Embeddedness - the paradox of development through the grassroots of churches

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Summary
What should development organisations take into account when considering whether to provide funding to a long-established church in the Global South, or to an organisation affiliated with such a church? Drawing on research in Northern Uganda, this article suggests that the key to addressing this question is in recognition of churches’ unique historical, social and religious embeddedness in local societies. From the point of view of donor organisations, this embeddedness is paradoxical: the same things that enable churches to ‘deliver development’ in an unusually effective and meaningful way, make churches appear as challenging grassroots partners for development. This is because the spiritual, historical and political embeddedness of churches makes the effects of their activities greater than of organisations lacking such embeddedness – whether those effects be ‘positive’ or ‘negative’. The notion of embeddedness draws attention to the need for donors to cease to think of churches in negative terms, as foreign impositions. The history of missionary churches is inseparably embroiled in the history of colonisation. However, the religious faiths and practices initially brought by missionaries to many parts of Africa are now an integral part of the life of many local adherents. Church members experience churches as their own – often much more so than they do the UN, NGOs, or secular discourses of human rights and development.

Introducing the case and my analytical space
Some time ago, a Nordic development NGO (which I will call SecularNGO) contacted me for advice about whether or not they should provide funding for a church-affiliated civil society organisation (which I will call the Nodding Syndrome Assistance and Prayer Organisation, NSAAPO), in the Acholi sub-region of Northern Uganda. Since I had previously studied development aid in Northern Uganda, and since I had recently conducted ethnographic fieldwork at the church in question and knew a number of people involved with the organisation, I was uniquely well-placed to offer the organisation my advice.¹ In this paper, I draw on my research on churches and politics in post-conflict Northern Uganda to present the advice I offered this particular NGO in a generalised form. The question I ask and answer, is: what should an organisation take into account when considering whether to provide development funding to a long-established church, or a CSO affiliated to such a church?

I explore this question particularly through analysis of what the
potential development role of churches looks like when development is understood as fundamentally political, and when churches are understood as fundamentally political actors. Since the article draws from analysis of the Anglican and the Catholic Church in Northern Uganda, its analysis is particularly relevant for contexts in which churches have a long-established position, as is the case for missionary-established mainline (Catholic and older Protestant) churches in most of Africa.

I argue that the role of churches in grassroots development work in Africa is fundamentally paradoxical, and that the crux of this paradox is in these churches’ embeddedness. By embeddedness, I refer to the consequences of churches having been present in the societies they work in for long periods of time, often since the time of colonialism. These consequences typically include the following (although there can of course be differences and tensions regarding any of these points in individual cases):

1. Churches, as physical places and as institutions, have become naturalised as parts of the local landscape.
2. The religious beliefs of churches have been comfortably interwoven or accommodated into the lifeworlds of their members.
3. Churches as institutions have become deeply integrated with other societal structures, including party politics, local administration, and family and clan structures, which often span generations.

All these points make churches uniquely valuable development partners because of their embeddedness, that is: 1) because they are considered natural parts of the landscape; 2) because their values are accommodated in local world views; 3) because they are deeply integrated in local society; and 4) because they gain meaning also through family networks and across generations. Churches may ‘deliver development’ in a way that development NGOs often cannot, particularly if they have been initiated, funded and/or staffed externally, and if their de facto accountability is to an external donor.

However, these same points also highlight the challenges involved in supporting development through churches. As I will argue, because of their embeddedness, churches may ‘deliver development’ in a way that is in fact counterproductive, or that contradicts the values of the donor agency. To highlight the paradoxical nature of embeddedness, I analyse the case of NSAAPO and expand on the rationale that lay behind the advice I gave to SecularNGO. In order to protect the identity of all the individuals involved, the account I provide is a largely fictional composition of parts taken from different cases, people, organisations and churches that I have encountered during my fieldwork. There are, however, two notable exceptions of what is not fabricated: first, the contextual set-up of the case study; that is, the historical and socio-political analysis of Uganda and Northern Uganda is factual. Second, Nodding Syndrome is an ailment which medical professionals are still uncertain as to the causes of, and it is a genuine
health concern in Northern Uganda. Although the details of the study on NSAAPO have been made somewhat ‘fictional’ so as to avoid identification, they have been crafted so that they could well be true. In other words, while the case itself is fictional, the points highlighted by the case reflect genuine paradoxes of development through grassroots churches in Africa.

Before I engage in this analysis, I will offer a brief elucidation of the normative underpinnings of my analysis. First of all, I see politics – the process through which communities of human beings decide on how to share power and resources – as natural and inherently positive. In my understanding, there is no development without politics: it is impossible to change society in any way without this change being grounded in relations of power, and without this change also affecting those power relations. Hence, for me to say that development is political is not a value statement, rather it is a statement of fact. Secondly, I understand positive change in society as such change which increases the equality of all human beings, so that regardless of age, sex, religious or political affiliation, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or any other aspect of their being, every member of a community has equal freedoms, including the freedom from repression, violence and discrimination, and equal access to services provided by the state or by other service-providing organisations such as churches or NGOs. Finally, I see the Western idea of a strict separation between state and society, and between religion and politics, as a culturally specific notion. In my understanding, there is nothing inherently better or worse in basing society on religious ideas than there is on grounding a society on an ideology that espouses a ‘rational’, secular or atheist understanding of state and society, and demands a division between religion and the state. A secular state can be just as repressive of individual freedoms as a religious one – and conversely, religious ideas can be personally and collectively just as empowering as secular ones. With these basic premises made visible, allow me to move to analyse NSAAPO as an institution embedded in Acholi society.

**NSAAPO: a Christian health-delivery and deliverance organisation in Acholi**

The “Nodding Syndrome Assistance and Prayer Organisation” (NSAAPO – this is a pseudonym, as are the other names used in this fictional case study: see endnote #3) was established by a group of active members of “Mainline Church Acholi Parish”, with the assistance of “Missionary”, a foreigner from “NordicChurch” who visited Acholi Parish in 2008. At this time, Northern Uganda was recovering from almost 20 years of war between the Lord’s Resistance Army and the Ugandan government. Despite the end of armed conflict there were many development problems, one of the most acute of which seemed to be that there were an increasing number of children suffering from unexplainable bouts of uncontrollable, seizure-like nodding of their heads and sometimes their whole bodies. The
mysterious symptoms eventually led most of the children to die, either because of malnutrition or following accidents caused by the seizures. In the absence of sufficient government health structures to address the particular needs of these high-need patients, members of Acholi Parish requested that Missionary sought funding which would enable the health clinic of the Parish to extend its services through a special program for children afflicted with Nodding. Missionary managed to secure such funding, and the following year, NSAAPO was established.

The aim of the organisation was to provide various forms of medical, social, psychological and financial assistance to families of Nodding victims. For these purposes, with funding from NordicChurch, NSAAPO hired a number of social workers, nurses, and experts on income generation and nutrition. In addition, following the mandate of the Church to pray for its members, members of the charismatic revival at Acholi Parish arranged Nodding victims from across the broader Acholi region to come together to Acholi Parish for special services at which NSAAPO staff, volunteers and local priests prayed for God to deliver the patients from the sickness. Because NordicChurch received funding from its Foreign Ministry, it gave strict orders that NSAAPO was not to use development money for these events, but should use its own income generation to fund the deliverance prayer sessions: a demand with which NSAAPO was happy to comply.

The project was a great success, and two years later, when Missionary from NordicChurch came back for a two-day visit at NSAAPO, she was extremely impressed with the professional capacity of NSAAPO’s staff. NSAAPO was reaching all of its desired development outputs: through support for the families’ ability to generate income and their increased know-how on nutrition, nodding-afflicted children were receiving the nutrition they needed, regular visits to the treatment centre had improved the children’s medical status, and awareness-raising had lessened the stigma previously attached to the syndrome. However, despite the impressive development outputs of NSAAPO, two years later massive budget cuts to development funding in the Nordic country forced NordicChurch to stop funding NSAAPO. After a year of struggling with insufficient funding, NSAAPO stumbled across an advertisement by SecularNGO for funding to support health-related CSOs in Northern Uganda. NSAAPO’s highly professional staff wrote an excellent application to SecularNGO, after which SecularNGO contacted me, an expert on churches and development in Northern Uganda, for advice on whether or not to give money to this Church-related organisation.

Having great respect for NSAAPO’s work, I was happy to comply, and prepared for the meeting with SecularNGO by skimming through mounds of information that had been logged into my mind during the eight months that I lived within walking distance from the NSAAPO office and clinic while researching churches in the region; NSAAPO’s mother church included. By the time I sat down for a Skype meeting with SecularNGO’s staff, I knew I could warmly recommend funding the organisation. However, I also
had to acknowledge that the potential effects of funding NSAAP0 were extremely complex. My scholarly urge to pay respect to complexity and nuance seemed at an angle with the straightforward analysis that I thought SecularNGO would want to hear.

In the following, I bring out a more nuanced picture of NSAAP0 than that which staff of SecularNGO had time to hear. My description and analysis of the intricacies of the economic, social, religious and institutional politics surrounding the organisation seeks to highlight what I have termed the “paradox of development through the church.” In my analysis, I draw analytical tools from my own research, as well as from the work of Ben Jones4 and Catrine Shroff,5 both notable scholars on churches and development in Uganda.

To fund or not to fund?
With emphasis on the positive, NSAAP0 could be characterised like this: NSAAP0 is a highly-respected civil society organisation in the small town where its work is focused. Its respectability draws from three things: first, the quality of its service delivery; second, the broad respect afforded to many of those sitting on its board of trustees; and third, its affiliation to Acholi Parish, one of the oldest, largest and most respected churches in the region. NSAAP0 has a reputation as an unusually straight-backed organisation. Its affiliation with Acholi Parish has provided it with unusually stable institutional backing, as well as free land and access to free infrastructural and other support services that an independent NGO would have had to pay for. Many of its key members are known as people of integrity, who genuinely have the best interests of the community at heart. Many of them are known as active members of the church and the local community, and some of them also for their political activism. This is not considered particularly strange in the town, however, since it is considered perfectly normal and typical for lay leaders of churches to also adopt positions of authority in local administration or politics, and vice versa.

Such an introduction would be an honest assessment of the organisation to a potential donor, and it is in line with what I told the members of SecularNGO. However, the familiarity I had with politics and churches in Northern Uganda, and my familiarity with Acholi Parish, made me aware of complexities that complicated this simplified and positive image of the NGO in question. The case of NSAAP0 illustrates the three different aspects of embeddedness I introduced above. Analysis of embeddedness highlights the paradox of development through the grassroots of the church; the same things that make NSAAP0 able to do something more than an average NGO in the local community increase the risk that development through the organisation would in fact be counter-productive, and entrench negative dynamics and structures, rather than enabling positive change in the society.
Embeddedness, type 1:
Churches, as physical places and as institutions, have become naturalised as parts of the local landscape

The political economy of NSAAPO was complex. The organisation largely relied on support from external donors, but in crucial ways, NSAAPO’s existence was made possible by the resources owned by Acholi Parish. Attachment with the Parish was, however, far from straight-forward. The organisation’s office was built on land that had been disputed for decades. Opinions differed as to whether the particular plot of land was owned by Acholi Parish; by the local government; by the Pentecostal church in the neighbourhood which had at one point claimed it prior to the expansion of the Acholi Parish health centre; to Mr. Odongo whose great-grand-father had used this land as grazing land for his goats but who had given up the Christian God and turned to serving the ancestors; to Mrs. Acan whose brother had been the head of the parish council when he gave up the hut he lived in in order for the health centre be built; or to the NGO that had given funding for building the first part of the health centre. Whoever was the rightful owner of the land would have the right to demand compensation for its use. The dispute over the land was being fought out in court, although numerous potential parties to the conflict had not dared to be fully honest at the court due to pressure they had felt from powerful local politicians who had interests in land adjacent to the NSAAPO office.

Organisations, whether churches or NGOs, have offices; and to build offices, they need land. This point is self-evident, yet often completely overlooked when thinking of development organisations. In the case of churches, these plots of land were often gifted to them during the colonial era, either by the customary owners of the land, or by the local colonial administration, or a combination of the two. On these plots of land, there are buildings, the number and flashiness of which depend on the amount of funding the churches have been able to gather either from foreign missions or locally: modest chapels or grand cathedrals; schools; health centres; parish halls and the like. In some African contexts, the land holdings and infrastructural property of churches can be substantial, and even where they are more moderate, churches everywhere are endowed with physical, material and financial resources. Churches own things, they sell things, they mortgage things. They have land titles, or they are in the process of getting them. These points, which make churches much more than just a religious community or an office with some staff, make it necessary to analyse the political economy of churches, and the political economy of development through churches. To put it simply, giving donor funding to churches enables them to become even more entrenched and naturalised in the landscapes. It allows them to repair roofs, to expand their premises, to build institutions, and to stake claims to the land on which they have built or which they have farmed. This may have considerable consequences in the local political economy.
Embeddedness, type 2:
The religious beliefs of churches have been comfortably interwoven or accommodated into the lifeworlds of their members

As part of the project funded by NordicChurch, NSAAPO arranged prayer services during which beneficiaries were prayed over by NSAAPO staff and volunteers. A number of the families who had benefited from the program told the visiting NordicChurch Missionary that the most important thing they had received from NSAAPO were these moments of community and prayer, during which they and their children were encountered with warmth, love and respect. The parents and nodding-affected children explained that NSAAPO was the first organisation they had encountered which acknowledged the vengeful spirits that were causing the nodding syndrome, and supplemented medical treatment with the healing power of prayer. For this, the parents were extremely grateful. Since Missionary embraced a holistic understanding of human development, she had no qualms with accepting that the beneficiaries of the project believed in spirits, nor that they employed a spiritual schema in interpreting health and sickness. She suggested, however, that NSAAPO staff downplay the role of prayer in their future funding applications, since secular funders would likely not appreciate ‘non-rational’ activities as part of NSAAPO’s intervention regime.

Three relevant points fall under this particular type of embeddedness. First, taking spirituality seriously reflects and reproduces the spiritual, psychological and social embeddedness of churches in African societies. Acknowledgement of the wholeness of the human person, including of the spiritual and religious person, is what makes churches and their development interventions meaningful for many of their beneficiaries. Such a holistic view allows churches to address problems that fully secular approaches would be powerless in dealing with. The language and practice of NSAAPO, which sought to incorporate ‘customary’ Acholi cosmological understandings, Christian teaching and medical knowledge, made the language of NSAAPO resonate with its beneficiaries much more than the language of juridical rights, bacteria and disinfectants that ‘secular’ NGOs used. This made NSAAPO’s work meaningful, in that beneficiaries and the local community developed a strong sense of ownership over NSAAPO’s and the churches’ work.

Second, support for an organisation influences its ability to further its ideological and religious agenda. In Northern Uganda, donor support for NSAAPO can be seen to have entrenched a particular type of ‘inculturated’ Christian interpretation of Nodding Syndrome. This led some notable proponents of ‘pure’ (non-Christianised) Acholi customary worldviews to complain on local radio stations that NSAAPO’s deliverance services were confusing the local spirit world, and hence causing more harm than help. Pastors of other churches were also annoyed, since their churches’ NGOs
were not as successful in gathering funding, while the leaders of Acholi Church, through their influence in NSAAPo, gained visibility in the local public debate surrounding Nodding Syndrome. Indeed, institutional power, which churches in part gain through external funding, can affect their spiritual and moral authority. Additional funding may either strengthen churches’ authority in the local context, or in cases where churches start to be increasingly seen as simply ‘running after money’, external funding can delegitimise churches in the eyes of local communities.

Third, and related to the previous point, one of the most important issues in which the embeddedness of churches is relevant for development relates to the way in which churches’ religious teaching about gender and sexuality are accommodated with what are understood as ‘customary’ norms in local communities. For instance in Northern Uganda, support to the development efforts of churches may inadvertently entrench the patriarchal, heteronormative and gerontocratic structures churches in this region have espoused. That said, it is noteworthy that when churches do adopt a progressive agenda, for example regarding gender equity or sexual rights, their capacity to advance their viewpoint in local communities can be far greater than that of ‘secular’ civil-society organisations, precisely because of their spiritual and religious embeddedness in local communities.

Finally, an interesting observation to be made in this context is that I met only one person during my fieldwork in Uganda who made the kind of post-colonial argument against missionary churches that one encounters repeatedly in Development Studies and secular development policy and practitioner circles. This is not to say that such people do not exist in Africa: they certainly do. Rather, it is to highlight that there are many people, for instance in Uganda, who are deeply committed to churches, who see them as their own, and who feel no need for a postcolonial secular critique of Africa’s missionary legacy. The dilemma for donors considering funding organisations in such contexts, then, is whether they should seek out and support those minorities who wish to outroot the colonial legacy of Christianity in Africa, or rather engage with churches, even when it risks entrenching their social standing in ways the donors are uncomfortable with.

**Embeddedness, type 3:**
Churches as institutions have become deeply integrated with other societal structures, including party politics, local administration, and family and clan structures that can go back generations

The leader of the charismatic revival in Acholi Parish, Ms. Atimango, had a special gift for prayer, and she was always present at NSAAPo deliverance meetings. The young woman had a burning desire to effect change in her society. After years of work in her church and in various civil society movements, she was approached by a government official who suggested she take the next step and move on to the really big arenas,
from which change could truly come about. Ms. Atimango agreed, and was preparing to run as the female candidate of the ruling party for parliamentary elections in her district. The chairperson of NSAAPo’s board of trustees, Mr. Ojok, was resentful of the fact, and wished Ms. Atimango would withdraw from the prayer sessions, where she got far too much attention for Mr. Ojok’s liking. His clan brother was high up in opposition politics. A major tug of war had been going on in the scenes of NSAAPo and within Acholi Parish over party political leanings: which politicians would be allowed to speak at church gatherings? If they were declined the right to speak politics, should they still be allowed to lead prayers?

Partly due to the historical interrelations between colonial and missionary organisations, churches across Sub-Saharan Africa are deeply intertwined with the state and with political parties, in a way quite foreign to ‘Western democracies’. For example, during early independence in Uganda, certain churches were affiliated with certain parties, although in the contemporary setting, the growth of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity has changed the bigger picture. Still, today churches provide some of the most important arenas for politicians to address the electorate, and for the unfolding of public debates. Support for churches and church-related organisations is hence extremely political; as is of course the case also for support provided to ‘secular’ civil society organisations.

Understanding the ‘organisational dynamics’ within NSAAPo, however, requires not only an understanding of party political affiliations, but as Jones’ has argued, knowledge of the long-standing personal relations and internal conflicts within and around Acholi Parish. In this context, what was particularly important were the relations between the families that had moved to live in the vicinity of the church in the early missionary era from far-off villages and the families whose forefathers had used the land of Acholi Parish for grazing. There were many tensions between these and other groups within Acholi Parish and NSAAPo, which provide a far more complex view of the power dynamics within the organisation that would come across to the potential donor in organisational documents. Those living near the church were broadly considered to have benefited more from the Acholi Parish and from NSAAPo than those living further away.

There was also growing frustration among youth in Acholi Parish. As Shroff has also discussed in another Ugandan context (see endnote #5), young people felt that the church elders systematically ignored them, pulling resources to their own organisations through their manipulation of their long-standing relations with foreign donors. All jobs, youth argued, were given to the ill-qualified relatives of those people sitting high up in NSAAPo and Acholi Parish hierarchy, rather than on grounds of merit. From the point of view of such youth, any money given to NSAAPo was money given to those who were already well-off; who already had access to jobs and security, in ways that the overwhelming majority of the
parish youth did not. For example, young women who disagreed with the patriarchal teaching of the Church would have risked losing any chance of gaining employment through Acholi Parish development projects had they spoken out against church elders. Hence whenever the staff of foreign donors came for their two-day visits, young volunteers of NSAAPO were careful to present themselves to the foreigners in an uncritical way that would look good in the eyes of NSAAPO leadership.

In conclusion: how to decide whether to fund or not to fund?
There is absolutely no way that SecularNGO could have known even a modicum of these issues without my eight months of fieldwork. Foreign staff members of an international faith-based NGO that had worked extensively with this church and had lived in the town for almost five years, had, for instance, never heard about the court cases concerning the land on which NSAAPO’s office was built – neither did they have a clue about the fact that the leader of the charismatic revival at Acholi Parish was planning to run for parliament under the ruling party banner. This, of course, is the case for all development work, whether done with local NGOs or churches: there is always more in the details than the donors will ever know.

What then would be the effect of SecularNGO providing funding to NSAAPO? Despite my extremely complex understanding of the local reality, I really could not say. All I could say was that as far as I knew, despite some people’s reservations towards NSAAPO’s activities, they were as respectable as any organisation I knew in the local context; I had great respect for many of their staff and trustees, and I had no reason to recommend SecularNGO against funding them. It turned out that the biggest problem for SecularNGO was not what they did not know about NSAAPO – it was that they did know that NSAAPO defined itself openly as religious.

The question for donors considering funding churches and church-related NGOs in the South then becomes: is the purpose of donor funding to promote Western secularism, employing Western terminology and values? Or is the purpose of donor funding to allow for people in the Global South to develop following their own trajectories, employing their own terminology and values? If it is the latter, then I see no reason why secular NGOs would not engage in partnership with religious organisations in Africa. Not to do so would imply a failure and lack of willingness of Western development actors to engage with the lifeworlds of hundreds of millions of Africans on what they feel are their own terms. On the basis of this analysis, I conclude by way of some tentative recommendations for donors considering development partnerships with churches or church-related NGOs in Africa.
Recommendations to donors and development NGOs considering working with churches or church-affiliated NGOs in the global South:

1. **Do not shy away from the fact that all development is inherently political**
   Development funding always impacts on the relative position of the funded institution in relation to other institutions and actors in the location; on the power dynamics within the funded institution; and the power dynamics within the communities of the ‘project beneficiaries’. In this, churches are no different to other non-governmental organisations.

2. **Realise the importance of religion for others even if it has none for you**
   There is no word for ‘religion’ in many African languages. This reflects how ‘religion’ in many African worldviews is not considered something distinct from other things; what Westerners often understand as ‘religious’ cuts across the way of life and way of thinking of many of the recipients of Western aid. It is futile to imagine that ‘religious’ thinking would also not cut across development aid in such contexts, even if it is implemented by purportedly ‘secular’ local NGOs. It does. Development agencies would be wise to recognise this, rather than to vainly attempt to keep development ‘secular’.

3. **Accept the paradox of churches’ embeddedness**
   Churches’ long-term presence in a society, and the religious and spiritual needs they are able to address, makes them much more deeply embedded in local communities than is the case for almost any other type of civil society actor. This has considerable benefits for donors. It also makes the politics of funding provided for such actors increasingly complex, but there is much reason to believe that the benefits out-weigh the risks.

4. **Show trust and commit for long periods of time**
   There is no way a donor can know all the intricacies of the paradox of churches’ embeddedness. Donor funding will unavoidably have effects in local contexts which cannot be foreseen or analysed with any amount of assessment tools. Some of these impacts will go against what the donors would like to achieve. Donors would do well to accede to this reality, and to commit to long-term relationships with church organisations.

5. **Empower religious youth**
   Donors should provide funding for training church youth in ways that enable them to adopt increasing responsibility in their churches, and to also challenge church leadership in critical ways. Religion is bound to continue to be part of the problem of ‘underdevelopment’ in Africa in the future, but through the building of critical young mass within religious communities, religion can also continue to be part of the solution.
Endnotes

Religion as a resource in development cooperation
Petter Jakobsson

5 These changes are described in the texts: The Postmodern Condition (Lyotard, Bennington and Massumi, 1984), The End of History? (Fukuyama, 1989), The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order (Huntington, 1996), The end of modernity (Sim, 2010) and Monsoon (Kaplan, 2010).
7 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are documents prepared by governments in developing countries through a participatory process involving national stakeholders, such as civil society representatives, and international actors, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. For more information, see: “Factsheet: Poverty Reduction Strategy in IMF-supported Programs,” International Monetary Fund, accessed January 12, 2016, http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/prsp.htm.
10 See: DID’s Research for Development database at www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d, the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development at www.religion-and-development.nl and Oslocenteret (the Norwegian Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights) at www.oslocenter.no/projects/religion-and-development.
16 Culture Matters: Working with Communities and Faith-based Organisations.
Religion and development - the Norwegian story
Jørn Lemvik

1 Digni is a Christian membership based umbrella organisation funding development activities done by its members - all of which are Christian churches or mission organisations.

2 The focus of much of the practical work was usually on health, education and agriculture.

3 This has been the dominant view up to our days. It is only the last 10-20 years, where people have seen the “power of religion”, and also experienced that most of the world is highly religious that religion is “back on stage”. One of the challenges we hold in Norway, is that we do not clearly see that it is we who are the exception where religion is concerned, not the rest of the world.

4 Norway is predominately a Lutheran country, and most of the mission organisations were organisations with a Lutheran faith identity. But other churches had also come to Norway like the Baptists, the Pentecostals and the Methodists and these were equally actively involved in mission work.

5 Over the years this have changed to 10/90 - and with Norad providing 8% administration fee to the Norwegian organisation on top of the 90%.

6 Dr. Katherine Marshall was one of the key actors world-wide on the issue of religion and development. She worked with Dr. James Wolferson in the World Bank in the 1990s when Wolferson started discussions with the Archbishop of Canterbury on the importance of religion in development.

7 The first consultation was organised in New York City in 2014, documented in the report Religion and Development Post -2015. The next consultation was also organised in New York City in 2015. Spin-offs of these consultations were projects on gender (Baha’i), peace and reconciliation (KAI/CID), finance (OECD), indicators (salvation army), and issues about “going local” (Digni).

Documentation will be available during 2016. At the time of writing a new consultation is planned for in Nairobi in 2016.
8 The funding of this endeavor is provided by GIZ, Germany and USAIDS, and the actual establishing of this hub was taking place in Berlin in February 2016.
9 From a Norwegian context, see for instance “Innblikk i forholdet mellom Religion and Development (“Focusing the relationship between religion and development” - authors translation) written by the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights (2012).
10 Digni has been active in most of the activities here mentioned, nationally and internationally.

Mission and development: 
Old stories or new possibilities? 
Tomas Sundnes Drønen

1 A different version of this article has previously been published in Swedish Missiological Themes 2013:2.
3 This article is a further developed version of “Misjon og utvikling - fortellinger fra gamle dager eller muligheter for morgendagen?” written by Tomas Sundnes Drønen and Marianne Skjortnes as a contribution to the report Religion og utvikling, published by Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights, and the Norwegian Foreign Ministry in 2012. I would like to thank Marianne Skjortnes for her contributions.
The need for contextual analysis on the role of religion in the Swedish development cooperation

Josephine Sundqvist

1 "Människor och Tro,” accessed January 5, 2016, sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=416&artikel=5984648. One of the four FBOs, PMU InterLife, is currently phased-out and they might lose their status as “ramorganisation”, their framework agreement with Sida.


6 Tønnessen, “Faith-based NGOs in International Aid”.


10 Ibid.


15 ”Tar svenskt bistånd religionen på allvar?” Sida-seminar during Almedalsveckan, arranged by: Sida and Kunskapsforum för religion och utveckling, July 1, 2015.

16 Competence Forum held at Sida Partnership Forum (SPF) in 2015, 2-4 November.

17 “Sida Development Talk”.

18 The United Nations Commission on Human Rights appointed further to resolution 1986/20 a “Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance”. In 2000, the Commission on Human Rights decided to change the mandate title to “Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief”, which was subsequently endorsed by ECOSOC decision 2000/261 and welcomed by General Assembly resolution 55/97. On 12 April 2013, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 22/20, which, inter alia, extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for a further period of three years.


21 Ibid.


29 However, it must be recognized that this foundational belief of Islam does not necessarily mean that each Muslim holds their religion in equal weight to someone else; religion is, after all, very personal as previously stated.
The United Nations, faith-based organisations and development post-2015

Azza Karam

1 All the opinions expressed in this paper belong to the author alone and are not representative of positions, attitudes or policies of any institution, board, government, staff or territorial entity.

2 There is a great deal of discussion and debate around the definition of an FBO. It is used herein to reference faith-based or faith-inspired non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with legal standing, which are working to advocate for and/or deliver development and humanitarian services whether nationally, regionally or internationally (or indeed at all those levels). In this article, FBOs are distinguished from individual religious leaders (RL) or local faith communities which operate in diverse contexts without being legally registered or established as a non-governmental entity.


4 Dr. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid is currently serving as one of the few women in the Saudi Shura council.

5 The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are derived from the UN Millennium Declaration, which was adopted by the UN member states in 2000. The target date for the MDGs was set to 2015. The Post-2015 development agenda was led by the UN member states and involved broad consultations, including civil society participation. On 25 September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit. It contains 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that seek to eliminate poverty. The SDGs
are universal and apply to all countries. For more information, see: “Post 2015
Development Agenda,” accessed December 8, 2015,
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015; and,
“Sustainable Development Goals,” accessed December 8, 2015,
http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgovoverview/post-2015-
development-agenda.html.
6 The first took place in 2009.
7 For more discussion on these simultaneous challenges and the discussion
thereof in the UN, see: “Ebola and ISIS: A Learning Exchange Between U.N. and
et/2014/11/ebola-and-isis-a-learning-exchange-between-u-n-and-faith-
based-organisations/.
8 The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging with Faith-Based
Organisations for Development (IATF-FBOs) consists of 10 UN agency Funds and
Programmes, as well as UN Secretariat offices and the World Bank, all with a
record of engagement (and focal points assigned) with religious and cultural
questions, faith-based and/or civil society outreach. Members of the IATF-FBOs
include: UNAIDS, UNDPA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDESA, UNWOMEN,
UNHABITAT, WHO, ILO, Alliance of Civilizations, and UNDESA.
9 The UN Development Group unites the 32 UN funds, programmes, agencies,
departments, and offices that play a role in development.
10 These take place once yearly and are referred to as Strategic Learning
Exchanges on Faith, Development and Humanitarian Relief. Various UN staff
members are convened with common FBO partners to exchange experiences and
address partnerships which help to address and assess the nexus between religion-
development and humanitarian aspects based on real in-country situations.
11 Digni is a Norwegian FBO umbrella organisation with a long track record of
advocacy with Norwegian and EU governments around the inclusion of
faithbased counterparts in sustainable development processes.
12 A full report of many of these discussions can be accessed at: “Religion and
Development Post-2015: Report of a Consultation among Donor Organisations,
United Nations Development Agencies and Faith-based Organisations,” accessed
December 6, 2015, http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/DONOR-
UN-FBO%20May%202014.pdf.
13 The author is grateful for feedback and discussions for an initial presentation
around these lessons learned, which took place around the DUF II in New York
(July 9 and 10, 2015), organised and hosted by the United Nations Inter-Agency
Task Force on Religion and Development, as well as during a Donors’ Coordination
Meeting generously hosted by the German development cooperation entities
(GIZ and BMZ) on September 1-2, 2015.
Faith-based organisations and their distinct assets

Kjell Nordstokke

1 The article has previously been published in Swedish Missiological Themes 2013:2.
2 A presentation of diaconal institutions in Norway and their role as service providers within the public welfare system is found in Angell, 2009.
9 Clarke, “Agents of Transformation,” 84.
14 Ibid, 5.
17 Ibid, 110.
19 Ibid, 30.
20 Ibid, 15.
21 Ibid, 32-33.
22 Ibid, 33-34.
23 James, “What is Distinctive about FBOs?” 12.
24 The Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA), organised by the World Council of Churches, is a prominent example of such efforts.
27 Ibid, 48-49.
30 Ibid, 63.

Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity and development: Views from Africa
Päivi Hasu

2 This chapter is an edited version of a chapter published in 2015 in Finnish in a volume titled Uskonto ja kehitys (Religion and Development) edited by Academy Professor Elina Vuola and published by the Finnish Literature Society. I would like to thank the Academy of Finland for supporting this study as part of my research on Religion and Globalization: Evangelical Christianity and Development in Africa. I am grateful to Anceth Jettah and Vivian Baitu for providing me with research assistance. Earlier versions of this paper have been critiqued by the entire group of contributors to Uskonto ja kehitys. I am particularly grateful to Fida International and the Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania for their generous collaboration over the years. Any shortcomings are of my own making.
7 Anderson, Introduction to Pentecostalism, 114.
9 Ibid, 393.
14 Fida International.
15 Fida International.
18 Ibid.
19 Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania (FPCT), General Secretary 31.8.2012.
20 Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania (FPCT), Administrative Secretary 31.8.2012.
21 Ibid.
25 Anderson, Introduction to Pentecostalism, 228.


30 Marshall, "Sovereignty", 211.


34 For a comparison of two different kinds of churches from the point of view of development see Hasu 2012.

35 Eph 6:12 (New International Version) - For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.


38 Stephenson, "Pentecostal Theology", 493.


40 Mal 3:10 (New International Version) - “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”


46 Hasu, ”Prosperity Gospels”, 76-77.

The role of faith-based mediation in internal armed conflicts
Isak Svensson


10 Scott R. Appleby, "Religion as an Agent of Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding.”


12 Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, "Ethno-Religious Conflict.”


14 Monica Duffy Toft, Religion, Civil War, and International Order, Discussion Paper 2006-03. (Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, July 2006).

15 Gerald F. Powers, "Religion and Peacebuilding.”

16 Ibid.


18 However, we note that at least, in some predominantly Catholic countries, or predominantly Muslim countries, the close historic or contemporary link between the religious institutions and the state may well have an impact on their standing - including credibility, trustworthiness and neutrality - as mediators.


23 For more, see: ibid.

24 For more, see: Toft, Philpott, et al., God’s century.


Another way of thinking: Religion, values and climate change
Henrik Grape

2 Ibid.
4 Oxfam, "Extreme Carbon Inequality."
8 The ten percentages of the Swedish households with greatest disposable income were responsible for 20% of the household emissions, according to data from 2003. The tenth percentage of households with lowest income were responsible for only 5% of the emissions. This means that the ten percentages with high income are responsible for three times more CO2 emissions than the ten percentages with lowest income. A study from 2012 looked at what the households with higher income buys more of, and it showed that the more expenditure per month the higher the expenditures for accessories, vacation homes, travel, restaurant meals, boats, and operating vehicles that the households own. Travels, cars, more consumption of goods and services results in higher CO2 emissions. It is important to underline that emissions from consumption is not only about individual consumers. The infrastructure, energy system, rules and regulations together with the supply of goods is of significance for the result. See: Statistics Sweden, “Mest koldioxid från sambor utan barn,” accessed February 15, 2016, http://www.scb.se/sv_/Hitta-statistik/Artiklar/Mest-koldioxid-fran-sambor-utan-barn/.
Religious leaders’ response to HIV prevention in South Africa
Elisabet Eriksson

1 A different version of this article has previously been published in Swedish Missiological Themes 2011:2.

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13 J. R. Cochrane, Understanding religious health assets for public health systems (Tübingen: German Institute for Medical Mission, 2006).


Recovering the biblical story of Tamar: Training for transformation, doing development
Gerald O. West

1 Gerald O. West, Contextual Bible Study (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993).

2 Gerald O. West and Phumzile Zondi-Mabizela, ”The Bible Story That Became a Campaign: The Tamar Campaign in South Africa (and Beyond),” Ministerial Formation 103 (2004), 4-12.

3 ‘CBS’ is more than an abbreviation; the Ujamaa Centre has been asked by some of the communities we work with not to call what we do ‘Bible study’, because, they insist, what we do “is not what we do in church”.


18 Ibid., 111.
20 Ibid., 12.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 32.
31 Ibid.


34 Nolan, *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel*, 17. For what this would look like in terms of inter-faith relations see: Matthew C. Palombo, ”Interfaith Praxis in South African Struggle for Liberation: Toward a Liberatio-


**International development engages with religion: How to achieve positive outcomes for women**

*Emma Tomalin*


5 Ibid. 2

7 Culture Matters: Lessons from a Legacy of Engaging Faith-Based Organisations.
12 Ibid, 79.
13 Ibid, 74.
17 Bradley and Tomalin, *Dowry: Bridging the Gap*, 225.
18 Ibid, 261.
19 Ibid, 252.
20 Ibid, 263.
23 Bradley and Tomalin, *Dowry: Bridging the Gap*, 265.
24 Ibid, 256.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid, 269.
29 Ibid.


32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Tadros, *Faith-Based Organisations and Service Delivery*, 11.

35 Ibid.


39 Ibid, xx.

40 Ibid, 1135.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid, 1158.

43 Ibid, 1137.


45 Facio and Morgan, “Equity or Equality for Women?” 1148.


47 Bradley and Tomalin, Dowry: *Bridging the Gap*, 265.


49 Dairiam, “Equity or Equality for Women?”


51 Ibid, 485.

52 Ibid, 160.

53 Ibid.

54 Facio and Morgan, “Equity or Equality for Women?” 1159.
Religious communities - a resource or a liability for development?
Auli and Mika Vähäkangas

1 This chapter was originally published as ”Uskonnolliset yhteisöt: kehityksen jarru vai mahdollisuus?” in Elina Vuola (ed.): Uskonto ja kehitys, näkökulmia suomalaiseen kehitysyhteistyöhön ja -tutkimukseen, 124-143. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2015.


11 For a detailed and deep analysis of such a system in Uganda, see: Richard Vokes, Ghosts of Kanungu: Fertility, Secrecy, and Exchange in the Great Lakes of East Africa (Woodbridge & Rochester: James Currey, 2009).

12 Terese Bue Kessel, Between God’s Sharing Power and Men’s Controlling Power: A Quest for Diaconal Empowerment and Transformation in Femmes Pour Christ in Cameroon (School of Mission and Theology: Stavanger, 2014).


16 Henrietta Grönlund, Volunteerism as a mirror of individual and society: Reflections from young adults in Finland (Doctoral dissertation, University of Helsinki, 2012).


29 Ibid, 238.
31 Gerrie Ter Haar and Stephen Ellis, “The Role of Religion in Development,” 352.

Embeddedness - the paradox of development through the grassroots of churches
Henni Alava

1 Henni Alava, ”Interactions of Conflict and Development Intervention in Northern Uganda” (Master’s thesis, University of Helsinki, 2008).
3 Please note that as described above, the names of all organisations (such as “NSAAPPO”) and individuals (such as “Missionary”) are pseudonyms, and the case study is an amalgam of factual and fictional material which is crafted so as to protect the anonymity of my informants in Northern Uganda.
5 See: Catrine Shroff, formerly Catrine Christiansen, Development by Churches, Development of Churches: Institutional Trajectories in Rural Uganda. (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2010).