



Religions and Development Research Programme

Mapping the development activities of faith-based organizations in Tanzania

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This study aimed to provide an overview of the scale and scope of Christian and Muslim organizations' development activities in Tanzania.

Systematic information on the nature, scale and development activities of FBOs is unavailable. The research in 2008-9 was based on semi-structured interviews with a snowball sample of key informants from nearly fifty religious and other organizations, but also drew on the limited NGO directories available, a 1993 survey of NGOs in nine districts and other secondary sources. The study reveals a wide variety of organizational arrangements, including faith-based charitable, relief and development organizations that are registered as NGOs or societies, and many development activities carried out by religious organizations (e.g. dioceses) and individual congregations (churches and mosques).

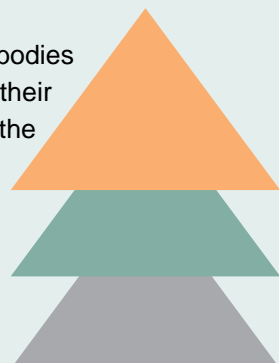
Muslims arrived in Tanzania centuries before Christians, with Islam initially becoming established in the coastal region and islands and then spreading inland along trade routes, especially during the 19th century.

Christianity's first major expansion was during the German and then British colonial periods. Currently the Catholic Church is the largest denomination, followed by Lutherans, Anglicans, Moravians, Seventh Day Adventists and, more recently, Pentecostal churches. Today, the vast majority of Tanzanians claim that their religion is Islam or Christianity, although traditional beliefs and practices are still widespread. Estimates of the proportions of people associating themselves with the two main faith traditions vary, from just under fifty per cent each, to sixty per cent Christian/forty per cent Muslim.

Welfare activities and *madrassa* education have been long associated with individual mosques and Sufi brotherhoods. After independence in 1961, Muslim organizations focused on addressing Muslim educational disadvantage, seen as arising out of a mission-dominated educational system. The East African Muslim Welfare Society, founded in 1945, was closed down by the government in 1968. Its successor, the government-approved BAKWATA (Muslim Council of Tanzania), is engaged in social service provision and development activities, but on a smaller scale than the traditional Christian churches, which developed important roles in education and health care during the colonial period.

After independence, the churches firmly supported the government's development objectives. However, the adoption of an 'African socialist' approach in the late 1960s and 1970s was accompanied by the suppression or co-optation of incipient civil society organizations and adoption of responsibility for service provision by the government which, among other strategies, nationalized education and health facilities belonging to religious organizations. Economic crisis from the late 1970s forced the liberalization of economic policy in the 1980s and, in the early 1990s, the restoration of multi-party democracy. Today, the government continues to depend on faith-based service providers' contribution to service provision (especially education and health), under financial arrangements that have evolved over time.

The traditional churches established apex bodies to coordinate with each other and manage their relationships with government, particularly the Catholic Tanzania Episcopal Conference (1956) and Protestant Christian Council of Tanzania (1934). Individual denominations, dioceses and the apex bodies themselves



have more recently established specialized departments responsible for their development and service delivery activities, including the Relief and Service Division of the CCT (1961), Caritas Tanzania (1971) and the Christian Social Services Commission (1992).

During the 1990s, the number of NGOs of all kinds increased rapidly, leading to the establishment of a new regulatory system in 2002, which provides for the official registration of both secular and faith-based organizations, although many organizations and community groups remain informal and un-registered. Today, in addition to the churches and mosques themselves, there are numerous FBOs engaged in welfare, development and advocacy activities.

- The Catholic Church and its associated organizations have the most extensive service delivery and development programmes, followed by the second and third largest denominations, the Lutheran and Anglican churches. The geographical distribution of activities is uneven, reflecting patterns of missionary activity during the colonial period. Although there are very large numbers of Pentecostal churches, they and the Seventh Day Adventists are perceived as being more concerned with evangelism than development.
- The numbers of mosques and Muslim FBOs grew rapidly in the 1990s, although restrictions on inflows of funds and their operations post-9/11 have slowed this growth. It is estimated that perhaps a third of the approximately 9,000 mosques are engaged in some charitable, welfare or development activities (and many more if *madrasas* are included).
- Government figures show that in 2003, of the 42 per cent of secondary schools that were privately run, 45 per cent were run by Christian and 12 per cent by Muslim organizations. In 2008, 40 per cent of hospitals, 22 per cent of health centres and 13 per cent of dispensaries were run by FBOs.

- FBOs' development practice has evolved from an early focus on charity, relief and service delivery to include sustainable development, advocacy, good governance and human rights. However, their scope is heavily influenced by the programmes for which external funding is available, resulting in a preoccupation since the 1990s with activities related to HIV/AIDS and caring for vulnerable children.

The main challenges facing religious organizations engaged in development activities were identified by informants as

- Dependence on external and government funding, reducing organizations' autonomy and sustainability, and resulting in some inter- and intra-religious competition for resources.
- Limited capacity, accountability and self-evaluation on the part of many FBOs.
- A mismatch in some instances between the religious composition of beneficiaries and that of catchment populations, commonly attributed to user fears that FBOs have a conversion agenda.
- Differing organizational and financial capacity (and levels of command over their member organizations) of the coordinating/apex bodies, varying from the hierarchically organized traditional churches to the more fragmented Pentecostal churches and Muslim community.
- Inter-religious competition and delicate relations with the state, despite Tanzania's long record of religious tolerance and official state secularism.

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