This can be a pragmatic consideration: for Dutch development organisations religion doesn't necessarily have to be involved, which is contrary, perhaps, to the concerned religious actors.

Attention should also be paid to religiously inspired ideas on society, nature and people. Sometimes these ideas contribute to the development goals, such as when they relate to human dignity, sense of community, solidarity and justice. Sometimes there can also be tensions, like those entailed in human rights, HIV/Aids, the value of one's own culture or the value of non-human life. These religiously inspired ideas are not permanent, but change constantly. At the same time, however, both fundamentalist movements and radical critics are inclined to narrow down religiously inspired ideas to their alleged essence.

21 David Warndorff, "Waarom heb ík aids en mijn buurman niet" ("Why do I have Aids and my neighbour doesn't"), *Trouw*, 28 December 2002. Go to www.trouw.nl/krantenarchief/2002/12/28/2158684/waarom_heb_ik_aids_en_mijn_buurman_niet.html?all=true.

22 Deepa Narayan-Parker et al., *Voices of the poor. Can anyone hear us?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Religious practices and experiences can also induce development; however, in practice they are seldom recognised as *drivers of change*. They can barely be used as an instrument for (externally determined) development goals. If they do occur, they are sooner considered an obstacle to than a stimulus for development, such as in the case of proselytism (see page 61).

1b General practical recommendations

···⇝ Pay sufficient attention to religion in your context analysis and organisational scan.

···⇝ Specify the complexity. Religion is seldom the sole cause or even the main cause of a conflict involving religion. Causes are more complex and involve political, economical and cultural aspects as well.

···⇝ Acquire knowledge of the religion(s) you will be dealing with.

···⇝ Take time to focus sufficiently on religion. The need for more knowledge is not always on a par with the amount of time available to many employees of Dutch development organisations. Nevertheless, it is crucial that you make time for this.

···⇝ Beware not to 'religionise' the context. If you consider religion as the only explanatory factor, for example as the cause of a conflict, you run the risk of giving religion too much weight. It is important that you involve religious leaders in the analysis of the context, but you should not discuss it only with them.

···⇝ Be patient. Trying to reconcile development goals requires a good relationship between donor organisation and partner organisation. This takes time and patience.

As soon as I start working in a new region, I try to make contact with those who represent the major religions. I ask them what they want for the community, what problems they see, how these should be changed and how they want to tackle them. Some religious leaders think they play no part in society. You have to talk with them, but it doesn't contribute much to my work. I seek cooperation mostly with religious people who opt for a role in society themselves. In reality you usually come across something in the middle. I also know a number of Buddhist monks who do not think they figure much in society, but if you look at what they do, they actually happen to play an enormous role. They are extremely modest. You first have to get to know them better and then they start trusting you. So you have to take your time and be patient.

(ICCO-employee)

2   Questions for the context analysis

After the tsunami of 26 December 2004 hit South-East Asia, the Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties (SHO/United Aid Organisations) were faced with an 'excess budget': the public had donated huge amounts of money. Some of these funds were used to build stone houses in Sri Lanka. Considering the gravity of the situation they had to be built quickly. Donors also wanted to see quick results. Photographs were taken to show how many houses were built. But there was one problem: the Sri Lankan people did not want to live in the houses.
What had happened? The ground on which the houses were built should have been 'purified' by means of Buddhist rituals. As this had not been done, the Sri Lankans did not want to live in the houses.

One of the main objectives of a context analysis is to acquire a better understanding of the situation in situ/on the spot. This can be achieved by means of the questions listed below. The relevance of each question depends on the particular situation. The list of questions is not exhaustive. The questions are intended primarily for yourself as points of attention when drawing up the context analysis. What you do with the answers depends on the protocols within your organisation.

Questions for the context analysis can be divided into four categories:
⋯⟩ Questions in advance
⋯⟩ Questions pertaining to the role of religion as a social phenomenon
⋯⟩ Questions pertaining to the contents of religious tradition
⋯⟩ Questions pertaining to the internal religious organisation

2a   Questions in advance

When you start your context analysis, ask questions such as:

⋯⟩ What must you know about the religious context?

⋯⟩ At what stage of your project or programme should you acquire that knowledge?

⋯⟩ Who advises you in acquiring that knowledge?

⋯⟩ Who decides what the correct knowledge is? You can get several answers if you ask yourself 'what the religion's opinion is' on a certain situation. So who advises and decides when this happens?

⋯⟩ How do you describe your contact with the cooperation partner and with the target group?

2b Questions pertaining to the role of religion as a social phenomenon

⋯⋗ What role does the religion of your cooperation partner play in society? For example, is it the official religion of the country or a minority religion? Can people be open about their belief? Or is religion politicised and misused?

⋯⋗ What role did it play in the past, for example in the colonial era?

⋯⋗ Does the country have an 'established church'? How does the religious community you will be dealing with relate to this church?

⋯⋗ How do the various religions in the country get along? Do they exist peacefully alongside one another or is there controversy between them? Has any interreligious dialogue been initiated?

⋯⋗ What is the power structure in a certain region or country? What place does religion occupy in these balances of power?

⋯⋗ Does the relevant religion have any urge to expand?

⋯⋗ Is there an institutionalised religious law, such as the Shari'a?

⋯⋗ What role does religion play in politically sensitive matters, such as HIV/Aids?

⋯⋗ How does the community value religion and religious leaders? Do the leaders have much authority? Do they reach many people and do they have any impact on them? Are they a good starting point for realising social changes?

⋯⋗ What forms of religious education are there? How do they relate to public education?

2c Questions pertaining to the contents of religious traditions

⋯⋗ What are the general characteristics of the religion? Every religious tradition has many varieties; however, there are always some key features that typify the entire religious tradition. Pentecostalism, for instance, has many manifestations but they all have common characteristics: a charismatic leadership, individual relationship between believers and God, community spirit, placing Jesus at the centre and openly avowing your personal belief.

⋯⋗ What role do perceptible and imperceptible actors play? Ancestors, for example, are an essential part of everyday life in many African religions. Natural objects and sites can also have great spiritual value, such as certain stones, trees or watering places.

⋯⋗ What is the importance of relationships between people, of people's relationship with nature, with the universe, with the spirit world, with God?

⋯⋗ What is the importance of creating a community and of the position of individuals within that community?

⋯⋗ What notions do people have with respect to conversion and secession? How does one deal with people who have a different religion (or none at all)?

⋯⋗ Which inclusion and/or exclusion mechanisms do you see? How does one deal with people who are disabled, homosexual or homeless, for example?

2d Questions pertaining to the internal religious organisation

···› How is the religious community organised? Consider the following points:
  – Hierarchy
  – Balance of power
  – Social classes
  – Gender relations

···› Must the staff members of the organisation converge to a religious trend? If so, which one?

···› Who is your contact in the organisation? How does this person relate to the rest of the organisation? Pose questions such as:
  – What is your contact's position in the hierarchy?
  – Is your contact an elected person in a temporary post?
  – Will your contact be transferred within a certain period of time?

···› Are the leaders elected and if so, how? Do men and women have the same rights and opportunities?

···› How much prestige does your conversation partner have within the (religious) community and within the organisation? What influence does he have at the local, regional or national level?

···› How do the church authorities deal with power and responsibility? Are they able to delegate properly?

···› At which target group are the (religious) activities aimed? Are the activities open to everyone or is it a limited target group? If so, who are allowed to participate?

···› What roles do religious organisations play in providing aid and in supporting social change? Consider the direction your organisation and the partner organisation want to take in this respect.

···› What part do religious organisations play in blocking social change when you consider the direction your own organisation or your partner organisation want to take?

···› How does an FBO relate – locally, regionally or nationally – to other religious trends?

···› What position does the FBO occupy within the social and political context of the field in which you work? Does it cooperate with other religious and non-religious NGOs?

···› Does the FBO's target group have access to basic social services? What role can and will the FBO play in this?

More reading material

Go to the documentation centre at **www.religion-and-development.nl** for case studies, analyses, training manuals and other relevant documentation.

For more information on the HIV/Aids issue:

···› Dennis de Jong et al, "Religion and HIV/Aids. The defining issue of our time" in Handout. Religion and development policy, ed. Dennis de Jong et al. (Utrecht, Knowledge Forum on Religion and Development Policy, 2008): 27-39.

···› Felicitas Becker & Paul Wentzel Geissler, Aids and religious practice in Africa (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

···› Gunnar Stålsett, "Religion and HIV/Aids. A changing relationship", Dharma world, nr. 36 (2009).

Religion in fragile states

Fragile states often suffer a long period of instability and conflict. It is important to examine the role of religion and religious organisations in conflict situations, as religious organisations and leaders can play a constructive part in solving conflicts and in reconciliation processes; however, they can also cause or boost conflicts.

ICCO's *conflict analysis tool* poses the following questions to the role of religious organisations and leaders in fragile states: [23]

⋯▸ How are the various religious leaders and religious organizations reducing or fuelling conflict?

⋯▸ What is the influence of religious beliefs on people's attitudes, behaviour and relationships?

⋯▸ What place does religion have in the underlying structures of the conflict?

American *business development consultant* Seth Kaplan recognises that religion can have an influence on development. He believes that development in fragile states should come from within the community itself. Religious organisations can play an important part in this respect:

"If Western development agencies opted to emphasize programs that help societies reform from within, those agencies would

quickly discover the merits of investing more of their resources in faith groups (and other indigenous networks). For instance, training the spiritual and administrative leaders of FBOs – everyone from ministers and imams to school principals and the heads of waqf foundations - on management, economics, education, and social welfare would help their organizations take on larger projects, expand their services, and improve their operations. Similarly, assisting well-established groups in introducing (in partnership, perhaps, with NGOs or private companies) savings and loan schemes, sanitation and garbage-collection systems, and housing development cooperatives would speed the spread of such programs throughout the world... Measures that foster cohesion – by improving internal governance, by expanding services, by helping codify norms and discipline regimes, and by creating stronger ties between members – would foster more 'spiritual capita' (social capital created through religion), an invaluable resource in the low trust environment common in fragile states." [24]

Insights

In June 2008 the KCRD organised a meeting in association with IKV/Pax Christi concerning religion and fragile states. During this meeting 22 Dutch employees of development organisations shared their most important insights in this regard.

- Religions and religious institutions are (potentially) important players in fragile states. As regards social cohesion and connection, religious organisations are often the only ones that are able to keep

up any form of infrastructure. Furthermore, they enjoy the population's trust.

However, their role is not by definition a positive one. Religion is often misused for political influence. Churches and political power can be interwoven in proportion to ethnic and political capacities. Corruption by leaders or the emergence of new religious movements can weaken the position, authority and influence of the church. Churches occasionally shy away from admitting their negative role in the reconciliation phase, whereas it is in that reconciliation phase and in the transition phase that religious leaders and religious values can reinforce the peace process.

- At times it is wise not to mention the subject of 'religion' in fragile states as it can be a sensitive topic and can feature in conflicts. Therefore, consider carefully how and with whom you speak about religion. You must also know the exact phase the conflict is in.

- In the context analysis you must consider the roles of religion on macro, meso and micro levels as they can differ significantly from each other. It is also important to ask yourself which religious actors are significant.

- Do not make religion more important than it is. It is only one component in a complex process. You can even reinforce a conflict by paying (too) much attention to religion.

- There are several reasons why a development worker disregards religion, such as ignorance or incomprehension. It can also be a deliberate choice, perhaps because of fear to aggravate the conflict or to be accused of proselytism.

- You must take the drivers of change into account (see page 25). This is important in order to fulfil your task convincingly at the community level and while developing basic social services.

- Dutch FBOs can assist in bringing together parties that are involved in a conflict to discuss its cause, its perpetuation or its solution. The FBOs have a religious network and communication resources at their disposal and their religious background often corresponds approximately with that of the parties concerned. Furthermore, Dutch FBOs have political room to manoeuvre so as to concentrate on dissidents as well.

In some instances, these Dutch NGOs actively use their influence on the church or on religious organisations in fragile states in an attempt to persuade them to step in where the state has failed. Incidentally, it is virtually impossible to remain impartial in this respect.

- Dutch organisations usually give priority to partner organisations that deliver good results and quality. These organisations don't necessarily have to be religious, but a church or religious network can be useful. Opting to work with a religious organisation does not mean that you stand up exclusively or 'missionary' for people of that religion,

but only that working with a religious organisation can make it easier for you to achieve your goal to help other people.

- Not every religious community has a central contact or an administrative structure. Take, for instance, the *African Independent Churches*. Their legal basis is unclear and therefore a major obstacle for possible cooperation. Because of this, Dutch donor organisations cannot conclude any contracts with such parties.

- In a post-conflict situation tensions can quickly arise when the state resumes the social services task which the churches had fulfilled up to that point.

Churches and conflict solution: possible roles
In April 2009 the Knowledge Forum on Religion and Development Policy[25] discussed the Dutch policy on fragile states with Bert Koenders, the then Minister for Development Cooperation. During this meeting Jan Gruiters (manager IKV/Pax Christi) mentioned five positive roles that churches or religious leaders can play in fragile states:

- Support for safety and humanitarian aid: In many parts of the world 'the church' provides (access to) fundamental facilities such as healthcare and education. In fragile states religious organisations are often the sole guardians of (parts of the) social cohesion and social services.

- Intermediary, peacemaker: Religious movements can play an important part where other powers, such as the state, fail. The local population puts their trust in religious leaders rather than in political leaders.

- Community mobiliser: Churches and religious leaders regularly promote civil participation in citizenship initiatives, such as elections.

- Reconciler: It is very difficult to distinguish between perpetrator and victim in fragile states, limiting the possibility of legal solutions and requiring other mechanisms to reach reconciliation. Churches and religious leaders can play an important part in this.

- Capacity booster: In many countries more than half the schools are linked directly to a church.

Gruiters also mentions the negative role that religious communities can play. In fragile societies where order is maintained through violence, the church is not always successful. These are complex situations which are subject to change:

- Part of the conflict: A church can be or can become a part of a conflict, especially when group identity is stronger than moral leadership. In that case the church is not a natural ally for a development organisation.

- New relationships: New religious communities, such as the *African Independent Churches*, change traditional relations between existing religious communities. This can cause conflicts with respect to competencies, division of tasks and the like.

- Poverty and corruption: Some religious communities are extremely impoverished and damaged by corruption and abuse. The community and its leaders lose their authority in these kinds of situations.

[23] Irma Specht, *Conflict analysis. Practical tool to analyse conflict in order to prioritise and strategise conflict transformation programs* (Utrecht: ICCO, 2008), 19.

[24] Seth Kaplan, Faith and fragile states. Why development community needs religion (Harvard: Harvard international review, 2009), 11.

[25] The Knowledge forum Religion and Development Policy was established in 2005 by the then Minister for Development Cooperation Agnes van Ardenne. It is a meeting place for representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Development Cooperation), social organisations (including NGOs) and academics. When it was established, the forum comprised the Ministry, Cordaid, ICCO, Kerk in Actie, Oikos and Prisma, followed later either permanently or temporarily by IKV/Pax Christi, Hivos, CMC Mensen met een Missie (People with a Mission), Initiative for Change, the Seva Network Foundation and Justitia et Pax. Under Minister Bert Koenders the emphasis lay on the policy dialogue between NGOs and Ministry about fragile states and religion.

IV
Know your (conversation) partner

Religion and homosexuality

Homosexuality and religion is an awkward combination, as evidenced by international cooperation. Not uncommonly there is a big gap between Dutch and African organisations in this respect. The following report of a meeting between ICCO and Kerk in Actie (Church in Action) experts, *Exploring stepping stones for a dialogue on homosexuality*, contains information on obstacles you might encounter.[26]

"*It's Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve!*" cries the South African minister while slapping her hand on the bible. In a short stage play she depicts the pain, the negation and the silence around the seemingly insoluble antagonism between homosexuality and religion. And certainly not just in Africa. Even in the Netherlands homosexuality is still discussed both within churches and in politics. But seldom do believers and homosexuals discuss the topic with each other.

They did so, however, in June 2008 when 10 Dutch and 10 African participants strove to understand each other without going for each other's throats. They represented widely diverse backgrounds and views, including those of churches and Christian organisations, but they shared a common vision of a world where everyone can live in peace, security and equality.

It was an inspiring and moving meeting, characterised by openness and a strong urge to find connections. Personal reflections and in-depth analyses alternated. The main conclusion was that we must look for relationships between the various approaches: religious, cultural and/or legal. And that one must always be aware of the cultural and religious context during the dialogue. This requires that all parties involved recognise that neither owns the truth and that they can learn from each other.

Collective bible study proved to be a good starting point for dialogue, based on a shared language. The manager of *Inclusive and Affirming Ministries*, Pieter Oberholzer, read from Matthew 5:22, in which Jesus calls on people not to pigeonhole each other. During the conversation and over the course of the next three days of the meeting, one could see the meeting turn into an exercise in humanity.

Seeing the other person as a human being, no longer dehumanising the other, turned out to be the first starting point for a dialogue. "*We are all created in God's image*", was a text from Genesis that linked all participants, providing the chance of a dialogue in which people – both those who consider homosexuality as having been created by God as well as those who do not see it that way – saw each other as human beings. Participants with the most extreme opinions openly listened to each other. Everyone asked themselves: do I really acknowledge you as a human being, no matter how much I disagree with you? The meeting was therefore both a confrontational and a liberating experience.

In practice however, that is quite a lot to ask. Anglican church leaders in East and West Africa, for instance, are so strongly opposed to homosexuality that they are even willing to risk a possible international schism. At the same time there is everyday life. In some countries homosexuality is tolerated, but in many African countries homosexuality is punishable – even punishable by death in four countries. Political and religious leaders forcefully suppress homosexuality. One of the participants, a young researcher from Zimbabwe, asked: "*In Zimbabwe only 500 people are associated with the homosexual movement and they are continuously harassed and threatened. Why does the government invest so much time and money in 500 people, whereas the real problems are so big? Why is that?*"

A participant from Africa said afterwards: *"I feel I should come out of my shell. But we must find our own way in this. Confrontation does not work and hammering on about human rights is counterproductive, only causing even more schisms. We should start with a pastoral approach, with seeing people and recognising their problems. Only when I approach it that way can I very gradually change something from within."* Substantial questions were asked concerning the way Northern organisations shape their human rights policy. "*If you do not couple*

What choices do you make when considering which partner organisation you should cooperate with? Do you opt for a moderate, but marginalised religious movement? Or do you choose a religious movement that is broadly supported by the community, but doesn't fit very well with your own standards and values or those of your organisation? The above report shows that a religious-empathetic approach is needed in order to cooperate with your partner. Only then can you understand each other's views of certain matters.

This chapter discusses the pros and cons of cooperating with FBOs. In order to achieve a fruitful dialogue with these organisations you must be able to empathise with the partner's religious ideas. This empathy must apply to the positive and the negative roles religion can play. At the end of this chapter we will therefore discuss the four language domains that can come up in conversations with your partner; recognising these language domains helps to prevent you from reacting too strongly to certain religiously or ideologically charged words.

[26] Elise Kant, ICCO Kerk in Actie. Report of expert meeting *Exploring stepping stones for a dialogue on homosexuality*, organised by ICCO Kerk in Actie, Utrecht, June 2008.

1 Partnership with FBOs

"In 2006, I attended our partner conference in Asia as part of the 'Democracy and Peacebuilding' programme. As soon as I saw all our partners together, I thought: They have all been selected so that we can enjoy a beer together. But what part do these secularised Muslims play in this society? Are they representative? I can't answer these questions, but they are important ones. Our partners dovetail well with óur organisation and employees, but probably not with the target groups in their own society. I believe that the process of selecting a partner is rather obscure. Actually, it is vital to consider in advance what we want with a partner and who or what that partner is to represent. There was only one practicing Muslim present at that conference; the others were all secular – whereas secular Muslims are few and far between in that country.

Another example is that of the African Independent Churches. We have not worked with them for many years, but they are very important in East Africa, with a large part of the population attending one of them. Those churches practice things we might not appreciate, such as exorcisms, but that does not alter the fact that we should wonder what stance we should take. I experienced bizarre things in those churches, but half of the village population took part in those services. Should we associate ourselves with what people there believe is important? Or do we tell them what we like and appreciate? It's a difficult decision, but you have to do something.

(ICCO-employee)

---

27 Niklas Bengtsson, *Do Protestant aid organizations aid Protestants only*? (Uppsala: Uppsala University, Department of economics, 2008). Go to www.nek.uu.se/Pdf/wp2oo8_6.pdf.

Whether Dutch development organisations occupy themselves with emergency relief, services, community building, peace building or democratisation, one of the key questions is: With whom do we cooperate? Whose projects do we support and whose projects do we not support? There is no clear-cut answer to the question of whether FBOs in the South are suitable partner

Protestant aid only for Protestants?

In an Uppsala University publication Swedish researcher Niklas Bengtsson presents his research regarding development projects in the Tanzanian region of Kagera. These projects are carried out at the rural level by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. The are co-financed by development organisations in the United States and Europe.
The objective of the projects is to improve literacy and primary education. The research takes the responsible organisations as an example to explore the extent to which Christian aid organisations look beyond their own boundaries. The conclusion is disappointing: even though the literacy of the population has increased by 15-20% and primary school attendance has increased by 10-15%, these results only apply to Protestant children. The programme has hardly reached any Catholic children in the region.[27]

organisations. They exist in all shapes and sizes (see page...). They vary in objectives and professionalism as well as in the amount of public support they receive from their target groups.

1a Partnership with churches?

Are churches in the South suitable partner organisations? Dutch development organisations differ in their answers to this question. The differences depend among other things on what the organisations focus on: is it the Christian identity of the religious organisation or the work the organisation does? Some employees of development organisations press for (more) trust in churches as natural partner organisations. Other organisations emphasise the importance of looking at churches just as critically as at other partner organisations.

Still others believe that churches cannot be suitable partner organisations for a variety of development activities, such as providing microcredit.

❧ The simple fact that churches, particularly in Africa, are the most permanent form of civil society is, in my opinion, a tremendous advantage. They continue to exist, irrespective of donor funds. Secular NGOs get into deep trouble when their financing is withdrawn, sometimes even going under. But churches are able to persuade people to donate money. They even know how to convince people of lesser means to give a donation. ❧

(Oxfam Novib employee)

1b Pros and cons of cooperating with FBOs

Rick James on FBOs: "*While Faith-based organisations (FBOs) are inherently very different from other types of civil society organisations, they are often treated exactly the same in terms of funding and capacity building support… If FBOs are to realise their potential comparative advantages in development, we need to understand much better the unique capacity building opportunities and challenges they face and see how these can be addressed in an appropriate and effective way*."[28]

Rick James explains why it is useful to consider (cooperation with) FBOs, stating how FBOs can be of added value to development: [29]

⋯⊳ They provide efficient development services, particularly in health and education.

⋯⊳ They reach the poorest at grassroots level.

⋯⊳ They are legitimate and valued by the poorest. Faith is a key aspect of cultural identity and well-being.

⋯⊳ They provide an alternative to a secular theory of development. Faith based organisations don't focus exclusively on economic development, but also bring in questions of values and meaning.

⋯⊳ They elicit motivated voluntary service.

⋯⊳ They encourage *civil society* advocacy. Religious institutions can have an influential voice in the village and in the nation.

⋯⊳ They have a long-term sustainable presence.

In addition to these seven advantages, says James, FBOs have three less obvious spiritual advantages:

⋯⊳ Spiritual teaching. Faith teaching emphasises some critical development principles, such as justice, compassion, reconciliation, and stewardship.

⋯⊳ Hope, meaning and purpose. Values and attitudes must change for development – and values and attitudes are the core business of religion.

⋯⊳ Transcendental power. This divine power energises human spirits and many believe development goes beyond human effort.

The extent to which FBOs are able to realise these advantages depends on the mutual relations between FBOs and local denominations. The afore-mentioned advantages are within easy reach if FBO and local religious community enjoy a strong institutional bond or relationship. [30]

Some FBOs prefer to work independently of local religious communities, as cooperating too closely can have its disadvantages. These disadvantages firstly have to do with the nature of religion, says James: [31]

[28] Antje Kamminga, "Church-related organisations and development work. Assessing capacity and comparative advantage" (Master's thesis Radboud University Nijmegen, *Post-academic programme in international development*, year unknown).

[29] Rick James, "Handle with care: Engaging with faith-based organisations in development" (2010), 2-5. This article will be published in *Development in practice*. Go to www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/625/Handle-With-Care-Engaging-with-faith-based-organisations.pdf.

[30] Kamminga (year unknown).

[31] Rick James (2010), 7.

- ⋯▷ Religion can be divisive – a rallying point for division and conflict

- ⋯▷ Religion can be regressive – maintaining (if not indeed promoting) injustices such as slavery, colonialism, apartheid, caste and gender inequalities.

- ⋯▷ Religion can be irrelevant – development being an autonomous technical discipline, about which 'otherworldly' religion has nothing valuable to say

- ⋯▷ Religion can be proselytising – seeking to convert others to their faith (see page ...)

Not only the nature of religion can be disadvantageous, so can the way in which religious organisations are organised. In 1998 James and a number of colleagues drew up an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of Christian church-affiliated institutes. According to them, these institutes have a great amount of potential added value and are a source of useful qualities; however, at the same time their organisational capacity often contains weaknesses. [32] Some examples:

- ⋯▷ Churches are frequently part of a wider national and/or international church community in which it takes a long time to make decisions. Consequently, development cooperation is not very effective.

- ⋯▷ Many people often work for the organisation on a temporary basis. They are usually volunteers who have little knowledge of setting up and implementing development projects.

- ⋯▷ The church organisations focus on members of their own religious community, only barely influencing regional or national structures. Consequently, they usually do not provide very structural development.

When cooperating with FBOs, you must be alert to both the negative and the positive sides of a religious organisation. According to Henk Tieleman and Ward Berenschot the two sides cannot be considered as separate entities, mainly because struggles for power are always involved in religious relationships. Considering that religion is closely linked to other areas in social life, those power relationships figure not only within the religious community, but in all of society.
Furthermore, it is important that you carefully consider the organisation you will cooperate with. For instance, you can narrow your perspective if you focus only on moderate religious movements. You can then run the risk of overlooking large groups. Tieleman and Berenschot advise you not to be deterred by orthodox movements or organisations, because, they argue, if you don't take that opportunity, fundamentalist groups will. [33]

To avoid unwelcome situations, collect sufficient information from the following sources:

- ⋯▷ The organisation itself: Check which religious ideas there are and who consider them to be an obstacle. Also ask the opinion of your cooperation partner when faced with a difficult situation.

- ⋯▷ Local or regional academics: A joint intellectual effort can clarify a lot and can provide an improved basis for new decisions.

- ⋯▷ Stimulate cooperation within networks of religious organisations and leaders. By cooperating, they are obliged to overcome certain mutual differences.

[32] Liz Goold et. al. (1998). Churches and organisation development in Africa. Directions and dilemmas for northern NGOs. *INTRAC & CORAT*.

[33] Ward Berenschot & Henk Tieleman, "Religie als instrument? Over de desecularisering van de ont- wikkelingssamenwerking" (Relgion as an instrument? On the desecularisation of development cooperation"), *Religie & Samenleving* (Religion & Society) 4, no. 3 (2009).

As a Dutch development organisation you are always in a political position. That position increases the more you restrict yourself to certain religious groups. Beware of that. For example, many Iraqi refugees, among whom comparatively many Christians, live in Syria. They often find themselves in a tight corner: they cannot go back to Iraq, but where else can they go?

What can Syrian churches, that provide emergency relief, do? They provide some help for Muslims, but they cannot carry out their programmes for thiry Muslims and four Christians; because then Muslim parties will accuse them of proselytism. However, if they focus on four Muslims and thirty Christians, Western donors will reproach them for caring only about their own crowd. It's a diabolic dilemma. So Dutch donor organisations must tread lightly. But then, can you still do what you set out to do?

You want to stand up for discriminated minorities and support a certain group in getting ahead. But it's a complex reality where religion is concerned.

(Kerk in Actie employee)

Questions for debate

┅┅▸ Is the religious or the secular nature of an organisation the deciding factor for your organisation when assessing a (partner) application? Why is it/isn't it?

┅┅▸ Does the identity of the (partner) organisation exclude (groups of) people, intentionally or unintentionally? If so, how? What do you do when a certain situation occurs?

┅┅▸ Is it always wrong to exclude certain groups? Isn't it efficient or logical at times to focus specifically on a certain (religious) target group?

---

2   Religious-empathic dialogue

The World Bank and the fight against HIV/Aids

The fight against HIV/Aids is an example of a topic about which religious communities and development organisations strongly differ. Some religious groups get annoyed at Western donor organisations who advocate the use of contraceptives to prevent infection. They believe contraceptives will promote sex before and outside of marriage and argue in favour of celibacy. This, in turn, annoys other development organisations who say that religious organisations are not emphatic enough in their moral protest to tackle this huge problem effectively.
Both the United Nations and the World Bank realise the importance of cooperating with religious communities to combat HIV/Aids. In May 2003 the World Bank organised a workshop in Addis Ababa for Christian and Islamic relief workers from East Africa. They were taught how to obtain funding from the

World Bank Aids Fund. The workshop clearly highlighted the differences in objectives and methods between religious groups and the World Bank. The manner in which the Aids programmes of the religious representatives were organised and administered was found to be far removed from modern management methods, as small religious communities often accept the help of volunteers, many of whom do not work very quickly or efficiently. But above all, it emerged that Aids was just one aspect of their programmes, their main goal being a spiritual and pastoral one: personal contact and people's trust came first.
The World Bank argued in favour of combining and professionalising the strengths of the communities, but the participants did not seem to be prepared to do so, fearing that too much bureaucracy would cost them their

flexibility. They were also afraid that their personal approach would come under pressure.

Despite the differences of opinion on the controversial subject of HIV/Aids, the workshop ultimately resulted in collaboration between religious leaders in Africa, the World Bank and the *UN Population Fund*. Since then, programmes centred on advising and on the empowerment of women have been implemented.
"*Cooperation efforts like this can only be achieved if all parties are prepared to acknowledge that their solution is not the total solution to the problem*," said Wendy Tyndale during her speech for the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development.[34]

---

[34] Wendy Tyndale. Speech during the *Religion and Development* conference on the establishment of the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development, The Hague, 3 November 2004.

[35] Maria Martens. Speech during a meeting of Over de Dijk, organised by the Eduardo Frei Foundation, Amsterdam, 13 December 2008. Martens is a former member of the European Parliament for the CDA (Dutch Christian Democrat political party).

Empathy is a key quality that all Dutch development workers should have. We particularly stress **religious empathy**, sympathy and sensitivity with respect to religion. Religion is an integral part of many people's daily life, so it is important that development workers develop a feeler for this. Maria Martens, former member of the European Parliament for the CDA (Dutch Christian Democratic political party), formulated this as follows: "*If you want to cooperate with each other, you cannot disregard what the other considers sacred.*" [35]
The following paragraphs explain what religious empathy is, how religious dialogue can be put into practice, why this dialogue is so important and what values and attitudes it entails.

What?
Religious empathy means that you have attention and respect for what religion signifies to your partner (organisation). It also means that you understand how religion figures within the context in which you are working (together).
Most of the employees of development organisations we interviewed said there is a difference between 'knowledge of' and 'empathy for' religion. Lack of knowledge is no problem, because you can brush up on this. Feelings and empathy are a different matter, they said, because religious empathy is much more about character traits. The employees used words like 'click', 'change' and 'intellectual maturity' to explain that it takes more to acquire religious empathy than simply taking a course. Still, a combination of knowledge and empathy is necessary.

How?

When you want to conduct a religious-empathic conversation, bear the following in mind:

···⟩ Pay specific attention to the role of religion within the context in which you work.

···⟩ Have respect for your partner organisation's persuasion.

···⟩ Consider the partner organisation as being a part of its society.

···⟩ Be honest about your personal convictions.

❝ It's a matter of how you perceive your partner. Do you consider him purely as someone who implements the projects he submits to you or do you see him as a part of his society? 90% of the population in the countries where we operate is religious. And if they are not religious, their world view is based on religious knowledge, images and practice. The point is, you have to have a feeling for that.❞
(Cordaid employee)

❝ You have to be honest towards your partner, even if you are not religious. But you have to let him feel that you understand his belief. You have to show that you can talk about religion. You have to have time and religious empathy in order to discuss it. You have to make time and empathy has to grow. People have to sense that you are understanding. ❞
(Cordaid employee)

Religious empathy grows by experience. You might be a religious empathic because you are religious yourself, or because you have experienced real-life situations that demonstrated the importance of religion.

Why?

There are various reasons why religious empathy is important:

···⟩ It helps you do your work properly, regardless of if you work for a secular or a religious development organisation.

···⟩ You need it to build up a good relationship with partner organisations.

···⟩ It makes you alert in your context analysis to certain points that require attention which you otherwise possibly would not have considered as relevant.

···⟩ Religious beliefs concerning the 'good life' can enrich the discussion on the objective of your development activities and the resources you use.

···⟩ You are better able to recognise and acknowledge the identity of the partner organisation.

···⟩ It will enable you to recognise and acknowledge underlying beliefs and ideas. This is also important when working with secular organisations and employees, and in the event of issues that initially do not seem to have anything to do with religion.

···⟩ You will generate (more) knowledge. This knowledge is required, for example, for properly assessing situations, projects, joint ventures or conversing.

···⟩ Ideas about the 'good life' can only be exchanged when you interact with each other. This exchange becomes productive when you project yourself into each other's beliefs and world view. Empathic dialogue becomes 'religious-empathic' when you make room in the dialogue for the vision of the 'good life' from a religious perspective.

Associated values and attitudes

Religious empathy entails a number of values:

···▸ Trust
···▸ Understanding
···▸ Openness
···▸ Equality

It is also important that you adopt the following attitudes:

···▸ Be open to others and their backgrounds
···▸ Be honest about your own belief
···▸ Dot not judge in haste
···▸ Do not exaggerate
···▸ Be curious, but not naïve
···▸ Stay true to yourself

Points requiring attention

···▸ Religious empathy can mean that an organisation makes 'instrumental' use of religion.

Religious empathy can also mean that you are freed from an instrumental approach, because you make more room for your partner's outlook.

❨ The argumentation sometimes is: We use religious actors because they have large scores of supporters. We can deploy them for achieving Millennium goal number X. That's what they may think, but reality will soon catch up with them. ❩
(Cordaid employee)

···▸ Religious empathy is not the same as religious sympathy. It is not a question of considering your own belief better than the other person's. You should be able to convey religion as a phenomenon, but you do not need to agree with it.

···▸ Religious empathy does not mean per se that you concern yourself with the religious belief in a contextual sense.

···▸ You need time for religious-empathic dialogue.

❨ Besides several other requirements, time is the most important ingredient because you simply cannot build up a relation in the first, second or third meeting. Time is pivotal in the quality of the relationship and that quality is essential for giving attention to religion. ❩
(Cordaid employee)

❨ It was difficult to communicate with a group of Buddhist monks in Cambodia because they did not speak French. So I started to learn their language. Six months later and to my utter amazement one of them suddenly started speaking French to me. I didn't appreciate that at first, because they had simply played dumb! But the monk explained: 'We first had to know whether you are good at heart.' I can understand that, from their perspective. They see so many development workers passing by! So you have to persevere, whereas there isn't enough time for that in the way we work nowadays. ❩
(ICCO employee)

···▸ Problems can arise when an employee who has no religious empathy must decide on a possible partner organisation.

···▸ Nowadays you have to be able to measure the results of development cooperation projects. Religious organisations are good at reinforcing a society's 'social fabric', but it is hard to quantify the output of this work. Therefore, it is difficult to get funding for it.

···▸ Religious-empathic dialogue can be politically sensitive.

❝ I don't think there is a more sensitive topic than religion. You can't broach this subject until there is real mutual trust. Do not underestimate the role of religion, particularly when religion is used as a political instrument. ❞

(Cordaid employee)

⋯⋗ As a Dutch outsider you are not always allowed to enter into religious dialogue.

❝ Religious leaders do not always have an interest in telling you what they really think about certain matters in the first, second or third meeting. ❞

(Cordaid employee)

⋯⋗ The donor organisation is often (too) quick to focus on reporting its results. Consequently, how the partner organisation connects with target groups in the community remains underexposed.

❝ Our work is highly 'financialised'. We have detailed directives for handling finances, reports, etc. So that's what we focus our attention on, because that's what we are evaluated on. ❞

(ICCO employee)

❝ Kerk in Actie (Church in Action) provided an extensive programme in Indonesia to train people to become 'motivators', after which they were deployed in churches to help others escape poverty. It was a very accessible job. The motivators did work that others could not do. But the problem was that they did not show up in the 'normal programmes', nor did their results. Financing for the project therefore ceased.
New approaches will never be able to succeed this way because their results can only become evident and can only be measured over the long term. This is also true for other organisations, but it is a more common occurrence in religious organisations, especially because their work is so accessible. ❞

(Kerk in Actie employee)

3 Language domains: How do you communicate with each other?

The way you conduct a dialogue, literally the words you use, is an important factor in development cooperation. In many instances, the status of the person you speak with influences the conversation. Take, for instance, position, authority, experience, gender, cultural and religious background. The influence of the language you use is discussed below.

Development professionals often occupy an intricate position in discussions. They must assess the positions of the interested parties (*stakeholders*) in the political, social, cultural and religious fields. They must also be aware of 'symbolic languages'. After all, the symbolic language of the (conversation) partner(s) can differ from yours. So it is essential that you try to understand each other's symbolic language. It helps to keep you from reacting too strongly to certain religiously or ideologically charged words.

We define four symbolic 'language domains'. In practice, these are often muddled:

···⟩ The language domain of Shared Tradition
···⟩ The language domain of Shared Values
···⟩ The language domain of Big Words
···⟩ The language domain of Human Rights

Each text on one particular language domain is concluded with at least one debate question.

3a The language domain of Shared Tradition

Speaking in metaphors and making references to holy texts is strongly embedded in religious tradition. An important notion in the Christian dialogue tradition is, for example, that all people are created in God's image. A reference to a religious text or a certain image can break down barriers between people. This is particularly true when the conversation partner comes from the same religious tradition as you.

Everything is based on respect for each other's authenticity. The background you share provides opportunities for remaining in dialogue, because you refer to the same source. It is a challenge for all parties within the shared framework to start talking about it. That is also the art of dialogue: to know where you stand and where you come from and being curious about the other person. That is why we organise dialogues on specific topics, such as sexuality and male-female relations in Africa. The Christian belief takes a different perspective, especially as regards HIV/Aids.
(ICCO employee)

When Cordaid cooperates with Catholic organisations there is an important common denominator. You work on the basis of a shared vision. You can call people to account on that. Topics such as justice and peace belong to the teachings of the Catholic Church. So it is important to dwell with these topics even if, from a political perspective, they are considered to be very inconvenient topics. These are topics that we stand by when talking about human and individual dignity.
(Cordaid employee)

Employees of Christian development organisations come across a range of views among Christian partner organisations. The same is true for Dutch Islamic organisations and Hindu organisations. You must find a balance between these different views. At the same time you must take up the challenge to make room for dialogue within the religious traditions themselves. An example from Cordaid demonstrates how difficult it can be to deal with different beliefs even in a shared tradition:

In Colombia, Cordaid cooperates with Jesuit partners. We also cooperate with women's liberation networks there. We see it as our task to show that, based on our Catholic faith, we believe that women are equal to men and that women contribute substantially to social changes in Colombia. But we have noticed that this is a sensitive subject within the Jesuit community. We work with a radicalised feminist movement that considers the Jesuits and the Catholic Church in Colombia to be exceedingly conservative. As a Cordaid employee, you find yourself in a tricky position because we take the position that everyone should be able to join in the discourse. This also produces internal arguments between those who are standing squarely behind the feminist movements and those who work with the Jesuits.

(Cordaid employee)

The effect of a 'shared tradition' is not self-evident. An Oikos employee says:

I have a Protestant background and started up a conversation with a Dutch Protestant minister in Bolivia. I thought that my background would be an advantage, but it wasn't always the case. In her view I was 'a Christian in name' only, because I hadn't realised my sins yet. She wanted to pray with me for my salvation. I thanked her kindly but refused

(Oikos employee)

Questions for debate

⇢ In conversations with partners do you use certain religious texts or images? Which ones?

⇢ Have you ever been 'wrong' as to the effect it had?

Truth claim

In 2009, the 'Nederlands Dagblad' (a Dutch daily newspaper) printed an article headlined 'True belief obstructs development aid' in which Herman Wijffels spoke out about religion and development cooperation. [36]

"*Christian development organisations should give up their exclusive claim to the truth. Otherwise they will only stand in the way of developing the world.*" That is what Herman Wijffels, former administrator of the World Bank and architect of the present cabinet, said on Monday at a symposium of Prisma, the association of Christian development organisations. "*As long as a religion says: 'This is the way, the truth and the life', it will stand in the way and be an obstacle for develop-ment aid.*"
The problem with religions, Wijffels says, is that they have become interwoven with the identity of the believers. "*I also grew up in 'the one true faith'. That is exclusive.*" Religions and Christian development organisations alike must rise above themselves and acknowledge that the truth can be found in all beliefs, says Wijffels. "*The churches fail in that respect. They are not willing enough to seek inter-religious dialogue. And that does not help; it only produces inconvenience and complications.*"

3b The language domain of Shared Values

Considering it is difficult to speak the same language via a shared religion or a religious tradition, is it perhaps possible to reach each other via shared values? Cordaid and ICCO (involved in the KCRD and in the development of this practitioners' guide) elect to emphasise values so as to rise above the area of tension between values and truths. Not all believers exclude other philosophies of life,

36 Domestic editorial desk, "Waar geloof hindert ontwikkelingshulp" ("True belief obstructs develop-ment-aid", *Nederlands dag-blad*, 25 May 2009. Go to www.nd.nl/artikelen/2009/mei/25/-waar-geloof-hindert-ontwikkelingshulp-.

religions or persuasions. Not every believer brags that his is the only true faith. Organisations such as ICCO and Cordaid try to connect people of different backgrounds by emphasising that people share certain values that apply within religious traditions as well as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

ICCO formulated three central values based on Christian tradition: justice, compassion and stewardship. As an organisation ICCO commits itself to these values and asks its employees and partner organisations to do the same. Morover, the organisation stresses that reciprocity is crucial for entering into a discussion as equal partners.

We agreed we are a Christian organisation with three key core values: justice, compassion and stewardship. These are associated with Christian tradition, but we want to understand them very inclusively. You will find similar notions in all kinds of religious traditions.
(ICCO employee)

Cordaid also operates on the basis of three central values: human dignity, social justice and *bonum commune (the common good)*. These values are embedded in Catholic social doctrines.

Both organisations have the following motivations for speaking about values:

···> If you translate religious principles into general human values you will find similarity where philosophical or religious dogmas would stand in the way. By speaking about values, you do not confine people to an identity. Designations such as 'the Muslim' or `the Christian' assume homogeneity and unity in points of view. These kinds of labels do not demonstrate the pluriformity within these religious communities.

···> Speaking about shared values helps to find allies who strive for development. You will meet people who want to share in those values and fight for them. You will perhaps sooner find sympathisers in a discussion about values than in a discussion about religious identity.

···> When people with different backgrounds – religious or otherwise – cooperate they can agree on shared values.

Questions for debate

···> Can 'values' bridge religious differences? If so, how do can you do that in practice? Do you have any examples?

···> Which values are not 'negotiable' for you? Do they correspond to certain religious ideas?

···> If you want to speak or cooperate with religious-fundamentalist organisations that go by an absolute truth claim, does it suffice to look for shared values?

···> How do you deal with your conversation partner's truth claim? What is your own truth claim? Do the two exclude each other? When do they and when don't they?

3c The language domain of Big Words

In the Netherlands the word 'shari'a' makes some people's hair stand on end. In the Middle East the word 'democratisation' does the same. Both words evoke certain images. In a dialogue or cooperation between, for example, a Western donor and an Islamic partner organisation in the Middle East "*words may carry very different meanings between Western donors and Islamic organisations, as does 'democracy' (assumed by many Muslims to stand for arbitrary justice) and 'Islam' itself (assumed by many Westerners to be opposed to key values like democracy, women's rights and human rights),*" says Maurits Berger (Arabist and lawyer). [37]

Relative outsiders usually find it difficult to sense 'taboos' around these kinds of concepts. Berger therefore suggests that Western donors do not use certain words (in any case not in an instrumental sense) in a dialogue with a reliable Islamic partner organisation. He specifically suggests the following:

···> Avoid any taboo phrases such as 'democratisation'. Ask instead after practical matters that point to democratisation. Ask whether and how elections are held, for instance, or how leadership takes shape, etc.

···> As a non-Islamic organisation, do not use an Islamic vocabulary. You will soon be wide of the mark. There are always several interpretations that even Muslims disagree on among themselves. Anyone using these notions within the context of an Islamic-oriented environment therefore runs the considerable risk of becoming entangled in an 'ideological trench war'. [38]

···> Try to stay away from a much-used we/they paradigm. Some Islamic groups use a certain Islamic vocabulary as a vehicle for this. Berger says: "*The donor may feel compelled to enter this realm of Islamic values in order to establish contacts with its Islamic counterpart. It should*

refrain from doing so, even if the donor fully agrees with the Islamic tenets of its counterpart, because the Pavlov reaction will be that the Westerner even uses the most sacrosanct to meddle with 'our' affairs and way of life. Packaging development aid in Islamic religious wrappings will only arouse suspicion and defiance." [39]

Enter into a dialogue with Islamic organisations and movements, concludes Berger, but avoid the pitfall of 'religionising' the dialogue. People and organisations, whether 'Western' or 'Muslim', should not be identified and classified on the basis of the Islam. He sums this up in a slogan: "*Talk to them, but don't talk their talk.*" [40]

Questions for debate

···> Which words do you believe are 'taboo' in the situations you work in? To whom are they taboo and why?

···> How do you raise subjects that are actually taboo but about which you want to initiate a discussion? Take, for instance, topics like condoms and the official vision of the Roman Catholic Church on contraceptives, democratisation in the Middle East, *shari'a* and human rights.

···> What is your opinion on Berger's recommendation: "*Talk to them, but don't talk their talk*"?

[37] Maurits Berger, Religion and development aid. *The special case of Islam* (The Hague: Clingendeal Instituut, 2006), 28. Go to: www.clingendael.nl/publications/2006/20061000_cdsp_pap_berger.pdf.
[38] Berger (2006), 20.
[39] Berger (2006), 21.
[40] Berger (2006), 1.

A study into the empowerment of orthodox Muslim women

Saba Mahmood (professor of socio-cultural anthropology) carried out influential research into the *empowerment* of pious Islamic women in Egypt. In this research she shows how pious Muslim women from a middle class district in Cairo give Islam a place in their daily lives. The traditions from Islam, the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet are important to them. At the same time they keep up with modern times. In her research, Mahmood gives these pious women the opportunity to respond, as it were, to those who consider them as being oppressed women. This way she strives to overturn a prevailing attitude: instead of giving an opinion on these women, they give their own perception of themselves.
The capability of these women comes to the fore instead of the standard image of oppression: they act consciously, are individuals in their social environment. The Western-liberal notion of emancipation is basically normative, says Mahmood. [41]

American researchers Dalia Mogamed and John Esposito show that many Muslim women cherish their belief and their rights. They conclude on the basis of their extensive research that Muslim women admire certain aspects of the Western world, but that they do not want to fully adopt Western values. The majority of the Muslim women they interviewed do not consider gender to be the most urgent issue, but political and economic development. Mogamed and Esposito point out that it often arouses suspicion when Westerners stand up for women's rights. They associate it with colonialism and Western imperialism, for instance.[42]

Mogamed and Esposito believe that, "*from a strategic point of view, [it is] dangerous to consider women's rights in the Muslim world as a struggle between Islam and the Western emancipatory views of equality. It disempowers the women and those who support them, bringing only more power to the people who are against women's rights because they oppose the Western hegemony. For many Muslim women there is no antagonism whatsoever between the belief they cherish and the rights they should have. Islam is considered essential for progress and not at all as an obstacle in this process. Therefore, every attempt towards more equality between the sexes should make use of existing cultural and religious frameworks, which grant women the desired rights, instead of eliminating them.*" [43]

The authors recommend: "*If you want to help Muslim women improve their situation, the first step is to question the presumption that their religious teachings are the main cause of the social fight that women must put up.*" They argue that "*we must realise that Islam has a tradition of sex equality*". And that "*we must be aware of the nuances within Islamic legislation and the different debates that are conducted within Islam.*" [44]

---

[41] Saba Mahmood, Politics of piety. *The Islamic revival and the feminist subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[42] Dalia Magomed & John Esposito, *Wie spreekt namens de islam? Wat een miljard moslims werkelijk denken* (Who speaks on behalf of Islam? What a billion Muslims truly think) (Haarlem: De Wereld, 2008), 127.

[43] Magomed & Esposito (2008), 124-125.

[44] Magomed & Esposito (2008), 125.

3d The language domain of Human Rights

The pivotal mainstay of Dutch development cooperation is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is a crucial basic principle. The universality of human rights is one of the cornerstones that unites people in a global society and enables them to fight for the rights of every human being. People can count on others fighting for their rights, irrespective of the political situation in their country. With this declaration as a starting point people's background and descent are of no importance; on the contrary.

The Declaration of Human Rights was formulated in 1948 after meetings with delegates of all world religions. Therefore, people from all religions would be able to appeal to this declaration. In recent years authoritarian political regimes and fundamentalist religious movements in particular often consider the Universal Human Rights to be more of a Western 'invention'. In the view of Hindu-nationalist movements in India, evangelical groups in Latin America and Africa and Islamists in Muslim countries, for instance, the declaration is an instrument of the imperialistic, anti-religious West.

As a Dutch development professional, you might have to deal with opposing views of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in your conversations with partner organisations. The first question you may ask yourself is: How do I handle any criticism of the Declaration? Some practical recommendations:

⋯⟩ Refer to the roots of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These rights were not drawn up based on Western ideas but rather on the notion that all people around the world should be able to coexist.

⋯⟩ Don't be on the defensive, talk calmly and choose your words carefully.

⋯⟩ During the debate, do not reinforce the opponent's feeling that 'the Western world', by pleading the Declaration of Human Rights, feels it is superior to the rest of the world.

⋯⟩ Consider human rights to be universal but not uniform. [45]

⋯⟩ Take the 'process approach' in which human rights are understood to be the outcome of a dialogue between parties.

⋯⟩ Do not go along with a (culture) relativistic approach that whitewashes oppressing (religious) ideas and practices.

⋯⟩ Do not take a dogmatic approach to human rights. [46]

The second question you might ask yourself is what difficulties you might encounter when your (potential) partner organisation accepts some but not all human rights. In the example of the rights of homosexuals provided at the beginning of this chapter, the following solution is put forward: "*If you do not couple the language of human rights to the religious perception of many Africans, then it remains a Western thing, something from the outside, and so it gets lost.*"

The third question is how you can find a new approach without abandoning the principles of human rights.

❨ We used to consider things mainly from a human rights point of view. It didn't matter whether the poor, marginalised people were Christians or Muslims. We viewed all of them from the same point of view, often focusing on the state: what responsibilities does the state have and what rights do the citizens have? Nowadays we wonder whether focusing on the state and the laws is the right approach. We and our partners have spent a lot of time on this approach over the years. The laws are partly in place but hardly anything has actually changed. So the question is: what should we do? How can we mobilise people? The human rights perspective obviously falls short. In the knowledge programme of Hivos in India we are working on another approach with groups who identify themselves as being 'religious'. With them, we debate about moral values and about the ability to mobilise people to improve their own living conditions.❩

(Hivos employee)

Questions for debate

⋯⟩ Have you ever been in a situation that your conversation partner interpreted universal human rights as a dominant 'Western discourse' or a 'Western language'? If so, what did you think or do? And do you understand why your partner reacted that way?

45 Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken, De invloed van cultuur en religie op ontwikkeling. *Stimulans of stagnatie*? (The influence of culture and religion on development. Stimulus or stagnation?) (The Hague: Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (Advisory Board on International Issues), 2005).

46 The last three recommendations in this list are by lawyer and political scientist Barbara Oomen, "Mensenrechten zijn nog veel te westers" ("Human rights are still far too Western"), *De Volkskrant*, 18 February 2006. Go to www.roac.nl/roac/_files/ publications%20oomen/ Mensenrechten%20nog% 20veel%20te%20westers% 20vk.pdf.

Religious education

The importance of education for development is beyond dispute. Therefore, many Dutch development organisations have given priority to supporting education for many years now. Already in colonial times, Western religious networks, including churches, set up educational projects all over the world.
It is, however, not easy to determine which types of education qualify most for support. In many developing countries, especially fragile countries, the state finds it difficult to provide quality education. Non-governmental religious organisations have traditionally provided education, frequently also accessing groups that are usually difficult to reach, such as children from the poorest families, disabled children, girls and nomads. Most parents prefer this kind of education to state education. Possible reasons for this are the quality of the education, the accessibility of the schools, the parents' faith in them, and the religious values they teach.

A number of dilemmas can arise when Dutch development organisations support religious schools, such as *madrasahs* (Islamic schools). Education is more than just the transfer of knowledge (*Lehren*); it is also about formation (*Bildung*) and passing on moral values. In its desire to pass on religious morals, a religious school might perpetuate certain unwelcome traditional patterns. The reinforcement of traditional gender relations, denying boys and girls equal opportunities, is frequently taken as an example. Some religious schools have a proselytistic objective or encourage intolerance towards dissidents. These attitudes are precisely what Western organisations want to discourage instead of reinforce.

Oxfam Novib works with madrasahs because they have no alternative. Oxfam Novib's premise is as follows: if a madrasah is the only available education and people therefore send their children to the Islamic school, we must consider what the most effective approach is to teaching these children. The madrasahs in Senegal, for example, are a good starting point for schooling. If necessary, our partner organisations enter into dialogue with these madrasahs to improve their quality. We notice that religion plays a major role in public life in many countries. If you do not accept that, you shut out a considerable part of social life. Our considerations should not be about what is religious and what is not. Instead, we should consider whether the local initiatives enable us to reach the goals we consider important for development.
(OxfamNovib employee)

Each development organisation decides for itself which types of education they will support. In the *Hand-out. Religion and development policy* the Knowledge Forum Religion and Development Policy makes recommendations with respect to dilemmas concerning cooperating with religious schools: [47]

⋯▸ Do not reject these practices straight away, but try to understand and dialogue about the underlying vision of human wholeness and fears of loss of traditional values. Some of these organisations feel the need to defend their values against the perceived threat of modernisation. Others zealously wish to save souls in order to achieve a new social order. All of them, in one way or another are a response to modernisation processes. Their fears and values should be acknowledged (not necessarily agreed with) as a first step to creating an opening for further discussion about how to prepare children effectively for participation in a rapidly changing society.

⋯▸ Avoid the pitfall of cultural relativism, meaning that all cultures and religions have their own values that should be respected. While cultural-religious diversity is a great good, discriminatory practices or harmful hate messages should not be tolerated. Such practices need to be confronted, preferably by forces from within the society or religion concerned, with global standards of human dignity and rights.

⋯▸ As concerns gender sensitivity, it is important to identify and assess which explicit or implicit messages *faith-based* schools transfer about gender roles and responsibilities. The key question here is whether the education contributes to the freedom of choice and *empowerment* of girls (and boys), and if it does so in a culturally appropriate way. Sewing lessons for girls, for example, may look rather old-fashioned to Westerners, but they have proven to be *empowering* since they give the girls access to skills and a potential source of income in a culturally acceptable fashion.

footing with other religions? This ratio determines how the school incorporates its religious identity into its curriculum. It also determines what possibilities a school has within society and its political and social institutes.

- Collect information on:
  - The accessibility of education for pupils of various religious backgrounds.
  - The tolerance towards and the respect for different religious traditions, the attitude towards conversion. Find out among other things whether it is possible not to attend religious classes.
  - Gender sensitivity. Note explicit as well as implicit messages concerning gender roles and associated responsibilities.

This information can help you distinguish such things as the official policy (*reflected level*), the presentation of a school in public (*spoken level*) and the way in which the subject matter is discussed in class (*experienced level*).

- Draw up a long-term support strategy for *faith-based* education, defining what strategy your organisation follows to strengthen the entire educational sector – both public education as well as private education – in that region. This strategy depends, among other things, on the condition of the state: fragile, relatively stable or stable.

- Investigate how *faith-based* schools relate to the formal and informal organisational structures and power relations in the community. Also find out where the funds come from.

- Where *faith-based* schools belong to faith institutions, one should be aware that power relations also play a significant role. Investigate how religious politics influences educational policy and education in practice. This can be the case, for instance, when a school is given financial support and in return must meet requirements as regards the content of the lessons or hiring staff. For a better understanding, discuss this with a partner organisation.

- Find out how religion and state interrelate with respect to education. Does the government recognise religious schools? Is the government involved in (the content of) the curriculum? How does the state support *faith-based* schools? Perhaps by paying

teachers' salaries, or for course material or school buildings?
- *Representation*: Does the religious institution which is responsible for contacts with the government represent various religious denominations (like a Council of Churches) or one single denomination? And to what extent does the institution represent grassroots religious organisations?
  - *Professionalism*: Does the institution have specialised staff with expertise in education?

- Distinguish between the various contexts within which *faith-based* schools operate. Is the religion concerned a minority or a majority in the school or is it on an equal

More reading material

Go to the digital documentation centre at **www.religion-and-development.nl** for case studies, analyses, training manuals and other relevant documentation.

For more information on the empowerment of women:

⤏ Jacqueline Ogega & Erin McNamara, eds., *Restoring dignity. A toolkit for religious communities to end violence against women* (New York: Religions for peace, 2009). Go to http://religionsforpeace.org/file/resources/toolkits/restoring-dignity-toolkit.pdf.

For more information on faith-based organisations:

⤏ Rick James, "What is distinctive about FBOs? How European FBOs define and operationalise their faith" *INTRAC* 22 (2009).

⤏ Rick James, "Handle with care: Engaging with faith-based organisations in development" (2010). This article will be published in *Development in practice*. Go to www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/625/Handle-With-Care-Engaging-with-faith-based-organisations.pdf.

⤏ Antje Kamminga, "Church-related Organisations and Development Work. Assessing Capacity and Comparative Advantage" (Master's thesis Radboud University Nijmegen, based on traineeship research at ICCO and Kerk in Actie, no year).

For more information on the language domain of Big Words:

⤏ Maurits S. Berger, *Religion and development aid. The special case of Islam* (The Hague: Clingendael Institute, 2006). Go to www.clingendael.nl/publications/2006/20061000_cdsp_pap_berger.pdf.

For more information on the secular language domain of Human Rights:

⤏ Rights and development group, *Rights-based development from a faith-based perspective* (Aprodev, 2008). Go to www.aprodev.eu/files/Development_policy/Dev-RBA/Rights-Position-Paper_E-2008.pdf.

For more information on religion and education:

⤏ Dennis de Jong et al, "Religion and education" in *Handout. Religion and development policy*, ed Dennis de Jong et al (Utrecht, Knowledge Forum on Religion and Development Policy, 2008): 16-26.

---

47 Dennis de Jong et al., *Handout. Religion and development policy* (Utrecht: Knowledge Forum Religion and Development Policy, 2008), 22-25.

V
Know yourself

The big question is: What mobilises people? And belief mobilises. Not always for the better, but in Latin America it generally does, I think. There are groups, like Indians, landless people and farmers, who need their spiritual dimension in order to be able to offer resistance and to keep themselves on their feet. They know that: there is someone on our side, we are not alone. 'If we are pushed aside into oblivion, we as the poor can still keep our dignity thanks to our spirituality.'

That, to me, is a very essential aspect of development. We don't pay enough attention to it in our analyses and decision-making. We can only focus on it when we as an organisation can and want to solve it. We in the Western world have reduced belief and spirituality to the private domain. Social movements in Latin America give religion a natural place in the semi-public domain. There is usually no room for religious experience in our organisation, as we are judged by our results. If we do not show results, we are lost

(ICCO employee)

The above quotation shows that it takes some effort to be receptive to the positive sides of religion: you have to want to see them. But your organisation must also recognise the positive effects and then make room for them, as the 'measurement culture' usually does not allow for. In development cooperation, a clear perception of religion is relevant for three related reasons:

⋯▸ Everyone has a philosophy of life. Consciously or unconsciously, it influences the way people think about, experience and act upon things. This is also true in international development cooperation. Are religion and faith something that belong to 'those others in the South', whilst in the West we have a secular, scientific and neutral view of the world? And do we approach development cooperation with that same neutrality?

The question is, of course, whether this neutral view is at all possible. Every philosophical view influences Dutch development organisations' outlook on development and what they aim for. Therefore, you first need to look 'within' before looking 'out': *no outreach without inreach*. Only then can you become aware of your own (religious) identity.

⋯▸ Once you have become aware of your own identity, discover how you differ from or correspond to the identity of your cooperation partner or target group. This will give you an insight into your own beliefs and motives as well as into those of others.

⋯▸ When you know how much your own ideas differ from or correspond to those of your partner, you can adjust your attitude and behaviour to that. What do you tell or not tell your cooperation partner about your own philosophy of life? Do you keep it to yourself that you are not religious or practice a different religion?

The above three points are discussed in more detail below.

1   No outreach without inreach

Without introspection, no attention can be paid to religion in projects in the South. First find out for yourself how you think, act and react and what identity your organisation has. Only then can you say something about how others think, act and react or should think, act and react.

The participants in the first conference organised by the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development in 2005, summed this up in the slogan '*no outreach without inreach*'. *Inreach* stands for the reflection on your own identity and that of your organisation. *Outreach* refers to the attention for religion in a certain situation, community or region.

Development cooperation should not concern only the view of the donor organisation or the Western notion of development. A Hivos employee says the following in this respect: "*Lately, we have been discussing more frequently whether our view of reality is still correct. By raising this question, more room can be created for cooperation with new organisations, including religious organisations.*"

In any case, there are two reasons for taking a closer look at yourself first before discussing other people:

···▸ Western donor organisations undoubtedly have good intentions, but you must realise that not everyone in the South is itching for aid or cooperation. Some consider development cooperation as a contemporary form of Western imperialism. Various social-religious movements in the South therefore resist it.

The slogan '*no outreach without inreach*' is a call to take a critical look at yourself.
Is it (still) the interests of the people in the South that count or is it your own interests? Don't just ask yourself whether we are doing the right things, but also whether we are doing them correctly.

We have to get off our high horse. We don't do things any better in the West than in other societies. We don't represent the best values. Pointing our finger does not produce a dialogue. Our accusing finger is no longer accepted.
(Cordaid employee)

···▸ In her book entitled *Vision of Development* Wendy Tyndale quotes sociologist Kurt Alan Verbeek. Verbeek suggests that many development professionals avoid the topic of religion out of respect for local culture and for fear of imposing their own views. However, Tyndale states that withholding your own view might appear to be condescending: you evidently consider your view superior to those of the other. [48]

In the Western world people strongly believe that religion is unscientific and ultimately cannot be sustained from a rational point of view. This opinion is constantly fed to us, either consciously or unconsciously, Tyndale contends. Whether you are religious or not, you must be aware of your own view of the world. Only then can you put it aside – in any case for just a while – and listen with a more or less open mind to what moves the other party and what that other party considers desirable.

You are never unbiased. Our organisation realises that now. But even if you are never impartial, you can still clearly choose to build bridges. This may sound simplistic, but in fact it is very difficult. You can and are allowed to build those bridges as an outsider. Go for it. To make social changes in the country it is essential that you listen to various debates. Make it clear that it doesn't help if everyone stands on their own dignity. Our organisation provides an opportunity for dialogue, for building bridges,

48 Wendy Tyndale (ed.), *Visions of development. Faith-based initiatives* (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 167.

for establishing relations. There are always people within partner organisations who dare to step outside their own comfort zone. I believe it is your task as an organisation to support them. 💬

Questions for debate

···▸ Does your organisation have a religious identity (Catholic, Protestant, Humanist, Islamic, Hindu or else)? What does this religious identity mean to you?

···▸ In your opinion, how does the identity of your organisation translate into policy? And how does the religious character manifest itself in your daily practices?

2   Seeking similarities

Corrie van der Ven, public relations officer at Kerk in Actie (Church in Action), lived in Indonesia from 2001 to 2006. The Protestantse Kerk Nederland (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) posted her to the Theological Seminary for East Indonesia in Massakar. She wrote an article on this for *Tussenruimte*, a magazine on intercultural theology. [49]

"The difference in religious identity was generally no issue when I lectured in Makassar. It helps that, unlike in the Netherlands, one's religious identity is not so obvious in Indonesia. Religion is only a part of your identity. Anyway whether being Muslim or Christian, people are never the same. You can have much more contact with some Muslims than with others. The same is true for Christians: you might share a lot with one and nothing with the other. And so it can happen that you have a better understanding with a certain Muslim than with a certain Christian. I learned from the Indonesians that our identity cannot be reduced to only one aspect. And that identities are not solidified. Our identity is made up of a multitude of facets. And they change over the years.

I also learned that identities are manipulated. Sometimes people deliberately put unilateral or solidified or disqualifying labels on others. Our colleagues call that identity politics: conscious labelling to exclude or include people, and all for their own political or financial gain. Does the Muslim exist? Does the Christian exist? Or the Dutchman? No, of course not. Whoever says so, commits identity politics and tries to exclude people.

The opposite of this is pluralism. It does not stand for relativism, but for hybridity. As an individual we have a hybrid, mixed identity and should not be pinned down to only one facet of our identity."

Only when we are aware of our different (religious) identities (*inreach*) can we tell on which points our philosophy of life differs from or corresponds to those of our cooperation partners or target groups (*outreach*). We can then also understand how our own beliefs and motives influence our behaviour in international cooperation.

Questions for debate

···▶ Has your organisation explicitly formulated its core values?

···▶ If so, what is your opinion of those principles?

···▶ How do you put those principles into practice?

···▶ What skills do you need for that?

[49] Corrie van de Ven, "Is er een rol voor christelijke zendelingen in Azië?" (Is there a place for Christian missionaries in Asia?"), *Tussenruimte, tijdschrift voor interculturele theologie* (intercultural theology magazine) 2010, no. 1 (2010): 25-31.

3   Behaviour and attitude

Once you know how much your philosophies of life correspond to those of your cooperation partner, you can start making choices. What do or don't you tell your partner organisation? How do you behave when you are in the company of your cooperation partner? Answers to these questions can greatly influence how you work together.

⟨ Certain public relations matters get easier as you grow older. I was a young woman when I was first sent to the African bishops. I was already written off before I began. It didn't matter what I had to say. That was very irritating ⟩
(ICCO employee)

⟨ As a public relations officer for Kerk in Actie (Church in Action) I am often involved in local projects, but the partners prefer to talk between one synod and another. Someone like me is 'only' a public relations officer, a 'small fry' in the whole. I am not a theologian, not a clergyman or preacher and moreover I am a woman. You automatically learn how to cope with that. In any case, it is important to know your partner's thoughts ⟩
(Kerk in Actie employee)

Every country and every situation has its own cultural dos and don'ts. These can influence the relationship between you and your partner. For example, being a female employee can be an obstacle. The employees quoted above were not daunted by this and dealt with it as best they could.

Acting contrary to cultural or religious customs can produce precarious situations. It is not always clear what the best or correct way to act is. Several NGO employees we interviewed for this book provided some practical *dos and don'ts*.

Most *dos and don'ts* and dilemmas relate to your attitude and behaviour. Your colleagues may possibly have many more examples. To read more, share an experience or ask a question, go to **www.religion-and-development.nl/guide**.

3a   Practical dos and don'ts

⋯⟶ *"I was asked once to say a prayer before embarking on our road trip. Well, it was easier in that context, in a different language, than if I had been asked to do that here in the Netherlands. Here, I am sometimes asked to speak to church communities. These communities can be in towns you've never heard of before and where you don't really feel very much at home, especially when you're not very religious or don't frequently visit a church service."*

⋯⟶ *"If you do not want to go to church on Sundays, try to arrange for a hotel instead of staying with a family."*

⋯⟶ *"Sometimes our Latin American partners ask me to lead them in prayer before or after a meeting. That's fine with me. When you work with Kerk in Actie (Church in Action) you get used to doing that. But I can imagine there are development workers who prefer not to do this. An elegant way to 'ward this off' is to ask if someone within the partner organisation wishes to lead in prayer instead."*

⋯⟶ *"Do not smoke in public in Latin America. Especially in Pentecostal communities you have to be aware of the rule that Christians do not smoke or drink. If you do smoke, you might lose much of your esteem."*

"Do not ask a Catholic priest in public what he thinks about condoms. He will always give the standard answer as dictated by the Roman Catholic Church. In private, he might give a different opinion, though."

"When talking with taxi drivers, I simply tell them I am married and have children. I feel I can reveal much more about myself to a cooperation partner."

"I am prepared to compromise on clothing, but I cannot and will not make any concessions when it comes to my being a woman."

What do or don't you say about your own religious belief?

"Religion is the most sensitive topic I know. You can only bring it up when there is a real sense of mutual trust. If you strike the right chord with your conversation partner, you will soon reach that point in the conversation. But do not underestimate how sensitive the topic of religion can be in contexts where it is used as a political instrument."

"Don't be too hesitant to enter into a conversation about what moves you or your conversation partner, but discuss it only against a background of trust."

"It's important to initiate a conversation about religion. It would enrich our relations if we could also speak on a spiritual level about things like our motives. But you have to be trained in that, it's not something that comes naturally."

"I rely on my own intuition: it's essential to have an open mind. In my opinion this means: respecting and partly accepting."

"I distinguish between the collective notion of religion and my own spirituality. With my own understanding of the Catholic faith I can rid myself of any criticism of the Roman Catholic Church as an institution."

"If you are not religious, just honestly say so. But you do have to explain it."

"My motive is compassion, which is mainly based on humanist principles. When people in Rwanda ask me whether I am religious, I always tell them I am a Christian. What I do and what I stand by is, after all, strongly influenced by the Christian culture. I make no distinction between Catholic and Protestant. When they question me further I explain that my parents are both Catholic and that I attended Protestant schools. I also tell them that religion is no longer a strong factor in Dutch society."

How far do you go in your principles versus pragmatism?

"Stick to your own working method, but be flexible at the same time. And especially: away with cold feet! Religious organisations are ordinary organisations too. Start, for instance, by doing a standard organisational scan. Do another one if you want to find out what a bishop's role is and how far his influence extends."

"You can't really do this work if you're dogmatic. It will not do to impose your own belief upon others. You have to remain open to corrections. But you can't be entirely without principles and relativism either."

"I'll go a long way with someone in order to get an understanding of something. But it's the end of the line for me when our views are completely at odds and cooperation partners are unwilling to manage money properly. So long as partners have the same goal, seriously work towards alleviating poverty and do their best to help people take the helm, I don't care what their religious identity is."

Questions for debate

⋯▸ What do or don't you tell your cooperation partner about your own philosophy of life?

⋯▸ Should you keep it to yourself that you are not religious? Should you in all circumstances be honest about being an atheist? Or may atheists present themselves from time to time as believers to help things along? And what do you do as a Hindu in an orthodox-Christian context? Do you explain your philosophy of life to your taxi driver but not to your partner?

⋯▸ With which statement on the previous pages do you identify the most? And with which do you identify the least?

Proselytism and conversion zeal

Christian medications?!

After the tsunami in December 2004 many Christian organisations provided emergency aid in the Indonesian province of Aceh, where **99**% of the population is Muslim. Most people of Aceh did not mind at all that Christian organisations came to help, so long as the orphans and homeless were cared for in Aceh itself. The permission of the then president of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid, was also important for the population and local governments to accept Christian relief organisations.

Still, there was a certain amount of distrust. This became evident when a Western aid organisation distributed antibiotics in white boxes bearing a black cross and the word Christchurch, indicating that the medication came from the New Zealand town of the same name. That caused quite a commotion amongst the population. Was a Christian proselytic organisation aiming to poison the Muslims in Aceh? An Islamist movement used the incident to fuel distrust of Western imperialism amongst the population.

ICCO, that (like Cordaid) was working at that time as a Christian organisation in the disaster area, seized upon the incident to find out whether their partner organisations and their supporters also had feelings of distrust. The discussions quickly brought mutual acceptance and trust to light, again confirming and reinforcing their positive work relationships.

What is proselytism?

The term proselytism is used when conversion zeal is experienced as being obtrusive or aggressive. The Dutch Van Dale dictionary defines proselytism as *(aggressive) conversion zeal*. The purpose of proselytism is to convince other people that your religion is better than theirs and that they can best convert to your religion in order to be saved, to amass wealth or to secure a good afterlife. The term proselytism is always used by other people, because what some people consider to be proselytism, a believer might see as propagation.

Especially within the Christian and Muslim faiths believers are called upon to spread the word of the gospel or the revelation. The key message encouraging Christians to convert others is stated in Matthew, chapter 28, verses 18-20. Catholics and Protestants usually refer to this as a call for mission. Muslims call it *da'wah* (invitation to the faith) or *tabligh* (make known). Their inspiration can be found in the Qur'an, particularly in *Surah An-Nahl* (the Bees), chapter 16, verse 125. The interpretation of these summonses differs strongly. Some believe that it is enough for a Christian or a Muslim to practice his faith, others believe that they are called upon to convert all 'non-believers'. These differences also emerge in discussions concerning propagation or conversion.

Jacques Matthey (director of the Missionary Department of the World Council of Churches) describes the danger of proselytism, seen from a Christian perspective:

"*In terms of power, the danger of proselytism lies in the pretension of one's superiority in terms of belief, theology, ecclesiology, ethics, coupled with a denigration of other traditions and the use of political alliances to effect conversions, the offering of economic incentives for attracting people and manipulating fear through apocalyptic narratives of God's judgement.*" According to Matthey, aggressive conversion zeal involves both the use of all kinds of means as well as sowing fear of 'Judgement Day'". [50]

Those who are encouraged to convert need not always be seen as victims. Sometimes they convert to another religion for pragmatic reasons. In this respect, Wendy Tyndale says: "*De facto there are probably quite a lot of people everywhere in the world who join a church for what they can get from it, as well as for the spiritual enlightenment and strengthening it might give. [...] In Guatemala there are hundreds of women – if not thousands – who have joined Pentecostal churches in the hope that their husbands will join as well and give up drinking alcohol (although it in no way encourages alcohol consumption and denounces drunkenness, the Catholic Church does not prohibit drinking). This of course leads to 'development' in many dimensions including that of having more money to spend on the children's education.*" [51]

Accusations of proselytism

In most cases proselytism is denounced by Dutch development organisations. Still, Dutch faith-based organisations and their alliances might have to deal with a grey area between supporting religious projects and religious partners on the one hand and proselytism on the other hand.

This grey area, which can be experienced by both employees and outsiders, has to do with people's perceptions of the nature of the project or of their partner organisation. How you deal with that area depends not only on the partner organisation and the political, social, cultural and legal context, but also on yourself and your organisation.

There are various ways for FBOs to avoid any semblance of proselytism:

⇢ The first way is to throw open their activities to everyone within the local community and not only to people with the same religious background as the cooperation partner.

⇢ Secondly, it is important to ensure total openness and transparency with respect to the intentions of the organisation and its activities. An ethical code or directive can be helpful in this respect.

This code should be propagated actively. That way, organisations can clearly communicate that their intentions are pure and that their activities are not for conversion purposes. During the past few years many ethical codes have been formulated to promote mutual understanding and to provide guidelines for inter-religious dialogue and cooperation.

In some instances it is better for development organisations to ignore their religious

inspiration and to mention it only as a source of inspiration. This applies when working in areas where religions do not co-exist peacefully and where certain religions evoke negative associations.

An example is given by Seva Network Foundation: "*We do not distinguish between the religious backgrounds of our partner organisations*," says manager Radj Bhondoe. "*It is even a concern for us that we do not cooperate enough with real Hindu organisations. Hindu organisations preferably present themselves as being secular. That is ingrained in a country like India. If you tell them you are a Hindu organisation, you are almost automatically suspected to be probably anti-Muslim or anti-Christian.*
The only way to breach this is by explicitly stating that you also cooperate with organisations of other religious backgrounds, such as Muslim, Christian or Sikh. That surprises people. Our inter-religious approach proves that you can deal with religion in a creative way and that groups with different religious backgrounds can work together to alleviate poverty. If we were to cooperate only with Hindu organisations, we would have a serious problem."

Questions for debate

⋯⋯▸ What stand do you take with respect to proselytistic development organisations?

⋯⋯▸ Has your Dutch faith-inspired organisation (ever) been considered to be proselytistic?

⋯⋯▸ How do you know whether an organisation is proselytistic?

⋯⋯▸ Where do you draw the line between carrying out religious work and proselytism?

[50] Jacques Matthey, "Mission and Power". Speech during the *EEMC Meeting*, Utrecht, February 2010.
[51] Wendy Tyndale, e-mail, 28 mei 2009.

VI
Practical dilemmas

The preceding theoretical chapters can help you deal with religion in a development cooperation context. As we already mentioned in the introduction, these chapters provide no cut-and-dried solutions.
The following practical dilemmas are intended for discussion purposes. The questions after each case will help you reflect on the theories. How do you react to certain situations? How do you view religious dilemmas? And what are your priorities?

The cases 'Bart's beer', 'Nellie's neckline' and 'Prue's partner' are general dilemmas. They concern the extent to which you know your context, your (conversation) partner and yourself. The 'Matthew's Mission' case is related to the 'Religious Education' topic (see page 50).

Would you like to discuss these dilemmas or share your thoughts on them? Publish your opinion and insights on the website **www.religion-and-development.nl/guide**. The detailed pages are presented in Dutch but you can react in English.

Barts' beer

After a enervating day, a varied group of Afghan and international development workers descend on a restaurant in Kabul. Tired after the long day Bart, who is employed by a Dutch organisation as a public relations officer in Afghanistan, orders a beer. The attitude of his Afghan Muslim colleagues changes immediately. For the rest of the evening, they shut him out of the conversation. To his amazement he is also ignored by the men who he had thought to be liberal.
Later that evening, outside the restaurant, one of these men sighs that he also would have liked a beer. "Why didn't you order one?" Bart asks. "Because then I would have forfeited my credit among the more conservative people there. That's why I treated you the way I did," he explains to Bart. Bart is surprised: didn't he have every right to order a beer? After all, not being a Muslim himself, that religious rule does not apply to him.

Questions for debate

⋯⋗ What do you think of Barts' attitude? Is he right?

⋯⋗ How fundamental or pragmatic are you in making your choices?

⋯⋗ Have we gone too far in our Western non-restrictive attitude?

Nellie's neckline

Nellie, a 23-year-old student of anthropology who has just arrived in Aceh to do research, gives the Dutch public relations officer in the hotel an enthusiastic account of how she was received by an Acehnese professor. The professor had taken Nellie along to her niece's wedding. When the public relations officer encounters the professor the following day, she tells him she had been embarrassed at the wedding by Nellie's attire. She is not as direct towards Nellie, but very effective: she sends Nellie off shopping with another niece. This is her subtle way of showing Nellie that her low-necked T-shirt is not acceptable in this context, in which the shari'a vice squad monitors the women of Aceh on their clothing, which must cover the body modestly.

Prue's partner

Prue is a public relations officer for Pakistan. Her organisation wants to send her to Pakistan for two years. Prue's female life partner wants to go with her. Prue was able to hide her relationship with her wife during previous visits, but that will no longer be possible if her partner accompanies her to Pakistan. A public lesbian relationship is risky in Pakistan. Prue and her partner might become targets of blackmail or threats, for instance. The organisation is responsible for the safety of its employees and their partners or family. Although a relationship is a private matter, in Prue's case the organisation decides not to send her to Pakistan.

Questions for debate

···⇢ Can you blame Nellie for her choice of clothing?

···⇢ Should the public relations officer have made Nellie aware of her inappropriate attire?

···⇢ Do you think that Nellie's choice of clothing has any effect on the way the professor regards the public relations officer?

···⇢ Is clothing or appearance (like makeup) an individual choice or should you adapt to a collective?

···⇢ How much attention does your organisation pay to outward appearance when traveling abroad?

Questions for debate

···⇢ What do you think of the organisation's decision not to send Prue and her wife to Pakistan? Is it a paradox that you emphasise human rights on the one hand yet on the other hand you deny your employees individual rights, that which you fight for?

···⇢ Should protocols be the deciding factor for sending people to other countries or should each situation be considered separately?

···⇢ In a developing country people regularly ask about your relationship and the amount of children you have. What do you consider to be a suitable answer?

Matthew's Mission

Matthew's Mission

Matthew from Zimbabwe has come up with a plan to establish a Christian elementary school in Yao, a remote Islamic village in Zimbabwe. The children will get free education there and free lunch. Matthew says he was called upon by Jesus Christ to provide education for the children. Not only does he want to teach the children reading and writing, but he also wants to pass on the Word of God to them. In other words, evangelise them.

Matthew comes knocking on the door of a Dutch development organisation for co-financing. However, the organisation is not keen to provide funding because it fundamentally does not support 'tying', which links a development project to a religious message. Because how free are you as a child or as a parent in such a situation to keep or to choose your own religion?

Matthew says that many parents are keen to send their children to his school. Furthermore, if he does not establish the school, the children will get no education and no lunch either, which is essential considering the serious economic crisis in Zimbabwe. At the end of the meeting, Matthew also indicates that an American evangelical organisation (known to be proselytistic) has advanced plans to establish a Christian school in the same region.

Questions for debate

···⟩ What underlying values do Matthew, the parents and the professional of the development organisation have? On which points do they differ and on which do they correspond?

···⟩ How do you deal with these differences? What is your opinion as an employee? What is your organisation's opinion?

···⟩ Would you finance Matthew' project? Why (not)?

···⟩ Do the Dutch supporters of your organisation influence the choices you and your organisation make?

···⟩ Can you, as a donor organisation, make demands regarding the education provided in Matthew' school? What demands can you make and what can you not?

···⟩ How do you feel about a proselytistic organisation providing religious education in the village if you do not wish to not wish to support the moderate religious education? Would that influence your choice as to whether or not to support the school of Matthew?

VII

Conclusion

Employees of Dutch development organisations regularly find themselves in situations that involve religion. These situations are sometimes difficult. The pivotal question in this practitioners' guide and the website **www.religion-and-development.nl/guide** is therefore:

In what ways do you, as a development worker, encounter religion in your work and how do you deal with this?

Religion is an important factor in development work. There are enough 'negative' aspects of religion to take it into consideration, such as when religious leaders exert power resulting in goods not being distributed fairly, or when religious arguments are used to pit groups against each other. Proselytism or even the false accusation of proselytism can be another reason.
Taking religion into account can also be important for 'positive reasons'. Religious communities and FBOs in the South usually enjoy much public support. Development programmes dovetail better when organisations consider the target group's religious and cultural beliefs. Furthermore, a 'natural' relationship based on trust can be developed when the donor and the partner organisation have a shared religious identity.

The 'positive' and the 'negative' sides of religion are often two sides of the same coin. A positive effect of religion can also have negative implications. For employees of development organizations, choices are never simple. Religion often causes all sorts of tension in development cooperation. The views of the partner organisation, your own organisation and of the development worker can cause tensions especially when sensitive subjects are involved, such as women's rights, HIV/Aids and homosexual rights. It is even more complicated when there are different views within a shared religious tradition. But also structural factors, such as a lack of time, can be a reason why insufficient attention is paid to the role of religion.

Within development cooperation, three questions are relevant to the subject of religion:

⋯⋙ Firstly, the question as to how religion influences the context. For example, religion can be a part of the conflict in fragile states, but it can also contribute to reconciliation. For 'outsiders' the exact influence is often difficult to fathom and describe.

⋯⋙ The second question pertains to the role of religion for your cooperation partner. Interpretations of the significance of religion can differ considerably in the South and in the predominantly secular Netherlands.

⋯⋙ Lastly, the question as to how your personal beliefs influence your view of religion. In order to answer this question, many Dutch organisations are currently debating their organisation's identity.

This book discusses these three questions in the chapters entitled *Know your context, Know your (conversation) partner* and *Know yourself*.

Professionals in the Dutch development sector come from different generations. They belong both to the age group that experienced the pillarisation era and to younger generations. These generations have also experienced religion differently. During the interviews for this book it became clear that younger employees of development organisations are frequently more open to religion than their older colleagues. They did not have to free themselves from outdated religious dogmas. "*The days of pillarisation are behind us,*" says Gerrie ter Haar. "*We now have to move forward; we can no longer lock ourselves up in our own religious compartment.*"

To make that step, this practitioners' guide argues in favour of development professionals being sensitive to religion. We call this religious empathy. The purpose of

religious-empathic dialogue in professional development cooperation is to find out what moves people in their circumstances and their culture and what ideas they have considering their development.

Religious empathy can be developed by collecting knowledge on religions and philosophies of life in the context analysis, by being curious about what moves other people (so also about religious views of the development process) and by being aware of your own view of the world, whether it be religious or not.

We hope that this practitioners' guide will prompt you to seek answers to important questions you come across as a development professional. You are most welcome to discuss these topics on the Internet at **www.religion-and-development.nl/guide**. The detailed pages are presented in Dutch but you can react in English. The Knowledge Centre Religion and Development also provides more details in courses and workshops.

General information on world religions on the Internet

www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions

www.religionfacts.com

www.worldreligions.co.uk

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_religion

Websites on research pertaining to religion and development

⋯⋙ **Religion and Development Research Programme**
University of Birmingham, UK An international research partnership exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction.

⋯⋙ **The Danish Institute for International Studies (DISS)**
The Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) is an independent research institution engaged in research in international affairs. The institute draws up reports and analyses and follows developments in international affairs continuously in order to assess the security and foreign policy situation of Denmark, e.g. aspects of relevance with regard to development policy.

⋯⋙ **Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs**
Georgetown University, Washington DC, USA. The website contains a Religion and Development Database which allows users to compare and contrast key scriptural passages across five religious traditions and five themes. Katherine Marshall, an expert on questions of religion, ethics, and development with many years of leadership experience at the World Bank, is a Senior Fellow and Visiting Professor at the Center.

⋯⋙ **Religion and ecology**
FORE's website contains enormous detail on the religious traditions of the world and their ecological contributions, including introductory essays, annotated bibliographies, selections from sacred texts, environmental statements from religious communities, and projects of religious grassroots environmental movements. To facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue, the site also addresses environmental issues related to ethics, economics, policy, gender, and evolutionary and ecological sciences.

⋯⋙ **Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics, World Bank**
The Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics is a small unit at The World Bank whose purpose is to contribute to analytical work, capacity development and dialogue on issues related to values and ethics.

⋯⋙ **Intrac**
Intrac specially designed training, consultancy and research services to organisations involved in international development and relief. It aims to improve civil society performance by strengthening management and organisational effectiveness, and by exploring policy issues.

Abbreviations and definitions

Civil society
The part of society in which citizens enter into voluntary associations and concern themselves with common interests outside their private lives.

Context analysis
Describing and exploring structures, institutes and actors within society in which you operate as a development organisation. A context analysis includes a country's social, political and economic situation and maps the relevant networks. (see page 24)

Donor organisation
Development organisation in the West that works together with partner organisations in the South.

Drivers of change
Structures, institutes and actors within a society that have an influence on development. (see page 25)

Faith-based organisation
An NGO whose identity and objectives are based on (FBO) one or more religious or spiritual traditions. (see page 20)

Fragile state
A state in which the government does not have the political will and/or the capacity to fulfil basic duties such as poverty alleviation, development, security and human rights. (see page 30)

Good life
Pivotal values of life that are pursued by an individual or a community. (see page 15)

Grass roots level
The level of local communities.

Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
A government-independent organisation, centred in one way or another on an assumed social interest.

Development chain
The connecting link between development cooperation and its supporters, donor organisations, partner organisations, community-based organisations and target groups.

Partner organisation
Development organisation in the South that collaborates with donor organisations in the West.

Pentecostal(ism)
Movement within Christianity in which the belief in the Holy Spirit is pivotal. (see page 80)

Proselytism
(Aggressive) conversion zeal. Proselytism is about persuading others that your faith is superior to theirs and that it is in their best interests to convert to your belief. Only then can they be saved, accumulate wealth or secure a good afterlife. (see page 61)

Religion
The convergence of four religious resources: religious ideas, religious practices, religious organisations and religious (or spiritual) experiences. (see page 14–18)

Religious empathy
Empathy for and sensitivity towards other people's religion. (see page 40)

Religious resources

Religious ideas, religious practices, religious organisations and religious (or spiritual) experiences. (see page 16)

Secularism / Secularisation theory

The notion that religion loses its meaning in the public domain when societies modernise. The expectation of this theory is that people will eventually abandon religion under the influence of ratio, science and technology. (see page 8)

Colofon

Religion & Development centre Knowledge

The Knowledge Centre is a joint venture between the Dutch development organisations ICCO, Cordaid, Seva Network Foundation, Oikos and the Islamic University of Rotterdam. Prof. Dr Gerrie ter Haar (ISS, Chair in Religion and Development) is attached to the Centre as a consultant.

The Knowledge Centre on Religion and Development provides a platform where academic knowledge and practical experiences come together and reinforce each other.

ICCO — Partner van ondernemende mensen
Cordaid
SEVA
OIKOS het kan anders
Islamitische Universiteit Rotterdam

Website: www.religion-and-development.nl

The coordination desk of the KCRD is located within the Oikos Foundation:
Address: PO Box 19170, 3501 DD Utrecht, The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0) 30 236 1500

Website
Employees, researchers and policy makers can exchange ideas and experiences, ask questions and reflect on difficult situations at www.religion-and-development.nl/guide. The detailed pages are presented in Dutch but you can react in English. An extensive documentation centre containing recent publications pertaining to religion and development is available on the website www.religion-and-development.nl.

Religion&
Development

knowledge centre