

advocacy. Issues around women's rights, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS are often regarded as part of a 'western agenda'. Whereas Christian organizations have engaged in advocacy and public debates on controversial issues such as HIV/AIDS, contraceptive use and drug abuse, few Muslim organizations have publicly addressed these issues.

Alongside the increased opportunities for FBOs to engage in service delivery and development activities, there has been an increase in the numbers of radical organizations, for example, those seeking to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria or Pakistan, or to advance the Hindu nationalist agenda in India. The politicization of faith-based activity is a potential problem for donors seeking to support relief and development causes, since some organizations' 'radical' political agendas are covert rather than overt.

The range of activities and the organizational arrangements through which they are provided varies between and within faith traditions, related to their history, values and beliefs, organizational structure, size and reach. In addition, it is influenced by the relationships between religious organizations and governments, which affect the scope for autonomous action by FBOs and the availability of funding, and are in turn affected by the decisions the organizations make.

The influence, legitimacy, resources and organizational capacity of FBOs may be considerable, with extensive networks of people, institutions and infrastructure, especially in rural areas, where few other such institutions exist (e.g. in Nigeria). Given the deficiencies in state provision, their contribution may be important (e.g. Nigeria, Pakistan), but often their community level work is too small scale or charity-oriented to make a significant contribution to poverty reduction and sustainable development. In addition, despite having indigenous sources of funds, many lack the financial resources to expand. Finally, there are often doubts about the efficiency of their management and the effectiveness of their activities.

## Implications

Some implications of this preliminary study for development research, policy and practice include:

- Data on the role of FBOs in development is surprisingly scarce and more comprehensive information is needed.
- The term FBO does not adequately capture the diverse organizational expressions of religious engagement in 'development', so should be used with care and/or more appropriate terminology developed.
- Current typologies for categorizing FBOs and their activities are limited: they introduce boundaries that impose particular definitions of what an FBO is, suggest their organizational forms and specify the activities they undertake. In practice, FBOs are more varied and do not fit neatly into such categories - it may be more useful to identify the ways in which religion manifests itself in all civil society organizations, to assess the pervasiveness of religion and the nature of its influence.
- Finding out about and engaging with FBOs requires awareness that this is a sensitive area, since religious issues are increasingly politically charged; not only are some religious organizations consciously repositioning themselves as development actors in addition to their traditional religious, charitable and welfare activities, but also some have overt or covert political agendas.
- Development actors should recognize the complexity and context-specificity of the FBO terrain and avoid standard responses (e.g. engaging with FBOs because of their assumed advantages or avoiding them because of their assumed disadvantages).



## Religions and Development Research Programme

# Comparing the development activities of faith-based organizations in Pakistan, India, Nigeria and Tanzania

### Introduction

Over the past decade or so, interest in the role of so-called faith-based organizations (FBOs) in development has increased. Reasons include the perceptions that they make a significant contribution to development and often have advantages, including being closer to the poor, with the result that their development activities have more positive outcomes than those of secular NGOs. However, these assertions remain untested by empirical work. Despite the apparent importance of FBOs in service delivery, community development, humanitarian aid, reconstruction and advocacy, there is strikingly little information about them. Among the many gaps in our knowledge, national overviews of the scale of operation, characteristics and activities of religious organizations and FBOs, their relationships with each other, and the interactions between them and governments and secular organizations are lacking.

This research set out to provide an overview of the scale of operations, role and characteristics of 'FBOs' in four countries with different religious traditions and compositions - Pakistan, India, Nigeria and Tanzania - and to compare the organizational features and activities of FBOs between religious traditions and the countries under study.

It found that the organizational and activity patterns vary between religious traditions and countries, influenced by political and religious history, changing

relations between religious bodies and governments and doctrine, but that the category of 'faith-based organization' is problematic and data is in surprisingly short supply everywhere.

*The category of 'faith-based organization' is problematic everywhere and does not adequately capture the diversity of religious engagement in development.*

### Methodology

In all four countries data are patchy, unconsolidated and difficult to access, so the research aimed to produce 'impressionistic overviews' of the scale and scope of FBO activity rather than comprehensive detailed 'maps', based on a synthesis of existing secondary material, combined with interviews with key informants. In India and Nigeria in particular, the research focused on selected geographical areas (Pune and Nagpur Districts in Maharashtra in the former, and Oyo, Plateau, Anambra, Enugu and Kano States, as well as Abuja and Lagos, in the latter).

### Defining 'development' and 'FBOs'

A broad definition of 'development activities' was adopted, including humanitarian activities, charity,

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### UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM Further information

Based on Tomalin, E. and Leurs, R. (2011) *Mapping the Development Activities of Local Faith-based Organizations in Pakistan, India, Nigeria and Tanzania: A Comparative Analysis*. Birmingham: RaD WP 62.

See also the individual country studies:

Iqbal, A. and Siddiqui, S. (2008) *Mapping the Terrain: The Activities of Faith-based Organizations in Development in Pakistan*. Birmingham: RaD WP 24.

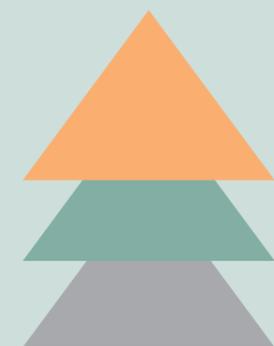
Jodhka, S. and Pradyumna, B. (2009) *Mapping Faith-based Development Activities in Maharashtra, India*. Birmingham: RaD WP 28.

Odumosu, O., Olaniyi, R. and Alonge, S. (2009) *Mapping the Activities of FBOs in Nigeria*. Birmingham: RaD WP 38.

Leurs, R., Tumaini-Mungu, P. and Mvungi, A. (2011) *FBOs in Tanzania: An Overview*. Birmingham: RaD WP 58. <http://www.religionsanddevelopment.org/index.php?section=47>

*Implications of a preliminary overview of the scale and scope of faith-based organizations' development activities include:*

- Data on the role of FBOs in development is surprisingly scarce and more comprehensive information is needed.
- The term FBO does not adequately capture the ways religious organizations engage in 'development', so should be used with care and better terminology developed.
- Current typologies for categorizing FBOs and their activities are limited; it may be more useful to identify how religion manifests itself in all civil society organizations.
- Finding out about and engaging with FBOs requires awareness that religion is a sensitive issue that is increasingly politically charged.
- Development actors should recognize the complexity and context-specificity of the terrain and avoid standard responses to engaging with or avoiding FBOs.



social protection, welfare and development. However, in practice the activities that were mapped depended on various factors, including availability of data and ease of access to organizations.

FBOs (sometimes called religious NGOs) were defined as organizations that are engaged in at least one development-related activity, identify themselves as faith-based and are affiliated with a wider religious body primarily concerned with promoting religious beliefs or providing religious services. They were provisionally subdivided into apex bodies, charitable or development organizations, socio-political organizations, missionary organizations and radical organizations. The research focused almost entirely on indigenous organizations, because more is known about the overseas activities of European and North American NGOs and FBOs. Some locally managed branches of international FBOs were included, but the analysis does not focus on their relationships with overseas funders or partners.

Defining and identifying FBOs posed a number of challenges:

- The term FBO has its genesis in the USA (especially during the Bush presidency of 2001-9) and Europe, where governments aimed to draw faith groups into service delivery. However, it is problematic: it is not used everywhere; it does not adequately capture the organizational expressions of religious traditions engaged in humanitarian and development activities; and the term itself is resisted because of its western origins and explicitly Christian overtones.
- Where most people are religious adherents, the values and work of apparently secular organizations can be influenced by the religious beliefs of their staff and volunteers, making it difficult to distinguish between faith-based and non-faith-based organizations.
- Many organizations do not want to identify themselves as religious even when many of the donations they receive are religiously motivated, because religion is politically controversial, may deter institutional donors and makes them susceptible to accusations of pursuing a conversion agenda or discriminating against those outside their own faith tradition.
- Because religion is a sensitive issue, researchers' motives are suspect, potential informants worry about how their organizations might be portrayed and organizations are reluctant to provide information, especially on funding and legal status.
- NGOs and FBOs may be formally registered, but these represent only a fraction of the total. If registered, they may be listed in directories, but those available were out of date and made no distinction between faith-based and secular organizations.

- Few respondents were knowledgeable about the wider FBO terrain, suggesting that most are only familiar with the organizations with which they are involved.
- If FBOs are defined as 'religious NGOs', this may exclude many types of religious organization engaged in development-related activities, including places of worship and their organizational structures (such as church congregations, parishes, dioceses, mosques, mosque committees and temples), missionary organizations, religious political parties and religious schools (such as madrasas).
- Not only did the initial typology have to be adapted in each country, it was rarely possible to classify FBOs into distinct organizational types or allocate them to activity categories.

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However, in many contexts the term FBO is firmly entrenched and indeed organizations in developing countries have emerged or refashioned themselves in response to the new global faith agenda, labelling themselves as FBOs in order to tap into international funding streams. While it is in many ways a problematic term, it was adopted for this research because of its wide use in mainstream development studies and policy.

## Findings

### Origins and proliferation of the FBO sector

#### ■ The pre-colonial and colonial eras

In all four countries, religion has long been associated with philanthropic activities, predating the emergence of development as a global concern and the rise of formal FBOs. Each country then had a period of European colonization that brought with it Christian missionaries, who alongside their aim of conversion often set up schools and hospitals. Today, even in Pakistan and India, where Christians are in a minority, the strength of Christian FBOs outweighs the proportion of Christians.

The colonial period also marked increased organized activity within existing religious traditions, for example, to counter the impact of Christian education. This was sometimes linked to the emergence of local religious socio-political revivalist movements, such as the Deobandi movement in pre-independence India.

Also, colonial governments increasingly institutionalized voluntary organizations, requiring them to register and regulating their activities.



*Condom distribution by an FBO in Tanzania (Photo courtesy of Claire Mercer)*

#### ■ The post-colonial era

After independence, existing religious organizations had to re-negotiate their relationships with newly independent governments and (for the churches) with their mother churches. The tricky nature of some of these relationships, as well as the state-led model of development adopted by most post-independence governments in the 1950s and 1960s, and increasingly authoritarian rule in many countries, inhibited the growth of civil society in general.

Indeed, governments' fear of the destabilizing effects of religious competition and their acceptance of responsibility for service delivery led in some instances to the 'nationalization' of education and health services established by religious organizations, especially the churches in Nigeria and Tanzania, and administration of *zakat* – religiously mandated charitable giving - in Pakistan.

However, many of these new arrangements were reversed in the 1980s and 1990s in the face of the debt crisis (Tanzania), decreasing oil revenue (Nigeria), poor state performance in service delivery, and political and economic liberalization. New spaces were created for the voluntary sector, with NGOs taking over many previously state provided services. Some traditional activities were returned to religious organizations and

further growth has been fuelled by increased funding from the Middle East to Muslim countries, the US to Christian organizations and diaspora populations to their areas of origin. In addition, the number of non-state organizations has grown, including radical FBOs with extremist or sectarian agendas.

### Scale of activities

The scale of FBO activities in the four countries today is significant, but it is impossible to give exact estimates, because of uncertainty over what counts as an FBO and the lack of systematic information. Generally, it appears that the proportion of Christian organizations in the total (in terms of both numbers and the scale of activities) exceeds their proportion of all religious adherents, because of their doctrines, conversion agenda, history, organizational structure and international networks, although given the poor data, it is currently impossible to be certain.

Overall, the sector seems to be expanding, certainly in terms of the numbers of formally registered organizations, both within different religious traditions and across locations. In addition, there is evidence that some FBOs are consciously repositioning themselves as development actors in addition to their traditional charitable and welfare activities. In Nigeria and Tanzania, for example, the numbers not only of Christian but also of Muslim FBOs have increased, in part because this organizational form may be a requirement for obtaining institutional funding.

**The scale of FBO activities is significant, but it is impossible to give exact estimates, because of uncertainty over what counts as an FBO and the lack of systematic information.**

### Nature of activities

FBOs are engaged in a broad range of development-related activities, including emergency relief, education, health, water supply, feeding the poor, care of orphans, HIV-AIDS related activities and so on. While many of these are traditional charitable and welfare concerns, which have occupied faith-based organizations for centuries, many now also undertake development activities designed to improve livelihoods and support communities, especially Christian organizations, those with international links and those that receive funding through the 'development industry'. In addition, some existing organizations are re-casting themselves as development agents.

Although some FBOs are deliberately inclusive and oriented to the poor, many primarily benefit members of their own faith tradition, who are not always poor.

The research found that engagement in socio-political activities is both less common and very varied. In Pakistan, for instance, FBOs are mostly involved in the provision of social services and play a limited role in