



Faith-based Interventions in Peace, Conflict and Violence: A Scoping Study

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**JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on
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Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local

Communities

Formed in 2012 by a broad collaboration of international development organisations, UN agencies, academic institutions and religious bodies, the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities (JLIF&LC) is an international collaboration to gather and communicate evidence for faith groups' activities and contributions to community health and wellbeing.

Learning Hubs

JLIF&LC has advanced its work of evidence gathering and communication by organising cross-sector, multi-religious, and cross-disciplinary 'Learning Hubs' focusing on thematic areas. Each Learning Hub contains a diverse membership of expert practitioners, policymakers, and academics engaged around the question of the state of evidence for faith groups' contributions in a particular thematic area.

JLIF&LC's current Learning Hubs include: Gender-Based Violence, Peace & Conflict; Resilience in Humanitarian Situations; Capacity Building; HIV & Maternal Health; and Immunization.

In addition to developing Scoping Studies of evidence for faith activity and contribution to each thematic area, the Learning Hubs have provided unique opportunities for cross-sector collaboration and friendship, out of which many new partnerships for research, policy development and practice have been initiated.

Learning Hubs have also actively contributed evidence and thematic expertise to international processes. For example, the Resilience Learning Hub has played a key role in UNHCR Dialogue on Faith and Protection; the SGBV Learning Hub has played a role in the UK Initiative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict; and the Peace and Conflict Learning Hub and Resilience in Humanitarian Situations Learning Hubs have contributed to the evidence base for religious engagement at the World Humanitarian Summit.

The JLIF&LC welcomes submissions of pertinent resources for posting, and invites expressions of interest in joining a Learning Hub by policymakers, practitioners and academics interested in the Hub theme.

For more information please see www.jliflc.com or contact Jean Duff, JLIF&LC Coordinator at jeanduff@pfaithdev.org.

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Executive Summary

Drawing on more than 70 case studies this scoping paper explores the interventions of faith-based organisations and local faith communities in peace, conflict and violence.

It highlights the complex and ambivalent relationship between religion and violence, in all of its forms, and the important but under-recognised contributions faith-based actors make in contexts in or emerging from conflict.

Religion, conflict and violence

Religion is implicated in many forms of conflict and violence, from the extremist violence of movements like *Daesh*, to religiously framed rioting and ethno-religious civil war. It can also justify harmful practices in countries seen as peaceful through measures that persecute minority groups or legitimise discrimination.

But a deeper analysis of links between religion, conflict and violence cautions against simplifications. Conflict protagonists are shaped by multiple competing identities and loyalties. Conflict causes are deeply rooted and sometimes obscured and conflict dynamics are determined by many intervening variables.

Deeper causes of conflict include poverty, political and ethnic exclusion, democracy and governance, and the global political economy. Conflict analyses must capture these complexities, taking account of theological narratives *and* socio-economic challenges. They must acknowledge that the causes of conflict are often non-religious, but that religious motives can still help determine conflict behaviour. And they must avoid giving undue prominence to religion where it is not a major factor.

Religion and peace

Religion has influenced the theory and practice of peacebuilding at a fundamental level. Today faith-based actors are regularly engaged in efforts to resolve conflict. At their best, they have the moral capital, grassroots networks, functioning institutional frameworks and open-ended commitment to provide a local response to local problems.

The range of peacebuilding activities that faith-based actors engage in is extensive, and includes mediation, humanitarian aid, and reconciliation and development work, as well as offering sanctuary, challenging social injustice, promoting dialogue, breaking down prejudice and protecting minorities.

Recognising the value of this, governments, donors and policymakers are seeking to better understand the role of faith in shaping societies, particularly on issues of peace and human flourishing. This marks a step change in how religion is approached and creates potential for new forms of collaboration.

To support collaboration much has to be done to improve partnerships. The resources of faith-based actors, which encourage others to work with them, also encourage instrumental forms of partnership that are disempowering. As the examples cited in this scoping study show faith-based approaches are at their strongest when they play to their strengths. To support success, faith-based actors should be recognised as architects of their own approaches.

Ultimately partnering with faith groups to address conflict and violence increases risk. Yet there is also a very significant lost opportunity cost to not doing so. We advocate a measured approach that seeks to increase the quantity *and* the quality of partnerships,

at a pace that is sustainable and leaves time for incorporating lessons that emerge.

A summary of key points

- The ‘ambivalence’ of religion makes trying to develop hard and fast rules about the contributions of faith-based actors futile. Each context must be judged independently.
- In some cases, religious actors will be a significant resource towards peace and should be enabled. In others, the emphasis must be on mitigating, containing or reversing their involvement in conflict escalation.
- Given the challenges involved, entering into peacebuilding relationships with faith groups is not for the risk-averse or faint-hearted. Yet our case studies show it is possible - and the potential gains for humanity more than justify the effort.
- To understand the ways in which faith-based organisations and local faith groups use their religious capital in relation to conflict it is important to understand the scriptural, ethical and theological values that motivate them. Efforts to improve levels of religious literacy are important.
- To make the most of partnerships with faith-based actors, collaborators should empower them to do what they do best. This may require more inductive and iterative approaches that take the existing activities and priorities of faith groups as a starting point and seek synergies.
- For their part, faith-based actors must go substantively beyond anecdotal evidence to demonstrate the impact of their work. The challenges are real and substantial, but not insurmountable. Tackling evidence gaps will require innovation and support across sectors and faiths, but the potential payoff includes firmer foundations for partnership, increased investment and a greater policy voice.
- The role of faith-based organisations and local faith groups in *preventing* violence is

particularly underexplored. Early indications suggest that faith-based actors are engaged in conflict prevention and make a distinctive contribution, though this often goes unrecognised (even by faith-based actors themselves).

- In particular, faith-based forms of conflict prevention place a strong emphasis on developing resilient relationships that can withstand conflict triggers, rather than tactical or technological measures to avoid outbreaks of violence. This relational dimension could strengthen existing conflict prevention approaches.
- The roles of religious women and religious youth are also underexplored (where they are considered, it is too often in the context of countering violent extremism). A greater appreciation of their varied work would help to broaden understandings of faith-based interventions in peace and conflict.
- The capacity of culture to justify injustice and resource peaceful social relations warrants a deeper exploration of the role of faith leaders’ sermons, prayers and teachings in shaping values and attitudes.
- Whilst contentious in a number of contexts, faith-based engagement in formal and informal education has the potential to foster greater levels of the critical openness, empathy and empowerment that can help to drive the building of cultures of peace.

Introduction

The Purpose of the Scoping Paper

Established in 2012, the [Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities](#) brings together international development organizations, UN agencies, universities and religious bodies to consider the potential of local faith communities to improve community health and well-being. The initiative is divided into six learning hubs. The Peace and Conflict hub links academics, policy makers and practitioners working to prevent or address conflict in our turbulent world, drawing on research and experience to develop recommendations and inform practice. It equips policymakers and practitioners for evidence-based decision-making with regard to engagement with faith groups and supports Hub members' own practice.

The scoping paper is divided into five sections. First, the paper defines key concepts and terminology and discusses the use of religious and spiritual capital by faith-based organisations, enabling a more holistic understanding of their practice. Second, it reviews existing thinking on the role of faith in peace and conflict. Third, it offers a range of case studies that highlight the distinctiveness and dilemmas of faith-based responses to conflict. Fourth, it considers the implications of this for best practice. Finally, it offers recommendations for the future development of the JLI Peace and Conflict Hub.

Defining Key Terms

Faith-based Organisation

The term 'faith based organisation' encompasses a wide variety of organisations, from faith groups serving local neighbourhoods to globally active development agencies such as [Islamic Relief](#), [Muslim Aid](#), [World Vision](#), [Christian Aid](#) or [Buddhist Global Relief](#). Clarke and Jennings (2008) view them as 'any organisation that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within that faith'.

In this scoping paper the term denotes national or international organisations that focus their activities on peacebuilding and conflict prevention, community development, social justice or anti-discrimination goals. They can be connected to specific faith communities or independent organisations whose activities are shaped by a commitment to the values of a particular faith. They can be providers of basic services and emergency services and can also be the basis of political action, mobilisation and contestation (Beaumont and Cloke, 2012).

Local faith community

'Local faith communities – such as congregations, mosques and temples – are those whose members reside in relatively close proximity, such that they can regularly meet together for religious purposes, often in a dedicated physical venue' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Ager, 2013). They are very diverse in form - including in organisational structure, values and principles, and the relationships they build with local people and others. Many are deeply rooted and influential, which enables them to mobilise support around key social and political objectives. Local religious leaders often play central roles community life and link communities to wider national and global networks. Many local faith communities make a significant contribution to peacebuilding, though they may also exacerbate conflict dynamics.

Conflict and violence

The principal founder of peace and conflict studies, Johann Galtung (1969 and 1990) suggests that conflict is three-dimensional, speaking about a 'triad of violence'.

Direct violence refers to the use (or threat) of physical force, which can include physical attacks on people on because of their ethnicity, religion, gender or sexuality. Direct violence can be expressed in many forms, including inter-ethnic conflict, rape, torture, verbal abuse, the persecution of identity groups, and civil war. It often arises from deeper cultural, economic and political structures and norms. What we see represents the tip of the iceberg.

Cultural violence refers to aspects of culture that can be used to legitimise other forms of violence. (Galtung, 1990). The use of the Exodus narrative in the Hebrew scriptures by the Dutch Reformed Church as a means of justifying Apartheid in South Africa, or cultural patriarchal norms coupled with misinterpretation of Islam to justify female genital mutilation/cutting exemplify 'cultural violence'.

Structural violence relies on cultural violence to legitimise exploitative and unequal aspects of social structures, systems and policies. Economic policies that result in low pay, insecure employment, the loss of workers' rights and unsafe working conditions are forms of structural violence, as they diminish the life-chances of individuals and communities. Examples include the segregation of public services in the USA until the mid-1960s, the Apartheid regime in South Africa and the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories. Structural violence is often manifested through the policies and practices of institutions – either because they actively promote practices that enable structural violence or fail to stop them.

The relationship between direct, cultural and structural violence is complex and contested. Galtung (1990) suggests that the physical enslavement of Africans was a graphic example of direct violence, and that this gave rise to the structural violence of the slave plantation economy and segregation, which in turn fed the cultural violence of racist ideology and institutional racism. Yet it is possible to suggest that the direct violence of slavery was only possible because it reflected the structural violence of empire building and the existing cultural violence of racist narratives.

Within this scoping paper direct, structural and cultural violence are seen as interrelated faces of conflict – each feeding and being fed by the others.

Conflict Transformation

Conflict transformation seeks to understand and address the underlying economic, political, social and cultural causes of conflict. It tackles deep-rooted and systemic injustices that can erupt in violence. It also lays foundations for new structures, institutions, systems of governance and cultures that are characterised by inclusivity, dialogue and trust. Focusing on systems and structures can enable greater understanding of transnational sources of conflict, such as human trafficking, climate change, terrorism and organised crime. In recent years, research into [global ethics](#) has begun to provide practitioners and academics with new resources that enable engagement with these globalised sources of conflict (Widdows, 2011). An example of faith-based conflict transformation is [Christian Aid](#)'s work in Colombia, which supports human rights lawyers who are working on behalf of trades unionists, journalists and NGO workers threatened

by paramilitary groups. Islamic Relief have also developed a [faith-based toolkit on conflict transformation](#) (Salek, 2014).

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding encompasses efforts to foster sustainable peace through measures that address conflict non-violently and tackle its root causes. It involves but goes far beyond conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacemaking and reconciliation. And it seeks a peace that is more than the absence of violence - one in which human security is engendered through equal and sufficient opportunity, fair distribution of power and resources, inclusive decision-making, and protection under the law.

The past decade has seen significant efforts to create and codify a peacebuilding architecture. At global level, the UN established a Peacebuilding Commission, a Peacebuilding Support Office and a Peacebuilding Fund. In 2015, promoting peace and justice became one of [17 Global Goals](#), and UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon called for greater commitment to conflict prevention (UNSC, 2015). Similar developments have taken place at regional level. The African Union has established a [Peace and Security Council](#) (PSC) with an African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) built around it. The European Union's Lisbon Treaty places peacebuilding and conflict prevention at the heart of its [external action](#). At national level, some countries have integrated peacebuilding within governance structures, for instance by appointing Ministers and Special Ambassadors for peace.

Yet these efforts remain incommensurate to the scale of the challenge. A [recent high level review](#) recognises a persistent 'gaping hole' in the UN's institutional machinery, arguing that a broader, more comprehensive approach is required - one that addresses all stages of conflict, involves the security, human rights and development pillars of the UN, fosters inclusive national ownership from a wide spectrum of domestic actors, and commits to realistic timelines (UN, 2015). Crucially, it underlines that sustaining peace is a task that only national stakeholders can undertake, albeit with accompaniment, facilitation and support from others.

This reflects a broader 'local turn' within peacebuilding, occurring in the context of increased assertiveness by local actors and a loss of confidence by some international actors (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013). Decades of peacebuilding have led to criticisms that its practice is often shallow, centralised and neglectful of local context (Brinkerhoff & Johnson, 2009; Paris & Sisk, 2007), as well as growing recognition of the limitations of using expatriate staff (Autesserre, 2014). Recognising and strengthening the role of local actors is now seen as key to unlocking more of peacebuilding's potential, particularly as domestic drivers play a more significant role in animating today's conflicts (UN, 2015). This has profound implications for faith-based peacebuilding, much of which occurs at grassroots level and with hard-to-reach communities.

Social, Religious and Spiritual Capital

The concept of social capital helps us to understand how groups and organisations can leverage their networks and intangible resources (such as their reputations) to support their objectives (Putnam, 2000; Field, 2003 and Baker and Skinner, 2014). It refers to 'connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' (Putnam, 2000). The effectiveness of faith-based organisations in responding to conflict largely rests on the extent to which they are able to rely on the social capital of local, national and transnational faith communities and their reputations for being trustworthy, reliable and

honest. Putnam (2000) and Sretzer (2002) identify three forms of social capital that are of particular relevance.

Bonding capital	The building up of resilient relationships, solidarity, capacity and self-confidence within homogeneous social, ethnic or religious groups
Bridging capital	The development of dialogue, greater understanding and levels of trust between different social, ethnic or religious groups
Linking capital	The development of trusting relationships between different social, ethnic or religious groups in order to develop a network that is capable of bringing about political and social changes

Figure 1 – Different types of social capital

A further, often neglected, aspect of debates about social capital relates to the values that underpin the activities of faith-based organisations.

Religious Capital	The resources faith groups possess as a result of their buildings, congregations, activities and relationships in local neighbourhoods
Spiritual Capital	The ethical, theological, scriptural and spiritual values that resource and motivate faith groups

Figure 2 – Religious and Spiritual Capital

Baker and Skinner (2014, 4) suggest that spiritual capital ‘energises religious capital by providing a theological identity, a value system, moral vision and a basis of faith.’ If social and religious capital refer to the ‘what’ of faith-based organisations’ engagement, then spiritual capital draws our attention to the ‘why’ aspect of their work. In the US, the [Yale Center for Faith and Culture](#) has investigated the role that spiritual capital plays in the development of practice in major corporations. By understanding the values, ethical frameworks and theological beliefs that motivate the work of faith-based organisations we are better able to assess their practice.

Religion, peace and conflict: current thinking

The links between religion, conflict and violence are deep, multi-faceted and much interrogated. Religion has been implicated in direct physical violence, such as rioting, massacres and persecution. It has also been implicated in structural and cultural violence, helping to define power relations and underpin narratives that legitimise and motivate physical violence. A cursory glance at history shows that all religions have committed atrocities in the name of faith. In Nazi Germany, Christianity played a critical role in making leaders' commands comprehensible and tolerable to the rank and file (Bergen, 1995). In many current conflicts, religious narratives serve to dehumanise others – enabling such atrocities as the Sinjar Massacre of Yazidis and their systematic enslavement by *Daesh*, and the brutalities of [the Lord's Resistance Army](#) in Central Africa. Religion can also be implicated in violence through inaction and omission - through failing to bear witness or challenge norms. Finally, given global increases in terrorism, particular attention is now given to extremism in the name of religion.

Whilst contemporary and historical experiences imply that religion is a significant driver of violence, this assumption can obscure other, more deeply rooted conflict drivers. Stewart (2008) and Østby (2008) emphasise the importance of horizontal inequalities (those between different groups in the same society). They build on work by Gurr (1993) and Collier (2003) investigating links between poverty and group identity in triggering conflict. In some cases, religious conflict can be rooted in state fragility or collapse, which may itself be born of many causes including bad governance and the international political economy (cases include the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Harakat Al-Shabaab in Somalia and *Daesh* in Iraq). These socio-economic and political causes of conflict are often harder to spot however, and at surface level the influence of religion can seem pronounced, especially where it is used to justify violent actions.

Religion is also credited with driving peacebuilding and reconciliation. Case studies document the interventions of religious organisations, for instance through mediation, witness, dialogue and reconciliation.¹ Research also explores how theology can support peacebuilding – for instance through engendering cultures of nonviolence and spurring action to tackle poverty and injustice, reducing the structural drivers of conflict.² Some researchers focus on Christian contributions (such as Sampson and Lederach, 2000; Appleby, 2000 and Johnston and Sampson, 1994). Others consider the contributions of Islam (Abu Nimer, 2003; Sachedina, 2000; and Said et al, 2002) and non-Western religions (Galtung and MacQueen, 2008; Neumaier, 2004). Galtung (1997) explores the peace potential of all religions, identifying factors that make them prone to violence and those which can help to build peace. He classifies religions according to their inherent potential to reject violence of different forms and stresses the need to de-emphasise the divisive aspects present in all faiths.

¹ See Marshall and Wallace's (2012) study of Muslims in the Rwandan genocide and Carter's (2006) account of the Melanesian Brotherhood during the Solomon Islands conflict. Well known examples include Archbishop Desmond Tutu's leadership during the South African Truth and Reconciliation process and the work of Sant' Egidio in Mozambique.

² Inspired by faith, Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi both sought to resist oppression through nonviolence. Some religions are explicitly pacifist; others place significant limits on the use of force. Abu Nimer (2003) explains how Muslim societies have developed many tools for non-violent conflict resolution, including non-violent resistance.

Religion, Peace and Conflict – An Ambivalent Heritage

In many ways, perspectives that cast religion as a driver of conflict and those that see it as a driver of peace are both correct, yet they each only give a partial account. Scholars have recognised this 'ambivalence of the sacred' (Appleby 2000), noting that religious individuals and organisations are important 'purveyors of ideas' (Haynes, 2011) that can drive both conflict and peace (Gopin, 2000). Philpott (2007) explores religious influences on peace and conflict by examining two variables – the ways in which religious and political authority are articulated in a given context, and political theology. He gives examples of how some religious groups, usually within a liberal political theology framework, can help to shift a country's institutional configuration towards democracy through nonviolent struggle, whilst others may have the same interests as governments in sustaining autocracy. For instance in Latin America, churches in Brazil and Chile strongly opposed dictatorship and exposed human rights violations, whilst those in Argentina and Uruguay never became strong democratising forces.

The ambivalent relationship between religion and conflict extends to religious actors in the same context, even of the same faith and sect. A case in point is Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. Several hundred clergy were killed, some for being Tutsi and others for refusing to stand by as Tutsis were slaughtered. But priests and nuns were also convicted as génocidaires, and church groups have been accused of complicity in state campaigns of violence and of failing to bear witness to atrocities. Longman (2001) argues that, shaped by their colonial experiences, many Rwandan churches emphasised respect for authority and were deeply implicated in political manoeuvring and discrimination. Similarly, churches in Northern Ireland at times exacerbated the troubles, with prominent Protestant clergy equating nationalist aspirations with a Papist plot, but were also crucially active in peacemaking and reconciliation (Marsden, 2012).

A deeper analysis of the links between religion, conflict and peace cautions against simplifications. Conflict protagonists are shaped by multiple competing identities and loyalties, conflict causes are deeply rooted and sometimes obscured, and conflict dynamics are determined by many intervening variables. Equally important is the need to resist simplifying the involvement of religious actors in conflict contexts. It is an oversimplification, for instance, to say that divides between Sunni and Shia represent the main source of conflict in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). There are many countries where Sunni and Shia live peacefully together, including in Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Where Sunni-Shia divisions do contribute to conflict, it is often because complex political problems have been turned into sectarian issues - either by domestic or external actors. An example is [Yemen](#) at the time of writing, where Iran is supporting the Houthis while Saudi Arabia bombs their positions in support of President Hadi.

Recent statistics on linkages between religion, peace and conflict also testify to this complexity. Research by the [Institute for Economics and Peace \(2005\)](#) demonstrates that societies with high levels of religious practice can be highly peaceful, and those with low levels of religious practice can have low levels of peace. In fact, the rate at which people identify as members of religious groups does not have a statistically significant relationship with peacefulness. Instead, the Institute identifies democracy as being a much stronger determinant of levels of peace and conflict. Democracies tend to have a greater acceptance of the rights of others, lower levels of religious restrictions and more robust institutions to prevent abuses of power (which helps

explain why religious tension can sometimes *correlate* with conflict, whilst recognising that democracy is more likely to be a *causal* factor).

The 'ambivalence' of religion makes trying to develop hard and fast rules about the contributions of faith-based actors futile. Each context must be judged independently – in some cases, religious actors will be a significant resource for efforts towards peace and should be included and enabled. In others, the emphasis must be on mitigating, containing or reversing their involvement in conflict inflammation and escalation. Given the challenges involved, entering into peacebuilding partnerships with religious organisations is not for the risk-averse or faint-hearted. However, the case studies in this report show that it is possible – and that the potential gains for humanity can more than justify the effort.

Violence in the name of religion – what does the evidence suggest?

A growing body of empirical research demonstrates a worldwide increase in religiously framed violence. Figures from the Pew Research Centre (2014) indicate that the share of countries with 'high' or 'very high' levels of social hostilities involving religion reached a six-year peak in 2012.³ The 2014 *Peace and Religion Report* surveyed 35 armed conflicts in 2013, suggesting that religion played a role 60% of the time but was not the single or primary cause of any. In the lowest performing countries in the *Global Peace Index 2015*, many conflicts were religiously-framed (Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Somalia and Pakistan are all in the bottom 10).

Many places have recently been affected by religiously framed violence. In the Central African Republic, fighting between the (Muslim) Seleka and the (Christian) Anti-Balaka has resulted in mass atrocities since 2012. In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Israel's offensive in Gaza in July 2014 killed 2,200 people (almost all Palestinians). In Mali, political in-fighting has been compounded by a radical reading of Islam, terrorist influences, criminal networks across the Sahara, and the fall of the Libyan Gaddafi regime (Yabi, 2012). In Nigeria, the Sunni Islamic fundamentalist sect [Boko Haram](#) advocates a strict form of Sharia law and became the world's deadliest terrorist group in 2014. It was responsible for 6,664 deaths (more than *Daesh*, which killed 6,073 people in the same year).⁴ And in Pakistan, a bombing targeting Christians celebrating Easter in Lahore killed more than 70 people in March 2016.

Europe also has seen an increase in religiously framed terrorism. In January 2015, the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* was attacked by gunmen linked to Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, ostensibly for its controversial depictions of the prophet Mohammed. Further attacks have occurred in Paris in November 2015 and in Belgium in March 2016. *Daesh* claimed responsibility for the first, citing amongst other grievances President Hollande's foreign policy in relation to Muslims worldwide, and are suspected of the second.

These figures and examples do not necessarily mean that religion is increasingly *driving* levels of violence, but rather that there are an increasing number of conflicts *involving* religion.

³ This is attributed in part to the continuing effects of the Arab Spring and to the significant increase in religious hostilities in Asia-Pacific, where China edged into the high category for the first time (Pew Research Centre, 2014). Later figures from 2013 found a slight decrease from the previous year, with the share of countries with 'high' or 'very high' levels of social hostilities involving religion dropping from 33% to 27%.

⁴ Institute for Economics and Peace (2015). Figures from the *Global Terrorism Index 2015*, compiled by the Institute for Economics and Peace based on data from the Global Terrorism database collated by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism.

Perspectives that ascribe violence to the essence of religions and their fundamental incompatibilities still dominate discussions on religion and violence, particularly in the media. Religion is also cast as a force that provides a legitimating narrative for violence and a collective identity around which to mobilise. Both perspectives are partly refuted by studies, which demonstrate that whilst religion can be an important intervening variable in conflict there are almost always underlying socioeconomic conditions that function as predisposing or causal factors (Armstrong, 2014; Bielfeldt, 2014, Cavanaugh, 2009; Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2000 and the Institute for Economics & Peace, 2014).⁵

Especially in multicultural societies, 'horizontal inequalities' can coincide with cultural differences to make violence more likely (Stewart, 2009). Similarly, countries with high levels of political or ethnic exclusion are also more likely to experience violence, indicating that both economic and social inequality *and* perceived injustice matter greatly (Cederman, Wimmer and Min 2010, Goldstone et al, 2010). Research into extremism also suggests that it is not necessarily religious theologies that are the problem, but extremist mind-sets – and so the origin of this form of conflict may not necessarily lie in religion (Gellner, 1992, Berman, 2007).

In Nigeria, the rise of Boko Haram since 2003 is rooted in the marginalised political economy and endemic poverty of the northern region. In Iraq and Syria, the rise of *Daesh* is rooted in Iraq's recent history of failed Western intervention and regional trends of political and social exclusion, autocracy, bad governance and the suppression of non-violent protest and dissent. Conflict analyses must capture these complexities, taking account of religious ideologies *and* socio-economic challenges. They must acknowledge that the causes of conflict are often non-religious, but that religious motives can still help determine conflict behaviour (Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2000; Stewart, 2009; Bielefeldt, 2014). They must disaggregate rather than conflate, recognising the differing (often localised) motivations of religious actors and the multiple identities and loyalties they hold.⁶ They must also avoid giving undue prominence to religion in contexts where it is not a major factor, as this can obscure more deeply rooted causes (Silvestri and Mayall, 2015) and distract from or deepen graver threats.⁷

Whatever the causes, the existence of conflict and instability can give a boost to those who seek to sow division and conflict along religious lines. The International Crisis Group notes the 'recruitment potential' that chaos provides, pointing to how disintegrating security in the Middle East has advantaged *Daesh* (ICG, 2016). The power vacuum created by failure of Western interventions and most of the 2011 Arab Revolutions has created enormous opportunity for violent religious extremism.

Countering extremist violence in the name of religion

The issue of extremist violence in the name of religion is very much global, affecting countries in the Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. In the first three months of 2016 alone, the Global Extremism Monitor recorded nearly 10,000 deaths at the hands of religious extremists or in counter-extremism efforts (Measures and Mellgard, 2016). Just a handful of

⁵ Fox (2004) uses data from the Minorities at Risk dataset to argue that 'when religious issues are important, they will change the dynamics of the conflict'. Svensonn (2007) also argues that grievances based on explicit religious claims make negotiated settlement less likely to succeed.

⁶ International Crisis Group (2016).

⁷ International Crisis Group (2016).

extremist movements fuel the world's most violent wars, including *Daesh*, Boko Haram, the Taliban and Al Shabab. In response, governments have spearheaded efforts to prevent radicalisation, counter extremist narratives and undermine the capacity of non-state actors to engage in political violence. The field of countering violent extremism (CVE) has rapidly developed with new preventative tools deployed as understandings of how and why people engage in violent extremism evolve (Holmer, 2013). Yet at all levels, governance and security actors still struggle to respond effectively - in ways that are measured and supportive, and which reinforce community cohesion and people's sense of belonging.

Recognising that radicalisation is a social process, efforts to counter extremism have identified religious leaders and local faith communities as important gatekeepers. Religious actors have sometimes been willing partners, partly to resist the exploitation of their faith by extremists. Muslim groups have been particularly involved as attention currently focuses on Islamic movements (though there is ample evidence of other religions being implicated in recent violence, including in Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Burma, the Balkans and Columbia). Signed by 126 Islamic religious leaders, the Oxford Foundation's [Open letter to the leader, fighters and followers of the Islamic State](#) picks apart the movement's ideology and reaffirms Islamic principles. In Pakistan, the campus-based network [Khudi](#) uses Muslim history to argue against twisted meanings of the word *umma* (meaning community, not 'nation united against infidels'). Many interfaith organisations are also working to counter extremism, including the [Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers](#) and [Religions for Peace](#), to name just a few. Think tanks such as [Hedayah](#) and the [Quilliam Foundation](#) challenge the ideological underpinnings of terrorism and develop the evidence base for policymaking.

It is unclear what success these initiatives have had, as there is an urgent need for more critical analysis and evaluation within the CVE field (Nasser-Eddine, Garnham, Agostine and Caluya, 2011). Some argue that CVE policies and programmes have had the unintended consequence of making faith communities feel that they are the subject of interventions, or suspect communities (Chaudhury and Fenwick, 2011; Thomas, 2010). Others perceive that they are self-selecting and fail to reach those who are most at risk of radicalisation. CVE measures have also had a negative impact on the operations of civil society organisations (Cortright, 2008), typecasting them as a security risk. In 2014, for instance, [Islamic Relief's banking services were withdrawn by HSBC](#) as counter terrorism regulations created a 'fog of uncertainty' for banks and charities. Whilst much remains to be learned about CVE, some key lessons have emerged. Firstly, CVE efforts must engage with the root causes of terrorism and political violence (Chaudhury Fink, 2014). And secondly, for CVE to succeed at community level the vitality of state-civil society relationships is critically important (Romaniuk, 2015). CVE looks set to continue for some time to come with greater presence at local level, with important and under-explored implications for faith-based organisations and local faith communities.

Faith-based responses to conflict and violence

Religion has influenced the theory and practice of peacebuilding at a fundamental level, and religious teachings significantly pre-date current approaches to thinking about peace, conflict and reconciliation. For instance, within Judaism the concept of *shalom*, meaning peace, connotes wholeness, fulfilment, completion, unity and wellbeing. In Asian religions such as Buddhism, the centrality of 'inner peace' can motivate action towards the peaceful resolution of social and political conflict. Both of these perspectives find common cause with conflict transformation

theory and the concept of 'positive peace', which seek to move beyond the absence of conflict towards a peace characterised by a genuine sense of wellbeing and security among people. The relational aspects of peacebuilding also resonate with the emphasis that many faiths place on relationships - with God and with each other. Islam, for instance, emphasises bonds of humanity through common origin, binding humankind in universal brotherhood. In the aftermath of conflict, the virtue of forgiveness taught in all religions can help to heal the wounds of the past.

Within policymaking and academia, study of the role of religion in contexts of conflict has arguably been sidelined, reflecting assumptions about secularisation and a lack of religious literacy and an expectation that significance of religion would diminish in an increasingly prosperous and globalised world. Yet events proved otherwise. The Iranian revolution in 1979, the role of the Mujahedeen in driving Soviet forces from Afghanistan, the wars in former Yugoslavia and the rise of the Christian Right in the USA all demonstrated that religion remained a potent force in the world (Marsden, 2016). In recent decades, academics and policymakers have started to shed their 'secularist scepticism' and recognise that religion matters (Johnston and Sampson, 1994; Abu Nimer, 1996 and 2003; Thomas, 2005; Hill, 2013; Mandaville and Silvestri, 2015; Silvestri and Mayall, 2015).

Today faith-based actors, including local level religious leaders and faith-based organisations, are regularly engaged in efforts to resolve conflict. At their best they have the moral capital, grassroots network and functioning institutional framework to provide a local response to local problems. They also exhibit an open-ended commitment, which even the most well-financed and dedicated international actors' lack. In 2012, DfID supported the Sudan Council of Churches to run the *Jonglei Peace Process Project*, to the value of £215,000, on the basis that the churches' involvement would be sustained: 'We need to learn more about how to partner with the church for peace and development in South Sudan – as unlike most international actors it will see South Sudan reach its maturity as a state'.⁸ Religious networks are particularly important where trust in governments is low, or where the state is incapable of providing security, healthcare and education.

The social and religious capital of some faith-based actors puts them in a position to help build sustainable peace, irrespective of whether or not the conflict has a religious component. Their day-to-day presence in many areas of life, including providing urgently needed basic services in the absence of alternatives, can help build trust and credibility vital in building peace. The range of peacebuilding activities that faith-based actors engage in is extensive, and includes initiatives to address both the proximate (short term) and structural (long term) causes of conflict, such as:

- Offering sanctuary and safe passage – Rwandan Muslims did not participate in the 1994 genocide and instead managed to rescue many of those who would have been victims (Anderson and Wallace, 2012).
- Mediation – After secret talks at the Vatican in 2015, Pope Francis was credited with playing a crucial role in forging the historic détente between the USA and Cuba.
- Calling for action/restraint from the public – The Episcopal Church of Sudan issued a pastoral letter on the day of independence in 2011 to call for unity and speak out against tribalism (Deng, 2011).

⁸ DfID (undated).

- Humanitarian aid – In Solomon Islands, the Brothers and Sisters of the church delivered aid to displaced and cut off people, as they were able to cross battle lines relatively unimpeded (Carter, 2012).
- Reconciliation and healing the wounds of conflict – In many places, including South Africa, Solomon Islands and Northern Ireland, religious leaders have led or co-led truth-telling and reconciliation processes to hold perpetrators of violence to account.
- Development – The growing [Islamic Finance](#) industry is gaining prominence for its potential to fund development. Its values of financial stability, financial inclusion and shared prosperity provide an enabling framework to address poverty.
- Challenging social injustice – Initially directed through church channels, the Jubilee 2000 campaign and global network helped secure debt relief for the world’s poorest.
- Promoting dialogue – In the Central African Republic, the Interfaith Peace Platform brings together Catholic, Evangelical and Muslim leaders and has helped build bridges between fractured communities and with authorities. It has been awarded the prestigious [Sergio Vieira De Mello peace award](#) for its work.
- Breaking down prejudice – The [Church of North India](#) works to deconstruct caste prejudice and has held silent rallies to demand justice for Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims.[9]
- Faith literacy – The [Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa](#) builds relationships between faith leaders, helping them to develop their theological understanding.
- Bridge building and social cohesion – Through its [Near Neighbours Programme](#), the UK’s Church Urban Fund brings religiously and ethnically diverse people together to improve the community.
- Protecting minorities - In early 2016, 250 eminent scholars convened to discuss the rights of religious minorities and the obligation to protect them in Muslim majority states. Their consensus is framed in the [Marrakesh Declaration](#).

Engaging faith groups more substantively in responding to conflict

Recognising the value of this work, governments, donors and global policymakers are seeking to better understand the role of faith in shaping societies, particularly on issues of peace and human flourishing. Government agencies such as the UK, USA and the Netherlands, and international agencies including the World Bank and UN, are seeking to become more ‘faith literate’ and build better partnerships with faith groups. The US State Department has set up the US Foreign Policy and Faith Working Group and there are Offices of Faith Engagement in every major US Government Ministry. The UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office has commissioned faith literacy training for staff and recognises the possibility of a ‘cultural cringe’ in speaking about religion (Foreign and Commonwealth office, 2013). More recently, the German and US Governments launched PaRD, a new bilateral mechanism on religion, development and humanitarian response to promote dialogue and collaboration among governments vis-a-vis religious engagement (Nitschke, 2016).

These moves mark a step change in how religion is approached and create potential for new forms of secular-religious collaboration. For faith groups they are a welcome, if overdue, shift away from the neglect of religion in conflict research and decision-making, and a departure from the tendency to see faith as part of the problem but not part of the solution. Yet tensions remain, and the prospect of greater collaboration makes addressing issues in working with faith-based actors more important than ever.

Issues affecting secular-religious collaboration

Steps towards more informed and extensive secular-religious collaboration, expedited in response to a swiftly changing global context, reveal how much has yet to be done to improve partnerships.⁹ We conclude this section by highlighting some of the recurring and cross-cutting issues explored more deeply through the remainder of the report.

Instrumentalisation of religious actors in peacebuilding

Faith-based actors are grounded in some of the world's most troubled areas and have significant spread and depth of presence. Where they work for the public good they accrue trust and social capital (Cox, 1994, Lederach, 1996, Smock, 2002 and Abu Nimer, 2002). Somewhat unusually among global institutions, faith-based organisations and communities operate at every level of society and have significant rural reach. They have important material resources and are often well located and appointed, with communal spaces and access to communications technology. And they have valuable human resources, often including staff and volunteers with specialised skills. These motivate others to partner with them, yet they also encourage instrumental approaches to partnership that can be disempowering. As we will see, faith-based initiatives are at their strongest when they play to their strengths and when they are recognised as the architects of their own approaches.

Instrumentalisation is part of a larger issue of how faith-based organisations and communities are perceived, and how this leads to marginalisation and mischaracterisation. Throughout the scoping paper we consider the consequences of this lack of understanding, including lost opportunity costs and the impacts it has on faith-based participation in peacebuilding.

The challenge of demonstrating impact

Today there is no shortage of anecdotal evidence documenting the potential of faith-based engagement in peace and conflict. There is, however, a distinct lack of robust – specifically quantifiable – research to substantiate this and test assumptions in a scientific and reliable way (Abu Nimer, 2015). This lack of evidence is often a concern for policymakers, donors and other potential partners of faith-based organisations, who are reluctant or cautious to initiate collaboration in the absence of robust data to inform decision-making.

There are several reasons for this lack of evidence. First of all, quantifying 'soft' measures is notoriously difficult and demonstrating impact is a challenge for peacebuilding generally. Secondly, faith-based organisations have their own cultures that sometimes emphasise oral over written communication and prioritise pastoral work over office work. After all, whilst they may take on community development functions they are primarily communities of worship. Finally, whilst other actors now have their eye on the big picture when it comes to religion and the potential value added, they sometimes have a blind spot when it comes to recognising faith-based projects. This warrants further investigation, but it could be that the different values, vernaculars and institutional structures of faith-based organisations mean their work can get overlooked. This is problematic, as it denotes a lack of mutual understanding between partners and limits faith-based actors' participation in broader networks and global conversations on conflict. Robust evidence on faith groups' activity and contributions is also an essential tool to counter the secular bias against faith engagement so often seen in policymaking.

⁹ For a review of issues relating to public faith partnerships see Duff and Buckingham (2015).

Faith-based Conflict Prevention

Faith groups now receive much greater recognition and support for their peacebuilding work, with donors and policymakers newly receptive to ‘tapping’ their potential in advocacy, community mobilisation and targeted intervention with hard-to-reach groups. Yet their work to *prevent* conflict, rather than bring an end to or recover from it, is largely unexplored. Based on evidence from recent empirical and field-based research by Payne and Ozerdem (forthcoming), this chapter situates the work of faith-based actors within current conflict prevention activity, sketching out the parameters of faith-based forms of conflict prevention.

Conflict prevention – a brief history

In essence conflict prevention is the effort to prevent tomorrow’s violence today. It proactively identifies the causes and triggers of conflict and swiftly responds in order to prevent violence from breaking out or escalating. Structural forms of prevention address the underlying causes of conflict, transforming these at the root in order to reduce the long term prospects of violence. Operational prevention responds to the imminent onset of violence by providing early warning and timely response, and may include hard and soft security measures to contain crises.

Whereas early generations of conflict prevention focused on high-level preventative diplomacy, recent approaches recognise the importance of community-based initiatives that harness local actors’ insights and networks, and their ability to act quickly. Local actors are now recognised as having several advantages over international organisations, though it is still unclear what the possibilities and limitations of their work are and how they can complement other initiatives.

The growing importance of conflict prevention stems from the dual recognition that conflict is an important barrier to pro-poor development and that reactive modes of conflict management and transformation are costly. Perhaps the strongest incentive for improving conflict prevention capacities is the cost of *failed* prevention (or put another way, the costs of conflict). Failed prevention exacts a heavy toll on human life and development, and on the economic, social and political systems that we depend upon. There is also a loss of opportunity cost, which whilst more difficult to quantify is nonetheless significant.

The stage has also been set by advancements made in technology and communications, which provide the means for achieving the ends. Of a global population of nearly 7.4 billion in 2015, more than 3.7 billion were mobile phone users, more than 3.4 billion were internet users, and more than 2.3 billion had active social media accounts (Kemp, 2016). Peacebuilders have been quick to capitalise on this growing connectedness, seeking to create a conflict prevention architecture capable of collecting and interpreting conflict data. Conflict early warning and early response systems make use of cheap and easily available tools such as cell phones and mapping software to monitor violence. These innovations are reshaping the field of conflict prevention at an unprecedented rate, and may quickly give way to even newer technologies.

The concept of conflict prevention came to occupy a central place in United Nations policy in the Boutros-Ghali era, with his seminal 1992 report *Agenda for Peace*. It has undergone substantial revision over the past two decades. Key milestones have included:

- 1990s - Tragedies in Rwanda and the Balkans led the UN to develop 'preventive diplomacy'.
- 2001 - Kofi Annan led the shift towards a 'culture of prevention'. International and regional organisations adopted preventative policies (Annan, 2001).
- 2003 - The African Union committed itself to take 'all necessary steps to anticipate and prevent disputes and conflicts, as well as policies that may lead to genocide and crimes against humanity'. The work of the council is supported by Panel of the Wise, a Continental Early Warning System, an African Standby Force and a Special Fund.¹⁰
- 2005 - The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was adopted as a new norm in international governance, with the UN tasked to develop early warning capacity.
- 2009 - The European Union adopted conflict prevention as an explicit objective of their external action with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (Vanheusden, 2010).
- 2012 – Ban Ki-Moon declares this the 'year of prevention'.

As conflict prevention has developed criticisms have emerged that its practice appears weak compared to its promise (Matveeva, 2006; Mehler, 2005 and Wulf and Debiel, 2009). There is concern about the appropriateness and usefulness of conflict indicators to facilitate early warning. These can have a 'straight-jacketing' effect within programming and provide a negative basis for analysis, measuring communities' risks and exposure to violence but not their resilience and capacities (Marshall and Wallace, 2012). After decades of practice there remains a persistent gap between warning and response, with political decision-making processes rarely influenced by conflict prevention systems. There are also challenges in relation to the credibility and reliability of evidence, and awareness that both under-warning and over-warning have obvious consequences (Brante et al, 2011). Structural prevention approaches, which address the long term drivers of conflict, often seek to challenge power relations, which can result in a short term *increase* in conflict. They are also underpinned by an implicit assumption that liberalization, human rights and democracy will advance peace, which is not always so.

Faith-based conflict prevention: key issues in an emerging field

As local actors, faith leaders and groups have a role to play within conflict prevention. Yet whilst many examples of faith-based actors responding to early indications of conflict exist, their interventions have yet to be fully recognised – often even by themselves. This is partly because conflict prevention has yet to be systematically integrated within the peacebuilding ministries of many faith groups. It is also because they often use different terminology to talk about their work, and so it flies under the radar of other actors.

Initial findings from recent research projects at the [Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations](#) offer starting points to analyse the character and impact of faith-based conflict prevention. Working with the [Zanzibar Interfaith Centre](#), one project indicates that phrases such as 'conflict prevention' and 'early warning' have little resonance at the local level where faith-based actors often work. Instead, prevention issues are articulated as specific problems, such as child protection, unemployment, election violence and crime.¹¹ Another project working with religious

¹⁰ The *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC)* was adopted in July 2002 in Durban, South Africa and entered into force in 2003.

¹¹ *From Early Warning to Response in Preventing Violence: Transforming Conflict Through Citizen Engagement*. This 18-month project was a collaboration between the [Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations](#) and the [Action Support Centre](#), funded by [Making All Voices Count](#).

groups in Nigeria and Solomon Islands has underlined the importance of relationship within faith-based approaches to conflict prevention, and how this can sometimes contrast with other approaches that are primarily technical and technological.¹² In particular, faith-based approaches often seek to construct resilient relationships across people of difference. Their focus is on building bonds that can withstand conflict stresses, rather than tactically seeking to avoid such stresses in the first place. This is interesting when we consider that many of the major problems in conflict prevention programming are human problems rather than technical/technological ones: how to get buy-in, build relationships and take timely action.

Case study snapshots

- The [Justice, Development and Peace Commission \(JDPC\)](#) in Jos, Nigeria convenes Emergency Preparedness and Response Teams throughout Plateau State to act as the eyes and ears of their communities and report early signs of conflict to the organisation for early resolution.
- The [Zanzibar Interfaith Centre's \(ZANZIC\)](#) Joint Committee of Religious Leaders for Tranquility and Peace holds press conferences to diffuse tensions. The organisation also convenes a network of 300 local peace committees. ZANZIC [recently trained](#) religious leaders on election observation, which plays an influential role in Zanzibar life.
- The church-supported [Baraka Academy](#) in the Democratic Republic of Congo teaches orphans whose parents were killed during conflicts in Ituri district, recognising that today's street children could grow up to be tomorrow's disenfranchised youth.
- The [Interfaith Mediation Centre](#) in Nigeria counts the cost of conflict using theological frameworks. It adds up the costs of death, injury and damage to property, knowing that it will be harder for agitators to mobilise people when they can put a figure on what will be lost.

Spotlight on Jos, Nigeria

The city of Jos is a flashpoint for violence in Nigeria, having experienced recurrent communal conflict for several decades. The city is strategically located within the Middle Belt region close to the federal capital of Abuja and serves as a hub for light industry, trade and transport. Today, the contest over land and power in Jos pits Hausa 'settlers' against the Plateau 'indigenous' tribes of Afizere, Anaguta and Berom. Indigenous status hugely affects life chances and regulates access to state resources including land, money, jobs, healthcare and employment. The preferential treatment of indigene groups has fostered deep social inequalities (Ostien, 2009). The fact that local governments determine who their own indigenes are has been a significant driver behind the conflict in Jos, as access to political office has become seen as a 'do or die' affair.

The recent history of Jos is characterised by uneasy and government-policed periods of calm interspersed with occasional and devastating episodes of violent conflict at critical junctures.¹³ What originally began as a political conflict has taken on a religious tone, as contentious issues such as the blocking of roads during prayer times have become trigger points for violence.

Places of worship and community spaces aligned with faith groups have been frequently attacked. Mutual suspicion has deepened religious cleavages between opposing ethnic groups and politicians have capitalised upon this to pursue their own agendas. Many religious leaders

¹² [The Faith-Based Conflict Prevention Project](#). This 24-month project was a collaboration between the [Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations](#), the [Anglican Alliance](#) and the [Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury](#), funded by the UK's [Economic and Social Research Council](#).

¹³ National Working Group on Armed Violence/Action on Armed Violence (2013).

and faith-based actors have been unequivocal in disavowing violence, but some from both faiths have used the conflict to preach hatred and pursue their private interests (Krause, 2011). Hardline religious leaders have also migrated to Jos, seeking a ready audience for their more radical and divisive interpretations of scripture. The violence has led to increased segregation between Muslim and Christians, with formerly mixed communities becoming religiously homogenous.

Religious leaders have heavy influence in Jos and in Nigeria more widely, and the religious undertones of the conflict reinforce this. Religious leaders are regularly given airtime on television and radio networks and faith groups have relatively significant resources at their disposal (including buildings, people and sometimes money). They are at the frontline of the crisis, and being among the most organised and well-resourced non-state actors they have been well placed to respond. Their conflict prevention activities have included tensions monitoring and mapping, elections monitoring, interfaith work with at-risk youth, faith literacy work in prisons, early response services including mediation and dispute resolution, and network-building with government and security forces. Some faith groups have incubated their own local organisations that provide sophisticated conflict prevention services funded by international donors, reaching out beyond the city into rural Plateau State.

The conflict prevention work of faith-based actors in Jos has been extensive and has included local faith communities (churches and mosques) as well as faith-based organisations. In fact, many faith-based organisations such as the [Justice, Development and Peace Commission](#) have been set up and supported by religious groups themselves (rather than being local branches of global faith-based NGOs, for instance). Importantly, religious women's groups have been at the centre of preventative action, reflecting their importance in peacebuilding in the wider Nigerian context (Yusuf and McGarvey, 2015):

“For a long time, the women of FOMWAN have spoken on behalf of Muslims when there was some issue the government wanted to address, because it was easier to work with us than with the men's organisations, where there is so much bureaucracy they can't respond promptly. The men do not have a rapid response like we have, so the government have turned to us to speak for Muslims”

Bilkusu Yusuf, Founder of the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria.

Areas for development

Research into faith-based conflict prevention is in its infancy. Based on evidence collected through collaborative research projects mentioned above, we identify the following areas as warranting further exploration.

1. The lack of awareness of faith-based conflict prevention. It is clear that work is taking place, though it is not systematised and mostly uses different terminology.
2. The differences between faith-based and other (local) conflict prevention approaches. Initial evidence points to the focus that faith-based organisations place on building resilient relationships rather than on tactical or technical measures to avoid conflict triggers. This reflects the need to see faith-based actors as architects of their own approaches.

3. Understanding differences of vernacular, values and modes of working, both between faith-based actors and the rest, and between different types of faith-based actor. This may also help us understand why faith-based approaches are largely unexplored.
4. Challenging our conceptions of conflict prevention to better capture faith-based contributions. Specifically, we need to recognise that prevention includes work that is preventative in effect, even if it is not preventative by design. This is important for faith groups, as many of their projects in other areas of community development have significant positive spin-off for conflict prevention that goes unrecognised.
5. What can conflict prevention learn from faith-based approaches? In many ways faith-based conflict prevention turns some conventional wisdom on its head, which may provide opportunities to constructively challenge and develop the field.

Faith-based Engagement with Poverty, Inequality and Development

[Pope John Paul II said that in order to build peace, one must work for justice.](#) In 2016, the grand imam of Al Azhar suggested that a future of freedom and justice [cannot be achieved by war, but through mutual cooperation between civilizations, and balanced and unbiased dialogue](#) (March 2016 speech to the German Bundestag). For the poor, justice includes fair and equal access to resources necessary for their well-being. This not only requires humanitarian assistance and charity, but also action to address the causes of poverty rooted in unjust social, political and economic structures. In some countries these structures are shaped by the legacy of colonialism or current international trade rules. In others they are shaped by home grown influences – based on domestic policies that deny identity and recognition, disempower communities, and fail to lay the preconditions for human development. Transforming these structures often involves challenging how power is wielded and decisions made, and substantively reshaping institutions so that they are less exploitative, exclusionary and unequal.

Poverty is inherently a form of structural violence and one of the main obstacles to human security. When a child dies from a vaccine-preventable disease, or a person dies from malnutrition in a world of plenty, they are victims of violence. They have been denied the social advantages available to others that would have kept them safe and well, and to which they have a right. Similarly, when farmers or indigenous peoples are illegally dispossessed of their land to make way for industry, they can experience profound impoverishment that has negative consequences to their health, income and lifestyles. The structural violence of poverty is not just an issue in poorer countries - a study in the US found that 291,000 deaths were attributable to poverty and income inequality in the year 2000 (Galea et al, 2011).

Left unaddressed, poverty can contribute to direct (physical) violence as pressures combine and bubble over into crime, rioting, violent resistance and armed conflict (Beckford, 2001). Poor people may use political violence to seek redress and may also be subjected to it by others seeking to maintain the status quo (Spitzer, 1975 and Sassen, 1998). For the poor, vulnerability to violence can be among the most pressing of the many urgent challenges they face. The issue is often compounded by the lack of protection offered by the law, with under-resourced and potentially corrupt or biased police and court systems providing insufficient deterrent and frustrating access to justice.

Violence also blocks the road out of poverty and hampers development. Since 2001, the costs of war in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan have included 370,000 dead as a direct result of war violence, a further 370,000 dead as an indirect consequence (for example through malnutrition and damaged infrastructure) and 7.6 million Afghan, Iraqi and Pakistani people displaced.¹⁴ So far the cost to the US is around \$4.4 trillion and it will continue to grow for decades - money that will not be spent addressing needs at home (Crawford, 2014). But it is marginal compared to the costs that Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan will bear. For them the full accounting cannot be put on a spreadsheet, but includes the lost investment in educating those who have died and the lost value in what they won't now produce, as well as the tremendous costs to infrastructure, and the

¹⁴ See the *Costs of War* project: <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/summary>

ongoing costs of support for the displaced and care for the war-affected. In these circumstances, tackling poverty and human insecurity becomes even more of an uphill struggle.

Faith groups' roles in the lives of the poor

'Wealth should not circulate between the rich among you.'

(Qur'an 59:7)

The commitment to social justice and human dignity are central elements of all religious traditions and faith groups often have a theological commitment to help the poor and socially excluded. In Islam, *zakat* (charity) is one of five core duties and is mentioned over 30 times in the Qur'an (Riddell, 2013). In Roman Catholicism, the Catholic Social Thought tradition that finds its roots in Pope Leo XII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* places a central focus on human dignity and respect for human rights, promoting forms of development that enable people to reach their full potential as human beings. For Anglicans, the need to 'transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation' is influenced by similar theologies of the common good and is one of the five [Marks of Mission](#). Jewish law makes the giving of charity a *mitzvah* (a commandment), not an option. In Buddhism, giving is voluntary and motivated by recognition that all beings exist in interdependence.

Religious institutions from all faith traditions often provide some of the most local, accessible social services– including access to education, healthcare, emergency aid and justice. Often they partner with international aid organisations, who may also be faith-based. Their services are heavily relied upon in places where the state is unable to provide support or is not trusted. The World Bank's *Voices of the Poor* report found that religion was frequently cited when people discussed the most important institutions in their lives (Narayan et al, 2000). In the words of Urmarral, from Kyrgyz Republic: 'The mosque is our court, school, and lawyer, while the village council is of no support, and policemen just provoke disorder' (Narayan et al, 2000).

As well as providing social services and social safety nets, faith-based actors are also sources of social organisation, change and advocacy. With their extensive networks they are often able to make vital links between work taking place at the grassroots and action at global level. Faith-based actors were instrumental in galvanizing communities in support of the millennium development goals and will no doubt make similar contributions to support the sustainable development goals. This kind of mobilizing, campaigning action is particularly important, as it addresses the social injustices that drive poverty, and faith-based actors can make distinct contributions. As a result of religion's enduring cultural significance, the ideals and ethical framework provided by religion can help to change social and political norms and religious leaders can mobilise popular support for action.

Increasingly global organisations, policymakers and international donors recognise faith-based actors as agents of transformation and have sought to partner with them, especially to deliver development goals (Clarke, 2007). They are motivated by faith groups' closeness to poor communities, their permanence, the trust and legitimacy they often enjoy, the resources they can leverage and their cost efficiency. A major breakthrough came with the World Bank's 'Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics', founded in 2000 as the focal point on the intersection of faith and development. The UK's Department for International Development (DfID) has also been working to improve partnerships with faith groups, particularly in conflict affected and fragile states. It recognises that 'faith groups make a significant contribution to

poverty reduction through humanitarian assistance, the provision of services, empowering the poor, resolving conflict and building support for development' (Battock, 2011) and has worked to developed shared principles for engagement.¹⁵

Yet other donors, agencies and policymakers remain sceptical, citing that religion can also negatively affect the lives of the poor. It can be disempowering, for instance by justifying poverty or social injustice as part of a divine plan. It can also be divisive and reinforce power dynamics and inequalities. And even where they are accepted as having good intentions, faith groups have sometimes been criticised for their paternalistic approach to helping the poor (Clarke, 2007). For those in a position to partner with them, these issues can be troubling. One of the major challenges to partnership remains understanding, on all sides.

Case study snapshots

- Faith groups have supported the Millennium Development Goals, including through involvement in [Make Poverty History](#). Influenced by the campaign, the 2005 G8 Summit committed billions extra to reduce poverty.
- Sikh charity [Langar Aid](#) feeds refugees in disaster and war zones. This builds on a Sikh tradition of a *langar* (kitchen) where everyone eats together for free, which was established by the Guru Nanak Dev Ji as a rejection of the caste system.
- The UK's [Church Action on Poverty](#) campaigns to close the gap between rich and poor, promoting fair taxes, fair pay, fair prices and more power for communities. A key area of work relates to the campaign for a '[living wage](#)'.
- [Islamic finance](#) advocates risk sharing and the financial inclusion of the poor. It is a relatively new industry but already has assets in excess of \$2 trillion. There is growing interest in how some of this could help to finance development goals.

Spotlight on Tanzania

Here we summarise a case study by Leurs, Tumaini-Mungu and Mvungi (2011).

There is a long history of faith-based development and social justice work in Tanzania emerging out of both the Christian and Muslim communities. After independence in 1961, Muslim organisations focused on addressing Muslim educational disadvantage, seen as arising out of the mission-dominated education system. Churches firmly supported the government's development objectives, but the 'African socialist' approach of the 1960s and 1970s led to the nationalisation of many of their services. Today however, the government relies on faith-based service provider's contributions, especially in education and healthcare, using financial arrangements that have evolved.

- The Roman Catholic Church has the most extensive service delivery and development programmes, followed by the Lutheran and Anglican churches. There are large numbers of Pentecostal churches, but they and the Seventh Day Adventists are perceived to be largely focused on evangelism rather than social action.
- The numbers of mosques and Muslim organisations grew rapidly in the 1990s, but restrictions on funds post-9/11 slowed this development. An estimated 1/3 of the approximately 9,000 mosques are thought to be engaged in some charitable, welfare or development activities.

¹⁵ [Faith Partnership Principles: Working Effective with Faith Groups to Fight Global Poverty.](#)

- Government figures from 2003 show 42% of secondary schools were privately run, with 45% of these run by Christian bodies and 12% run by Muslim bodies. In 2008, 22% of health centres and 12% of dispensaries were run by faith-based organisations.
- FBOs have evolved from an early focus on charity and service delivery to include sustainable development, advocacy, good governance and human rights. However, their work is heavily influenced by programmes for which external funding is available, resulting in a preoccupation since the 1990s with activities related to HIV/AIDS and caring for vulnerable children.

Areas for Development

Reflecting on her involvement in the World Faiths Development Dialogue since 1998, Katherine Marshall identifies four lessons for engaging faith-based actors in development (Marshall, 2015). We believe these offer a good starting point for shaping JLI initiatives at the intersection of religion, conflict and development:

1. Integrating religious dimensions into policy and operational work throws up considerable difficulties, with secular institutions sometimes tense or ambivalent about formal engagement with religious institutions. This reflects preconceptions and knowledge gaps about religion, partly arising from a lack of faith literacy.
2. The religious dimensions of development are broad but religious actors and institutions are often absent from the 'policy table'. Such dimensions are also hard to measure, but a first step is to remove the blinkers which obscure them.
3. In conflict-affected places there is often attention on the role of religion, but less consideration of religious actors' real and potential contributions to service delivery or to how they can help shape attitudes constructively.
4. Instrumentalisation needs to be avoided. Faith and development actors need to engage with each other at the reflection and planning stages of projects, not just during implementation. Cooperation arrangements must be improved.

Faith-based Engagement with Cultural Violence and Discrimination

Direct violence arises from a cultural context within which certain groups of people are depicted as outsiders who threaten moral norms or national security. This chapter focuses on cultural violence, which creates an enabling context. It introduces examples of faith-based engagement against discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, gender, religion and sexuality and examines the values that motivate such work.

Key Issues and Questions

Two key ideas underpin cultural violence; models of identity that exclude particular communities, and the use of culture to demonise specific social, ethnic or religious groups. Before thinking about faith-based engagement with discrimination it is important to consider these two themes.

Culture

Culture can be seen as fixed and finished – something inherited and closed-off to future change or development. Such an approach can be tied to excluding identities, which depict certain cultural groups as ‘outsiders’, thereby fostering discrimination. Alternatively, culture can be seen as something that is dynamic and evolving, presenting culture in inclusive terms. Culture can be used to reinforce the status quo or open up the possibility of a transformed social order (Geertz, 2000; Gilroy, 2000 and Beckford, 2004). Music, art, poetry, drama, film and television have the power to justify discrimination, to embed it in our unconscious (Adorno, 1991). They can also be used to incite direct violence against groups who are presented as outsiders or as a threat to social order. The sermon in Christian worship or at Friday prayers within the Muslim community, the imagery used within some religious art and the messages in religious tracts, social media and blogs can provide the theological justification for discrimination. Equally, they can also tackle harmful cultural norms and challenge discrimination. The way in which we think about individual and group identity is shaped by our understanding of culture and the extent to which we are seen as ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’ (Hearn, 2005, Castells 2010).

Identity

The way we think about individual and group identity shapes our understanding of community. Castells (2010, 6ff) work on the relationship between individual and communal identity can help faith-based organisations to challenge discrimination. He refers to three forms of identity:

Legitimising Identity	Affirms dominant cultural, social and moral norms – supports the status quo.
Resistance Identity	Builds up confidence, solidarity and capacity within marginalised groups by excluding oppressors/persecutors – can demonise ‘outsiders’
Project Identity	The development of networks of marginalised groups animated by resistance identities in order to bring about social change

Figure 3 – Castells’ Models of Identity

Discrimination rests on fixed ideas about identity that exclude people considered to be outsiders and the use of culture to suggest that certain social, ethnic or religious groups threaten social cohesion. This is often referred to as 'scapegoating', which transfers the blame for social problems onto groups presented as cultural outsiders (Girard, 1986). The use of culture by the Nazis to reinforce ideas about Aryan purity and to heap the blame for social problems in Germany onto the Jewish community is an example of scapegoating. More recently, the stigmatising of [Rohingya](#) Muslims in Burma as [cultural outsiders](#) has paved the way for an ongoing process of violent ethnic cleansing by members of the Buddhist majority. For faith-based organisations and local faith groups to support the creation of peaceful societies, it is vital they understand and respond to the complex challenge of discrimination.

Case Study Snapshots

Religious ideas can be used to foment violence based on gender, sexuality, ethnicity and religion. During the troubles in Northern Ireland, tensions between Nationalists and Unionists were interwoven with religious identities as a means of criticising either the Protestant or Catholic community. The demonising of [Yazidi](#) culture and faith was used to justify their violent persecution by *Daesh* in the Sinjar province of northern Iraq in 2014. An analysis of this shadow side of religious practice can provide faith-based organisations and local faith groups with tools to challenge discrimination and the direct violence it can foster.

- In Bosnia and Herzegovina [IMIC](#) has developed extensive intercultural/interfaith dialogue programmes aimed at Bosnian, Croatian and Serb youth who were born after the 1922-95 civil war.
- In Central and East Africa, [IMA World Health](#) runs broad-based primary healthcare, women's empowerment projects, HIV/AIDS work and faith-based community health programmes in isolated rural areas. These programmes serve a dual purpose. On the one hand they provide vital primary healthcare and on the other they counter discrimination against people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.
- In the Central African Republic, the [Interfaith Platform for Peace](#) brings together senior Christians and Muslims to develop greater understanding and tolerance between communities. Twenty local peace committees have been set up.
- [Restore](#) is an ecumenical Christian project in Birmingham, UK supporting asylum seekers through befriending, mentoring, educational programmes and women's/men's activities. Restore also runs awareness-raising workshops and training for faith groups.
- Hebrew for 'healing', [Tikkun](#) is an online educational and dialogue initiative in the US, which stimulates debate about interfaith dialogue, poverty and conflict.
- In Brazil, the Christian Aid supported [Casa Noeli dos Santos](#) provides a safe house for women who are the victims of domestic violence. The project seeks not only to support women but to challenge gender-based discrimination.
- [Rabbis for Human Rights](#), established in Israel in 1988 is a campaigning organisation focusing on human rights advocacy and monitoring and shared activism with Palestinian communities in the Occupied Territories, as seen in its Olive Tree project.

Spotlight on The International Multi-Religious Intercultural Center, Bosnia

The Bosnian civil war (1992-95) has been the most violent conflict on European soil since the Second World War. The causes of the war related to historic and contemporary conflicts,

essentialist attitudes towards ethnicity, interreligious tensions and nationalist expansionism in the aftermath of the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

One of the pioneers of interfaith dialogue in the Balkan region is Franciscan priest Marko Orsolich from Sarajevo (Brajovic, 2006). On 10th December 1991 (International Human Rights Day), he launched the International Centre for the Promotion of Inter-Religious Dialogue. This faith-based peace movement drew on the support of Christians, Jews and Muslims in Sarajevo to provide food-aid, advocate for human rights and assist Bosnians living in cross-cultural/inter-religious marriages during the civil war.

The [International Multi-religious Intercultural Center](#) is an example of an indigenous and intercultural faith-based organisation, arising from the cultural complexity of Bosnian society. Whilst it was established by a Franciscan priest and draws its support from Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities, it is not structurally linked with or accountable to any specific religious institution. Belloni (2001) suggests that Bosnian civil society has potential to help mitigate the deficiencies of disengaged international peacebuilding. However, writing over a decade after the end of the war, Rangelov and Theros (2009) characterise it as 'weak, divided and donor driven'.

In the two decades since its establishment IMIC has tackled cultural violence and discrimination and has emphasised grassroots interfaith and intercultural dialogue. It has focused its work on children and young adults who have grown up in post-settlement Bosnia and on the experience of Bosnian women from Christian, Jewish and Muslim backgrounds who lived through the war. The work with Bosnian women has drawn on key passages from both the Bible and the *Qur'an* as a means of empowerment for those who have rarely spoken to women from other faith traditions (Schüssler-Fiorenza, 2014). The stories of the women involved in the project were recorded in the IMIC published book *Women, Religion and Politics* by Zilka Spahic-Siljak (2013). The work of IMIC is complemented by the Croatian based [Ecumenical Women's Initiative](#), which emerged from the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Women's Solidarity Fund. EWI focuses on the collaboration between female academics and activists in the Balkans.¹⁶

Spiritual Capital: Values Evidenced in Practice

Faith-based organisations draw on the religious capital of local, national and global faith communities. This is one of their key strengths, but it also presents challenges that are less apparent in the work of secular NGOs, especially in relation to work on discrimination. These challenges ironically arise from the same spiritual capital that motivates and energises their work. Whilst faith communities unite around broad belief systems, the ways in which people of faith interpret scriptural, doctrinal and ethical ideals can be contradictory.

The theological differences between conservative and progressive members of the same faith community can be stark - for instance, in relation to human sexuality. For instance, some people of faith argue strongly that homosexuality contradicts the will of God, whilst others assert the need to build an inclusive religious community that recognises the rights of LGBT people ([Public Religion Research Institute](#), 2015). Similarly, people of faith participating in interfaith programmes can encounter opposition within their own community, especially where a faith revolves around claims to uniqueness and a desire to make converts or where religious traditions are implicitly aligned with national identity. Faith-based action on discrimination, therefore,

¹⁶ See Siljak's (2013) report *Women, Religion and Peace Leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

especially in relation to gender, sexuality and interreligious dialogue, does not command universal support from religious communities. With this in mind it is important to summarise the theological, scriptural and ethical themes upon which effective faith-based efforts to combat discrimination are based. We highlight two themes drawn from the case studies:

Welcoming the Stranger/Hospitality

The command to 'welcome the stranger' found in the scriptures of all the world's religions represents a challenge to cultural violence. The commandment is repeated thirty-six times in the Jewish Torah, emphasising its central place within Judaism. Similarly, the Christian New Testament asserts God's preferential option for the stranger. This can be seen, for example, in the letter to the Hebrews 13:2 – 'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it.' Similar sentiments are expressed in the *Qur'an* (*Surah* 8:74) – 'Those who give asylum and aid are in very truth the believers.' The Sikh hymn 'City Without Sorrow' links the welcoming of the stranger with a broader commitment to equality, 'There is no second or third status; all are equal here.' (*Guru Granth Sahib*). Faith-based action on discrimination is therefore interlinked with a commitment to a just society.

Gerrie ter Haar (2009) suggests that engaging with the commitment to welcome the stranger that is found in all religious traditions can provide faith-based organisations and local faith communities with spiritual resources to counter discrimination. The scriptural foundations of this spirituality include the Jewish and Christian assertion (Genesis 1) that human beings are made in the image of God, and the *Hadith* recalling the Prophet Muhammad saying that because all people are descended from Adam, 'No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, no coloured person to a white person, or a white person to a coloured person' (Musnad Ahmad 22978 and Al-Tirmidhi). Sikh tradition emphasises the spiritual significance of egalitarian hospitality through the *Langar*. The *Langar* is a shared space for eating that is found in all Gurdwaras, where food is provided free to any person regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, age or class. But it is more than a community café - the giving of food and the unconditional welcoming of the stranger is very much about spirituality. A faith-based commitment to hospitality becomes a sacramental act that reflects something of the generous and welcoming nature of God.

Interdependence

In his 1963 ['Letter from Birmingham Jail'](#) Martin Luther King (1963) suggested that 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' King touches on one of the fundamental values underpinning faith-based engagement with tackling discrimination – the interdependence of all human beings. Two millennia before King's letter the Apostle Paul talked about such interdependence, 'If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured all rejoice together' (1 Corinthians 12:26). Similarly, the *Hadith* narrated by al-Bukhaari recalls the Prophet Muhammad's words, 'The believers in their mutual mercy, love and compassion are like a single body; if one part feels pain, the rest of the body will join it in staying awake and suffering fever.' The parable of 'Indra's Jewelled Net' within the Buddhist *Avatamsaka Sutra* offers us another illustration of theological significance of interdependence and its peace potential. The heavens are compared to a closely woven net of pearls. Whilst each pearl is uniquely valuable every jewel is interconnected. This vision of uniqueness and interdependence provides faith-based organisations, local faith groups and interfaith programming with a powerful resource, capable of challenging discrimination.

Areas for Development

Effective faith-based action on discrimination represents a vital aspect of broader conflict transformation work, especially in societies where culture and fixed ideas about identity are used to exclude or demonise specific social, ethnic or religious groups. Effective long-term peacebuilding relies on clear and theologically informed action to challenge the conflict that arises from cultural violence. In view of the role that religion continues to play in shaping identity, values and community relations, effective action on discrimination needs to engage faith communities as partners. We suggest that the following represent areas where further work is needed -

1. A deeper engagement with the values that underpin faith-based action on discrimination - the common theological commitment to 'welcome the stranger' and the affirmation of our interdependence as human beings.
2. Examination of the practical implications of such core values for faith-based organisations and local faith groups and for interfaith programming.
3. Research into the impact that exclusivist truth claims and religious prejudice can have on the work of faith-based organisations, local faith groups and interfaith activism in societies characterised by interethnic or interreligious conflict.
4. The further development of evidence based case studies that illustrate good practice in relation to faith-based action on discrimination, which could be used to resource the work of other faith-based organisations.

Faith-based Engagement in Civil Society Politics

Any exploration of faith-based responses to conflict needs to recognise the significance of faith-based civil society activism, especially in an era that has witnessed the increased visibility of religion in the public sphere. Brief reflection on three key issues can sharpen our understanding of this arena of faith-based organisations' practice.

Key Issues and Questions

The Nature of Civil Society

Civil society can be seen as a network of informal associations that are independent of the state, a metaphor for the 'good society' or a synonym for the public sphere (Shannahan, 2014, 90-96). The iconic non-violent direct action of [Mohandas K Gandhi](#) and [Martin Luther Jr](#) illustrates the potential of faith-inspired civil society politics. Contemporary examples of such activism include the [Tanzania Youth Interfaith Network](#), the [Christian Partners Development Agency](#) in Kenya, the [Islamic Relief Women's Empowerment Project's](#) Shea Butter project in Mali, the [Socio-Pastoral Institute](#) and [Ummah Fi Salam](#) (Communities for Peace) partnership in the Philippines and the Buddhist inspired [Sarvodaya movement](#) in Sri Lanka. However, in some contexts identity politics and religion can be so closely interrelated that their fusion helps to fuel inter-communal conflict. The relationship between Hindu nationalism and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India is one example (Rajagopal, 2012). Contrastingly, secular governments may lack the ideological framework and religious literacy to respond effectively to religious extremism, which can impact on civil society. The Chinese government's response to groups such as Falon Gong, Tibetan autonomy movements and insurgency/terrorism in the Xinjiang are examples (Morrison, 2014).

Attitudes to the Secular and the Sacred

For most of human history little distinction has been made between secular and sacred spheres of life. In some parts of the world, such as Europe, religion has moved from the centre of society to its privatised margins over time, giving rise to the widely held perception that religion and politics don't mix. This narrative fails to reflect the experience of most African, Latin American, Caribbean and Asian societies and faith traditions such as Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism or Buddhism, within which the distinction between 'sacred' and 'secular' is rarely made. Europe represents the exception rather than the rule (Davie, 2002 and Berger, 1999), but even in a relatively secularised European context recent years have witnessed a new visibility of religion in civil society politics (Hoelzl and Ward, 2008). This diversity is important to consider, as it impacts directly on faith-based engagement in civil society.

Levels of Religious Capital

Religious capital refers to the resources that faith groups offer the wider community through their congregations, buildings, community projects and presence in local neighbourhoods (Baker and Skinner, 2014). Naidoo (2000, 5.1) suggests that faith-based organisations 'probably provide the best social and physical infrastructure in the poorest communities...because churches, temples, mosques and other places of worship are the focal points for the communities they serve.' The role that faith-based organisations such as the [South African Council of Churches](#) played in the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa is well documented ([UNESCO, 1991](#)) as is the work of the [Jubilee Debt Campaign](#) on global debt. Faith-based engagement in civil society politics also addresses food poverty ([Trussell Trust](#) in the UK), microfinance (Islamic Relief in [Chechnya](#)), social cohesion in fractured societies ([KAICIID](#) in the Central African Republic),

citizenship education and the role of faith-based organisations in good governance (in [Tanzania](#), World Conference on Religion and Peace, 2010) and 'Do No Harm' interfaith community building and conflict transformation ([Garred and Castro, 2011](#)). Reflecting on the ways in which religious capital is used can enable a fuller understanding of the practice of faith-based organisations.

Case Study Snapshots

- In Bethlehem, [The Holy Land Trust](#) focuses on home rebuilding, work with olive farmers, girls' empowerment and dialogues between Palestinian and Israeli musicians.
- [Davao Ministerial Interfaith/Local Capacities for Peace](#) in the Philippines develops intercultural and interfaith dialogue in the Mindanao area, and has trained local people to act as interfaith guides in order to lessen community tensions.
- [Faith Matters](#) in the UK uses conflict resolution tools to address integration, social cohesion, hate crime and extremism.
- The [Gamaliel Foundation](#) is a network that comprises of 44 local community organising groups across the USA working on immigration, housing, healthcare, low pay and education.
- 'Keeping the Faith' in Sierra Leone focuses on the role that faith leaders and faith groups have in public health, including in the 2014/15 Ebola crisis. This is explored in the 2015 [Keeping the Faith](#) report supported by Islamic Relief, World Vision, Christian Aid and Tearfund.
- [PICO International](#) is a faith-based community organising network that originated in the USA but works actively on development, housing, conflict prevention and intercultural dialogue in El Salvador, Haiti and Rwanda.
- [Sojourners](#) is an online Christian social justice movement providing theological engagement with issues of poverty, inequality, discrimination and US foreign policy. It aims to provide people of faith with a means of influencing US government policy and vehicles for activism.
- [Pax Christi International](#) is a global Roman Catholic organisation, which works on issues relating to human rights, peacebuilding and social justice in more than fifty countries.

Spotlight on Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and multi-faith society. The 2012 Census revealed that 74.9% of the population were Sinhalese, 11.1% Sri Lankan Tamils, 9.3% Sri Lankan Moors and 4.1% Indian Tamils. 70.1% self-defined as Buddhist, 12.5% as Hindu, 9.6% as Muslim and 7.6% as Christian. Stewart (2009) suggests that the conflation of ethnicity and religion has implicitly privileged Buddhism by privileging Sinhalese culture. This has alienated the Tamil community, a large majority of whom are Hindus. Whilst Sri Lanka is the oldest democracy in Asia (1931), Alagappa (2004) argues that it is an 'illiberal democracy'. DeVotta (2002) argues that the political system is characterised by 'ethnic outbidding', and 'auction-like process whereby Sinhalese politicians strive to outdo one another by playing on their majority community's fears and ambitions.'

Faith-based organisations have played an active role in Sri Lankan civil society politics for more than two centuries.¹⁷ In 2015 more than 1,400 civil society organisations were registered by the [National Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organisations](#), although the number of unregistered organisations could be as high as 20,000 (Asian Development Bank, 2013). In spite of this, concerns about increasing pressure on civil society during the civil war and tightening government control in post-conflict Sri Lanka have been widely expressed (Hogg, 2011 and Saravanamuttu, 2013). During the conflict, faith-based organisations became more active in

¹⁷ The Baptist Mission was established in 1802.

human rights work alongside groups that had become marginalised during the war. This shift from welfare to advocacy brought with it far greater levels of scrutiny in post-conflict Sri Lanka. This can be seen, for example, in the restrictions placed on NGOs in 2014. These followed criticisms of the government's human rights record in 2013, which was described by the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay](#) as 'increasingly authoritarian'. Orjuella (2003, 199) suggests that 'The ethnic polarization resulting from political and violent conflict also impinges on civil society, which is ethnically divided.' Faith-based organisations like the [Karuna Center for Peacebuilding](#) have developed significant interfaith and inter-ethnic work. Generally however, working for peace through the civil society sphere is a major challenge in Sri Lanka, as life is structured around two parallel ethnically oriented civil societies rather than a single uniting public sphere.

Sri Lanka's twenty-five year civil war killed possibly as many as 100,000 people. The conflict began on 25th July 1983 and divided Sri Lanka ethnically and geographically. Central and Southern majority Sinhalese Sri Lanka was pitted against the insurgent Tamil Tigers, which were established in 1975 to fight for an independent Tamil nation in Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka. After his election as President in 2005 the Sinhalese Mahinda Rajapaska initiated what proved to be a final and controversial offensive in 2007, which led to the surrender of the Tamil Tigers in May 2009. As government forces pushed northwards the remaining Tamil troops and as many as 200,000 civilians were confined to a narrow strip of land around Mullaittivu. There was widespread international condemnation of the treatment of Tamil civilians during this offensive and allegations of war crimes by both government and Tamil Tiger forces. The 2011 Sri Lankan government's Lessons Learned Reconciliation Commission concluded that the army did not deliberately target civilians. However the Commission was criticised by the [United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) for failing to address torture, executions and sexual abuse on the part of government soldiers and suicide bombing, assassinations and the recruitment of child soldiers by the Tamil Tigers, particularly during the final stages of the civil war.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement

Established by A.T. Ariyaratne in 1958, the *Sarvodaya Shramadana* Movement is one of the most well established NGOs in Sri Lanka. It grew out of the student work camps led by a group of teachers. The Sanskrit word 'shramadana' means 'gift of labour' and the camps provided students with the opportunity to work alongside poor communities in rural Sri Lanka. Over the last fifty years *Sarvodaya Shramadana* has grown to employ 3,000 local organisers in 34 districts across the island.

The values and practice of the movement reflect a holistic understanding of peace as a positive state that is characterised by inclusive social relations, empowered local communities, intercultural and interfaith dialogue, support for people displaced as a result of the civil war, education and active engagement in civil society politics. In this sense *Sarvodaya Shramadana* seeks to build peace through action on structural and cultural violence, thereby lessening the likelihood of direct violence.

Examples of the movement's work include-

Sarvodaya Suwasetha – work with 1,000 orphaned children

4,355 Pre-Schools/Nurseries – serving 98,000 children

Rural community organising – working in 1,500 villages

Shanti Sena (Peace Brigade) – dialogues, youth exchanges, peace education

Internal Displacement Camps – advocacy and organising with camp residents

2004 tsunami – Conducted disaster management briefings

Rural Development – Provision of clean drinking water in rural Sri Lanka

Figure 4 – Sarvodaya Shramadana

The *Sarvodaya Shramadana* movement is best described as a faith-inspired organisation. The values that guide it draw on concepts from Theravada Buddhism and Gandhian philosophy but these ideals serve as an inspiration to inclusive, interfaith and intra-ethnic community engagement rather than a dogmatic straitjacket. The commitment to the Buddhist principle of 'loving kindness' has meant that *Sarvodaya Shramadana* has adopted policies and practices intended to overcome ethnic, caste and religious prejudice in relation to its development of community programmes.

The first key principle that guides the movement is *Sarvodaya*, which means 'the awakening' or in Gandhian terms 'the uplift of all'. The application of awakening to social justice is unusual within Theravada Buddhism and reflects a socially engaged Buddhist tradition (Bond, 1992) which views '*sarvodaya*' as a force for social as well as individual change. This awakening is multidimensional – spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political – as seen in the movement's Village Awakening (*Gramodaya*) programme, which has sought to empower marginalised rural communities in Sri Lanka (Ekins, 2005). Awakening is linked with the organisation's second core principle, *shramadana* or 'selfless action'. It is through the selfless giving of one's labour without any thought of personal reward that non-attachment to material wealth and power is cultivated. Selfless action leads to awakening.

One of the key insights that other faith-based can draw from *Sarvodaya Shramadana* relates to its' fusion of principles with pragmatic organisational practice. The movements' combination of Buddhist and Gandhian principles and a methodology intended to resource the building of an effective and stable people's organisation is reminiscent of the [methodological approach adopted within broad-based community organising](#). This marriage of pragmatism and principles has helped to ensure the movement's longevity and can offer lessons to other organisations operating in different contexts.

Spiritual Capital: Values Evidenced in Practice

Faith-based engagement in civil society politics raises questions about motivation and purpose. Does a faith-based commitment to peacebuilding inevitably demand an active involvement in politics? If so, what values should guide this work? Are faith-based organisations, as the martyred German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it, 'called to not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice... [but] ...to drive a spoke into the wheel itself'? And what approach should faith-based organisations take? Their work can reflect an ethic of social responsibility and the golden rule - the 'caring' model. Alternatively, they can be inspired by a

more radical theological stance, which prioritises the struggle for social justice above welfare provision - the 'campaigning' model. The approach to these questions is culturally specific rather than universal. Attitudes towards the role of local faith groups in the public sphere are not uniform - they can be influenced by levels of secularisation and the extent to which religious identities are framed in exclusive or inclusive ways. Where faith groups are marginalised from mainstream society, activism can be more focused on bolstering group identities than on broader social problems.

In light of this, it is important to consider the motivation of faith-based engagement in civil society politics. Two contrasting theological traditions can be identified -

Focused on the Common Good

Many faith-based organisations engaging in civil society politics are motivated by a spiritual commitment to the 'common good' and the 'golden rule' - 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself' (Mark 12:31). In a Christian context 'common good' thinking can be rooted in Catholic Social Thought within which a commitment to the 'common good' provides the ethical plumb-line against which government social policy should be judged - does a policy result in greater levels of poverty and inequality or enable 'human flourishing'? Such a principle is found across the world of faith. There is a clear affirmation of a 'common good' ethic in *Sura 4:36* in the *Qur'an*, 'Worship Allah and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbour, the neighbour farther away, the companion at your side and the traveller.' Similarly, the ancient Buddhist scriptures also articulate this commitment to the common good, 'Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful' (*Udanavarga* 5:18). A similar ethic characterises the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í faith, 'The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men.'

Faith-based organisations motivated by a focus on the common good tend to adopt a 'caring' approach to their civic engagement. We see this, for example, in foodbanks, shelters for the homeless, the befriending of asylum seekers and refugees, soup-kitchens, advice centres for women who are the victims of domestic violence or credit unions.

Prioritising the Voiceless

A second core value that motivates faith-based organisations' engagement in civil society politics emerges from a more radical theological tradition where primacy is given to social justice as opposed to welfare. A key proponent is the Peruvian liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez (1988). Equating the destructiveness of poverty with death, he argued that 'The poor deserve preference...because God is God, in whose eyes the 'last are first'.' People of faith are challenged to adopt a similar preferential option for the poor.

This ethic can carry with it the risk of arrest or persecution by political leaders, who may welcome the more consensual faith-based commitment to the common good but resist the greater threat to their power embodied by this campaigning approach. Faith-based organisations that prioritise the voiceless tend to adopt a campaigning stance. Examples include campaigns for a living wage, the abolition of female genital mutilation (FGM), trade justice and human rights. The work of [Deacon Eliineide Ferreira de Oliveira in Brazil](#) alongside women who have endured domestic violence offers an example of an approach to gender justice that combines a caring and a campaigning ethic.

Areas for Development

Whilst faith-based engagement in civil society politics is widespread it remains a controversial area of faith-based activism, especially in societies where the role of religion in public life is contested. Such work at a local, national and global level can provide opportunities for building interfaith and intercultural social justice networks. Whilst faith-based engagement in civil society politics can address direct violence it is often more directly involved in countering structural and cultural violence.

In recent decades religion has assumed a renewed political importance, largely as a result of the enduring religious capital of many local faith communities. In light of this a deeper analysis of the core values that guide faith-based activism is important. This can facilitate a fuller understanding of the differing ways in which local faith groups use their religious capital in relation to direct, structural and cultural violence. The insights gained from such work could enable the development of more informed approaches to measuring the impact of faith-based engagement in civil society politics. We highlight two key issues that merit further research -

1. The ways in which faith-based organisations and local faith communities balance pragmatic activism with deeply held religious principles.
2. The impact that their relationship with local/national power elites has on faith-based activism.

Faith-based Engagement in Education for Peacebuilding

Education plays a vital role in building a peace that is more than the mere absence of violence. This chapter considers how faith-based formal and informal education can pave the way for peace. Four key issues that impact on faith-based work in this area need to be addressed before illustrating the problems and potential that is has.

The Power of Ideas

Antonio Gramsci (1971) recognised that ideas can sustain injustice or to subvert it. In the context of worship, for example, hymns, prayers and sermons can present injustice as God's will or articulate a commitment to social justice. Arising from his work alongside illiterate Brazilian peasants, Paulo Freire (1970) wrote about the importance of education in the struggle for liberation, suggesting that it was only when marginalised communities became aware of the true cause of their oppression that emancipation could be achieved. These insights remind us that it is only when an ideological commitment to peace supplants a culture of violence that peaceful social relations can be forged.

Religion and Education – An Ambivalent Past

Faith communities have been intimately involved in education for millennia. Buddhist and Christian monasteries were centres of education centuries before schools were established. The oldest universities in the world find their roots in Islam and Christianity (such as Al-Azhar University in Egypt and the University of Bologna in Italy). Education empowers the educated. However, it is important to recognise the ambivalent relationship between religion and education: it can be a source of empowerment, but also of oppression. Scriptural texts have been used to justify slavery, racism, the oppression of women, and poverty, as well as stimulating movements for justice. As faith-based organisations develop educational programmes it is important to recognise the power of education to emancipate or to oppress and religion's ambivalent role in this story.

Religion and Education – A Contested Present

The role of faith-based organisation in education is a vital component of peacebuilding, whilst at the same time being increasingly controversial. In many parts of the world faith schools are the major provider of primary and secondary education. In South Sudan, for example, approximately 50% of schools are run by Christian organisations. In Afghanistan, [Islamic Relief's 'Educate A Woman Educate A Nation'](#) project empowers women at home and in the community through education. In spite of this, the role of faith schools remains controversial. In the UK, some have argued that faith schools deepen ethnic and religious segregation ([Cantle, 2014](#)), although there is [evidence to suggest that the reverse can often be true](#) and that they can enhance social cohesion (Berkeley, 2008). The approach to faith schools in the UK city of Birmingham illustrates this dilemma. Early in 2014, Birmingham City Council received an anonymous letter alleging that a group of conservative Muslims were planning to take control of the governing bodies of some city schools in what was described as 'Operation Trojan Horse'. Following a BBC News report headlined ['Islamic Takeover Plot in Birmingham Schools Investigated'](#) the issue became national

news. A department for Education investigation was launched with the [former head of Counter Terrorism in the London Metropolitan Police as Chair](#); a move widely condemned for conflating Muslims, education and terrorism. However the resulting report did not find evidence of any significant influence by 'extremist' Islamists and was [criticised for stigmatising the Muslim community](#).

Informal Education – From Sunday Schools to Madrassas

Informal educational programmes are a key part of the work of local faith groups. They serve as informal centres of religious education and have the potential to influence the values and practice of people of faith. In recent years an increasing focus has been placed on the role of madrassas within the Muslim community and the nature of the education they provide. In Pakistan, unregulated madrassas have been seen to promote a vision of Islam that perpetuates social segregation, reinforces gender discrimination and radicalises impressionable children and young people (Abdin et al, 2013; Zaidi, 2013 and Majeed and Saeed, 2014). However, some studies argue that the emergence of female only madrassas in Pakistan provide increasing educational opportunities for girls (see Bano, 2010). In the UK, the role of madrassas [was questioned by Prime Minister David Cameron in 2015](#) amidst plans for [new inspections](#), whilst the head of the government's education inspection team (OFSTED) suggested that in some circumstances Church [Sunday Schools also ran the risk of teaching or perpetuating intolerance](#).

Faith-based informal education can also play a significant role in shaping the perspectives of religious leaders and their attitudes towards peaceful coexistence and social inclusion. With many decades of experience, the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa ([PROCURA](#)) engages religious leaders in theological explorations of peaceful coexistence. In Afghanistan, an [Islamic Peace Studies course](#) funded by USIP has equipped religious leaders with resources on peace and conflict resolution found within the Qur'an and Islamic teachings, which they can deliver to communities through Friday sermons, madrassa lectures and other addresses.

Case Study Snapshots

- [Religious Studies and Intercultural Understanding](#) (Macedonia) – Report into the use of religious studies by the trans-Balkans 'Ecumenical Women's Initiative' as a means of facilitating post-conflict intercultural understanding.
- [Educate A Woman, Educate A Nation](#) (Afghanistan) – Islamic Relief supported project supported the development of community-based educational programmes for girls and women as a means of countering discrimination, empowerment and community regeneration.
- [Adyan](#) (Lebanon) – Cross cultural and interfaith project that arose from the Lebanese civil war that uses youth exchanges, educational programmes, music and film as a means of fostering greater intercultural dialogue and awareness.
- [Soliya](#) (USA/Global) – Faith inspired network using social media and film-making to interconnect young people across the world, to provide a platform for protest, cross-cultural dialogue and intercultural understanding.
- [Jubilee 2000/Jubilee Debt Campaign](#) (United Kingdom) – Diverse faith inspired network campaigning to raise awareness about global debt, challenge world leaders, the G8 and global financial institutions to cancel unpayable debt.

Spotlight On Pakistan

Since its partition from India in 1947 Pakistan has oscillated between peaceful democratic development, electing [the first ever female Muslim head of state](#) (Benazir Bhutto), military rule and violent conflict rooted in a conservative Islamist model of Muslim faith. 96.2% of people in Pakistan self-define as Muslim, 1.6% as Christian and 1.6% as Hindu (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The country's Constitution does not discriminate against non-Muslims but the legal right to freedom of speech does not extend to making derogatory remarks about the *Qur'an* or the Prophet Muhammad, which can be prosecuted under the Blasphemy Law. In spite of these provisions, [religious intolerance](#) and the [persecution of Christians](#) are widely reported. The 2016 [suicide-bombing of Lahore, which has a large Christian population, was religiously motivated](#). Several dialogue programmes and projects have been initiated to improve interfaith relations, such as [Interfaith Youth in Action](#) and the [Centre for Dialogue and Action](#) established by Forman Christian College. These have the potential to help build a more sustainable peace in Pakistan.

Robin Hood Schools and the Church of Pakistan

The [Church of Pakistan](#) brings together Christians from Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran and Presbyterian traditions. Since its inception it has placed a strong focus on healthcare and education and administers many schools. The Diocese of Lahore runs more than twenty interreligious and co-educational schools, which are 'widely recognised as being well governed, with well trained and committed teaching staff and high academic standards.'¹⁸

There are three ways in which the Church of Pakistan uses its religious capital and educational track record to support peacebuilding. First, the Church provides training for students planning to teach in either Church or State schools. Second, the co-educational nature of its schools, its commitment to the empowerment of women and the appointment of female head-teachers provide professional opportunities for women and positive role models for girls.¹⁹ Third, its schools follow a 'Robin Hood' model, where affluent urban Church schools help finance schools in poor rural regions, reflecting a commitment to a common good and a preferential option for the poor. In doing so, the Church addresses the structural violence embodied by poverty and marginalisation. Its active empowerment of girls and women represents one way of countering the cultural violence embodied by discrimination against women.

Spiritual Capital: Values Evidenced in Practice

Faith-based engagement in education lays foundations for building inclusive, peaceful and just societies. As we consider the case studies it is worth reflecting on the core values that motivate faith-based organisations' engagement in education. Three themes merit further reflection.

The Power of Belief

Educational work within and by faith-based organisations is characterised by the power of belief - a factor largely absent from similar work undertaken by secular NGOs or state education systems. Belief is arguably one of the most powerful forces in human history. Historically the power that belief has to define practice and shape attitudes towards issues of justice and peace has been used to justify injustice and depict it as God's will. The selective use of scriptural texts to

¹⁸ Web Site - <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmintdev/1570/1570we04.htm> accessed 25 March 2016.

¹⁹ Web Site - <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmintdev/1570/1570we04.htm> accessed 25 March 2016.

justify slavery, colonialism, racism, segregation, sexism and violent conquest illustrates this corrosive power and has been a feature of all faith communities. Alternatively, religious belief can empower powerless communities and inspire people of faith to struggle for justice and work for peace. Faith-based organisations are engaged in a wide range of creative educational projects that contribute to peacebuilding in imaginative ways. However, a fuller engagement with the influence that individual faith has on the formation of such projects and the theological values that underpin them can enable organisations to develop a greater understanding of the problems and possibilities that belief based educational work presents.

Openness

Exclusivist attitudes to people from other faith communities can demonise them and dismiss the possibility of discovering new truths from them and their communities. This complex area is well summarised by Smock (2005). Applied to education, these attitudes can lead to accusations that faith-based initiatives hide a commitment to conversion, which can alienate faith-based organisations from communities and exacerbate tensions and discrimination. However, it is also important to note that a commitment to learning through encounter with people from other cultures and religious traditions is evident in many world faiths. In Sikh scriptures (the Guru Granth Sahib) there are a number of hymns written by Hindu and Muslim religious teachers. An awareness of the limiting nature of exclusivist approaches to education, the dangers of proselytism and of the progressive potential of openness characterises the best examples of faith-based initiatives in education for peacebuilding. An ongoing attention to these key issues needs to be built into the planning, programming and practice of such initiatives.

Empowerment

A third theme relates to the liberative potential of education. The social media work of Soliya, Islamic Relief's 'Educate a Woman Educate a Nation' initiative, the cross-subsidised Church schools in Pakistan and the intercultural and interreligious education of Adyan in Lebanon all demonstrate that the best faith-based education is empowering. As the work of Base Ecclesial Communities in Latin America, South Africa and the Philippines and the *Sarvodaya* Movement in Sri Lanka illustrate, it is through education that marginalised communities can be awakened to the nature and causes of their oppression. Such emancipation provides the root to empowerment and needs to permeate faith-based engagement in education for peacebuilding.

Areas for Development

Faith-based education has a key role to play in peacebuilding but is a controversial arena of action. In a number of societies faith-based organisations play a pivotal role in providing high quality primary and secondary education. However it is also the case that such schools can be accused of fostering religious discrimination and entrenching segregation, thereby reducing opportunities for intercultural and interfaith encounter. Faith-based schooling and informal educational programmes run by local faith groups root education in the belief systems and ethics of particular religious traditions. It is therefore important to recognise the ambivalent impact of faith-based education. It would be too simplistic to suggest that formal and informal faith-based education either causes conflict or is the source of peaceful social relations. However it needs to be recognised that faith-based education has the potential to foster a culture within which the trust, respect and intercultural understanding vital to the building of peace can grow or to inhibit the forging of such a culture.

We suggest that -

1. A greater awareness of the role that formal and informal faith-based education plays in shaping the values and behaviours of children and adults and their attitudes towards people from other ethnic or religious groups can enhance the work of faith-based organisations in conflict situations.
2. The values of critical openness, empathy and empowerment that characterise the best practice of faith-based educationalists can provide useful tools for the development of more holistic approaches to peace education.
3. A deeper understanding of the capacity of the power of ideas and religious values to mould attitudes and actions can enable the development of more effective conflict prevention and long-term conflict transformation.

Implications for Practice

Reflections, Insights and Challenges

We now turn to the implications that the reflections of previous chapters have for the practice of faith-based organisations and local faith communities in places of conflict and tension.

Firstly, we reflect on and structure the different examples of practice that have been introduced. Typologies are used widely in the social sciences to categorise phenomena, actions, characteristics or organisations in order to analyse similarities and differences. However, they can overly simplify matters or activities. They can also give the false impression that the distinctions between types are fixed and universal and take insufficient account of cultural differences. Whilst typologies can be useful, they should be seen as aids to reflection rather than fixed and final categorisations. Used in this more reflective way, the table below can help faith-based organisations and local faith communities to think creatively about their work - including their underpinning values, operations and activities, and impact.

Figure 5 below captures the activities referred to in the case studies highlighted in the scoping paper. These are plotted under two broad categories - 'caring' and 'campaigning'. These descriptors are used as umbrella terms to summarise the objectives and impact of activities.

Those activities loosely described as caring arise from a 'love your neighbour' or 'do no harm' ethic, which reflects the 'golden rule' and a commitment to the common good found in all religious traditions. Evidence suggests that people who are members of local faith groups are more likely to be involved in caring-based engagement than people who do not express any religious faith (Birdwell and Littler, 2012). These activities tend to focus on:

- An ethic of social responsibility
- Pastoral care
- Counselling and emotional well-being
- Meeting the immediate physical needs of people in conflict situations, those who are internally displaced/refugees or are socially excluded as a result of poverty or inequality
- Fostering greater intercultural and interfaith understanding
- Providing opportunities in relation to education, employment and civic engagement
- Building relationships across social boundaries (bridging social capital)

Activities described as campaigning arise from a more radical theological and philosophical ethic, which moves beyond the affirmation of social responsibility and the common good. Campaigning activities tend to be motivated by the conviction that in an unjust world a loving God who creates all people in the divine image is necessarily biased towards the poor, the demonised and the excluded. This is not because God favours some people more than other but because injustice, discrimination and violence contradicts the will and nature of a loving God. This understanding of the nature of God is reflected in activities that consciously seek to care for the vulnerable and to campaign for the fundamental social change, which is necessary for the holistic transformation of conflict situations and to build a culture of stable peace (Gutierrez, 1988 and Beckford, 2004).

Some activities combine elements of caring and a campaigning, with different emphasis or implications in different contexts. For example, the befriending of an orphaned child in a war zone may arise from a clear caring ethic but can be interpreted as campaigning if it challenges those with power. Equally campaigning against human trafficking or for a living wage can lead to the development of activities that have a more explicitly caring emphasis.

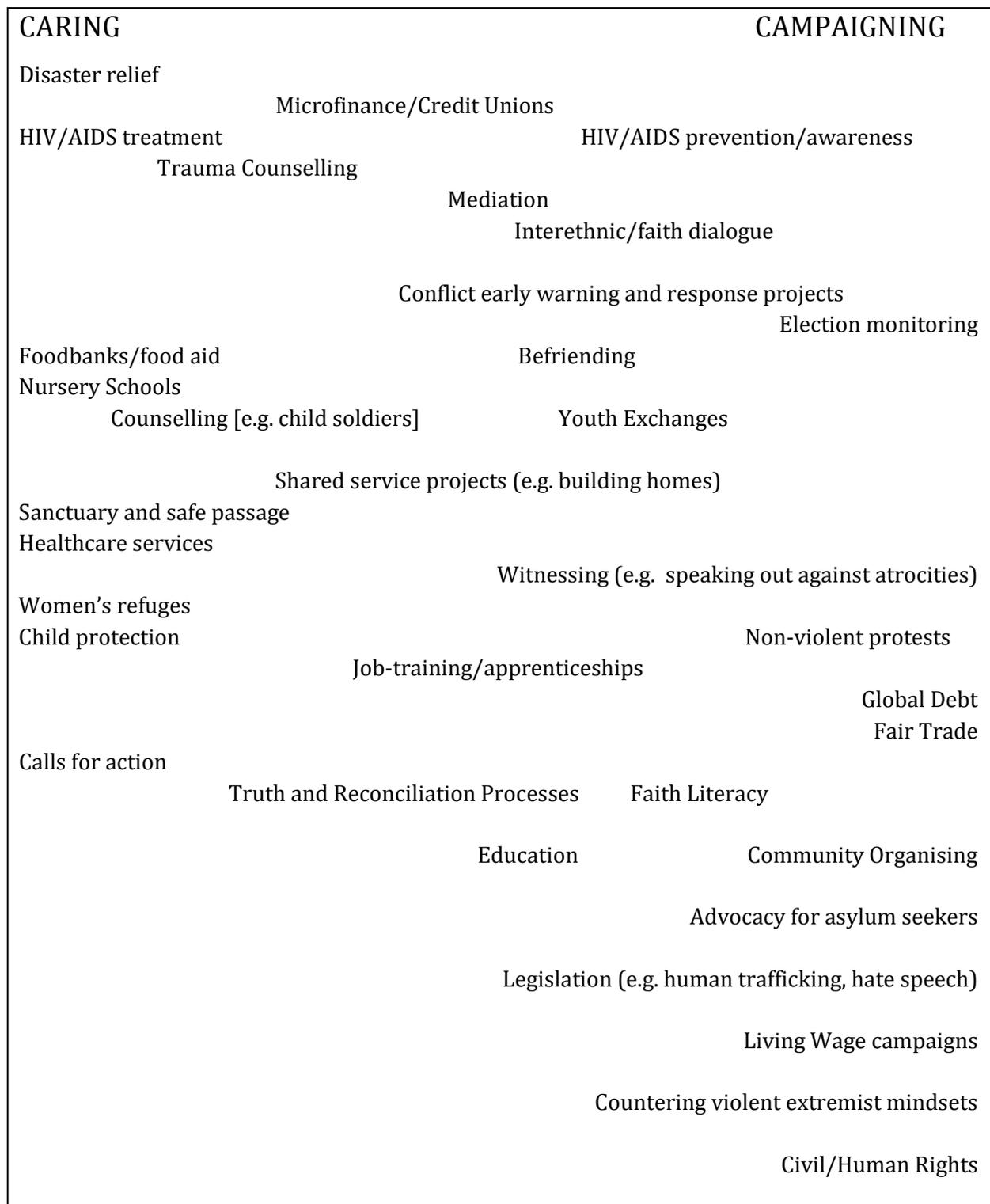


Figure 5 – A 'Caring'/'Campaigning' Typology of Faith-based Projects

The value of the caring/campaigning matrix lies in helping faith-based organisations and local faith communities to understand the contributions that their activities can make to building a more peaceful and just world – even if they are not labelled as ‘peacebuilding projects’. Doing so is a crucial first step in recognising the full scope of their contributions, which is a precursor to describing this work to others and seeking recognition in broader networks. We hope that the matrix is useful as a tool to assist faith-based actors in thinking about and articulating their contributions – a modest starting point, which we suggest can be developed through the JLI.

Understanding Identity

Framing identity has significant socio-cultural and political implications (Castells, 2010), which can affect the activities developed by faith-based organisations and their impact. Two points in particular have implications for practice:

1. **Essentialist understandings of identity** assert an irreducible core that remains intact in spite of waves of migration, globalisation and cross-cultural relationships (Gilroy, 2000; Hearn, 2006 and Shannahan, 2010). ‘Strategic essentialism’ (Spivak, 1987 and Beckford, 2006) can help marginalised groups to develop a greater sense of self-confidence and solidarity – think, for instance, of the role that the South African Council of Churches played in the struggle against apartheid and the work of the *Sarvodaya* Movement in Sri Lanka. However, it can also lay the foundations for future conflict.
2. One way in which persecuted or marginalised groups can assert a ‘strategic essentialism’ and gain greater self-confidence and solidarity is through forming **empowering resistance identities**. Faith-based organisations need to recognise that these resistance identities can empower people who face discrimination such as racism, sexism or homophobia. However, inward-looking resistance identities have little chance of fashioning significant social change. With this in mind, it is vital that faith-based organisations understand the importance of networked power for change. Where disparate oppressed groups gather together around a shared agenda for peace and justice to develop a **project identity** their common vision and effort makes it becomes more possible to realise their goal of major social change. Faith-based community organising networks PICO International and the Gamaliel Foundation, KAICIID in the Central African Republic and the Tanzania Youth Interfaith Forum illustrate the power of project identity and can provide resources for other faith-based movements.

Tackling communications gaps and misunderstanding: the need for religious literacy

A recurrent theme in the scoping paper is the need to bridge an occasionally debilitating communications gap between faith-based organisations and local faith communities on the one hand, and their key collaborators on the other (policymakers, donors, and non-faith based NGOs). The gap reflects the different values, vernaculars, culture and institutional structures of faith-based organisations and faith communities, which often vary from non-faith-based actors and across faith-based actors themselves. The principles that underpin faith-based interventions in peace, conflict and violence reflect the different theological approaches of faith groups and are shaped according to time, place and social context – all of which must be understood if partnerships and joint initiatives are to reach their full potential. **In the face of such a challenge, increased religious literacy and a greater awareness of the complexities of faith-based peacebuilding practice is imperative.**

There is already unprecedented awareness of the potential benefits of partnering with faith-based organisations in responding to conflict and acknowledgement that this requires improved forms of partnership. There is also growing awareness of how a lack of understanding contributes to the marginalisation, mischaracterisation and instrumentalisation of faith-based actors (though perhaps the true extent of this has yet to be revealed). However, the scale of the response remains modest. **A substantive response requires faith literacy to be recognised as a key skill for faith-based and non-faith based actors alike – one that is valued as a core part of professional development and mainstreamed across organisations.** This applies not just to those working on peacebuilding issues, but those working on social issues within conflict-affected contexts more generally (such as those working in development and humanitarian aid).

The practice of faith-based organisations is motivated by theological concepts such as the golden rule, the common good, a commitment to the innate dignity of all people, welcoming the stranger, peacemaking, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry and caring for the widow and the orphan. Many faith-based organisations reference these values, but it is rare for them to be expressed in detail. **Deeper engagement with theological, ethical and scriptural themes could provide practitioners with resources to translate values into practice more effectively.**

The same scriptural or theological themes can be interpreted in very different and even contradictory ways (Lichterman, 2008), for example in relation to gender, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, violence and social justice. **A greater awareness of theological diversity can enable more informed practice by and partnership with faith-based organisations**

When developing projects, international partners can struggle to take adequate account of the complexity of the local religious landscape. **The development of enhanced levels of religious literacy can help these organisations and agencies to understand the values that motivate local faith groups. It could also help to generate greater levels of trust between international organisations and local (faith) communities.** This could help to limit the potential for cultural insensitivity, ineffective programming and lost opportunity costs.

Recommendations to the Joint Learning Initiative Peace and Conflict Learning Hub

We recommend that the Joint Learning Initiative's Peace and Learning Conflict Hub considers the following as it continues to develop its work –

1. The need to develop a greater understanding of the ways in which faith-based organisations and local faith groups use their religious capital in relation to conflict – and the scriptural, ethical and theological values that motivate them.
2. The need to develop more inductive and iterative approaches to partnership with faith-based organisations and local faith communities, taking their existing activities and priorities as a starting point and seeking synergies.
3. The need for faith-based organisations and local faith communities to move beyond anecdotal evidence of the impact of their work. Strengthening the evidence based for faith-based interventions in peace, conflict and violence would provide firmer foundations for partnership, increased investment and a greater policy voice.
4. The need to research the specific role played by faith-based organisations and local faith groups in *preventing* violent conflict – early indications suggest an under-recognised but distinctive approach which focuses on developing resilient relationships.
5. The need to further research the role played by religious women and religious youth in faith-based interventions in peace, conflict and violence.
6. The importance of developing a greater understanding of the capacity of culture to justify injustice and resource peaceful social relations and the ways in which culture is used to foment conflict or build peace by faith leaders.
7. The importance of researching the significant role that formal and informal education within faith communities plays in fostering greater levels of the critical openness, empathy and empowerment that can help to drive the building of cultures of peace.

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