

SCOPING NOTE

ENGAGING WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Produced by DEVCO A5 and B1
September 2020

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. SETTING THE SCENE	4
2.1. Clarifying the terminology	4
2.2. The roles that FBOs and religious leaders play in development: Some examples	6
3. HOW TO ENGAGE WITH FBOs AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS	8
3.1. FBOs in EU Cooperation with Civil Society	8
3.3. Guiding principles for engagement	9
3.4. Criteria for engagement	12
4. THE WAY FORWARD: WHEN IS ENGAGEMENT RELEVANT?	12
4.1. Assessing the context	13
4.2. Considering whether to engage	14
APPENDIX A: WRAPPING UP - KEY TAKE-AWAYs FROM THIS NOTE	15
APPENDIX B: GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH RELIGIOUS ACTORS	16
APPENDIX C: SHOULD YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE	17

Acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEVCO	Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid
EU	European Union
EUD	EU Delegation
FBO	Faith Based Organization
FoRB	Freedom of religion or belief
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
LGBTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer
PRSD	Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development
RL	Religious leaders

1. INTRODUCTION

Faith matters to people and it matters to development. In many parts of the world, faith-based organisations (FBOs) and religious leaders are influential actors in society and they often enjoy broad support and legitimacy. Their impact on development, security and human rights issues can be positive and negative – and sometimes both at once.

FBOs and religious leaders play important roles in development processes. Around the world, they engage in a wide variety of activities and provide services related to development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ranging from health and educational services, disaster relief and environmental protection, prevention of violent extremism and conflict resolution, social justice and human rights advocacy (including for freedom of religion or belief), forced displaced persons protection, and women’s empowerment. Lately, they engage significantly in responding to the COVID crisis mobilising their networks for prevention of the spread, supporting the health sector and providing health services and other support to local populations. At the same time, some of these actors may be sceptical towards issues like gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, use development as a pretext for proselytising and missionary work, or in other ways present challenges to development cooperation.

The importance of understanding the complex characteristics of FBOs and religious leaders, in both enabling and hindering development processes, is now broadly acknowledged by many actors, including donors, policy practitioners and aid beneficiaries.¹ In some contexts, engagement with FBOs and religious leaders can contribute to furthering common goals around development, human rights and peacebuilding. In other contexts, it may be irrelevant, impossible, or even counterproductive, to engage with these actors.

This note² provides an introduction to FBOs and religious leaders in the context of development cooperation and outlines key issues to bear in mind when considering if, how and with whom to engage at country level. The intention is not to argue for more engagement with FBOs and religious leaders, but to provide staff with guidance, share lessons learned, and encourage reflection on engagement with FBOs and religious leaders in a more informed and effective manner, grasping relevant opportunities and managing risks.

This work follows up and is part of previous work conducted within the DEVCO Agora on Religion and Development, including the study *Exploring and Working with Faith-based organisations. An Analysis of Practices in Selected EU Member States* (Marie Juul Petersen, 2019) and the survey and data analysis report *Engaging with Faith-based Organisations in cooperation and development* (DEVCO, 2019).

2. SETTING THE SCENE

2.1. Clarifying the terminology

The term **faith-based organisation, or FBO**, refers to non-governmental organisations or institutions in civil society that define themselves as religious, by referring to religious principles, traditions, practices,

¹ See bibliography (Appendix 3) for a short overview of literature on developments within this field.

² This note has been drafted by Marie Juul Petersen (Danish Institute of Human Rights) and Beatriz Sanz Corella (Team Leader of the Roadmap Facility for Engagement with CSOs) with the support of the Roadmap Facility. The note also draws on the contributions made by colleagues from EU delegations during the session about engagement with FBOs organised within the Civil Society and Human Rights Focal Point Seminar in February 2020. The note is complemented by a collection of five short case studies and a reflection note, providing concrete examples of engagement with religious actors, with a particular focus on initiatives to counter gender-based violence (Elisabeth Le Roux, 2020). A number of external experts have commented on earlier versions of the note.

authorities, figures or concepts in relation to their organisational identity, rationale, activities, staff, funding sources, or target groups. The organisations and institutions commonly grouped together under this heading make up a highly diverse group of civil society actors, including faith-based NGOs, associations and charities; interfaith networks and councils; missionary organisations; education and health institutions; local community organisations; religious minority groups and many others. Operating from the local level to national, regional and international levels, FBOs comprise both urban and rural organisations, professional and voluntary organisations, formal and informal organisations, traditional and non-traditional. Some focus solely or primarily on development-related activities, for others it is a secondary activity.

FBOs differ not only with regard to their organisational characteristics, but also with regard to their **religiosity**. Religion influences, in very different ways, how these actors understand key development and human rights principles, engage in development activities and define target groups. To mention only a few examples: For some, universalism and non-discrimination are indispensable religious principles; for others, intra-religious solidarity is a key motivation. Some are avowedly non-confessional; others see proselytization as an integrated part of faith-based aid provision. Some rely on gender-sensitive or feminist theology; others consider women's rights and gender equality as antithetical to their religion. FBOs are, in other words, faith-based in a wide variety of ways, and there is not one 'faith-based approach to development'.

Religious institutions, such as churches, mosques, temples and other places of worship, are often included in the category of FBOs. In many places in the world, religious institutions are also important development actors, providing health and education services; offering care for children, the elderly, the poor, and those with handicaps; collecting and distributing alms; serving as sanctuaries during disasters, or otherwise engaging in development-related activities.

The term **religious leader** refers to individuals who play influential roles within their religious institutions and communities as well as in broader society. They include formal religious leadership and authorities, such as priests, imams, rabbis, and other faith leaders, as well as other influential actors, including e.g. scholars, teachers, or leaders of faith-based organisations. While women and youth are rarely in positions of formal religious leadership, they may nonetheless be very influential informal religious leaders in their community and in broader society. Some religious leaders work primarily or solely at local level, while others engage in national- or international-level activities.

Development-related activities are not the primary focus for religious leaders, but they may nonetheless play important roles in relation to e.g. conflict resolution and mediation, education, coordination and distribution of humanitarian aid or social justice advocacy. In certain religious beliefs, social work and caring for the planet are perceived as part of the religious mission, and thus a natural way of practicing a person's religion. As with FBOs, religious leaders and institutions may have widely differing understandings and interpretations of their religion, and even religious actors from the same religious community may disagree substantially on various issues, including e.g. issues related to gender equality.

WHEN ADDRESSING RELIGION, REMEMBER THAT...³



- Religion is an integral part of life for many people, including those we want to reach and empower with our development cooperation⁴.
- Religions are internally diverse. Even within the same religious community people (men, women, youth...) may interpret and practice their religion in widely differing ways.

³ For more information and tools on religious literacy, see e.g. Harvard Divinity School's *Religious Literacy Project*, <https://rlp.hds.harvard.edu/>, or the Transatlantic Policy Dialogue on Religion and Diplomacy's resource center *Religion & Diplomacy*, <https://religionanddiplomacy.org.uk/library/>

⁴ See data from <https://www.pewforum.org/data/>

- Religions change over time. What today seems to be an indispensable norm or practice in a religious community may be re-interpreted and changed over time.
- Religions are embedded in, and shaped by, their context. A particular religious tradition may be interpreted and practiced in very different ways in different cultural, social, or geographic contexts.
- Religious doctrines and practices are not always the same. The formal religion of religious authorities may look very different from the ‘lived religion’ of lay people in local communities. Aspects of religions are mixed with traditions, culture and context.

2.2. The roles that FBOs and religious leaders play in development: Some examples

FBOs and religious leaders play a variety of different roles in relation to development, human rights and peacebuilding, presenting promising opportunities as well as potential risks and obstacles for EU DEVCO engagement in these areas.

Service provision: Many FBOs and religious institutions are engaged in the provision of health, education, care and other social services. They often have significant outreach, even in the most remote areas. Especially in states with a weak or dysfunctional social service system, they can play an important role in ensuring inclusive, effective and sustainable service provision. They often focus on those that are particularly vulnerable or marginalised – children, the elderly, those with handicaps, forced displaced persons, the poor, etc. At the same time, however, some FBOs and religious institutions may provide education that encourage exclusion and intolerance; they may refrain from providing sexual and reproductive health services to women in need; or they may otherwise engage in service provision that does not comply with human rights standards.

EUD testimonies working with FBOs and religious actors

“In the DR Congo, FBOs are one of the few remaining credible organisations.”

“Faith based organizations work in the remote regions of Papua New Guinea. Where government is not present, Faith based actors are present.”

“FBOs are considered key development actors in Zambia. Zambia is a Christian nation and the scope and scale of the work of FBOs is enormous. They have a huge outreach, even to remote places, are well integrated in communities and are perceived to be neutral.”

“In Ethiopia, religious organisations are very important in society. The EU Delegation is now collaborating with a religious leader who is playing a role in peace mediation among the political leaders in the framework of EU funded National Dialogue Project.”

“Most Malawians are very religious, and it can be an advantage if the organisation implementing (parts of) your programme can reach out to some of these people”

Source: Religion & Development. Engaging with Faith-based Organisations in cooperation and development - Survey Report

Changing norms and behaviours: FBOs and religious leaders often enjoy a high degree of trust and authority in the communities in which they work, making them potential agents of change, also when the matter in question is not religious in nature. Many engage in awareness-raising, education and other activities to change discriminatory or harmful social norms and behaviours, finding inspiration in their religious texts and traditions to argue against e.g. gender inequalities and gender-based violence, discrimination of minorities or violent extremism. But there are also ample examples of FBOs and religious leaders who contribute to sustaining and promoting those very norms and practices, interpreting the same religious texts and traditions to justify discrimination, inequality and even violence.

Peacebuilding and conflict resolution: The authority, trust and outreach of FBOs and religious leaders also means that they can – and often do – play important roles in conflict resolution and peace building, particularly in relation to conflicts with a religious dimension. Inter- and intra-religious dialogue can be a useful tool in this respect. Faith-based approaches to reconciliation

can also be powerful. But FBOs and religious leaders can also encourage and worsen situations of conflict, engaging in hate speech, discriminatory practices, or otherwise contributing to polarisation and tensions.

Representation and advocacy: Because of their position, outreach and strong bonds with local communities, FBOs and religious leaders are often well-suited to engage in advocacy for the poor and marginalised, bringing perspectives and experiences ‘from the ground’ to the fore. On the other hand, FBOs and religious leaders cannot automatically be assumed to represent, or have relevant knowledge about, the people they claim to speak for. For instance, formal religious leadership is often male in an advanced age and may not adequately represent women’s and younger generation’s perspectives and experiences. Religious leaders, as well as FBOs, may also abuse their positions of power or suppress critical voices in the communities they claim to represent. Some may be closely connected to government. International FBOs may not necessarily have closer bonds with local communities than, say, secular international NGOs.

Context-sensitivity and translation: Familiarity with local religious beliefs and practices may mean that FBOs and religious leaders can design and implement development, human rights and peacebuilding activities in a context-sensitive manner, resonating with the values, needs and practices of local communities. But there is also a risk that FBOs and religious leaders place too much emphasis on religion, or that their interpretations of religion differ from those of the communities in which they work. In some contexts, religion may also – consciously or unconsciously – be used as a tool in political power struggles and quests for legitimacy.

Supporting vulnerable peoples in Bangladesh

The project 'Establishing vulnerable peoples' rights and access to social safety net programmes', implemented by World Vision, is conducted under the CSO-LA thematic programme, following a call for proposals launched by the EU Delegation in Bangladesh.

The project started in 2016 and runs for 48 months. Its objective is to empower local, indigenous civil society organisations, local authorities and communities to promote access to Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) for the most vulnerable communities, by enhancing transparency and accountability in the provision of SSNPs.

3. HOW TO ENGAGE WITH FBOs AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS

3.1. FBOs in EU Cooperation with Civil Society

FBOs are part of civil society. As such, EU engagement with FBOs takes place within the overarching framework of the EU engagement with civil society organisations (CSOs), as set by the 2012 Communication *The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations* and later confirmed in the *European Consensus of Development* adopted in 2017. The latter reaffirms EU commitment to the 2030 Agenda and prescribes, among others, the need for building better tailored partnerships with a broader range of stakeholders, including civil society, and partner countries at all stages of development, in order to improve their implementation on the ground by working better together and taking into account their respective comparative advantages.

According to the 2012 Communication, the EU considers CSOs to include all non-state, not-for-profit, non-partisan and non-violent organisations through which people pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic. Operating from the local to the national, regional and international levels, CSOs comprise urban and rural, large and small, formal and informal organisations. As stipulated in the 2012 Communication, the EU values CSOs' diversity and specificities and “engages with accountable and transparent CSOs which share its commitment

EU engagement with religious actors in Zambia

In Zambia, the EUD is supporting a number of projects promoted by both international and local FBOs in a wide array of sectors, ranging from sustainable livelihoods, to maternal and child health, gender justice, HIV prevention, support to people living with disabilities and prison environment.

Such broad collaboration is a reflection of the important role played, historically, but also today by FBOs in advancing development in Zambia, a predominantly Christian country. FBOs in Zambia are well integrated in communities due to the longevity of their presence, but also because of their impact in terms of service delivery and partnership with government and other stakeholders.

Source EU Delegation

to social progress and to the fundamental values of peace, freedom, equal rights and human dignity”. This also applies to FBOs.

EU support to FBOs and religious actors



There is no comprehensive or systematic overview of EU support to FBOs in external action. A few highlights include the following. In the period from 2007 to 2016, 263 grant contracts were signed with FBOs, amounting to €150 million or around 9 percent of the total amount of the thematic programme on Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities. At global level a Framework Partnership Agreement with Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité Internationale (CIDSE) was signed in 2016 to support work on sustainable development.

Through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), a number of FBOs working on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) have been supported (Perchoc 2017a). Strategies for FBO engagement are often employed in EIDHR projects, ranging from children’s rights to torture rehabilitation, and it is not uncommon for human rights defenders supported through EIDHR to have faith-based links, or to defend the rights of religious minorities or the right to freedom of religion or belief. Three regional intercultural and -religious dialogue projects were financed by the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), and projects involving FBOs in countering violent extremism are supported under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP).

Many ECHO partner organisations are FBOs, engaging in the implementation of EU humanitarian aid.

Geographic instruments managed by DEVCO and NEAR (European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA)) have also occasionally supported Faith Based Organisations and intercultural activities

DEVCO’s dialogue platform with civil society organisations, the Policy Forum on Development (PFD), includes a number of FBOs. EU DEVCO is also an informal observer in the network of donors and FBOs, Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD).

3.2. How to engage with FBOs and religious leaders

As part of its work with civil society, EU engagement with FBOs and religious leaders can take different forms, depending on the purpose of the engagement:

Information-sharing: FBOs and religious leaders can contribute to strengthening EU knowledge and understanding about a given context, sector or issue, including – but not limited to – the role and relevance of religion in this.

Consultations and dialogue and peer-to-peer learning: FBOs and religious leaders can provide relevant analysis, input and feed-back, and ensure that perspectives and experiences ‘from the ground’ are heard and addressed at different stages of the policy cycle. Like other CSOs, they can help identify opportunities for making development cooperation more effective by using relevant entry points in a specific context and programming cycle. Also, dialogue with those religious actors whose position and work present obstacles to human rights, development and peacebuilding can enhance the EU’s understanding of their rationales and motivations and provide opportunities for constructive exchange. Dialogue is better when inclusive of diverse expressions of civil society, therefore dialogue limited to FBOs is generally not recommended. Such dialogue requires special preparation and specific objectives and suitable inter-disciplinary partnerships. In this vein, the “Faith for Rights” framework and #Faith4Rights toolkit provide practical guidance and opportunities of collaboration among development, human rights and faith actors on areas of common interest⁵.

⁵ See <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/faith4rights-toolkit.pdf>.

Partnering: FBOs and religious leaders can be partners in development efforts. The EU can provide direct financial support to formally established FBOs⁶, e.g. in the areas of service provision, capacity-building and awareness-raising, creating an enabling environment for civil society, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, or interfaith dialogue. The EU may also seek to mobilise FBOs and religious leaders, encouraging joint initiatives and strategic alliances around common causes, e.g. the fight against gender-based violence or hate speech.

3.3. Guiding principles for engagement

Engagement with FBOs and religious leaders, regardless of the form it takes, should be guided by a set of general principles within the overall EU framework for engagement with CSOs. These principles include⁷:

Advancing development, human rights, gender equality and peacebuilding: Engagement with FBOs and religious leaders should always aim to contribute, indirectly or directly, to advancing EU goals of sustainable development, human rights, gender equality and peacebuilding. Accordingly, it is advised that we:

- ⇒ Support and cooperate with like-minded FBOs and religious leaders who are fostering, or who have the potential to foster, positive change towards sustainable development, human rights, gender equality and peacebuilding;
- ⇒ Build strategic alliances on specific issues with those with whom we share interests and values, considering such alliances as a way not only to further progress on these issues but also to build relations and common ground⁸;
- ⇒ Where appropriate, consider if and how to engage in dialogue with those whose world views and values differ substantially from ours, inhibiting efforts towards sustainable development, human rights and peacebuilding, in order to better understand and, where possible, challenge their rationales and motivation. Reputational risks should however be carefully considered⁹.

Diversity and inclusion: The EU engagement with FBOs and religious leaders should strive to reflect a diversity of actors, contributing to a richer understanding of local dynamics and the development of policies and programmes that more adequately respond to these. To ensure diversity, it is advised that we:

EU engagement with religious actors in Nigeria

The Delegation of the EU to Nigeria maintains a regular dialogue with FBOs and religious leaders as part of its political engagement with key interlocutors in the country and through a number of specific development actions. One recent example is the EU engagement with the Kukah Centre, led by the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Sokoto, to support the National Peace Committee in the run up to the 2019 elections.

The EUD also engages in dialogue on how to promote good governance with several religious leaders including the Archbishop of Abuja, the President of Christian Association of Nigeria, a popular and influential pastor who stood as Vice Presidential candidate with Buhari in the 2011 election, or the Chief Iman of Abuja national mosque, the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emir of Kano whose influence goes well beyond the religious sphere.

With regards to support, several actions are funded under the EU Trust Fund and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace. The majority of our work with FBOs and religious leaders in Nigeria revolves around peacebuilding or prevention of violent extremism (as opposed to supporting FBOs as service delivery actors). Interventions include the Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme, implemented by the British Council in the North East of Nigeria; the initiative led by the Cordoba Peace Institute aiming at preventing violent extremism through the dissemination of Alternative Narratives among religious leaders, and the de-radicalisation programmes in prisons and in the facility operated by the Operation Safe Corridor in Gombe (to rehabilitate former Boko Haram Associates and fighters) by training imams and making religious counselling accessible to inmates as part of a broader rehabilitation programme.

⁶ And eventually to non-registered organisations or individuals under the Human Defenders scheme, under the EIDHR.

⁷ See also the recent toolkit published by EU Cord, Act Alliance, Caritas Europa & Islamic relief (2020): Engaging with local faith actors and communities. A toolkit.

⁸ See UNFPA's *Guidelines for Engaging FBOs as Agents of Change* (2009) for more detailed elaboration of the concept of strategic issue-based alliances. Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/guidelines-engaging-faith-based-organisations-fbo-agents-change>. See also Michael Wiener, *Engaging with Religious Communities*, Oxford Journal of Law and Religion (2012), 37–56.

⁹ On this point, see the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), *Religious communities as partners for development cooperation*. Available at: https://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type_of_publication/strategies/Strategiepapier363_02_2016.pdf

- ⇒ Reach out to FBOs and religious leaders from the main religious traditions in the country, including clergy, lay leaders, and different strands within the majority religions, as well as to actors from religious minority and indigenous communities, and, where possible, atheists, humanists and other non-believers;
- ⇒ Pay (particular) attention to interfaith organisations;
- ⇒ Include religious scholars, community actors and other influential religious actors, alongside formal religious leaders, in order to facilitate participation of women, youth and others who may represent different religious views and practices from those of the formal religious leadership;
- ⇒ Pay particular attention to women-led and/or gender-sensitive FBOs, youth-led FBOs, as well as FBOs that work for LGBTQI+ rights, where possible;
- ⇒ Focus on local FBOs, and where necessary provide advice and capacity-building to support their involvement.

Respect and openness: when engaging with FBOs and religious leaders, it is important to show respect of their values and worldviews, recognising their distinct expertise, roles and experiences in the fields of development, human rights, gender equality and peacebuilding. The same attitude should be expected from FBOs and religious leaders towards their members/adherents. It is therefore advised:

- ⇒ Be explicit, open and transparent about EU values, goals and policies, and
- ⇒ Not refrain from engaging in discussions on issues that may be controversial, including e.g. sexual and reproductive health and rights, or sexual orientation or gender identity rights, but seek ways of exploring these issues in a sensitive and respectful manner.

A practitioners' perspective:

EU Delegations experiences engaging with FBOs and religious actors



EUDs highlight a number of both positive elements and challenging points when engaging with FBOs and religious leaders.

Positive elements:

- ◆ Inter and intra faith dialogue is proving key in any comprehensive approach to addressing violent extremism in several countries, as a means to address the root causes of conflict.
- ◆ Often international and local FBOs develop a strong expertise in peacebuilding and in setting up conflict resolution and reconciliation mechanisms. Many often have a long-term presence in the communities and are able to engage deeply with these in order to formulate context-relevant actions instead of applying blueprint interventions.
- ◆ Finally, and tapping into religious leaders' leadership, it is possible to address conflicts either by supporting religious leaders to disseminate peaceful messages or by engaging with them to avoid the use of religion to exacerbate existing tensions.

Challenges and risks:

- ◆ Engaging with religious leaders that are controversial. This needs to be carefully assessed against the possible benefits of engaging with them.
- ◆ Engaging with or supporting organisations and individuals who may receive funding from other sources and who may not share all values promoted by the EU (i.e. in relation to gender equality) and/or may be actively engaged in countering these values and/or may be discriminating, due to religious attitudes, certain groups

- ◆ FBOs and religious leaders may disseminate religious messages, whose content Delegations are not necessarily equipped to monitor and assess.
- ◆ Close links of some of them to political parties raising unrealistic expectations and presenting risks for political instrumentalization
- ◆ Incompatibility of proposed actions with local customs.

Source: Religion & Development. Engaging with Faith-based Organisations in cooperation and development - Survey Report & Data analysis. May 2019. Paola Trucco, MKS Programme complemented by EUD contributions

3.4. Criteria for engagement

While EU consultations and dialogue with religious actors should aim to be as inclusive as possible, including also those religious actors with whom the EU does not necessarily share common ground, in EU partnerships, more precisely when funding is involved, a certain degree of commonality is necessary. Thus, a set of basic criteria should be applied for the selection of partners, in line with the principles of a rights-based approach (RBA) and EU criteria for cooperation with CSOs.¹⁰ These include:

Non-violence: Partners should not engage in, or encourage, acts of violence or hate speech themselves and they should not cooperate with, fund, or be otherwise affiliated with actors that engage in, or encourage, violence or hate speech.

Apply all rights: Partners should uphold and commit to the legality, universality and indivisibility of human rights. This also means that partners should be committed to basic principles of gender equality and women's rights. We do not expect all partners to explicitly agree on, or actively work for, the whole spectrum of rights, but they should not speak out or work *against* them.

Participation and access to decision-making processes: Partners should enable individuals to have access to the relevant information and to make use of their freedom of expression. Participation should be considered more than consultations or a technical step in project or programme preparation. It is about enabling participation in decision-making processes as the basis for active citizenship.

Non-discrimination and equal access to services and goods: Partners must not exclude or give preferential treatment to any religious group or community, impose conditions as to particular religious affiliation, beliefs or practices of participants, or otherwise engage in discriminatory practices in any of their development activities.¹¹ 'Do no harm' principles should be upheld.¹²

Transparency and accountability: partners are effective when they demonstrate a sustained organisational commitment to transparency, multiple accountability and integrity in their internal operations.

No proselytization: In their implementation of EU funding, partners should not carry out any activities that directly serve to spread or preach a religion. This does not mean that we cannot or will not support actors that engage in proselytization, but that EU funding to such actors cannot fund their proselytization activities.

¹⁰ For more information please see: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/file/22208/download?token=7AJXVWY->

¹¹ See *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes* (1994), core principles 2 and 3, <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/who-we-are/the-movement/code-of-conduct/>; as well as the *Beirut Declaration* and its 18 Commitments on "Faith for Rights", <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/40/58> (2019), annex II, commitments XIV and XV.

¹² This does not mean that specific interventions cannot focus on a particular community or group of individuals in a specific context. Special measures in the form of e.g. quotas or programmes directed at specific groups may be necessary in order to effectively address discrimination and inequalities. However, such initiatives must always aim to address specific discrimination, must not be continued after the aim has been met and must not lead to maintenance of different rights for different groups. See Human Rights Council, *Recommendations of the Forum on Minority Issues at its sixth session: Guaranteeing the rights of religious minorities*, A/HRC/25/66 (2013), par. 44.

4. THE WAY FORWARD: WHEN IS ENGAGEMENT RELEVANT?

Engagement with religious leaders and FBOs can be particularly relevant when working in contexts and/or with themes or issues where religion matters. This could be e.g. harmful practices justified with reference to religion, religious family laws and other religiously justified legislation, oppression of religious minorities and non-believers, or conflicts along religious lines, to mention only a few examples.

But engagement can also be relevant in relation to a wide range of other themes/sectors and issues that may not have an explicit religious dimension, such as anti-corruption, accountability, environmental protection and climate change, peacebuilding, conflict resolution and service provision, to mention only a few examples. The moral authority and duty of FBOs and religious leaders, their connections and outreach, knowledge and expertise or other qualities may make them important actors to consider as members of local civil society, together with other civil society actors and organisations.

Regardless of the context, sector or issue at hand, the relevance of engaging with FBOs and religious leaders cannot be presupposed but should be based on a careful and context-specific analysis in order to assess if, when, how and why such engagement is relevant. Just like with civil society actors in general, **knowledge and a more refined understanding** of FBOs and religious leaders is key to any sound engagement. What follows are some relevant questions to consider in this process.

4.1. Assessing the context

When engaging in analysis of a particular context, sector or issue, make sure to consider the possible religious dimensions of this. Familiarise yourself with the main religious traditions, communities and practices and consider the ways in which these may influence the context, sector or issue at hand. Map relevant religious individuals, institutions and organisations and explore the ways in which they engage in this. Pay attention to power dynamics and relations, among religious actors as well as within broader civil society and with government. Explore the legal and policy framework in any given context: can FBOs and religious leaders, including minority representatives, operate freely?¹³

This does not necessarily require new or different analytical tools or methods from those you already use. Attention to religion can be mainstreamed into existing tools and methods used for analyses of the contexts or sectors in which we work, or the issues we work with (e.g. civil society mappings, political economy assessments, stakeholder analyses, etc). Likewise, FBOs and religious leaders can be included amongst the CSOs we consult when undertaking such analysis, as well as, more specifically, in civil society-related processes, such as the Roadmap for Engagement with CSOs, the Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategies and the Gender Action Plan.

WHEN DOING A MAPPING/ POLITICAL ECONOMY ASSESSMENT (PEA)/ STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS



- Include religion in your mapping/PEA/stakeholder analysis
- Include FBOs (i.e. an explicit reference) in Terms of Reference of the mapping/PEA/stakeholder analysis;
- Ensure that the mapping team (at least one of the experts) has some previous knowledge of FBOs and religious leaders, particularly in countries where religion plays an important part in society and even politically;
- Take into account existing assessments in the desk review. Several partners (i.e. UN but also Member States) have gained literacy in the subject and have undertaken assessments and/or may have a special representative on the subject;

¹³ The 2016 Guidance Note on the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Religion or Belief includes an Annex with guiding questions useful for this kind of assessments.

- Identify what the “entry points”/who the gate keepers are, to gain access to the key FBOs and religious leaders, particularly those with whom we may not share common ground;
- Include FBOs in the list of CSO actors to meet/survey/consult during the exercise.

Mainstreaming attention to religion, however, **does not mean overemphasising its role or relevance** at the expense of other factors; it means systematically considering its (potential) role and relevance alongside these other factors. Religion is rarely the only determining or explanatory factor. Even when a given issue seems to have a clear religious dimension, other factors may be equally, or more, important when trying to understand the root causes and dynamics at play. For instance, conflicts between different religious groups may be motivated by resource scarcity; oppression of certain religious groups may be driven by an authoritarian state’s desire to maintain control and suppress dissent; harmful social practices that are sometimes justified with reference to religion may be sustained for cultural or economic reasons.

4.2. Considering whether to engage and monitoring

When considering whether to engage or not with FBOs and religious leaders around a specific theme/topic/question, spend time getting to know the actors in the field. Organise meetings with relevant organisations and institutions, talk to staff, visit project sites. Draw on existing sources of information and knowledge, including UN agencies and other donors, international and national experts, research, media and other sources. Engage in exchanges with Member States and other donors to inform the assessment on whether to engage with selected FBOs . Monitoring is also key, as changes may occur. The questions highlighted hereafter may be of help.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



Are FBOs/religious leaders influential, knowledgeable or otherwise important actors in relation to the issue you are addressing?

- ◆ Who are the religious leaders and FBOs involved in in this issue? Are there actors that are not (yet) involved who could potentially contribute positively and who could be mobilised?
- ◆ How are they involved?
- ◆ Where are they based and at what level(s) do they operate?
- ◆ Do they contribute positively or negatively to the issue?
- ◆ Do they have influence in relation to this issue? With whom?
- ◆ Do they have valuable knowledge and expertise?
- ◆ Do they have moral authority and legitimacy in relation to this issue?
- ◆ What is their relation with other religious actors and other civil society actors?
- ◆ What is their relationship with government?
- ◆ Are there other actors that are better placed to address these issues?
- ◆ Are they engaged in other projects supported by the EU, MS or relevant other donors?
- ◆ How are they funded? And who funds them?

Will engagement with some of these FBOs and/or religious leaders be useful in addressing this issue?

- ◆ Do they embrace/agree with a rights-based approach to development and other key criteria including gender equality, as outlined above?
- ◆ What are the areas of commonality or convergence with EU strategic priorities?
- ◆ Where are divergences, tensions and potential conflicts?
- ◆ What would be the added value of engagement?
- ◆ What would be the related risks and how could you mitigate them?

APPENDIX A: WRAPPING UP - KEY TAKE-AWAYS FROM THIS NOTE

- ◆ Religion forms a notable part of the lives of the majority of people in the world. For many of the people we want to reach and empower, religion provides meaning and hope and is embedded in the community. We therefore need a certain amount of religious literacy when analysing contexts and selecting suitable partners.
- ◆ FBOs and religious leaders are **important actors in most civil societies** around the world. They engage in service provision, peacebuilding and advocacy activities, and they are key actors in maintaining or changing norms and behaviours.
- ◆ FBOs and religious leaders are **highly diverse** in terms of organisational types, religiosity and ways in which they engage in development, human rights, gender equality and peacebuilding. As such, they present both opportunities and challenges for EU engagement in these areas.
- ◆ Engagement with FBOs and religious leaders takes place within the **overarching framework of engagement with civil society organisations**. FBOs and religious leaders should not be excluded, nor should they be prioritised or otherwise treated differently than other CSOs.
- ◆ Engagement with FBOs and religious leaders **can take different forms**, including information-sharing, consultations and dialogue, and partnering.
- ◆ Regardless of the form, engagement should always aim to contribute to advancing development, human rights and peacebuilding; it should reflect religious diversity and inclusion and be based on openness and respect.
- ◆ When funding is involved, a set of **basic criteria** should be applied, in line with a rights-based approach. This includes commitment to non-violence, non-discrimination, and application of all rights. Funding cannot be given to activities that directly serve to spread or preach a religion.
- ◆ Engagement with FBOs should always be considered as part of the EU's broader civil society engagement; FBOs and religious leaders should not be privileged, siloed or ignored in terms of cooperation, dialogue or funding, but considered on a par with other civil society actors.
- ◆ The decision to engage or not to engage, and with whom, should be based on **careful and context-specific analysis**, mainstreaming attention to religion, FBOs and religious leaders into existing tools and methods for assessment of the contexts, sectors and issues we work with.
- ◆ When deciding to partner with a particular FBO, spend time getting to know the partner.

APPENDIX B: GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH RELIGIOUS ACTORS

1. Advancing development, human rights, gender equality and peacebuilding:

Engagement with FBOs and religious leaders should always aim to contribute, indirectly or directly, to advancing EU goals of sustainable development, human rights, gender equality and peacebuilding. Accordingly, it is advised that we:

- ⇒ Support and cooperate with like-minded FBOs and religious leaders who are fostering, or who have the potential to foster, positive change towards sustainable development, human rights, gender equality and peacebuilding;
- ⇒ Build strategic alliances on specific issues with those with whom we share interests and values, considering such alliances as a way not only to further progress on these issues but also to build relations and common ground;
- ⇒ Where appropriate, consider if and how to engage in dialogue with those whose world views and values differ substantially from ours, inhibiting efforts towards sustainable development, human rights and peacebuilding, in order to better understand and, where possible, challenge their rationales and motivation. Reputational risks should however be carefully considered.

2. Diversity and inclusion

The EU engagement with FBOs and religious leaders should strive to reflect a diversity of actors, contributing to a richer understanding of local dynamics and the development of policies and programmes that more adequately respond to these. To ensure diversity, it is advised that we:

- ⇒ Reach out to FBOs and religious leaders from the main religious traditions in the country, including clergy, lay leaders, and different strands within the majority religions, as well as to actors from religious minority and indigenous communities, and, where possible, atheists, humanists and other non-believers;
- ⇒ Pay (particular) attention to interfaith organisations;
- ⇒ Include religious scholars, community actors and other influential religious actors, alongside formal religious leaders, in order to facilitate participation of women, youth and others who may represent different religious views and practices from those of the formal religious leadership;
- ⇒ Pay particular attention to women-led and/or gender-sensitive FBOs, youth-led FBOs, as well as FBOs that work for LGBTIQI+ rights, where possible;
- ⇒ Focus on local FBOs, and where necessary provide advice and capacity-building to support their involvement.

3. Respect and openness

when engaging with FBOs and religious leaders, it is important to show respect of their values and worldviews, recognising their distinct expertise, roles and experiences in the fields of development, human rights, gender equality and peacebuilding. The same attitude should be expected from FBOs and religious leaders towards their members/adherents. It is therefore advised:

- ⇒ Be explicit, open and transparent about EU values, goals and policies, and
- ⇒ Not refrain from engaging in discussions on issues that may be controversial, including e.g. sexual and reproductive health and rights, or sexual orientation or gender identity rights, but seek ways of exploring these issues in a sensitive and respectful manner.

APPENDIX C: SHOULD YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE

Academic literature and reports

Bartelink, Brenda, le Roux, Elizabeth, & Palm, S. (2017) *Sleeping Giants: Mobilizing faith leaders as agents of change*. Research Report, Tearfund

Carbonnier, Giles (ed.) (2013) *International Development Policy: Religion and Development*, Palgrave Macmillan

Clarke, Gerard and Jennings, Matthew (eds.) (2008) *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations* Palgrave Macmillan.

Deneulin, Severine and Zampini-Davies, Augusto (2017) *Engaging Development and Religion: Methodological Groundings*. *World Development*, 99

Duff, Jean; Battcock, Mike; Karam, Azza; and Taylor, Adam (2016) *High-Level Collaboration between the Public Sector and Religious and Faith-Based Organizations: Fad or Trend?* *Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 14(3)

Karam, Azza (2017) *The Role of Religious Actors in Implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals*. *The Ecumenical Review*, 68(4).

Mandaville, Peter and Nozelle, Melissa (2017) *Engaging Religion and Religious Actors in Countering Violent Extremism*, United States Institute of Peace.

Olivier, Jill et al. (2016) *Understanding the roles of faith-based health-care providers in Africa: review of the evidence with a focus on magnitude, reach, cost, and satisfaction*, *The Lancet*, Vol. 386

Perchoc, Philippe (2017) *The EU and faith-based organisations in development and humanitarian aid*. European Parliamentary Research Service.

Petersen, Marie Juul (2019) *Exploring and Working with Faith-Based Organisations. An Analysis of Practices in Selected EU Member States*, Danish Institute for Human Rights.

Petersen, Marie Juul (2020) *The International Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief*, Danish Institute for Human Rights.

Tomalin, Emma (ed.) (2016) *The Routledge handbook of religions and global development*, Routledge

Wiener, Michael (2012) *Engaging Religious Communities*, *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2012), pp. 37–56

UNFPA/NORAD (2016) *Religion, Women's Health and Rights: Points of Contention and Paths of Opportunities*, UNFPA.

Guidelines and tools

Department for International Development (DFID) (2012) *Faith Partnership Principles: Working effectively with faith groups to fight global poverty*. Policy paper, DFID.

Department for International Development (DFID) (2006) *Faith in Development Position Paper*, DFID.

EU Cord, Act Alliance, Caritas Europa & Islamic relief (2020): *Engaging with local faith actors and communities. A toolkit*.

Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) (2016) *Religious communities as partners for development cooperation*. Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Frazer, Owen and Own, Mark (2018) *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding. Analysis Guide*, US Institute of Peace.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and International Committee of the Red Cross (1994), *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes*, <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/who-we-are/the-movement/code-of-conduct>

Knowledge Centre for Religion and Development (2011). *Religion and development. A practitioner's guide*. Knowledge Centre for Religion and Development and Oikos.

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2020) *#Faith4Rights toolkit* (<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/faith4rights-toolkit.pdf>)

UN Development Programme (UNDP) (2014) *Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-based Organizations and Religious Leaders*. UNDP.

UN Environment (UNEP) (2018) *Engaging with Faith-Based Organisations*. UNEP.

UN Population Fund (UNFPA) (2009) *Guidelines for Engaging FBOs as Agents of Change*. UNFPA.

UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (2009) *Partnership with Faith-based Organisations*. UNAIDS Strategic Framework. UNAIDS.

UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) (2014) *Partnership Note on Faith-Based organizations, Local Faith Communities and Faith Leaders*. UNHCR.

USAID (2009) *Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding. An Introductory Programming Guide*. USAID.

Mappings and collections of best practices of FBOs (thematic and geographic)

Adams, Nathaniel (2015) *Faith and Development in Focus: Bangladesh*. World Faiths Development Dialogue, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs.

Bouta, Tsjeard, Kadayiifci-Orellana, Aysa and Abu-Nimer, Mohammed (2005) *Faith-Based Peace-Building. Mapping and Analysis of Christian, Muslim and Multi-Faith Actors*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael and Salam Institute for Peace and Justice.

Corman, Crystal, Marshall, Katherine and Stoddard, Elizabeth (2017) *Faith and Development in Focus: Kenya*. World Faiths Development Dialogue, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs.

Faith to Action Network (2017) *Mapping Faith-Based Responses to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in India*. Faith to Action Network and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Netherlands.

Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) (2016). *More than anything. The contribution of religious communities and human rights organisations to sustainable development*. Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Herzog, Lauren and Mui, Wilma (2016) *Faith and Development in Focus: Senegal*. World Faiths Development Dialogue, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs.

Iqbal, Muhammad Asif and Siddiqui, Saima (2009) *Mapping the Terrain. The Activities of Faith-based Organisations in Development in Pakistan*, Working Paper no. 24, Religions and Development Programme, University of Birmingham.

Jodhka, S., & Bora, P. (2009). *Mapping faith-based development activities in contemporary Maharashtra, India*. Working Paper no. 28, Religions and Development Programme, University of Birmingham.

Leurs, Robert, Tumaini-Mungu, Peter, & Mvungi, Abu (2011). *Mapping the development activities of faith-based organizations in Tanzania*. Working Paper no. 58, Religions and Development Programme, University of Birmingham.

Marshall, Katherine and Corman, Crystal (2017) *Faith and Development in Focus: Guatemala*. World Faiths Development Dialogue, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs.

Marshall, Katherine (2018) *Faith and Development in Focus: Nigeria*. World Faiths Development Dialogue, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, and PaRD.

Norwegian Church Aid (2018) *Engaging Faith Actors on Gender-Based Violence. Best Practices from the NCA Global GBV programme*. Norwegian Church Aid.

Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) (2018) *Religious Engagement in Humanitarian Crises. Good Practice Collection*. PaRD.

Roux, Elizabeth le (2015) *A scoping study on the role of faith communities and organizations in prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence: Implications for policy and practice*, Unit for Religion and Development Research, Stellenbosch University.

Sakhiyya, Zulfa (2011) *Preliminary Study on the Potential Role of the Mosque in Disaster Situation in Indonesia*. OCHA, Islamic Relief Indonesia and Nadhlatul Ulama.

UNICEF (2015) *A global mapping: UNICEF engagement with religious communities*. UNICEF.

UNFPA (2008) *Culture Matters. Lessons from a Legacy of Engaging Faith-based Organizations*. UNFPA.

UNFPA and the Asia-Pacific Women, Faith and Development Alliance (2013) *A Mapping of Faith-Based Responses to Violence against Women and Girls in the Asia-Pacific Region*, UNFPA and the Asia-Pacific Women, Faith and Development Alliance.

Odumosu, Olakunle, Olaniyi, Rasheed, & Alonge, Sunday (2009). *Mapping the activities of faith-based organizations in development in Nigeria*. Working Paper no. 38, Religions and Development Programme, University of Birmingham.

Resource centres

“Faith for Rights” Framework: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/freedomreligion/pages/faithforrights.aspx>

Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Learning Platform: <https://www.forb-learning.org/>

Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities: <https://jliflc.com/>

Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development: <https://www.partner-religion-development.org/>

Religion & Diplomacy: <https://religionanddiplomacy.org.uk/>