

Box 2: Comparing voluntary organizations in Karachi and Sindh

Local charities	Professional development organizations
Sources of funding Individual donations	International and national institutional donors
Focus of activities Mainly charity, relief and welfare	Long term development Secure livelihoods Empowerment, sustainable development
Relationship with religion Islamic motivation and identity, Islamic injunctions guide choice of activities	Mostly explicitly secular Choice of activities influenced by international development thinking

The study concludes that:

- 'FBO' is a problematic category in the Pakistani context, as religion operates in complex and varied ways within organizations. It is misleading to categorize organizations into two (faith-based/non-religious or local charitable/professional development), but the latter broad distinction is more appropriate than the former.
- Religion is important in the values and functioning of many Pakistani charitable organizations, although for some it is implicit rather than explicit. Organizations that make their religious identity explicit include those associated with religious minorities.
- Organizations that frame themselves as being part of the 'development sector' are generally non-religious or secular in nature.
- The role of religion within an organization is tied to its funding sources; its location within local, national and international networks; and the political and ideological profile of its members.

Implications

The implications of this study's findings for donors and policy makers include:

- The term faith-based organization should be avoided in the Pakistan context because it is associated with radical religious organizations with extreme views.
- As well as their relationships with religion, voluntary organizations can be distinguished by whether their activities are charitable and welfare oriented or aimed at socio-economic transformation and long term development and their sources of funding.
- A broad distinction between local charities with philanthropic aims and professional development organizations is more appropriate than one between faith-based and non-religious organizations.
- Development partners' decisions about whether and how to engage with voluntary organizations must be made on a case-by-case basis, based on an understanding of individual organizations and their context – a general preference for those that are religiously inspired is not appropriate, any more than it is for secular NGOs.



Religions and Development Research Programme

The role of faith in the charity and development sector in Karachi and Sindh, Pakistan

Introduction

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are gaining increasing attention in development circles amongst practitioners, funders and policy-makers. However, little research is available on what kinds of FBOs actually exist, especially in developing countries, and how they approach and either contribute to or hinder processes of development. Furthermore, little is known about how, if at all, these organizations differ from 'secular' non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

This report aims to understand the nature of faith-based organizations in the Pakistani context, with a focus on Karachi and Sindh province. Specifically, it explores the role of religion in organizations engaged in development-related activities. Case studies of six local philanthropic/development organizations are set alongside less detailed profiles of development organizations that define themselves as non-religious.

The study finds that most local humanitarian organizations are religiously inspired, but the term 'faith-based organization', which is associated with radical religious organizations that are conservative and extreme in their views, is problematic in the Pakistani context. Instead,

amongst local voluntary organizations, a distinction can be drawn between local charities and professional development organizations, based on the focus of their activities, their relationship with religion and their sources of funding.

Background

In Pakistan and in South Asia in general, religion has historically played a key role in efforts to alleviate poverty, most often through philanthropic activities. Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Sikhism all have strong traditions of serving the poor. Pakistan, although a majority-Muslim country, has benefitted from philanthropic contributions by all the major faith communities.

The emergence of NGOs, however, is a more recent phenomenon, beginning in the period following the 1947 Partition, when voluntary organizations emerged to address the refugee crisis. However, it was not until the 1980s, against the backdrop of the Afghan War and the accompanying influx of foreign aid, that this sector grew exponentially. These developments have shaped the context of contemporary civil society, particularly the voluntary/ philanthropic sector, and must frame any discussion of FBOs in the Pakistani context.

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Further information

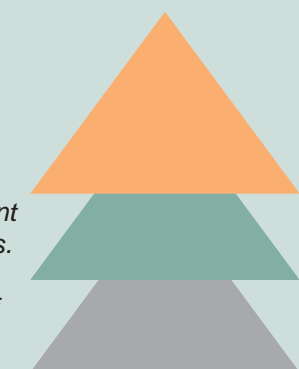
This brief is based on Nida Kirmani and Sarah Zaidi (2010) *The Role of Faith in the Charity and Development Sector in Karachi and Sindh, Pakistan*. Birmingham: RaD WP 50. The research was carried out as part of a wider comparative study by Nida Kirmani, then Research Fellow in the Research Programme, University of Birmingham, and Sarah Zaidi, independent researcher, in liaison with the Lahore University of Management Sciences.

See also Bano, Masooda (2009) *Marker of Identity: Religious Political Parties and Welfare Work—the Case of Jama'at-i-Islami in Pakistan and Bangladesh*, Birmingham: RaD WP 34, and Iqbal, Muhammad Asif and Saima Siddiqui (2008) *Mapping the Terrain: The Activities of Faith-based Organisations in Development in Pakistan*, Birmingham: RaD WP24.

<http://www.religionsanddevelopment.org/index.php?section=47>

An analysis of six large indigenous philanthropic organizations in Karachi and several professional development organizations suggests that:

- The term faith-based organization should be avoided in the Pakistan context because it is associated with radical religious organizations with extreme views.
- As well as their relationship with religion, local voluntary organizations can be distinguished by whether their activities are charitable or development-oriented and their sources of funding.
- A broad distinction between local charities with philanthropic aims and professional development organizations is more appropriate than one between faith-based and non-religious organizations.
- Donors and policy makers' decisions about whether and how to engage with religiously inspired voluntary organizations must be made on a case-by-case basis, based on an understanding of individual organizations and their context – a general preference is not appropriate.



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The research

The research focuses on Karachi, a city characterized by its large size, religious diversity, multiple urban development challenges and a long history of social activism, within the wider provincial and national contexts. The organizations profiled are involved in the betterment of poor and marginalized sectors of society; they include organizations that openly profess a religious affiliation and see it as an explicit part of their work, as well as those that are not explicitly affiliated with a religious tradition and claim a humanitarian motivation, working in similar sectors and geographical areas.

The research was qualitative and aimed to shed light on the role of religion in organizations engaged in development-related activities. The sensitivity of public discussions of religion in Pakistan and external interest in the operations of local organizations meant that careful negotiations had to precede the study and limited the researchers' access to some organizations. In addition, the preference for anonymity in giving and the receipt of charity (see Box 1) limited the information available on both donations and beneficiaries.

Following a scoping exercise, six main organizations were selected for study, on the basis of their religious orientation, sources of funding, programmatic and geographical scope, and prominence. They are

- the Al Khidmat network, which includes various organizations affiliated to the Jamaat-e-Islami, the largest religious political party in Pakistan. Members of the Al Khidmat Foundation, the Al Khidmat Welfare Society (including its women's wing) and the Al Khidmat Khawateen Trust were interviewed.
- the Alamgir Welfare Trust
- the Saylani Welfare Trust
- the Edhi Foundation
- the Behbud Association
- Caritas (Roman Catholic, Karachi and Hyderabad dioceses)

These six organizations are then placed within the wider context of the development sector in the region, by comparing them with 'professional development organizations', for which religion has no apparent role, and for which less detailed profiles were developed. These included the:

- Orangi Pilot Project
- Indus Resource Centre
- Thardeep Rural Development Programme
- Sindh Agricultural and Forestry Workers Association

The findings are based on over eighty semi-structured interviews with staff, volunteers and beneficiaries in Karachi and Sindh.

Box 1: Muslim charitable giving

Zakat is the most important form of Muslim charity. It is obligatory for Sunni Muslims with disposable wealth and is calculated at approximately 2.5 per cent of wealth annually. Other categories of giving include *zakat al-fitr* (the equivalent of feeding one person in need), *waqf* (religious endowment), and *sadaqat* and *khairat* (voluntary giving). *Sadqa-e-jariya* is a particular form of charity that involves investing in something with long-term benefits.

In addition, every Muslim who is able is expected to sacrifice or pay for the sacrifice of an animal after the yearly *Hajj* period (*qurbani*). The meat is distributed amongst people in need and sale of the hides is an important source of funding for many charities.

These forms of charity aim to purify wealth, better the self, and improve the chance of an individual attaining paradise in the afterlife. In addition to donating material goods, Muslims are expected to perform good deeds and donate their time. There is a preference for individual anonymity in both giving and receiving, with an emphasis on giving directly to individuals or religious organizations, donating without boasting and the protection of recipients' dignity. *Zakat* in particular is considered to be a right of the recipient rather than an act of benevolence on the part of the giver. The Qur'an stipulates the categories of people who are eligible to receive *zakat* (the poor, the needy, potential converts to Islam etc), but leaves scope for different interpretations, for example, whether it can be given to non-Muslims.

Findings

The profiles of the six main case study organizations analyze their mission and aims, programmatic priorities and main activities, governance and funding structures, and the role of religion as a motivating factor for staff, volunteers and donors.

- The organizations range from those focused primarily on welfare provision to those more concerned with long-term development. However, the emphasis of most is on providing welfare services, including assistance to the needy, support for orphans, and health and education services.
- All are hierarchically organized, although their structures differ. The organizational and accountability arrangements of many are

informal. Most rely on paid staff, although some are membership-based and managed by volunteers. With the exception of the Behbud Association and the women's wings within the Al Khidmat network, most are managed by men.

- All rely on religious donations, although to a differing extent, which has an impact on the organization's choice of activities.
- Each has a differing relationship with religion, with some framing themselves in explicitly religious terms and others having a more subtle relationship with religion.

Comparing the six main case study organizations with a range of others, the study concludes that a simple division into faith-based and non-religious is inappropriate. However, a broad difference between the languages, programmatic priorities, funding structures, and relationships with religion of local charities and development organizations can be discerned. While the six charities studied are influenced by religion, in terms of their identity, motivation or through their funding base, the development organizations appear to have little or no relationship with religion (see Box 2). Rather, most of the latter were explicit about taking a 'non-religious' approach.

Furthermore, none of the development organizations rely on individual religious donations. The main distinction appears to be between those organizations that rely on local, individual sources of funding and those that rely on national and international institutional donors. The former tend to focus on welfare and service delivery, with some also delivering 'religious services' (see Box 2). The Pakistan government now collects *zakat*, but widespread distrust of the system motivates many to donate to voluntary organizations (or directly to individuals).

The development organizations studied are largely funded by institutional donors. Unlike all the local charities, with the exception of Caritas, they are influenced by international development thinking, leading them to focus on support for livelihoods development, empowerment of disadvantaged groups and communities, and long term development.

Although some activities (such as healthcare or vocational training) are undertaken by both charitable and development organizations, all the latter focus primarily on development rather than welfare, and none mention religion as being relevant in any aspect of their work. Furthermore, most of the development organizations explicitly include gender equality and women's empowerment in their mission statements and activities, while few philanthropic organizations include this in their priorities.

In Pakistan, a distinction can be made between local charities, which rely on individual donations (especially Islamic forms of giving), and development organizations supported by institutional donors.

Conclusion

Religion in Pakistan has historically played an important role in charity, responding to people's immediate needs and partially filling a social service gap that has been left by the state. It continues to do so. However, religion must be understood as one variable amongst many, including the social, political and ideological profiles of an organization's members, its position within national and international networks, and its funding sources. All these factors influence the identity and activities of organizations.

The key findings of the analysis are:

- With the exception of Caritas, the Christian organization studied, most of the organizations identified as 'faith-based' are locally-based and funded through local, individual donations.
- Faith is intertwined in the work of local charities to different degrees; these can be distinguished from professional development organizations, which have no apparent relationship with religion.
- Local charities focus on meeting immediate, individual needs rather than addressing long-term development objectives.
- As well as engaging in charitable and welfare activities as part of Muslims' religious duty, organizations may adhere to values that reinforce rather than challenge the status quo, for example with respect to gender roles and equality.
- Some religiously inspired welfare organizations have a sectarian base and support an Islamic political agenda.
- Local philanthropic organizations are often better established, respected and trusted than secular non-governmental organizations, but their management arrangements tend to be less transparent.
- There is little or no cooperation or dialogue between charities and professional development organizations.