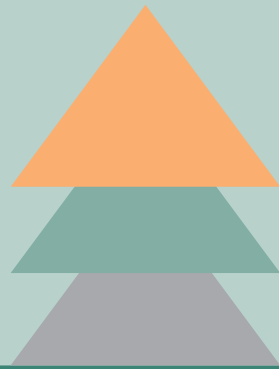


Religions and Development Research Programme

Understanding the Roles of Religions in Development: The Approach of the RaD Programme

Carole Rakodi

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Working Paper 9 - 2007

RaD

Religions and Development

Research Programme

The Religions and Development Research Programme Consortium is an international research partnership that is exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The programme is comprised of a series of comparative research projects that are addressing the following questions:

- How do religious values and beliefs drive the actions and interactions of individuals and faith-based organisations?
- How do religious values and beliefs and religious organisations influence the relationships between states and societies?
- In what ways do faith communities interact with development actors and what are the outcomes with respect to the achievement of development goals?

The research aims to provide knowledge and tools to enable dialogue between development partners and contribute to the achievement of development goals. We believe that our role as researchers is not to make judgements about the truth or desirability of particular values or beliefs, nor is it to urge a greater or lesser role for religion in achieving development objectives. Instead, our aim is to produce systematic and reliable knowledge and better understanding of the social world.

The research focuses on four countries (India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania), enabling the research team to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional belief systems. The research projects will compare two or more of the focus countries, regions within the countries, different religious traditions and selected development activities and policies.

The consortium consists of six research partner organisations, each of which is working with other researchers in the four focus countries:

- University of Birmingham, UK: International Development Department, Department of Theology and Religion, Centre for West African Studies, Centre for the Study of Global Ethics.
- University of Bath, UK: Centre for Development Studies.
- Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi.
- Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan.
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan.

In addition to the research partners, links have been forged with non-academic and non-government bodies, including Islamic Relief.

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1 Introduction

For perhaps thirty years, the importance of recognising social diversity and difference when analysing conditions in developing countries, assessing the outcomes of development policies, and designing policy interventions that achieve poverty reduction and do not have unexpectedly adverse effects on some population groups has been acknowledged. Most attention has been given to gender (Tomalin, 2007a). Because by the late 1960s, it was recognised that economic growth was failing to benefit all equally or to reduce poverty, poverty and inequality have also received considerable if inconsistent attention (Nkurunziza, 2007). Marxist analysts focused on class-based differentiation and discrimination, with long debates about whether European conceptions and categories of class were applicable in developing countries. However, the sidelining of Marxist theories in development studies, less because of their analytical contribution than their failure to offer alternatives other than revolution against the capitalist system, has meant that the debate about inequality has mostly been couched in terms other than class. Ethnicity has received attention in analysis of the political economy of countries with ethnically diverse populations and in contexts where there is discrimination against particular ethnic groups, especially minorities. Increasingly, in the last decade or so, it has been recognised that development analysis and policy must consider age and ability/disability as further dimensions of social diversity and difference. By the 1990s, the necessity for development theory to recognise social difference and diversity had been recognised and guides to conducting social and gender analysis in policy formulation, the design of programmes and projects, and assessing the outcomes and impacts of development interventions had been published (Moser, 1993; ODA, 1995). Although they included passing and rather uneasy references to culture, they did not refer to religion as a dimension of social diversity and difference.

In 1980, one of the most important academic development journals, *World Development*, devoted an entire issue to the role of religion in development (e.g. Goulet, 1980). However, this was not followed by any sustained interest in the issues discussed and, as late as 2000, Ver Beek was able to refer to spirituality as a 'development taboo'. His search of papers published in three of the most prominent development studies journals between 1982 and 1998 revealed only rare references to the role of spirituality or religion in development. Moreover, he noted that in none of the few papers which did refer to religion were the relationships between development and religion the central theme. Particularly surprising, he felt, was the neglect of religion in the literatures on integrated rural development and indigenous knowledge. "As a result, [he concluded] little is known about the role of spirituality in the development process, and little or no guidance is given to development practitioners on how to

address spiritual issues, which results in less effective and even damaging development efforts” (Ver Beek, 2002, p. 70)

It was not until the late 1990s that development agencies started to pay attention to their relationships with religious organisations and publications started to appear in the mainstream development studies literature. In 1998 James Wolfensohn, then president of the World Bank, and George Carey, then Archbishop of Canterbury, started the “World Faiths Development Dialogue” to promote dialogue between religious groups, and between the World Bank and IMF and religious groups. Other dialogues include the Inter American Development Bank’s initiative on Social Capital, Ethics and Development; the World Council of Churches dialogue with the International Labour Organisation, UN, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank; and UN Fund for Population Activity’s (UNFPA) discussions with faith leaders. It emerged from *Voices of the Poor*, the participatory poverty assessments conducted under the auspices of the World Bank, that thousands of poor people consider that ‘harmony’ with transcendent matters (including a spiritual life and religious observance) is a central part of their well-being. Papers on the relationships between religion and development started to appear in mainstream development studies publications, notably in those published by Oxfam: *Gender and Development* (7, 1, 1999), *Development in Practice* (Tyndale, 2000) and *Development and Culture* (Ver Beek, 2002; Verhelst with Tyndale, 2002). Nevertheless, when DFID consulted on themes for its new research programmes in 2003, the dearth of good analytical and policy relevant research on the relationships between religions and development was still very evident. In 2004, therefore not only did the agency commission work on its engagement with faith groups and their potential role in poverty reduction (Clarke, 2007), but it also invited bids for a major new research programme on this theme.

Many of the statements above are, of course, over-generalisations. Religion could not be ignored in the political economy of many countries, especially India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, as it was a major factor influencing the shape of their post-independence boundary and constitutional arrangements. Class continued to be central to the analysis of development and under-development in Latin America, where gross inequalities in land ownership underlay the survival of rural landed elites, the emergence of urban industrial and entrepreneurial classes and continued severe poverty. India could not be understood without reference to caste, itself inextricably linked to Hinduism, and important government policies aimed at overcoming entrenched caste-based discrimination and disadvantage, themselves influencing the overall political economy of the country. Despite the state-centred model of economic

development adopted by most countries in the 1950s and 1960s, religious organisations continued in many places to play a major role in service delivery or in struggles against authoritarian governments. Writers and development practitioners from within the faith traditions articulated critiques of mainstream approaches to economic development and developed their own visions of development – normative approaches that often sat uneasily with social science’s aim of objectivity. Researchers in some disciplines, moreover, continued to study the nature of religion and its interface especially with culture (anthropology), and also with social organisation (sociology), human behaviour (psychology) and politics (political science). However, there was little dialogue between these researchers and those engaged in mainstream development studies research or policy-making.

In the first section of this paper, some of the reasons for the neglect of religion by mainstream development studies and practice will be explored. Reasons why it is important to address the research gaps will then be summarised. Any research requires a conceptual framework, either to generate hypotheses for testing, or to provide starting points for generating and analysing research questions. As we will see, one of the outcomes of the longstanding neglect of the relationships between religions and development and a problem for new research is that there are no recognised conceptual frameworks for analysis. As a minimum, however, it is necessary to clarify the two key concepts involved: religion and development. This will be tackled in Section 4. In Section 5, the Religions and Development Research Programme’s formulation of the key research questions will be outlined. Researching the relationships between religions and development theory and practice raises some tricky issues and poses a number of dilemmas for the researchers involved. These will be discussed briefly in Section 6, and the paper will conclude by outlining the research programme that is now under way.

2 Development theory/practice and religion: why the neglect?

Views about religious beliefs and practices have always been amongst the most polarised in human society. On the one hand, critics consider organised religious traditions as obstacles to the achievement of development goals. On the other, religious adherents insist that human destiny cannot be reduced to material dimensions alone and that religious beliefs can and should motivate believers to work for reduced poverty and material progress.

Critics of religion

- consider belief in the transcendent to be incompatible with modern scientific knowledge
- regard the requirements of many religions that adherents subscribe to set credal beliefs and obey those in religious authority as robbing humans of autonomy and agency,
- judge that many religious beliefs and practices hinder social change and thus hold back improvements in education, health, women's equality etc, and
- believe that, throughout history, the desire for religious hegemony has resulted in competition, conflict and violence.

Advocates, in contrast,

- emphasise that material sufficiency and especially material abundance is considered by many people to be less essential for their wellbeing than a meaningful existence, expressed through religious mysteries, beliefs, symbols and rituals
- note that religious beliefs in many of the world's main faith traditions are associated with the obligation to forge positive relationships with both other people and the natural resources on which human societies depend
- recognise that religious beliefs provide a powerful motivation not just to increase the number of adherents to a particular religion, sect or denomination (in the case of some faith traditions), but also to behave in more ethically and morally upright ways and to care for the disadvantaged.

It is important to recognise the historical roots of the contemporary 'development' project. Centuries of struggle for domination between religions and religious-subdivisions in Europe and the Middle East had led many to the belief that only secular models for the relationships between state and society would enable full advantage to be taken of scientific and technological developments and all members of society to benefit from the improved material well-being that would follow. Belief in the capacity of secular states to achieve social and material progress was bolstered by wartime experience and the post-war determination of northern European and American governments to improve the lives of their

citizens. The apparent poverty and backwardness of countries dominated by the Roman Catholic Church or Islam and the devastating religious conflict that was associated with the independence period in South Asia reinforced the view that religion and government should be kept apart.

One of the explanations for the neglect of the role of religion in mainstream development studies and policy is that it was regarded as irrelevant. The determination of post-war governments to avoid the economic instability that had given rise to the 1930s world depression and the reconstruction of Europe with the assistance of the Marshall Plan gave prominence to economic policy. The discipline of economics promised the analytical and policy tools that were regarded as necessary to achieve global economic stability and the restoration of growth and prosperity in northern countries. In the 1950s and 1960s, Keynesian approaches to economic management strategies were dominant, as countries tried to industrialise and the newly independent countries in South and Southeast Asia and Africa attempted to deliver on their independence promises of greater prosperity for their populations. While the newly industrialising countries of East Asia adopted export oriented approaches to industrialisation, elsewhere, import substitution seemed the most promising first step. Everywhere, economic development planning was seen as the key tool for providing the development 'big push' that countries needed (Nkurunziza, 2007). By the 1970s, however, policies based on import substituting industrialisation were challenged by constraints on the size and growth of domestic markets and over-protectionism, deteriorating terms of trade for many primary products, limitations on state capacity, oil price shocks and the debt crisis.

The problems did not challenge the dominance of economics. Instead, its neoliberal variant enjoyed a resurgence, embodied in the stabilisation and structural adjustment policies advocated by the IMF, World Bank, and other multilateral and bilateral development agencies in the 1980s. Whether Keynesian or neoliberal economic policies dominate, the basic assumptions are similar: all dimensions of development and individual welfare can be expressed in monetary terms and summarised in economic indicators such as GDP and income/consumption; economies can be quantified and modelled, using selected core variables and a variety of simplifying assumptions; people and enterprises are rational economic actors that aim to maximise their utility; and the benefits of economic growth will trickle down to benefit the poor, thus reducing inequality in the long term. The main difference between the models relates to whether the role of government in economic management is extensive or minimal. In much economic analysis, because religion is not regarded as

'rational' and cannot be measured, it is regarded as irrelevant to the calculations of individual economic actors and governments alike.

Other economists, however, are aware that non-economic dimensions of human society are relevant to understanding economic phenomena. Conscious of the very different rates of economic progress demonstrated by developing countries in the 1950s and 1960s, explanations were sought in non-economic factors. In particular, illiteracy and 'tradition' seemed to be holding back progress in those countries that were failing to industrialise or sustain economic growth. Two strands of sociological thought that had been developing in parallel with economic theory were influential.

The first viewed societies as systems made up of interdependent parts (e.g. cultural beliefs, legal or political institutions, economic/technological organisations, social patterns of family organisation). So long as these parts were compatible, the social structure would be in equilibrium, but if one of the parts became incompatible with the others, it was believed that change in the social structure would occur. Countries seeking greater prosperity regarded one structural component as primary: economic/technological organisation, meaning a western-type economic structure. Attempts to transform the economic structure of developing countries to resemble the economic structure of western countries led some economists to a realisation that economic behaviour and institutions are embedded in social and cultural institutions. They therefore not only saw the transformation of social, cultural and political institutions as an inevitable result of the diffusion of a western economic structure,¹ but also made an assumption that a reorganisation or westernisation of social and cultural institutions would *facilitate* economic growth and could even be a prerequisite or condition for achieving economic growth.

The second element of sociological thought that was influential in development thinking was the notion that role relationships in society, and therefore social structure, can be understood by ascertaining the particular combinations of value orientations characteristic of that society. One of the first economists to draw attention to non-economic factors in development was Hoselitz, who simplified the sociological concept by holding one set of values to characterise traditional and the other to characterise modern societies. Modernisation then became the problem of ensuring a transition from dominance by traditional values to dominance by modern orientations for action. Transition from a traditional or economically backward to a modern or economically advanced society could, it was suggested, be achieved by: the removal of traditional social, cultural and institutional features and their

replacement by 'modern' ones, or by instilling 'modern values and beliefs, to ensure that people, especially peasants, would behave in an economically 'rational' way, i.e. according to the profit motive. Education and the media, it was suggested, could change people's social attitudes and behaviour for the better, and also foster the emergence of an entrepreneurial and managerial elite by rewarding achievement rather than allocating roles according to inheritance or tradition, thus fuelling the virtuous circle of economic growth. There was, of course, nothing new in these beliefs – they had motivated the engagement of both missionaries and colonial governments in the provision of education and health services.

Much earlier, Weber had famously postulated a positive role for Protestant Christianity in the development of European capitalism, and had suggested that other religions, such as Hinduism, hindered economic and technological revolution not because their beliefs and practices posed insuperable obstacles but because they infused the whole of society with a 'spirit' that was not conducive to economic transformation (Weber, 1930[1904-5]). Although Weber's thesis was controversial from its first publication (Goldthorpe, 1996, p. 80-1), in the 1950s and 1960s, modernisation theorists and many governments accepted his view that religion in general (or a particular variant of religion such as Catholicism or Hinduism) was generally an obstacle to the structural and behavioural changes necessary for economic transformation.

In the post-war period, several aspects of the relationship between religion and governments had changed. First, rivalry between religions and the desire of minority religions to safeguard the interests of their adherents was expressed in a quest for political power, especially in South Asia. The initial constitutional settlement did not resolve the issues and the devastating conflicts and refugee movements that ensued led the Indian government under Nehru and the Pakistani government under Bhutto to regard religion as a source of conflict and to adopt an avowedly secular constitution, as did Nigeria. That a secular constitution does not resolve the issues is demonstrated by the lasting tension over the nature of the state in Pakistan because of its perceived aim of protecting the interests of Muslims, the rise of religious-based political parties in both India and Pakistan, and by tensions over the principles on which legal and governance systems are based in many countries including Pakistan and Nigeria.

Second, the fragility of many post-independence governments, their desire to forge a sense of national unity amongst disparate populations and their need to deliver greater prosperity led many politicians to regard all social organisations with independent sources of power and authority as a potential threat. This constrained the emergence of civil society organisations in many countries. More generally, it placed religious organisations in a delicate position vis a vis the state, especially where they supported the emergence of challenges to authoritarian rule, for example in Latin American countries, where the emergence of liberation theology from the radical wing of the Roman Catholic church provided both the ideological justification and organisational basis for the development of civil society organisations and questioned the predominant economic development model.

Third, governments believed that they had a responsibility towards all their citizens. Involvement in service provision was regarded as necessary in order to overcome the patchy coverage of services provided by religious bodies and ensure universal national standards (e.g. in the educational curriculum).

Fourth, the dominant diagnosis of under-development put it down to a lack of capital for investment by governments and enterprises alike. Large injections of external capital (through foreign direct investment and overseas development assistance) were seen as a major part of the solution. To build political legitimacy, maintain security, manage their economies, and provide infrastructure and services, strong governments with multiple roles, responsibilities and powers were regarded as necessary by developing and developed countries and international institutions alike. Moreover, almost universally, those with different diagnoses of and solutions to underdevelopment (from dependency theorists to neoliberal economists) continued to disregard the potential relevance of religion to understanding the causes of economic stagnation and poverty or its role in devising ways of increasing wellbeing as well as economic growth.

The 'international development industry' arose as a means of enabling the required transfers of cash and expertise. It incorporates the major financial institutions, the multi- and bilateral aid agencies, development NGOs² and the educational, research and training institutions that develop and transmit knowledge about developing societies, their relationships with the rest of the world and their successes and failures with respect to achieving the material objectives that most believe to be desirable. It continues to dominate theorising, analytical research, policy making and, for the poorest

countries, financing of development. Arguably, it is one manifestation of broader economic and cultural globalisation trends. Nevertheless, for the most part, the organisations that constitute the ‘international development industry’, especially those that control most of the financial resources, are avowedly secular. Their association with the UN or secular northern governments not only prohibits them from favouring one religious tradition over another but also inhibits them from acknowledging the religious dimension of life at all, whatever its importance as a motivating force in the lives of many of their staff members. Moreover, Clarke (2007, p.79) notes that

“Western official donors have traditionally been ambivalent about the relationship between faith and development and the activities of faith-based organisations. They were heavily influenced by the legal separate of church and state in liberal democracies. They felt that religion was counter to development, that religious discourses with strong historical resonance were inflexible and unyielding in the face of social and political change. This antipathy was often reciprocated. Faith leaders often saw themselves as defenders of traditional moral values amid the onslaught of secular modernity and many were wedded to a paternalistic view of poverty and the poor, ready to advocate the charitable obligations of the faithful but less willing to press for political and social change. With notable exceptions, the main faiths emphasised the spiritual and moral dimensions of poverty at the expense of the material, and representative organisations avoided poverty-focused social engagement and policy dialogue with governments and donors.”

In the last fifteen years there has been increased engagement between faith traditions and FBOs and states and their overseas development activities. At one extreme, this takes the form of the close relationships between Christian evangelical churches and development organisations and the US government on the one hand and organisations promoting Wahhabi Islam and charitable works and the Saudi Arabian government on the other. In contrast, some governments remain determinedly secular and most European countries are ambivalent. Nevertheless, in the latter, some of the most prominent non-governmental development organisations are faith-based and some associated with the mainstream Christian churches have received government funding, although in their relationships with governments, “Typically,... they wear their faith lightly” (Clarke, 2005, p. 2). In the UK, for example,

“They shared much of DFID’s vision of development and appeared as quasi-secular organisations and therefore compatible with DFID’s secular vision of development; they had plural work forces (employing believers and non-believers alike), avoided proselytising activities (ie converting non-adherents to the faith), and were non-denominational in their work with local communities (helping believers and non-believers

on an equal basis). To the FBOs themselves, however, this quasi-secularism was largely forced on them by DFID's antipathy to faith-based value systems and it made for uneasy relationships at times, with frequent potential for misunderstanding. As one FBO interviewee observed, staff were forced to 'leave their faith at the door' when they sought DFID funding or engaged in dialogue with DFID officials" (Clarke, 2007, p. 84).

The result of the various factors identified in this section has been widespread neglect of the role of religion in both mainstream academic analysis of people's lives and social relationships and in development theories and practices.

3 The research gaps

Despite the neglect of religion in mainstream development research and policy, it is clear that

- religion is a key aspect of millions of people's lives and influences their actions in many different ways.
- religious organisations are amongst the most important social organisations in many societies, and have maintained and even increased their scale and scope despite decades of persecution or neglect
- the major world faith traditions have historically had international reach and influence, provided their adherents with identities and allegiances that reach beyond local social structures and national boundaries, and are being re-constituted and reinforced by contemporary globalisation trends
- the role of religion in public life is being radically re-assessed
- religion and politics is linked in controversial ways
- relationships between development actors and religious organisations are complicated and sometimes fraught.

Although it is possible to make these general statements with some confidence, when they are probed further, it is clear that our understanding of each is either limited or the understanding that we have is not available to those working in development. Each will be explored briefly, to identify some of the key knowledge gaps.

First, modernisation theory's belief that religion had already decreased in importance in so-called 'modern' industrialised countries and its assumption that the same would happen as developing countries modernised was challenged: it was apparent that religion had not disappeared in Europe and North America (and, moreover, that religious belief was widely surviving communist persecution) and also that the number and membership of religious organisations was growing in most parts of the south (as a result of a new generation of missionary work and the growth of indigenous religious organisations, especially in Latin America and Africa). It also has become increasingly clear that, while for most people in the north, the sacred and the secular are distinct spheres, "For most people of the 'South', spirituality is integral to their understanding of the world and their place in it, and so is central to the decisions that they make about their own and their communities' development" (Ver Beek, 2002, p. 60). There is said to be a notion of the sacred at the heart of their lives (Verhelst with Tyndale, 2002) and that they find in "religious beliefs, symbols, practices and mysteries their primary source of meaning" (Goulet, 1980, 482). Ellis and Ter Haar contend that "it is largely through religious ideas that Africans think about the world today, and that religious ideas provide them with a means of becoming social and political actors" (2004, p. 2). In contrast, developed societies are said by some analysts to

be increasingly secularised: religion is disappearing, is becoming a purely private affair, or is being watered down. Not everyone would agree: even if religion is becoming a more personal and private matter than in the past, there is much evidence to show that spiritual matters continue to be important to many people and in some northern country contexts (such as the US) it cannot be argued that religion is declining in importance (Tomalin, 2007b).

Today, many external development actors recognise the validity of and need to understand indigenous culture and religious beliefs and practices. However, Ver Beek suggests that development interventions often change society and religion “without encouraging reflection on or gaining consent to those changes” (Ver Beek, 2002, p. 74). Knowledge of how people understand the sacred, how this understanding influences their values and beliefs, and how these in turn influence their behaviour and actions is an important (although clearly not the sole) source of explanations about how people conceive of well-being, how they make day-to-day life course decisions, their ethical and moral stances, and how they regard various social issues. Although anthropologists have developed an understanding of many groups’ belief systems, how these are changing and how they relate to behaviour, through the use of ethnographic methods and the study of symbols, ritual, etc, this understanding has less frequently been applied to analysing the interactions between people and development processes, objectives and actors (Bradley, 2007).

Second, religion is used by many states and politicians for both symbolic and practical purposes. Some determinedly secular states, notably the US in the north, have been influenced by the rise of religious organisations that are not content to deal with people’s private beliefs and morality, but have increasingly influenced national policies. Clarke (2005, 2007) outlines how Ronald Reagan, President of the US from 1980 to 1989, mobilised the religious right in support of his foreign and domestic policy agenda, and how it has subsequently continued to grow in size and influence, especially since George Bush came to power in 2001 (Clarke, 2007). Parallel developments included Arab support for the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and increased aid flows from Arab governments to Muslim countries. Elsewhere, rulers of ostensibly secular states have used religion instrumentally or symbolically to unite disparate populations or enlist their support for particular policies, for example by appealing to ‘Asian’ or ‘Islamic’ values. The collapse of communism “fuelled the rise of identity politics, centred on novel blends of ethnic, cultural and religious identity” (Clarke, 2005, p. 6). In addition, when communism ended, it became clear that faith traditions had survived the decades of persecution and

many religious bodies experienced a revival during the period of economic hardship and social upheaval that accompanied its demise. Elsewhere, democratisation struggles were often assisted by religious groups (bolstered by their ability to link and appeal to international faith communities), for example, sections of the Catholic church were instrumental in the movements to oust authoritarian rule in many Latin American countries, Christian leaders helped to topple the Marcos regime in the Philippines in 1986, Buddhist leaders contributed to the collapse of military rule in Thailand in 1992, and Muslim leaders in Indonesia helped to bring down the Suharto government in 1990. The opening up of political space was not always entirely positive: it also resulted in simmering inter-ethnic or inter-religious conflict emerging into the open, for example in Indonesia and Iraq. Moreover “[i]n many parts of the world, political parties and allied social movements diluted their class character and developed a more multidimensional identity, invariably incorporating a strong faith dimension” (Clarke, 2005, p. 6), for example, the Hindu nationalist Bharatya Janata Party in India.

Although religious organisations had been important providers of services (especially education and health) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in the 1950s and 1960s, a strongly state-centred approach to development was adopted by developing country governments backed by western donors. Western countries’ belief in state responsibility for development and the efficacy of economic development planning rested on their own post-war experience (e.g. the institution of welfare states in Europe, the success of the Marshall Plan). Developing country governments were driven by the desire (and political imperative) to extend services to all their citizens, in order to build their political legitimacy and foster national unity (for example by the development of a national curriculum). Faith-based service providers were generally overtaken by government provision and were often effectively nationalised. Many secular northern agencies were uneasy about channelling public funds to religious organisations. The reduced availability of government funding and religious organisations’ changing relationships with their ‘mother’ bodies in the rich countries often reduced their ability to maintain services. Fragile or authoritarian governments also clamped down more generally on civil society organisations, especially those that aspired to political activism. The result for many existing organisations was a period of political quietism, while few new organisations emerged.

This changed in a number of ways in the 1980s. The radical economic policies of liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation pushed through at home (for example in the US and the UK) and overseas (especially through the IMF and World Bank) also provided increased opportunities for FBOs and other

not-for-profit and private providers of services. In the US, legislative change increased the opportunities not only for FBOs to bid for government contracts but also for them to adopt a more explicitly religious stance in their activities (Clarke, 2005, 2007). In the UK, attempts to find new ways of meeting the needs of an increasingly multi-cultural society and marginalised young people, often from minority groups, opened up new opportunities for religious groups to provide education. In developing countries, governments economically weakened by structural adjustment policies and under pressure to privatise services turned in many cases to the remnants of faith-based service providers, handing hospitals and schools back to (now indigenous) religious organisations. NGOs, including FBOs, were also increasingly favoured by international official and non-governmental donors as being more able to reach the poorest, having more appropriate development and service provision models, and being sufficiently flexible to respond to emergencies and new challenges such as HIV/AIDS. Today, by some estimates, more than half of all health care and a large proportion of education services in sub-Saharan Africa are provided by FBOs (Marshall, 2005). In addition, increased aid flows from the richer Arab countries (and later from diaspora communities) gave rise to a proliferation of NGOs and FBOs in the Arab and wider Muslim worlds. The values and economic views of these organisations are varied: some support the neoliberal agenda of a reduced state role, others are more concerned with social justice (Alkire, 2006). Although there have been some case studies of the activities of FBOs, these are not extensive and the literature is widely dispersed (Candland, 2000; Bradley, 2005, 2006).

Clarke (2005) suggests a five-fold typology of religious organisations

- i. The religious organisations or apex bodies associated with particular faith traditions, which “rule on doctrinal matters, govern the faithful and represent them through engagement with the state and other actors” (p. 9), some of which have a unified hierarchical form of organisation and some of which do not
- ii. Faith-based charitable or development organisations (FBOs) “which mobilise the faithful in support of the poor and other social groups, and which fund or manage programmes that tackle poverty and social exclusion” (p. 9)
- iii. Faith-based socio-political organisations, including political parties, social movements, mass organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood or Indonesia’s *Nahdlatul Ulama*, and secret societies that operate covertly. These “interpret and deploy faith as a political construct, organising and mobilising social groups on the basis of faith identities but in pursuit of broader political objectives or, alternatively, promote faith as a socio-cultural construct, as a means of uniting disparate social groups on the basis of faith-based cultural identities” (p. 9)

- iv. Missionary organisations that actively proselytise
- v. Radical or terrorist organisations that promote militant forms of faith identity or engage in armed struggle or violent acts justified on the grounds of faith.

While such a typology is a possible starting point for mapping a range of religious bodies; analysing the ways in which religion influences their motives, values and activities; and examining the nature of their relationships with secular agencies, at present we lack national overviews of the characteristics, activities, interactions between and influence of religious organisations and FBOs, with the partial exception of some surveys of the non-profit sector in a number of countries coordinated by Johns Hopkins University (Ghaus-Pasha et al, 2002a, 2002b; Salamon et al, 2003; Salamon and Sokolowski, 2004). In addition, the above typology does not separately identify local congregations, despite their importance in religious teaching, promoting particular values, and playing a role in people's lives and communities.

The changes sketched above have, if anything, increased the already complex relationships between politics and religion, by introducing new global dimensions, legitimising militant expressions of identity, and increasing the political salience of religion (Haynes, 1993). Today, disenchantment with governments' ability to rule effectively and transparently is reflected in the higher trust ratings given to religious bodies and their leaders in opinion polls in many countries³. It also helps to explain the emergence of faith-based political parties in some countries, and partly accounts for movements to introduce Shariah law and Islamicise economic practices (for example in Nigeria or Pakistan). Although some political scientists have analysed the role of religion in third world politics and international relations (for example, Haynes, 1993), the new dynamics of religion, politics and their interface at both global and local levels requires more sophisticated analysis than theories such as the 'clash of civilisations' suggest. In Tanzania, for example, Heilman and Kaiser (2002, p. 692) argue that

“uncovering and analysing relationships between identity groups and the state elucidates how cross-cutting cleavages complicate the mobilisation of individuals and organised groups based on identity.. The combination of cross-cutting cleavages, intra-group conflict, and rough numerical parity among Christian and Muslim adherents complicates instrumentalist assumptions of elite manipulation, and these factors also limit the analytical salience of primordial expressions of religious identity in the political realm”.

Similarly. Singh's (2004) analysis of the competing visions of Gandhi and Nehru for India's future, the needs and claims of religious minorities, and nationalist Hinduism's attempt to realign state and cultural power in the interests of the majority, demonstrates the complexities of secularism and multiculturalism as strategies for managing multi-religious states.

The Human Development Report of 2004 tackles the social and political management of culturally and religiously diverse societies. It adopts a highly normative and ideological stance with respect to the desirability of individual cultural choice and multiculturalism as a way of managing cultural diversity. It advocates multicultural policies to achieve 'living mode' and 'participation' inclusion, argues that attempts to suppress cultural diversity are morally wrong and likely to exacerbate conflict, and suggests that there are a variety of mechanisms available to governments for ensuring that the rights of different cultural and religious groups are recognised, their needs reflected in political decision making and their access to public resources guaranteed (UNDP, 2004). Critics (for example Pieterse, 2005) focus on the report's reliance on a notion of individual cultural choice, which they argue demonstrates a western liberal bias, and

- its lack of analysis of whether cultural diversity can actively foster development
- its limited historical analysis
- for "taking the politics out of culture and identity" and
- for promoting mechanisms for managing multiculturalism, the efficacy of which is unproven.

Whatever the shortcomings of the UNDP report, however, the challenges of governance and social change, especially in multi-religious states, are unlikely to diminish. For development agencies to address such challenges, their approaches must draw on well informed analysis of the relationships between religion and politics and realistic assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of the mechanisms and policies (such as positive discrimination) associated with multiculturalism.

4 A conceptual framework for studying the relationships between religions and development?

One of the outcomes of the neglect of religion in the mainstream development literature is that there is no generally accepted conceptual framework for studying the relationships between religions and development. We believe that it is not possible to develop such a conceptual framework at the outset: not only is the field of study wide and complex, it also needs to draw on the insights of work in several disciplines (anthropology, religious studies, sociology, economics, political science, philosophy, ethics etc). Even if it is not possible at present (and may ultimately be neither possible nor desirable) to devise an over-arching conceptual framework for the research, some conceptual clarification is necessary at the outset.

In particular, we need to consider the two key concepts: development and religion.

4.1 What is religion?

There is no consensus on the definition of religion within or between the disciplinary traditions that have studied religion and society. A distinction can be drawn between studies of religion from within: the concern of theology and related disciplines, for example, ethics, and the social sciences, which seek to understand the nature of religion as a social and cultural phenomenon. Theology and related disciplines aim to provide reasoned discourses to understand, explain, critique, defend or promote a religion – they provide reflection on the traditions themselves. They are generally situated within the religion concerned, accept its basic truth claims, and are concerned with interpreting its beliefs and teachings and detailing how to live in conformity with those beliefs and teachings, which may encompass views about the wider organisation of families and societies⁴. Most of the social sciences, in contrast, are not concerned with the truth claims of a particular religion, and instead study the implications of religious belief and organisation for the nature of society. However, how they try to understand society varies enormously, both between and within disciplines, depending on their ontological and epistemological assumptions. Two broad distinctions illustrate this diversity: first between positivist and interpretivist approaches to theory and method, and second between substantive and functionalist definitions of religion. The first is discussed in Section 6.

Within the social sciences, a broad distinction can be drawn between substantive and functional definitions of religion, although some definitions combine elements of both (Furseth and Repstad, 2006).

Substantive definitions concentrate on what religion *is*: the cross-cultural attributes of religion that distinguish it from other social phenomena, particularly belief in a transcendental reality and/or (a) spiritual being(s), religiosity (which is signified by the beliefs held and practices in which adherents engage), and affiliation with a religious organisation. In this sense, religion has to do with supernatural realities, with the sacred and with ultimacy: “a system of language and practices that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy; and .. relates people to the ultimate conditions of existence” (Haynes, 1996, p. 98). Views about the nature of the transcendental reality, of course, differ: Durkheim considers it to be our collective consciousness, while others accept adherents’ supernatural interpretation. Religion thus comprises

“forms of human practice communally arrived at which are constrained by an [oral or written] text or group of texts set aside and regarded as sacred. Using the term ‘sacred’... is to recognize that human communities mark off certain temporal, spatial and relational areas of life as having semantic density in contrast to mundane transactional activities.... All religions... have text as sacred, which is believed to mediate in some sense between the community and a transcendent source... Such a text-focussed tradition creates a pattern of living and framework of values within which people live their lives in particular historical communities” (Flood, 2006, p. 52).

Functional definitions are primarily concerned with what religion *does*: the role it plays in both the construction of people’s worldviews and the maintenance of social cohesion, although analysts’ views about the relative importance of these functions differ. Perhaps the best known writer with a functional view of religion is Geertz (1973, p. 90), who defines religion as a system of symbols which acts to establish moods and motivations amongst people by formulating concepts of a general order of existence, and clothing these with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem realistic. Thus religion is the means by which meanings are attributed and order structured and transmitted, as revealed by, for example, symbols and ritual. Through its interplay with other dimensions of social organisation and difference such as class, caste, gender and ethnicity, it influences beliefs, behaviour and social organisation: people’s sense of personhood, their social relationships and wider socio-political organisation. In this view religion can best be regarded as the ‘space’ in which those values and beliefs that shape cultural mechanisms and the structures of human daily life operate and can be studied, typically through examining symbols and rituals, as well as a form of social organisation (Bradley, 2007). Whether religion has a positive or negative function in society is open to investigation: there is evidence that religion contributes to “a person’s flourishing or

contentedness, and comprises a dimension of human well-being” (Alkire, 2006, p. 502). However, Ellis and Ter Haar (2004, p.5) are at pains to emphasise that religion, defined in the African context as “a belief in the existence of an invisible world, often thought to be inhabited by spirits that are believed to affect people’s lives in the material world .. may include both constructive and destructive practices”.

Critics of purely functional definitions consider that they may lose sight of what distinguishes the sacred from the secular or profane – they “share an incredulity to religious truth claims” (Flood, 2006, p. 49) (Tomalin, 2007b). Whaling (1986, p. 7), for example, considers that any definition of religion must include both functional and substantive elements. He conceptualises it as having a number of common elements: a religious community or organisation, ritual and worship, scripture and myth, concepts of the sacred, spirituality, aesthetics, ethics, social and political involvement. Beyond these, he suggests that it is characterised by a belief that there is a transcendent reality (the supernatural, sacred or divine) and also a mediating focus or channel that enables human beings to connect to that reality. The reluctance of many social scientists to accept faith traditions’ own conceptualisation of the nature of religion contributes to the lack of communication between theology/Hindu or Buddhist philosophy/Islamic jurisprudence and the social sciences, including development studies.

Developing concepts and definitions for use in the research programme is bedevilled not only by these inter- and intra-disciplinary differences, but also by cultural and linguistic issues. In English, the term religion is often used interchangeably with faith, but its meaning is not identical, which may become clearer when it is translated into other languages. Religion is defined by the OED as a “recognition on the part of man [sic] of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny, and as being entitled to obedience, reverence and workshop; the general mental and moral attitude resulting from this belief, with reference to its effect upon the individual or the community; personal or general acceptance of this feeling as a standard of spiritual and practical life” (OUP, 1989). The central meaning of the word ‘faith’ is similar to ‘belief’, ‘trust’ or ‘confidence’ but unlike these words, it implies a relationship with a transpersonal reality, the existence and nature of which cannot be logically proven or objectively known – thus faith refers in the theological sense to belief in the truths of religion, the authenticity of divine revelation and in particular to “the spiritual apprehension of divine truths, or of realities beyond the reach of sensible experience or logical proof” (OUP, 1989). Thus a ‘religion’ generally refers to a group of people who express a belief in a divine power and regard a particular source of knowledge or teaching about that power as authoritative, often taking the form of a religious

organisation. A 'faith tradition' is a broader concept, referring to a religious movement that shares a history, customs, culture and, to some extent, body of teachings, but may be comprised of more than one sect or denomination, each with some distinctive teachings, practices and organisational forms.

In the major Indian languages 'religion' can be translated as *dharma*. 'Faith' would have to be translated as *astha*, but this is closer to 'belief' in English: conviction of the truth of a proposition. 'Faith communities' would be *sampradaya*, but this means 'sects' in English - a narrower and more specific concept. In Arabic and, by derivation, in languages such as Urdu and Kiswahili, there are words for 'religion', meaning way of life – the sum total of a believer's faith and practice (*deen* in Arabic, *dini* in Kiswahili) and 'belief' (*aqeedah*, meaning any religious belief system or creed, and *eeman*, referring to personal faith or belief). Clearly, any attempt to do comparative international research, especially on the complex relationships between religions and societies, must face the challenge of recognising and understanding the linguistic, cultural and conceptual diversity embodied in local understanding of the key words and concepts with which research team members are working.

4.2 What is development?

Although in its most generic sense, development implies a vision of progressive change and measures to achieve that vision, there are clearly alternative conceptualisations of what change would be considered desirable and 'progressive'. Many conceptualisations of development equate it with material prosperity, expressed in terms of monetary wealth for individuals, families and nations. The means to achieve this vision of development is typically considered to be economic transformation, including economic growth and structural change, the outcomes of which are measured in terms of improved consumption, which in turn is thought to indicate improved welfare. As noted above, religion is considered to be irrelevant. When setbacks on the road to economic transformation and poverty reduction were encountered, however, various social attitudes and characteristics (often including religious beliefs and practices) were identified as obstacles to progress. This diagnosis, together with recognition that the behaviour of economic agents and economic variables are influenced by the socio-political setting, gave rise to an alternative conceptualisation of development as social and cultural modernisation, implying that people's values needed to be changed, through the instruments of education and the mass media. Both these conceptualisations embodied particular ideas about 'progress' and how it could be achieved: not only was there a single destination (developed) but also there was a single path to that destination (economic growth and modernisation). Critics pointed out

the Eurocentric bias of both the goal and the means. Some went further to imply that promotion of a northern vision of the desirable end-state and a single model of the political, economic and social structures that would enable the goal to be achieved was merely another phase of the colonial project – development as imperialism. Analysts focused on both the undesirability of an externally imposed notion of development and the obstacles to achieving it given the economic and political power structures within world capitalism (Nkurunziza, 2007).

In reaction, alternative visions of development have been formulated, based on empowering developing countries and their people to formulate their own goals and take control over the means by which those goals will be realised. Thus alternative approaches to development focus on basic needs satisfaction and seek to endogenise the development process by encouraging self-reliance by community organisations, while more radical post-development analysis questions the desirability and feasibility of development (material consumption, integration in the global economy) as a goal. Writers within various religious traditions have also suggested alternative visions of development that are said to be compatible with religious beliefs and values (e.g. Sardar, 1996; Bond, 2004). Tyndale (2000) identifies a number of common elements in these views, centring on ‘right relationships’ between people (sharing wealth, equity and inclusion) and between people and the environment, as well as means of bringing about change (personal transformation, education and leadership, and identifying appropriate criteria for development). Critics accuse alternative development advocates of neglecting power relationships and romanticising local culture, and post-development writers of focusing on discourse rather than the reality of poverty and offering no alternative model (Nkurunziza, 2007).

An alternative view of development as empowerment that is more theoretically developed and influential is the capability approach, the main proponents of which are Sen (an economist) and Nussbaum (a philosopher) (Deneulin, 2007). This approach is based on the contention that poverty arises not from the lack of money income but from the failure of individuals to realise their full human potential and live valued lives. It argues that rather than measuring income or consumption, poverty should be measured using indicators of the freedom to live a valued life. In this view, societies should identify the capabilities desired for their citizens - the opportunities people have to live a certain kind of life, that is, the capabilities that are regarded as central, given people’s value frameworks. In this view, the role of government is to ensure that people have the necessary opportunities and the freedom to choose, while money income is regarded as a means to enhance capabilities rather than an end in

itself. While Sen refuses to specify a minimum set of desirable capabilities, Nussbaum has attempted to do so. The approach has generated considerable and ongoing debate. Although neither Sen nor Nussbaum explicitly consider religion, it is potentially relevant in two ways:

- Religion is an important determinant of people's values, for example the status or value of each individual, issues of personal responsibility and social justice, or questions of the sacredness of the material world. While Sen pays little attention to religion, instead emphasising the freedom to choose values through public discourse, Nussbaum accepts it as a potential source of values, providing it does not harm others and maintains human dignity. Thus religion may be important in the public discourse Sen considers vital as a means of ascertaining the central values of a society.
- Being part of a faith tradition or affiliated to a religious organisation may influence the opportunities open to people, mainly because it may give rise to positive or negative discrimination and to access to or exclusion from political power and influence, but also because the nature of the religious organisation of which a person is a member may influence the social capital available to him or her.

In general, the debate about the capability approach to development raises unresolved issues over power relationships in public discourse; the influence of cross-civilisational links on indigenous societal values over time; the question of how, if values are arrived at by reasoning, they relate to culture; and how to judge what is a sufficiently reasoned process for arriving at a society's central values.

5 The role of religions in development and questions for research

A broad distinction can be drawn between the nature and role of religion for individuals, and the relationships between organisations explicitly motivated by religion (for maintenance of the religion or other purposes) and socio-political organisations more broadly. The Religions and Development research programme focuses on two themes related to this distinction and is attempting to understand and explain two sets of relationships, those between religious belief and membership of a religious organisation and people's values and attitudes, social relationships and behaviour; and those between organised religion, societies and states. These relationships are complex. They imply both that values and beliefs can influence actions and that religious organisations can influence the states and societies in which they operate and vice versa. They also have important implications for the achievement of development and poverty reduction goals, which will be examined during the research. The themes are, of course, related to each other, but the broad individual/societal distinction enables individual research topics and methodologies to be defined.

5.1 Theme 1: the relationships between religious values and beliefs and the actions of individuals and social groups

The questions to be addressed under this theme include: How do religious values and beliefs influence the ways in which individuals, social groups and FBOs see their own situation? How does religion influence their actions and interactions? What are the common elements and differences between religious values and those underlying mainstream development policies and practices? Our starting point is a belief that

“Religion is always religion-in-action, religion-in-relationships between people, between the ways the world is and the way people imagine or want it to be.... [The study of lived religion implies that attention must be paid] to institutions *and* persons, texts *and* rituals, practice *and* theology, things *and* ideas... The key questions concern what people *do* with religious idioms, how they use them, what they make of themselves and their worlds with them, and how, in turn, men, women and children are fundamentally shaped by the worlds they are making ... Religion approached this way is situated amid the ordinary concerns of life, at the junctures of self and culture, family and society.... The interpretive challenge ... is to develop the practice of disciplined attention to people's signs and practices as they describe, understand, and use them... and to the structures and conditions within which these signs and practices emerge” (Orsi, 2003, p. 172).

The first question to be addressed concerns the relationships between people's religious beliefs and affiliation to a religious organisation and their values and attitudes: what sort of religious teaching do adherents living in poor countries receive and what is their understanding of that teaching, especially with respect to matters that are important to development: questions of wealth, well-being, inequality and poverty; expectations about whether the rewards for religious adherence and practice are this or other worldly; means of making a living and organising economic life, including usury, interest and debt; dimensions of social differences such as caste or gender; and ethics and morals, for example attitudes towards corruption.

Second, the research will question how people's religious beliefs and membership of a religious organisation influences their social relationships at family, community, and societal levels. Religious values and beliefs are one influence on attitudes towards gender roles and responsibilities and social constructions of age, which are important to the allocation of roles and responsibilities at family and community levels, ideas about what is desirable and for whom (e.g. education) and expectations about the roles that men and women, young, adult and older people, or able and disabled people can play in economic and community life. In addition, membership of a religious organisation can be expected to influence people's relations with their kin, and their willingness to take on leadership roles and responsibilities within and beyond religious organisations themselves.

The third important question relates values to behaviour: how do people's religious beliefs influence their decisions and actions, for example with respect to the livelihood strategies they pursue, their healthcare seeking behaviour, fertility and reproduction, education, or social and political engagement?

The programme will study some of these links through a focus on local religious teaching and its interpretation by teachers and listeners, local constructions of well-being and attempts to achieve it, the engagement of people in politics and attempts to secure or resist social change, and their involvement in social development and welfare activities. In all cases, we will need to consider mediating factors: the influences of culture, ethnicity and other dimensions of social diversity and organisation.

One research component will examine local religious teaching and its interpretation by recipients. Religious teaching within developing countries draws on the internationally accepted teaching of religious sects or denominations, generally based on the authoritative interpretation of sacred texts. However, the messages conveyed by local religious teachers are likely to be influenced by the social context and culture, as well as locally prevalent religious beliefs other than those of the world religion to which the teachers belong. This might apply particularly to their teaching about a number of the development-related matters listed above. The vehicles for religious teachings will be examined (verbal and written texts such as radio programmes, pamphlets, recordings, sermons and addresses) and both religious teachers' and listeners' interpretations studied to provide insights into people's views about particular development issues.

The widespread nature of corruption in developing countries is regarded as a problem by development agencies and citizens alike, and there have been many attempts to reduce it. However, few anti-corruption activities have been successful. Recently, analysts have speculated about whether one of the reasons for the lack of progress is a failure to consider the ways in which people's ethical and moral values and beliefs influence their views about their own and others' involvement in corruption. The links between 'religious teaching' and 'values, ethics and morals' are not straightforward, and the links between these and behaviour are even more complex and subject to a wide range of influences, so the research programme will be circumspect about attributing behaviour to religious beliefs. In no area is this more obvious than in the study of corruption, which is made even more difficult by the fact that corrupt behaviour is by definition illegal. The research will, therefore, concentrate on attitudes towards corruption and how these are influenced by religious values and beliefs.

A third research component will examine the role of religion and culture in social constructions of well-being, as well as in people's everyday lives and social relationships in families and communities. This work will develop an understanding of the nature and role of local religious organisations, and will also probe how relationships beyond local communities (with government, service providers, higher level religious organisations etc) influence people's ability to fulfil their aspirations, especially by determining their access to resources.

People's religious values and beliefs may also be expected to influence their views about wider social and political issues and their willingness to engage in practical activities to improve the welfare of others, including charitable giving and community development. Other components of the research will examine the involvement of adherents of particular religions and religious organisations in politics, movements to achieve or resist social change and social development activities. These are described in more detail below, as they bridge between the two themes.

5.2 Theme 2: the relationships between religious organisations, states and societies

The main questions suggested by this theme include: How do religious organisations, states and societies relate to each other at local, national and international levels? How are those relationships changing in the contemporary world and how are they influenced by religious values and beliefs? What influence do they have on governance, policies and the achievement of development goals? At the time that this research programme was being formulated, DFID was also commissioning research on *Institutions and Pro-poor Growth*, which had a primarily economics focus. The RaD programme, therefore, is centrally concerned with political and social aspects of the social world rather than economics aspects, although the latter are not completely ignored. In addition, it was felt that, around the time of the Rio de Janeiro conference on the environment, a considerable amount of research on the relationships between religious values and beliefs and environmental management had been undertaken. There is not, therefore, considered to be such a major research gap in this area as in some others. Moreover, certain aspects of the links between politics and religion were felt to be relatively well-researched, especially where they concern international relations, which is not in DFID's view part of the remit of this research programme: political Islam, the role of religion in conflict, the relationships between religion and international terrorism.

One research component will examine the question of how the relationships between organised religion, societies and states play out in the political arena by examining the evolution of politics and governance arrangements, drawing on historical analyses complemented by contemporary analyses based on the views of key actors.

One of the reasons why many people regard religion as an obstacle to development is that religious attitudes are commonly thought to be socially conservative, for example, the views of the Catholic church about contraception, Islamic views about the role of women and their access to education, or the centrality of caste to Hinduism.. However, it would be wrong to generalise: some religious traditions, such as Catholic liberation theology, Gandhian Hindu thought about the nature of development, or the Buddhist Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, are based on a central concern with social justice and have articulated radical alternative visions. The research will gather empirical evidence on the motives for engagement of religious adherents and organisations in movements for social change, as well as socially conservative groups, and the outcomes of their involvement, focusing on selected issues that are important to the achievement of development objectives, including anti-corruption movements and the women's movement.

The preparation, monitoring and revision of Poverty Reduction Strategies are supposed to be consultative, bringing the voices and views of civil society organisations into government policy making. Faith communities are sometimes said to be particularly strongly placed to represent the views of ordinary people in these consultative and monitoring processes, because of their local presence and strong organisations. The research will, therefore, examine whether faith communities have been involved, and diagnose the opportunities for and constraints on their involvement.

Finally, at the international level, many apex or umbrella religious organisations have special consultative status at the UN, where they might be expected to influence international development agendas (such as debates around gender, the MDGs, population growth or reproductive health). A number of case studies of the efforts of such religious organisations to influence UN development agendas will be conducted.

Many social scientists have seen different religious identities and views as a source of prejudice, disrespect for alternative worldviews and conflict. As noted above, such views have exacerbated the neglect of social scientific study of the relationships between religion and society. Views within the faith traditions, especially amongst those convinced of their truth and committed to proselytising, have been very different and recently, a shift in views amongst development practitioners and some social scientists can also be detected. Extension of the concept of capital (a stock of resources that can be accumulated, drawn upon, depleted and replenished) from the traditional (economic) focus on

financial and physical capital, initially to natural capital and later to social and cultural capital represented an acknowledgement by economists of the importance of environmental and relational assets to welfare. Social and cultural capital refer to the social networks and symbolic resources available to people, which can be used for constructive purposes but can also be used to exercise power (Bourdieu's 'symbolic violence') and often contribute to inequality, first because elites have access to more social and cultural resources than poor people, and second because of the important role of bequeathed social and cultural capital in reproducing inequality (Rao and Walton, 2004). Even more recently, economists and others have started to explore the idea of 'spiritual' or 'religious capital', especially in the US context (e.g. Iannaccone and Klick, 2003)⁵. However, in addition to criticisms of the use of the concept of capital to denote social resources and relationships, Tomalin (2007b) notes that the role of religion in social capital formation (whether positive or negative) is poorly understood and under-researched, especially in non-western contexts.

A series of research components will examine how religious organisations and their members live out their ethical and moral values, asking the question how do religious values and beliefs influence the engagement of FBOs⁶ in service delivery and development activities? The origins and current inspiration of many contemporary development NGOs lie in organised religion, although the extent to which they publicly acknowledge their religious roots and motivation varies. In some respects, FBOs resemble secular NGOs, but in other respects, because the religious organisations with which they are associated regard themselves as being different in kind from governments and development agencies, they resist being included in the same category as secular NGOs. While some research has shown that FBOs can deliver good quality services more cost-effectively than other service providers (e.g. Reinikka and Svensson, 2004, in Uganda), other studies demonstrate that the self-attributed altruistic motivations of FBOs and their staff influence their perceptions of the people amongst whom they work in ways that are not always acknowledged and cloud their perceptions of the effectiveness of their work (e.g. Bradley, 2005, 2006 in India). Our research will examine examples at local, national and international levels:

- The relationships between state and non-state service providers with respect to madrasa education
- The service-providing activities of religious political parties and how these relate to government
- The engagement of FBOs in development activities, such as community development projects.

- The role played by religious organisations in the reconstruction of social capital in the aftermath of local conflict.
- The engagement of transnational diaspora communities linked by religion in remitting funds for development activities.

The religious affiliation of the organisations being studied is only likely to capture one influence on their motivation, mode of operation and relations with intended beneficiaries and other actors, especially government agencies. For example, in one of the few comparative studies (of four FBOs in Thailand, Indonesia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) Candland (2000), while suggesting that religion might provide the basis for “progressive social solidarity” (p. 356), also concluded that “religious tenets and institutions are seemingly best employed for social and political change in a political arena in which religion is not already used by governments to legitimate arbitrary or dictatorial rule” (p. 145). In each case, therefore, our research will analyse how the religious nature of the organisations under study is mediated by political and cultural dynamics.

6 Difficulties and dilemmas in researching religions and development

Research into the relationships between religions and development is complex and sensitive, even if the research focuses on selected issues and organisations. The researchers involved in this programme are aware of some of the difficulties and dilemmas that the research is likely to encounter, although we do not yet have solutions to many of them. In this section, some of the difficulties and dilemmas will be briefly reviewed.

The first set of issues is epistemological – they concern the nature of knowledge and truth. Not only do different disciplines have different ideas about the nature of knowledge, the use of theory and the role of empirical analysis, but also the global faith traditions have different ideas about the nature of knowledge and the function of scholarship.

For example, within religious studies, Tomalin (2007c) suggests that there is a continuum of positions, from naturalists, who believe that all entities and events can ultimately be explained scientifically, to phenomenologists, who take all expressions of religion at face value and attempt to capture subjects' accounts of their views and experiences as faithfully as possible – the latter consider that ascertaining or questioning the 'truth' of religious experience and knowledge is not the business of the researcher. There is a parallel distinction in most of the social sciences. On the one hand, positivist approaches are based on a belief that it is possible to derive universal laws about the nature of human behaviour or the relationship between two social phenomena by abstraction of key variables from their context, and hypothesis testing using quantitative data and statistical analysis. At the opposite extreme, interpretivist approaches believe that value-free social science is impossible – analysis is always conditioned by the researcher's values and beliefs, even in the selection of hypotheses to test. To avoid the bias that results, researchers are urged to aim to represent the views of their research subjects without any theoretical or cultural preconceptions of their own – theory, in this view, emerges from the data, which are essentially qualitative. These different epistemological positions imply different views about what kind of 'evidence' should be gathered and what types of information are considered reliable and valid. Anthropology sits firmly within the interpretivist approach, with internal debates that focus mainly on how self-critically reflexive anthropologists are, while positivist approaches have dominated economics throughout, were most influential in sociology and geography in the 1960s and 1970s than in the last twenty years (although they are still widely used), and continue to be very important in psychology and political science. However, first Marxist scholarship and, more recently, recognition of the importance of social institutions (the formal and informal rules that govern

social interaction) and the ‘cultural turn’ in many disciplines has challenged the dominance of positivist approaches, in economics (the new institutional economics), political science, geography (cultural geography), sociology, psychology and development studies (postcolonial analyses).

Arguably, these recent shifts in disciplinary approaches and the methodological tools they mainly use have contributed to the new willingness to analyse the relationships between religion and society, although there are dangers in adopting too extreme an interpretivist (phenomenological) approach. Assumptions about the nature of knowledge and how to study the social world underlie questions about objectivity and subjectivity. Interpretive approaches to the study of religion aim to get as close as possible to the religious understanding of believers, but the dividing line between empathy (representing the views of others as accurately as possible) and sympathy (treating the religious accounts of subjects as beyond scrutiny) is far from clear (Tomalin, 2007c). When it comes to the study of religion many social scientists are ‘insiders’: to study their own or others’ religious traditions, they need to “step imaginatively outside their own religious perspective in order to get some idea of what someone else’s might be like. ‘Outsiders’, those with a non-religious view of the world, have the task of imagining what the world might be like if a sacred realm really did exist” (Connolly, 1999, p.2; see also Orsi, 2003, p. 174; Furseth and Repstad, 2006, p. 205-7). Any such ‘imagining’ that we succeed in doing will inevitably be partial, but it is arguably essential if dialogue between different understandings of the nature and role of religion in society is to take place.

Conceptions of the role of theory and scholarship differ not only between the main social science disciplines, which evolved in Europe and North America and so owe their intellectual traditions to those cultural contexts, but also between these and other disciplines (such as ethics), as well as between the traditions of scholarship within the faith traditions. The social science disciplines consider that the main purpose of social science research is to describe social phenomena using empirical investigation and to explain the social world – the essential role of theory is explanatory. However, in addition social scientists often consider that they have a responsibility for praxis, a role in changing the world, and this leads them into the development of normative theory: ideas about how the world ought to be, or what sorts of outcomes particular interventions are likely to have. This particularly applies in the ‘applied’ areas of study such as development studies or public management (Nkurunziza, 2007; Shah et al, 2007).

In this, social scientists share to some extent the view of theory in theology or Islamic studies, in which the sacred texts (and other sources of authoritative religious teaching) are interpreted, *inter alia* to identify beliefs about how the world ought to be. 'Knowledge', in this tradition, refers to the most authoritative interpretation and is linked to the 'truth claims' of the religious tradition concerned, although in Islam knowledge has a wider conceptualisation that embraces not only knowledge and insight but also social action (*ilm*⁷) and some branches of theology (biblical research, church history) rely on empirical evidence and social, economic and cultural explanations, so the boundary between theology and social science is fuzzy (Furseth and Repstad, 2006, p. 10). Within Islam there is controversy over whether the Qur'an and Sunnah provide all necessary knowledge or need to be interpreted through reason and complemented by empirical study of the natural and social world, which itself may be held to reveal the divine (Tibi, 2005; Koshul, 2006). As Islamic scholars such as Tibi (2005) point out, Medieval Islam recognised reasoning (not mere repetition) as a way of developing both philosophical and religious interpretation and scientific knowledge, whereas some contemporary variants of Islam have, in part, returned to a pre-Medieval view of the Shari'a as immutable and the foremost source of all knowledge not unlike fundamentalist Christianity. The role of scholarship within religious traditions is thus generally considered to be interpretation and explication, as well as suggesting how the ideal world suggested by the religious teachings might be achieved (through individual moral behaviour, ways of relating to others, and ways of organising society – for example systems of law or economic organisation). In studying the relationships between religion and society, these differing views of the nature of knowledge, the role of theory, and the functions of evidence and scholarship need to be teased out, but guidance is currently lacking in the academic literature on whether and how to reconcile the different views and traditions.

A second major group of issues in the study of religions and societies relates to the imprecise and contested nature of the concepts involved: religion, culture, identity, development, rights etc. In the main social science disciplines, our understanding of these concepts has mostly evolved during the study of western societies, or of non-western societies through the eyes of western social scientists (or even non-western social scientists educated in the west or taught by those educated in the western social science traditions). Analyses are, as a result, constantly open to challenges: for example that the concepts are Eurocentric and inappropriate for understanding other societies, or that those versed in the western social sciences are merely part of a western imperialist project.

Anthropological texts mainly regard religion as one important foundation of cultural beliefs, identities and everyday actions and practices. They seem to regard religion as fundamentally experiential, providing people with a framework for understanding the world and their place in it, with culture being conceived as the mechanism by which these beliefs are translated into social structures and practices that shape behaviour and determine how people relate to the world and each other. However culture also determines the shape that religious spaces take and influences the specific identities and behaviour that emerge from them. While many aspects of religious experience seem to be similar across cultures, specific beliefs and the practices into which they are translated differ (Bradley, 2007). The difficulties in separately identifying such intertwined aspects of people's experiences and lives are reflected in some of the debates common in development studies, for example, are female exclusion or genital mutilation religious or cultural practices? do men dominate religious (and other) leadership positions for religious or cultural reasons? Moreover, it is argued that the distinction between religion and society itself arose out of the progressive separation of the private and public spheres of life during the process of secularisation in western states, and may be inappropriate in non-western contexts. Finally, many of the concepts linked to contemporary ideas of 'development', such as progress, liberalism, universal human rights or Weberian bureaucratic ideals, are heavily influenced by the particular religious (Christian) and cultural (western) contexts from which they have emerged and, it is argued, are not necessarily applicable to other faith traditions or cultures.

There are a number of major religious traditions in the countries of the south, the organisational expression of which is very varied, ranging from the hierarchical organisation and authority structure of most Christian denominations, to the mosque-based organisation, schools of jurisprudence and teaching traditions of the Islamic sects, and the more informal local religious communities typical of Hinduism or African traditional religions. The cultural characteristics of the societies in which the religions evolved or into which they were imported and the role of organised religion during the colonial period also varied greatly. All these have influenced the post-independence evolution of state-society-religion relationships in different ways in different parts of the world. Given the limited resources available to a single research programme, difficult decisions have to be made about which aspects of this complexity will be studied.

The remit of the programme is to undertake comparative research across poor countries and different religious traditions, focusing our efforts on policy relevant but neglected areas. The team has chosen

to focus on four countries, in three of which at least two of the major world religions are important and where religious-based conflict, which has adverse impacts on the achievement of development objectives, has either occurred in recent years or might occur in the near future. Because the research is explicitly comparative, the four countries in which we are working are not merely convenient locations in which particular research projects will be carried out, but will provide material for comparative analysis between countries and between religions, regions and organisations within countries.

Countries in which DFID has major programmes were selected: one from South Asia (India), one from West Africa (Nigeria) and one from East Africa (Tanzania). In addition, international, government and non-governmental development agencies alike recognise that they encounter difficulties when working in largely Muslim contexts (presumably partly because of a failure to recognise the generally implicit religious and cultural underpinnings of debates about development objectives and policies). The programme therefore selected one Muslim-majority country on which to focus (Pakistan)⁸. This choice of countries will enable the research to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional religion. The practical issue of how to study six faith traditions and four countries is further complicated, first, by the fact that all the countries are characterised by regional variations, and two are very large federal states with dramatic differences between sub-national areas and, second, by the subdivision of each of the religious traditions, each of which is subdivided into at least two sects, denominations or variants. Difficult decisions about the selection of geographical locations, faith traditions and subdivisions within the faith traditions face the research programme.

Related to these research-related and practical decisions are issues about the scope and nature of comparative research. Multi-country comparative research using quantitative data tends not to consider the history and context of the countries under study, and is often cross-sectional, analysing data for the same date in different countries regardless of whether that date is the most appropriate for the phenomenon under study and thus failing to reveal trends. Such research can be exploratory, aimed at identifying patterns and correlations, or may aim to test a hypothesis already derived from theory. Research on religions and development using this methodological approach might focus on correlations between commonly available indicators of development and measures of religious allegiance or religiosity (for example, Morris and Adelman, 1980). Given the criticisms of existing

studies and the complexity of the issues and concepts under consideration in this research, such an approach is considered inappropriate.

We are, therefore, focusing on a small number of in-depth case studies, enabling us to situate our analyses in the historical, political, social and cultural contexts of the countries concerned. Many decisions related to the choice of appropriate methodological approaches remain – detailed designs for data collection and analysis will depend on the objectives of specific pieces of research. Moreover, the issue of equivalence needs to be handled with care: do concepts mean the same thing in different social contexts? Are the available data comparable? Do international and national researchers' own values and identities influence their views on the important research questions, and their approach to data collection, analysis and interpretation? The cases selected will be illustrative: typical, representative, perhaps in some cases extreme or variant. We are aware that with a relatively small number of cases under study, we will generally not be attempting to 'prove' theories, because of the 'too many variables, not enough cases' problem. For some research questions the aim will be to capture the full complexity of each local situation; for others, some variables can be held constant in the choice of case studies, in order to enable comparison of a more limited set of variables. In some instances, the selection of comparative case studies within a country can assist in overcoming some of the problems of attribution (e.g. the attribution of perceived differences in attitudes to religion may only be possible when variables such as historical experience, political system and cultural context are held constant). The research programme wishes to avoid the mere empirical description of individual cases (however 'thick' the description). It is important that the research is informed by and contributes to explanatory, and perhaps predictive and normative theory. However, whether the role of theory is to identify starting points for the selection of research questions and analysis of data, to explain the empirical findings, to suggest a normative position against which an observed case can be assessed, or to predict or suggest how the world ought to be will need to be carefully considered as the research evolves.

The final issue that I will raise here relates to the motivations for the current renewed interest in religion in the context of development. Some believe that religious values and beliefs, the communicative resources of organised religion, the altruistic motivations of religious believers and the organisational and financial resources of FBOs are under-used resources for development. Others are more circumspect: they note the religious inspiration for recent international terrorist atrocities, a resurgence

in religious conflict, the forceful assertion of religious identity in politics as reflected in the rise of religious political parties and the adoption of Shari'a law, and the inhibiting effect of religious conservatism on achieving universal education or equality for women. They suspect that the current desire of some development agencies to work more closely with religious bodies is merely the latest attempt to find the 'missing ingredient' in development. There is a danger that some, including adherents to a particular religion, religious organisations themselves, and some of those associated with secular development agencies hope that recognition of the potential benefits of using religious values to encourage particular types of behaviour and partnerships between governments and religious organisations will solve intractable development problems that governments and NGOs (the previous 'panacea') have been unable to solve.

In my view, on the question of whether religion presents opportunities or obstacles for the realisation of the objectives of human development, the jury is still out. In the face of strongly held competing views, we lack the evidence we need. That is a reason to examine the religious values and beliefs that people hold and explore their implications for people's decisions and actions; to scrutinise evolving relationships between states, social organisations and organised religion and ascertain whose interests they serve; and to analyse the developmental activities of FBOs and their outcomes.

7 The Religions and Development research programme 2005-2010

In order to develop a fuller understanding of the relationships under study, the research projects will compare two or more of the focus countries (India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania), regions within the countries, different religious traditions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional religion), and selected development activities and policies. The programme contains three streams of activity: first, conceptual development, second, research projects and third, exploration of the links between the two and their implications for development policy and practice, through internal and external dialogue.

7.1 Developing a conceptual framework

As the work progresses, the programme aims to develop a conceptual framework for understanding the relationships between religions and development. As noted above, no such conceptual framework exists at present and indeed, it may not prove either possible or desirable to agree a single theoretical framework. We are approaching this task in a number of inter-connected ways, by:

- reviewing, comparing and perhaps reconciling the contributions of different disciplines to the study of relationships between religions, societies and development (Bradley, 2007; Jackson and Fleischer, 2007; Marquette and Singh, 2007; Shah et al, 2007; Tomalin 2007a, 2007b, 2007c)
- examining the teachings of the faith traditions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, African traditional religions) that are relevant to key development concepts and practices, such as poverty, wealth and inequality; debt, credit and usury; and gender.
- exploring the epistemological issues raised by different scholarly traditions (faith-based and disciplinary)
- reviewing and refining key concepts, drawing particularly on the contribution of philosophy in developing concepts such as religion, spirituality, sacredness, moral values, fundamentalism, justice, well-being, freedom/liberty, liberalism, toleration, rights/duties and multiculturalism.

7.2 The research projects

The programme is comprised of four research projects linked to our two main themes, each containing two or more individual research components. The aims of the research projects are to improve our understanding of people and their societies, identify drivers and obstacles to pro-poor social change, and produce new knowledge that can inform the development and poverty reduction activities of governments and non-governmental development actors. We will do this by examining

aspects of people's values and their lived experience, the impacts of faith communities and FBOs on aspects of development, and the implications of relationships within and between faith and other social groups, societies and states. Each of the four projects addresses a major research question and is comprised of two or more linked components that address aspects of the main research question. In addition, many of the research components will contribute to the questions addressed by other research projects.

Some of the research is being undertaken in all four countries (especially 'foundational' research that provides contextual material). Other components will compare two or more countries selected from our four focus countries (and in two cases Bangladesh). Within countries, the work will, in principle, be concentrated in two or three geographical areas in order to develop in-depth analysis, but choices will also be related to the specific objectives of particular components. For example, in Nigeria the work will be concentrated in three states: Kano (predominantly Muslim), Anambra (predominantly Christian) and Oyo (mixed Christian and Muslim). In Tanzania, work will concentrate on the mainland, where the population is mixed Christian and Muslim, and where 95% of the population lives. However, attention will also be paid to Zanzibar because of its political salience. In India, each research component is likely to focus on two states, although the selection of states may vary. In Pakistan, particular attention is likely to be paid to the Northwest Frontier Province. While the intention is to study all the major faith traditions represented in each country, human and financial resource limitations will prevent this within every research component.

7.2.1 Project i: Relationships between religious values and development concepts and practices

The overall question addressed by this project is: how are people's religious values and beliefs reflected in their attitudes towards key development issues, their perceptions, experience and pursuit of well-being, and their attitudes towards corruption? It includes three components that consider the content and influence of religious teaching; relationships between religion, perceptions of well-being and the situation of poor people; and the attitudes of public servants towards corruption.

(ia) Relationships between values, religious teaching and mainstream development concepts and practices

It is common for social and political actors to use the language of values to persuade their audiences of the correctness of their proposed course of action. It is equally clear that for many actors it is their religious beliefs and ideals which motivate them. How do these values and beliefs influence people's responses to the challenges of social and economic development? Much experience suggests that the claimed universal beliefs of a particular religion are adapted or challenged in local cultural contexts and in the face of practical development issues. The aim of this component is to examine local interpretations of religious teachings relevant to development. The starting point will be the standard international teachings of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. It will examine how these teachings are interpreted in the light of local cosmological worldviews and patterns of cultural beliefs and values and how these interpretations affect teachers' and recipients' views of some key development issues. The focus will be on two key development issues: poverty, wealth and inequality; and gender relations. Within the first, particular attention will be given to credit and debt, including attitudes to the paying and taking of interest and alternatives. Within the second, issues of gender equality and women's education will be considered. The objectives are to

- Assess the impact of the formal teachings of various religions on local attitudes to the identified issues (poverty, credit and debt, gender relations, women's education)
- Analyse how these issues are understood, including the way interpretations by religious teachers are reached and what external factors influence them
- Analyse how the teachings are accessed and received by the wider community
- Identify the roles of religious leaders within their communities and their relations with other significant social actors

The methodological approach will include

- a review of the main relevant international teachings within each of the faith traditions (see above, Section 7.1)
- selection of study sites (one or two per country, each with a rural and urban dimension), mapping of religious organisations and identification of the key religious teacher(s) and channels by which religious teaching is communicated to local residents

- textual analysis of selected written and oral materials e.g. sermons, tapes
- the use of ethnographic tools to ascertain how the religious teacher selected for study interacts with local religious and non-religious organisations and residents, his religious values and teachings and the influences on them, and acceptance/resistance to and interpretation of the religious teachings.

(ib) Wellbeing and religion – questions of values and practices

This research component builds on existing work within the ESRC Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) research programme (<http://www.welldev.org.uk>) (Oct 2002-Sept 2007) and will be carried out by the Centre for Development Studies, University of Bath. WeD has developed a conceptual and methodological framework for understanding the social and cultural construction of wellbeing. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and fieldwork in urban and rural sites in Peru, Ethiopia, Thailand and Bangladesh, it has investigated how people's own perceptions relate to objective indicators of their welfare; the politics of how needs are defined, met or denied; the impact of policy regimes, political economy and social institutions on people's responses to opportunity and harm; and the ways that individual and collective action affect objective states of welfare and subjective perceptions of quality of life.

Religious values and practices are life dimensions that are often overlooked in studies of poverty, and are related in complex ways to norms, human action and the construction of meaning. However, WeD resources are insufficient to examine the ambivalent relationships of people to religious values, translation of the latter into action, and the ways in which religion crosscuts other dimensions of social difference in people's perceptions, experience and pursuit of wellbeing.

The aim of the component is to explore the significance of religion to the values and practices that make up the social and cultural construction of wellbeing. The objectives are to analyse

- the relative significance of religion in the construction of wellbeing
- the importance of religion compared with other dimensions of life (e.g. class, gender) in shaping action and behaviour
- the ways people move between different 'cosmologies' or value/belief frameworks in their everyday lives, how they 'rationalise' these movements, and how they are influenced by class, age and gender.

The work will be divided into two stages. The first will build on existing quantitative and qualitative work in two sites (one urban and one rural) in NW Bangladesh (community profiles, resources and needs and quality of life questionnaire surveys, process research into family relationships, material resources and wellbeing, and collective action) by analysing relevant findings from this work and carrying out an in-depth ethnographic study. The Bath-based researchers will work with fieldworkers from WeD's current Bangladeshi partner (Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies).

In the second stage (provisionally late 2007-2009), a modified and streamlined version of the WeD methodology (including the study of religion) will be developed for application in another country. The objectives of this stage are (a) to build on WeD experience to devise an improved but less resource intensive methodological approach to studying the social and cultural construction of wellbeing and (b) to analyse how other religions (e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism) influence values, actions and perceptions of wellbeing, and compare the findings with those from a predominantly Muslim society. This stage will be undertaken in India, provisionally in two (rural and urban) communities. The prospective senior researcher for Phase 2 will be involved in the Bangladesh research, to enable his full participation in adapting the methodology, analysis and writing up.

(ic) Religion, ethics and attitudes towards corruption

Faith provides many with a language of ethics and, often, guidelines to live by. Despite this, many of the most corrupt countries in the world (according to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index) also rank high in terms of religiosity (using indicators such as those used by the Pew Global Attitudes Projects). This raises a number of questions. Do public servants separate private and public morality? Do they behave corruptly despite their own moral imperatives not to? How do they then justify their actions? Do attitudes towards corruption vary between religions? Do the actions of religious leaders make a difference to their followers' views and behaviour?

The aim of the component is to assess how public servants' religious beliefs influence their beliefs and perceptions about what is corrupt, which in turn may or may not influence their behaviour with respect to corruption and their reactions to anti-corruption initiatives. Together with an investigation of the role of religious organisations in fighting corruption (iib), this component is intended to help improve the design of anti-corruption strategies.

The methodological approach will combine

- textual analysis (to determine if the language of religion is evident in the discourse on corruption, and to understand if and how public servants use this language to justify or condemn corrupt behaviour)
- a questionnaire survey of male and female public sector workers in 2-3 sectors that are vulnerable to corrupt behaviour, involving scenarios on ethics and corruption
- semi-structured in-depth interviews with leaders and members of selected religious organisations, policy makers and staff in the selected sectors, and those engaged in anti-corruption policy design and implementation.

7.2.3 Project ii: Religions, governance and development

This project asks: what are the historical and contemporary relationships between religions, politics and governance; what implications have these had for development and poverty reduction outcomes; and how can these links and outcomes be explained? It will provide a contextual analysis of these relationships for all four focus countries, as a basis for detailed consideration of the roles of religious organisations in movements for social and political change, Poverty Reduction Strategy Processes, public sector reforms, and post-conflict peace-building and development.

(iia) Religions, politics and governance

The aim of this component is to improve understanding of the relationships between faith communities, organised religious groups, governance and development. This aim translates into four specific objectives:

- To examine the relationships between faith communities, organised religious groups, political processes and government policies
- To identify the role of faiths as obstacles to and levers of change for development
- To assess what political accountability, transparency, representation, political participation and broader engagement in political processes *mean* for faith communities and their members
- Building on 'drivers of change' work, to identify entry points for potential pro-poor change within faith communities' and religious organisations' relationships with the state and processes of governance.

The methodological approach will involve

- Developing an overview of the main faith communities in each country, as a basis for selection of representative and significant communities and/or religious organisations to provide suitable coverage at national and state levels
- Reviewing existing historical and constitutional literature
- Semi-structured interviews with political and religious leaders to assess the involvement of religious organisations in politics and their understanding of key political concepts
- Qualitative methods (e.g. FGDs) to investigate the views of faith adherents on political engagement.
- The detailed investigation will be undertaken in two states/provinces/districts in each of the countries (e.g. Punjab and Maharashtra in India), chosen to represent different political histories, levels of socio-economic development, religious composition etc.

(iib) The role of faith communities in contemporary movements for social change

Religious organisations are potential drivers of or barriers to change. The aim of this component is to analyse the motives, strategies and outcomes of faith engagement in ‘movements’ for social change and its impacts on democratisation and reform. It will study the relationships between religion and selected processes of social change, in order to

- Understand the ways that different types of religion address selected social concerns (their motives and strategies) and the outcomes of their engagement
- Examine the extent to which religion is seen within the social movements studied as a positive force encouraging or a barrier to social and political reform
- Assess and compare the political and policy outcomes of ‘religiously driven’ movements and faith engagement in ‘secular’ movements.

The processes of social change to be studied include the women’s movement, because of its importance for the achievement of gender equality, the MDGs and good governance. Criteria for the selection of other movements for study will be agreed with the country teams, in the light of the resources available. They may include anti-corruption campaigns or human rights advocacy.

The methodological approach to be adopted will be developed nearer the start of the component. A relatively long period of study is envisaged, to enable the observation of the selected processes of engagement and advocacy and the organisations involved over time.

(iic) Faith communities and the development process in Nigeria and Tanzania

Assessments to date have generally failed to differentiate faith-based from other civil society participants in Poverty Reduction Strategy processes. Building on an APRODEV project and initial World Faiths Development Dialogue work, this project will analyse the nature and extent of faith communities' participation and influence in PRSP processes and, if constraints on such engagement are identified, identify ways to strengthen their capacity to participate. This action research will

- Record the nature and extent of faith communities' engagement to date in consultations, policy making, implementation and monitoring of PRSPs in Nigeria (NEEDS and SEEDS) and Tanzania
- Assess their capacity for participation and, if constraints are identified, assess how that capacity might be increased
- Build the capacity of interested faith communities (and inter-faith bodies) by methods to be determined by the actors involved
- Assess the impact of capacity building on further participation in PRSP processes on the basis of agreed indicators and from the perspective of different stakeholders.

(iic) Religious organisations and reforms in public services

Religious organisations play an important role in service delivery, but their influence on reforms in the sectors in which they are involved is not clear. This component aims to examine whether and how faith communities and religious organisations influence reforms in the education and health sectors. The objectives of the research are to

- Identify the interests religious organisations have in service sector reforms
- Ascertain the values brought by faith communities and religious organisations to their attempts to influence reforms and assess their compatibility with public service values
- Identify and assess the effectiveness of the formal and informal channels of influence used by faith communities and FBOs to influence public reform agendas
- Analyse how governments engage with and respond to religious organisations during reform processes

- Examine the outcomes of religious organisations' attempts to constrain, enable and/or influence reforms and assess their implications for reform policy and practice

The research will examine general or specific reform processes at national or sub-national (State) levels. Selection of detailed areas or episodes for study will be made in conjunction with the country research teams. The selection of contrasting sub-national areas will enable within as well as between country comparisons. The methodological approach will combine review of documentary evidence with in-depth interviews with key informants from political, bureaucratic, religious and other relevant civil society organisations.

7.2.4 Project iii: Religious identity, faith-based organisations and development activities

The overall question addressed by this project is: in what development activities are FBOs engaged and how does their religious identity affect their engagement? It is, therefore, concerned with the operations of FBOs, such as service delivery and development activities.

(iia) Mapping the terrain: the activities of FBOs in development

The nature, scale, activities and relationships of FBOs remain poorly understood and documented, despite their apparent importance in service delivery, humanitarian aid, reconstruction and development. This component will ascertain the scale and broad dimensions of the development-related activities of FBOs in the focus countries, to improve understanding of their relative importance in development and provide a basis for selection of case study sectors/organisations for more detailed research.

In the first stage of the research

- a suitable typology will be developed, based on a critical review of existing typologies
- existing databases and earlier studies of NGOs (including FBOs) will be reviewed to assess their value and accuracy
- an overview of the history, scale and type of development-related activities of FBOs will be developed, based on a review of existing evidence and interviews with knowledgeable informants, using a snowball sample.

In the second stage, a more complete overview of the FBOs active in one or two geographical areas within each country will be developed.

In the case of India, the first stage will be undertaken in two States: Maharashtra and Bihar, and the second in two selected districts (e.g. Pune in Maharashtra) within each State. In Nigeria, the work will focus on Kano, Anambra and Oyo States. In Tanzania and Pakistan, broad national overviews will be attempted during the first stage of the research, before areas on which to focus in more depth are chosen.

(iii) Faith-based service providers and their changing relationship with the state

This component builds on earlier work on non-state service providers for DFID's Policy Division (including India, Pakistan and Nigeria) and complements research on non-state providers in education, health and water in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh which is funded under the ESRC Non-governmental Public Action Research Programme (2006-8). The relationship between government and non-governmental actors in the delivery of basic services is seen as an area of contention between independent actors with structurally and ideologically different perspectives on the means and ends of public action but who, nonetheless, are engaged in public action through shared organisational arrangements. This component will analyse the relationships between government and non-governmental actors in the delivery of basic services (provisionally education and health) by FBOs, especially to poor people. Its objectives are to

- Identify the factors (e.g. values, objectives, organisational form) that condition the definitions of and goals for public action by FBOs and compare them with those of government and 'secular' NGOs
- Analyse whether and how differences of definition and goals are managed through alternative forms of contractual and non-contractual organisational arrangements that link FBOs and governments
- Examine how the characteristics of the actors and services under observation influence the perspectives of actors and the possible forms of collaboration.

Methodologies are currently being developed for scoping government/NGO/FBO relationships, surveys of the size and scope of non-government service delivery and case studies of different forms of contracting and collaboration. Selection of FBOs for study will be done in the light of the scoping study: the initial focus will be on *madrastas*. Analysis of the service provision activities of religious political

parties is also being considered. The research will initially be undertaken in India and Pakistan, and will then be extended to Bangladesh and Nigeria.

(iiic) The development activities, values and performance of FBOs

This component aims to analyse the activities, values, organisational characteristics and performance of selected FBOs. In-depth studies of FBOs will be undertaken to ascertain the reasons for their selection of development activities, the role of religion in the motivations and values of staff, their sources of funding and management structures and their developmental effectiveness. Where possible, the findings from these studies will be compared with comparable studies of 'secular' NGOs in order to ascertain similarities and differences between their ways of operating, ability to reach poor people and development effectiveness. Assessment of performance and developmental outcomes is problematic because of measurement problems, the cost of obtaining primary data, and difficulties of attribution. While it may be possible to obtain 'objective' markers of performance, therefore, this part of the study may focus instead on the discourses about performance that different NGOs use, in addition to staff, client and observer perceptions of performance.

The selection of suitable case studies will be made using the typology and mapping developed in iiia) and criteria developed in conjunction with country research teams e.g. typical of FBOs in a particular context, engaged in activities relevant to the achievement of development objectives, distinct from those FBOs studied in (iiib) and (iiid) (e.g. community development, HIV/AIDS mitigation).

(iiid) The role of faith communities in conflict transformation and long term development

The research programme will focus on the role of religious groups in conflict transformation, policy formation (iid) and development (ivb, ivc), rather than the role of religions in conflict, humanitarian aid and immediate post-conflict physical reconstruction, because the latter are relatively well-researched (and some aspects are also within the field of interest of the Crisis States DRC). However, attention will be paid to understanding the role of religions in conflict in the focus countries in component (iia). The importance of non-material aspects of community reconstruction and longer term development processes, as well as conflict management and peace-building, has been recognised periodically by international actors, but the contribution of religious organisations and FBOs to these non-material processes remains under-researched.

The aim of this component is to assess the role of faith communities and FBOs in the management of peace and conflict and the long-term rebuilding of society and social capital. Its objectives are to

- Compare the roles of faith communities or religious organisations and secular organisations in building peace and reconstructing post-conflict communities
- Assess the extent to which faith communities target their own adherents
- Examine the extent to which peacebuilding and development efforts are used as a base for proselytisation
- Assess the policy and practical implications of the roles taken by faith communities and FBOs in already fragile political/conflict situations.

The political analysis of the focus countries (see iia), as well as the mapping of faith communities and FBOs engaged in development activities (see iiaa), will include organisations engaged in peace building, post-conflict reconstruction and longer term development and will provide a basis for the selection of cases for study, which will be agreed with the country research teams. They are likely to include examples of both inter- and intra-faith conflict, and conflicts in which religion has and has not been a salient factor. It is anticipated at this stage that studies will be undertaken of communal conflicts in one or two cities in India, conflicts between sects in urban Pakistan and Muslim-Christian conflicts in a city in northern Nigeria. The analysis will consider the views of different members within communities (e.g. men and women; young people, adults and elderly people).

The methodological approach to this component is likely to include historical and contextual analysis to understand the roots and course of the conflicts under study, examination of the activities of faith-based and secular organisations, oral history, documentary analysis, and semi-structured interviews with key informants in the relevant organisations.

7.2.5 Project iv: Religious transnationalism and development

This research project addresses selected international dimensions of the role of faith communities in development, by asking: what outcomes do the financial and lobbying activities of religious and inter-faith organisations have for development at local and international levels?

(iva) New forms of religious transnationalism and development

The role of migrants' remittances in development has attracted considerable research attention. However, two aspects of these transnational relationships and flows have been neglected: first, the transmission of 'social remittances' (ideas, norms and values) and their impact in migrants' home countries, and second, the role of diaspora religious organisations in the North in funding development activities that go beyond traditional concerns with migrants' immediate communities. The range and diversity of communities of South Asian origin in the UK (Sikhs from Punjab, Muslims from Pakistan, Hindus from Gujerat etc) offers an opportunity to study these developments.

The aim of this component is to improve understanding of the role of new religious transnational movements and their contribution to development in their 'homelands' with reference to India and Pakistan⁹. The study will

- Conduct case studies of FBOs based in UK diaspora communities, to examine their values and beliefs, concepts of development, strategies for resource mobilisation, decision making and operational functioning in engaging with development projects
- Conduct case studies of selected development projects funded by UK-based FBOs to assess patterns of expenditure, organisational arrangements and outcomes.
- Assess the impact of such development projects on local processes of development, especially poverty reduction, and the extent to which they reach poor men and women and other socially disadvantaged groups.
- Evaluate the impact of engagement with the development process on the religious identities of UK-based organisations' membership and on the recipients of development projects in the South.

Criteria for selection of UK-based organisations will be developed in conjunction with country research teams. The methodological approach will be case-study based and largely qualitative, although local socio-economic statistics, official data on remittances and village records will be used where available.

(ivb) Faith communities and international institutions

Organised religions, their affiliates and their global and regional networks are increasingly prominent actors in international arenas, notably the UN system. For example, they are currently attempting to ensure that the MDGs are achieved. Nevertheless, their values and policy stances, strategies and ability to influence the UN and its agencies vary. Building on earlier research, the aim of this component is to improve understanding of the constitution, working practices, interaction and influence of selected religious organisations with offices in New York. Its objectives are to

- Compare the policy stances of selected religious organisations on key development issues (potentially the United Methodist Church, Caritas International, the Temple of Understanding, DATA (Debt, Trade, AIDS and Africa) and the ONE campaign, American Jewish World Service and the International Association for Human Values)
- Assess the extent to which these organisations operate independently or collaboratively and the relative effectiveness of their policy influencing strategies.

The aims of the project will be achieved by

- examining the organisational structures and values of selected religious organisations and their UN offices
- analysing the history and outcomes of selected attempts to influence the UN and its agencies with respect to key development issues, for example, reproductive health, women's education.
- identifying the opportunities and constraints on the ability of religious organisations to work together and to influence the UN and its agencies
- a combination of documentary analysis and key informant interviews.

7.3 Communications

Links between the conceptual work of the programme and the research projects, as well as between individual research components, will be developed through internal communication processes, involving team members and the advisory group that has been formed in each country. The advisory groups contain both experienced academics and representatives of faith bodies and potential users of the research outputs (governments, NGOs, FBOs). In addition to the country advisory groups, each of the components has identified advisers. Thus communication with potential audiences is being

developed alongside the research in order to secure advisers' inputs into research proposals, as well as discussing preliminary findings and sharing research outputs with a variety of potential users.

Some of the research components will produce findings that are immediately relevant to ongoing policy debates: in these cases, the policy implications of the findings will be discussed in workshops that involve the researchers and relevant government and non-government policy actors, and policy briefs will be produced. Some of the research components aim to produce basic knowledge about the societies under study. Some of this knowledge may be relevant to policy making, and can be fed into the relevant national and international debates, through the advisory groups and other channels. Some of the knowledge may be most appropriately used to improve the information available to organisations and individuals as well as to encourage dialogue and change attitudes. The programme will explore appropriate outputs and channels by which its findings can be translated into material suitable for use by a variety of potential audiences. It is envisaged in particular that educational and training materials suitable for use by NGOs, FBOs and other organisations, potentially including schools, will be developed. To prepare for this, links are being forged with potential users from an early stage in the research (one example is given below) and a staff member with appropriate expertise will be recruited during the second half of the programme.

A programme of events and publications to reach academic audiences is being planned. During the course of the programme there will be major conferences in the UK and the focus countries, and a series of smaller seminars and policy workshops in each country. The programme has started a working paper series in which the initial outputs of its work will be published, and will later develop plans for publication in books and journals. Papers based on work done by researchers in the country teams will be published simultaneously in the working paper series of our partner organisations where appropriate.

Each country team is developing a communications strategy and rolling action programme. In the UK, particular attention is being given to developing non-academic partnerships, especially with development NGOs, both faith-based and secular. The most significant partnership has been developed with **Islamic Relief**, which has its international headquarters in Birmingham. In order to support the development of Islamic Relief's Policy and Research Unit, and ensure good

communications between the RaD programme and IR, the programme is sharing two Research and Policy Analyst posts with the Unit between 2006 and 2008.

In addition, Islamic Relief and the RaD programme are collaborating on an activity called **UK Muslim NGOs talking**. Relatively little is known about the values, ways of operating, relationships with government and other organisations, and positions on key development issues (e.g. *zakat*, *waqf*, credit, gender, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS) of UK-based Muslim development organisations. The aim of this programme of activities is to bring together these organisations to explore their positions on selected development issues and foster communication and collaboration between them. Building on a mapping of Muslim development NGOs in the UK, a series of preliminary meetings was held in 2006/7.

Contacts with development NGOs in the UK and Europe more widely are being developed through collaboration with BOND and INTRAC, with a view to holding a series of workshops, initially to identify NGOs' interests in the research and the appropriate form that research outputs may take, and later to share research findings and develop appropriate materials (e.g. for training purposes). Links with international and national development agencies, international religious bodies, religious organisations in the focus countries and the UK, and inter-faith networks will be developed through an e-newsletter, periodic research bulletin, RaD events and attendance at relevant conferences and meetings.

8 Conclusion

The Religions and Development research programme is an international research partnership that is addressing the overall question “What are the implications of religion for the course that development takes?” by exploring the links between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The research aims to provide knowledge and tools to enable dialogue between development partners and contribute to the achievement of development goals. Our focus is on socio-political aspects of the relationships between religions and societies. We believe that our role as researchers is not to make judgements about the truth or desirability of particular values or beliefs, nor is it to urge a greater or lesser role for religion in achieving development objectives. Instead, our aim is to produce systematic and reliable knowledge and better understanding of the social world. In this endeavour, we are conscious that we must take care neither to simplify complex and contested concepts nor to essentialise religion as the only (or even main) source of people’s motivation and identity. The outputs of the research programme will build knowledge about the relationships between religions, state and society in the countries where our work is concentrated (India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania, also Bangladesh), will produce material that can inform contemporary policy debates, and will be communicated in forms suitable for academic, policy other audiences.

Notes

- ¹ See Inglehart and Baker (2000) for a contemporary re-visiting of this argument using data from the World Values Survey.
- ² One category of NGOs engaged in development activities are the faith based organisations (FBOs), sometimes but not always the successors of missionary organisations. Today, they justify their activities in terms of a mixture of motives, both explicit and implicit: they aim to achieve humanitarian, development and/or social justice objectives based on religious imperatives derived from their interpretations of their shared texts, their concern to support newly autonomous religious bodies in developing countries and their desire to proselytise. Moreover, many apparently secular NGOs such as Oxfam trace their inauguration to individuals with a religious motivation.
- ³ In a Gallup International/BBC World Service Voice of the People poll in 2005 in 68 countries (excluding China and most of the Arab world except Egypt, 74% of respondents in Africa, 68% in SE Asia and 49% in North America considered religious leaders the most trusted group (33% globally), compared to politicians, who at 11% were the least trusted group. Many (25% globally, 86% in Nigeria) said that they would give religious leaders more power (www.bbcnews.com/yourworld)
- ⁴ Some believe that the term theology should be confined to the study of those religions that worship a deity (a theos) and believe that it is possible to speak and reason about this deity, especially Christianity, suggesting the 'philosophy' might be more appropriate to describe the study of Buddhism and Hinduism. The main discipline for the study of Islam is not theology (kalam) but jurisprudence (fiqh), referring to the development of a full comprehension of divine law (shari'a) as embodied in the Qur'an and Sunnah, complemented by the rulings of Islamic jurists (faqih or jurists and ulema or scholars) (ijtihad). Sunni and Shi'a Islam use slightly different methods for jurisprudence (see, for example, Tibi, 2005; Rahman, 1987). Hinduism evolved out of an ancient tradition of philosophical speculation on the nature of the universe, (a) god(s) (Brahman in some of the six orthodox schools of Hindu thought) and the soul/authentic self (Atman). The nature of Buddhism has been subject to considerable debate, with it being seen as a philosophy, culture or civilisation rather than a religion, because it is non-theistic (Reynolds and Hallisey, 1987).
- ⁵ Iannaccone and Klick (2003) note the intuitive appeal of the term 'spiritual capital': "a linguistic union of the academically respectable concept of capital (both 'human' and 'social') and the vague but popular notion of spirituality" (p. 2). Building on Iannaccone's earlier definition of religious capital as the accumulation of people's past experiences (notably their religious upbringing), which influences their religious beliefs and behaviour over the life-cycle, between generations and among family and friends, they suggest that although ill defined, spiritual may be regarded as a superset of religious capital and a subset of human, social and cultural capital.
- ⁶ In this programme, the term 'faith communities' is used broadly to denote religious traditions and their adherents, 'organised religion' or 'religious organisations' to mean the organisational forms taken by groups within faith communities (membership groups such as denominations, sects, congregations) and faith-based organisations (FBOs) to mean organisations that resemble NGOs or other civil society organisations but are based in or affiliated to a faith tradition or religious organisations. They may be membership or non-membership organisations.
- ⁷ "the Qur'an sees a mutually enriching relationship between practical rationality (i.e. the pursuit of this-worldly goods) and value rationality (i.e. the pursuit of next-worldly ideals) and suggests that a balance be maintained between the two" (Koshul, 2006, p. 497).
- ⁸ Because research on two related areas by team members was already under way in Bangladesh, and comparisons between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are revealing, some research will also be undertaken in Bangladesh.
- ⁹ The main financial flows to Nigeria and Tanzania appear to be from the Middle East rather than the UK. Not only are sources of information on financial flows non-existent in these countries, the source organisations are difficult if not impossible to access.

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