



Wilton Park



Report

**Religion and development: making better policy to
make a bigger difference in Africa**

Wednesday 20 – Friday 22 May 2015 | WP1400

Held in Cape Town

In association with:

INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR
LAW AND RELIGION STUDIES

AT
BYU

BRIGHAM YOUNG



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Following on from our event on Religion, Foreign Policy and Development in February 2014, this meeting focused on how development policies can be of the most benefit and long term impact across Africa.

This follow up conference aimed to:

Draw policy makers, diplomats/international practitioners and religious actors into dialogue about the best interface between religion, policy and development.

Survey current and emerging institutional arrangements for engagement with religion and faith-based organisations [FBOs] within Africa in order to identify current and emerging good practice.

Strengthen policy machinery within government, NGOs and FBOs by improved information sharing and co-ordination about engagement with religion actors in support of societal transformation

Key points

“Government wariness about religious proselytization is generally overblown”

- To foster effective development programmes in Africa, governments cannot ignore religion or religious actors as vital partners in development.
- Religion and government share most development goals, including better healthcare, education and general welfare, and each would benefit from strengthened cooperation.
- Even when goals diverge on issues such as human rights, dialogue and mutual respect are needed to enable religion and government to cooperate effectively in areas they do agree.
- Government and religion should respect each other’s independence and neither should try to co-opt the other.
- Government wariness about religious proselytization is generally overblown.
 - Most religious actors understand that government development programmes cannot be used for proselytization or the exploitation of vulnerable recipients. They also understand that government funds cannot be used by one religion to discriminate against another.
 - Attempts to eliminate the religious nature of FBOs are illegitimate and counterproductive. People have real spiritual needs that are not best met by government.
 - The human rights values of expressive freedom and religious freedom, combined with the self-determination of individuals, should caution against attempts to silence the voices of religious actors.

“The overriding agenda of development is enhancing peoples’ lives. On this point both governments and religions share a common goal.”

Development in Africa: shared government and religious development goals and resources

1. Because of the power of religion in the lives of most Africans, there is increasing agreement within government that religion is an important player in creating the conditions for sustainable development.
2. One commentator defined religion as the political economy of the sacred. This involves power. The hope is to exercise that power in a way that benefits others.
3. To harness the power of religion appropriately governments must engage with religion at institutional and grass-roots levels.
4. The ability to harness the power of religion in development is potentially easier where there is convergence of goals of government organisations, non-government organisations (NGOs) and faith-based organisations (FBOs).
5. Development here is a holistic concept that includes adequate food, shelter, healthcare, education, and employment.
6. Development is also about mobilizing resources, both human and capital to empower and protect human life.
7. Religious organisations already support important development activities.
 - For example, in rural areas of some African countries religious missions provide most medical services. FBOs in Ghana helped pioneer universal health care models for the poor and marginalized.
 - In Kenya 40% of basic services like providing water or healthcare are provided by religious organisations.
 - More broadly, in rural areas, religion is the only government many people know.
8. Additionally, religious organisations tend to enjoy strong moral authority, have wide networks and are deeply rooted in their communities.
9. The separation between religion and the state does not mean a separation between concerns and expertise.
10. A discussion must account for the continuing influence of African traditional religions. Some commentators believe that liberation theology has not gone away. What has happened is the replacement of the white oppressor with the black oppressor. FBOs sometimes require conversion or have other strings attached to the aid they offer, thus marginalizing indigenous religions. We cannot move forward whilst indigenous religions are marginalized.
11. Others argue that government seeks to control religion or co-opt it for its own purposes.
12. Some question whether government and religion should cooperate. Maybe they should keep to their respective spheres?
 - An example of how far we have to go lies in when the World Bank made an attempt to engage with religion. Nearly all 184 governments of the world were opposed. These governments felt this effort made religion political and would distort their religious message. Other concerns included religious proselytizing in an attempt to gain additional members by using government support and offers of material gain.
 - Many secularists believe that religion is bad, often citing gender as the litmus test. Unless there is equality between men and women then government actors should not work with the religions. Further, government actors cannot read religious groups. They have a great deal of scepticism, fear and can't understand the complexity of religious organisations.
13. Further, the concerns about proselytizing may be overblown. Secular governments also attempt to persuade others to follow their objectives and priorities.
 - For example, the UN Millennium goals have been imposed on societies because we think they are aspirations that people want. But by imposing these goals and enlisting religious support, is the UN co-opting religion?
 - In Nigeria the people are very familiar with a government that attempts to use religion for its own aims and with religions trying to use government for their own legitimacy. Both sides attempt to use or co-opt the other.

“People are the ultimate beneficiaries of effective cooperation between government and religion. Accordingly, government engagement with religion will inure to the benefit of all.”

14. For this reason, governments must be careful about working with religions. Governments can undermine religious actors' support within their own faith communities if the governments express too much support, thereby conveying a message that a religious actor has been co-opted.
15. Aligning themselves with religion can taint governments. If religious actors subsequently become involved with “regrettable things” this can damage government credibility.
16. Many government actors are religious themselves and they do understand religion and have no desire to undermine religion.

Development in Africa: challenges and rewards of government engagement with religion

Institutional incapacity of governments to engage with religion

17. Government organisations, NGOs and FBOs work differently:
 - Governments and NGOs tend to be top down while FBOs tend to be bottom up.
 - Governments, NGOs and FBOs also tend to work in silos, unaware of the others' efforts and priorities.
18. Governments appreciate the development help they receive from religious organisations but they are wary of the divisive impact religious actors may have.
 - Governments often say they want to work with faith based development efforts but then they fail to follow through.
19. Nevertheless, some governments are coming to see the value of working with religious actors in development:
 - For example, the European Union previously expressed interest in religion and equality and then in religion and conflict. Now it is interested in 'religion and development'
20. There is great diversity amongst the religions and cultures of Africa. While government attempts to have a uniform approach to all. This uniformity of approach does not always fit well with the diversity of local customs or religious values.
 - For example, a common development goal is universal human rights. Yet religious sensibilities often suggest that some adjustment may be required. Many government actors frown upon this type of adjustment as an abdication of human rights norms.
21. Development efforts are never perfect because people are not perfect. Rather than allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good, it is helpful for governments to consider whether their overall efforts would be enhanced by cooperation with religious actors who do not share all their values.

Barriers to government engagement with religion

22. Differing Government/religious perspectives sometimes prevents effective development cooperation. These include:
 - Health care ministry vs. health care industry
 - Religious values vs. human rights
 - Helping the poor vs. cost containment and efficiency
 - Spiritual welfare vs. political and temporal improvement
23. Proselytization is a key issue that permeates much of government hesitancy.
24. There is a need for better religious literacy among government actors. Some government representatives acknowledge their paucity of religious understanding and the resulting marginalization of faith-based actors.
25. Some governments fear religion because it represents such a potentially very potent political foe. Often relationships between governments and religious actors are compromised by colonial history.

26. Government aid for development is often strictly limited to secular aims and projects. Religious needs are expressly or implicitly excluded because they are viewed as an inappropriate use of government funding.
27. Governments also ignore religion because it is “a mess”. It is disorganized, internally incoherent and often is leaderless.
28. Many FBOs don't systematically evaluate their work leading to a lack of evidence to support policy making. Religious actors often work at a grassroots level in ways that are difficult to manage or assess.
29. As a result governments question whether they should abstain from cooperation with religion. As one government commentator expressed it, “We have different visions so perhaps we should just leave each other alone.”
30. Governments are also repulsed by human rights abuses in some religious traditions, such as violations of free speech (e.g., blasphemy or apostasy laws) and the freedom of religion of others.

Engagement challenges with faith-based organisations

31. Faith-based organisations may engage in proselytization of vulnerable groups or exclude non-believers.
32. FBOs may incorporate discipleship and evangelism into their development programmes.
33. Governments are nervous of privileging one religious group or finding religious organisations unreliable partners because of inter- or intra-religious tensions.
34. When Western ideas are brought into a Muslim society it can feel like ‘wearing a dress bought for another person’.
35. FBOs are most effective when their leaders earn the respect of both government and community. Caution needs to be exercised when governments are tempted to conscript religious leaders for their own purposes.
36. The independence of religious actors is key. Too close a relation with government can undermine the credibility of both sides.
37. Of course, development cooperation necessarily requires at least some alignment between the aims of government and religious leadership
38. Government commentators suggested that religious organisations still frequently challenge government policies while receiving government funds.
39. Working with government can be particularly vexing for Muslim organisations. Bridging the differences secular governments and Islamic FBOs are not always easily bridged.
 - For example, pro-Western governments and NGOs often want to promote individual freedoms and liberty of choice at the expense of Islamic traditions and values.
40. Education inspired by Western values explores new ideas and challenges the status quo, Muslim conference participants asserted that Islamic education emphasizes adherence to doctrinal precepts and frowns upon questioning.
41. Because of the tensions between Western and Islamic ideals, conference participants asserted that Saudi Arabia is increasingly giving development aid to Muslim majority countries in Northern Africa.
42. Muslims often view international organisations from the West as agents of Christianization. Many welcome aid but resist cooperation.
43. The fear that development aid will be linked to religious conformity has long repelled Western governments.
 - For example, Western governments and NGOs simply cannot support a particular religious denomination or tradition because their funds come from citizens who represent a plurality of religious and non-religious beliefs.
 - Further, as a matter of principle, many feel governments should not take sides or pick winners and losers from among religions. They want to support humanity without regard to their religious persuasion.

44. Beside these fundamental tensions, it is common for religions to instil religious belief as part of their educational goals. It obviously causes confusion when, for example, a Christian student attending a Muslim school is asked to face Mecca to pray multiple times throughout the day. On the other hand, a Muslim will be confused if, at a Christian school, he or she is asked to pray through Jesus Christ.
45. The antidote has been to promote development programmes that are purely secular. This has included avoidance of cooperation with religious actors, even when secular aims overlap with religious ones.
46. Given these significant concerns, some government leaders again ask the question: Do the benefits of cooperation with religion outweigh the risks? Do the different visions of religion and government necessitate leaving the other alone? Is it better to stay away from each other, rather than to try to harmonize our purposes and methods for development?
47. Rather than disengagement, a better approach is proper training. If governments train religious leaders they can become experts in important development areas and they will in turn teach others within their religious communities.
48. Examples by commentators included biodiversity training of Imams in Algeria who teach these principles in Quranic schools, training in energy efficient cooking in India that included traditional religious leaders, water efficiency training in other parts of Africa using religious leaders, involvement of religious leaders in funeral rites of dead persons helped contain Ebola in West Africa (dead persons are far more contagious than live persons).

Removing engagement barriers

49. A starting point for removing barriers is to simply develop new attitudes. Governments need to “get over it.” Religious persons are part of the societies that government is supposed to represent. Religions influence people so their voices must be heard.
50. To do so governments need to better understand religious perspectives:
 - For example, governments need to better understand the processes of proselytizing, gaining supporters and possible promises of material gain.
 - Here governments also need to reflect on their own activities. Many government leaders reward charismatic religious leaders because these powerful figures can deliver votes. If there is a risk that such religious actors might prey on vulnerable people why are government leaders so anxious for their endorsement?
51. Similarly, governments should not object to the pastoral support that FBOs give to those in need. Why should government object to religious actors seeking to meet others’ spiritual needs by prayer? When governments provide development aid they too project values that they ask aid recipients to accept.
52. Governments should focus on the benefits of cooperation. Increased cooperation will create sustainable networks of individuals and communities who and provide the skills and resources that may otherwise be lacking.
53. Suggestions for cooperation include
 - Smart partnerships between governments and FBOs
 - Local community partnerships between governments and FBOs
 - International grants to FBOs
54. Governments can view religious actors as rivals. When there is conflict, there should be a process for resolution.
55. In pursuit of understanding, many commentators argued we should not get hung up on terminology. While many religious traditions bristle at the secularist tone of the international human rights agenda, religions typically don’t disagree with the substance of most of those rights. The essence of human rights is found within most religious traditions. Governments would do well to sometimes set the secular texts aside and promote the rights that are described within the religious traditions, especially when they are harmonious or supportive of internationally protected human rights.
56. Of course, governments want to deal with key representatives of faith communities. But many religions do not have such roles. Islam, many Christian churches and African

indigenous religions are not hierarchically based.

57. Some commentators advocated creating a government council to represent a faith community, as is done in Malaysia, but others disagreed, saying these councils lack legitimacy. All acknowledged that the lack of authorized representatives from religious communities often makes engagement very difficult.
58. But despite this difficulty, governments sometimes simply need to create a “map” of stakeholders that includes religious actors. This first step will often illustrate the powerful place religion may have in any effective development effort.
59. Next, effective dialogue in planning goals and execution is crucial. Pilot development projects are a good way to test proposals.
60. Ultimately, it is important that local governments and community stakeholders contribute into the project to increase joint ownership.
61. As governments learn to identify and work with religious leaders it is important that they not ignore deep-seeded religious and cultural beliefs that are not particular to denominations or that transcend “orthodox” religious beliefs.
 - For example, many Western Africans still fear witchcraft. Rather than dismiss this concern as superstitious or irrational, governments would be wise to allow persons to participate in traditional cleansing rituals rather than try to prevent them against their traditional beliefs. It harms nothing to do so and may make adherents feel more confident.

Rewards of engagement with religion

62. Religious leaders often know what is happening in their communities and can provide very helpful information for government actors.
63. In local communities religion is often viewed as reliable and trusted so governments may benefit from association with religious actors.
64. Governments may benefit from the important infrastructure provided by religious organisations. Some governments cannot meet their own development goals without relying on this existing support.
 - For example, 40% of healthcare and 40% of water in Kenya is provided by religious organisations.
65. Perhaps most importantly, people have spiritual needs that governments simply cannot and should not attempt to meet. In Africa the vast majority are faithful believers. Faith really matters. Lessons learnt about government engagement here may benefit other areas of the world.
66. Religion can provide a powerful motivation for individuals to change. This should not be underestimated.
67. Pastoral care provided by religious leaders contributes to the wellbeing of millions. Because many conversations are confidential, it is difficult to evaluate the assistance provided.
 - One commentator asserted that there were only five psychiatrists in Ghana. If true, then religious leaders are likely to be carrying a heavy load.
68. In summary, the people are the ultimate beneficiaries of effective cooperation between government and religion.

Development in Africa: challenges and rewards of religious engagement with government

Institutional incapacity of religion to engage with government

69. Religious institutions and actors need to understand that development activity should be for the benefit of all people – not just their own religious community.
70. Religious actors often do not understand government roles and purposes or the benefits of engaging with government.
 - For example, religious actors seeking to help people with multiple needs including spiritual, as well as educational and health concerns may need to engage with

“Government can be a force for great good in society. There should not be anything antagonist in joining hands with government to assist others.”

government education and health provision.

71. Religion actors also need to be able to explain their aims and processes to secular actors in order to gain the trust of government authorities.
72. Religious institutions also have a tendency to be reactive to public discourse; often failing to take a pro-active or prophetic role.
73. Religions need structures that governments can understand, including credible representatives who can speak on behalf of their adherents.
74. Some charismatic leaders are exploitative, making claims for God-given temporal blessings in exchange for payment.
 - As one commentator put it: “There are three types of religion: Good religion, bad religion and very bad religion.”
 - Religious goals should be about betterment of others not self-enrichment.
75. Religion is hampered by its diversity and a lack of a common agenda for development.
76. There can be significant mistrust between government actors and religious leaders. Religious representatives also note a degree of hypocrisy in government objections to proselytization.
 - For example, religious organisations are often warned against “buying” converts in exchange for aid. However, it appears that governments and other secular organisations attempt to “buy” adherents to their political or secular human rights values.

Barriers to religious engagement with government

77. An area of significant misunderstanding is the human rights agenda promoted by government. These efforts are often seen as ignoring or contravening religious sensibilities.
 - For example, governments often promote greater access to contraceptives, but some religions object because they view procreation as sacred. This difference gets in the way in other health care areas and inhibits the development of areas of common concern.
78. Religion and government often have different time horizons.
79. Additional foundational barriers to engagement include:
 - Fear that religions might beggar themselves becoming dependent on government handouts;
 - Fear that governments seek to instrumentalise religion for political ends
 - Distrust of government that sometimes lingers from the colonial regimes of the past.

Engagement challenges with government actors

80. Religions need to learn to engage with government without being compromised or co-opted. Religions need to draw a line between their religious activities and government concerns.
81. However, there seems to be two competing developments that make this line increasingly difficult to draw. First, the expanding welfare states in Africa and around the world have increasingly interjected governments into areas traditionally occupied by religious actors. Second, religious organisations and FBOs have sometimes attempted to become more secular so they can receive government grants.
82. Some religious organisations lose the moral right to criticize governments or because they have succumbed to corruption themselves.
83. Many religions worry about government instrumentalisation.
 - For example, one commentator noted that when a group of Christians and Muslims decided to meet to create a system of cooperative dialogue the government offered to fund the travel and participation of the delegates. Now the government has appropriated this group to further their own goals. The religious organisations need

to start again without government funding.

84. Using others for your own ends is not legitimate but, in truth, the essence of cooperation is transparency, leveraging each party's strengths.
85. Many FBOs are insufficiently self-critical and therefore lack the capacity to improve.
86. On the other hand, FBOs are sometimes imprudently critical of Western NGOs and don't understand the limitations that exist in many African regions.
87. Additional practical engagement challenges with government include
 - Limited alignment of goals
 - Limited capacity of FBOs to promote effective policy and practice
 - Lack of human resource
 - Conflict between clergy and lay people
 - Inability to manage absorb larger grants
 - Lack of ability to read the political context

Removing engagement barriers

88. Faith leaders need more education and training in development processes. Religions often take a long-term perspective and therefore add value to the shorter-term goals of many government development efforts.
89. Religious actors also need to accept an inclusive, pluralistic society. Religions must engage with government stakeholders without compromise their religious values and beliefs.
90. Religions likewise need to promote inclusiveness in discussions about development. Religious actors need to engage with others to be effective.
91. Religions cannot require conversion as a condition for assistance.
92. Religions need to look at common development values and principles to advance shared agendas. When there are differences, they need to be negotiated to enable better working together.
93. Faith leaders must use their power and influence with caution, based on sound ideas that are verifiable.

IV. Specific contexts for development engagement between religion and government

A. Conflict resolution and peace building

94. Cooperation between government and religion in theatres of war or conflict is potentially very significant but fraught with problems. Governments can misuse religion by attempting to elicit its support for political purposes.
95. Religions may also intentionally or unintentionally take sides during conflict.
 - For example, one commentator asserted that an Afghan textbook contained a maths problem using the speed of a bullet to calculate the time it would take from the time the shot was fired until it hit a Russian soldier in the head. 20 million Afghan students used this textbook at Islamic madrasahs or schools.
96. Religious narratives are also sometimes misappropriated to foment violence.
 - For example, groups such as Al-Shabaab in East Africa or ISIS have contorted religious aims to justify tremendous suffering and violence. These groups do not represent Islam but they are trying to inspire religiously based violence throughout Africa.
97. Further, uncorrected bias or deliberate misinformation can greatly hamper development efforts.
 - For example, if a Christian organization aids refugees that are predominantly Muslim, many will view this with suspicion, as an act of proselytization.
 - Similarly, if the UN or EU tries to assist Muslim refugees, ISIS tells its people that

"Governments can misuse religion by attempting to elicit its support for political purposes."

- these are Christian under cover groups trying to convert Muslims into Christians.
- The Apartheid government in South Africa used religious justification for its treatment of black people.
 - Tens of thousands of Somalis have been granted asylum in the U.S. because they are fleeing radicalized Islamic extremists.
98. But ignoring religion may also result in harm.
- For example, after years of civil war in Chad, between the mainly Arab-Muslim north and the Christian and animist south, peace building efforts ignored religious beliefs. While complicated, this lack of religious interaction meant that the people never learned of shared traditions that might have helped.
99. On the other hand, directly combatting religious misunderstanding can be enormously helpful.
- In the town of Jos in Nigeria, a group of Christians was purported to have killed 500 Muslims. The Christians provided food and drink to the council of Muslims who met to decide what to do in response. The Christian leaders expressed confidence in the Muslim council's ultimate decision. As a result, the council brought in Christian nuns to ask for their advice on breaking the cycle of violence. The result was the establishment of peace zones that worked well and reduced suspicion.
100. Governments cannot control religious narratives. Only internal groups' narratives really change people's thinking. All government can really do is try to encourage religious groups to correct their violent narratives.
101. If governments attempt to encourage so-called "moderate" religious voices to create new narratives, they run the risk of undermining the groups they desire to help.
102. On the other hand, if religious leaders attempt to take on government roles or to articulate essentially political solutions, they lose credibility and influence.
103. Given this challenge, some commentators lamented the lack of space for discussion of religion and violence.
104. However, what religious leaders can do is to articulate powerful narratives of hope and healing.
105. One commentator shared the following narrative that helped bring together the power of religion and government.
- He told a story of female Muslim refugee to the U.S. from Afghanistan. She taught school to girls and the Taliban threatened her. She and her husband and children fled to Iraq. The husband was killed in front of her leaving her a widow with five young children. She and her children were eventually brought to the U.S. (Salt Lake City) as refugees. A local Christian church helped her with food, clothing and rent. When she married an Iranian refugee, she needed marriage counselling after problems arose. She also needed immigration assistance so she could work, legal help to defend her against criminal charges for shoplifting and domestic violence, and she needed English instruction. This comprehensive network of assistance could not be replicated by government, which tends to work in silos, and in this case was acting as a prosecutor against her. However, the local religious community could call upon experts to help her. But even more importantly, beyond all of her temporal, mental health, educational and other needs, she needed to have hope and to forgive those who had harmed her so she could move on. She needed spiritual assistance that governments should not and cannot offer.
106. Many commentators felt that this narrative represented the crux of the whole matter. Governments cannot do everything nor should they try. But if governments assume that people do not have religious needs and try to limit religions by taking prayer, faith and hope out of the picture they are not recognising the whole person.

Development policy and religion

107. In 2000 the United Nations promulgated eight international development goals that were to be achieved by 2015. They are as follows:
- To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- To achieve universal primary education
- To promote gender equality
- To reduce child mortality
- To improve maternal health
- To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- To ensure environmental sustainability
- To develop a global partnership for development.

108. Even though all 189 United Nations member states agreed to the goals, many of their religious constituencies disagree with the way they were interpreted or implemented. Gender equality, women's issues generally and HIV/AIDS are all areas of particular tension between secular governments and NGOs and different religions.
109. Did the UN merely take the opinions about what elites think is good for people and impose them on the nations of the world?
110. There is great imbalance in the distribution of wealth between northern and southern parts of the African continent. Further, even where natural resources are plentiful, African wealth seems to flow to other parts of the world. Development should be about closing these inequalities.
111. All world religions encourage the giving and treating of others like one's self.
112. Development policy would be greatly enhanced if it could harness the energy of religion to make a difference. Dialogue with religious actors and institutions has the potential to progress social welfare to persons throughout Africa. If religious actors were more routinely included in policy development, the religions of Africa would be more likely to lend their support to the development goals.

Gender and human rights

113. Development about social change and social change can upset existing social and power relationships. To say that religion should participate in development processes really means that religion should be a part of social change. But here a number of significant tensions emerge:
- For example, many African women may want social change, but this is opposed by male religious leaders.
114. Traditional African religions were male dominated, as are most Christian and Muslim religious communities. This explains the lack of women leading FBOs. Muslim commentators acknowledged the dearth of women in leadership roles among Islamic organisations.
115. Women also may suffer from various forms of oppression in African societies.
- For example, women are stigmatized for becoming pregnant after being raped by soldiers in war torn areas.
 - Domestic violence is also a serious problem, particularly as a result of increasing alcoholism, among men. Only recently have the texts of the widely respected Alcoholics Anonymous programme been available in local languages in many parts of Africa.
116. Some commentators asserted that African culture has had a high degree of respect for and power given to women. They asserted that it was the religions of the West that brought discrimination against women.
117. Western-based NGOs acknowledge having gender markers in their development programmes to ensure that they account for and improve gender outcomes.
118. More generally, there is need for discussion about the connection between religion and human rights. Most countries have agreed to human rights norms, so religious actors cannot simply set them aside. Yet some commentators noted that Muslim leaders sometimes stated they would not listen to any human rights narratives outside of Islamic sources.
119. Muslim asserted that just because there are differences between Muslim values and

human rights values, this does not make Muslim values inferior. Human rights have become like a secular religion.

- For example, commentators asserted that while the West reveres freedom of expression, many in the Islamic world do not value of unlimited expression. In their view, some things are sacred and should be protected from blasphemy.
- Further, some Muslim commentators took umbrage with the West trumpeting its human rights record internationally, while ignoring human right of religious freedom at home. France's prohibition of Muslim women wearing headscarves and veils is one example.

120. But others Muslim commentators argued that Islam is not monolithic.

121. The emphatic positions expressed at the conference made it clear that in the area of gender and human rights dialogue easily breaks down.

Healthcare

122. In many African countries religiously provided healthcare represents a significant portion of the total healthcare services available.

- For example, 40% of healthcare services are provided by religious organisations in Kenya.

123. However, the total amount of healthcare services provided by religious organisations varies widely among different African countries. Research suggests that the range is 7% - 70%.

124. Francophone countries tend to have more religiously provided healthcare while English-speaking countries tend to have more government provided services.

125. While many religious organisations generally provide standard, Western-style healthcare, traditionally Africans take a more holistic approach to healing and sometimes reject vaccinations or some medications. Some traditional religions discourage taking medication for HIV/AIDs. Others who take prescribed medications and begin to feel better, may also attend church meetings and ascribe their healing to spiritual blessings. They then cease taking the medicine to the detriment of their health.

126. During the recent Ebola outbreak in Liberia, Sierra Leone and New Guinea government officials failed to work with religious authorities to reach out to local communities, substantially weakening their public information/education programmes. Besides religious burial of the victims, there was almost no coordination with religious organisations to control the spread of the disease. The result was a higher incidence of infection.

127. The lack of cooperation is not limited to pandemics. New public health initiatives tend to ignore the existing healthcare provided by religious organisations, including the substantial funding supplied by missionary agencies for public health initiatives. Better coordination would lead to better outcomes.

128. Regardless of their articulated religious tradition many Africans still continue to practice ancestor worship and other forms of indigenous religion. For example, if someone is ill it is common for many to 'call upon their ancestors for help'. This can be confusing to governments and NGOs who seek to administer modern health care programmes.

Economic self-sufficiency

129. Governments and mainstream and traditional religious actors are increasingly disturbed by the rise of Pentecostal/Charismatic spiritual leaders who are increasingly involved in financial and economic concerns, 'bad religion' and the so-called prosperity gospel.

130. Governments are naturally wary of trespassing religious freedom rights, but when these charismatic leaders cross the boundary from self-help to exploitation, governments are concerned to protect their citizens. Some of whom have handed over their life savings in their quest for a prosperity gospel.

131. Unfortunately, government leaders are themselves sometimes conflicted. Many of these charismatic leaders are very popular and have large television audiences. Government leaders want to be associated with them to garner their support through implicit or explicit endorsement. These religious leaders organise big crusades and then present the votes to the politicians.

Conclusion

132. Development is a common human activity which empowers individuals and communities, creating and mobilising human and financial resources.
133. Religion too is about power. It empowers or disempowers individuals and communities. It teaches right and wrong, and it helps society determine what it can and should become individually and collectively.
134. Governments should not ignore religion; and religions should not ignore government. Indeed in many parts of Africa religious actors dramatically outspend government in community-based health and education programmes.
135. Development goals are not just about alleviating misery but also about human flourishing. Here religious actors should be natural partners for government. Here 'good' religion brings to the table an authentic concern for the whole person and a holistic approach to development.
136. Here 'good' religion wants to argue that fundamentally, people are spiritual beings. Spiritual help is not something governments are fully equipped to provide, nor should they. Hope, forgiveness and purpose come primarily from religious identity and beliefs.
137. It is nearly impossible for religious people to hide their beliefs. They naturally want to share what has brought them peace and fulfilment. Governments should not, therefore, be overly concerned if religious partners in development also want to share principles from their faith.
138. Government policy is much better framed if it takes into account the real life values and practices, including the religious values and practices of both individuals and communities.
139. But better coordination between government and religion is needed, to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
140. Africa can learn from America and Europe but it needs to find its own way.
141. Religions and governments need to form a "critical partnership". The two sectors need to work together but recognize that they have different aims and different time perspectives.
142. There is a great need for education and training of religious leaders in public policy processes. This would help eradicate suspicion but also enhance their ability to make a bigger difference.
143. Of course, development programmes should not have as their primary purpose the proselytization of others and when funds come from government or other non-religious sources, religious organisations should share their development assistance with non-adherents.
144. Even without large financial resources religions can train others to "capacitate" themselves. Most individuals and communities are not looking for a hand-out. They want to learn to fish, rather than just be given a meal.
145. Of course, there are tensions between religion and government in offering development assistance. Many religions reject aspects of the secular human rights agenda and object to being told they cannot express their faith as an authentic part of their development work.
146. Religions, too, are sometimes unreliable partners. 'Bad' religions may become exploitative of their own members, or they may become so antagonistic to the values the government hopes to promote that they cannot work together. Both governments and religions may seek to appropriate or co-opt the other for their own purposes.
147. Looking forward, we are experiencing epoch transformations in society. Economic shifts to the east, more urban populations, many more young people in the global south and a rising global middle class. By 2050, China could have more Muslims and more Christians than any other country.
148. Religion is a great part of this social change. Not least in Africa where religion is fundamental to the identity of the continent.

Robert T. Smith

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