



BERKLEY CENTER for RELIGION, PEACE & WORLD AFFAIRS

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Faith-Inspired Organizations and Global Development

A Background Review “Mapping” Social and Economic Development Work in South and Central Asia

A project of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace,
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Luce/SFS Program on Religion and International Affairs

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BRAC Development Institute (BDI), founded in July 2008 at BRAC University, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, is a resource center dedicated to promote research, provide graduate training and build knowledge to address the challenges of poverty, inequity and social injustice in the global south. BDI takes an inclusive, multidisciplinary approach, across research, teaching and communications, to fulfill its mandate - to constantly challenge conventional knowledge and advance a southern voice in the global development discourse.

About this Report

This draft background report was prepared as part of the Berkley Center's global "mapping" of the work of faith-inspired organizations worldwide. The report serves as background for the consultation on faith-inspired organizations and global development policy in South and Central Asia in Dhaka, Bangladesh on January 10-11, 2011. The South and Central Asia review is part of a comparative project on Religion and Global Development supported by the Henry R. Luce Foundation. Through a series of meetings with stakeholders and background reports, the Berkley Center and WFDD have worked to "map" the role of faith-inspired organizations around the world, highlighting best practices and policy issues that arise. Prior events have included: a meeting in Washington, DC in April 2007 focused on the United States; a meeting in Doha, Qatar in December 2007 focused on the Muslim World; a meeting in The Hague, The Netherlands in June 2008 focused on Europe and Africa; a meeting in Antigua, Guatemala in January 2009, focused on Latin America; and a meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in December 2009 focused on Southeast Asia.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
INTRODUCTION	10
SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA: RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT ROLES	12
CATEGORIZING FAITH-INSPIRED ORGANIZATIONS (A COMPLEX TASK)	16
DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS: NUMBERS AND COMPARISONS	20
SECTOR FOCUS AND EMERGING POLICY QUESTIONS	22
BANGLADESH	30
SRI LANKA	35
NEPAL	42
MALDIVES	47
BHUTAN	50
INDIA	54
PAKISTAN	66
AFGHANISTAN	76
KYRGYZ REPUBLIC	80
KAZAKHSTAN	85

TAJIKISTAN	88
TURKMENISTAN	91
UZBEKISTAN	94
APPENDIX 1: MAP OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA.....	97
APPENDIX 2: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT REPORTS - ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY	98
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY	105
ENDNOTES	113



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In keeping with the rich faith traditions of the South and Central Asia regions, faith-inspired actors play highly diverse and complex roles in development efforts. These activities are, however, poorly understood and are rarely acknowledged explicitly in development and academic literature. Faith-inspired actors are seldom part of national and regional policy discussions, though their contributions are significant. Coordination is problematic at the strategic and programmatic levels, among faith-inspired actors, and between faith-inspired and secular development actors.

This report focuses on the diverse array of development activities involving faith-inspired organizations. Its primary focus is by country, for South and Central Asia respectively; the two regions are very distinct but interconnected in significant and very relevant ways. The aim is to increase awareness of the important and widespread work being done, and to help catalyze efforts to bridge gaps in policy and coordination. The overall goal is to increase development effectiveness, bringing into the picture important areas of unaccounted for and unacknowledged work. The report is based largely on desk reviews of existing material and literature, enriched by interviews with specialists and practitioners, and the outcomes of the January 2011 Dhaka consultation, for which this background report was written. The review's fairly limited range of investigation limits the scope for broad generalizations. It builds on the most comprehensive body of literature on the intersection of religion and development, produced under the recently concluded University of Birmingham Research Programme on Religions and Development (see appendix 2).

The Millennium Development Goals have particular significance for this region, since a large share of the world's poor live here. Faith-inspired organizations are active on every Millennium Development Goal, and many make significant contributions, especially in education and health. Learning from this experience and engaging these actors more systematically offers the promise of improving the quality and reach of development programs. Current avenues to engage faith-inspired actors are, however, underdeveloped, and those that are in place are underutilized and poorly understood; some positive examples, particularly

involving large international faith-inspired NGOs, can serve as useful models (Islamic Relief and ACT Alliance, inter alia).

Faith-inspired organizations in South and Central Asia are far from a monolithic group. The wide range of religious beliefs that characterize the region gives rise to an extraordinary diversity of institutional forms and activities. The report makes no systematic effort to define religion or faith and does not confine its analysis to a tightly-defined set of faith actors. Use of the term "faith-inspired" reflects an appreciation of the complex links between inspiration and organization, belief and action. Religion and faith are tied to moral, ethical, and practical attributes that tend to emphasize human and spiritual contributions to political and economic domains; among many communities, religious piety and development often occupy a common social space. The report does not advocate for or contest active development work by faith-inspired actors. Rather, it argues strongly for thoughtful and professional efforts to take account of the many facets of faith in reflecting on development challenges and opportunities. Frequent assertions that faith-inspired organizations meet the needs of the poor better than secular organizations should be assessed case by case, institution by institution.

The report focuses is on the largest faith communities in the region, which tend to have the most active institutions: Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Muslim, and Sikh, but it also notes the other religions and indigenous belief systems that help to weave the social, cultural, and religious fabric of both South and Central Asia. In addition, the report centers its attention on three key sectors: peacebuilding and conflict, gender, and education. Other areas with particular significance highlighted in the study are health, governance, and environmental protection.

Within all the large faith traditions, the diversity of institutions, in their structure, organization, is striking, membership, and form. Best known to development policymakers are the larger international NGOs, such as World Vision, Islamic Relief, Catholic Relief Services, American Jewish World Service, and Muslim Aid. National and local level faith-inspired organizations number in the thousands and includes registered NGOs and

foundations, social movements, and informal community-based organizations; the Edhi Foundation in Pakistan, The National Fishworkers' Forum in India, and the Center on Mental Health and HIV/AIDS in Tajikistan are active examples. Local religious congregations and leaders, in addition to traditional pastoral duties, often provide diverse social services (e.g. schooling, healthcare, and humanitarian aid), and charismatic leaders have advocated for improved social and development policies at the national level (whether Hindu leaders fighting corruption in India, or Catholic fathers mediating between warring parties in Sri Lanka). A particular characteristic of the South and Central Asian faith landscape is the dynamic presence of faith-inspired/religious movements, generally drawing inspiration from major faith traditions (with Hinduism and Islam the most well known), and with followers numbering in the millions. Movements like the Art of Living, Ramakrishna, Aga Kahn Development Network, and Brahma Kumaris are among the most active in mobilizing members around shared social causes and ideals.

Peacebuilding and Conflict

The South and Central Asia regions are noteworthy for a wide range of complex conflicts, ranging from tensions among states, terrorist threats, and communal violence. Religion plays visible, complex, and often poorly understood roles in sparking or magnifying these conflicts, but faith roles in peacebuilding are also significant. Faith communities tend to be engaged in most parts of the conflict cycle. Religion is often seen to fuel tensions, and some disputes are expressly framed as falling along religious lines; but in most instances, religion is part of a complex mix. One reason for gaps in policy attention is a common misunderstanding of complex religious roles and the tendency for policymakers to sidestep religious dimensions rather than confront them directly. In South and Central Asia, failure to address complex and unique religious attributes of individual conflicts can lead analysts to miss significant nuances that drive conflict and post-conflict cycles, while some localized successes can be overshadowed by macro-level complexities.

The scale and scope of faith-inspired actor contributions to peacebuilding varies depending on the understood definition of peacebuilding; definitions range from the traditionally understood areas of conflict resolution and mediation to a broader range of activities directly related to building sustainable peace that include (inter alia) education, governance, health, and gender work. Systematic documentation, monitoring, and evaluation of peacebuilding contributions are hampered by differing understandings of what comes under the “peacebuilding umbrella,” though faith-inspired actor engagement direct and indirect is found across the peacebuilding spectrum. Most faith-linked peacebuilding work, however, is quite decentralized, with few efforts at coordination. This is in part because many activities tend to be ad hoc, springing from local situations and circumstances; current coordination efforts involve primarily large international faith-inspired organizations, global interreligious organizations, and international organizations (e.g. UN Cluster System groups and ACT Central Asia Forum).

An Asia Foundation survey found that over 70 percent of people in Bangladesh would request the involvement of a religious or

community leader in local conflict mediation or resolution processes. Engagement in practice however, remains complex, with practitioners in Pakistan noting that low levels of education among religious leaders can hamper effective collaboration. The character of the ruling regime also influences the extent to which faith-inspired actors contribute to peacebuilding work; large democracies in South Asia tend to have more engaged actors than more restrictive Central Asian governments. Particularly relevant to the South Asia context, diaspora faith communities can significantly influence and shape conflict and peacebuilding trajectories through financial contributions and political advocacy (Sri Lanka, Nepal, and India being notable examples); South Asian diaspora communities in North America and Europe are particularly active.

Recent conflicts such as those in Afghanistan and the Kyrgyz Republic offer examples of religious leaders working courageously across social divides, and collaborating with diverse stakeholders. In Afghanistan, national policy has integrated local conflict resolution mechanisms and national level peace jirgas; in southern Kyrgyz Republic, Christian Aid and ACTED both collaborate, through formal and informal arrangements with religious leaders to build trust across ethnic divides. Localized successes, however, do not necessarily translate into policy-oriented generalizations due to political sensitivities surrounding faith engagement in conflict zones and the wide range of perspectives among faith actors themselves; local knowledge and nuanced understanding of local contexts is key to effective engagement.

Transnational faith-inspired movements have made particular efforts towards national and regional level peacebuilding as well; examples include the Art of Living, Brahma Kumaris, Sarvodaya, and Islamic Relief. International interfaith and ecumenical organizations also facilitate mediation, conduct trainings, and support coordination efforts (examples include Religions for Peace, the World Council of Religious Leaders, United Religions Initiative, and the World Council of Churches). Results thus far have been mixed, with successes more prevalent at the local level than nationally (see Sri Lanka, Kashmir, and Pakistan as examples).

Gender

Gender equity is high on the agenda for most international development organizations and is seen as central to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As religion is introduced into the picture, however, the landscape quickly becomes more complicated. Apart from the complex reality of diverse approaches to gender roles, perceptions of religious and cultural traditions impact on women's social and economic roles influence attitudes of national and international actors towards religious institutions broadly. The influence and presence of faith-inspired actors can be significant, and engaging faith actors on gender deserves greater attention.

Gender preference across much of South Asia infringes on the basic right to life. A strong preference for sons has grossly distorted the gender balance in some areas, visibly impacting demographic profiles. Gender imbalances are worsening the phenomena of child and forced marriages and human trafficking. While the

factors contributing to gender preference are varied (including economic condition), religious leaders can play important roles in changing attitudes and behaviors, as they themselves often contribute to gender preference and discrimination (presiding over child marriages, for example).

Increasing educational opportunities for girls has proved to be most the effective method in building greater gender equity; faith-inspired schools, particularly madrasas in rural areas, are often the only educational opportunities available to girls. The Bangladeshi madrasa system is the “most-feminized” and largest co-ed system in the world; 87 percent of madrasas are co-educational, and 46 percent of students are girls (World Bank). While most faith traditions tend to be patriarchal in structure, some also see modern religious practice by women, accessed through increased literacy and education, as a form of liberation.

Faith-inspired organizations sometimes have facilitated access to communities in development contexts with complex and clearly defined gender roles. A Muslim-inspired organization, for example, may be more familiar with local customs and readily accepted by community leaders than their secular counterparts; while many secular organizations are equally sensitive to local contexts, past experiences and taboos can shape local perceptions. Constructive engagement by faith actors can open the doors of educational facilities, make it possible to approach sensitive social and health related issues, and achieve empowerment through dialogue.

Education

Faith-inspired institutions account for large segments of the education landscape (in both rural communities and urban centers) in many countries in the region. Historically, religious institutions were key centers of education in most countries, including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan. Faith-inspired organizations often provide the only affordable education opportunity for poor populations living in areas underserved by government or private institutions. Thus, they contribute significantly to progress towards the second Millennium Development goal of ‘education for all.’ There is, however, no systematic mapping of their reach, quality, and impact, and constructive dialogue surrounding faith roles in education can be clouded by controversy; the degree to which education is seen as linked to proselytization and the content of education are two primary areas of contention. A constant theme among faith institutions is the role of values in educational curricula and approaches.

Faith-inspired education ranges widely, from completely secular programs, to a hybrid of secular and religious instruction, to purely religious instruction. Some governments, notably Sri Lanka and Nepal, have made a push to incorporate traditional faith-inspired education institutions into mainstream systems. Quality of education is an area of debate and concern; many schools do not qualify or choose not to conform to government standards of education, but they are still significant, particularly in remote areas, and (probably increasingly) in urban centers. The quality of what is being taught, and the nature of the content also varies widely; an often expressed concern is that the teachers

themselves may have limited educational credentials (though this is often the case in secular schools as well). National and NGO imam training programs are making significant efforts to address capacity deficiencies, though gaps remain due to limited mapping and reach (Bangladesh and Tajikistan as two examples).

Madrasa reform is a lively topic in both South and Central Asia. Programs and results vary, and are actively disputed; the process is often marred by politics and misunderstandings. Most reform efforts aim to introduce a balanced curriculum that includes both religious and secular subjects, as well as technical skills in some cases. Some practitioners emphasize a growing societal divide between students and graduates of faith-inspired and secular schools, and note limited professional opportunities from graduates of purely religious schools (other than a limited number of positions in mosques or as madrasa instructors).

Understanding the vast array of institutions is a first step in identifying gaps in educational access and quality, and to bridge divides that separate secular and faith-provided schooling.

South Asia

This report defines South Asia to include Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. South Asia’s faith landscape is among the world’s most diverse and complex, and institutions and leaders are deeply engaged in all virtually all development sectors. Faith has important links to development strategies, notably in shaping social norms and in delivering services. Public information is another critical dimension of roles of faith-inspired actors.

It is particularly difficult to separate the faith and secular realms in this region, as much development work draws, to varying degrees, on faith inspiration. Many well-known social movements have strong faith links, including the non-violent movement of Mohandas Gandhi, and the Self Employed Women’s Movement founded by Ela Bhatt. Complicating the picture, many development organizations that have faith origins or links do not explicitly self-identify as faith-inspired (the Aga Khan Development Network is a prime example). This is particularly, though not exclusively true with Hinduism, which in India can be understood as having nationalist or political ties. In Pakistan, many development actors are driven by the social teachings of Islam, though the organizational mission statements are outwardly secular. In short, distinguishing between faith-inspired and “secular” actors is challenging, and it does not make sense in all circumstances to draw, or attempt to draw distinct divisions; understanding of what drives an organization and their programs however, is important for effective policy interventions. Religion is closely linked to much programming for Dalit populations across South Asia, given the strong religious links to their social status, though it is only one part of a complex social and political structure; in India, development discourse surrounding religion is often framed within the caste context.

Cooperation and coordination mechanisms and performance, between the government, non-governmental organizations, and faith-inspired organizations, varies by country. Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and India, engage religious leaders

and faith-inspired organizations and communities in official development policy and planning at least to a degree. In Bangladesh, for example, the Imam Training Academy, trains most imams in the country on issues concerning health, advocacy, and education; in India the 2006 government commissioned Sachar Committee report provides actionable policy recommendations to engage and improve the lot of the largely marginalized Indian Muslim population. In other countries, Pakistan, Maldives, and Afghanistan, the relationship is more tenuous and often politicized around topics of religious extremism, making wide scale cooperation more challenging; effective examples, particularly around peacebuilding, are well-known, and increasingly (though not systematically) reflected in development policy.

Gender inequality is a major development challenge in South Asia; in India, recent census figures show rising gaps in boy to girl ratios. Religious actors are often close to the center of these issues. Child marriage, dowry abuse, and feticide all have faith dimensions. While many religious leaders condone such practices, an increasing number of faith-inspired actors advocate against gender-biased traditions, such as Muslim Aid in Bangladesh, which advocates against dowry practices and feticide.

In a region characterized by religious diversity and well known episodes of conflict with religious threads, there are numerous examples of religion working for peace. Faith-inspired organizations from all major faiths are active, including in Pakistan, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, India, and Afghanistan, across religious divides, and within single faith traditions; they often have the trust of local communities based on common faith beliefs and can enter complex environments where many secular or government actors cannot or choose not to. Religious leaders can also be seen as neutral actors to convene often belligerent sides to dialogue; catholic orders in northern Sri Lanka are one notable example.

Faith-inspired organizations in many instances are the first to respond to natural disasters; they are often on the ground in remote and hard to access locations. The Indian Ocean tsunami and the Pakistan floods are two examples in which lives were saved due to the response capacity of local faith actors. Their roles are, however, not without controversy; among the faith-inspired organizations that conducted large-scale relief efforts during the floods in Pakistan were some classified or considered as terrorist organizations. They reached vulnerable populations but injected political and military dimensions into the already complex humanitarian disasters, further complicating sensitive policy environments. Clarifying misunderstandings can help lead to more effective development interventions.

A wide array of religious movements, largely Hindu-inspired, but also representing other faiths, have millions of followers both within South Asia and abroad. Many undertake a broad range of complex humanitarian activities, though they are often not described as such. Some, like the Art of Living, are active on interfaith initiatives. The largest movements can effectively mobilize substantial funds to respond quickly to humanitarian need.

Central Asia

Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) is a challenging environment for faith-inspired actors engaging in development work. These nations, recently emerging from a Soviet system that purged religion from the public sphere, have a heritage of rich faith traditions that are integral to social relationships, interactions, and structures. Central Asia, as a region, however, is struggling to define national and regional identities. The region has strong Muslim roots that are reemerging in different forms. The resulting social paradigm is a legacy of now weak former Soviet style government institutions, and emerging, though still institutionally weak, traditional social structures largely rooted in Muslim traditions; the often tenuous relationship between the two systems has implications for the direction and focus of national development plans.

Top-down political and legal structures (to varying degrees) largely dictate to what extent organizations can operate. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have the most restrictive regimes, while regimes in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan are slightly more permissive, although they still maintain high levels of control over the social activities of faith-inspired actors. In the former two countries, activities by both national and international faith-inspired organizations are almost non-existent (with a few exceptions – World Vision Uzbekistan runs programs for disabled children). In the latter, international organizations generally must act with prudence to align programming with government guidelines (often severely limiting the scope of work to non-controversial issues). Local religious leaders engaged in development work are usually part of a government-sanctioned program, though some informal partnership between local religious leaders and international faith-inspired organizations do exist (e.g. in the Kyrgyz Republic during the 2010 civil unrest). Significant work has been done surrounding HIV/AIDS prevention and sensitization, imam training programs, and peacebuilding.

The two faith-inspired organizations with wide-reaching programs in Central Asia are the Aga Khan Development Network and the Gülen Movement. Both Muslim-inspired transnational organizations are active in most countries; their programs include education (for which the schools are considered among the best), rural development, business development, economic development, and women's empowerment.

Much of the tension between religious communities and faith-inspired organizations and the Central Asian governments are linked to concerns about extremist groups with religious links (both real and perceived). While some Islamic extremist groups operate in Central Asia, most faith communities and faith-inspired organizations make positive contributions to society, but are significantly hampered by blanket policies towards religious groups. Despite the challenges, faith-inspired actors are conducting significant work, and given the important roles religion plays in daily life and social interactions, greater engagement of faith communities and faith-inspired organizations offers real potential for increased aid and development effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Religion is a pervasive and influential force across South and Central Asia. Religious beliefs are as diverse as the region's geography and peoples, and religious practices and institutions both shape and are shaped by social changes that are transforming the region. Institutions and communities, influenced and motivated by links to faith, engage in widely ranging activities, some classically religious in nature (teaching scripture, pastoral care), others covering a wide gamut of services and community action (including, but not limited to, education, peacebuilding, health, advocacy, etc.), working from the many thousands of temples, churches, mosques, gurdwaras, and other religious institutions and organizations across the region.

This report, prepared as background for an exploration of religion's role in development in the South and Central Asia, examines the practical, development related roles and work of faith-inspired organizations. Specifically, the report looks at the environments in which they work historically but above all in the present-day, the activities in which they engage, and the complex network of actors working both independently and cooperatively in the two linked but distinct regions of South and Central Asia. Its central aim is what we term a "mapping" of the landscape of faith-inspired organizations working in development in order to identify and highlight areas with potential for increased collaboration and their policy implications. It also sets out to identify areas where further investigation and discussion would be useful. Given the diversity and size of both South and Central Asia, not all issues and countries are treated in equal detail; the investigation is partial and preliminary.

The report is based largely on desk reviews of existing material and literature, enriched by interviews with specialists and practitioners, and outcomes of the Dhaka consultation in January 2011. The primary body of literature on religion and development in South Asia comes from the University of Birmingham Religion and Development program; the report, whose summaries are included in annex and examines in detail the role of religious actors in specific regions, focusing

particularly on education, religion/government relations, religion and society, and gender. Literature on Central Asia is less developed and consists primarily of country specific studies. This background report aims to build upon this literature, with a particular focus on the roles and activities of practitioners, and the environments in which they function.

With the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, country and regional development trajectories and progress towards the MDGs are high priority concerns. Progress varies by country and sectors. Faith-actors are involved in different sectors, often making significant contributions in areas such as education, gender equity, and healthcare. Successful examples and challenges are highlighted in this report.

The country context in which faith-inspired organizations work (social, political, cultural, and economic) largely determines and influences their roles and activities. The report thus focuses on a country-by-country overview that highlights challenges and constraints at national and local levels. The proceeding section takes a regional perspective on specific sectors (namely peacebuilding, gender, and education), examining the main issues and challenges, faith dimensions, and the diverse roles of faith-inspired organizations in addressing them in South and Central Asia.

The review is challenging. The wide range of religious beliefs that characterize the region give rise to an extraordinary diversity of institutional forms and activities. Their overall nature and form are not documented or analyzed in any systematic way, and they vary by country and region, within and across faiths. Faith-inspired institutions work in all sectors of society, ranging from the spiritual realm to social service functions more commonly associated with secular organizations. They are present in education, healthcare, HIV/AIDS, environmental preservation, humanitarian relief, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, gender, and emergency relief, among many other sectors. They work independently, in collaboration with other faith-inspired groups, and in an

extraordinary array of partnerships with secular institutions, public and private. As an exploratory review the report's findings are far from definitive.

This study makes no systematic effort to define religion or faith, and thus has not constrained its analysis to a tightly defined set of faith actors. Its approach is wide-ranging and inclusive. Use of the term "faith-inspired" reflects an appreciation of the complex links between inspiration and organization, belief and action. Religion and faith are tied to moral and ethical attributes that tend to emphasize human and spiritual contributions to political and economic domains.

Beliefs affect behaviors relevant to many endeavors that have clear social, economic, and political reach. The primary focus of the present exploration, however, is not on the ways in which faith and belief shape attitudes towards development and related behaviors, but on a set of more pragmatic questions linked to policy engagement and service delivery; how are faith-inspired actors engaged in development more broadly, and what roles and functions do they fill?

The report focuses on the largest faith communities, which tend to have the most active institutions: Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Jain, and Sikh. But other religions and indigenous belief systems also help to weave the social, cultural, and religious fabric of both South and Central Asia. In many ways unique to South and Central Asia, is the array of transnational faith-inspired movements, largely Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim, but also from other faiths; their development activities are explored in the report. Belief systems are syncretic in many situations, and each of the larger world religions has a uniquely South or Central Asian character.

The central threads running through much of the analysis and discussions are the purposeful focus of much faith-inspired work in poor communities on gender, education, and peacebuilding/conflict. The major faiths present in South and Central Asia all profess to address those who are excluded and

marginalized in society, those who suffer, and those who are poor. Faith-inspired organizations are particularly active, and often have a significant value-added, at the grassroots level. In communities, faith-inspired organizations can have a nuanced understanding of the local context, significant and often well established networks, and established relationships and trust with local leaders and community members. Recent natural disasters and conflict situations highlight how effectively some faith-inspired actors can respond to local needs, and their extraordinary reach into remote communities.

In South and Central Asia, national borders and ethnicities overlap, and faith communities live side by side. These ancient trends are accentuated by urbanization, migration, and the population displacements linked to conflicts and natural disasters. The results both lend to instances of constructive cooperation, as well as inter/intra religious conflict; faith-inspired organizations thus find themselves often at the epicenter of local understanding and influence surrounding development work and humanitarian aid. In places where there are active conflicts, faith-inspired grassroots initiatives engage the poorest members of the community, who are often particularly imbued with their religious identity. A wide array of groups addresses social injustice, human rights abuses, and gender discrimination in concrete, practical ways.

The review is designed to inform and serve both development practitioners and policymakers from faith-inspired and secular institutions. The different faith-inspired organizations form part of the development architecture, presenting attendant challenges of coordination and aligning with national and international strategic objectives. Often the faith-inspired experience suggests new insights and practical lessons, as well as special challenges on issues ranging from governance to effective community mobilization. The report's findings could serve as a useful enrichment for development discussions in these complex and important world regions.

SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA: RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT ROLES

Religious institutions and faith-inspired organizations have a strong physical, spiritual, and functional presence across most South and Central Asian communities. Even the most remote and inaccessible locations are likely to have a vibrant religious center or centers that often serve as a social and economic hub, in addition to more classic spiritual roles. Faith-inspired institutions are involved in a range of social and public services at the community level, including prominently but not exclusively education, peacebuilding, and healthcare, as well as influencing complex social relations, including class and gender.

Each context presents a quite different profile, sometimes mirrored in wide differences among regions of a single country. This diversity gives rise to a variety of arrangements and foci in terms of types of development programs and sector concentration, as well as the way organizations relate to public services and local authorities. The respective roles of local versus regional and international organizations also differs markedly by country. Transnational religious movements have a special importance and character in South Asia and actively participate in many facets of development (though not always explicitly in name). The capacity and disposition of the state also shape the approach to faith-inspired organizations, as well as to civil society more broadly. Thus, India, for example, with its vibrant and established democracy and rich cultural and religious diversity, has a large and dynamic civil society with thousands of different organizations working in virtually every imaginable sector, while in Turkmenistan, non-governmental organizations, including those with a faith character, work under tight government restrictions.

This section briefly introduces the region's major religious traditions and their social engagement in development.

Hinduism

Hinduism is an oversimplified label coined during the British Raj to represent the very diverse practices of the native religious traditions in India. The classification "Hindu" tried to unify

often conflicting beliefs that had no single founder, no clearly established beginning, no singular authoritative text, and millions of variegated local, communal, or individual gods.¹ Many object that for these reasons it is not a "religion" or even a "faith tradition." However, there are important common threads, a host of leaders, places, and organizations, and beliefs that fall under the general rubric.

Hinduism is practiced by hundreds of millions of people in many countries across South Asia. It is the tradition of the majority of the population in India and Nepal, and there are significant minorities in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Prominent Hindu beliefs and practices such as dharma (duty), karma (action), and samsara (rebirth) influence the formulation and implementation of the development agenda in India and Nepal, and the shape and direction of the wide-ranging Hindu-inspired development organizations. Temples, individuals, faith-inspired political parties, social and spiritual movements, NGOs, and community groups draw inspiration from the basic Hindu principles. In India in particular, many Hindus engage in social welfare activities through membership in secular organizations, though their faith traditions still play a role in development activities.² Many organizations refer to Gandhian teachings and practices in their work, linking these, on occasion and in some settings, to Hindu spiritual traditions. Others reflect the teachings of the many well-known religious leaders.

There is a broad spectrum of Hindu diaspora communities in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada; more affluent communities in particular, donate to Hindu organizations such as Hindu Aid, and the Hindu American Foundation, as well as to diaspora temples, to support development projects in the subcontinent.³ The Hindu Tamil Diaspora community has been influential in shaping political and development agendas in Sri Lanka – both fueling conflict and supporting humanitarian aid. Hindu inspired religious movements, often with an international presence, are also active in development; their faith inspiration is clear but often complex. As an example, the Art of Living Foundation, founded and led by

His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, describes itself as spiritual, with Hindu tradition as one thread. It is one of the largest volunteer-based NGOs accredited with the United Nations.⁴

Islam

Muslim tradition is evident in development approaches and programs in various ways in South and Central Asia, including individual mosque and imam-run charitable activities, local Islamic faith-inspired organizations, zakat-focused institutions, local and international religious movements, and international Muslim organizations. The diversity and number of organizations involved in development reflect the importance of approaches to social welfare to Muslims across the regions. Muslim organizations trace their base-line concept for “redistributive justice”, or charity, to tenets of the Qur’an, particularly zakat (alms-giving), sadaqah (voluntary charity), and waqfs (pious endowments) which engage the construction of religious buildings, shelters, orphanages, refugee camps, and hospitals.⁵

Countries with Muslim majorities belong to Islamic international organizations including the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Large international Muslim-inspired development organizations including Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid work in South and Central Asia and partner with local Muslim humanitarian organizations, religious leaders, organizations of other faith inspiration, and secular development organizations and governments. Muslim religious movements are also active in development; the pietistic group the Tablighi Jam’aat work through apolitical channels in the subcontinent to promote grassroots missionary revivals and a return to faithful Islamic practices. Networks of imams engaged in social welfare work are established in specific countries, notably Bangladesh and Tajikistan.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Central Asia witnessed a resurgence of traditional Muslim beliefs and traditions.⁶ Today Islam plays important roles in everyday life in all Central Asian countries. The Aga Khan Development

Network (AKDN), established by Prince Abdul Karim, is perhaps the largest development organization inspired by the Muslim faith working in Central Asia. AKDN works in most Central Asian countries, and in several countries in South Asia, to promote economic development, education, government transparency, and the rebuilding of social bonds, among other development sectors. The Muslim inspired Fethullah Gülen movement, runs Turkish faith-inspired schools throughout Central Asia.

For Sufi populations, the Muslim pillar of zakat, or charity, is a central focus for charitable giving.⁷ Sufi-Muslim leaders and charities are spread across South and Central Asia, and focus on areas such as education, counseling, and disaster relief; some notable examples include the Miran Saiyed Ali, Dargah Kabrastan and Masjid Committee Trust, and the Miran Saiyed Ali Spiritual Treatment Centre and Educational Welfare Trust in South Asia, and leaders including Ibrahim Hazrat and Ismatullah Sheikh in Central Asia.⁸ Traditionally, Sufi shrines and mausoleums are sites for almsgiving and food provision for the poor and often expand to cover education, healthcare, and other welfare activities.

Buddhism

Buddhism is the majority religion in Sri Lanka and Bhutan, and has significant minorities in Nepal; it is practiced in smaller pockets in most other countries in South and Central Asia. The Buddhist faith forms an intrinsic part of everyday life in countries where it is the majority religion, and well-established and trusted networks of religious leaders and monasteries are engaged in social development work. Besides its obvious and influential spiritual realm, Buddhism can be a notable force for national cohesion. In Bhutan and Sri Lanka, national development policies draw strong inspiration from Buddhist texts and traditions, as do political ethos. Historically, Buddhist temples were central in providing education. Socially Engaged Buddhism, the worldwide movement that works to transform society through active compassion and engagement of dharmic

principles, has strong roots in Sri Lanka. Perhaps the best-known organization inspired by socially engaged Buddhism is the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement; the movement works in over 15,000 communities in Sri Lanka and has projects in other countries in South Asia.

Diaspora Buddhist groups are also influential in informing political and development policy. The Buddhist Sinhalese Diaspora supports development initiatives in Sri Lanka and was particularly active following the 2004 tsunami; During the civil war, some segments of both the Sinhalese and Tamil Diaspora however, also participated in fueling the conflict. International Buddhist inspired NGOs include the US-located Buddhist Peace Fellowship which works on peacebuilding in Bangladesh and India, Buddhist Global Relief, the Buddhist Leadership Initiative, which educates monks on HIV/AIDS prevention and other health issues, and the Red Lotus humanitarian organization in Sri Lanka.

Sikhism

Sikh communities are found throughout South and Central Asia, with greatest numbers in India and Pakistan. The Sikh tradition employs a strong emphasis on man's salvation, hard honest work, individualism, rationality, and shared earnings.⁹ Sikhism follows the teachings of a group of gurus from different faiths, and Sikh communities are particularly inclined to show compassion to and engage in interfaith initiatives. Since the 1960s, a wealthy Sikh diaspora has emerged in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.; these communities provide substantial funds to international and local Sikh-inspired organizations in their home countries and abroad.

Private charitable organizations often operate around gurdwaras (temples), providing space for the provision of clothes, food, and first-aid for the destitute, disabled, or orphaned. Some organizations are also engaged in promoting values-based education. Noteworthy Sikh inspired organizations include: the Kalgidhar Trust/Society, the Chief Khalsa Diwan (CKD), the Kali Vein Environment Project, and the Shiromani Gudwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC).

Zoroastrian (Parsi)

The Parsis in South Asia are originally Zoroastrian migrants from Iran and represent a wealthy and prominent religious minority in India and Pakistan; there are also small minority communities in Central Asia. Since the eighteenth century in Bombay (Mumbai), developmental assistance has been provided through Parsi "gifting" which matured into today's Parsi trusts and charitable foundations.¹⁰ These organizations continue to play an important part in development, particularly in metropolitan areas with Parsi communities. The Bombay Parsi Panchayat, the largest Zoroastrian institution, was founded in the seventeenth century to encourage charity work in rural areas of Gujarat and to support local hospitals, schools, temples, and the poor of the Parsi community.¹¹ Well known for their emphasis on education, The Parsi Benevolent Institution is a notable school open to all Indians irrespective of caste, gender, or religion.¹²

Jainism

The essence of the Jain tradition is a concern for the welfare of all beings, peacebuilding, and non-violence.¹³ Although small in number, most Jains live in India and emphasize philanthropy.¹⁴ Jain developmental organizations are commonly charitable trusts and foundations that draw on donations to assist Jains and non-Jains in various development projects. The Ratna Nidhi Charitable Trust works with volunteer doctors in assisting nearly 25,000 Indians with physical disabilities.¹⁵ Other Jain trusts, such as the Institute of Jainology in Ahmedabad, India promote interfaith dialogue and encourage coordination between Jain communities and development organizations.¹⁶

Christianity

There are small communities of Christians throughout South and Central Asia. Despite their small size, the community is active in most development sectors including education, healthcare, and orphanages, as well as campaigning for human rights for marginalized groups and advocating for the poor.¹⁷ Churches and local Christian-inspired organizations provide varying degrees of assistance to the poor, including running local schools and engaging in peacebuilding work. The role of Christianity as a minority religion involved in social outreach has contributed to tensions with other faith groups, as difficulties can arise when groups are not open and transparent about their intentions in evangelizing. Christian development organizations work actively with minority groups, particularly Dalit groups in Hindu societies. Christian, and particularly Catholic, schools are often among the elite schools in South Asia.

Several international Christian organizations work in South Asia; Caritas, CAFOD, World Vision, and Lutheran World Federation are active in refugee rehabilitation and disaster relief. In Central Asia, the ACT Alliance, which includes Christian Aid and DanChurchAid, among others, works in most Central Asian countries and engages local religious leaders on gender rights, health, and education, among other areas of focus.

Bahá'í

Founded in Iran in 1844, the Bahá'í International Community (BIC) is the youngest of the world's independent monotheistic religions and has more than 5 million adherents in 236 countries and territories. Bahá'ís come from nearly every national, ethnic and religious background. The Bahá'í have active communities in most countries in South and Central Asia. One of the largest Bahá'í communities is in India, with over two million members. The major principle of the faith is the unity of all religions and of mankind. BIC engages in social and economic development work, emphasizing grassroots action. This process begins with consultation, where all members of a community come together to problem-solve about development projects. Projects can be initiated by the Bahá'í administration or by groups and individuals. In addition to local projects, the Bahá'í

community has initiated global campaigns focused on literacy, primary healthcare training, and the advancement of women; Bahá'í organizations run nearly 400 schools worldwide, with many located throughout South and Central Asia. They are active in interfaith work, and regularly work with other faith communities and religious movements. In India, the Bahá'í community works with the government on education reform. BIC is a registered NGO with the United Nations and the European Union.¹⁸

Post Soviet Transition – Central Asia

Under the USSR, religious leaders and members of the Islamic ulema lost their positions of influence in the community and were relegated to the sidelines.¹⁹ Since 1989, religion, and particularly Islam, has experienced a vivid resurgence. Central Asian countries, all of which had a rich Islamic heritage before Soviet rule, are rediscovering their religious and cultural traditions. The resurgence of religion has been met with growing pains in most Central Asian countries; secular governments tend to restrict religious freedom and engagement in social spheres and promote a government-approved version of Islamic practice (which varies by country). There is a rise of religious extremism in some parts, and government policies towards religion are often shaped through that lens. Despite challenges, faith-inspired actors are playing an increasing role in development in Central Asia.

As Central Asians reclaim their religious traditions and heritage, Islam is emerging as major source of new identity and inspiration. Mosques are reopening and becoming vibrant centers of community, Sufi teachers are making their way back into mainstream society, and religious education and madrasas are made available for the general public, though in practice institutions operate largely under government mandated guidelines.²⁰ The reintegration of religion into the public sphere has elicited an overall positive response from a people who desire to practice their faith openly. Conversations with practitioners point to an increasingly younger group that regularly attend mosque services.

Religious leaders are increasingly involved in providing public information on social development issues, most notably on healthcare and HIV/AIDS. Governments and NGOs, including the government of Tajikistan, engage imams in training on development issues.

The Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan have among the most active faith involvement in development; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan have more restrictive environments, although some engagement is taking place.

CATEGORIZING FAITH-INSPIRED ORGANIZATIONS (A COMPLEX TASK)

Faith-inspired organizations and actors in South and Central Asia are very diverse. Some organizations explicitly identify with a particular faith tradition or institution, like a Sikh educational institution or a Catholic hospital. Many others however draw inspiration from a wide range of faith or spiritual traditions and organizations, with the links defined in less explicit or direct ways. A small group sees themselves as either interfaith or bridging the religious and secular worlds. There are some institutions that downplay their faith/religious links even though their history or their base of support has clear ties to a faith tradition or leader. This is in part because of sensitivities around faith-secular links and concerns about religious tensions or perceptions of religious approaches to issues. The picture is complicated by vocabulary; institutions may highlight respectively their religious, faith, or spiritual links, and the meaning of an “organization” varies quite widely, as such entities range from vast in geographic reach and size to tiny, very local, and informal.

There have been many efforts to categorize faith-inspired organizations, though there is no common framework; each country groups or categorizes non-state organizations and/or religious bodies in different ways. Academic literature on faith-inspired organizations is limited.²¹ Efforts to create a typology include those that relate to how faith-inspired organizations are structured (J. Sider)²², and those that address the values that drive NGOs (G. Clarke)^{23, 24, 25} Clarke, identifies five types of organizations: faith-based representative or apex bodies, faith based charitable or development organizations, faith-based socio-political organizations, faith-based missionary organizations, and faith-based radical, illegal, or terrorist organizations. The University of Birmingham Religion and Development Programme utilizes and builds upon these typologies, also examining and categorizing faith engagement through specific areas of focus, including education, healthcare, emergency relief community development, marginalized focus groups, and women, among others.

To help in seeing and understanding some patterns in this diversity (and with many caveats), we suggest six categories (that both draw and build upon the aforementioned efforts) that encompass much of the development work that has some faith character or links:

- 1. International Faith-inspired Organizations:**
- 2. National/Local Faith-inspired Organizations**
- 3. Religious/spiritual movements**
- 4. Religious Communities and Congregations/Leaders**
- 5. Diaspora Faith Communities**
- 6. Faith-inspired political parties or organizations**

Some organizations may extend across categories.

International Faith-inspired Organizations

These development organizations work beyond the borders of the country where they are headquartered, and many (like Caritas, World Vision, and Islamic Relief) are major international players on the development scene. Many have large operating budgets and a worldwide network of offices. Several are active across South and Central Asia, working in many different sectors. Some have their base and headquarters in South and Central Asia; others are based in North America, Asia, and Europe. Such organizations have international mandates and visions. Their funding sources are often diverse (including but not limited to government donor agencies, international organizations, foundations, and individual contributions), as is the composition of their staff.

One of the largest international NGOs is Catholic Relief Services (CRS), which is active in Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and across Central Asia. CRS works in many sectors, including community-based education, emergency response training, healthcare facilities, and HIV/AIDS prevention. Others are Islamic Relief, American Jewish World Service, World Vision, and the Aga Khan Development Network.

National Faith-Inspired Organizations

National faith-inspired organizations generally work within the borders of one country with their particular faith groups, or with the wider community at large. Many such organizations work for welfare and development in South Asia and Central Asia. Most are registered as non-governmental organizations or community-based organizations.

NGOs normally have a legal status and operate independently from the government, receiving funding from a variety of sources, including individual donations, foundations, and government and independent donor agencies. NGOs vary widely in size, focus, and mandate. Local NGOs tend to work across sectors in the development field on topics like gender empowerment, conflict and peacebuilding, disaster relief and management, mobile health clinics, and education but some are very specifically issue-focused. The NGOs that can be termed faith-inspired tend not to differ from other NGOs in specific, definable ways, but they draw motivation for their work in differing forms and to varying degrees from one or more religious or spiritual faiths. Community-based organizations are a sub-set of non-profit/non-governmental organizations that tend to focus on grassroots/locally-focused development.

National NGOs and community-based organizations in South and Central Asia vary in size and range of activities, and they participate to varying degrees in local and national

coordination bodies with international organizations (including the United Nations) and networks. Some are large organizations and serve multiple regions beyond the city or town where they are located. For example, the Alamgir Welfare Trust provides food and health services in many regions in Pakistan. When the organization was first founded, their principle welfare activity was distributing left-over food from lavish weddings to poor neighborhoods in Karachi. Today, the organization offers diverse welfare and development services to the community, including buying school supplies for children from poor families, burial services, and financial help to cover the cost for the Hajj pilgrimage, an important ritual practice in Islam.

Similarly in India, Veerayatan focuses on sadhana, or the spiritual development of the person, as well as economic or social progress. The organization emphasizes prayer, meditation, and yoga for integrating the spiritual self into the realm of civic responsibility. In addition, the organization provides education and healthcare services including nearly 100,000 successful eye surgeries, and offers artificial limbs and calipers to poor patients to improve mobility.

Mutakalim, the Muslim women's rights NGO in the Kyrgyz Republic was established in 1999, and today has offices throughout the country. The organization lobbied the government to make it legal for women to be photographed wearing the «hijab» – Islamic dress for women – for passport pictures. The notion behind the appeal is to protect a woman's right to religious practice as well as encourage the revival of faith in the Kyrgyz Republic.²⁶

Religious/Spiritual Movements

South and Central Asia are distinctive in the prominent role of religious movements. Such movements inspire millions of people in the region, as well as worldwide. While the impetus and vision may be framed in different terms, the development

role of these institutions is often substantial. Examples of religious movements include Arya Samaj, the Brahma Kumaris, the Sathya Sai Baba Organization, the Chinmaya Mission, the Art of Living, the RamaKrishna Mission, the Tablighi-Jam'at, and the Gülen Movement.

It is not uncommon for a religious movement with pietistic goals to engage in welfare work if they witness unmet needs in the community. The international pietistic Islamic movement the Tablighi-Jama'at (TJ) is responding to a particular Islamic theological commitment to care for the wellbeing of the ummah, both spiritually and economically. The TJ is active in multiple Indian states, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Kazakhstan. As a religious movement, the Tablighi infuses Islamic spirituality into the development services they offer. Ideologically, the religious movement is committed to making people better Muslims, which includes empowerment through Islamic education, piety, and social values.

For Hindus, the theological notion of ahimsa (non-violence), dharma (duty) and karma (action) is an important driving force in several international religious movements. For example, the core beliefs of the Hare Krishna Movement founded by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada are based on traditional Hindu scriptures including the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam and the Bhagavad-gīta. The movement has inspired the international Movement for Krishna Consciousness (ISKON), active throughout South and Central Asia. ISKCON today is a worldwide confederation of more than 400 centers, including 60 farm communities and 50 schools. In recent decades, the movement's most rapid expansions in terms of membership has taken place in Europe and India. ISKCON has inspired a project called Food for Life that is active in over sixty countries and serves over 700,000 meals every day. ISKCON Youth Forum (IYF) is designed to raise Krishna consciousness and organizes festivals, retreats, dramatic performances, discussions, and presentations to engage the youth to become more socially and ethically aware.

National Religious/Spiritual Movements

Local religious movements normally operate on a more limited scale than international religious movements and often, though not always, work within specific regions or towns. Many religious movements have begun as local/national movements and have subsequently expanded their reach and following internationally. The Arya Samaj as one example from India, is a Hindu reform movement founded in the nineteenth century by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. The swami was a sanyasi (renunciate) who believed in the supreme authority of the Vedas and preached a purified version of Hinduism without the ritualism and what he considered the excessive role of Brahmin priests. The Arya Samaj quickly expanded to all parts of India and has branches in almost every major metropolitan city, including Delhi, Chennai, and Kolkata. Apart from spreading a theological message, Arya Samaj reaches out to the Dalit community, providing education, mobile health clinics, and social welfare services. The movement has since spread and has an international following, though its work is primarily concentrated within India.

Other social movements are not specifically religious, though they draw clear motivation from their faith inspiration. The Self-Employed Women's Association (Sewa) is one prominent example. The movement, started by Ela Bhatt, draws on the Gandhian principals of non-violence and social activism, which are themselves drawn from core Hindu traditions.

Other religions in the two focus regions, including the Jain, Muslim, Sufi, Christian, Bahá'í, and Sikh communities, have national/local level social movements in this area.

Religious Communities and Congregations/Leaders

Religious communities and congregations, including churches, mosques, temples, gurdwaras, and shrines along with their local religious leaders, respond to social and development challenges and issues in their local contexts. Local religious bodies have both continuing roles, often with deep historic roots (such as helping the neediest in a community) and case-by-case responses to crises, acting when governments or other development organizations cannot. In South and Central Asia, local religious institutions are active in providing welfare services, including food distribution, clothing drives, mobile clinics, and orphan care. The support of local religious leaders is often a necessary aspect of successful program implementation in rural areas, given the trust and respect that religious leaders hold in their communities.

Local shrines in the region play a role in providing welfare services. Shrines in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh attract large numbers of pilgrims that engage in petitionary prayer, supplication, and worship. It is a common practice for local development organizations to collect money and food from wealthy neighborhoods and then donate the goods to local shrines for further distribution.

In Muslim countries, the emphasis on zakat or charitable alms is intertwined with social engagement of local places of worship. Muslims have an obligation to give generously for the well-being of their ummah, and often pay zakat by donating goods and food instead of money. Because the shrines are trusted by the community, they are often the most common recipients of this form of zakat. The shrines have volunteers to cook and serve the donated food to pilgrims and other poor people in the vicinity, hence providing a corporeal service as well as a spiritual one. It is difficult to document accurately how many people visit these shrines, but it is clear that they benefit poor families in local communities.

Similarly in India where the majority religious tradition is Hinduism, local shrines also participate in welfare activities. Many shrines have food distribution programs and provide welfare for widows who are homeless. Churches engage in similar welfare activities.



Diaspora Faith Communities

Diaspora communities play significant roles in both the South and Central Asia development contexts. They have been influential in shaping political landscapes (including conflicts) in the region. Activities include fundraising and direct humanitarian or development assistance. Some diaspora communities form distinct organizations to promote the well-being of their community in their country of origin; diaspora temples, churches, gurdwara, shrines, mosques, and other religious institutions often sponsor and/or support development efforts.

An example of an active diaspora community in the United States is the Sikh community, which works in India particularly through the Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE). The organization is committed to the preservation and promotion of Sikh culture in Indian states where the Sikh community is small in number to encourage the community to participate more fully in civil society.

Other particularly active diaspora groups include the Tamil and Sinhala (Sri Lanka), Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, and Nepali communities, as well as smaller communities from Central Asia.

Faith-inspired political parties and organizations

Religiously-inspired political parties in South Asia are unique because they often have affiliated welfare wings that engage in development work and provide social services to the underserved. In India, the two largest political parties that engage in multiple welfare and development services are the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS). These political parties have unique characteristics that blur the line between political party, religious party, and/or religiously-inspired welfare organizations. The RSS supports the Vidya Bharatiya Schools amongst other welfare services, including poverty alleviation and healthcare. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, the Jama'at-i-Islami has welfare wings that are involved in a wide range of charitable, welfare, and development services, including healthcare, education, emergency relief, and orphan support.²⁷ The Al-Khidmat Foundation in Pakistan is associated with Jama'at-i-Islami and is engaged in poverty alleviation through various sectors, such as helping poor families to pay for weddings and other religious celebrations.

DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS: NUMBERS AND COMPARISONS

Poverty and Social Indicators for Central Asia

Poverty and Social Indicators						
	Europe and Central Asia	Kyrgyz Republic	Kazakhstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Population, mid-year (millions)	404	5.3	15.9	7	5.1	27.8
GNI per capita (Atlas method, US\$)	6,793	870	6,920	700	3,420	1,100
GNI (Atlas method, US\$ billions)	2,746.0	4.6	110	4.8	17.50	30.6
Average Annual Growth, 2003-09						
Population (%)	0.2	0.9	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.4
Labor force (%)	0.8	2.9	1.8	3.8	2.7	3.9
Latest Year Available, 2003-09						
Poverty (% of population below national poverty line)	NA	43	NA	54	NA	27
Urban population (% of total population)	64.0	36	58	26	49	37
Life expectancy at birth (years)	69.0	67	66	67	65	68
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	19.0	32	26	52	42	32
Child malnutrition (% of children under 5)	41.0	3	5	15	NA	4
Access to an improved water source (% of population)	NA	90	95	70	NA	87
Literacy (% of population age 15+)	96.0	99	100	100	100	99
Gross primary enrollment (% of school-age population)	98.0	95	109	102	NA	93
Male	100.0	95	109	104	NA	94
Female	99.0	94	109	100	NA	92
GDP per Capita (Average Annual Growth)						
1989-1999		-6.5	-4.1	-13.8	-8.7	-3
1999-2009		3.6	8.3	7	12.8	5.2
2008		7.5	2	6.2	9	7.2
2009		1.5	-0.2	1.7	6.6	6.3

Source: World Bank

Poverty and Social Indicators for South Asia

Poverty and Social Indicators									
	South Asia	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Population, mid-year (millions)	1,568	29.8	162.5	0.7	1,153.3	0.31	29.3	169.7	20.3
GNI per capita (Atlas method, US\$)	1,082		580	2,020	1,220	3,970	440	1,000	1,990
GNI (Atlas method, US\$ billions)	1,697		93.5	1.4	1,405.70	1.2	13	169.8	40.4
Average Annual Growth, 2003-09									
Population (%)	1.5	2.6	1.5	2.1	1.4	1.4	1.9	2.2	1
Labor force (%)	2.2	3.1	1.3	4.5	2	5.2	3.1	3.8	0.6
Latest Year Available, 2003-09									
Poverty (% of population below national poverty line)		42	40				31		
Urban population (% of total population)	30	24	28	36	30	39	18	37	15
Life expectancy at birth (years)	64	44	66	66	64	72	67	67	74
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	55	134	41	52	50	11	39	71	13
Child malnutrition (% of children under 5)	41	33	41		44		39		21
Access to an improved water source (% of population)	87	48	80	92	88	91	88	90	90
Literacy (% of population age 15+)	61		55	53	63	98	58	54	91
Gross primary enrollment (% of school-age population)	108	106	92	109	113	112		85	101
Male	110	127	89	108	115	115		93	101
Female	105	84	94	110	111	109		77	102
GDP per Capita (Average Annual Growth)									
1989-1999			2.7	5.3	3.8		2.4	1.4	4.3
1999-2009		7.7	4.1	5.9	6	4.7	1.6	2.7	4.3
2008		-0.4	4.7	3.3	3.5	4.8	3.4	-0.6	5.2
2009		37.1	4.3	5.8	7.7	-4.4	2.8	1.4	2.8

Source: World Bank

Millenium Development Goals Progress Sheet

MDG PROGRESS BY REGION (2011)		
GOAL 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger		
	South Asia	Central Asia*
<i>Reduce extreme poverty by half</i>	very high poverty	high poverty
<i>Productive and decent employment</i>	very large deficit in decent work	large deficit in decent work
<i>Reduce hunger by half</i>	high hunger	moderate hunger
GOAL 2: Achieve universal primary education		
<i>Universal primary schooling</i>	high enrollment	high enrollment
GOAL 3: Promote gender equality and empower women		
<i>Equal girls' enrollment in primary school</i>	parity	parity
<i>Women's share of paid employment</i>	low share	high share
<i>Women's equal representation in national parliament</i>	low representation	low representation
GOAL 4: Reduce child mortality		
<i>Reduce mortality of under five-year-olds by two thirds</i>	moderate mortality	low mortality
GOAL 5: Improve maternal health		
<i>Reduce maternal mortality by three quarters</i>	high mortality	low mortality
<i>Access to reproductive health</i>	moderate access	moderate access
GOAL 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases		
<i>Halt and reverse spread of HIV/AIDS</i>	low incidence	low incidence
<i>Halt and reverse spread of tuberculosis</i>	moderate mortality	moderate mortality
GOAL 7: Ensure environmental sustainability		
<i>Reverse loss of forests</i>	medium forest coverage	low forest coverage
<i>Halve proportion without improved drinking water</i>	moderate coverage	moderate coverage
<i>Halve proportion without sanitation</i>	very low coverage	high coverage
<i>Improve the lives of slum-dwellers</i>	high proportion of slum dwellers	
GOAL 8: Develop a global partnership for development		
<i>Number of Internet users</i>	low usage	high usage

*Data includes the Caucasus. These countries were not examined in this study, but form part of the UNDP regional grouping.
Source: United Nations

Chart Key:

	Target already met or expected to be met by 2015
	Progress insufficient to reach the target if prevailing trends persist
	No progress or deterioration
	Missing or insufficient data

SECTOR FOCUS AND EMERGING POLICY QUESTIONS

CONFLICT AND PEACEBUILDING

Religion plays visible and complex, yet often poorly understood roles in the many and very different conflicts in South and Central Asia. Despite religions' evident presence and social importance, the close links between building peace and development, and the significance of a range of complex conflicts in the regions, there is little systematic research on the links among religion, conflict, and peace. Thus, a central focus of this review and consultation is the diverse roles played by religious communities, institutions, and leaders in conflict and peacebuilding.

While every conflict has distinct features, in some fashion religious elements can be seen as cross-cutting, in part because religion has deep roots in communities as well as complex national and transnational links. There is some irony in the broad picture that emerges: in South and Central Asia, where most people take particular pride in their deeply held religious values (in which peace is often a core element), and in centuries long traditions of tolerance and successful plural societies, religion seems to be quite often today at least the spark for violent conflict. Hindu Buddhist, Hindu Muslim, intra-Muslim, Hindu-Sikh, and anti-Christian tensions, among others, have divided communities and led to violence and wars. Concern about the fundamentalist tendencies in several faiths, some (of course not all) prone to violence, put a new spotlight on religious roles in conflict. Several countries today are deeply split along religions and/or ethnic lines, and religion divides some countries from others or exacerbates tensions. Whether it contributes to or is itself a central factor in conflicts, the role of religion is a growing focus of attention.

South and Central Asia are two very different but interlinked regions. Both face a range of different conflicts, though these conflicts do not fit neatly into any common pattern. They range from protracted internal armed insurgencies, terrorist threats and acts, and international border disputes, to inter-sectarian violence and ethnic conflicts with religious threads. The role that religious beliefs and actors play in each conflict is distinct, always complex, and often contested (some arguing that religion is central, others that it is not). The key factor, religious identities and tensions, is

often intertwined with ethnic and national roles. In situations as different as Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, ethnicity, tribal affiliations, culture, and religion are intertwined, with many implications for politics and economics. Religious justifications for conflicts often draw on deep historic roots (witness the protracted dispute centered on India's Ayodhya Temple and Babri Masjid, which goes back to ancient Hindu legends). There are many examples where religious identities have contributed to flaring disputes and violence, but also cases in which religion has served a role of constraining tensions and brokering peace.

Religious elements in differing forms are highlighted as contributors to several South and Central Asian conflicts. Prime examples are Afghanistan, Kashmir, Pakistan (inter-sect and border region conflicts), Sri Lanka, India, the Kyrgyz Republic, and tensions surrounding the resurgence of religious groups in post USSR Central Asia. Religiously-based nationalism is seen by many (though not all) analysts as a causal factor in the over two-decade civil conflict in Sri Lanka; religion is a communal tag of identity in the Kashmiri conflict; and the rise of more fundamental interpretations within some Muslim communities in Uzbekistan has fueled social tensions that erupted into violent conflict. Some well known instances of terrorism, notably the 2001 attacks on the Indian Parliament, and the 2008 attacks in Mumbai, give rise to mounting concern and have regional and global implications. Religious identity is often closely tied to ethnic affiliation, along with economic, social, and political status, in several countries, notably Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Bhutan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and in parts of most countries across the two regions.²⁸

The degree to which religion is consciously part of policy reflections about conflict and peacebuilding in the region varies (as it does across the world). While religious actors and beliefs are commonly blamed for fueling conflict, and some disputes are expressly framed as falling along religious lines (like communal violence involving Hindus and Muslims in India or inter-sect violence involving Ahmadia Muslims in Pakistan), in most instances religion is clearly part of a complex mix, and policymakers tend to leave it on the sidelines more often than they confront or engage religious bodies directly.²⁹ But there is growing appreciation of potential

positive roles in peacebuilding, such as when religious leaders sooth communal tensions or serve as mediators.³⁰ Religious leaders tend to be well trusted and accepted by communities, including those facing conflict, and wield influence that can quickly mobilize communities. In South Asia specifically, religious communities have been renowned peacemakers and leaders of nonviolent social change over the past century. Most notable are the religiously inspired anticolonial nonviolent movements of Mahatma Gandhi and Abdul Ghaffar Khan, often cited as inspiration for both faith-inspired and secular peacebuilding initiatives today.³¹ In Central Asia, Muslim leaders from opposite sides of the borders in the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan are cooperating to foster peace between two ethnic groups that share a common faith tradition, yet engaged in violent conflict in southern Kyrgyz Republic in June 2010.

The understanding of faith-inspired roles in working for peace is evidently tied to the understanding of what is involved in the peacebuilding process. Definitions of peacebuilding vary quite widely. Some restrict their focus to direct negotiations, mediation, and post conflict recovery. Others, including former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, academic Scott Appleby, and Ela Bhatt view peacebuilding far more expansively for example as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.”³² For South and Central Asia, the latter definition offers a richer scope for understanding the complex factors that lead to conflict, and the various sectors where faith-inspired actors work to contribute to building sustainable peace. Thus, peacebuilding activities can include a myriad of development sectors, including, but not limited to, education, poverty alleviation, shelter, dispute resolution, governance, gender rights, human rights, advocacy, livelihoods, humanitarian assistance, and trauma relief, inter alia. Also, the manner in which the array of peacebuilding activities are related and overlap can be sensitive and complex; education can be perceived as related to advocacy and proselytizing; gender-specific initiatives may push traditional boundaries dictated in part by religious belief; and the involvement of certain faith groups in mediation and reconciliation may create a perceived threat to other faith groups involved.

A related and significant issue (currently the focus of a Berkley Center/WFDD study) is the role that women play in religious peacebuilding. Several of the richest examples are from South Asia, notably Ela Bhatt’s work with self-employed women and Ashima Kaul’s peace work in Kashmir. The roles of women are often invisible because of traditional male leadership of religious institutions. When work for peace is defined more narrowly as linked to direct conflict resolution work, as opposed to the broader understandings of what peacebuilding entails, women play numerous important roles.

We have identified no comprehensive survey of the peacebuilding work by faith-inspired actors in South or Central Asia. Preliminary discussions among practitioners suggest that peacebuilding networks among faith-inspired actors are less developed than in other world regions. In South Asia, in particular, a wide array of scholars undertake research about religion, peacebuilding, and conflict, but the three are not often linked. Those working “on the ground” generally have limited exposure to the literature, and their activities are not often reflected. There is however, considerable scope for enriching our understanding of the complex and diverse roles that faith actors play in conflict environments, and their capacity to engage constructively in peacebuilding. Another area that merits investigation is the training of and networks of those working for peace, with, again, a more explicit focus on their religious dimensions.

Recent events including the conflict and internal displacement in Pakistan, ethnic conflict in the Kyrgyz Republic, conflict/internal displacement in Sri Lanka, and peace jirgas in Afghanistan, illustrate how effective faith actors can be in responding to vulnerable populations, well before government and international organizations arrive.

Several organizations are taking a special interest in the roles of religion in peacebuilding, often focusing specifically on South and Central Asia. Among international development organizations, the Asia Foundation, the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), and several United Nations agencies have active programs engaging religious leaders and faith communities. The programs involve

training and sensitizing religious leaders and faith communities to peacebuilding techniques. “Training of trainer” approaches are common, so as to build an expanded network of faith-inspired actors. Fragmentary evidence suggests promise in this work, but a rather decentralized approach. Knowledge gaps are still substantial.

The major international interfaith and faith-inspired development and peacebuilding organizations have an active presence in major conflict zones (on local and regional initiatives) in South and Central Asia. These include Religions for Peace (WCRP), the Parliament of the World’s Religions, United Religions Initiative, Initiatives for Change, and the community of Sant’ Egidio. International faith-inspired development organizations, notably World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid, and American Jewish World Service also seek to ensure that their development work is well attuned to conflict issues and contributes to building peace; this appears to be a growing trend. Further, and in many ways specific to the South and Central Asian context, transnational religious movements working on peacebuilding include the Art of Living movement, Arya Samaj, the Brama Kumaris, and Tablighi Jama’at. Their programs vary widely across the broad range of activities under the peacebuilding “umbrella”; examples include short-term relief and rehabilitation courses, and longer term reconciliation and reconstruction programs.

Local/national religious leaders and faith-inspired organizations often initiate programming drawing on local expertise and understanding of sensitivities and nuance. Some work independently and locally, while others engage in national/region wide initiatives with international organizations, both faith-inspired and secular. Most local initiatives are ad hoc in nature, and largely grow out of local situations, opportunities, and needs. As one example of an established organization in Sri Lanka, Sarvodaya works at the national and local levels on indigenous peacebuilding efforts, coordinating and collaborating with government and civil society leaders, as well as actors from all sides of the conflict. Individual religious leaders are often inspired by their immediate surroundings to leverage their influence to promote peace. Examples can be found in countries including Sri Lanka, the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and India, and from all major faith traditions. Some efforts are inspirational and successful, but others fall short. Religious leaders may lack the necessary skills, education, and knowledge. Outcomes and success are difficult to measure, and the picture on faith-inspired roles is further clouded by ambiguities in defining and pinpointing how faith affects individual and community behavior. The general picture, however, suggests rising interest in the potential for positive action, as well as an urgent need to address or combat the negative and divisive influences of fundamentalist tendencies and movements.

This review highlights the historical and present importance of faith-inspired actors in conflict environments in South and Central Asia, citing some specific examples and avenues for potential engagement. Dialogue on the opportunities and pitfalls of faith engagement in peacebuilding offers real promise in helping to dispel misconceptions and create opportunities in sensitive environments and contexts.

GENDER

Nearly every institution with international development as its focus pays tribute to the importance of women and their efforts; most faith-inspired organizations also highlight the importance they give to women and gender relations. For faith-linked institutions especially, the nuances of their differing approaches can be significant.³³ Gender and women’s issues are key components in achieving sustainable development in virtually all sectors in South and Central Asia. Most issues cut across all traditional sectors and present similar challenges throughout the regions; others are more distinctive to particular countries, regions, or communities. In short, there are some important common themes but also important differences. As religion is introduced into the picture, the landscape becomes more complicated. Religious and traditional understandings of women’s roles in society are widely perceived as hindering women’s ability to exercise their basic human rights, including basic education, health, and human security. Most agree that faith traditions tend to be patriarchal in structure, with women largely excluded from discussion and decision-making, decisions that often have profound effects on their lives. Yet some also argue that modern religious practice by women as a form of liberation. Exploring the approaches of faith-inspired organizations to gender relations offers new insights both for barriers to equality and possible novel approaches to engage women on often sensitive development topics. Faith-inspired organizations can play particularly important roles in confronting gender inequities that have religious dimensions.

Gender inequality creates barriers to access jobs, assets, political influence, justice, and nutrition and health services for many women in both South and Central Asia. Legally, women have equal rights under the law of most countries, and there have been female prime ministers in both Pakistan and Bangladesh, and (as of 2010) in the Kyrgyz Republic. However, in practice there is still far to go to see true gender equality. Cultural practices, for example the dowry system, which is illegal in India, persist. They contribute to a harsh reality that girls are often seen as a burden by poor families. The goal – to shift the paradigm so that girls are seen as an asset – is coming closer in many cases, but data on gender relations from many sources demonstrate clearly that the challenges continue.

Perhaps the most fundamental evidence of the challenge is the persistence and even increase in boy preference, leading to a range of practices that are evident in gender imbalances – more boys are born or survive. Aside from selective abortion of female fetuses, girl children may receive less nutrition and healthcare, so mortality is higher. Female infanticide still occurs. Preliminary 2011 Indian census results show that the sex ratio for girls to boys ages 0–6 has dropped from 976/1000 in 1961 to 927/1000 in 2001, to 914/1000 in 2011;³⁴ in parts of India, there are now fewer than 800 girls for every 1,000 boys. Culture and tradition, with religion as part of the mix, help perpetuate boy favoritism. In some areas of India, for example, the prevailing belief is that only sons can perform last rites for parents.³⁵ Amartya Sen in his influential article, “More Than 100 Million Women Are Missing,” highlighted how traditional practices and roles of women contribute to an aversion to the girl child, with profound effects on demographic balances. These distorted gender ratios have nefarious effects

beyond their obvious human rights dimension: for example, they contribute to human trafficking for sexual exploitation, to fill the dearth of girls.

Another distinctive and damaging gender issue is early marriage (especially for girls), as South Asia is a region where it is most commonly practiced. The negative effects are well known: young married girls rarely continue their education and they (and their children) face higher mortality and health risks. Child marriage is, once again, encouraged by a combination of traditions, economic forces, and religious beliefs. The hope is that religious leaders can be more centrally part of efforts to bring the practice to an end.

Key development issues at the intersection of faith, gender, and development in South and Central Asia include, but are not limited to: human trafficking; domestic violence; cultural barriers to participation in society or politics; early and forced marriage; family planning; female genital cutting; sexual and domestic violence; maternal health; and disparities in education and healthcare. The issues are complex in themselves, but they also tend to overlap. For example, early or forced marriage often leads to domestic violence, which can include sexual violence, which can evolve into maternal and child health challenges. All of these issues pose significant challenges to overall development in the region, given that women's progress is so critical for sustainable development.

Religion's role in this complex array of relationships is multifaceted, complex, and often controversial. Individuals and organizations that work to advance women's rights often cite religious traditions or religiously inspired laws as justification for gender exclusion. Yet a number of leading individuals and organizations working to overcome gender-based challenges derive their inspiration from faith. Constructive engagement by faith actors by opening the doors of educational facilities, providing adequate healthcare, and empowerment through dialogue has yielded positive results in supporting gender equality and enhancing sustainable development.

Millennium Development Goals number three (gender parity in education; the share of women in wage employment; and the proportion of seats held by women in national legislatures) and five (maternal mortality and universal access to reproductive health) address gender issues explicitly, and thus progress is quite closely monitored. According to 2010 data, the MDG for "equal girls' enrolment in primary school" is the only goal already attained, or nearly attained by both South and Central Asia. While some countries are making notable progress, particularly on education (Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and countries in Central Asia), in both regions as a whole, trends show decreasing gender equity.³⁶

Educating girls is often seen as the most critical development challenge, and despite significant progress, in parts of the South and Central Asia there are still wide disparities at many levels, from primary through university. Women's literacy figures in several countries reflect the historic lag, even when (as in Bangladesh) remarkable progress has been made in recent years. Central Asia has greater gender equality in education than South Asia, largely a legacy of Soviet policies. However, the resurgence of traditional practices has seen a trend towards increasing inequalities.³⁷ In South Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India

have the greatest gender inequalities in education. Again, faith plays an often complicated role.

In countries including Pakistan and Afghanistan, faith-inspired groups holding extreme fundamentalist viewpoints may actively prevent girls from attending school, sharply curtailing their lack of opportunity. More commonly, local religious leaders may reinforce parents' hesitations to send girls to school or the priority they give to sons. Religious leaders can temper or help change attitudes and increasingly do so, though this is difficult in religiously and politically charged environments, as it takes courage to advocate for the social change that gender equality represents. How to engage religious actors more actively and effectively in such environments is a policy challenge, but it is also has great practical significance. Faith-inspired organizations tend to be sensitive to local faith contexts and thus, can help map promising strategies and communications approaches. There is considerable positive experience to build upon. As an example, in Pakistan, nearly 250,000 girls are pursuing education in over 3,000 madrasas.

Health raises a host of gender issues. Gender stereotypes and overall neglect are perpetuated by cultural/religious traditions and girls' health can be neglected in favor of boys. Traditional understandings of sexual health affects maternal health practices and family planning, while human trafficking and the commercial sex trade put women at a heightened risk for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

One area where the links between gender and faith have been only scantily explored is women's roles in conflict and how religious beliefs and institutions affect them. This is the subject of an ongoing USIP/Berkley Center/WFDD review which highlights the phenomenon of the invisibility of women in many conflict situations. Women play important and varying roles in conflict environments – they can both perpetuate violence, and they are commonly victims, carrying many if not most of the burdens of conflict. In Sri Lanka, a few women have played the role of suicide bombers, while many in IDP camps suffer from insecurity, poor health, and economic distress, otherwise war widows are facing tremendous societal adversities. Women's peacebuilding work is often inspirational, motivating communities and drawing on religious teachings.³⁸ Many global networks of women peacebuilders directly support UN Resolution 1325, calling for greater gender perspective in conflict environments. NGOs including the Association of War Affected Women in Sri Lanka work with women victims of conflict, both at the local level with individual women from all societal groups and faith traditions, and at the international level, advocating for universal policies to protect women in conflict.

Faith-inspired organizations from all major faiths and movements have commonly invested considerable effort in specialized gender programming, aiming at gender sensitive approaches mainstreamed in their organizational strategies. Large international organizations, including World Vision, Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid, and Catholic Relief Services, among many others, all have gender focused programs in both South and Central Asia. Many local/national level faith-inspired organizations are organized by and for women, and are led by women leaders. In the Kyrgyz Republic, for example, development coordination bodies have been established

with a specific focus on women's organizations, and include faith-inspired members. Transnational religious movements and interfaith organizations (national and international) also have gender focused approaches and programming.

The experience, approach, hesitations, and insights of faith-inspired organizations deserve careful research and purposeful attention and dialogue. Religion has both positive and negative dimensions; long-standing traditions contribute to the unequal treatment of women, while powerful and moderate voices can initiate change, overcome adversities, and move ideas into practice. Though South and Central Asia face challenges, with them come opportunities for constructive engagement by faith-inspired actors.

EDUCATION

Faith-inspired organizations play a variety of quite different roles in education in South and Central Asia. Faith run schools are, in most countries, an accepted part of the education systems (with different levels of integration into formal structures), but there is no overall, systematic mapping, and far less an analysis of quality which, from partial evidence, varies from superb to poor. Thus reach and impact are hard to assess. Constructive dialogue about how faith and faith schools fit within overall approaches to education can be clouded by controversy.

Millennium Development Goal two grew out of a global consensus to assure 'Education for all,' and it has particular relevance in this region, with significant parts of the population underserved by education. Some elements of faith-inspired systems focus particularly on poor and marginalized communities; thus, the role of faith institutions deserves more systematic attention than they have received.³⁹

Faith institutions are significant in at least five dimensions of education and development, including as advocates to achieve social justice, as providers of a large share of education options, contributing to or defining what is taught about religion, shaping perspectives and affecting knowledge levels on issues of social change and development (i.e. health and peacebuilding/reconciliation), and informing and educating today's youth.

Faith-inspired actors contribute to education through a variety of institutions. Historically, religious institutions were key centers of education in most countries including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Bhutan. Institutions including madrasas, missionary schools, Buddhist privena, faith-inspired universities, and unofficial community gatherings, inter alia, are all widespread in South and Central Asia. Students at these institutions range from the elite (as is often the case with Catholic missionary schools in India and Pakistan), to poor and marginalized girls (in Afghanistan and also Pakistan), for whom rural madrasas are often the only option for an education.

There are situations in which faith-inspired actors are 'part of the problem,' stalling the push for universal education (a notable

case being for girls), while at the same time often 'part of the solution,' offering education to the underserved and instilling in students morals and ethics for a peaceful society. Many faith-inspired institutions specifically target girls with limited alternative educational opportunity.

Curricula of study in faith-inspired institutions vary widely. Many outstanding schools run by faith communities (for example Jesuit schools) have largely secular curricula, teaching the full range of subjects. This cannot be said of others, especially those with few resources. The most widely discussed are the widely ranging madrasas, some of which offer a limited religious curriculum. Reform of these Muslim run schools is a widely discussed policy challenge. Madrasa reform is an issue of contention between the madrasas and the state in many countries, notably in Pakistan; madrasa leaders fear increasing trends towards secularization, while concerns over religious extremism and a lack of marketable skills in madrasa graduates drives reform agendas.

A common topic in discussions about the role of faith-inspired education is how values and values-based education are approached. What are a common set of values applicable to society as a whole? Sikh and Hindu inspired schools in India and Nepal have notable examples of consciously framed values-based institutions.

Quality of instruction and teacher training are common issues. Religious leaders teaching in faith-inspired schools may lack a high level of education, religious or secular. In Central Asia, years of suppression of religion during the Soviet Union era created a dearth in general religious knowledge. Lack of education among instructors can contribute to misinformed interpretations of religious texts, which are then passed along to students.

Another topic of discussion is the practical, job preparedness effectiveness of faith-inspired institutions. Some faith-inspired institutions do not provide students with practical knowledge and skills directly applicable to the job market, only preparing them for narrowly focused, and a limited amount of theological jobs. Many practitioners argue that madrasa students are becoming marginalized from "mainstream society," having very different life experiences from their counterparts at secular education institutions.

The specific country context largely determines both the roles and the debates surrounding faith-inspired schools. In Sri Lanka and Nepal, traditional religious schools are seeing increased support from the government, and in some cases being further integrated into the official education system (though with specific mandates on curricula and instruction). Elsewhere, especially in Central Asia, many types of faith-inspired schools are highly restricted, and may be banned or shut down if discovered. In Tajikistan for example, only government-approved madrasas can operate, though many "unofficial" madrasas operate in secret.

In countries including India and Pakistan, among others, the relationship between faith and education are seen by some to have political dimensions. In India, the concept of Hindutva combines nationalism and what many say are Hindu inspired philosophies to promote a homogenous nation. Many minority groups fear it may threaten diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural identities. Vidya

Bharati schools, (one of the largest school systems in India), as one example, are seen by many as promoting a Hindutva agenda.⁴⁰ In Central Asia as well, registered Islamic schools teach a government-approved curriculum, in many cases blending religious instruction with state and political ideologies.

Concerns about proselytization often enter into discussions about religion and education. In Pakistan, Christian schools have been the target of violence, and in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, some Christian and certain Muslim-inspired schools have been permanently shut down under charges of proselytizing. Most practitioners agree that being clear and transparent can dispel concerns and contribute to trust among and between faith communities.

Two Muslim-inspired organizations aspire to educational excellence and are major players in the education sectors in much of the region. The Aga Khan Development Network of Islamic-inspired schools and universities offers quality education in state of the art facilities to student bodies of all faiths. The schools of the Gülen Movement have expanded across Central Asia with broad based curricula. Another dimension of this education picture is students who seek education abroad and in some instances seek specifically religious training. Again, some is of outstanding quality, but not all. There are much-discussed examples of students trained in Pakistan, Egypt, and the Middle East who return with what may be considered subversive or extreme ideas. Turkmenistan has recalled students out of fear they will contribute to social discord.⁴¹

In sum, the faith and education landscape is complex, with myriad actors of diverse style, form, and quality. A dearth of poor data contributes to misunderstanding and tensions between and among faith and secular actors; it is an area that deserves more research and informed dialogue.

CROSS-CUTTING SECTORS

Though this report has a specific focus on three sectors (peacebuilding, gender, and education), each is related to and overlaps with a myriad development issues and sectors. Other sectors where faith-inspired actors play active roles include, but are not limited to: health, migration, human trafficking, environment and climate change, and governance.

One of the largest concentrations of faith-inspired work is in the health sector. Work includes inter alia mobile health clinics, hospitals, HIV awareness and prevention, tuberculosis prevention, malaria prevention, maternal care, and care for the elderly. Faith-inspired actors are drawn to health work for many reasons, including a faith motivation to help those in need, and because their position in communities gives them a capacity to convey often sensitive health messages couched in traditional language and understanding. Health can be an entry point for faith-inspired actors to enter into broader social development work and cooperation, as it is a common challenge for everyone and an obvious issue. Conversely, faith-inspired actors can be part of the

problem; stigmatizing HIV/AIDS is the classic example. Advice or instructions some religious leaders gave to followers during the height of Pakistan's recent floods to fast during disaster conditions, not taking into account the exceptions set out in the Qur'an, is another case of faith-inspired actors contributing to the problem.

Organizations like the Edhi Foundation and Caritas operate mobile clinics in Pakistan that reach remote, underserved populations and assist in humanitarian responses in disaster prone areas. In India, the Brahma Kumaris operate state-of-the-art hospitals that offer free care to the poor, attending to both spiritual and physical needs. In Central Asia, local imams are active in HIV education and advocacy; they have proved effective in crossing cultural and religious barriers to engage communities in dialogue. Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka works to strengthen Sri Lanka's tuberculosis control program, partnering with the Global Fund to fight Aids, tuberculosis, and malaria. An array of other organizations is active in South and Central Asia on a wide range of other health related issues.

Migration, both within countries from rural to urban settings, and across borders, shapes contemporary society in South and Central Asia. In 2005, Asia hosted 53 million out of the world's 191 million migrant, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.⁴² Migrants relocate for a host of reasons, notably economic migration to urban centers, and forced migration because of conflict, natural disasters, or climate change. Migration often exacerbates situations of poverty and can contribute to conflict; women and children are particularly vulnerable and at risk.

Faith-inspired actors respond to the many challenges facing migrants, including education, livelihoods, health, humanitarian assistance, and poverty alleviation. In urban areas, international and local faith actors work in the sprawling slums with primarily economic migrants, providing education, livelihoods training, and health and sanitation services. In cases of forced migration, faith-inspired actors are often the first to come to the aid of migrants; large international organizations including Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid respond to natural disasters and conflict-induced migration, often focusing on immediate humanitarian assistance. Muslim Aid, for example, responded to cyclones in Bangladesh that caused widespread flooding in low-lying delta regions and forced migration to higher land.

A distinct yet related issue is human trafficking. Human trafficking has a strong gender component, is related to poverty, and has consequences for health, largely in the form of communicative diseases and women's health. Human trafficking is a transnational issue, linking countries in South and Central Asia, and happens for many reasons, including sexual exploitation and bonded/forced labor. Faith-inspired organizations both work with the victims of trafficking and implement programs to address root issues of poverty drawing on their faith inspiration to help the victims. The Christian-inspired International Justice Mission has four offices in India and uses its global faith linkages and networks to bring attention to and rescue women and children victims of forced prostitution.⁴³ Other organizations, including World Vision and Catholic Relief Services, as well as a range of local organizations, have programs in countries such as Nepal that provide livelihood training and education to trafficking victims. In some cases,

Concerns About Corruption in Bangladesh

Transparency International's 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index ranks Bangladesh as 134th on its annual review of corruption, suggesting that it is one of world's most corrupt countries. Citizens of Bangladesh point to corruption as a common phenomenon and a social evil; a recent survey by the Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad found that 95 percent of people polled believed that the police were the most corrupt department in the country, followed by customs, taxation, the bureaucracy, and the judiciary.

Scholars tend to agree that corruption penetrates almost every part of the government and public service providers and is a serious obstacle to Bangladesh's socio-economic development. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in Bangladesh was formed to counteract various forms of institutional corruption, including bribery in business, education, and branches of government; it campaigns to create a social stigma around corrupt behavior.

Faith-inspired actors are increasingly active in combating corruption, and often invoke faith perspectives and teachings as their motivation. More than 80 percent of Bangladeshi citizens say that religious leaders should play a role in national development goals (survey conducted by the Asia Foundation with

USAID support). The Asia Foundation's USAID Leaders of Influence (LOI) program includes training on public advocacy and corruption. The program has provided communities with training to establish enterprises that transparently fund mosque-based activities to raise awareness of critical development issues, including anti-corruption. Imams discuss these issues of corruption and governance during Friday sermons and other discussions and religious meetings.

Government leaders recognize the influential roles imams have in their communities and their potential influence in addressing development issues, particularly corruption. Speaking to the National Convention of Imams in 2009, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged imams, ulema, mashaikhs and other religious leaders to wage a social movement against corruption in order to build a prosperous and peaceful society. Chief Advisor Fakhruddin Ahmed also called on imams to be vigilant on crime and corruption. He urged imams to use Friday sermons to preach against social evils and corruption and encouraged them to teach moral duties such as honesty, sincerity, and integrity. The government of Bangladesh has a national imam training program as well that touches on issues of governance and corruption.

The Corruption Index: South and Central Asia

2010 Perceptions

Rank	Country	Rating
36	Bhutan	5.7
91	Sri Lanka	3.2
87	India	3.3
105	Kazakhstan	2.9
134	Bangladesh	2.4
143	Maldives	2.3
143	Pakistan	2.3
146	Nepal	2.2
154	Tajikistan	2.1
164	Kyrgyz Republic	2
172	Turkmenistan	1.6
172	Uzbekistan	1.6
176	Afghanistan	1.4

Ranking is out of 178 countries worldwide (1 being the least corrupt).

Rating is on a scale from 10 (highly clean) to 0 (highly corrupt).

Source: http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/results

extremist faith-inspired groups have themselves engaged in human trafficking, with the Taliban kidnapping and trafficking girls for sexual exploitation as an example, though these cases are not representative of faith-inspired actors as a whole.

The effects of climate change have particular significance for South Asia. In Maldives and Bangladesh, highly populated low-lying coastlines are at heightened risk of flooding. In both South and Central Asia, changing weather patterns affect farming seasons and water supplies, decreasing food security and increasing the potential for resource conflicts. Globally, faith-inspired actors have been quite marginally engaged in the climate change debate, but that situation is changing. The Maldives is an example of a government that is seeking actively to bring faith-inspired actors into dialogue, sending a high-level government representative to participate in the October 2009 ARC Windsor Castle meeting with over 100 religious leaders. Muslim Aid is working in Bangladesh on disaster preparedness.

Some South and Central Asian countries are among the world's most corrupt. Only two countries in the world are more corrupt than Afghanistan (ranked 176/178, with 1 being the least corrupt) on the 2010 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index. Bhutan is the "cleanest" country in the region, ranked 36/178. Faith-inspired actors play diverse roles on this sensitive issue. They can promote positive values through both advocacy and education. In Bangladesh, government officials, including the Prime Minister, have called on religious leaders to wage a social movement against corruption. The Asia Foundation has for many years worked with imams to that end.

Bangladesh stands out for the large number and wide variety of faith-inspired organizations and actors involved in development and offers good examples of constructive engagement between faith and secular organizations and between them and the government. The vibrant civil society (Bangladesh has some of the world's best known development organizations, notably BRAC and the Grameen Bank), includes many faith-linked groups, reflecting both the diverse religious demography (predominantly Muslim with significant Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian minorities) and religion's important role in people's lives. There are, however, significant tensions surrounding religion, reflecting Bangladesh's complex history and contemporary politics that shape state-religion relationships and, to a lesser extent, interfaith relations. At present no organization or network can provide an overall picture of the work of faith-inspired organizations, nor has there been systematic research on their impact and reach into the poorest communities.

CULTURE AND RELIGION

Bangladesh's often tumultuous history has produced a society with a rich array of cultural, ethnic, and religious traditions. Some 98 percent of the population are ethnic Bengali and speak Bangla; other ethnic groups are Urdu-speaking, non-Bengali Muslims of Indian origin, and several smaller indigenous and ethnic communities. An estimated 90 percent of the population is Muslim; mostly Sunni Muslims with a smaller Shi'a community, as well as Ahmadis. Bangladesh's Hindu

population is estimated at nine percent; it has declined since its independence in 1971. Buddhism is common among the non-Bengali populations of the Chittagong Hill. There are small communities of Christians, Sikhs, Bahá'ís, and animists.⁴⁴

Following its bitter independence struggle with Pakistan, Bangladesh established a secular state; however, the important role of religion and specifically Islam lay behind subsequent changes in how religion and state relate. Several constitutional amendments established Islam as the national religion, though with freedom to practice any religion. In February 2010, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court ruled that the amendments establishing Islam as the national religion were unconstitutional; since then, a nominal ban was placed on Islamic political parties, though government officials have stated that the ban will not be strictly enforced.⁴⁵

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries; the population is estimated at 164 million (2010).⁴⁶ It remains heavily rural, and 80 percent of the population lives outside the main urban centers; rural-urban migration trends are strong, however, and the country's urban population is increasing.⁴⁷

Bangladesh has made significant progress in poverty alleviation over the past decade, despite frequent natural disaster and shocks. Recent economic performance has been quite robust, with economic growth in the 6 percent range; Bangladesh has high aspirations, including attaining middle-income status by 2021. Poverty levels declined from 57 percent in 1990, to 40 percent in 2005. Bangladesh is currently on track to reach the MDG of halving poverty by 2015. Despite progress, 56 million people still live below the poverty line, and 84 percent of the population survives on less than \$2 a day.⁴⁸

Bangladesh is one of the world's countries that are most vulnerable to climate change; 60 percent of deaths worldwide caused by cyclones over the past 20 years have been in Bangladesh. The growing urban populations lives in poor conditions and are subject to the risks of climate change-related natural disasters (35 percent of the population in the six largest cities live in slums); a substantial portion of the roughly one billion dollars of Official Development Assistance (ODA) that Bangladesh receives annually is focused on sectors potentially affected by climatic risks and changes.⁴⁹ Infrastructure is still quite poorly developed, and electrical power coverage is less than 50 percent.

Bangladesh has made great strides on education but still faces significant challenges. Primary-school enrollment rates have increased impressively - 87 percent of boys and 91 percent of girls attend primary school (though the completion rate is still only 47 percent). Girls' enrollment in secondary school in Bangladesh has risen to nearly six million in 2008, from just over one million in 1991, with a rising number of girls from disadvantaged or remote areas.⁵⁰ Secondary school rates are lower; 36 percent of boys and 41 percent of girls attend

secondary school.⁵¹ UNICEF estimates that nearly 7.5 million children work to help support their families. In government schools, 10 percent of primary school teaching posts are vacant and one third of them are uncertified.⁵² Certain groups, particularly disabled children, indigenous children, Rohingya refugee children, and those in remote areas, have much poorer access to education.

Maternal mortality is high in Bangladesh; an estimated 12,000 women die each year from pregnancy or childbirth related complications, or 300 deaths per 100,000 live births. Some 85 percent of women give birth at home with no formal healthcare; only 18 percent are assisted by skilled health personnel. Malnutrition is also high, especially in rural areas and for children; about 20 percent of infants have low birth weights and approximately 45 percent of children under five are underweight. Acute respiratory infections (ARIs) are the leading cause of child illness and death.⁵³

Bangladesh has among the highest rates of child marriages in the world; 74 percent of girls are married before they are 18 and over a third of girls are married before they turn 15. Although it is illegal, the practice of dowry - requiring a bride's family to pay significant sums to the family of the groom - encourages marriage of young girls because younger brides typically require smaller dowries. Young brides are often pregnant within the first year of marriage; a third of teenage girls aged 15 to 19 are mothers or are already pregnant. Only 16 percent of adolescent girls in Bangladesh understand how HIV is transmitted and prevented.⁵⁴

There is a complex and long-standing refugee crisis with the Rohingya community in the south along the border with Burma (Myanmar). In 1992, some 250,000 people fled Burma into Bangladesh because of persecution. Since 1993, the Bangladeshi government has denied over 200,000 subsequent Rohingya arrivals official refugee status, so they are ineligible for UN assistance.⁵⁵ Roughly, 18,000 Rohingya refugee children now live in two official government refugee camps in Bangladesh. UNICEF estimates that barely three

percent of Rohingya refugee children attended school during the first years that they were living in Bangladesh; almost 50 percent of those enrolled are girls.⁵⁶

Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development

Bangladesh has an established and robust civil society, with diverse segments engaged in different development sectors; within this society, faith-inspired actors play significant and often complex roles. An Asian Development Bank report reports some 26,000 NGOs registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau. The NGO Affairs Bureau official list of NGOs posted on the Agency website includes churches, missionary organizations, and faith-inspired development organizations, as well as many secular development NGOs. There are also more than 250,000 mosques in Bangladesh, most of which are involved in different levels of community outreach and engagement.

Civil society involvement is increasingly seen as both important and significant by both national and international organizations and faith-inspired organizations broadly fall under the broad category of NGOs. However, there are few coordinated and meaningful efforts to “map” and understand their exact reach and influence. Faith groups in Bangladesh are diverse, and activities can vary greatly depending on region, which include education, peacebuilding, environment, disaster relief, sanitation, microfinance, and women’s empowerment, inter alia.

Development practitioners from both faith-inspired and secular institutions suggest that religion is occupying an increasingly public space in Bangladeshi society, particularly among women. Faith-inspired actors are seen as bringing a particular knowledge and understanding of community values and culture to development and peacebuilding work. Many agree that the ability of a development program to effectively engage religious leaders can be a determinant of its success or failure. Some development practitioners observe that faith-inspired organizations can face challenges vis-a-vis official complex bureaucratic structures, though both literature and interviews suggest increasing efforts to engage and coordinate with faith-inspired actors.

Development Partners and Coordination

There are numerous instances of partnership and coordination mechanisms between secular and faith-inspired organizations, and focused research about faith and development in Bangladesh, around most development sectors. Some existing arrangements are highlighted below.

The World Bank Affiliated Network for South Asia (ANSA SAR), located at the Institute of Governance Studies (IGS), at BRAC University, Dhaka, is open to civil society organizations from Bangladesh to fund programming promoting social

accountability in South Asia; the network specifically targets faith-inspired and community-based organizations. Also within BRAC University, the BRAC Development Institute (BDI) engages in policy research aimed at bridging the divide between faith-inspired and government/secular development actors.

The Bangladesh Country Coordinating Mechanism is a public-private partnership for addressing HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria; within the organization, a partnership between the Global Fund and the Government of Bangladesh funds and partners with faith-inspired organizations engaged in health-related activities.

Also targeting health initiatives, UNICEF has worked with faith-inspired organizations to develop sermon booklets including four Friday sermons on avian and pandemic flu. The key message promotes hand washing with soap before prayer. More than 2500 imams attended a national conference on integrating influenza messages into their sermons.

Zakat and Social Welfare

Several institutions in Bangladesh are organized specifically around the collection and dissemination of zakat; some studies, however, highlight that the potential for zakat as a poverty alleviation tool is underutilized.⁵⁷ Zakat in Bangladesh is voluntary, unlike the compulsory systems found in other parts of South Asia and the Middle East.

Among government-sponsored institutions, the Zakat Fund was established by the Islamic Foundation under the Zakat Fund Ordinance of 5 January 1982 to collect zakat for organized social welfare programs. Programs include a free hospital in the Tongi region focused on children; 25 sewing training centers for the unemployed; distribution of educational materials to poor students; employment training; and financial assistance to widows.

Non-government affiliated organizations, both faith-inspired and secular, both collect and distribute zakat funds. Among them, the Centre For Zakat Management (CZM), a pro-poor social enterprise supported by Rahimafrooz Bangladesh Ltd, is working to institutionalize the collection and disbursement of zakat in different regions in Bangladesh. Other organizations within Bangladesh collect zakat specifically surrounding Eid and Ramadan celebrations, providing poor families with clothes and food. The Zakat Foundation of America is one international organization that encourages “privileged Muslims” to help the poor through zakat contributions; they have a specific program focused on Bangladesh.

Faith Institutions and Education

The government of Bangladesh currently spends 14 percent of its total budget, or 2.3 percent of total GDP, on education. Faith-inspired education consists of the madrasa systems, as well as

Working with Imams to Combat HiV/AIDS in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, a local Muslim-inspired organization, the Masjid Council for Community Advancement, works through religious networks on HIV/AIDS prevention. The goal is to reach 50 percent of the adult population over a three-year period with messages about abstinence, faithfulness and partner reduction. The program is supported by PEPFAR (the U.S. President's Emergency Program for HIV/AIDS).

The Masjid Council worked with the US based NGO Family Health International (FHI) to develop a training curriculum aimed at about 600 imams in 2010. The long-term goal is to reach approximately 550,000 people through Friday sermons, utilizing the influence, respect, and reach of imams in their communities. The Masjid Council also works with religious leaders to produce satellite television talk shows, and has aired 40 episodes of Islamic-based television programs discussing HIV/AIDS and related issues. Some two million people were expected to be exposed to HIV/AIDS messages through Islamic television programs in the period of a year, thus reducing the spread of the disease.

Among government institutions, the Imam Training Academy, established by the Islamic Foundation of Bangladesh, has introduced reproductive health and HIV/AIDS-related topics in its training curriculum for imams. Through a Training of Trainers (TOT) approach, the Academy has trained over 40,000 imams to deliver HIV/AIDS messages emphasizing HIV/AIDS prevention. Training also includes human rights, legal rights of women, dowry, and child marriage issues. The Islamic Research Cell (IRC), a section of the Family Planning Association of Bangladesh (FPAB), an NGO affiliated to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, is also engaged in imam training. With the support of more than 750 professionals and 3,000 volunteers, the IRC has since 1993 trained imams in reproductive health. The training includes equal rights for wives and the importance of condom use.

World Vision, Caritas, and Salvation Army support similar programs in Bangladesh. World Vision has reached more than 10,000 adolescents and delivers HIV/AIDS prevention education to deep sea fishermen and their spouses, spouses of migrant workers, and youth.

Christian and other faith-inspired schools. Madrasas make up one branch of the Bangladeshi national education system, the other two branches being general education and technical vocational education.⁵⁸ Official mosques function under the Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board, an independent government funded agency charged with establishing madrasas, assigning teachers, and creating curricula. Madrasas fall into three different categories: recognized and state sanctioned school religious private schools, known as Aliyah madrasas; religious private unregistered madrasas, known as Qomi madrasas; and unregistered unofficial madrasas, estimated to number between 4,000-16,000. All madrasas represent 8 percent of primary schools (nearly 7,000), and 32 percent (approximately 8500) of secondary schools, and 15 percent of total post-primary school enrollment; 92 percent of madrasas are in rural areas. World Bank studies note that the Bangladeshi madrasa system is the "most-feminized" and largest co-ed such system in the world; 87 percent of madrasas are co-educational, and 46 percent of students are girls.⁵⁹

Bangladesh has a history of practical madrasa reform programs, beginning with large-scale reforms in the late 1980s. Reforms have included fiscal incentives both to modernize curriculum (i.e. include secular subjects, alongside religious curriculum), and increase female enrollment. The Aliyah madrasas were encouraged by the government to engage in a reform program

and have successfully integrated secular subjects into their curriculum. The Qomi madrasas remain more traditional and provide only a Qur'anic-based education and other forms of Islamic instruction. There are some tensions between the two groups; while graduates from the Aliyah madrasas compete for jobs in the open market, graduates from the Qomi madrasas are usually competitive only for religious positions in mosques. Despite some limitations in madrasa curricula, many rural families prefer this mode of education to government schools. The understanding is that while secular subjects may allow children to find jobs, madrasas teach children about Islamic values that enable them to be morally and ethically committed. Moreover, in rural areas, madrasas are often the only option for an education for many families.⁶⁰

Discussion with practitioners highlights concerns around quality of instruction. A World Bank report noted that 82 percent of math teachers in the madrasa system are untrained, and 80 percent of English teachers in Qomi madrasas are untrained (compared to 44 percent in Aliyah madrasas). Resulting test scores in madrasas averaged 35 percent in math and 33 percent for English; students did, however, answer correctly 75 percent of questions related to Islam. The study found that Qomi madrasas account for only 2.2 percent of the total secondary school enrolment, with Aliyah madrasas

accounting for over 18 percent.⁶¹ Madrasas improve access to education for children from poor families who cannot pay for private schools; most development practitioners, however, agree on the need for improved transparency and accountability surrounding curriculum and quality of education. Muslim religious leaders can play an important role in reaching out to imams to this end; organizations including the Asia Foundation and the Masjid Council for Community Advancement have collaborated with both national and international organizations, and regularly engage imams on issues of education.

Other faith communities are also active in education, including Christian and, to a lesser extent, Buddhist, Hindu, and Bahá'í communities. Among Christian schools/education focused institutions are the College of Christian Theology Bangladesh (CCTB) located in Savar Dhaka, which trains men and women in theology and Christian ministry to serve their home communities through social welfare programs. The CTB has a focus on the Aboriginal tribal groups (Garo) of Madhupur Jungle in the Tangail District that are now primarily Christian.

Holy Cross works with children and adults from Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Christian and indigenous tribal traditions, in programs that integrate value-based education into secular school curriculum. Holy Cross serves over 1,500 students, offering a literacy program for more than 400 street children in Dhaka. The Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB), founded in 1973, works with local imams on disaster preparedness education and training. The CCDB has also trained 30,000 practicing Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) through an eleven-day basic training course. There are numerous Catholic and Christian missionary schools in the country, many established before independence; some are among the highest-achieving schools in the country.

The Bahá'í community has schools and education programs at the village, regional, and national levels, with a strong focus on “values-integrated” curricula. The Bahá'í regularly coordinate with international and national organizations on education policy, including with UNICEF and the University of Dhaka.

Both Hindu and Buddhist groups run schools, largely organized around community temples in the southern and eastern parts of the country.

Gender

Most faith-inspired organizations in Bangladesh have varying degrees of gender-focused programming. Faith-inspired organizations work on issues of gender equality through programming in education, economic livelihoods, and health, and most international faith-inspired organizations have mainstreamed a gender lens in their programming.

Among international organizations, Muslim Aid provides microloans to women, focusing on women from the poorest communities not reached by most mainstream development interventions. DanChurchAid is active in several areas but gives special focus to child marriage. Caritas Bangladesh uses the popular form of Gambhira folk music to teach villagers who are illiterate to educate women on issues of child marriage, the dowry system, and sexually transmitted diseases. The Caritas Regional Cultural Team (RCT) has performed Gambhira in 1000 villages across the region. Catholic Relief Services is also active in the prevention of child marriage, trafficking, and child labor practices in rural areas.

National faith-inspired organizations include both Muslim and Christian organizations, along with a smaller number of organizations inspired by the Hindu, Buddhist, and Bahá'í faiths. The Islamic Bank Foundation, a Muslim-inspired organization, has welfare activities that serve “less affluent segments of the society,” and particularly women. The Women's Small Local Organization Program (WSLO), part of the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB), focuses on management skills training for women, working with small local organizations. Other organizations include the Aga Khan Development Network in Bangladesh, Believers of Christ (BC), Friends of Word (FW), and Christian Life Bangladesh (CLB).

Peacebuilding

Religious leaders play particularly important roles in peacebuilding in Bangladesh; such work covers a range of sectors, from traditional conflict resolution and mitigation programming (largely concentrated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region and along the border with Burma (Myanmar)) to family and gender violence, to peace education. An Asia Foundation survey found that over 80 percent of people in Bangladesh believe that religious leaders of all faiths should have a role in national development; over 70 percent would specifically request the involvement or opinion of a religious or community leader at a shalish (local village councils/dispute resolution mechanisms) conflict mediation or resolution process.

Peacebuilding organizations represent major faith traditions, including interfaith initiatives. Anando, as one example, is a Catholic-inspired organization that works in peacebuilding in the Chittagong Hill Tracts with indigenous groups in support of the 1997 peace accord. Their work aims to build sustainable peace in the community through a family-centered peacebuilding approach. Muslim Aid, as part of its broader development mandate, works with Rohingya refugees along the border with Burma (Myanmar) to improve security within an unofficial refugee camp, as well as with host communities.

The Bangladesh Inter-Religious Council for Peace and Justice (BICPAJ), a religious non-profit NGO, was founded in 1983 by a group of Muslims and Christians committed to promoting a peacebuilding agenda. As part

Leaders of Influence

An Asia Foundation survey (supported by USAID) highlighted the development significance of Bangladesh's religiosity: over 80 percent of Bangladeshi citizens agreed that religious leaders should have a role in advancing national development goals and democratic principles in Bangladesh. Over 64 percent of citizens agreed that religious leaders have a major role to play in guiding community thought on social issues, and over 70 percent would ask for the involvement or opinion of a religious or community leader at a shalish, or local mediation forum.

With this in mind, the Asia Foundation, with support from USAID/Bangladesh, initiated the Leaders of Influence program in 2004. In partnership with the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), the program supplements the 45-day imam training program that the Islamic Foundation/MORA has run since 1981 to train imams on theological and social issues. It has reached over 60,000 imams since it began.

Now in its second cycle (2007-2011), Leaders of Influence works specifically to strengthen the capacity of religious leaders to engage more actively in development efforts. The core objectives are to: 1) engage imams and other religious leaders in dialogue and

practical exposure in development practice and values supporting democracy, human rights, economic development, and human/social development; 2) facilitate dialogue and sharing of experience between Bangladeshi religious leaders and their counterparts in other countries within South and Southeast Asia; 3) promote understanding of key development practices and the role of religious leaders in advancing them; and 4) better understand, monitor, and analyze the perspectives of religious leaders and their communities on issues of national development and the societal values that underlie development.

To date, the program has reached more than 20,000 leaders, addressing a range of issues that include anti-corruption, health concerns (including HIV/AIDS – Box x), anti-trafficking, social forestry, and early childhood education. The leaders take what they have learned back to their home communities; imams in particular, during Friday sermons and in other religious meetings at mosques, pass on the ideas to community members. Program outreach also includes exchanges with other religious leaders from South and Southeast Asia, print and broadcast media, and monitoring and evaluation of program impact and reach.

of its programming, it implements “violence resolution” programming in the Chittagong Hill Tracts on issues of peace and justice; focus groups include youth, women, and indigenous groups.

Other faith-inspired organizations engaged in peacebuilding include: SUFI (Spiritual Union for Institution), which has a focus on dowry practices; Hotline (Human Rights) Bangladesh, associated with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh, which works to promote awareness of human rights violations; and the Commission for Justice and Peace (CJP), also a commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB), working in rural areas to promote peace between multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities.

International interfaith organizations involved in peacebuilding in Bangladesh through trainings, workshops, and networks include the World Council of Religious Leaders, United Religions Initiative, and the World Council of Churches.

International development organizations, including the United Nations, collaborate with faith-inspired actors on peacebuilding related programming. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), as one example, has collaborated with religious leaders to reduce vulnerability of women and children to human trafficking and violence.

SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka, one of South Asia's most highly developed countries, has important achievements in education and gender equality and shows consistent economic growth. It also faces development challenges, the remnants of decades of civil conflict. The government declared a military victory in May 2009 after years of internal conflict, but there has yet to be a formal reconciliation process; scars of war are an obstacle to building sustainable peace. Internally displaced numbers are decreasing, but thousands remain in camps. Faith-inspired organizations and religious leaders play prominent roles in Sri Lanka, and interfaith initiatives are part of the effort to build confidence and trust among diverse communities. Faith actors (both within Sri Lanka, and among the Diaspora communities) hold a particularly important place in Sri Lankan society, and are widely viewed as crucial components of the peace and development equation.

Socio-Economic Background and Development Challenges

Sri Lanka's population now totals about 20.5 million (2009). An island just south of India, it is ethnically and religiously diverse: approximately 74 percent Sinhalese, 13 percent Sri Lankan Tamils, five percent Indian Tamils, seven percent Sri Lankan Moor, and some one percent other ethnic minorities, including Malay and Burghers (1989 Census).

Sri Lanka has made notable progress in long-standing efforts to address poverty and ensure equitable development; it is a middle income country with a per capita income of US\$4700 in 2009 (World Bank). The poverty rate is the lowest reported in South Asia. Poverty is largely concentrated outside the capital city of Colombo; geographical isolation, especially distance to the nearest market or city, is highly correlated with poverty incidence.⁶² A central focus today is the aftermath of nearly three decades of civil war; peace has opened new opportunities for reconciliation and development, but the scars and unaddressed tensions of past conflict run deep.

Sri Lanka's social development indicators are among South Asia's best. Literacy is near universal, with equality between both girls and boys in a part of the world where girls often lag behind in development indicators. Overall enrollment of school-aged children in primary school is near 100 percent (that number drops for secondary school, at 87 percent), though government expenditure on education is just under 3 percent of GDP- relatively low compared to other countries of similar economic status.

Sri Lanka has maintained GDP growth averaging 5 percent annually for the past ten years. With the end to conflict, Sri Lanka's projected economic growth is expected to rise.⁶³ The structure of the economy differs from other South Asian countries; the agricultural sector is small (13 percent of GDP), and industry (30 percent) and the services sector (60 percent) larger; rubber processing, Ceylon tea, textiles, and petroleum refining are three of the largest sectors. Sri Lanka benefits from remittances, with about 1.5 million citizens working abroad (90 percent of them in the Middle East). Recent cases of abuse highlight dangers that women in particular face in going abroad to work, particularly in domestic service positions in the Middle East.⁶⁴

Peace has largely been restored after a fierce campaign and government military victory in May 2009; displacement is decreasing but remains a challenge. With internal displacement numbers near 320,000 immediately following the conflict, the UNHCR estimated that 232,400 people had returned to their homes as of January 2011, with an additional 75,300 expected to return by December 2011. An estimated 202,500 IDPs remain, expected to decrease to 127,200 by December 2011.⁶⁵ Prolonged displacement has had implications for health, education, and economic development for both displaced and home communities.⁶⁶ Conflict-affected regions generally lag behind other provinces in terms of development, as is evident in both in social development indicators and physical infrastructure. Only 46 percent of the population had access to safe drinking water in the north and east before the conflict ended, compared to 62

Insights from the Sarvodaya Movement

The Sarvodaya Movement is widely known and admired as a bold and far-ranging institution and approach to development that has a long record of accomplishment in Sri Lanka and abroad. Its distinctive Buddhist-inspired philosophy underpins its commitment to community development and empowerment as well as its focus on peace and conflict resolution.

The Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya Movement, or Sarvodaya (which in Sanskrit means “awakening of all”) began in 1958, when a group of teachers in Colombo, Sri Lanka, including the founder Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, created shramadana (meaning “sharing work, knowledge, talents, and time”) work camps to encourage their students to mobilize poor communities around basic development projects. Sarvodaya has since grown to be the largest and one of the most active grassroots civil society movements in Sri Lanka (described by some scholars as the world’s largest peoples’ participatory development movement), with a staff of 3,000 in its network of organizations, invited to work in over 1,500, or roughly one-third of the villages in Sri Lanka (it has grown from 100 villages in 1967), on issues related to: peacebuilding, gender, education, capacity building, health, emergency relief and rehabilitation, village infrastructure, environment and biodiversity, communication and participation, and youth. With its large experience and reach into so many villages, the Sarvodaya movement has achieved a “critical mass” in Sri Lankan society that allows it to influence social change through social and political participation. Its goal is a society in which there is neither poverty nor excessive affluence. The movement’s website claims that it has influenced national policy strategy in health and education; Sarvodaya has been a resonant and influential voice urging reconciliation throughout the long Sri Lankan conflict and into the present post-conflict period.

Sarvodaya’s holistic approach is based on Buddhist principles (including goodness, sympathy, and tranquility) and Gandhian values of truthfulness, nonviolence, and self-sacrifice. The movement’s 2005-2010 Strategic Plan translates these principles in programmatic terms, highlighting the goal of empowerment through what it describes as three spheres of transformation: Consciousness, Economics, and Power. Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne explains his philosophy that “economic development is a fragment of life and living” that “cannot be separated from his total life and living” (drawn from 1999 Shumacher lectures on Buddhist Economics). The Sarvodaya interpretation of Buddhism and Buddhist thought adheres strictly to a view that Buddhist principles should be applied to social problems for all people, regardless of faith or ethnicity.

So what does the movement do? Its peace and community building activities include work in internal displacement camps, meditations for peace, the Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena (Peace Brigade) youth group, a Child Education Center at

Sarvodaya headquarters, the Vishva Niketan Peace Center, and the Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena north-south youth peace dialogue, among other initiatives. The Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena North-South peace dialogue was held in June and July, 2010 in Mannar and Jaffna with Sri Lankan youth from the Northern and Southern parts of the country to begin the recovery and reconciliation process after 30 years of bitter and violent conflict. Young people met peers from formerly warring regions for the first time; youth from both groups came together in shramadana work camps to repair and beautify the Maradamadu Church, and the Tellipalei hospital in Jaffna, both of which had been neglected through years of war. The groups earned the admiration of their communities.

Sarvodaya was an instrumental actor following the 2004 tsunami, recognized internationally for its capacity to mobilize relief swiftly through extensive local networks. It built upon on-the-ground experience with qualitative assessments in settlements camps, and distributed practical information to relief organizations, including the UN, the World Bank, and local and international NGOs; the Sarvodaya website became a central information source during the post-tsunami relief efforts. It had conducted disaster management briefings with local disaster coordinators weeks before the tsunami, so Sarvodaya was prepared to respond with immediate disaster relief within hours of the tsunami, receiving donations from international private sector donors, Sarvodaya branches in the US, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany, and the Arigato Foundation in Japan.

Sarvodaya also shares its development model abroad. The founder often speaks at international conferences, and the movement is well-connected to international interfaith and development networks. Sarvodaya USA, with its headquarters in Wisconsin, aims to promote Sarvodaya worldwide, and furthers its view of holistic development in communities in the United States. A Japanese Sarvodaya chapter was established in 2009.

Information from:

Herath, Anuradha K., “A.T. Ariyaratne: Leading Sri Lanka’s Largest Civil Society Movement for 50 Years” from the Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anuradha-herath/at-ariyaratne-leading-sri_b_254537.html (accessed 15 November 2010).

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<http://www.sarvodaya.org>

percent for the rest of the country, while 46 percent of children from 3 months to 5 years of age were underweight, compared to 18 percent and 29 percent respectively. The government has launched infrastructure and sanitation development projects to address the nation's large regional inequities. Direct effects of conflict also compound long-term poverty challenges not directly attributed to the conflict itself.

Many international institutions are concerned that Sri Lanka's government has yet to address the legacy of distrust among different social groups and the bitter aftermath of conflict. National and local NGOs and religious leaders are working towards reconciliation, but the process is moving slowly. Differing perceptions of development organization sympathies during the war also shade how some groups view international development organizations and their involvement in post-conflict issues, at times adding tensions to an already complex environment.

The Asian Development Bank completed a Country Gender Assessment in 2008. The report found that Sri Lankan women are generally relatively well-situated, but have yet to achieve full gender equality or empowerment. The study also notes unequal rights and widespread discrimination against women are significant. Specific gender challenges are found across different sectors, including domestic and family law, political participation, health, education, and employment. Women from minority groups, including the Muslim and ethnic Tamil populations and displaced populations, face greater inequalities due to social marginalization and discrimination.⁶⁷

Religious Profile

Sri Lanka's population is about 70 percent Theravada Buddhist. Most Sinhalese identify as Buddhist. Islam is practiced by about 7.5 percent of the population, largely from the Sri Lankan Moor ethnic group (approximately 7 percent of the population), Muslim Indian Tamils, and a smaller number of Malays. About 15 percent of the population identify as Hindu, especially ethnic Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils. Christianity represents about 7.5 percent of the population, consisting of Sinhalese and Tamils, as well as the Burghers (an ethnic group of mainly European colonist descent).^{68,69} Sri Lankans of all faiths tend to hold religious leaders in high regard, and religious leaders have historically offered guidance on social and political issues, with influence at multiple levels of society.⁷⁰ As a result of this tradition of social activism, religious leaders have worn multiple hats, both supporting conflict and working towards relief and reconciliation. Societal fragmentation along religious and ethnic lines tends to vary by region.

The Sri Lankan constitution guarantees freedom of religion; it grants Buddhism a "foremost place" and commits the government to protecting it, while not recognizing it as the state religion.⁷¹ In recent years, some parliamentarians have pushed for passage of an Anti-Conversion Bill, in direct response to cases of proselytizing, often tied to economic incentives, by foreign and indigenous evangelical Christian groups, particularly following the tsunami.⁷²

Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development: Diverse Actors and Coordination

A large and diverse group of international, national, and local organizations work for development in Sri Lanka, and many have links to faith institutions and communities. Their activities include a wide range of post-conflict/peacebuilding and development work addressing, inter alia, education, gender, child soldier reintegration, demining, health, human rights, infrastructure development, poverty reduction, displaced person assistance and repatriation, livelihoods, sustainable development, governance, and disaster relief.

Faith-inspired actors have well-established historical roots. Religious institutions were historically at the center of many community welfare services, drawing on Buddhist doctrines of compassion and equality. Traditionally, development was measured by the village water supply and the temple, representing both the economic and spiritual realms, with religious leaders often taking leadership positions in their communities.⁷³ International groups working in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) date to 1802, with the establishment of the Baptist Mission. Other well-established organizations that are still active include the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (1857), Buddhist Theosophical Society (1880), Young Men's Christian Associations (1882), Young Women's Christian Associations (1882), Salvation Army (1883), Mahabodhi Society (1891), Young Men's Buddhist Association (1897), Vivekananda Society (1902), Ramakrishna Mission (1929), Sarvodaya (1958), and Dharmavijaya Foundation (1977).

Today, faith-inspired organizations from all the major traditions are engaged in development and peacebuilding work. Sri Lanka's government does not distinguish or specifically monitor faith-inspired organizations in its reporting on civil society; since the tsunami, however, suspicions in public dialogue about the work of faith-inspired have increased, linked to allegations of aggressive conversion efforts. Practitioners report increased scrutiny of their work. A 2005 study on the tsunami relief response found that out of 165 NGOs (largely international NGOs) listed on ReliefWeb (a website devoted to humanitarian relief and development professionals) working in the country, 49 percent had faith links (1 Jewish, 1 Buddhist, 4 Muslim and 43 Christian).⁷⁴ Some 40 percent of faith-inspired NGOs cited in the study had programs in education; similarly, most faith-inspired organizations cited in this chapter have specific peacebuilding, gender, and education-focused programming.

Some development practitioners describe concerns for new government registration requirements and oversight for NGOs.⁷⁵ In the northern parts of the country, for example, some NGOs must register with the Ministry of Defense to work (although religious groups have greater freedom of operation in general, this does not necessarily extend to faith-inspired development organizations).⁷⁶

Secular development partners, including think tanks, universities, and international organizations, have considerable experience in engaging faith leaders and

communities in peacebuilding, development training, and programming. Sri Lanka's multi-faith character has inspired interfaith cooperation, at the grassroots and national levels. Diaspora temples and communities have played an influential role in Sri Lankan affairs, especially linked to the conflict and tsunami relief efforts; they continue to play active roles today.

Development Coordination Bodies

Sri Lanka takes development coordination seriously and the several coordination bodies, both general and thematic, include members coming from both secular and faith-inspired institutions. The National Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organizations, the government agency responsible for coordinating and regulating the NGO sector, works to ensure that NGOs operate within the national policy framework. As of September 2010, 1,324 NGOs were registered, including both secular and faith-inspired organizations (international, national, and local). The government Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs maintains comprehensive lists of mosques, Arabic colleges, Koranic madrasas (for which there are specific registration guidelines), Islamic Associations, and Muslim orphanages (nine are officially registered, though the actual number is much higher).⁷⁷

There are also independent voluntary member-based and United Nations coordination bodies. The Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies consists of 89 local and international humanitarian development organizations, and works to streamline often-overlapping development programs; a particular focus is post-conflict development. Members include many faith-inspired organizations, including: ADRA Sri Lanka, All Ceylon Hindu Congress (ACHC), American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), Caritas Sri Lanka, Christian Aid, Christian Children's Fund of Canada, Cordaid, Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka, Islamic Relief, Lanka Evangelical Alliance Development Service, Lutheran World Relief, Malteser International, Methodist Church, Muslim Aid Sri Lanka, National Christian Council of Sri Lanka, United Methodist Committee On Relief (UMCOR - Sri Lanka), World Vision Lanka, and the Islamic Relief Committee. No Buddhist-inspired organizations are registered as members.

Smaller local coordination bodies focus on region-specific issues; they too include both faith-inspired and secular organizations. Local coordinating bodies and NGO consortiums include: Ampara District NGO Consortium; Consortium of NGO - Trincomalee District; Consortium of Non-Governmental Organizations - Mannar District; NGO Consortium Vavuniya (Vavuniya Consortium); and Puttalam District NGO Consortium (PDNGOC), among other local groups.

Aid Partners

Eleven United Nations agencies have offices in Sri Lanka and all work with and/or coordinate with faith-inspired organizations in different ways. They include the United

Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNICEF, UNHCR, UNFPA, and UNAIDS. Large development partners, including the World Bank and USAID, convene coordination meetings which include faith-inspired organizations. The Donor Peace Support Group⁷⁸ consults with other development partners, including faith-inspired organizations, on conflict-sensitive approaches to development assistance.⁷⁹

International Faith-Inspired Organizations and Religious Movements

International NGOs

International faith-inspired organizations have a large and long-term presence in Sri Lanka. Many have focused on addressing the civil conflict and were particularly active after the tsunami. Since 2009, their main focus has been post-conflict relief, reconstruction, and peacebuilding. Christian organizations comprise the largest group, but organizations from all major faith traditions have a presence. International faith-inspired organizations tend to implement a variety of programs that cover the work of different development sectors. The examples below illustrate international faith-inspired NGOs.

Catholic Relief Services, along with Caritas Sri Lanka, the Catholic National Commission for Migrants, and local Catholic organizations, run a protection program working with poor women who because of lack of education and opportunity are forced to go abroad, primarily to the Middle East, for work. The partnership works in rural villages to educate local women on the dangers of such work (including domestic and sexual violence, involuntary servitude, and abuse), collaborating with local Buddhist temples, mosques, and local government offices. An estimated 200,000 women annually seek domestic work abroad.

Muslim Aid works with all faith and ethnic communities, focusing on emergency relief, infrastructure, livelihoods and microfinance, food security, orphan care, and women's and community empowerment. In 2008, Muslim Aid created the Women's Resource Centre, along with a local partner, the Young Muslim Women's League, focused on economic opportunity, education, and maternal health and nutrition caused by conflict. In 2006, it collaborated with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), in the northeastern town of Muttur in response to violent conflict between the government and the LTTE. The partnership provided humanitarian relief to hard-to-reach displaced populations and resulted in a worldwide strategic agreement between the two organizations, which was expanded to Indonesia.⁸⁰

Other international faith-inspired organizations include members of the Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies and Catholic Relief Services, American Jewish World Service,

Buddhist Global Relief, Diakonia, SEWA International UK, and DanChurchAid.

Religious Movements

Several religious or spiritual movements from the greater South Asian region and abroad engage in social development activities. Ramakrishna, a worldwide Hindu-inspired religious movement, originally from India, has been active in Sri Lanka since 1930, with programs ranging from education to free health clinics. One such clinic is the Colombo Medical Camp, which provides free care to over 2000 patients in the slums around Colombo, and makes rural visits at the request of the government or NGOs. Art of Living has been active since 2005 in assisting displaced communities and facilitating trauma relief workshops. Other religious movements working in Sri Lanka include: Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, the Brahma Kumaris, and Soka Gakkai

National and Local Faith-Inspired Organizations

Non-Governmental Organizations

Sri Lanka has a large and well developed network of national faith-inspired organizations. Sarvodaya is a well-established and perhaps most well-known organization. (See Box # 4)

There are numerous national organizations with a strong gender focus, stemming in part from a legacy of the civil conflict when many institutions sought to respond to widespread atrocities and violence that often disproportionately affected women. Families were often displaced and split, leaving women as head of household, responsible for economic and family care.

The Sarvodaya Women's Movement, founded in 1982, responds to the need for greater gender focus throughout Sarvodaya's programming. The Suriya Women's Development Organization is a Tamil civil society organization established in the early 1990s that works with displaced women on economic development, advocacy, and legal protection. Suriya has partnered with international organizations and become active politically, advocating for women's rights.

The Sinhala-Tamil-Muslim Rural Women's Network (STMRWN) based in Trincomalee works with women from different ethnic and religious communities, promoting political involvement, women's empowerment, and human rights through poverty alleviation, micro credit, healthcare, education, environment, and peacebuilding programs. STMRWN was among the first women's groups to contest provincial council elections in 1999.⁸¹

The Association of War-Affected Women has no direct faith links. It works with women of Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities directly affected by the war (with their sons and/or husbands missing, killed, or disabled due to the war) to achieve socio-economic

development through equitable and inclusive participation.

Other examples of local and national level faith-inspired organizations, and organizations working with religious communities on both gender, and other sectors, including education and peacebuilding, include: the Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum, Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust, Widaloka Cultural Foundation, Sithumina, the Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation Foundation, Sewalanka, Young Muslim Women's League, and the Dharmavijaya Foundation. This list is not exhaustive; other organizations are members of, or linked informally by the numerous local and regional NGO coordination bodies.

Religious Leaders

Local religious leaders (Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian) play active roles at the local, regional, and national levels in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. When conflict arises at the village level, people generally do not call upon international organizations or local government officials; rather, they tend to turn to local religious leaders for support and guidance. Local religious leaders have been an important source of information on conflict and its societal effects.⁸² There are, however, sensitivities around the involvement of religious leaders in development work given their varied historical involvement and perceived sympathies towards particular ethnic/religious groups. Some religious leaders, do not wish to work with NGOs, as they are sometimes perceived as involved with proselytizing or foreign agendas.

Sri Lanka hosts conferences, trainings, and workshops, often with an interfaith character, to support local religious leaders' involvement in peacebuilding and development initiatives. In May 2009, the United States Institute of Peace launched a program to work to train over 100 clergy from Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities to train in peacebuilding principles in line with teachings of the respective religious traditions..⁸³

The World Conference of Religions for Peace has established an interreligious council of 20 members, including prominent Buddhist monks, along with Hindu, Muslim, and Christian leaders, from both the Sinhalese and Tamil sides of the conflict. In June 2008, the council met with President Mahinda Rajapaksa to call for good governance and human rights in the midst of the government's then-intensifying military campaign against the LTTE; the initiative has resulted in a continuing network of religious leaders working for peace. In October 2009, the Inter-religious Council of Sri Lanka, along with a parallel group from Thailand, organized an inter-religious conference of 150 religious leaders from Sri Lanka and Thailand to exchange experiences and opinions on the roles of religious leaders in conflict transformation and peace building. The Asia Foundation, the Inter-Religious Alliance for National Unity, and the European Council of Religious Leaders also work with religious leaders.

Education

Traditionally, Buddhist monks educate village members at the *pirivena* (temple school). In Tamil communities, village schools were located near temples and run by Brahman educated *Vellalas*. In colonial Sri Lanka, English medium missionary schools flourished. *Pirivena* are a formal component of the government-recognized education system; according to 2006 government statistics, there were 659 *pirivena* in the country.

In October 2010, Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa announced that Buddhist temple school education should be enhanced with information technology infrastructure, promising that *pirivenas* in Sri Lanka would be provided with computer laboratories and internet facilities. Several international educational exchange organizations offer volunteer opportunities to teach English in rural village *pirivenas*.

During the colonial period, the Buddhist Theosophical Society established Buddhist schools in provincial capitals; the language of education was English. Apart from the *Musaevs College* for girls, which is private, all schools that remain active have been run by the government since 1963. Examples are: *Ananda College* in Colombo; *Dharmaraja College* in Kandy; *Maliyadeva College* in Kurunegala; *Mahinda College* in Galle; *Visakha Balika Maha Vidyalaya*, a Buddhist college for girls in Colombo; *Nalanda Maha Vidyalaya* in Colombo; and *Mahamaya Vidyalaya* in Kandy.

Sri Lanka's Catholic schools include *St. Joseph's College*, *St. Bridget's Convent*, *St. Peter's College*, *St. Benedict's College* in Colombo, and *St. Anthony's College* in Kandy. One practitioner noted some complaints of students having converted to Catholicism to gain admittance. Islamic *madrastas* are required to register with the Department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs; there are 104 *madrastas* registered in 17 districts.

Diaspora Communities

During the civil war, the Sri Lankan diaspora played active and varied roles in both supporting the conflict, and aiding in peace and relief initiatives. Tamil and Sinhalese diaspora communities continue to shape the peace, conflict, and development dynamics (with the Tamil diaspora population numbering near 1 million). Diaspora temples, often at the center of the diaspora communities, support development initiatives, particularly raising financial resources and collecting contributions.⁸⁴

Sri Lankan diaspora organizations and networks organize relief and development programs, including tsunami relief, assistance to internally displaced people, and post-conflict peacebuilding and development assistance. One such organization is the *Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America*, an umbrella organization of local Tamil organizations in the U.S.; the New Jersey branch has been active especially

in tsunami relief, as well as in sponsoring orphans in Sri Lanka. In New Zealand, the *United Sri Lanka Association* made a donation in November of 2009 of prosthetic limbs to soldiers who had been disabled as a result of conflict. Many other diaspora community groups are active, particularly in North America, Europe, and Canada.

Sri Lankan temples and churches organize development support initiatives independently and collaborating with diaspora community organizations. In January 2010, *Hindu Temples and Tamil churches* in London with the *Tamil Health Organization* in the U.K. organized a clothing drive for those in displaced person camps in Sri Lanka. In the United States, Hindu and Buddhist temples and Sri Lankan religious organizations mobilize communities to provide material and financial assistance to those affected by conflict and natural disasters. *Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara* in Los Angeles for example, raised \$2,000 for the internally displaced in Sri Lanka, and the *Dharmapala Institute* in Milpitas, California collected donations for tsunami victims.

Sri Lankan faith-inspired organizations advocate for an increased role of diaspora communities in development. On April 24th, 2010, Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, founder of *Sarvodaya*, gave a presentation at *American University* in Washington, DC, on the "Role of the Sri Lankan Diaspora in Rural Development & Reconciliation," urging the Sri Lankan diaspora to support rural development and reconciliation.

There are some sensitivities around diaspora engagement, as some diaspora communities funded and supported various groups involved in the conflict, but more positive contributions today are working to change perceptions.

Jansila Majeed of the Community Trust Fund in Puttalam, Sri Lanka

In March 2010, United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton presented the Women of Courage Award to Jansila Majeed, Managing Trustee of the Community Trust Fund in the Puttalam province of Sri Lanka. She was one of ten recipients to receive the United States government award to “women who have shown exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for human rights and women’s equality.”

Ms. Majeed, herself displaced for nearly twenty years, worked actively within her community, particularly with Muslim and Tamil populations, on grassroots programs promoting livelihoods, healthcare, peacebuilding, and women’s empowerment. She has overcome hardships and marginalization, being both displaced and from the minority Muslim community, often working against established community structures and within a highly politicized environment.

The Community Trust Fund was established in 1993 with a group of five people, and today has 160 full-time team members and 350 volunteers working with the poor, war affected, and tsunami-affected communities.

Following the 2004 tsunami, the Community Trust Fund helped to protect women’s rights. The tsunami widowed thousands of women, particularly acute among the Muslim

community. Muslim tradition requires that widows mourn for four months and ten days in private following the loss of their husband. The Community Trust fund worked to ensure that those mourning received emergency relief and educational materials, while respecting their religious customs and traditions.

As part of its peacebuilding efforts and advocacy, in January 2010, along with 35 Muslim civil society and religious organizations, the Community Trust Fund was a signatory to a motion to make 2010 the year of return for expelled northern Muslims. In addition, the organization has a separate women’s group to address issues of particular concern to local displaced women, including healthcare, women’s rights, violence and abuse, and peacebuilding.

As of 2008, the Community Trust Fund has been supported by 59 separate donors; among the donors are multiple faith-inspired organizations, most notably: Cordaid, Neelan Thirichelvam Trust, Asian Muslim Action Network, Global Peace Mission, and Muslim Aid. The organization is a member of multiple NGO coordinating bodies, including the Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies, the District NGO Consortium, and National NGO Council of Sri Lanka.

NEPAL

Nepal stands out in South Asia for its high level of religious harmony. Faith-inspired organizations of many kinds work in Nepal across various sectors on sustainable development and peace. Nepal transitioned into a secular democratic state in 2007, but religious communities play important roles related to the development agenda; education, health, and conflict resolution mechanisms all have significant involvement of faith actors. Nepal's future development hinges on whether or not peace can be built and sustained and faith-inspired actors have significant potential to contribute to that process. The government and international organizations increasingly recognize and engage faith-inspired actors in policymaking and planning. Nepal also stands out in South Asia for the array of locally developed interfaith organizations and initiatives.

Societal and Development Overview

Nepal is at a moment of extraordinary opportunity in its history. After nearly 240 years of monastic rule, it elected its first president in 2008. Nepal's decade-long civil conflict fueled by Maoist groups formally ended in 2006. The government of Nepal has made poverty alleviation and peacebuilding a priority; its 2010 capital budget allocates approximately 46 percent to projects directly related to poverty. International NGOs and local NGOs, including faith-inspired organizations, spend an average of almost \$1.5 billion USD a year on poverty reduction and peacebuilding programs.

Years of conflict have exacerbated development challenges; poor infrastructure, poor social services, insecurity, and continuing social tensions are barriers to sustained development. High risk groups include former combatants, war widows and the orphans, elderly, youth, and the disabled.⁸⁵ The World Bank highlights that the key challenges facing the new government are "to rebuild the legitimacy of the state, maintain law and order, and deliver benefits to those excluded and to society at large." A constituent assembly is working to reach a consensus on a new constitution, taking

into consideration the voices of minority groups and all geographic areas, in governance and access to resources; as this report was finalized, a deadline of May 2011 had been set for completion of a draft constitution.

With a GDP of \$470 per capita, Nepal is the poorest country in South Asia. Nepal's population of 28 million is growing at 2 percent a year, while the ratio of population to arable land is one of the highest in the world. Low growth is expected in both agricultural manufacturing output; inadequate power infrastructure, social dissatisfaction, and low government expenditure are cited as causes by the World Bank. Despite challenges, there are relative improvements in development since the cessation of conflict.⁸⁶

Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals is mixed. Nepal is on track to achieve most MDGs (action on climate change and full employment are problem areas) by 2015, though structural inequalities inhibit broad-based and sustainable growth and development. Major challenges lie in indentifying and accessing vulnerable populations currently living below the poverty line. Achievements to date include: equal access of girls and boys to primary school and secondary education access will likely be achieved as well; under-five mortality (51 per 1000) and maternal mortality rates (380/100,000) have decreased significantly; poverty has fallen by about five percentage points in the past five years; food security has improved.⁸⁷

'Feminisation' is a striking phenomenon of poverty in Nepal; Nepal is one of the few countries in the world where women have a lower life expectancy than men.⁸⁸ Women face discrimination in many sectors, including their rights to nationality and citizenship, property, and face serious problems trafficking and sexual abuse, education, employment, health and reproductive rights, and legal and court proceedings.⁸⁹ Forced marriage is still a problem, as are early marriage, dowry violations, and lack of autonomy over their body and health. Women rarely participate in public life, barred by caste, language, and religion.⁹⁰ The new constituent assembly is aiming to ensure fair representation for

women in Nepal's political and policymaking process.

Approximately 60 percent of the total population is literate; though rates for youth are higher; 77 percent of girls, and 87 percent of boys are literate (compared with 62 percent of men and 33 percent of women). Access to education is unequal between the rich and poor; only 51 percent of children from the lowest income-quintile attend primary school, compared with 87 percent from the richest income-quintile.⁹¹ Girls' school enrollment, though lower than boys, has increased significantly from 60 girls per hundred boys enrolled in primary school in 1990, to 86 per 100 in 2002 (World Bank); the number increases for secondary education with a ratio of 88/100 students.

There is increased investment in the health-care delivery networks in Nepal, though they are largely inadequate for the needs of the country. Government spending on healthcare is approximately six percent of its GDP (WHO 2006), an increase from under four percent ten years earlier. Access to safe and affordable healthcare is difficult in many parts of Nepal, as is access to family-planning; Healthcare practices include popular folk medical care that relies on jhankri (shaman), Ayurvedic treatment, and allopathic medicine. The infant mortality rate is 41 deaths for every 1000 live births, with wide regional disparities;⁹² in the Dalit community, there are almost 90 deaths per 1000 live births.⁹³

Dalit groups face particular development challenges, despite the fact that caste-based discrimination was abolished in 1963; these distinctions are not widely understood by development organizations.⁹⁴

Nepal has a significant refugee population from Bhutan; according to UNCHR over 107,000 refugees live in seven camps in Jhapa and Morang districts in eastern Nepal. Faith-inspired NGOs including ARDA, Caritas Nepal, DanChurchAid, Habitat for Humanity, and World Vision are partners with UNHCR in providing humanitarian services to the camps.

Religious Landscape

Nepal has an ancient culture with a vibrant religious and spiritual landscape. The land is sacred for both Hindu and Buddhist cultures and is commonly believed to be the birthplace of the Buddha. Today, more than 80 percent of the population is Hindu.⁹⁵ Some 10 percent of the population identify as Buddhist, others as Muslim (four percent), Kirant Mundhum (an indigenous belief – 3.5 percent), and Christianity (less than one percent). There are small communities of Jains, Sikhs, and Bahá'ís.⁹⁶

There is diversity of practice within individual faith traditions. Hindus are traditionally divided into Shaivite and Vaishnavite divisions of Hinduism. Nepalese Buddhists are grouped into those that practice Hinayana, Mahayana, and Tantric Buddhism. Muslims are divided into both Sunni and Shia

sects while Christians include both Catholics and Protestants. Nepal enjoys relative religious harmony in a region where strife between religious groups exists. Although the majority of religious communities are well integrated into society, there are reports of caste-based discrimination towards Dalits, particularly Dalit women (See Text Box 6). In 2002, the government established a National Dalit Commission to protect Dalits from discrimination and encourage their civic participation.⁹⁷

Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development

NGOs have a relatively short history of engagement in Nepal compared to other countries in South Asia; only since 1991 can foreign aid flow directly to development organizations, and not first through government channels.⁹⁸ The Social Welfare Council is the government agency charged with the registration and coordination of non-governmental organizations. Both secular and faith-inspired development organizations are registered and listed in the same directory.

Coordination Bodies and Development Partners

There are both international and national, many thematically based, coordination bodies in Nepal.

The Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN) is a coordination body of 98 international development NGOs; it aims to increase information sharing and effective collaboration. Member organizations typically work across a broad range of development sectors. Faith-inspired member organizations include: ADRA Nepal, DanChurchAid, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Habitat for Humanity International, Heifer International, Lutheran World Relief Nepal, Mennonite Central Committee, United Mission to Nepal, and World Vision International Nepal

Focused specifically on the Dalit issues, Dalit NGO Federation (DNF), established in 1996, is an umbrella organisation of all Dalit NGOs in Nepal. DNF is registered with the District Administration Office and affiliated with the Social Welfare Council. It has five regional committees to support 210 member organizations.

The ACT Alliance of Christian NGOs is also active in Nepal.

International development organizations that collaborate with various faith-inspired actors in Nepal include the World Bank, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, the Asia Foundation, the United States Institute for Peace, and CARE.

International Faith-Inspired Organizations

As of May 2011, there were 158 international NGOs registered with the government in Nepal; faith-inspired organizations are not differentiated from secular development

organizations. The majority of international faith-inspired organizations are Christian, though organizations from most major faith-traditions have a presence in Nepal. The following are some examples of faith-inspired organizations.

Caritas has a large presence in Nepal, focusing particularly on gender equality for Nepalese women. Caritas Nepal partners with local and international NGOs, including the Asia Partnership for Human Development (APHD) and other Caritas/Catholic agencies including Missio, Secours Catholique (Caritas France), Catholic Relief Services, Caritas Austria, Caritas Australia and Caritas Japan. Projects include foci on gender, human trafficking, and peacebuilding.

Other international Christian faith-inspired organizations include World Vision, Lutheran Services, Jesuit Service, and members of the ACT Alliance - Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, the Lutheran World Federation, and United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India. These organizations focus on several issues, including rehabilitation of Bhutanese refugees, anti-trafficking projects, healthcare, disaster relief, education, and peacebuilding. Lutheran World Relief, for example, partners with local and regional organizations, including the South Asia Gender Alliance (SAGA), the Dalit Support Coordination Forum, and the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN).

The Tevel b'Tzede, an international Israeli Jewish organization, (The Earth-In Justice), works within Nepal in rural villages and urban slums on health, sustainable agriculture, education, environmental issues, and women's empowerment. The organization partners with the Nepali organizations Chandra-Jyoti Integrated Rural Development Society and the Dhulikel Hospital Community Health Program on gender empowerment and healthcare. The approach of Tevel b'Tzedek is unique in that it relies on youth volunteers to implement projects (largely Israeli youth taking an academic gap year, or those that have recently completed mandatory military service).

There are fewer international Buddhist, Muslim, and Hindu-inspired organizations; they include Tzu Chi (Buddhist), Art of Living (Hindu), and the Muslim-inspired organizations Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) and Muslim Hands.

National and Local Faith-Inspired organizations

There are thousands of national and local level development organizations working in Nepal, and numerous organizations draw inspiration from different faith traditions. There are 34 organizations from the government list of registered NGOs that are explicitly Hindu in name, with others inexplicitly drawing inspiration from the Hindu faith; 61 organizations have an explicit Muslim inspiration. Christian organizations are registered under diverse names, and there are no comprehensive compiled lists of organizations; their presence, is however, widespread. Apart from the official government

records, local temples, mosques, and churches are all engaged in both official and unofficial development activities.

Peacebuilding

As development in Nepal is strongly linked to successful post-conflict transition, it is not surprising that many organizations are involved in peacebuilding work. Networks and individual organizations approach peacebuilding from diverse angles, including civil society building, education, dispute resolution, and interfaith engagement, inter alia.

The National Council on Churches in Nepal (NCCN), a network/forum for Christian-inspired organizations in Nepal, works to develop the capacity of civil-society organizations and raise cooperation and understanding among various religious communities. It has established a program, Christian Efforts for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation (CEPJAR), to encourage interfaith dialogue, and supports the Inter-Religious Council Nepal to facilitate peacebuilding between religious communities. Promot-Nepal, a Christian organization, trains people in conflict management and offers courses related to conflict transformation, peacebuilding, and governance. Programs focus on building management skills suitable for church communities.

Chintamani Yogi, the founder of Hindu Vidyapeeth-Nepal (HVP) schools and a Hindu spiritual leader, is committed to peacebuilding; he chairs or serves several organizations that focus on peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The Youth Society for Peace (YSP) engages youth from indigenous communities in regional conflict prevention. One YSP program, Arms Down, coordinates with different communities to construct a participatory youth peacebuilding agenda. The national Inter-faith Coordination Movement (NICM) focuses on interfaith harmony among different communities; the organization engages Hindu, Buddhist Muslim, Christian, Bahá'í, Jain, and Sikh communities.

Many organizations focus specifically on Dalit communities and victims of conflict. Examples include the Dalit Development Society, the Dalit Welfare Organization, Sindhuli, and Siddhartha Social Development Centre. (See Box # 6 for further information)

The Bahá'í Education, Curriculum, and Training Associates (ECTA), founded in 1997, promotes rural development strategies and educational programs focused on peacebuilding.

Gender

Numerous Nepalese community/civil society organizations focus on issues of gender, some with stated faith-inspiration for their work. The Fatima Foundation, as one example, is a Muslim-inspired organization that works to build participation of oppressed Muslim women in civil society. It seeks to empower women by teaching Islamic values and viable skills to encourage financial independence.

International organizations, notably within the UN system, increasingly recognize the potential roles of faith communities in approaching gender issues. In November 2010, UNICEF marked the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children by asking representatives of different religious faiths to collaborate in advocating for better lives for children. The observance began with an interreligious prayer event on the Day of Prayer and the 21st anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, organized by the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC). One aspect of the event focused on promoting maternal health, child survival, and the benefits of breastfeeding for infants and young children. Religious leaders from different faith traditions spoke to their respective communities, encouraging women to breastfeed children, and couched their instruction in the theological language of their particular faith.

Education

There are three general categories of schools in the Nepali educational system: government schools, private non-religious schools, and religious schools. In the Nepal Government School Sector reform plan – 2009-2015, religious schools (also called traditional schools), including gumbas/vihars, madarasas, and gurukuls, are recognized as a schooling option within the formal education system; to be recognized however, religious schools must meet national standards of instruction and curricula and use secular textbooks recommended by the government's Education Board.⁹⁹

Some Christian Ministry schools are well-respected, and many government and business elite graduated from Jesuit high schools. There are at least 3,500 madrasas, which fill gaps in education where government schools are not present, particularly in Tarai and remote mountain districts, as noted by the Al-Hira Educational Society of Nepal. Hindu schools are found throughout Nepal, and although public schools do not teach religious beliefs, most have a statue of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of learning, on their grounds; some schools begin the day with a Hindu prayer. Buddhist monastery schools are found throughout the country and are particularly active in gaining recognition in the government education system; the Monasteries Management Committee is one organization that oversees many monasteries in the Himalaya region.

Some national/local level NGOs focus specifically on improving education. The Faith Foundation Nepal works to provide equal education opportunities, particularly in rural areas, including provision of school uniforms, supplies, and scholarships.

HIV/AIDS Awareness

Faith-inspired organizations in Nepal are particularly active on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention issues. The Nepal Christian Society (NCS), as an example, is comprised of different groups of Nepali Christians and organizes training

seminars, camps, and conventions to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS. The Millat-e-Islamiya, a Muslim organization, operates clinics in Kathmandu for both Muslims and non-Muslims. The Nepalese Bahá'í community is a member of the Inter-religious Council of Nepal, through which it has met with Maoist leadership to consult on HIV/AIDS issues.

Various international organizations engage religious leaders on topics of HIV/AIDS. World Vision Nepal held a three-day training session on HIV and AIDS awareness for 14 different religious leaders from Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and Om Shanti (Hindu) traditions, and the World Bank organized a program that brought together religious leaders and policy makers to discuss the role of religious organizations in reducing the societal stigma commonly associated with HIV/AIDS.

Nepal's Dalit Women

Although the caste system was officially abolished by the government and caste discrimination is prohibited under the constitution, caste dynamics still wield a strong influence in Nepalese society. Dalits, or “untouchables,” are the lowest group in the Hindu caste system. “Dalit” means oppressed, downtrodden, and exploited, and Dalits claim that their caste position has led to the denial of social, political, religious, and economic rights. Some 22 percent of Nepal's population is Dalit and 80 percent of the Dalit population lives below the poverty line. The literacy rate amongst Dalits is reported as 34 percent, with an even lower rate of barely 24 percent for women (Bishwakarma, Hunt, and Zajicek), compared to the national average of 54 percent.

Dalit women face particular discrimination, and comprise the majority of manual and agricultural labor in rural and remote parts of the country. The Jagaran Media Center, a Nepali organization working for Dalit rights, reports that Dalit women in rural villages must wait for hours before they can have access to water wells, or until high-caste women grant them permission to drink. Dalit women are also the victims of dowry and bride price systems practiced in some parts of the country.

A group of organizations, both international and Nepali, are working together to empower Nepal's Dalit communities, with a particular focus on women. The Lutheran World

Federation Nepal (LWF) partners with the Dalit Support Coordination Forum, an alliance of donor communities supporting Dalit rights in Nepal, as well as with the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN), an international network of Dalit-focused civil society organizations (headquartered in Denmark), to implement programs that support marginalized voices to fight social exclusion created by the caste system. LWF established the Dalit Empowerment Program to encourage Dalit participation in the political process. Caritas International works with local Dalit empowerment groups on education programs for Dalit women.

Several local organizations work for Dalit rights with a focus on women. Empower Dalit Women of Nepal (EDWON) for example, addresses domestic violence, caste and gender discrimination, and poverty in rural Dalit communities. The Feminist Dalit Organizations (FEDO) advocates for Dalit women's rights and works to uplift their economic status through small micro-finance loans and improving maternal health. The Dalit Welfare Organization (DWO) partners with LWF, advocates for Dalit women through local and international media, and promotes education.

MALDIVES

The Maldives has seen rapid social and political change in recent years. The new constitution, ratified on August 7, 2008 reflects moves towards international norms and compacts and set a legal framework for democratic institutions, including NGOs, to grow and develop. It also reflects the central role that Islamic tradition plays in the everyday lives of Maldivians. Civil society engagement is increasing, especially following the 2008 democratic reforms. Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals has also been quite marked, especially on health indicators. Life expectancy, now estimated at 72 years, exemplifies a broad narrative of progress and openness to change. Yet significant challenges remain. Notably, the Maldives has come to prominence recently in international debates on climate change, as the prospect of rising sea levels is an imminent threat to the 80 percent of islands that are less than one meter above sea level.

Religion is an important and often sensitive subject, with significant links to the Maldives development agenda. The engagement of faith-inspired organizations is almost exclusively within a Muslim context. Notable is evidence of rising fundamentalism and its impact on the tourist industry. Concern about fundamentalism also colors broader engagement among religious communities in the civic arena, as civil engagement for the public good can be misconstrued as pointing towards extremism. As a result, faith-actors are less engaged on social development than elsewhere. Coordination within the NGO sector (as is the case elsewhere in the region) presents significant challenges, and despite the democratic opening tensions between public and private institutions are not insignificant. Some argue that the Maldives is at a critical point in moving towards an established democratic society.

Society, Economy, and Politics

The Maldives, an archipelago of 1,200 islands, has a population of about 400,000 people, primarily of South Indian, Sinhalese, and Arab descent. A lower-middle income

country (World Bank classification), with a per capita income of around \$3,970 USD, its recent annual economic growth rate has been quite robust (6 percent in 2008). Tourism is the country's economic mainstay; tourists numbering nearly twice the country's population visit each year. Fishing is the second largest industry. Human development levels are high, and literacy is estimated at 98 percent, with near equality between men and women (over 99 percent of both male and female age 15-24 are literate). Life expectancy is 72 years, and the below 5 mortality rate is low, at 12.7/1,000. (World Bank)

While UN estimates indicate that extreme poverty and hunger have been widely eliminated, about 16 percent of Maldivians live below the national poverty level, concentrated in the more remote atolls, and among the rural population. In 2004 the Maldives reported a Gini index (that measures income disparities) ranking of 37.31, showing relative equality by international standards.¹⁰⁰

Three decades of single-party rule under President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom gave way in 2004 to a relatively peaceful transition to a liberal multiparty democracy. The president announced political and legal reforms, including an initiative to modernize the criminal system, within a framework of Islamic law.¹⁰¹ The August 2008 constitution legalized multiparty presidential competition, separation of powers, and a bill of rights. Former political activist Mohamed Nasheed defeated President Gayoom in a run-off poll in August 2010.

Religion, Law, and Society

Islam plays important and public roles in Maldivian society. Though Sri Lankan Buddhism came to the Maldives in the first few centuries BC and was widely practiced for many years, in 1153 the Maldivian sultan converted to a Moroccan-influenced Islam. Most Maldivians are Sunni Muslims, with some influence of local cultural adaptations.¹⁰² Most islands have one or more mosques that serve as a place for

community meetings and worship. Business and government offices close on Fridays at 11 am for weekend sermons. One result of the Islamic role is that foreign visitors are allowed only brief visits outside of the capital city of Malé, to limit foreign influence on local Maldivian traditions. Non-Muslim worship is permitted only in private, which applies to tourists and labor migrants.¹⁰³

The Maldives' legal code is based primarily on Islamic law, with strong influences from English civil law and common law.¹⁰⁴ The constitution refers explicitly to Islam. Chapter one declares Islam as the state religion and establishes the faith as the basis of all Maldivian laws.¹⁰⁵ Qualifications for president – as well as vice president and cabinet members – require that a candidate be a Sunni Muslim, while legislative authority, vested in the People's Majlis, requires that the body pass laws consistent with Islamic tenets. The constitution guarantees non-discrimination based on a number of factors – including race, sex, color, national origin – but not religion. The law requires that citizens of the Maldives must be Muslim.

Development Challenges and Progress

Despite significant progress on important development indicators, the Maldives faces challenges in sustaining a peaceful democratic transition. Capacity development, strengthening the newly-formed institutions, decentralizing authority, establishing a culture of human rights, professionalizing the civil service, ensuring equity, and establishing and promoting good governance are recognized as areas that need action.¹⁰⁶

In 2008, the ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), issued a national development plan, the Aneh Dhivehi Raajje (Strategic Action Plan). The plan defines five pledges, to be achieved between 2009 and 2013, including: quality healthcare for all, prevention of narcotics trafficking, affordable housing, affordable living costs, and the establishment of a nationwide transportation system.¹⁰⁷

Overcoming challenges associated with climate change have been a top priority for the government, as 80 percent of the 1,200 islands are no more than 1 meter above sea level. Since government scientists predict a 0.9cm increase in water levels each year, global warming threatens the physical survival of the country.¹⁰⁸ While the government and Maldivian NGOs are working to alleviate the local symptoms of global warming, they challenge global leaders to adopt long-term solutions to man-made climate change, highlighting the special urgency for their nation. The Maldives was the first country to sign the Kyoto Protocol. In 2009, after a highly-publicized underwater cabinet meeting, the President signed a declaration to cut global carbon emissions to be presented at the climate summit in Copenhagen that year.¹⁰⁹ The Maldives High Commissioner attended the October 2009 Alliance of Religions for Conservation (ARC) conference on faith and climate change at Windsor Castle, UK, sharing the experience of being at the front-line of the struggle against climate change with over 100 faith leaders from around the world.¹¹⁰

Progress towards the MDGs has been noteworthy, with the Maldives reporting that the nation has fully achieved five of the eight MDGs, including eradication of poverty and extreme hunger, reduction of infant mortality, attainment of universal primary education, improvement of maternal health, and substantially decreasing the incidence of malaria, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases.¹¹¹ Remaining challenges focus on quality of education and achieving gender equality.¹¹² Two-thirds of the population lack access to modern sanitation. The Maldives' size and location pose special and continuing challenges, as the population is dispersed over about 200 inhabited islands, over half with less than 1,000 people. Difficult access to many islands results in relatively high per unit service costs.¹¹³

Despite progress on gender issues, particularly in education, encouraging women's participation in the workforce, education, and politics and the elimination of gender-based violence are still challenges. The percent of women in the labor force decreased by 17 percent over two decades, and men still dominate in most decision-making and executive positions.¹¹⁴ The World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap Index for 2010 ranked the Maldives 99th out of 134 countries.¹¹⁵ The Index highlights wage differentiation by gender, with men earning twice as much for the same work, and a 20 percent separation in labor force participation. Only five of the 77 members of parliament are women, characteristic of substantial under-representation of women in political institutions.¹¹⁶ Men often leave their island in search of employment, and 47 percent of homes have women-headed households.¹¹⁷ A 2007 ministry report found that one in three women between 15 and 45 had experienced physical or sexual violence at least once, one and five of those at the hands of a partner; one in six girls under 15 years of age had suffered from some form of sexual violence.¹¹⁸ The government has extended broader legal protection to women, and criminalized gender-based discrimination; it now allows women to run for all elected positions including head of state in the new constitution and acknowledges all rights set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).¹¹⁹ The Maldivian Red Cross is currently the only society in South Asia to be led by a female secretary general.

Although the Maldives has traditionally been known for a moderate interpretation of Islam, the presence of religious extremist groups is having a detrimental effect on the largely tourist-based economy.¹²⁰ A terrorist attack occurred in September 2007 when a bomb detonated in Malé's Sultan Park, wounding 12 foreigners. The terrorists announced that their aim was to disrupt the "outside influences" brought into the country by the tourist industry.¹²¹

Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development

NGO involvement in the Maldives by international and national groups is limited. The 2010 Directory of Development Organizations in the Maldives includes no

faith-inspired organizations. It does list many government agencies that engage in development work, as well as United Nations organizations. Transparency International is active in addressing corruption and governance issues.¹²² Faith-inspired NGOs are not specifically excluded by law, but several reports indicate that the government turns away non-Islamic faith-inspired groups and individuals.^{123, 124}

There was a change after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, when some faith-inspired organizations were permitted to do disaster relief work such as water and sanitation and displaced person care. The organizations included the American Jewish World Service, World Vision, Caritas, Baptist World Aid, Church World Service, Muslim Aid, and Lutheran World Relief.¹²⁵ Their work however, was largely confined to immediate relief work, although Muslim Aid has some continuing programs.

Islamic finance is expanding in the Maldives. In October 2009, the Maldives entered into cooperation with the Islamic Cooperation for Development of the Private Sector (ICD), part of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), to provide Islamic banking services.¹²⁶ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and IDB announced a joint initiative in June 2009 to establish Asia's first major multi-country Islamic infrastructure fund targeted at \$500 million,¹²⁷ aimed to support investment in infrastructure and development of remote atolls.

The Maldivian Red Crescent (MRC) (not strictly a faith-inspired organization but with faith links) was formed in August 2009 and has since worked towards international recognition from the ICRC and IFRC.¹²⁸ In 2010, MRC had six branches working with local partners to establish community health and first aid programs, women's empowerment projects, disaster risk reduction, and climate change programs. MRC's five-year strategy aims to open opportunities for youth and strengthen institutional capacity. The 2011 program focuses on disaster management and preparedness; its aim is to reach approximately 40,000 Maldivians over the year and to develop effective community response plans.

Individual mosques have traditionally been centers of community gathering and public space. A 2006 Asian Development Bank report on environmental management notes that mosques have historically been a location for communal wells and that "the role of mosques as communal water sites increases their potential in supporting environmental education by linking it to people's spiritual learning and their sense of relationship with the environment." The report observes, however, that while religion plays a major part in daily life in the Maldives, mosques or religious leaders are not explicitly involved in the environmental policy-making process.¹²⁹ A UN report highlighted the roles of mosques as centers of public information, with Friday sermons at mosques offering advice to people on social issues, "often calling for women and children to be treated correctly by society."¹³⁰

Coordination and Development Partners

NGOs are required to register with the Ministry of Home Affairs under the Clubs, Associations and NGOs law; approximately 1100 clubs and NGOs are registered, though most do not have office space or a paid staff.¹³¹ There are several coordination bodies and networks, but participation of faith-inspired organizations ranges from limited to non-existent. The Maldives NGO Federation is a collection of 44 NGOs who organize to promote the growth of the NGO sector in civil society and fair government treatment.^{132, 133} UN Inter-Agency Group meetings also help coordinate development activities, with the goal of eliminating unnecessary competition and avoiding duplication across agencies.¹³⁴

The government cooperates with international organizations, primarily from the UN system, that have partnerships with faith-inspired organizations, notably UNICEF and UNDP. The World Health Organization (WHO) is the Maldivian Health Department's largest developmental partner, providing technical support and serving as a coordination body for ministries, agencies, and NGOs.¹³⁵ The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF, both of which actively engage faith-inspired actors in their international programs, initiated the "Third Country Program" to cooperate on national development programming. The Maldives' Ministry of Home Affairs works with UNDP to further civic engagement, particularly to strengthen the image and coordination of national NGOs. The effort stresses mobilization and organization of community groups, including Ward Committees, Atoll Development Committees, Island Women's Development Committees, and Island Development Committees. Local NGOs and the government benefit from partnerships with bilateral development organizations and international NGOs, including CARE.¹³⁶ The Canadian, Australian, and International Red Cross have assisted the MRC in disaster risk reduction and climate change initiatives.¹³⁷

BHUTAN

“Bhutan’s economy of agriculture and monastic life remained self-sufficient, poor, and isolated until recent decades, when a series of remarkable monarchs began to guide the country toward technological modernization (roads, power, modern healthcare, and education), international trade (notably with neighboring India), and political democracy. What is incredible is the thoughtfulness with which Bhutan is approaching this process of change, and how Buddhist thinking guides that thoughtfulness. Bhutan is asking itself the question that everyone must ask: how can economic modernization be combined with cultural robustness and social well-being?” Jeffrey Sachs, August 2010.

Summary

Bhutan, a remote, isolated, and landlocked nation of some 700,000 people lying between China and India, approaches modernization challenges in distinctive ways that reflect a conscious focus on religion, especially Bhutan’s Buddhist heritage. An absolute monarchy that isolated itself deliberately from the outside world until the 1950s, Bhutan is looked to today as an interesting model as it traces its own paths to development and democracy. NGOs (faith-inspired or secular) play limited roles, but the Buddhist religious establishment is particularly significant in the education sector.

Socio-Political Setting

Bhutan’s opening to the outside world has involved political, social, and economic change. All have entailed extensive consultation with the people and walking a fine line between preserving traditions, protecting Bhutan’s unique ecology and cultural heritage, and taking advantage of the benefits of modernization. In politics, absolute monarchy has given way to a constitutional monarchy, economic growth is promoted

with government leadership, and education and health are a focus. Bhutan’s GDP per capita is one of the highest in South Asia (about US\$1900 in 2008), but its challenges include rural poverty, significant income inequality, and youth unemployment. The 10th Five Year Plan (2008-2013) aims to reduce poverty (now about 23 percent)¹³⁸ and strengthen democratic institutions. It supports women’s empowerment in the economy and decision-making; women in 2006 accounted for only 3 percent of National Assembly members and 4 percent of people’s representatives in the National Assembly¹³⁹.

Gross National Happiness (GNH), a uniquely Bhutanese measure that attracts considerable international attention, is enshrined in the constitution. The aim is to measure and guide national progress focusing on four pillars: equitable and sustainable economic development, cultural preservation, environmental conservation, and good governance. GNH is measured through surveys conducted twice a year which quantify 31 sets of indicators.¹⁴⁰ Buddhist ideals underpin the GNH approach, though it is articulated as Bhutanese more than Buddhist, in respect to the significant Hindu minority. A distinctive aspect is the effort to measure spiritual welfare as part of GNH: thus the practice of meditation, prayer, commitment to nonviolence, and belief in a broader life purpose.¹⁴¹ The 10th Five Year Plan reflects both GNH parameters and the UN MDGs.

Religion and Government

Buddhism is highly visible and influential in Bhutan; perhaps ten percent of Bhutan’s population belongs to the monastic system.¹⁴² Bhutan was ruled from the 17th century under a dual system of governance (Chhoe-sid-nyi) with two branches representing the administrative and religious needs of the country.¹⁴³ Heading the religious branch and Central Monastic Body was the Supreme Abbot, or Je Khenpo, equal in status to the King, who led the administrative apparatus.

Under today's constitution, the Prime Minister comes under the King, but she or he has power over the cabinet and other administrative issues. Bhutan's Monastic Body, consisting of both Central and District bodies, still has considerable influence, and it is still at times difficult today to distinguish between the social and religious.¹⁴⁴ The government finances the Monastic Body through an annual grant. Ten of the 150 seats in the National Assembly and two of the 11 on the Royal Advisory Council are reserved for Buddhist monks. Greater separation between religion and politics, however, is part of Bhutan's modernization process. As of September 2010, both Hindu and Buddhist clergy are banned from voting in elections.

Two-thirds to three-quarters of Bhutan's population practices Drukpa Kagyupa or Ningmapa Buddhism, both disciplines of Mahayana Buddhism (closely linked to the Buddhism practiced in Tibet). Between a quarter and a third of Bhutanese are ethnic Nepalese, most of them practicing Hindus. Christians, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, and nonreligious groups comprise less than 1 percent of the population. Mahayana Buddhism is described in the constitution as Bhutan's "spiritual heritage". Article 7(4) guarantees freedom of religion. Bhutan's King, the Druk Gyalpo, is the "protector of all religions". The primary practical issue today around religious freedom and Bhutan's distinctively Buddhist culture is integration of Bhutan's significant ethnically-Nepalese Hindu population. This involves a history of conflict and a refugee crisis that has remained virtually unchanged since the 1980s.

Development and Faith: an Intertwined Response

Bhutan's development initiatives have yielded many positive political and social results. Multi-party parliamentary elections in 2008 were orderly and were deemed a fair manifestation of the new democracy. The royal family continues to respect its new role and constraints. UN analyses indicate that Bhutan

is on track to achieve most of its MDG targets by 2015, and progress towards controlling malaria, ensuring environmental sustainability, halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, and promoting universal education is excellent.¹⁴⁵ However, substantial challenges lie ahead. Most urgent is addressing the needs and desires of Bhutan's large, increasingly educated young population. There is much to do to encourage private sector expansion and create jobs. Pockets of poverty and malnutrition and low female participation in tertiary level education also need attention.

Bhutan's development path has been largely government-led, with limited grassroots participation. Resource constraints and the inaccessibility of much of the country provide part of the explanation. Constitutional restrictions on groups deemed "harmful to Bhutan's unity and peace" are another.¹⁴⁶ Local NGOs are few and far between, and civil society is generally weak, with its activities constrained. A higher and growing number of gender, education, and environmental NGOs operate today than in the past, but there are very few political or human rights based organizations.¹⁴⁷ Even the Bhutan Foundation, established to support Bhutan's NGO and government-led development activities, was founded from the United States.¹⁴⁸ International NGOs, including several faith-inspired NGOs, have a limited but significant presence, both in Bhutan itself and working with Bhutanese refugees in Nepal.

Bhutan's well-established and trusted network of religious leaders has always been active in community work and charity. Monks, nuns, and religious communities play visible roles across the development spectrum, from HIV prevention and care to ensuring that poor children receive food, shelter, and an education.¹⁴⁹

Education

Bhutan is on track to achieve the MDG target for universal education by 2015. Development of progressive education is considered one of the most dramatic changes as Bhutan has modernized.^{150,151} Western-style education was introduced only in the 1950s, but student numbers, schools, and teachers have since expanded rapidly. Before 1961, Bhutan's modern education sector consisted of 400 students, 45 teachers, and 11 schools¹⁵²; today there are nearly 150,000 students, 5,000 trained teachers, and 800 schools.¹⁵³ Some students are also educated in monastic institutions. In 2009, the net gross primary enrollment ratio was 92 percent.¹⁵⁴ The government has pledged to make basic education - the first 11 years in Bhutan - free and available for all children. Ratios of girls to boys are almost even for lower education especially; more girls than boys attend school in some areas. Continuing challenges include students living in remote areas and increasing girls' enrollment in tertiary institutions (they were only 54 percent in 2007).¹⁵⁵ Community Primary Schools, with villages expected to help construct and support them in return for their children's education, are part of the solution.

Buddhist monasteries have long played important roles in shaping Bhutan's culture and society and today offer an alternative path to education. Buddhist monks run a system of monastic education whose administration remains under the Central Monastic Body. Despite concerns that non-religious job prospects for monastic graduates are limited, parents still send their children to Lobdra (schools for novices) and then to Drubdeys (meditation centers), Dratshangs, Rabdeys, Aney Dratshangs (nunneries), or Shedras (colleges).^{156,157} Many children who attend monastic schools come from economically disadvantaged homes, especially in rural, inaccessible areas.¹⁵⁸ Monasteries, however, have difficulties in meeting students' basic needs, including clothing and sustenance, with the government funding they receive. In some schools, less than half of students receive benefits, so that all have half-rations in food, clothing, and sometimes shelter.¹⁵⁹

Education is a national project, undertaken by government and non-government actors, to deliver universal education that is consistent with the country's values. It has widespread support from the people and the government,^{160,161} and the aim is to "integrate the best of our cherished cultural and national values with the best modern knowledge and technological developments".¹⁶² Dr. Karma Ura, leader of the center responsible for measuring GNH, observed in 2009 that "for the education system to pay attention to values is central to our cultural perspective that is influenced by Buddhism."¹⁶³ The 1999 Planning Commission's Bhutan 2020 report highlighted that "quality education ensures awareness of cultural heritage."¹⁶⁴ Bhutan's distinctive education system is capturing regional attention; a March 2010 Center for Bhutan Studies (CBS) and Seminar Foundation (India) dialogue in Thimpu included discussions on GNH and education.¹⁶⁵

Health

Bhutan has also made significant strides in health. Once widespread, malaria and tuberculosis have declined significantly, with only two malaria-related deaths reported in 2007, versus 63 in 1993; tuberculosis cases declined from 720 to 127 per 100,000 over a similar period.¹⁶⁶ Under-five mortality rates have declined sharply (halved between 1990 and 2007), and the government is committed to further reductions. Maternal mortality still needs attention, with 255 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000, though according to UNDP, Bhutan is on track to achieve the MDG for maternal mortality by 2015. Increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS is a concern, given high infection levels among Bhutan's neighbors. Less than 0.01 percent of the population is currently infected, but recent reports suggest rising incidence, with 38 reported cases in 2000 rising to 144 in 2008.¹⁶⁷ The government has acted quickly; the national HIV/AIDS and STI Control Program (NAP) was founded in 1988 by the Ministry of Health, but manpower shortages and difficult terrain have delayed broad public understanding of the disease. Key areas of focus (which the World Bank supports) include prevention services to and empowering those most at-risk, generating political and social support, reducing stigma, and improving HIV/AIDS education and policy decisions.¹⁶⁸

Bhutan's religious bodies and youth groups have provided some support for health programs. In 1989 for example, the Department of Health and the National Council for Religious Affairs formally endorsed the potential benefits in health education as promoted by religious practitioners.¹⁶⁹

Expanding into Bhutan from Southeast Asia, the Regional Buddhist Leadership Initiative has worked on HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Working with UNICEF, its aim is to build isolated groups of advocate Buddhist monks and nuns into a nationally connected network of well-rooted and locally trusted health educators.¹⁷⁰ The program approaches HIV/AIDS through educating youth about prevention, caring for those infected, destigmatizing the disease through discourse, and teaching by example. The Initiative began work in Bhutan in 2001, with its first participatory workshop focused on religious community roles in health and development. Bhutanese monks travelled to Thailand to see development activities of Thai monks and the impact that HIV/AIDS has on communities.¹⁷¹ A promising feature of the Initiative is its reliance on education; in the Mekong subregion in Southeast, several temple schools have incorporated prevention education into their curricula. The potential for positive impact in Bhutan is substantial.

Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal

Skilled laborers of Nepali origin settled southern Bhutan in the 19th century, becoming quite powerful politically and economically over the years. At the peak, Bhutanese of Nepali origin, or Lhotsampas, made up about 40-50 percent of the population. Around 1985, tensions emerged between the

dominant Drupka Buddhist population and this substantial Hindu minority; various measures curtailed the latter's citizenship rights and freedom of expression, all under the King's "One Nation, One People" command, which obliged Lhotsampas to adopt the attire and language of the Drupka Buddhists.¹⁷² The government revoked the citizenship of Lhotsampa communities and 1991 saw the expulsion of some 90,000 Bhutanese across India into Nepal; more expulsions followed. Over 100,000 Bhutanese refugees have since then lived in seven refugee camps administrated by the Nepalese Government and UNHCR. Refugees are not permitted to work in Nepal outside the camps, nor can they vote or own land.¹⁷³ Worrying reports highlight growing incidences of alcoholism, child marriage, prostitution, trafficking of women into India, and suicide¹⁷⁴. Yet the refugees have demonstrated profound self-reliance and adaptability in their situation.¹⁷⁵ Refugee communities elect community members as an administrative camp management committee (CMC). The CMCs address the various needs of their constituency, from coordinating food distribution, birth and death registration, and health initiatives to developing conflict negotiation mechanisms for disputes within the community.

International NGOs have worked with the CMCs since 2000. Among these, working alongside the Association for Medical Doctors for Asia (AMDA) and the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS), Caritas Nepal helps to provide education through the Bhutanese Refugee Education Program, and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) maintains camp infrastructure and supervises water delivery. Such cooperative health programs have led a reduction in birth rates, under-five mortality, and malnutrition frequency.¹⁷⁶ Education is provided in the camps, and literacy (75 percent) and school enrollment (nearly 100 percent) are both significantly higher than for both Nepal and Bhutan.¹⁷⁷

Other faith-inspired organizations working on funding refugee-related issues include the Jesuit Refugee Service, Catholic Relief Services, and the Jesuit Conference for South Asia.

INDIA

Some call India the world's most religious nation. They are pointing above all to history: several of the world's most significant faith traditions (Buddhism and Hinduism most notably) emerged in India. They also allude to the vibrancy in India's contemporary faiths. An extraordinary diversity of religion marks many domains of Indian life. India also stands out for both religious harmony and significant communal tensions. Over many centuries, different faith communities lived harmoniously side by side in India, and there is a pride in this heritage. India's constitution establishes a secular nation that also accommodates religious dimensions of life. Yet India also faces major interreligious challenges. Most significant is the Muslim/Hindu rift that dominated much of the politics around independence and still fuels conflicts over Kashmir and outbreaks of tension and violence. However, a broader picture should be kept in mind: India is a nation with extraordinary religious diversity and both pride and experience in interfaith harmony.

Against this backdrop, India's religious leaders, institutions, and ideas play active roles in most facets of development – that is, social change and approaches to social welfare. Religious leaders are influential in both spiritual and social realms, and many are also involved in politics. Faith often motivates social and welfare work in different parts of India, albeit in different ways. The organizations vary widely, and there is no coherent umbrella which groups them. Knowledge about their work is patchy at best, with some organizations thoroughly researched and others far less well known.

Socio-Economic Background

India, a federal republic with a secular government, is the world's largest democracy, the second largest nation (with its population numbering over 1 billion), and the fourth largest economy. Following economic reforms in the 1990s, economic growth has averaged around 7 percent per year. Even tempered by the global financial crisis, India had the

second highest economic growth rate among all the major economies. India's diverse economy encompasses traditional sectors including agriculture, handicrafts, textiles, industry, and a growing service sector, with over half of total economic output and almost one-third of the labor force. Agriculture contributes about 30 percent of the GDP, the largest products being rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, lentils, onions, potatoes, dairy products, sheep, goats, poultry, and fish; industry constitutes 26 percent of the GDP.¹⁷⁸

Notwithstanding the economic growth of recent decades, poverty remains a significant challenge. The World Bank estimates that 37 percent of the population is poor; given India's large population, almost one-third of the world's poorest people are in India.¹⁷⁹ India has made marked progress in increasing literacy, but only 61 percent of Indians are literate. Women rank lower on most development indicators; 73 percent of adults males are literate, compared to 48 percent of adult females.¹⁸⁰ Broad health coverage remains a challenge; 46 percent of children under five are underweight. Infant mortality rates are higher for females. Some cultural practices traditionally favor boys over girls; demographic imbalances have increased in some regions, though this varies by region.

Religious Demography and Society

India is one of the world's most religiously diverse nations. Four of the world's major religious traditions: Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism, originated in India, and Islam has long been a major social and cultural force. Hinduism is the largest religious tradition; some 80 percent of the population identifies as Hindu. Muslims represent more than 13 percent of the population, and India has the world's second largest Muslim population. Christians comprise slightly over two percent and Sikhs slightly under two percent of the population. Other religious groups, totaling just under two percent of the population, include Buddhists, Jains, Zoroastrians, Baha'is, and Jews. Ethnic cultural groups include Indo-Aryan tribes,

Child Marriages in India

In some parts of rural India, arranged child marriages is a common practice, affecting the welfare, security, and development potential of young girls. Despite legal efforts (the Indian Parliament adopted the Child Marriage Restraint Act in 1978, setting 18 as the minimum age for women to get married, and 21 for men), the practice continues and in some areas is widespread. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) there has been an overall decline in the percentage of women aged 20-24 married before 18, from 54 percent in 1992-93 to 45 percent in 2005-06. Rates however, vary by region; A recent UNICEF report notes that 82 percent of girls in Rajasthan, where child marriage is a common practice, are married by 18; 15 percent of girls in rural areas across the country are married before 13; and 52 percent of girls have their first pregnancy between 15 and 19. In Madhya Pradesh, almost 73 percent of girls are forced into a child marriage, as are 64 percent in Uttar Pradesh, and 67 percent in Bihar.

Religion plays a role in influencing norms and behaviors that contribute to child marriage. Combined with local customs and ethnic and tribal norms, in some regions of the country women are seen as property and some fathers and husbands sell their wives and unmarried daughters to gain wealth. The annual festival of Akhai Teej is considered an auspicious day for marriage and local police raid child marriage ceremonies and arrest families trying to force children to marry. Child marriage places young girls at a high risk for domestic violence and sexual abuse and in some instances is supported by superstitions including the belief that having sex with a virgin can cure syphilis, gonorrhea, and AIDS.

Many faith-inspired organizations are working in India to reduce child marriages. International NGOs such as World Vision operate children's clubs and self-help groups throughout India that educate youth and women on the dangers of child marriage. World Vision also runs programs to educate children and women about their legal rights and has been successful in stopping several child marriages in Rajasthan. Caritas India has education programs on gender justice and equality in rural areas that target women and young girls.

Indian faith-inspired organizations, including the Hindu Women's Welfare Society Shradhanand Mahilashram work in rural areas to provide education and counseling for women and young girls. The Deep Griha Society in Pune operates programs and seminars to raise awareness and combat child marriage.

International religious movements as well have programs to eliminate child marriage. The Brahma Kumaris organization is active in raising awareness about child marriage on a local and international level. The Art of Living runs a youth program students are educated about the social problems of child marriage and work to find sustainable methods to end the practice.

Religious leaders often can perpetuate child marriage by condoning the practice. The 1995 United Nations conference in Beijing focused on rights of the girl child, including ways to combat child marriage. Conference outcomes noted that dialogue with traditional and religious leaders to identify practical ways to reduce early marriage was an important component to combating the practice.

comprising 72 percent of the population, Dravidian tribes (25 percent), and Mongoloid tribes and other indigenous cultures (three percent).¹⁸¹

Among minority religions, Zoroastrianism has a strong presence; the religion originally emerged in Persia, but the largest Zoroastrian community today is in India.¹⁸² The Cochin Jews, the oldest Jewish community outside of the Middle East, is in the southern state of Kerala. The Mar Toma sect of Eastern Orthodox Christianity also traces its roots to 52 C.E.¹⁸³ Roman Catholicism came to the island of Goa with Portuguese explorers, and Protestantism was introduced through missionaries in the 18th century. Large global spiritual movements originating in India, mainly Hindu-inspired, include the Hare Krishnas, the Brahma Kumaris, Sathya Sai Baba movement, and the Art of Living.

The Hindu caste system was officially abolished after independence, but caste identities are still a part of cultural societal relations to varying degrees and contribute to many forms of discrimination. The lowest caste group, the

"untouchables," still face employment and social barriers, including limited access to temples; affirmative action provisions and social activism aim to address inequalities. The untouchables have renamed themselves Dalit, a self-conscious title that means, "Downtrodden and Crushed." Forms of intra-caste violence, social exclusion, and discrimination toward Dalits still challenge contemporary India.¹⁸⁴

Development Challenges

A large part of India's population is still very poor, seeing few gains from rapid growth. The poorest segments of the population include scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes, minorities and women; they lack access to the resources and opportunities they need to benefit from economic growth. The seven states in India have the lowest incomes: Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh; they account for over half of India's population. International development

organizations focus their poverty reduction programs in these states.¹⁸⁵ The 2006 Sachar Committee report on the social, economic, and education status of India's Muslim population found that Indian Muslims are among the most marginalized societal groups. Though the report made specific suggestions to address inequities, an August 2011 parliamentary panel has found that implementation has not addressed the root problems of inequity. The panel recommended that legal structures be tasked to ensure timely implementation of recommendations.

Gender bias in India has contributed to the worst form of discrimination - sex selective abortions, female foeticide (though the practice was outlawed by the Pre-natal Diagnostic Tech Act in 1994, it continues in practice), and infanticide. Indian economist and Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen highlighted in his influential article in the *New York Review of Books*, "More Than 100 Million Women Are Missing," the gross levels of gender inequality and discrimination in India, leading to an increasing demographic gap between boys and girls. The girl child, he emphasizes, is seen as a burden to many poor families; the financial strain of traditional practices like dowry (also prohibited by law) leads some poor families to see a girl as an unwanted liability. Preliminary 2011 Indian census results show that despite widespread awareness, sex selective births continue. The sex ratio for girls to boys age 0-6 has dropped dramatically from 927/1000 in 2001, to 914/1000 in 2011.¹⁸⁶ Sen's article notes that the lowest ratios of women to men are in Haryana and Punjab, while Kerala (which also has among India's highest development indicators) has a ratio of 1.03 girls to boys. Women lag behind men in most development indicators and often face a general neglect in basic nutrition, health, and educational, though improvements are being made in some areas, including in health, education, and civic participation. Child marriages (See Text Box #8) and forced marriages are still common, especially in rural areas. Discrimination against widows is also common, (See Text Box # 16) and is often connected to religious, ethnic, and tribal customs.

Healthcare presents serious challenges, especially in rural and remote areas, and is exacerbated by poor transportation infrastructure. Deaths from tuberculosis and polio have decreased, but child malnutrition levels are among the highest in the world. India is on track to reach the MDG for access to drinking water, but less than a third of the population is using improved sanitation facilities.¹⁸⁷ According to UNICEF, the maternal mortality ratio is 254 deaths per 100,000 live births. Over half of married women are anaemic, and one-third of them are malnourished.¹⁸⁸

The newest education figures show that while significant effort and resources mobilized for education have shown results, considerable progress must be made if India is to reach the MDG for universal education, particularly ensuring gender equity in access to education. According to 2011 census figures, the overall literacy rate rose to 74 percent, up from 65 percent in 2001 (male 82 percent/female 65 percent [a 12 percent increase for females from 2001]). While more than 95 percent of children attend primary school, just 40 percent

of children attend secondary school. Dalits, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes face particularly acute challenges - statistics released by the International Dalit Conference state that 90 percent of the poor and 95 percent of illiterate Indians are Dalits.¹⁸⁹ According to the World Bank, the two issues that remain in achieving universal basic education are: reaching the eight million children still not enrolled in schools (down from 25 million in 2003) and ensuring quality of education.

Ethnic and religious diversity has contributed to communal, religious, ethnic, and caste-related conflict. The conflict with Pakistan over the disputed territory of Kashmir is frozen, with a fragile ceasefire generally holding since 2004. Though largely a territorial dispute, the populations on each side are split between primarily Muslims and Hindus respectively. The 2008 Mumbai bombings that attacked luxury hotels, a hospital and a Jewish center were traced to Islamic militant group from the Pakistani controlled region of Kashmir. In December 1992, violence linked to the destruction of the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya (Hindus claim the mosque was built atop a temple believed to be the birthplace of Lord Rama) resulted in the death of 2000 people.¹⁹⁰ Residual animosities culminated with the 2002 massacre in Gujarat, where 2000 people died and hundreds of women were assaulted and raped.¹⁹¹ The event polarized Muslim and Hindu communities, compounding an environment of distrust and fear.

India is also challenged by caste-based conflict. Although untouchability is banned (article 17 of the constitution - 1950), discrimination against Dalits is widespread. In 1989, the Indian government passed the Prevention of Atrocities Act to address escalating violence between Dalits and upper caste Hindu.¹⁹² Despite the legislation, India's National Crime Records Bureau indicated that the most recent data (2009) reports that 33,594 crimes targeted Dalits, including sexual assault, rape, murder, and destruction of farm lands and property, with only a 30 percent conviction rate.¹⁹³ Even with education and urban jobs, some Dalits suggest that the stigma of Dalit identity perpetuates societal exclusion.

The continuing Maoist/Naxalite insurgency that began in 1967 was in 2006 cited by Prime Minister Singh as the biggest security threat to the country. Swami Agnivesh of the Arya Samaj movement is a prominent faith-inspired leader pursuing mediation efforts between the Maoists and the government.

Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development

Faith is an integral part of India's culture and traditions. For most Indians, religion permeates most aspects of life - from family to education to politics. Post-independence India emphasized a secular state, and religious community organizations were not expected to play active roles in

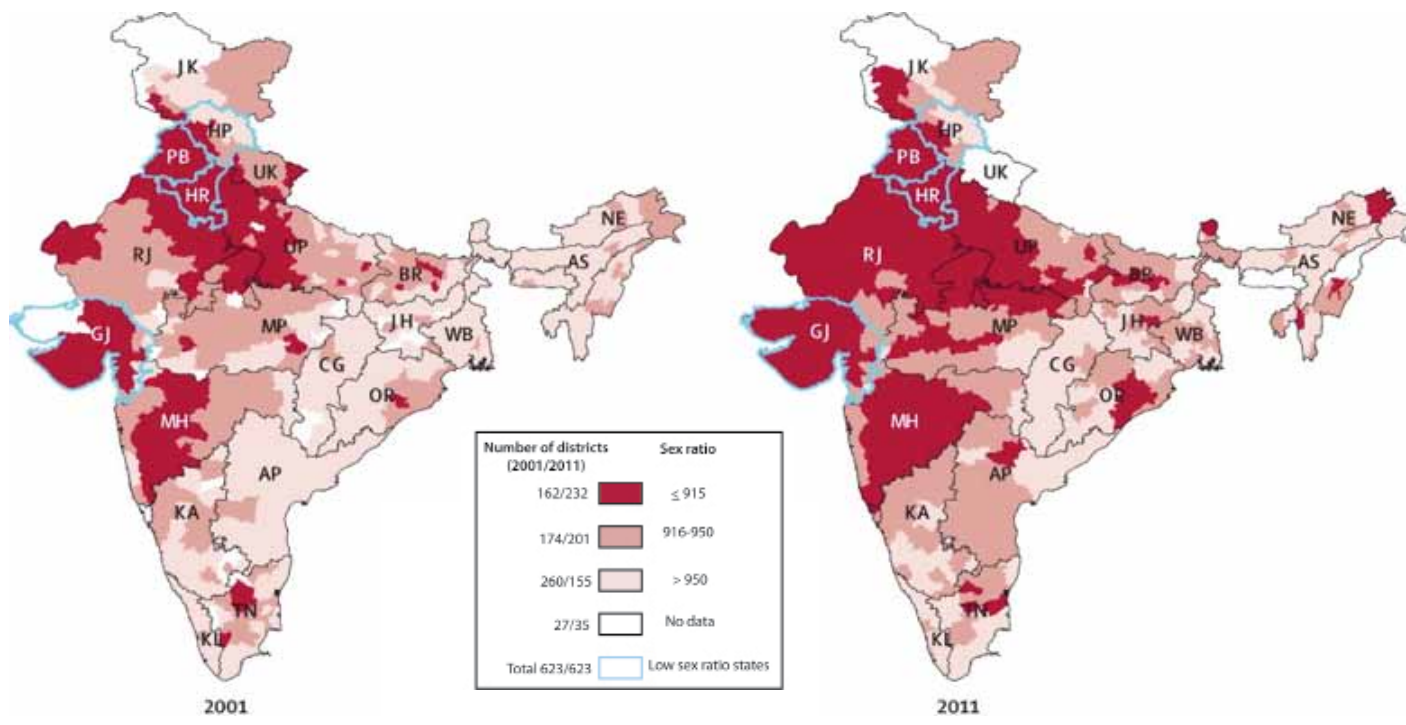


Figure 1 - Sex ratio of girls to boys at ages 0-6 in 2001 and 2011, by district. Of the 623 districts, data were available for 596 in the 2001 census and 588 in the 2011 census. The blue highlighted states are Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab, which have shown consistently lower child sex ratios at ages 0-6 years in the last three censuses. Chart from Prabhat Jha, Maya A Kesler, Rajesh Kumar, Faujdar Ram, Usha Ram, Lukasz Aleksandrowicz, Diego G Bassani, Shailaja Chandra, Jayant K Banthia. "Trends in selective abortions of girls in India: analysis of nationally representative birth histories from 1990 to 2005 and census data from 1991 to 2011." *Lancet* 377 No. 9718 (2011): 1925.

social and economic development. From the 1980s, religious movements and communities working in a social development capacity began to be identified with an active and growing civil society.¹⁹⁴ Today, the faith and development landscape is both complex and vibrant, with thousands of organizations working in different development capacities at different levels of society, often providing welfare services to underserved and marginalized populations. Limited available research and conversations with practitioners cites that some of the most meaningful work by faith-inspired actors has been in the fields of education, health, emergency relief and community development.¹⁹⁵ Gender-focused work, present research cites, is a more recent trend; this review has found numerous examples of faith-inspired organizations (national and international), with gender-specific programming.

Development Organization Registration and Coordination

India has a comprehensive framework for the registration and coordination of development organizations. Legal registration categories are inclusive of both secular and faith-inspired organizations. There are three categories of registration for not-for-profit development/charity organizations. The three categories are: trusts; societies; sec. 25 companies. Cooperatives and trade unions are separate legal entities, and include many faith-inspired movements. The government of India NGO Partnership System maintains a database of registered organizations and coordinating government ministries; the list includes local, national, and international faith-inspired development organizations; at the time of this

report, there were 36,657 registered organizations searchable by area of operation and sector of work.

Complexities of Terminology in Modern India - Hindu-Inspired Organizations

Religion in India is complex; the word "religion" has different connotations in the modern Indian context. The Indian constitution guarantees freedom of religion to all citizens of India while trying to uphold a secular, democratic government that does not privilege one religion over another. Religious affiliation and faith-inspiration among development organizations is often nuanced in meaning; "faith-based organization" in the commonly understood western definition cannot always be equally applied in India, particularly related to Hindu-inspired organizations. Many organizations that derive inspiration from Hindu beliefs self-identify as secular in the Indian context.

Outwardly Hindu-inspired organizations are often seen as expounding a Hindutva ideology. The term Hindutva was introduced in 1923, and suggests that all people born in Ma Bharat (Mother India) regardless of their ethnic, tribal, and religious identities are bound together by a unique "Hinduness," as derived from a cultural and civilizational understanding of "Hindu." "Hindu," in this context, implies that all consider India as their motherland (matrabhumi), their fatherland, (pitrubhumi) and their holy land (punyabhumi). While scholars, theorists, and practitioners argue about the direct religious connotations of the term, it is widely accepted that it conveys an implicit Hindu nationalist worldview, as is evoked by some political parties.¹⁹⁶

Gandhi's Wheel of Satyagraha

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the great political and Hindu inspired spiritual leader, spearheaded the Indian independence movement. Known as “Bapu ji” or “Father of the Nation,” and the Mahatma or “Great Soul” of India, left Gandhi a body of ideas and principles that continue to influence world leaders, social activists, scientists, and writers. Among those inspired by Gandhi are Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Albert Einstein, Henry David Thoreau, and Leo Tolstoy. The essence of Gandhian principles is his commitment to “satya” or truth, which he draws from the Hindu sacred text, The Bhagavad-Gita, the search of which led him to his unfaltering faith in ahimsa (non-violence) as well as equality and justice.

As a young lawyer, Gandhi moved to South Africa in pursuit of a legal career. Living under apartheid, Gandhi experienced racism and discrimination personally and became a leader in the fight against the apartheid regime. After Gandhi returned to India, he radically changed his life. Seeing the colonial powers in a new light, he focused on regaining pride in his native culture and language. He stopped wearing western clothes, opting instead to wear clothes made with khadi, a traditional homespun cloth that he spun himself on his spinning wheel. He envisioned an India where people would be self-sufficient, eating only what they grew on their own lands and wearing what they spun with their own hands. Many of his ideas (like spinning khadi) became forms of political protest against the British. In

almost every part of India, Gandhi's teachings about simplicity and self-sufficiency found resonance with the Indian people, seen as contrasting with British tendencies towards materialism and excess.

In his widely read autobiography, “My Experiments with Truth”, Gandhi says that “God is Truth” and “Truth (satya) is God.” Today in modern India despite the effects of globalization and trade, Gandhian principles and ideology are a significant part of the landscape. In development and welfare work, many faith-inspired organizations and actors draw inspiration from Gandhian philosophy and ideals. Gandhi's commitment to ahimsa (non-violence), his adherence to simplicity, and his promotion of nai talim (basic education) are lasting and relevant ideals for Indian society. Many faith actors working in India highlight these terms as their inspiration and their path for peacebuilding work in communities. Gandhi's teachings show a way to interreligious and intra-caste politics, gender equality, and Dalit empowerment, to education that focuses on the moral development of the person, and to the upholding of the principles of satya economically, politically, and theologically.

Gandhi's wheel of satyagraha (truth force) continues to spin, affecting communities far beyond India's borders, encouraging individuals engaged in development work to draw their inspiration from the forces of Truth and the Mahatma who taught them.

The Hindutva ideology has created some tensions vis-à-vis the idea of a secular democratic India, contributing to episodes of interreligious conflict and intra-caste politics. Hindu-inspired organizations may be hesitant to identify as “Hindu” for fear that their organization be interpreted as “right-wing” or nationalist in their ideology. One of the most contentious aspects of the faith-inspired organizations and their civic involvement is the value orientation and political ideology of some faith-inspired organizations.¹⁹⁷ Unlike in some western contexts, where the term secular implies a lack of religious conviction, in the Indian context, it is often understood and used differently, complicating the landscape in terms of categorization.

Hindu Organizations

A wide variety of Hindu-inspired organizations work in many sectors and different states. Some organizations state explicitly that their inspiration is linked to Hindu heritage and beliefs, but others do not. Large, Hindu-inspired organizations support civil society, civic rights, education, health, gender equality, Dalit rights, and poverty alleviation, among other development sectors. Some have connections with diaspora communities abroad.

An important category of development organizations trace their inspiration to the social teachings and actions of Gandhi, who was in many ways inspired by Hindu traditions (See Text Box 9); most such organizations, however, identify themselves as secular. There are perhaps thousands of organizations with a broad Hindu faith inspiration. The University of Birmingham study on faith-inspired organizations in Maharashtra identified 30 Hindu-inspired organizations in the state, noting that they were more difficult to identify than were their Christian counterparts.¹⁹⁸ This section focuses only on those where the faith link is clear and explicit.

Many Hindu-inspired organizations work in education and basic poverty alleviation programming, particularly in rural areas often within their respective states. Mobile clinics and gender empowerment programs are particularly common among Hindu inspired organizations. The All India Movement (AIM) for Seva, as one example, established by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, was formed as an initiative of the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha. An apex body of Hindu religious heads of various “sampradayas” or traditions, it focuses heavily on education.¹⁹⁹ The organization works in rural areas to reach underserved populations, seeing education as one of the best paths to empowerment. Anoopam Mission, established through the vision of Brahmaswarup Param Puija

Yogiji Maharaj, engages in humanitarian service as a form of bhakti (devotion) to God. It runs several educational institutions and operates blood donation camps and cancer awareness programs in rural areas. The Bharat Sevashram Sangha, a Hindu charitable organization founded by Acharya Srimat Pranavananda ji Maharj, focuses on education in Kolkata. It also operates Tribal Welfare projects in West Bengal, Jharkhand, Orissa, and Gujarat, with four mobile medical units at 64 locations under the Government of India's Grant-in-Aid program.

A different category of organizations focuses on healthcare, infectious disease prevention, and adults and children with disabilities and special needs. One such organization is the Divine Life Society, a religious organization founded by Swami Sivananda Saraswati, that integrates yoga into social welfare activities to promote general well being, especially for those suffering from trauma.

Apart from registered NGOs and community organizations, many Hindu inspired social movements are organized around specific causes, for instance around workers and civic rights. Among the largest social movements in India, the Self Employed Women's Association, or SEWA, was founded by Ela Bhatt (2010 recipient of the Niwano Peace Prize). SEWA is a trade union with over 1.2 million members created to protect the rights of self-employed women who have few benefits and little support. Though SEWA is a secular organization, it highlights inspiration drawn from Hindu values and those of Gandhi.

Arya Samaj, a Hindu inspired reform movement founded in 1858, represents the interest of the poor and downtrodden, with 3-4 million followers worldwide. Araya Samaj teachings draw on Hindu principles set forth in the Vedas. Another organization, the National Fishworkers' Forum, draws inspiration from both Hindu and Christian faiths, and represents fishers' rights in the coastal communities of Kerala (See Text Box 10).

A large array of Hindu-inspired schools draw varying inspiration from Hindu teachings and ideologies. Vidhya Bharati Schools are inspired by Hindu philosophies and beliefs, and are present throughout India, forming an important component of the Indian education system.

Religious/Spiritual Movements

The prominent role of religious/spiritual movements is a distinctive feature of South Asia's landscape. India is home to an extraordinary array of such movements, some local and small, and others with members in many parts of the world. Many inspire members to focus on and support social development and welfare work. Spirituality is often an integral part or the leading dimension of their agendas. Large international religious movements (largely Hindu-inspired) include, inter alia, the Brahma Kumaris (see Text Box 11), the Sathya Sai Baba Organization, Arya Samaj, the Chinmaya Mission, the Art of Living, and the RamaKrishna Mission.

Art of Living, led by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, is active in many development sectors including education, spiritual development, HIV/AIDS awareness, and interfaith development cooperation; they are present across South Asia. The Sathya Sai Baba Organization was established by the charismatic leader, Sathya Sai Baba, to promote the messages of encompassing love and service. The movement is an international phenomenon, with 1,200 Sathya Sai Baba Centers operating in 114 countries that work on development issues, including education. It has several "Bal Vikas" (schools for children) that combine academic education with its Human Values Program, focusing on moving from body consciousness and selfishness to God consciousness and selflessness.

The Chinmaya Mission was established under the guidance of Swami Dayananda Saraswati (Natarajan) in Tamil Nadu. It operates several centers around the world to expand knowledge of Vedic instruction. The Swami is also active in the All India Movement (AIM) for Seva, convened the first World Congress for the Preservation of Religious Diversity and is a partner of the Women's Global Peace Initiative. The RamaKrishna Mission, established by the eminent scholar and Hindu philosopher Sri Vivekananda based on the theology of his guru, Sri RamaKrishna, has 160 branches internationally. Two distinct wings - the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission - both engage in philanthropic work, but the former emphasizes spiritual development. The organization operates 14 hospitals with 93 out-patient dispensaries and 30 mobile dispensaries in Bihar. It also supports gender empowerment and operates several training centers and maternity clinics for women, particularly in remote areas.

Christian Organizations

Although Christianity is a minority religious tradition in India, Christian organizations, local, national, and international, are particularly active in development work. The number of Christian organizations is large, as is the spectrum of development activities in which they engage.

Several Christian umbrella organizations serve as coordination bodies/forums. The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), as one example, serves both Protestant and Orthodox Churches. NCCI advocates for and coordinates welfare and development services for India's underserved populations. Organizations linked with NCCI include the National Council of YMCAs, the YWCA of India, the Henry Martyn Institute, the International Centre for Research, Interfaith Relations and Reconciliation, the Churches Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA), the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI), and the Bible Society of India (BSI). Associated organizations include the All India Association of Christian Higher Education (AIACHE), the Association of Theologically Trained Women of India (ATTWI), the Board of Theological Education of Senate of Serampore College, the Christian Union of India (CUI), Christian Endeavor in India, Ecumenical Council for Drought Action and Water Management (ECoDAWM), the Inter-Church Service Association, and the Leprosy Mission (LM).

Kerala Independent Fishworkers Federation: Coastal Activists of Southern India

Many labor-focused social movements have emerged in India, often with faith links or inspiration. A prominent example is the Kerala Swathanthra Malsya Thozhilali Federation, or the Kerala Independent Fishworkers Federation, a non-party trade union and community-based grassroots organization. Christians, Muslims, and Hindus work together in a community of nearly 800,000 strong, helping to build the fishermen into an intimate and close knit community. Kerala State, in Southern India, has 222 coastal villages, 113 inland fishery villages and almost 1 million fishermen and families. Kerala produces 24 percent of India's export earnings from their marine fisheries. Some 35 percent of the fisherfolk are Christian, 25 percent are Muslim, and 40 percent are Hindu; each group draws on their faith as a source of inspiration for their work with the Fishworkers Union. Over the past several years, the organization has engaged difficult environmental issues such as resource conservation, protection of water bodies and coastal protection. They also tackle challenges like gender inequality, seeking creative solutions through women's empowerment.

The Federation's objectives include working for the socio-economic and political welfare of all fish workers; providing legal aid to each working family; conservation of marine resources; and prevention of pollution in water bodies. To this

end, in 1991, the Federation organized a rally to support families that lost their livelihood when a fish disease called Episeutic Ulserative Syndrome swept through the inlands of Kerala. After a series of rallies and hunger strikes, the government relented and offered the affected families monetary compensation. The fishworkers organized a march to protest the death of Asha Niyogi, the wife of Sankar Guha Niyogi, an activist from Madhya Pradesh who was shot dead while advocating for tribal and indigenous people.

The Federation cooperates to solve gender inequality issues in the community. The fishworkers addressed the safety of fish working women who had to travel large distances to market, along with the pressure of child-caring and domestic responsibilities. The Federation demanded transportation for these women and launched a series of protests until the government sanctioned a special bus for women fishworkers to facilitate their travel and ensure their safety. These efforts have increased security for women from robbery and sexual assault and have served to raise their social status in their communities. The fisherwomen have their own movement, Theeradesa Mahila Vedi. It focuses on economic security for fisherwomen as well as ecological protection of Kerala's marine resources.

Other umbrella organizations such as the Church of North India (CNI), the Church of South India (CSI), and international organizations including the World Council of Churches (WCC) and United Religions Initiative (URI).

Christian organizations are particularly active in the area of health and HIV/AIDS response. A 2008 study by the Oxford University Department of Public Health, in collaboration with the CDC Global AIDS Program (India) and the HIV Department of the World Health Organization in Geneva, focused specifically on the role of Christian faith-based organizations in HIV prevention and response. The study found that many Indian Christian FBOs could make valuable partners for governments, the World Health Organization, and donors in responding to HIV in India and should be assisted to increase the scale of their activities. The report highlighted a need for greater networking and coordination between organizations and the government and for a strengthening of the administrative and managerial capacity of faith-inspired organizations. The report noted that international organizations do not have adequate structures in place to effectively engage faith-inspired organizations.

Religious Coordinating Bodies and Religious Umbrella Associations referenced in the report include: Christian AIDS/HIV National Alliance (CANAA); CORINTH (Christian Organisational Response and Networking in HIV); Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI); Catholic Health Association of India; Emmanuel Health Association (EHA); Salvation Army; and the National Lutheran Health and Medical Board (NLHMB).²⁰⁰ The Catholic Mission Medical Board also has a large and active presence and works across India on diverse health issues, as does Caritas India.

Another group of organizations focus particularly on disability issues. Examples of organizations in this category include India Partners, a U.S. Christian development and relief organization committed to supporting self-help ministry projects in India,²⁰¹ and the Christian Foundation for the Blind in Chennai that preaches the gospel and provides support through outreach activities to the blind members of the community.²⁰² Asian Aid USA, associated with the Seventh Day, Adventist Church, supports a deaf school in Kollegal in Karnakata and the Australian Catholic Mission operates a school for the deaf and blind in Chennai.²⁰³ The

International Lutheran Deaf Association has a mission project in India supporting the Ephphatha Lutheran Deaf School. Local Christian organizations involved in services for the deaf and blind include the Ebenezer Fellowship of the Deaf in Kerala and the Maharashtra Deaf Fellowship of India, which is active in Aurangabad, Bombay, Nagpu, Nasik, and Pune.

Christian-inspired organizations and church communities have diverse roles in peacebuilding. The Catholic Peacebuilding Network and Catholic Bishops Conference of India both conduct research and maintain networks of Christian peacebuilding organizations in India. One such organization, PRASHANT, is a human rights organization in Gujarat that works to alleviate discrimination and violence between Hindus and Muslims, and towards Christian communities, operating under the direction of Jesuit priest, Father Cedric Prakash. The Baptist Church community the state of Nagaland has been particularly active in building peace between the government and parties to the local insurgency.

International Christian NGOs work across India and tend to have broad programming covering a wide range of sectors, including gender, education, and peacebuilding, inter alia. Examples of prominent organizations include: World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Christian Aid, Caritas, ADRA, Lutheran World Relief, Samaritan's Purse, and Jesuit Refugee Service.

Christian-inspired organizations are especially active in youth and education, serving both the most needy as well as the upper class and elite. Many of the best and elite schools in India have a strong Christian tradition; missionary schools have a long and established history in India. The Salesian New Life Children's school in Vijayawada provides education specifically for street children, in addition to providing them with shelter and daily meals.

One particular challenge facing Christian organizations is the issue of religious conversion. Recent years have seen rising Hindu-Christian conflict in rural areas linked to Christian conversion among Dalit and Tribal groups. Four states, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu have passed laws restricting or prohibiting religious conversions.

Muslim Organizations

As India has the world's second largest Muslim population, a large array of Muslim-inspired organizations operate in India, both national and international.

There are several coordinating bodies focused specifically on the Muslim community. Indian Muslim Relief and Charities (IMRC) is an umbrella organization that funds charitable projects and forms a network of more than 100 Muslim organizations in India. The All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat (AIMMM) is an apex forum of Muslim organizations and institutions; the network includes the

All India Shia Conference, the Muslim Indians, the Indian National League, and the UP Rabita Committee. The Community Coordination Initiative (CCI) is a federation of Muslim NGOs that aims to coordinate the efforts of Muslim NGOs in various areas of social, educational, scientific, cultural, economic and other endeavors. Partners include: Rural Muslim Welfare Organization, the Citizen Welfare Education Society, the Students Islamic Trust, Al-Khidmat, and Al Huda Children's Welfare Trust.

The state of Kerala, with its vibrant Muslim community, has several active Muslim development organizations. The Samastha Kerala Jam'eyyat ul-Ulama known as Samastha, the largest Muslim organization, was established in 1924 by Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham. It represents the traditional ulema that oppose 'Wahabi ideology' and operates madrasas in the state. The Kerala Nadwathul Mujahideen movement runs several madrasas and Arabic colleges; it was one of the first Muslim organizations to encourage women's education. The Jamaat-e-IslamiHind in Kerala runs several organizations, including the Students Islamic Organisation, Girls Islamic Organization, and the Solidarity Youth Movement. The Jamaat publishes Madhyamam, a prominent daily newspaper in Malayalam, and Prabodhanam, and a weekly magazine.

Other Muslim-inspired organizations center their operations around the collection of zakat to fund local development projects; examples include the United Islamic Aid in Mumbai, the Rehmani Foundation, Rahat Welfare Trust, Modern Educational, the Social & Cultural Organisation, and Islamic Research Foundation. Zakat is also given directly to mosques, which fund madrasas and other education programs, health, youth, and shelter programs, inter alia. The Rehmani Foundation also runs successful education programming, with a focus on training Muslim youth for entrance into government and public jobs.

The Moulana Azad Foundation works to promote educational opportunity among minority groups. Funded wholly by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, it is a central organization implementing scholarship schemes and financial aid to address inequities in the Muslim population cited in the Sachar report.

International Muslim inspired organizations are active in peacebuilding, education, and empowerment. Among the organizations are Muslim Hands focuses especially on education and disaster relief. Muslim Aid operates 53 projects in partnership with 26 different charitable organizations, working to provide healthcare, education, water and sanitation, shelter, emergency relief, feeding the poor, and skills training. Islamic Relief has worked with local organizations since 1994 on various projects including orphan sponsorship, enhancing livelihoods, and seasonal Ramadhan and Qurbani food distributions; they have also supported flood relief in Gujarat, Bihar and Assam. UK Islamic Mission (UKIM) responds to humanitarian crises (including earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters) as well as human displacement, health, and poverty reduction.

Brahma Kumaris: Teachers for the Mind, Body, and Spirit

The Brahma Kumaris are a rare spiritual movement led by women. Based in India, Hindu-inspired, and dating back to the colonial period, the Brahma Kumaris today are active in 100 countries. The movement's founder, Dada Lekhraj, established the World Spiritual University under the name "Om Mandali" in Hyderabad, Sindh. After partition, he witnessed the suffering of the population as the country split into two and decided to address it through education. Taking the name Brahma Baba, he integrated spiritual contemplation into a new model of education that would be accessible to everyone, regardless of faith or ethnicity. He sent female missionaries to Bombay and Delhi "on service" to establish centers to teach Raja Yoga. Today, almost every town in India has a Brahma Kumari (BK) study center. The Brahma Kumari Academy for a Better World has three campuses including Gyan Sarovar (Lake of Knowledge) and Shantivan (Forest of Peace) and has welcomed over 2.5 million students and visitors of different faiths and cultures, teaching topics of peace and non-violence.

Since its beginnings, the Brahma Kumaris have focused on social service, with an emphasis on health. In Mumbai, opposite the Andheri Railway Station, the Brahma Kumaris run a modern hospital called the BSES M G Hospital. It combines spirituality and modern medicine, as the Brahma Kumaris believe that a healthy body is not possible without a sound mind or spirit; the hospital's vision is "Healing with a Spiritual Touch." It has 120 beds, 22 intensive in its intensive care facilities, and provides most modern hospital services. It offers free care for those who qualify – over 38 percent of all patients. In partnership with Cleft-Children International (CCI), the hospital offers a free clinic to those suffering from Cleft Lip and Palate

deformities and conducted more than 900 surgeries through 2007. They also offer free medicine and run free medical camps providing services to poorer communities. The hospital responds to emergencies, providing care for victims of natural disasters. In fact, they assisted those injured in the Mumbai metro bomb blast of 2006.

The Brahma Kumaris have many sister organizations and partnerships that work on faith and development issues, including the Janki Foundation for Global Healthcare, a U.K.-based charity that promotes healthcare based on nurturing positive thoughts and attitudes; the Values in Healthcare program, which integrates a spiritual approach to disease for healthcare practitioners; and the Images and Voices of Hope, a global initiative to connect journalists, artists, and media professionals with a focus on hope and peace for the future. In 1992, the Brahma Kumaris, through the World Renewal Spiritual Trust (WRST), established a Department of Renewable Energy that promotes solar architecture, steam cooking systems, and hybrid energy. Since 1998, Dadi Janki, the administrative Head of the Brahma Kumaris, has organized a retreat attended by some 1000 people that focuses on incorporating spiritual growth into everyday work.

The Brahma Kumaris are active in interfaith work and work closely with several international interfaith movements, including the World Congress of Faiths, Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, United Religions Initiative, the Global Peace Initiative of Women Religious and Spiritual Leaders, and the World Conference of Religions for Peace.

Muslim educational institutions are organized around the madrasa system. The exact number of madrasas in India is not known, though government figures estimate that there are around 32,000 throughout the country.²⁰⁴ Approximately 7000 are registered with the government of India.²⁰⁵ Madrasa reform programs include those implemented by the government of India and USAID.

Bahá'í, Zoroastrian, Sikh, and Jain Organizations

India has the world's largest Bahá'í, Zoroastrian, Sikh, and Jain communities and, though they represent small minorities, they have significant cultural and social influence. Each of these traditions has a special spiritual focus that translates into active development and social welfare work. The Bahá'í community focuses particularly on interfaith activities, values-integrated education, and gender issues, inter alia. The ancient Zoroastrian tradition has strong commitment to truth and spirituality, and has had particular success in promoting values-based education. The Sikh community also has

strong interfaith traditions and a long history of inclusivity, welcoming the saints, prophets, and gurus of all world faiths. Its pluralistic vision is an integral part of Sikh development approaches. The Jain community has a deep dedication to the principle of ahimsa or non-violence, centerpiece of the Gandhian movement.

Perhaps the most well-known Bahá'í inspired organization is the Barli Vocational Institute for Rural Women, established in 1985 with funding from local members, the Indian government, and the Council for Advancement of People's Action in Rural Technology (CAPART), an agency of the Ministry of Rural Development to provide vocational training and empower rural and tribal women.²⁰⁶ The Institute was listed by UNICEF as one of 81 successful basic education programs in developing countries.

The Zoroastrian community, concentrated in Mumbai, has several development initiatives. The Zoroastrian College

in the city of Sanjan is a spiritual and academic center that collaborates with the United Nations Peace University. India's Zoroastrian community works with diaspora organizations including the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), a non-profit religious and charitable trust, and the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO).

The Sikh community in India (largely concentrated in Punjab, but with communities throughout India) often collaborates with Sikh diaspora organizations, particularly in the U.S. and U.K. The World Sikh Organization (WSO), a non-profit international umbrella organization founded in 1984 to promote and protect Sikh culture, campaigns for disaster relief, assists with adoption of orphaned children, and collaborates with the Red Cross. SCORE, a faith-inspired non-profit organization dedicated to creating awareness of the Sikh religion and culture and promoting justice, equality and brotherhood, supports various development projects. Local Sikh organizations like the Kalgidhar Society building education institutions for the poor in underprivileged rural areas of North India, teaching a values-based education; the Society runs drug and alcohol rehabilitation and healthcare centers. The Nishkam Sikh Welfare Council, another Sikh organization, works to protect the disadvantaged, including victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, violence, exploitation and those with disabilities.

The Jain community runs development organizations in various states within India. The Jain Group of Institutions (JGI) was established through the collaborative efforts of the Mahaveer Jain Group and has 21 institutes in Bangalore, including vocational and technological centers. The Seva Mandir works for rural and tribal development in Udaipur and Rajsamand in 626 villages and 56 urban settlements; it reaches approximately 70,000 households.²⁰⁷ Shri Jayantibhai Patel is a Jain trust for the well-being of the blind and disabled; 58 blind and disabled inmates live at their home. According to the 2001 census, the Jain community has the highest literacy rate (approximately 94 percent) out of all the major religious groups in India.

Dalit Organizations

In India, discourse on religion and development is often framed within the context of caste. The extent to which religious organizations challenge class and caste issues varies both within and between faith traditions; authority structures and interpretations of religious principles concerning caste are not uniform. (see Jodhka, S. Surinder, 2011) A wide range of Dalit-run/focused organizations however, work across different development sectors, with a focus on Dalit communities.

Significant efforts have been made towards collaboration and networks of Dalit focused organizations. Networks include the Dalit Freedom Network (DFN), the All-India Confederation of Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribe Organizations (SC-ST Confederation), the National Conference of Dalit Organizations (NCDOR), and the National Federation of Dalit Land Rights Movements (NFDLRM).²⁰⁸ NACDO

trains local Dalit leaders to fight for the constitutional rights of their community, having over over 300 member organizations in BIMARU (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal) and the non-BIMARU states of Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Pondicherry. NFDLRM is a nationwide mass movement initiated in 2006 by more than 250 Dalit land rights movements from 16 states, primarily focused on issues of land and livelihood of Dalit communities in India. It is part of four national movements: All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch (AIDMAM), Dalit Aarthik Adhikar Abhijan (DAAA), National Dalit Movement for Justice (NDMJ) and National Federation of Dalit Land Rights Movements (NFDLRM) promoted by National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR).²⁰⁹ It has a nationwide network of committed volunteers.²¹⁰

Other groups work internationally to raise awareness of Dalit concerns. The International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) (founded in 2000) is a network of national solidarity networks, groups from affected countries, and international organizations concerned about caste discrimination and similar forms of discrimination. The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), founded in 1998 by a group of activists, academics, human rights organizations, works to advance the rights of India's scheduled castes²¹¹ and presents cases of human rights violations against Dalits to the National Human Rights Commission, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, and the National Commission for Women, and National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (night soil carriers).²¹²

Numerous Christian inspired organizations work on Dalit related issues. The All India Christian Council (AICC) works to secure the rights of Christian Dalits and demands the restoration of Scheduled Caste status to Dalits who converted to any religion other than Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism.²¹³ The AICC is a coalition of thousands of Indian denominations, organizations, and lay leaders and collaborates with Confederation of SC/ST Organizations (India), the Dalit Freedom Network (USA), the Christian Solidarity Worldwide (UK) and Release International (UK).²¹⁴ Other organizations include the Nazareth Association for Social Awareness (NASA), Navsarjan, and the Society for the Reorganization and Enlightenment of the Village Ends (SERVE), which operates two primary/secondary schools and a nursing school for rural girls in the slums on the outskirts of Hyderabad.

Kashmir - Faith Dimensions of Peacebuilding

Kashmir, a mountainous region located between India and Pakistan, has been an area of contention and conflict since 1947. India views Kashmir as an integral part of India, while for Pakistan, Kashmir is a disputed territory whose final status must be determined by the people of Kashmir. Some groups within Kashmir desire an independent state. India presently administers some 43 percent of Kashmir (Jammu, Kashmir Valley, Ladakh, and the Saichen Glacier); Pakistan controls Azad Kashmir, Gilgit, and Baltistan (Aksai Chin and the Trans-Karakoram Tract are controlled by China). Hinduism and Islam are the predominant religions. The main religions of Jammu are Hinduism in the east and Islam in the west; Islam is the main religion in the Kashmir valley and the Pakistan-controlled regions. Since India and Pakistan signed a peace agreement at Tashkent (Uzbekistan) in 1966, occasional military confrontations and violent demonstrations have sustained insecurity. Kashmir is a point of geopolitical contention between India and Pakistan and for the entire region. A succession of peace efforts have sought to resolve the Kashmir question. In 2000, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee declared a ceasefire in observance of Ramadan and in 2004, peace talks allowed a bus service connecting two of Sikhism's holiest sites on the Indo-Pakistani border to reopen in 2005. After Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was elected, he met several times with then Pakistani President Musharraf to discuss the Kashmir dispute. However, strained bilateral relations since terrorist attacks on Mumbai in November 2008 have slowed peace negotiations.

Religion and Conflict

Kashmir has a vibrant religious landscape. Muslims and Hindus have lived in relative harmony since the 13th century, when Islam first became the majority religion in Kashmir. The Sufi and Kashmiri Pandits (Hindus) traditions coexisted, leading to a syncretic culture where Hindus and Muslims often worshipped the same saints and at the same shrines. During this time in Kashmir's history, there was a vibrant pluralism in practice among the community. Men and women visited tombs of Muslim saints and Muslim and Hindu neighbors sought blessings from them. There was a system of local religious leaders that had the respect of the community. This was a shared culture between different religious communities shaped by the spiritual traditions of the land, primarily Sufi Islam and the Hindu bhakti tradition. In recent years, however, Kashmir has seen a rise in tensions and conflict with clear religious dimensions. Kashmiri militant groups have targeted Kashmiri Hindus, and Muslim extremists have persecuted the Hindu minority. Almost 50,000 Muslims have fled the region to seek safety in India.

In early 1990, terrorist attacks in Kashmir led Hindu Pandits to leave the Kashmir Valley. These families planned to return to Kashmir when the conflict subsided, but the political situation in Kashmir is still volatile and Kashmiri Pandits are still displaced. Currently, 300,000 Kashmir Pandits from the Indian-administered Kashmir Valley are in the Jammu area in refugee camps at Udhampur and Jammu. Another 100,000 are displaced, in refugee camps in Delhi, established by the Indian government.

Peacebuilding

Within Kashmir, several organizations engage faith communities in peacebuilding efforts. Given the deep cultural connections of Sufi and Hindu traditions, these efforts often focus on using the resources that community leaders can offer. Sufi religious leaders have large networks and followings. As scholars Daniel Philpot and Brian Cox note, faith-based diplomacy is underutilized in national and international conflict and has the potential to transform "the hearts of grassroots and civil society leaders." Kashmir is a case in point.

Since 2001, Brian Cox with the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD) has conducted eight seminars with more than 400 members of Kashmiri civil society on both sides of the LOC (Line of Control) to encourage dialogue and peacebuilding efforts; to facilitate a spirit of reconciliation among young leaders in the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist parts of Kashmir.

The focus is to "break the cycle of revenge that typically accompanies identity-based conflicts." In 2003, ICRD, in collaboration with the Kashmir Institute of International Relations initiated a faith-based reconciliation project, bringing together imams and pandits (Hindu Brahmins) to discuss issues and challenges facing their communities.

Individual faith-inspired leaders and activists, notably Swami Agnivesh, are active in seeking to resolve conflicts; his immediate focus is on legal avenues at the Supreme Court level to assure accountability for human rights abuses.

Some organizations have a particular focus on the lot of women and their roles in building peace in Kashmir. The Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW) gathered Muslim Sufis, Hindu Yogis, Buddhist Monks, Humanitarians, and Peace practitioners at a Sufi-Yogi Dialogue in Kathmandu. Attendees recited the sholaks (verses) of Nund Rishi, Kashmir's patron saint, and other verses to reflect how all religions could work

...Kashimir continued.

together to work for peace. This event brought together 30 Sufis and Vedantic practitioners from Kashmir Valley, Pakistan, India, Cambodia, Qatar, the United States, and Nepal to share their faith traditions and experiences. Women in Security, Conflict Management, and Peace (WISCOMP) has engaged with civil society in Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh to build constituencies of peace. WISCOMP held a two-day dialogue called 'Symbol and Substance: Exploring Inter-community Relations in Ladakh' which brought together community leaders, religious leaders, and women groups. The dialogue was centered on the dynamics of Buddhist-Muslim relations and work on establishing a cooperative ethos between the two communities.

Athwaas, an affiliate organization of WISCOMP, is an alliance of women in Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh. Athwaas has established Samanbals (centers for women from all communities) and operates projects for Hindu and Muslim women widowed by conflict. The program encourages women to work together spinning raw cotton in the hope that working together will enable them to overcome hostility. The workshops also included training for capacity building and psycho-social healing for the attendees. The program focuses on the role of women as peacebuilders because they can have transformative effects in their communities by teaching their children and family members respect and interreligious cooperation on a micro-level.

Athwaas also founded the Yakjah Reconciliation and Development Network. "Yakjah" means "Togetherness" and represents a network that works with youth, women, and spiritual leaders from Muslim or Hindu backgrounds. The organization uses visual media and multi-media to create activities that transform attitudes, change perceptions, and help to rebuild relationships in communities that are torn by conflict. In addition, the organization trains Sufi religious leaders and women to participate more fully in the civil society and political spheres.

Press for Peace (PFP), a humanitarian organization established in 1999 in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir (Azad Jammu), partners with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, ASR Women Resource Centre, Action Aid, and the United Religions Initiative. PFP works on human rights, addressing issues of interreligious violence and engaging faith leaders in the peace process. The Institute of Peace and Development (INSPAD), a think tank and peacebuilding organization in Azad Kashmir and Pakistan, also works with religious communities.

PAKISTAN

Pakistan has faced many challenges since it became an independent nation and a federal republic in 1947. Complex relations with its neighbors and turbulent domestic politics have hindered development progress; conflicts with India in Kashmir, violence along the border with Afghanistan, and a bloody war with Bangladesh displaced millions and sustained peace has been elusive. Pakistan's external relations have been shaped by regional geopolitical dynamics, brokered by a succession of political transitions between military and civilian regimes. Successive earthquakes and devastating 2010 floods highlight Pakistan's vulnerability to natural disasters.

Pakistan's development indicators are low by international standards. Pakistan ranks 125 out of 169 countries on the UNDP Human Development Index. Women lag behind men on most indicators. An important feature is wide variations by region.

Founded as an Islamic nation, religion plays a larger role in shaping societal norms and relations, as its role is intertwined with tribal and traditional cultural relationships. Interpretations of Islam as a factor in governance and social and personal behaviors vary by region; access to education for girls is an example. Faith-inspired actors are active across most sectors of development, their roles diverse and at times controversial. Political realities and perceptions shape interactions between faith actors, the government, and international donors.

Socio-Economic Background and Politics

Pakistan, with a total population of approximately 170 million (growing at 2.2 percent a year), is one of the world's largest Muslim nations. Development has been disappointing, with a turbulent political history resulting in low tourism and foreign investment. About a third of the population lives below the poverty line, and almost 60 percent live on less than \$2 USD per day. Recorded unemployment is estimated at 15 percent. Economic growth slowed from near seven

percent in 2006/07 to just over one percent in 2008/09; inflation grew to over 20 percent.²¹⁵ The 2010 floods (See Text Box 14) affected most of Pakistan's crop land; almost 22 percent of the economy is directly or indirectly related to agriculture.²¹⁶ According to the World Bank, the floods cost the economy over \$10 billion USD and may have partly reversed gains in poverty reduction made over the past 7-8 years. The north-west region of Pakistan faces longstanding and significant human displacement and security problems. The government is undertaking a post-crisis needs assessment exercise, supported by the World Bank, the UN, the Asian Development Bank and the European Commission.²¹⁷

Indicators for both education and health are lower than other countries in South and Central Asia. UNICEF reports an overall literacy rate of 54 percent, with a ratio of 60 females per 100 males able to read; in 2007, almost 50 percent of the poorest children aged 7 to 16 were out of school, compared with five per cent of children from the upper class. About 28 percent of females are enrolled in secondary school, compared to 37 percent of males.²¹⁸ Looking towards the deadline for the MDGs in 2015, the number of children out of school will continue to increase if progress is not accelerated.²¹⁹

Low education levels contribute to child marriage, forced marriages, and high fertility. About 23 percent of females between the ages of 15 and 19 are married, compared with 5 percent of the male population in the same age group.²²⁰ One estimate highlights the pattern of marriage within families and communities, indicating that only 37 percent of married women are not related to their spouses and 63 percent have arranged marriages to a family member, such as a second cousin. This increases the difficulty of divorce because of the close family ties and social stigma.²²¹

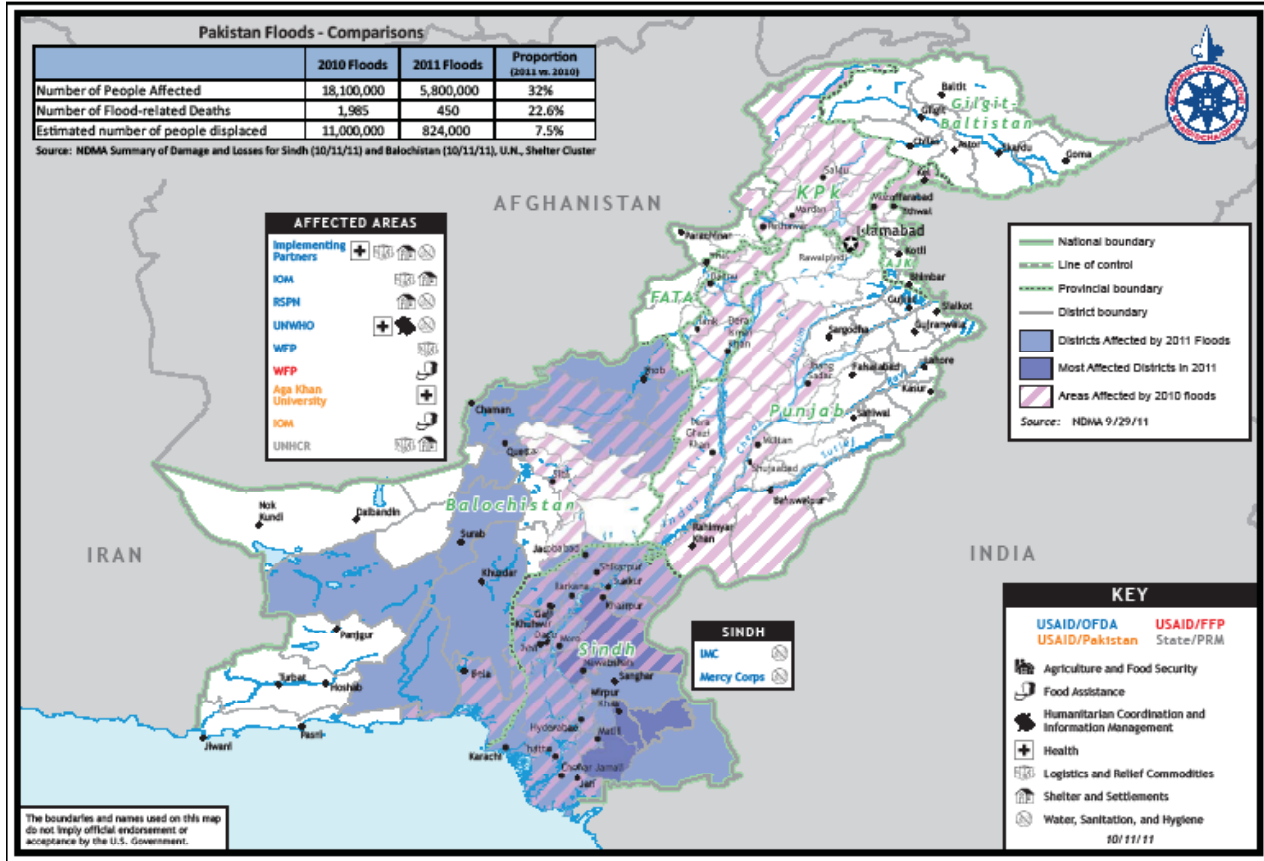
Class and socio-economic divisions, as well as tribal and feudal customs impede gender equality and empowerment. Tribal or feudal domestic traditions often discriminate against females even in eating patterns, contributing to nutritional deficiencies for women and female children.²²²

*USAID - OFDA Pakistan - Complex Emergency and Floods Fact Sheet #1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2011, April 5, 2011		
Estimated Total Number of Households Displaced by Conflict to Date	568,740 Households (More than 3.4 Million People)	U.N. and GoP - January 2011
Estimated Number of Households that have Returned to Areas of Origin	394,100 Households (More than 2.3 Million People)	U.N. and GoP - January 2011
Estimated Number of Households that Remain Displaced in KP and FATA	174,640 Households (Up to 1.1 Million People)	U.N. and GoP - January 2011
Total Number of People Affected by Floods	18.1 Million	National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) - March 20, 2011
Estimated Number of Deaths from Floods	1,985	NDMA - March 20, 2011
Estimated Number of Houses Damaged or Destroyed by Floods	1.7 Million	NDMA - March 20, 2011



USG HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR PAKISTAN FLOODS

Includes ongoing FY 2010 assistance utilized for the 2011 floods, as well as committed or obligated FY 2011 and FY 2012 assistance in Pakistan



Pakistan Floods

In July 2010, heavy monsoon rain caused flooding in Pakistan, affecting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sind, and Baluchistan. With almost one-fifth of the country underwater, many bridges collapsed leaving victims stranded and difficult to reach. Though the flood waters have receded, many still need continued assistance; faith-inspired organizations are now engaged in long-term efforts of rehabilitation; UN cluster groups are organized around coordination efforts.

Almost 2,000 people are reported to have died and another 12 million were internally displaced. Flood victims lost homes and family members, and in some areas, entire villages were washed away. The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warns that Pakistan could face major food shortages because farmers will miss a planting season and because of the loss of 1.2 million livestock. The Pakistani government estimates that the country has suffered close to \$43 billion in damage. Infectious diseases including cholera, typhoid, and tuberculosis, lack of hygiene, sanitation and access to clean water are serious health concerns.

According to an April 2011 U.K. government evaluation of the humanitarian response to the floods, actors on the ground confirmed that the international aid response was slow, with local organizations and religious groups being the first providers of the primary response before international aid arrived. After international aid arrived, however, the report noted that international assistance became intertwined with politics, being used as an arm of “soft power” diplomacy to win the “hearts and minds” of the local population. Religious groups were subsequently excluded from aid coordination efforts, in large part because they were “framed as the competition for winning hearts and minds.”

Despite coordination challenges, one representative from Islamic Relief noted that some groups have collaborated with UN agencies, providing accurate and up-to-date information that the government cannot. Local faith-inspired actors can cross into isolated villages and provide medicine and clean water, and transport people out of disaster areas because they know the terrain and the people trust them. The political aspect of all this is in a different arena and another dimension from what these groups are doing to help the community from a humanitarian standpoint. Among the organizations he witnessed were Ismailis,

Tablighis, and village based organizations. An August 2010 session of the Upper House of Parliament reported that 1102 local NGOs received funding from the government for floods relief work in rural areas that lacked government infrastructure.

A large component of the international NGO response comprised faith-inspired organizations. Islamic Relief, World Vision, Tearfund, Caritas, Catholic Relief Services, Cordaid, International Catholic Migration Commission, Norwegian Church Aid, Church World Service, Muslim Aid, Muslim Hands, American Jewish World Service, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Malteser International, and Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe were among the first on the ground. Many of the above organizations are members of the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum, one of the largest NGO coordination bodies that mobilized around the disaster. Other organizations from Asia, including Jamiyah Singapore, the Buddhist Lodge, and Taoist Federation, have joined the relief efforts as well, providing financial assistance through government channels. .

Islamic Relief worked with internally displaced persons (IDPs) providing rehabilitation support for almost 2 million people in the district of Mardan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province), where the majority of displaced persons were relocated. It provided psychological support services and access to safe play areas for children suffering trauma. Caritas International responded with medical treatment and vaccinations, and World Vision provided emergency items such as tents, hygiene kits, and mosquito nets and distributed more than 6000 metric tons of food in the three flood affected provinces.

There, however, were some challenges; American Jewish World Services, for example does not publish the list of local Pakistan grantees to ensure the safety of their community-based partners. Some groups, reportedly with Taliban links, accused Christian groups of proselytizing, affecting the overall security of all Christian-inspired organizations.

Muslim Family Law, which is operative in many parts of the country is often interpreted unequally for women with reference to inheritance, divorce, age of marriage, and natural guardianship of children. In addition, during the late 1970s, a series of discriminatory laws were introduced by General Zia-ul-Haq, including the Hudood Ordinances.²²³

Health challenges include infectious disease, high infant mortality rates, and high maternal mortality rates. Pakistan's maternal mortality ratio is estimated at 280 deaths per 100,000 live births (compared to 320 per 100,000 live births in South Asia).²²⁴ Almost one in ten children does not survive to their fifth birthday; the majority of child deaths are due to diarrhea, pneumonia, or vaccine-preventable diseases. Some 30 percent of children are chronically malnourished and lack safe water and household sanitation, especially in rural areas. Proper sanitation and access to clean drinking water are limited, especially in rural areas. In rural areas, only 40 percent of the population use an improved system of sanitation; 87 percent have improved drinking water systems, but these are rudimentary.²²⁵ Other development challenges include limited efficiency of electricity production, high dependence on foreign financial assistance, and poor infrastructure.

Turbulent politics have involved successive transitions from military to civilian rule. In 2007, General Pervez Musharraf stepped down and the democratic Pakistan People's Party (PPP) came into power. However, Pakistan still faces challenges in establishing solid systems of democratic governance; ethnic, tribal, and linguistic cleavages are important factors.²²⁶ Barriers to political and civic participation for the majority of the population are also a factor in deep and persistent poverty.

Pakistan is a key actor in the NATO-led conflict in Afghanistan, primarily in the frontier areas, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Swat Valley and Waziristan, and Baluchistan, although the conflict is increasingly penetrating into the interior of the country. The resulting humanitarian disaster has been immense; faith actors have played critical roles within the aid community to reach and assist those in the most need.

Religious Demography and Society

Pakistan is a parliamentary-based federal republic, with Islam as the official state religion. Between 95 and 97 percent of Pakistanis are Muslim (largely Sunni, with Shias estimated from 10-20 percent).^{227, 228} Most Shia Muslims belong to the Ithna Asharia branch, with some members from the Ismaili and Ahmadiya traditions. Religious minorities, including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and Zoroastrians, comprise around 5 percent of the overall population.²²⁹ The Christian population is the largest religious minority, with significant numbers of Roman Catholics in the Sind Province and smaller Protestant communities in the Punjab.²³⁰ Zoroastrian and Sikh communities comprise less than 1 percent of the total population.²³¹

Pakistan's religious history is complex. While Pakistan's constitution recognizes Islam as the official state religion and only a Muslim can serve as president or prime minister, non-Muslims have held high positions in the military and in parliament; non-Muslims are restricted from serving in official sharia courts, are not bound by sharia law, and may appeal to civil law courts for adjudication in legal matters. Religious minorities in India including Sikhs, Zoroastrians, and Christians were encouraged to migrate to Pakistan during the partition in 1947; churches and Sikh gurdwaras are part of the religious landscape. Although alcohol is prohibited in Islam, the government offers an accommodation to the Christian community by permitting the production, sale and consumption of wine for the religious ritual of Communion. Religious minorities have cited concern over national identification cards that include religious membership. Identification cards first began printing religious affiliation in an effort to identify and protect religious minorities, but it has in reality increased interreligious tensions and, in some instances, exacerbated religious violence in rural regions of the country.

Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development

Faith plays a prominent role in Pakistani life and society. One development practitioner suggested that faith is so deeply integrated within Pakistani culture that it is difficult to draw a clear line between the "faith" and "secular" realms. Research conducted at the University of Birmingham, however, notes the problematic nature of the term 'faith-based organization' in Pakistan; the term faith-based is not commonly used in the Pakistani context. Religion, however, plays large roles in development and is "intertwined with notions of charity and social welfare." It is difficult to untangle the two.²³²

Rather than a clear distinction between faith and secular organizations, the Birmingham study noted, the nature of an organization's funding is a differentiating factor, with donor sources coming from either individual donations with a focus on immediate relief, or professional development organizations that are funded by institutional donors and prioritize long-term development and community empowerment.²³³

NGOs have existed in Pakistan since its independence in 1947; a recent survey conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) concluded that between 8,000 and 16,000 non-profit organizations operate in Pakistan, though there is now comprehensive mapping of exact numbers. An Asian Development Bank study noted that NGOs register under five different ordinances, and updating and reporting is not systematic;²³⁴ the five laws are: the Societies Registration Act, which pertains to professional, cultural, and educational bodies; the Trust Act for private acts of public charity; the Cooperative Society Act; the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies Ordinance of 1961; and the Companies Ordinance of 1984.²³⁵

Coordination and oversight of NGOs by government ministries, particularly for disaster relief, is problematic, and registration procedure is often marked by red tape and bureaucratic procedure; the ADB study concluded that NGOs in Pakistan lack adequate governance and transparency.²³⁶

International Faith-Inspired Organizations

Many international faith-inspired organizations, from all major faith traditions, work in Pakistan in most development sectors, including gender, education, peacebuilding, health, emergency relief, and other welfare-related issues. Their activities have stepped up following flood and humanitarian efforts following the 2010 floods.

International Muslim-inspired organizations have diverse programming across many sectors. Islamic Relief works with gender issues, education, economic empowerment, and disaster relief; they were an important responder following the 2005 earthquake and the 2010 floods. Muslim Aid, a U.K. based relief and development agency, is runs educational programming, and initiated the Economic Empowerment Programme in 2007 to encourage development projects and financial investments in rural areas.²³⁷ Muslim Hands United for the Needy is involved in flood relief and has distributed over 33,000 food parcels with flour, sugar, rice, tea and pulse; its current focus is long-term shelter for flood victims.²³⁸ The Aga Kahn Development Network is active in Pakistan, with particular focus on education and rural development, among other programs in a range of development sectors. Other international Islamic-inspired organizations working in Pakistan include: Helping Hand for Relief and Development, Qatar Charity, Islamic Help, and the IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation.

Christian international NGOs have a significant presence and are active in all sectors, particularly on relief efforts. Christian organizations face specific challenges; some have been accused of proselytization or conversion efforts. Conversations with practitioners note, however, that if organizations are clear in communicating their humanitarian purposes, they can gain the trust of local communities and are able to work effectively with the local people.

As an example, Caritas Pakistan, an affiliate of Caritas Internationalis, raised \$8 million to provide emergency response, temporary winter shelters and basic items such as hygiene kits and healthcare assistance for relief efforts for the Pakistan flood.²³⁹ Caritas Switzerland staff worked closely with Caritas Pakistan on earthquake response, and 18,000 people received earthquake-proof shelters through a partnership including a CAFOD (Catholic aid agency for England and Wales), Catholic Relief Services – United States, and Caritas France, Secours Catholique.²⁴⁰ Other International Christian organizations working in Pakistan include: Church World Service Pakistan, Shelter for Life, World Vision, United Methodist Committee on Relief, Christian Aid, DanChurchAid, Norwegian Church Aid, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Global Peace Pioneers, Salvation

Army, Habitat for Humanity, Food for the Hungry, ADRA, and Catholic Social Services.

The American Jewish World Service has supported emergency relief projects following the 2005 earthquake, and the Joint Jewish Distribution Center was active in the flood relief efforts in 2010.

National and Local Faith-Inspired Organizations

National and local level faith-inspired organizations work in most social sectors, including emergency relief, healthcare, education, microfinance, poverty reduction, food security, and maternal and child health. They have been particularly active recently in floods and humanitarian relief efforts. Reports about their roles tended to center on complex motivations, but the situation is complex. Many organizations have provided effective relief assistance.

A large group of national/local faith-inspired organizations focus on healthcare. Edhi Foundation, one of the most well-known, is a large development organization with over 250 centers throughout the country, that provides medical care, emergency relief, ambulances, offers burial services, and operates mental safe houses and shelters for abused women.²⁴¹ It also operates orphanages and offers rehabilitation for drug addicts in rural areas. The Pakistani Red Crescent Society partners with national and international bodies including UNICEF for Polio Eradication and HIV/AIDS Education Drives.²⁴² It has developed 161 health facilities throughout the country, 61 of which are specifically dedicated to maternal health and childcare.²⁴³ A local Christian organization, Dar-ul-Sukun, runs a home for mentally challenged or handicapped children and adults.²⁴⁴ The Alamgir Welfare Trust is a local organization that supports poor patients and provides free burial costs for poor families. It also enables economically disadvantaged people to travel for the Hajj pilgrimage.²⁴⁵ A similar organization, Al-Mustafa Welfare Society is active throughout Pakistan and offers healthcare services. The organization provides ambulances and cardiac emergency vans in the service of the poor.²⁴⁶

Organizations working more generally on poverty alleviation include Islamic microfinance institutions, food distribution programs, and vocational training. Akhuwat, as one example, is an Islamic micro-finance organization based in Lahore that utilizes mosques and churches for community outreach projects and social empowerment; Akhuwat has opened branches in other cities including Bahawalpur, Multan, Gujrat, Dera Ghazi Khan and Karachi, and has collaborated with USAID, among other donors.²⁴⁷ The Center for Islamic Economics has as a main objective to spread an Islamic-based economic system without usury to promote financial equity in society.²⁴⁸ The Al-Khidmat Foundation is engaged in poverty alleviation through various sectors, including helping poor families cover the cost for weddings and religious celebrations. The Christian Development Organization operates a food program for poor people in rural villages, providing two meals a day for poor families.²⁴⁹

Zakat and Social Welfare

Thousands of organizations, as well as government agencies, depend on Islamic sources of charity, such as zakat, as a main source of funding. Zakat funds are used to provide basic healthcare and education to large parts of Pakistan's poor. Religiously motivated organizations, through central tenets of Islamic charity, have become a central part of Pakistan's social safety net.²⁵⁰

In 1980, as a part of the Islamization program, President Zia-ul-Haq introduced a welfare system, known as the Zakat and Ushr Ordinance. Based on the Islamic obligation of zakat, or alms-giving, the aim was to forge a national system to help the underserved population, especially widows and orphans, as the Holy Prophet was particularly sensitive to these vulnerable groups. The Zakat and Ushr Ordinance combined elements of Islamic welfare and integrated them with a modern public welfare system. The moral imperative of zakat is based on the Quran and one's personal commitment to faith. The zakat and ushr system is organized in Pakistan through the Central Zakat Administration (CZA).²⁵¹ There is currently a Central Zakat Administration at the federal level, one Provincial Zakat Council in each province, a District Zakat Committee in each district, a Tehsil Zakat Committee in each tehsil (or sub-division), and a Local Zakat Committee (LZC) in each locality.

Zakat is collected at the rate of 2.5 percent on eleven assets contained in the First Schedule of the Zakat and Ushr Ordinance of 1980. Ushr is collected on a compulsory basis at the rate of 5 percent of the produce from every land-owner, grantee, lessee, lease-holder or land-holder.²⁵² The collected funds are used for zakat programs including providing educational stipends to deserving students at schools, colleges, and universities. The second program determined by the local zakat committee is healthcare; the zakat fund will cover medical treatment for individual patients up to Rs. 3000 for inpatient procedures and Rs. 2000 for outpatient procedures. The third program covers marriage assistance to unmarried women. A onetime payment of Rs. 10,000 is paid to the bride to cover expenses.

Apart from the government system, among the myriad non-governmental organizations involved in zakat charity is the Edhi Foundation. Other smaller organizations include the Alamgir Welfare Trust and the Al-Mustafa Welfare Society, which use zakat donations to assist poor families with marriages, travel for the Hajj pilgrimage, as well as burial and funeral costs. Some Pakistanis choose to pay zakat in the form of in-kind donations, and local organizations collect these donations in the form of food, clothes, and raw materials. The food is usually taken to local shrines where it is cooked and distributed to the poor; the clothes and raw materials are usually donated to larger organizations that can oversee the distribution.

Post-9/11, collection of zakat funds have raised some concerns. Some diaspora communities were uneasy about contributing zakat funds for major crises, including the 2010

floods, because of fears that extremist groups may use the funds; the decrease in funds has affected those organizations and their ability to carry out effective development work.²⁵³

Pakistan's zakat system is also critiqued as disorganized and corrupt. One practitioner noted that it is common practice for people to withdraw large sums of money from personal accounts just before the government officially charges zakat payments. It is reported that people misreport their assets and hence pay less zakat than they should. Another contention is that zakat funds are misused by the government, contributing to distrust and antagonism among communities that need help. Despite these issues, the zakat system, a revered institution grounded in deep religious principles and practice, does benefit large segments of the population.

Education

Faith-inspired institutions are significant players in Pakistan's education system. This system in Pakistan is comprised of three types of schools: private schools (which include some schools run by faith communities), government schools, and madrasas, which are explicitly religious. According to 2007-2008 government statistics, there are some 257,000 educational institutions of all categories in Pakistan, with a total enrollment of 37,500,000 students.²⁵⁴ Approximately 71 percent of educational institutions are in the public sector and 29 percent in private sector. Some 89 percent of primary schools are in the public sector and 11 percent are in the private sector. Just under 50 percent of high schools are public, as are 69 percent of degree colleges.²⁵⁵

Interviews stress that a critical issue is the very limited integration among these systems. Students rarely interact and cannot easily move from one to another, contributing to societal fragmentation. Religious minorities have had a strong presence in the education system since independence. The Catholic board of education oversees 62 schools, with 52,000 students.²⁵⁶ The Convent of Jesus and Mary for girls and St. Anthony's School for boys integrate theological instruction into their course curriculum, engaging the spiritual as well as the intellectual training of the individual. Catholic schools are often the preferred choice for the elite, but there are efforts to accommodate low-income families by providing scholarships funded and supported by the church diocese.

Other Christian schools are run by Protestant communities. The Christian Fellowship of Pakistan is the largest Christian organization in Pakistan and operates a school with 300 children and an orphanage with over 40 children.²⁵⁷ The Murree Christian School is operated by the World Mission Prayer League, under the Church of Pakistan; the school believes the Bible and Christian experience are essential for the fullest well-being of students and integrate this ethos into their education. Forman Christian College in Lahore and Gordon College in Rawalpindi are operated by the Presbyterian Church. Kinnard College for Women in Lahore and Karachi

Madrasa Reform in Pakistan

In recent years, especially post-9/11, international concern about potential links between madrasa education and Islamic radicalism has grown. The Pakistani government has had a madrasa reform agenda since the 1960s and has engaged in a tug-of-war with the Islamic ulema to introduce secular subjects into the curriculum and to modernize madrasas. There are two main reasons why madrasas are able to resist reform. First, as Islam is the official state religion, to “secularize” madrasa curriculum is a sensitive issue, as some see it as going against the religious foundations of the state. Second, there is a strong support base for the senior ulema from conservative members of society.

Madrasa teachers and the ulema feel it is their duty, and in some cases their right, to determine the religious vision of the country. As an Islamic country, the government also has the responsibility of providing citizens with Islamic education. Therefore, a key element in the madrasa reform process is securing the trust of the senior ulema. The ulema are suspicious of any “top-down” approach to madrasa reform; some fear that foreign governments and development organizations exercise undue influence on government efforts to secularize curricula. For the ulema, changing traditional madrasa education can be interpreted as a method to “secularize” the Islamic way of life.

The Washington-based International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD) has worked over several years to support madrasa reform in Pakistan. The ICRD has

engaged a number of madrasas, including more than 2,200 madrasa leaders and senior faculty from 1,450 madrasas. Douglas M. Johnston, the president and founder of ICRD, notes that reform is a significant step in reducing the potential for radicalism. He suggests that when religious scripture is selectively interpreted, it becomes a tool “for justifying the unjustifiable.” Madrasa leaders command respect from their students and their community, and ICRD believes that improving their education will counter extremism; promote authentic religious values; contribute to the stability of their country; and integrate the madrasa leaders and students more fully into civil society.

Many development practitioners and policymakers note that madrasas overall do not prepare students to enter the workforce and find viable employment post-graduation. Students attending madrasas that do not incorporate “secular” or vocational training have fewer economic and livelihood opportunities than their counterparts in secular institutions, and are often marginalized from “mainstream society.” However, practitioners have noted that madrasa education is often the only option for an education in rural areas; the issue of quality of education received thus becomes an issue of central importance.

As a leader of a Muslim-inspired organization in Bangladesh noted, the word madrasa has become equivalent to a four letter word in some policy circles; nevertheless, it is generally agreed that open conversation and dialogue is needed to dispel myths and support inclusive and sensitive reform.

Grammar School are both operated by the Church of Pakistan and accommodate children from poor families. There are also Christian theological seminaries including the Northwestern Theological Seminary of Pakistan, and the Open Theological Seminary in Lahore. Both seminaries enable students from poor families to enroll in their institution.

Christian schools are a well-established part of Pakistani society, though there have been instances of violence during periods of interreligious conflict. Christian schools are sometimes associated with the “west” and perceived as “anti-Muslim,” and have become the target of some violence. The Murree Christian School was shut down after attacks by religious militants in 2008. It reopened but was recently

attacked by gunmen who killed a small group of people from the school, including the principal.²⁵⁸ Other schools in rural areas have also been threatened.

Local Zoroastrian schools such as the Mama Parsi School for girls and the Bai Azerbaijan Soparivala Parsi High School aim to bridge the gap between their faith tradition and Pakistani culture. These schools incorporate religious instruction in their curriculum and are open to children from all religious communities, offering scholarships to poor families. These religious minority schools are accessible to lower income families and often appeal as an option that integrates spirituality with secular education.

The Aga Khan Development Network operates 192 schools (primary, secondary, and university levels) that educate over 36,000 students and employ over 1,600 teachers. Within the Aga Khan University, the Institute for Educational Development focuses on research and training to improve developing nation educational systems, including that of Pakistan.

Traditional Islamic education is primarily concentrated around madrasa education. Madrasas are present throughout Pakistan and appeal to rural families because they are inexpensive and provide religious instruction; madrasas often provide two meals a day, which is of particular importance to poor families that cannot afford to provide regular nutritious meals. Estimates of the numbers of Pakistani madrasas vary widely. One estimate puts the total at approximately 28,000²⁵⁹, of which only 6,700 are registered with the government. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) 2002 report noted about 600,000 students in 6,000 registered madrasas, with more than 250,000 students in Punjab Province alone.²⁶⁰ Some 1,900 registered female madrasas in Pakistan are growing more popular among young girls in rural communities (See Text Box 13).

Madrasa educational reform is a serious challenge. It often contributes to contentious relationships between the Islamic ulema and the local government; the government is working to incorporate greater “secular education” into the predominantly religious curricula of madrasas, while “reform” is often perceived as “western” education by the madrasas. Nonetheless, madrasas remain an affordable and accessible means of education to many Pakistanis in rural areas with few or no alternative choices. The director of Islamic Relief in Pakistan noted that madrasas, though often controversial in policy circles, are a permanent fixture of the Pakistani educational landscape, and should be engaged, not marginalized²⁶¹ (see Text Box 15 on madrasa reform).

An alternative to madrasas for Islamic education are the Turkish Fethullah Gülen schools. There are now Gülen Schools in seven cities in Pakistan that offer Islamic inspired education that is more integrated than traditional madrasa education.²⁶²

There are NGOs that support faith-inspired education as well: the Isra Islamic Foundation, an organization of Muslim professionals, serves the underprivileged population in Sindh and opened the Usra University, the Isra Blind Control Program, and the Isra Qur’an Academy, where students can pursue both a secular and religious education.²⁶³

Peacebuilding

Different categories of organizations do peacebuilding work. Several international development organizations partner with faith groups, or collaborate with religious leaders in peacebuilding efforts. These initiatives include projects to build interfaith harmony and peace between religious communities, along with efforts to partner with local religious leaders to enhance conflict resolution capacity at the community

level. Roles of religious leaders in peacebuilding are complex; practitioner interviews suggests that the role of local religious leaders, particularly imams, is still fairly limited, hopefully at a nascent stage; low education levels among some religious leaders can hamper effective collaboration. However, there are examples of successful engagement, and religious leaders are often the most influential voices within communities, working for peace (or, on occasion, exacerbating tensions).

The United States Institute for Peace supports dialogue between communities along the Pakistan and Afghanistan border where the majority of the conflict between the Pakistan army and the Taliban is unfolding.²⁶⁴ Dialogue participants receive conflict-resolution and mediation training in Kabul and Islamabad to encourage engagement between different ethnic and religious communities.²⁶⁵ The programs particularly address intra-religious conflict between the Sunni and Shi’a communities. USIP’s Religion and Peacemaking Program is collaborating with Al-Noor, a local partner, and with Sunni and Shi’a scholars to produce an Islamic textbook in Urdu for use in madrasas that promotes peace and understanding.²⁶⁶ The program hopes to use the textbook to teach courses on Islamic peacemaking at local seminaries and encourage dialogue between the Sunni and Shi’a communities.

In November 2007, Actionaid, an international NGO active in 42 countries, partnered with the Citizen’s Peace Committee to organize the “Karwaan-e-Aman,” a rally for peace to promote religious tolerance and interfaith harmony in the community.²⁶⁷ The rally brought together human rights activists and religious leaders from different faith traditions.

Subcontinent-wide religious movements are active in Pakistan, particularly in interfaith initiatives. The Hindu inspired religious movement, the Art of Living, implements programs to promote peace between India and Pakistan. The World Alliance for Youth Empowerment (WAYE), the youth component of the Art of Living, works in Pakistan under the label of “Indo-Pakistan Youth Peace Initiatives.” The program attracted Muslims, Christians, and Hindus to youth empowerment seminars to encourage interreligious understanding between these communities.²⁶⁸

Alongside international actors, Pakistan’s vibrant civil society actors (faith-inspired organizations and those that engage faith actors) are implementing peacebuilding projects. Local faith-inspired organizations have the advantage of being both culturally and religiously connected to the community, having particular knowledge of religious, sectarian, ethnic, and tribal conflict and violence. They are instrumental at the policy level around issues of access and security; faith-inspired communities have presence on the ground, even in the most insecure regions where international and government actors are not present.

Some examples of include the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI-Pakistan), which works exclusively on peace and development in Pakistan.²⁶⁹ CPDI-Pakistan’s projects focus on peace and tolerance; religious and sectarian violence; inter-provincial conflicts; and improved

The Plight of South Asia's Many Widows

Widows, are sadly a common reality in South Asia; the share of widows in the female population is among the highest in the world. Estimates put the number of widows in India at almost 40 million, or ten percent of the female population. The Indian city of Vrindavan is nicknamed the City of Widows because nearly 15,000 women have migrated there to escape the marginalization and stigmatism they face in their homes and villages. Many widows live on the streets or in group shelters and most survive by singing in Hindu bhajan ashrams, where they receive a little rice and pay in exchange for hymns. In Nepal and Sri Lanka, internal conflict has produced many war widows who face social ostracism, though generally not to the same degree as non-war widows. One Sri Lankan minister told an audience recently that the civil war had left 89,000 widows in the Tamil concentrated regions of the north and east - 30,000 of them under 30 years old. Data for Nepal is poor, but ten years of armed conflict has produced similarly high numbers, particularly among young women (Nepal has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world); 67 percent of Nepalese widows are under 35 years old.

The region's widows face a wide range of obstacles, with the result that many are deprived of even the most basic human security and dignity. Because widows are commonly thought to bring bad luck, custom forbids them from attending weddings and social functions. They may be blamed for the death of their husbands. Social pressures discourage remarriage and dictates that they forgo traditional colorful clothing and jewelry, wearing simple white saris and sometimes shaven heads. Some leave their husband's family's home voluntarily due to maltreatment by in-laws, but many are thrown out because they are considered both a bad omen and a financial drain. Though perhaps 28 percent of Indian widows are eligible for pensions, less

than 11 percent actually receive payments. With no access to a family or means of economic support, many widows are forced into begging and prostitution. While the practice of sati, or a widow's self-immolation, was banned in 1829, occasional instances are still reported; the murder of widows by in-laws is a more common occurrence.

Especially in Hindu communities of India, Nepal, and the Sri Lankan Tamils, development agencies focus on widows as an especially vulnerable group. Faith-inspired organizations, Hindu and otherwise, as well as individual activists play especially important roles in protecting and sheltering South Asian widows. Beginning in the nineteenth-century, Hindu activists, like Ram Mohan Roy and his mission to end sati, and Kamala Ghosh, principal of Vrindavan's Vivekananda School, have worked actively to end widow abuse. Hindu temples frequently house and employ widows, while temple societies, like the Vrindavan Shri Bhagwan Bhajan Ashram society, provide food and shelter. Socio-spiritual guilds are active in Hindu centers, two examples being the Swaminarayan Anoopam Mission in Gujarat, which helps with widow rehabilitation, and the Christian Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission, which provides a home and vocational training for widows. Organizations including Caritas, World Vision, and the Kuwait Red Crescent Society have recognized the need to single out widows in disaster relief distribution and development schemes. In Sri Lanka, the Association of War Affected Women, though not faith-inspired in its mission, works closely with faith communities to empower women widowed by conflict.

understanding across cultures, sects, and religions.²⁷⁰ The Cavish Development Foundation (CDF) works on peacebuilding initiatives promoting interfaith harmony between the Muslim majority and religious minorities in Pakistan.²⁷¹ In 2010, CDF trained two groups of 15 students each in Islamabad, Pakistan and presented a puppet show employing dramatic performances to focus in issues of religious tension and ways to create interfaith harmony. CDF also created District Peace Committees (DPCs) comprising of social activists, academics, and religious leaders from all major religions to promote interfaith dialogue in districts with religious tension.²⁷² Amn Tehrik comprises individuals and organizations from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that are collaborating to promote peace by opposing pro-terrorism clerics and their influence in mosques and in madrasas.²⁷³

Aware Girls, a women-led organization, works to alleviate what they consider to be the exploitation of Islamic militant groups to incite the youth to commit religiously inspired violence.²⁷⁴ They initiated the “Seeds of Peace” program with 20 women and men to promote tolerance, non-violence, and peace against religious extremism.²⁷⁵ Another example, BARGAD, established in 1997 by a group of students from Lahore, focuses on students in secular colleges and religious seminaries to promote peacebuilding. In 2003, the organization launched a “youth track” peacebuilding initiative in South Asia; so far, 35 universities in Pakistan, three in India, and two in Afghanistan have collaborated with BARGAD’s peacebuilding program.²⁷⁶

Coordination Bodies and Partners

Several coordination bodies work on flood relief, disaster and emergency response, and humanitarian aid. The Pakistan Humanitarian Forum, as an example, is comprised of 39 international NGOs working in conflict/disaster-affected regions of the country. Faith-inspired members include Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service Pakistan,

Helping Hand for Relief and Development, Islamic Relief, Muslim Hands International, Qatar Charity, Shelter for Life, and World Vision.

A coordination body for health active in all four provinces is the Pakistan Health Cluster, working to decrease acute malnutrition, cholera, malaria, and other infectious disease. Faith-inspired members include Church World Service, Helping Hand for Relief and Development, Islamic Help Pakistan, and World Vision. The Pakistan Food Security Cluster (particularly active during the 2010 floods) includes the following faith-inspired organizations: Global Peace Pioneers, Food for the Hungry, IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation, Islamic Relief, Khubaib Foundation, Muslim Hands UK and Qatar Charity.

The ACT Alliance, a coordinating body of Christian development organizations, runs relief and development work, and members working in Pakistan include Norwegian Church Aid, Church World Service, and Diakonien Katastrophenhilfe.

Other national coordination bodies that include local and community-based and/or faith-inspired NGOS are: All Pakistan Women’s Association and Pakistan Voluntary Health & Nutrition Association (PAVHNA).

Several international organizations active in Pakistan coordinate with local faith-inspired organizations or agencies that run faith-related programs. United Nations agencies support programs that focus on education, health, water, nutrition, safe motherhood, and reproductive health and children’s health education.²⁷⁷ Canada, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom all support faith-inspired organization work.²⁷⁸ Some embassy-based programs support NGO work with faith-inspired actors, including Australia, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland.²⁷⁹

AFGHANISTAN

Located at the crossroads of South and Central Asia, Afghanistan has endured successive conflicts that have involved significant yet complex religious dimensions. Faith-inspired actors play influential, yet complicated and diverse roles in development and peacebuilding. Conflict has held Afghanistan's development hostage and casts a shadow on peace, stability, and prospects for the region and beyond. The future is uncertain: some observers point to progress while others are less optimistic. An important question is how religious leaders and institutions, very much part of the "problem," can be more effectively engaged in efforts to build peace.

Religious and Social Demography

Of Afghanistan's population of about 30 million, almost 80 percent are Sunni Muslim, and 19 percent Shi'a; other religious groups comprise less than 1 percent (about 4900 Sikhs, 1000 Hindus, almost 400 Bahá'ís, and a small Christian community).²⁸⁰ Sunni Muslim Pashtuns dominate the southern and eastern regions, while most of the Shi'a community is in the Hazarajat in the central highlands. Ethnic communities include the Pashtuns (42 percent), Tajiks (27 percent), Hazara (9 percent), Uzbeks (9 percent), Aimak (4 percent), Turkmen (3 percent), and the Baloch (2 percent).²⁸¹ Afghan Persian or Dari is the official language.

The UNDP Human Poverty Index ranks Afghanistan at the bottom of 135 countries in terms of human deprivation. Short life (44-year life expectancy) and weak education are marked characteristics.²⁸² GDP per capita is \$1,321 USD, and 42 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Regional and seasonal differences are important aspects of poverty.²⁸³

There are large health challenges. Infant and under five mortality rates are high.²⁸⁴ Trained health workers attend only about 15 percent of births; over 90 percent of births occur at home, and UNICEF reports that about 15,000

women die each year from pregnancy-related causes.²⁸⁵ In Save the Children's 2011 State of the World's Mothers report, Afghanistan was rated the worst place to be a mother. Only 23 percent of the population has access to safe water, and only 12 percent have access to adequate sanitation, increasing the incidence of infectious disease. Almost 15,000 Afghans die of tuberculosis every year, 64 percent of which are women. Almost 4 percent of the population is disabled; landmine accidents account for a significant part of the problem.²⁸⁶

Despite laws prohibiting gender violence and discrimination, domestic abuse and sexual violence are pervasive. The Taliban regime excluded women from most parts of social and political life. Poor health conditions and malnutrition make pregnancy and childbirth exceptionally dangerous.²⁸⁷ Women and girls still face severe restrictions in their access to education, healthcare facilities, and employment. Child marriage, forced marriage, and female trafficking are common in the region. Almost 54 percent of girls under the age of 18 are married, most marriages arranged by parents without the girl's consent; during the Taliban regime, families were forced to marry their daughters to the Taliban or to buy their freedom with large sums of money, which was not a viable option for most.²⁸⁸ Precise numbers are unknown, as families are hesitant to report cases for fear of the social stigma attached to a daughter or sister kidnapped or sold for sex. Conflict has also increased levels of abductions of young girls and women by Taliban fighters.

Improvements in education have been made; since 2001, enrollment in grades 1-12 increased from 3.9 million in 2004 to 6.2 million in 2008. Girls' enrollment has increased from 839,000 to more than 2.2 million.²⁸⁹ Literacy rates are low; in urban settings 26 percent (36 percent male; 15 percent female) of the population is literate, but in rural areas, the literate population is only some nine percent (of that, less than one percent are women). The ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary and secondary school in 2007 was .58. In 2005, only 21 percent of girls enrolled in primary school completed their studies.²⁹⁰

Afghanistan's ability to achieve MDGs is closely tied to building effective governance structures and enhancing security (UNDP). Afghanistan has added a goal to "enhance security," in addition to the other MDGs.²⁹¹ Years of conflict have destroyed critical infrastructure, including roads and electricity (the percentage of the population with access to electricity is among the lowest in the world²⁹²); partnerships with international development organizations support widespread reconstruction efforts.

Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development

In Afghanistan, relations between the government and faith-inspired actors with other civil society actors, are complex.²⁹³ Faith plays an omnipresent role in daily life, translating into motivations to conduct development work for many development organizations. Religion has also played complicated roles in the decade-long conflict, with religious misinterpretations often responsible for igniting tensions and creating divides. One development practitioner noted that while faith motivates the work of many organizations, many do not openly publicize their faith motivations, particularly Christian organizations. Proselytizing is illegal in Afghanistan, and the government has suspended or expelled organizations accused of proselytizing. In May 2010 both Church World Service and Norwegian Church Aid were suspending from operating in the country; they have since been cleared of wrongdoing and allowed to resume aid work.²⁹⁴

Security remains a concern, highlighted in 2007, when 23 South Korean missionaries were kidnapped, and in August 2010, six members of the International Assistance Mission were killed, both incidents claimed by the Taliban. The Aid Worker Security Database suggests that Afghanistan has the world's highest amount of attacks on aid workers (123 between 2006-2010). The data is not disaggregated by faith-inspired or secular identification, but many of the attacks were specifically directed towards faith-inspired actors. There is a trend for military actors to become increasingly involved in development activities, blurring the lines between aid and military intervention. As a result, the aid community, both faith-inspired and secular actors, are viewed as synonymous with military forces by some segments of Afghan society.

Though there are inherent risks, faith-inspired organizations and religious communities are often present in the most insecure areas where neither international secular development organizations nor the government has much presence. In short, faith leaders have significant influence and shape opinions and perceptions in many communities.

Registration of development organizations is becoming increasingly stringent in a government effort to fight corruption and fraud. In November 2010, almost 150 local NGOs were banned from operating in the country. In May 2010, 172 NGOs were banned, including the World Islamic Call Society and Samaritan's Purse International Relief. Over 1,400 NGOs (over 300 international) are registered with the government.

International Faith-Inspired Organizations

Muslim organizations often face fewer barriers than other faith-inspired and secular organizations in entering communities because of their cultural and spiritual affinity. Organizations include Muslim Peace Fellowship/Ansâr as-Salâm, Ummah Welfare Trust, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Helping Hands, Muslim Aid, Islamic Relief, and the Aga Khan Foundation. Ummah Welfare Trust (UK), as one example, works in Afghanistan on a variety of development projects, including sponsoring widows and orphans and providing Eid gifts for the poor. Women Living Under Muslim Laws, an international solidarity network, provides information, support, and a collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned, or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam.

The numbers of Christian-inspired organizations working in Afghanistan is significant. USAID finances several Christian groups; from 2001-2005 it spent US\$57 million (out of a total of US\$390 million to nongovernmental agencies) to fund projects run by faith-based organizations in Pakistan, Indonesia, and Afghanistan.²⁹⁵ Christian groups operate healthcare, education, and disaster relief projects under the grants.

International Assistance Mission is one of the longest continuously operating organizations in Afghanistan, operational since 1966. Catholic Relief Services helps to rebuild homes, farms, and war-damaged streets and buildings. Key areas include agriculture, water and sanitation, education and emergency response. The Christian Children's Fund operates several Well Being Committees, designed to involve the community in the protection of children from sexual abuse, child labor, and child marriage. Other organizations with a presence in Afghanistan include: Adventist Development and Relief Agency International, Christian Aid, Cordaid, Catholic Relief Services, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Church World Service, Norwegian Church Aid, Tearfund, United Methodist Committee on Relief, World Vision International/Afghanistan, and Zoa Refugee Care.

Some international non-governmental organizations have specific programs to collect and distribute Islamic alms, or zakat. The Zakat Foundation of America, as one example, uses zakat donations to improve education in Afghanistan. Other organizations involved in zakat collection and disbursement include Helping Hands, Muslim Aid, and Islamic Relief.

National/Local Organizations

Religious leaders, communities, and other faith-inspired actors play important, albeit complex civil society roles. A Peace Research Institute report observed that the mosque is a traditional center of public and social life in Afghanistan, particularly in rural areas, both for religious functions and a space for education, meetings and entertaining visitors.²⁹⁶ Afghan organizations focus their activities around most sectors, notably education, poverty alleviation, gender empowerment, and peacebuilding.

Zakat

Zakat traditionally forms a central part of revenue and social charity in Muslim communities. In Afghanistan, the government currently has been unable to impose or enforce collection.²⁹⁷ Under the Taliban regime, there was forced collection of zakat; following the Taliban government, zakat has decreased significantly. According to a 2007 report focused on the town of Sayedabad (south of Kabul), 35 percent of mullahs surveyed said that zakat was collected in their area; 15 percent unofficially and 20 percent formally through a mosque system. Zakat that is given tends to first be given to family and neighbors, with remaining funds going to local religious leaders and students. The results, however, can vary by region, the report noted, correlated to levels of economic security.²⁹⁸

Education

Over twenty years of war have destroyed Afghanistan's education infrastructure. The Ministry of Education reports that 673 schools have been closed because of violence; however, 220 have recently reopened, providing access to over 180,000 students and 3,000 teachers.²⁹⁹

In response to the education crisis, the Afghan Ministry of Education proposes to develop the Islamic education system by raising standards and training teachers.³⁰⁰ To do this, as stated in the National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan, the Ministry plans to build a madrasa in each of the 364 districts in Afghanistan. The Ministry also plans to establish a National Islamic Education Council to update and review the Islamic education system, and to establish district level Islamic schools with a combined Islamic and technical/vocational education curriculum. They will implement a Technical Working Group, which will include members of the National Ulema Council and Islamic Education staff to develop the religious education curriculum.³⁰¹ Approximately 340 official government madrasas were registered with the government in 2007. The majority of Afghanistan's madrasas, however, are private and independent; in most cases they are unregistered. Accurate data on the number of madrasas countrywide is not available.³⁰²

The Department of Islamic Education plans to begin registering private madrasas. These madrasas will be encouraged to adopt the national curriculum for Islamic education. These schools will accommodate up to 50,000 children and offer a curriculum consisting of 40 percent religious education, 40 percent general education, and 20 percent computer science and foreign languages.³⁰³ The new curriculum aims to enable students to have an Islamic education and also study secular subjects, preparing them to enter the workforce upon graduation.

Most Sunni madrasa curricula in Afghanistan are based on the dars-e nizami curriculum commonly used in madrasas across South Asia. Many madrasas have significant transnational

links, particularly to Pakistan, as well as to the Gulf countries; links include students, teachers, finances, and thought.³⁰⁴ Links tend to be informal, posing challenges to government madrasa reform initiatives.

Education is a priority among many faith-inspired NGOs, particularly for girls. Fewer girls are enrolled in religious schools than in regular schools. In 2007, girls comprised 36 percent of the total student population, while they made up only some eight percent of the students in Islamic education institutions. Traditionally, many girls are taught religious education in the home.

Gender

During the conflict and civil war in the 1980s and 1990s, women were a target of armed violence, rape, and sexual assault. Violence against women was both commonplace and employed as a method of dishonoring families and communities.³⁰⁵ Violence was exacerbated by the Taliban regime's rules regarding the visibility of women in the public sphere. Women were to stay at home under the observation and control of husbands and male members of the family.

After the fall of the Taliban government, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) was established following the Bonn Agreement as the government ministry in charge of women's issues and tasked by the transitional government of Afghanistan to advance the role of women.³⁰⁶ MoWA collaborates with religious leaders in its mandate.

A faith-inspired education initiative launched by the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Asia Foundation focuses on lowering maternal and infant mortality. Involving religious leaders was a key project component, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs was involved in the campaign.³⁰⁷ Following the education of religious leaders, some mullahs began distributing condoms while others used the Quran to support a method of birth control through prolonged breaks between births.³⁰⁸ UNDP organized a meeting in 2009 with 300 Islamic scholars on the role of women in Islam.

Two networks of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) work to help women who are denied rights because of fundamentalist religious practices. The Taliban issued an edict that RAWA members would be executed if caught; today RAWA works underground to combat the women's oppression. RAWA runs orphanages and has established schools, income-generating projects, and medical treatment facilities for women.³⁰⁹ The Afghan Women's Network (AWN) is engaged in advocacy with the government, parliament, foreign missions, and the UN to work for gender empowerment and reinstate women's rights that were restricted with the strict Islamic interpretations of the Taliban government.³¹⁰

Peacebuilding

Faith-inspired actors are important in the Afghan peacebuilding context. Given the security realities, NGOs are unable to operate in many parts of the country. Local-level peacebuilding is traditionally led by local elders, including religious leaders, and over half of the conflicts in Afghanistan are dealt with at the local level through local mediation institutions.³¹¹

Informal justice mechanisms already exist in almost all communities. These local conflict mediators are generally called *jirga* or *shura*, meaning ‘council.’ In the councils, community representatives, including the elders and religious leaders, hear the details of a conflict and arrive at a verdict, which may involve a payment of a loan, an allocation of land, or other agreeable terms for mediating the conflict. *Jirgas* and *shuras* are not engaged by development organizations on a large scale but there are examples of constructive engagement. Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU) is one example of an organization that has been able to engage *jirgas* and *shuras* in conflict resolution and peacebuilding programs.³¹²

The USIP Mediation and Peacebuilding Training for Afghan Religious Leaders have supported two programs to involve religious leaders in the peace process. The Institute convened 50 Afghan *ulema* and religious scholars for two workshops on conflict resolution. Religious leaders were taught mediation skills using Islamic principles of nonviolence, along with methods to help communities confront histories of violence. An international summit on reconciliation in Kabul in 2010 with religious scholars from Afghanistan, Egypt, Jordan, and Pakistan worked on peacebuilding in the Muslim tradition and the responsibilities of religious leaders in the process.³¹³ Peacebuilding Across Borders, the second USIP project, aims to build a dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan. USIP initiated a series of dialogues from both sides of the border to generate trust and a common agenda for peace. The dialogue group participants were trained in conflict resolution and mediation by USIP experts.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as recently as April 2011, convened a meeting with 25 religious scholars from Nangarhar province to discuss causes of violence and strategies to end it. At the meeting, the head of the Department of Religious Affairs in Nangarhar province noted that a third party, such as the United Nations, can help in mediations efforts between fighting parties to advance resolutions of violent conflict. The results of the meeting were shared with senior UN officials in Kabul.

Some national faith-inspired NGOs work on conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts. The Afghan Society for Social Reforms and Development (ASSRD), as one example, is a Muslim-inspired organization that works for the spiritual and physical rehabilitation of Afghanistan. Its aim is to propagate Islamic moral values in communities to encourage peacebuilding.

Coordination and Development Partners

Both the government of Afghanistan and the International community have made significant efforts to improve coordination of aid and relief efforts. The Afghan NGO Coordination Bureau (ANCB) was founded in 1991 as a network of national NGOs in Afghanistan coordinating the activities among its members, with the Government, international organizations, and other donor agencies. ANCB has 350 Afghan member NGOs. The organizations receive grants from international organizations, including the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), “to promote best practices in NGO management among ANCB members and to build links within the Afghan NGO community, the government of Afghanistan, and international community.”

A second body, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), provides a forum to promote efficient and effective aid between and among member organizations and international bodies and governments. Some faith-inspired member organizations include: Adventist Development and Relief Agency International, Aga Khan Foundation-Afghanistan, Christian Aid, Cordaid, Catholic Relief Service, Church World Service, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Muslim Hands International, Norwegian Church Aid, Tearfund, United Methodist Committee on Relief, World Vision International/Afghanistan, and Zoa Refugee Care. Some members are also members of ANCB.

Two other coordinating bodies that have as members or engage faith-actors are the Islamic Coordination Council (ICC) and the South West Afghanistan and Balochistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC).³¹⁴ Discussed in the section on gender, two women focused networks are the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) and Afghan Women’s Network, both of which work on issues of religious and cultural tradition and gender equality.

UNFPA has collaborated indirectly with religious leaders through the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Asia Foundation. The partnership focused on family planning, gender-based violence, and conflict management.³¹⁵ UNDP and partner NGOs engage religious leaders on issues such as integration of human rights principals into local dispute mechanisms.³¹⁶

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

The Kyrgyz Republic, a predominantly Muslim country with significant Christian minorities, stands out in Central Asia for the significant level of involvement of faith-inspired actors in development activities. The Kyrgyz Republic has perhaps the most liberal environment within the Central Asia context for engagement of religious actors and faith-inspired development organizations, and leaders are involved in many sectors, including health, humanitarian relief, education, and advocacy, involving local, national, and international partners. The Kyrgyz Republic struggles nonetheless to balance the secular and religious spheres and consolidate Central Asia's first parliamentary democracy. The government seeks to combat religious extremist groups, some with transnational links, while creating an enabling environment allowing the majority of moderate religious communities to contribute to a peaceful society that embraces the nation's rich religious heritage. To date, government policies have sent mixed messages, on paper calling for freedoms and participation, but in practice restricting activities through bureaucratic barriers. After the June 2010 ethnic violence between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations, religion is looked to as a common thread to help heal and reconcile past wounds and sustain development.

Socio-Economic Background and Development Challenges

The Kyrgyz Republic, with a population of approximately 5.5 million and a former Soviet republic, borders Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China. The population is 65 percent Kyrgyz, 14 percent Uzbek, and 13 percent Russian, along with other ethnic minorities, including Dungan, Ukrainian, Polish, and Uighur.

The Kyrgyz Republic is classified as a low income country, with a GNI per capita of \$870 (World Bank); 43 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line, and poverty is most acute in rural areas. Extreme poverty however,

has been reduced to 6.6 percent (2007 UNDP data). A recent survey showed the unemployment rate to be about 18 percent; as in other Central Asian countries, a significant part of the Kyrgyz Republic's educated workforce migrates in search of employment, largely to Russia. Between 2004 and 2008, 800,000 Kyrgyz migrated to Russia.

Before last year's political and social unrest, the Kyrgyz economy was on a path to recovery following the global economic crisis, with GDP growth of nearly 8 percent in 2008, led largely by investments in private sector growth and energy. With the government transition and episodes of ethnic violence, economic growth prospects have dimmed. The economic downturn generated demands for humanitarian assistance, social services, and shelter.

In terms of social indicators, the Kyrgyz Republic's record is varied; resource limitations today put in question their sustainability. The Kyrgyz Republic has a 99 percent literacy rate, with near equality between boys and girls; secondary school enrollment is at 85 percent, with a slightly higher enrollment rate for girls than boys. However, challenges include insufficient resources to ensure adequate teacher training, to retain qualified staff, and to modernize management of educational institutions (UNDP).

The Kyrgyz Republic is making slow improvements in health, though long-term challenges remain. The country seems unlikely to meet health related MDGs. Child mortality is relatively high; 41/1000 children die before the age of 5, and the number of newborn deaths is increasing due to low quality of care and lack of adequate facilities. Though women have a significantly greater life expectancy than men (70 and 63 years respectively), maternal mortality is quite high and has slightly increased since 2005, from 78 to 81/100,000 births in 2008. HIV/AIDS and communicable disease rates have increased since 2000, particularly in the south; increased migration has been cited as one cause. Reported cases of HIV have increased from under 500 in 2003 to more than 2,300 in 2009, and tuberculosis is at epidemic level, with over 100

cases per 100,000 (UNDP).

Increasing gender inequality has characterized the Kyrgyz Republic in the post-Soviet period. Deteriorating social infrastructure including the closure of kindergartens and child-care facilities and the worsening medical services, have shifted responsibility for the care of children and families to women; this fortifies traditional understandings that women's roles lie primarily in the domestic/familial spheres. Women are increasingly active in political and public spaces, though many obstacles to full participation remain. Rosa Otunbayeva is the first female head of state in Central Asia, and as a result of an updated Election Code in 2007, women constitute about one quarter of the parliament, though there is only 4 percent female representation in local government bodies (UNDP).

Religion and the State

Religion has played a growing role in Kyrgyz society since the dissolution of the Soviet Union; the collapse of the atheist philosophy of the Soviet Union and the ideological vacuum it created was filled in part by religion.³¹⁷ Islam is the most widely practiced faith; 75 percent of the population identifies as Sunni Muslim (there are 1,619 officially registered mosques). Some 20 percent of the population identify as Russian Orthodox. Other religious groups account for five percent, including Protestants, Roman Catholics, and smaller groups of Jewish, Jehovah Witness, and Bahá'í. Ethnicity is largely correlated with religious belief; ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks tend to identify as Muslim, and ethnic Russians as Russian Orthodox or Protestant, though a growing number of Kyrgyz are converting to Christianity, largely to Protestant Churches. Overall, religious practice in the south is more traditional and devout than in other regions.³¹⁸

The Kyrgyz Republic has among the most liberal spheres for religious actors out of the Central Asian republics, and the new constitution ratified in June 2010 guarantees freedom of religion and separation of religion and state. In practice however, many activities remain restricted, and complicated government requirements for registration and obtaining permission for activities prevent many religious leaders and other faith-inspired actors from engaging in social welfare activities. Many religious leaders engage in social welfare activities on an unofficial and needs basis.

The government restricts the social activities of Muslim groups it categorizes as "extremist," and communities face restrictions and barriers to establishing new mosques and madrasas, contributing to tense relations between the government and Muslim communities. Proselytizing by Christian groups has contributed to tensions both in local Muslim communities and between Christian churches and the government. While numbers are not well known, there may be up to 50,000 evangelical Christians in the Kyrgyz Republic.³¹⁹

Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development

Faith-inspired actors have a limited though growing role in the Kyrgyz Republic. Civil society and NGOs, including faith-inspired actors, are increasingly active in social welfare and development activities in several sectors, including: health and HIV/AIDS, gender, human trafficking, programs for the elderly, and increasingly, since the events of 2010, peacebuilding. A 2008 law allows the government to contract NGOs to carry out social programs on its behalf. Faith-inspired organizations engaged in development include international NGOs, local faith-inspired NGOs, public associations, local religious leaders/congregations, and informal community movements engaging in social welfare and humanitarian work.

The State Agency for Religious Affairs is the government ministry responsible for the general oversight and registration of religious activity in the country. Specifically designated to oversee the Muslim community is the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Kyrgyz Republic (SBM) and the Muftiyat (spiritual board of believers headed by the supreme clergyman, Mufti of all Muslims in Kyrgyz Republic). Seven kazyyats, or regional departments of the SBM, operate at the regional level.

The Muftiyat itself cooperates with international development agencies, including USAID and Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia, among other international organizations, on programs related to education, HIV/AIDS prevention; it has participated in international symposiums and conferences. The SBM regularly provides charitable assistance to low-income citizens, distributing money, clothes and food to social groups including pensioners, orphans, and young unemployed parents.

The SBM is responsible for collecting Sadaqa Al-Fitr, (a religious duty of believers to donate money to the poor at the end of fasting) and distributing it to the poor; funds are disbursed in the following percentages: 40-50 percent to the Muftiyat, 10 percent to regional kazyyats, and the remaining 40-50 percent to mosques for discretionary distribution, including for public charitable assistance. In practice, mosques have very limited funds available for social charity, as traditional sources of funding only cover salaries of SBM clergy and Muftiyat staff; corruption and misuse of funds is also a concern.³²⁰

National/Local Faith-Inspired Organizations

NGOs and civil society groups, also referred to as Public Organizations, are growing in numbers in Kyrgyz Republic. Some organizations have an explicit faith inspiration.

A 2010 study, *Muslim Community in Kyrgyz Republic: Social Activity at the Present Stage*, provides a comprehensive study of the social activities of Muslim communities in the

Kyrgyz Republic. The community, the report underscores, is not homogeneous. “The level and forms of their social activity depend primarily on the ideological orientation and values of the jamaat (group).” The report notes four categories of organizations: formal clergy from regional *kazyiyats* (regional government religious ministry offices) and mosques; educational institutions (madradas, institutes, departments of theology at public universities and other religious schools and centers); public associations, foreign and local charitable and humanitarian organizations (including registered NGOs whose activities are based on the values of Islam; and informal community movements.

Some of the most active organizations are Adep Bashaty, Mutakallim, Sumayya, Dil myurok, Waqf al Islami, Sunnot, Assalyam, and Muassasah Shabab aalyami al Islami (World Islamic Youth Foundation).

Adep Bashaty was established by graduates of the University of Cairo and Al Azhar University and is working on projects including: academic scholarships for poor families, humanitarian assistance for the elderly, charity concerts, fundraising for secular schools, and for rural water supply systems.

Some organizations focus specifically on issues related to women and girls. UN OCHA noted in its June 2010 – 2011 flash appeal for support that faith-inspired organizations can be important partners in combating gender based violence, though they need support to build capacity and knowledge.³²¹

Mutakallim, a UN implementing partner, was established in 1999 by 12 female activists, and implements programs on issues including women’s rights and family issues; it collaborates with UN agencies on domestic violence, family issues, and HIV/AIDS. Mutakallim has branches in Toktogul, Balykchy, Karakol, Osh and Aravan. It has cooperated with the Red Crescent Society and is funded by international donors, including UNFPA. Another organization, the Women’s Community Foundation “Sumayya,” established in 2004, focuses on girls’ education and is working to open an elementary school in Bishkek’s twelfth district. The Public Foundation for Women “Ak Jooluk Ajary” was established in Bishkek in 2008 and is comprised mostly of young girls; it works with orphans, large families, the sick, and local schools. Yyman Bakyt (80 percent of its members are women), established in 2000, has programs to collect and distribute clothes to the poor and organizes *subbotniks* (voluntary cleaning of common spaces on Saturdays); they are financed in part by the UNFPA and coordinate with government ministries and universities.

Other Muslim organizations include Hadisi, which works on HIV prevention and other health issues in Bishkek, and Arysh, which focuses on internal migrants in Bishkek. Both organizations partner with the international Christian NGO, DanChurchAid.

Local religious leaders contribute to development initiatives, though involvement is very much localized and ad hoc; some leaders, however, partner with international NGOs on specific projects. International NGO representatives operating

in the southern region of the Kyrgyz Republic noted that government bureaucracy limits the official charity work local religious mosques and leaders can do, and waiting for official authorization significantly delays projects. As a result, work that mosques and local religious leaders do is mostly unofficial, particularly in peacebuilding and humanitarian work. Secular NGOs are increasingly looking to local religious leaders, as they hold the trust of local communities and can quickly mobilize local support.

The French development NGO, ACTED (active in Kyrgyz Republic since 1999), engages local religious leaders in border areas in Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan to implement peacebuilding projects, to collect and distribute humanitarian aid following the 2010 violence, and to organize communities around ACTED shelter programs.

Orthodox Christian communities face similar difficulties, since Muslim leaders and are difficult to partner with on an official basis, as they have to obtain permission from the central authorities in Moscow. Other primarily Protestant churches do work on an ad hoc basis. The Mormon Church in Bishkek has implemented small scale aid programs, and some Korean Baptist Churches provided humanitarian assistance on an unofficial basis following the ethnic violence in Osh.

International Faith-Inspired NGOs

Following the ethnic violence of 2010, organizations in Central Asia that did not have Kyrgyz Republic-specific programs offered humanitarian assistance through partnerships with local and international NGOs.

The ACT Alliance (an umbrella organization of Christian NGOs with over 100 members worldwide), has three organizations with a permanent presence in the Kyrgyz Republic: DanChurchAid, ICCO, and Kerk in Actie. Three organizations fund programs in the Kyrgyz Republic: Christian Aid, Church of Sweden, and Diakonien Katastrophenhilfe (DKH). As of December 2010, ACT Alliance members are continuing reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in southern Kyrgyz Republic. Long-term programming aims specifically at easing tensions and promoting reconciliation between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations, focusing in part on their common Muslim heritage and culture. The member organizations are also involved in shelter reconstruction and education, among other activities. ACT Alliance was an important source of humanitarian information during the June 2010 violence; its situation reports were circulated throughout humanitarian community. DanChurchAid and ICCO collaborated with World Vision in Uzbekistan on cross border/refugee response.

Other Christian international NGOs include: Catholic Relief Services/Caritas, Christian Aid, ADRA, DCCA, and Habitat for Humanity.

The Gülen Movement in Central Asia

Fethullah Gülen, founder of the Gülen Movement is influenced by his Sufi heritage, especially by the teachings of Said Nursi. Beginning in Turkey in the 1970s, the Gülen Movement places particular emphasis on education. Its learning centers, called “lighthouses” (isik evler), synthesize secular and scientific subjects with the religious values of the Qur’an. The goal is to encourage students to “internalize values of responsibility and self-sacrifice through collective prayers” and thus promote an economic and moral transformation of society. Today, the Gülen Movement has schools worldwide, with educational facilities from Central Asia to Europe and North America. Over the past 30 years, Gülen has opened over 1,000 educational institutions in more than 100 countries.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the movement began to work in Central Asia. The first Gülen schools appeared in 1992–93, and there are now schools in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and the Kyrgyz Republic. Kazakhstan has 30 high schools with over 5,600 students, and there are 11 high schools and one university in the Kyrgyz Republic with more than 3,100 students. The schools are managed by both local and Turkish

administrators. The curriculum incorporates scientific subjects with the social sciences; Russian is the primary language of instruction. These modern day Gülen lighthouses present themselves as a safe haven from “drug and alcohol use, premarital sex and violence.” Through the schools, the Gülen movement aims to reach vulnerable youth populations that lack other educational options. Gülen schools focus on the tenet of *hizmet insani* or “being in service to others.” With an emphasis on character development, the schools seek to mold students into respectful citizens that engage in moral and ethical behavior.

Through his educational project in Central Asia, Fethullah Gülen claims that he building “cultural bridges” between Turkey and Central Asia and between the Muslim world and the West. The Gülen movement has wide support from the Turkish diaspora community and promotes “dialogue with religious and secular leaders about democracy, human rights, and pluralism.” Some controversy surrounds the Gülen schools, and some governments, including that of Uzbekistan, see the schools as disproportionately promoting a Turkish identity. The schools are, however, often viewed as providing a quality and modern education.

Some International Islamic-inspired NGOs are active in the Kyrgyz Republic. The Aga Khan Development Network has both long-term development and short-term relief projects in areas including health, economic development, rural development, civil society technical assistance, microcredit, financial services, and cultural development. AKDN works with its local partner, the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP KG), to implement socio-economic development programs in rural mountainous communities in Osh and Naryn. AKDN also partners with government authorities, community organizations, and local civil society groups.

Muslim aid organizations without a permanent presence in the Kyrgyz Republic provided humanitarian relief following the 2010 ethnic violence through local partner organizations. Muslim Aid launched an appeal for food, medicine, and emergency supply donations to assist displaced populations, working through local partners to distribute aid. Islamic Relief France launched an appeal, operating through local partner organizations Mehr Shavkat and the Resource Center for Elderly People, to distribute food, hygiene kits, and plastic sheeting for temporary shelter.

Education

Government-regulated Muslim-inspired education centers around: *hujra* (traditional religious teaching, tending to be conservative and narrow in scope), madrasas, an Islamic university, and Islamic centers, foundations, and associations. The SBM officially includes 45 madrasas and Qur’an study classes (for which the curricula are mandated by the Ministry of Education), six institutes, one university, and 26 Islamic centers, foundations and associations.³²² There are also many non-official mosques throughout the country that offer unofficial education; in December 2008, there were 1,325 mosques and madrasas in the Osh, Batken, Jalalabad oblasts, according to the Central Asian News Service. Some unregistered madrasas operate in secret; their activity is restricted by the government, and they can be closed down if discovered.

The AKDN operates several schools in the Kyrgyz Republic. In 2002, AKDN opened a school in Osh, including an academic center with 22 classrooms and seminar rooms, a Learning Resource Center, a multipurpose gymnasium and a 200-seat cafeteria. The Aga Khan Early Childhood Development Program works in rural communities in the Osh and Naryn oblasts to build capacity in existing kindergartens and improve academic curricula. The program

supports 48 kindergartens and trained 80 kindergarten staff. AKDN is establishing a branch of the University of Central Asia (an internationally chartered university with branches in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and the Kyrgyz Republic) in Naryn, the Kyrgyz Republic, focusing on education to support economic and social development in the region.

The Gülen Movement also has schools, under the Sebat International Education Institute (Sebat), officially registered as an NGO in the Kyrgyz Republic. Since 1992, Sebat has opened 4 high schools, 4 university dormitories, the International Atatürk Alatoo University, the International Silk Road School, and the Secom Center for language and computer studies. The schools enroll more than 4,600 students.

Several Christian schools in the Kyrgyz Republic are operated by foreign registered NGOs. The Association of Christian Schools of Central Asia, as an example, operates five schools in northern Kyrgyzstan for nearly 550 students, and provides secular education, as well as education on Christian morals and ethics. The Central Asia Sharing Aid (CASA), a USA-registered NGO, operates and supports schools and orphanages in the Kyrgyz Republic and is seeking to establish a university. CASA partners with the Mercy Charitable Christian Foundation (MCCF), a Kyrgyz national faith-inspired organization operating schools in Tokmok, Ivanovka, Kemin, Belovodsk, and Kara-Balta.

Partners and Coordinating Bodies

An increasing number of coordination bodies exist in the Kyrgyz Republic, particularly following the international aid response to the 2010 ethnic violence.

United Nations coordination and cluster groups meet regularly. In Osh, ACTED, Catholic Relief Services, and Christian Aid are regular members of weekly coordination meetings.

The ACT Alliance coordinates with local NGOs (secular and faith-inspired), other international NGOs, the UN, and government bodies.

Faith-inspired organizations are part of several coordination groups; the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyz Republic unites more than 85 NGOs that focus on women's participation in regional, local, and national political structures. The AgeNetnetwork in Osh consists of civil society members and authorities working with older people in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Russia. DanChurchAid coordinates with AgeNetnetwork members. The Harm Reduction Network Kyrgyz Republic (HRNK) is a network of five NGOs that works on issues including HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, GLBT issues, and advocacy, and has been active since January 2004.

In direct response to the humanitarian need in 2010, approximately 10 local NGOs, under the leadership of Resource Center for Elderly (based in Bishkek) established the Mobile Group (MG) to engage relief efforts in Osh and Jalalabad. The group's focus is to receive requests and complaints on aid distribution and humanitarian efforts, check information, compile and deliver lists of those in need to the government aid organizations, and monitor and document cases. The MG is organized into four clusters: 1) documentation cluster; 2) distribution cluster; 3) information cluster; 4) human resource/coordination of volunteers cluster.

KAZAKHSTAN

While Kazakhstan is one of the most highly developed countries in Central Asia, with rich oil-based resources and impressive achievements in education and food security, it faces development challenges, some remnants of Soviet era tight media controls and low civic participation. A struggling medical system is a more recent problem. Kazakhstan is a predominantly Muslim country; while Kazakhstan has been relatively peaceful during the past two decades and sees itself as a beacon of harmonious interfaith and inter-ethnic cooperation, critics qualify the peace as a veneer for “quiet repression.”³²³ Religious communities report strict legal restrictions, uneven enforcement of regulations, and intrusive government oversight of their activities; as a result, engagement of faith-inspired actors in development seems to be limited, and accurate information is scarce.

Socio-Economic Background and Development Challenges

With 2.7 million sq. km, Kazakhstan is the ninth largest country in the world, but has a population of only 15 million. At the time of the 1999 census, the population was 53 percent ethnic Kazakh and 30 percent Russian, with tiny minorities of Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Germans, Tatars, and Uighurs. During the Soviet Virgin Lands Program of the 1950's and 1960's, Soviet citizens were encouraged to farm uncultivated northern Kazakh land, and the resulting influx of immigrants – both Slavs and other deported nationalities – left ethnic Kazakhs in the minority for decades. Independence in 1991 led to a wave of emigration, and the ethnic balance readjusted to a slight ethnic Kazakh majority.

Boasting the largest economy of central Asia, Kazakhstan has a GDP per capita of \$11,800 and enjoys increasing wealth due to major deposits of petroleum, natural gas, and coal. At the 1999 census, 12 percent of Kazakhstanis lived below the poverty line, with average life expectancy 68 years. Maternal and child mortality are quite high. The fertility rate is 1.87

children born per woman, and the infant mortality rate is almost 25 deaths per 1,000 live births.³²⁴ Though HIV/AIDS incidence is mainly limited to intravenous drug users, it is an important health issue, as is multi-drug resistant TB.

Kazakhstan has already achieved several MDG targets, such as poverty reduction, access to primary education and promotion of women's rights; the government adopted an MDG+ agenda in 2007. For example, Kazakhstan has moved on from general hunger and food security to “hidden hunger” or micronutrient deficiencies in women of productive age and children.

Education is one sector where Kazakhstan has seen impressive results. Kazakhstan reports a 99.5 percent literacy rate, and both men and women average 15 years of education. In 2009, it was ranked as high in human development by UNDP, in large part because its educational accomplishments;³²⁵ it achieved the number one ranking on the International Education for All Development Index (EDI).³²⁶ As of 2007, the government spends three percent of its GDP on education,³²⁷ and 12.5 percent of registered Kazakhstani NGOs work in education.³²⁸

Since independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has undertaken deep market reforms and created oil-based wealth. While the wealth has supported the expansion and development of urban centers, rural areas are under-served, and Kazakhstan is seeing growing socio-economic stratification and an undiversified, oil-based economy. Agriculture makes up just 6 percent of the total GDP and 31.5 percent of the labor force, while industry makes up 43 percent of the GDP, employing just 18 percent of the labor force; the 51 percent of the GDP earned in the service sector touches 50 percent of the labor force. While these figures suggest certain levels of inequality for an oil-based economy, its inequality levels are not notably severe; the Gini Coefficient in Kazakhstan is 29. Recognizing the risks of an undiversified oil-based economy, the government aims to develop the industrial sector further, and the new strategic development outlook shifted the corporate tax code to promote domestic industry.

Religion

Though Kazakhstan has long been predominantly Muslim, between the 1999 and the 2009 census the percentage of the population self-identifying as Muslim increased sharply, from 47 to 70 percent.³²⁹ Kazakh Muslims belong to a Sunni branch of Islam, the Hanafi school, infused with Sufi elements.

In 2010 there were 2,369 registered mosques, all but 70 of which operate under the auspices of the Spiritual Association of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK), which oversees imam-education and placement. Muslim communities that do not meet registration requirements at the level of a mosque may qualify as a house of prayer. They have permission to meet and teach but cannot build structures with minarets or hold prayer meetings on Fridays.

The largest non-Muslim religious group in Kazakhstan is the Russian Orthodox community, comprising one-third of the total population and served by 299 registered churches. There are 83 registered Roman Catholic churches and affiliated organizations; the Roman Catholic archdioceses account for just one percent of the population. While Protestant churches outnumber Russian Orthodox or Roman Catholic congregations, their individual congregation size appears to be quite small: 1,267 registered Protestant organizations with 543 places of worship.³³⁰ Registered synagogues serve Jewish populations in Almaty, Astana, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kostanai, and Pavlodar.

As Kazakhstan has made efforts to establish an independent identity in the post-Soviet years, many citizens have reinvested in religion as a means of self-definition. Some say that folk Islam, or Islamic doctrine enmeshed with traditional folk practices, defines what it means to be Kazakh.³³¹ In SAMK mosques, prayers are conducted in Arabic and Kazakh; minority ethnic groups have struggled in the past to register or secure imams who speak their native language.³³²

Religion and the State

Religious organizations are subject to the same strict registration rules as any other public association or NGO. Registration must take place both at the national level and in any province where the group carries out activities. Most religious communities do choose to register and are approved, though sometimes after long delays.³³³ Once approved, the government reserves the right to suspend activities by court order if the group undertakes work outside the original, approved charter or operates outside the approved jurisdiction.

Religious instruction is not permitted in schools. Local and foreign missionaries must register annually with the Ministry of Justice. As with registration as a religious NGO, missionaries must provide all literature and other material for official review: unapproved material is illegal for distribution in the country. Any foreigner entering the country and participating in religious activity may be subject to observation, questioning and expulsion.

In 2008, the legislature approved a draft law that would create a two-tier system, differentiating religious “groups” from religious “associations.” Association status would require a minimum of 50 members to register in a region and thereby earn the right to meet in public spaces and rent buildings for worship – activities which would be forbidden to smaller religious “groups.” The law would have further complicated the process by which religious communities could achieve recognition as a national group and have outlawed most public religious activity, effectively reducing religious practice to a private, government-sanctioned act. The law was ruled unconstitutional just before Kazakhstan assumed the chair of the Organization for Security and Change in Europe (OSCE), but human rights advocates worry that the legislation could be re-proposed as Kazakhstan’s term as OSCE chair has ended.³³⁴

Civil Society and Law

In the early years of transition from communist rule, hundreds of NGOs were established, primarily focused on human rights and democracy issues.³³⁵ Today, the number of NGOs is wholly debated: there may be as many as 31,201 NGOs registered in the country; however as few as 1,000 of those are active.³³⁶ In recent years, NGOs’ missions have branched out from human rights and democracy to address service delivery gaps and a broad array of human development challenges. These NGOs are based in and primarily serve urban areas fueled by a new middle class; rural NGOs are rare, compounding rural development challenges.

Law governing NGOs does not differentiate institutions, public associations, joint stock companies, consumer cooperatives, foundations, religious associations, or types of unions: all qualify as “noncommercial organizations” under Kazakhstani law. Any public association must have at least 10 members, the majority of whom must be Kazakhstani; this includes religious entities, which may be founded by foreigners if the majority of members are citizens. Unregistered associations are subject to administrative and criminal liability. Courts have defended registered NGOs’ right to exist when brought to trial but law enforcement has enforced legislation unevenly.³³⁷

Recent legislation from May 2007 allows the Kazakhstani government to fund NGOs directly through government service provision tenders. Prior to this legislation, select NGOs enjoyed close relationships with the government through the patronage of high-ranking officials. It is unclear if the new legislation has opened opportunities for smaller, local, unconnected, service-providing NGOs.

Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development

Knowledge of faith actors in Kazakhstan is quite limited, and it is difficult to determine to what extent faith-inspired organizations are working in the country. Faith-inspired organizations and communities are subject to the same

regulations as NGOs and religious associations. There is, however, some concern that authorities have restricted or placed pressure on religiously-inspired charitable activity, including the closing of a Protestant-run drug-rehabilitation center. There are also reports of minority religious leaders being barred from visiting prisons and psychiatric homes.³³⁸

Among the major international faith-inspired organizations active in Kazakhstan are the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), Caritas, and the Gülen Movement. AKDN is currently building in Tekeli, Kazakhstan one of the three campuses of the University of Central Asia. Caritas Kazakhstan, which has an operating budget of US\$100,000 and a staff of 10, was founded in 1998 to help alleviate both the effects and causes of poverty. Many of Caritas Kazakhstan's projects focus on improving Kazakh health systems; in the twelve years of its operation, it has helped set up 28 Centers of Medical Help for those unable to afford full healthcare. It has also provided humanitarian assistance in the wake of emergencies and disasters.

DanChurchAid, ICCO, and Kerk in Actie all support projects in Kazakhstan through local partners under the auspices of the ACT Alliance. The World Bank lists Food for the Hungry and Northwest Medical Teams International as faith-inspired groups active in Kazakhstan; however, the groups' respective websites make no mention of their activity there.³³⁹

The Gülen Movement now operates 28 schools; a recent Time article reported that a Gülen education is in incredibly high demand.³⁴⁰

Partners and Coordinating Bodies

The only coordinating body with a specific focus on faith-inspired organizations is the ACT Central Asia Forum, which evolved from a pilot 'ACT Development Forum' established in Central Asia in 2007, (itself a successor to the Ecumenical Consortium for Central Asia). Current members of the forum are Christian Aid, DanChurchAid, ICCO and Kerk in Actie. The forum works with over 40 local partners to ensure secure livelihoods and access to basic services.

Kazakhstan also has a number of broad NGO coordinating bodies. There are two national NGO associations in Kazakhstan: the Almaty-based Association of Non-Governmental Organizations of Kazakhstan (ANOK), and the Astana-based Confederation of Non-Governmental Organizations of Kazakhstan (CNOK). Several oblasts and regions support more local NGO networks.

The Association of Non-Commercial Legal Entities, Jalgas-Counterpart, supports and unites Civil Society Support Centers (CSSC) in nine different provincial locations.³⁴¹ The CSSCs, which provide legal advisory services, are part of the Civil Society Support Initiative led by Counterpart International. This initiative is one of several serving NGOs in Kazakhstan: similar resource networks are funded by groups

like the Soros Foundation, the National Democratic Institute, and the UNDP.

Other networking resources include the Decenta Public Association in Pavlodar, the Almaty-based NGOs Central Asian Sustainable Development Information Network (CASDIN), and the Institute for Development Cooperation. The International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC) is also active in Kazakhstan, providing capacity building training programs. The Eurasia Foundation's Kazakhstan Open Budget Initiative works to increase civic engagement in the process of budget development and monitoring to better meet the needs of local constituencies.

TAJIKISTAN

Islam plays a growing and influential role in social, political, and development spheres in Tajikistan. The Tajik context is unique within Central Asia. Faith-inspired organizations and religious leaders are important and active participants in social development, working independently and in partnership with national and international development organizations; at the same time, the government is increasing efforts to monitor and direct all activities. Overall, the religious environment is restrictive; only those actors in line with government priorities are able to operate freely and engage socially. Government policies to combat religious extremism help shape the environment in which religious actors operate, creating many barriers. Religious persecution and bureaucratic red tape are significant. Long-term development challenges include rebuilding education and health systems where institutional capacity and financial resources are limited. Tajik religious leaders are influential in their communities, and many development practitioners argue that their involvement is crucial for sustainable development.

Socio-Economic Background

Tajikistan is the poorest of the former Soviet republics, with over 47 percent of the population of seven million living below the national poverty line (GDP 2009 per capita (PPP) \$1900). Though there are improvements in some areas (Tajikistan's 2010 Human Development Ranking is 112/182, up from 127 in 2009), Tajikistan is not on track to meet MDG targets for health, education, and poverty alleviation.³⁴²

Tajikistan's economy was particularly hard-hit by the global economic crisis; rapid GDP growth averaging nine percent per year from 2000-2008 declined to 3.4 percent in 2009. Economic recovery is largely dependent on the external economic environment, particularly Russia, to which it is tightly connected through remittances and trade.³⁴³ GDP growth is expected to pick up in 2010 as exports are increasing and remittances have rebounded. The State

Statistics Agency reports that 11.5 percent of the working age population is unemployed, and a substantial 40 percent remain underemployed.³⁴⁴

The government reports a literacy rate of near 100 percent, though Tajikistan's education system has suffered greatly since independence, largely due to large-scale emigration of professors and the educated population, and insufficient government funding. International development organizations, including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, are supporting the modernization of education and improvements in quality. School attendance, especially for girls, has declined; gross school enrollment is near 96 percent for primary school, but levels drop to 84 percent for secondary school; the ratio of girls to boys in school is lower than other Central Asia countries at .96 and .87 respectively. Demographically, nearly half of Tajikistan's population is under 14 years of age.³⁴⁵

Life expectancy in Tajikistan is the second lowest in the WHO European Region, at 61 years, and decreasing (WHO estimate); the official national figure is 72 years. Several factors explain the decline, including poor nutrition, polluted water, and increased incidence of diseases (malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, typhoid and cholera, and cardiovascular diseases).³⁴⁶ Infant mortality is high, at 60 per 1,000 live births, as is child mortality; under five mortality rates are approximately 61/1000, significantly higher than the average of 21/100 for Europe and Central Asia.³⁴⁷

Gender inequity has increased significantly since the breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of Tajikistan's civil war (1992-1997). Women have had to assume most household responsibilities, as the state does not have the resources to sustain Soviet era social services; traditional cultural patriarchal attitudes reinforce traditional gender roles. Women also face discrimination in the workplace and are rarely promoted to management positions. Women are vulnerable to trafficking (largely to Russia and the Middle East), and to gender-based violence.³⁴⁸

The government retains many Soviet governance structures, contributing to bureaucratic inefficiencies, and has insufficient resources to sustain equitable development. Corruption is a serious problem, inhibiting economic and social development in areas including health and education, and discourages foreign investment.³⁴⁹

Religion and Society

Islam has taken on a prominent role in Tajik society since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Tajikistan is 98 percent Sunni Muslim, with a small Shia minority. The remaining two percent include Russian Orthodox, Catholic, Buddhist, and Jewish faiths. There are also small Parsi and Ismaili (Muslim) communities. There is no state religion, though the government recognized the “special status” of Hanafi Islam in 2009; Tajikistan is the only former Soviet republic to officially endorse a religion.

Tajikistan’s government currently only recognizes three religions; Sunni Islam, Shia/Ahmediyya/Ismaili branches of Islam, and Russian Orthodox. The Salafi and Wahabi schools of Islam are currently illegal, and the government conducts military campaigns to combat extremist groups, concentrated in the Rasht Valley. All religious communities are required to register with the State Committee on Religious Affairs (SCRA) and with local authorities.³⁵⁰ Failure to register with the SCRA can result in both fines and forced closure of religious institutions.

Laws restrict the number of mosques that can be registered within a given population, and many mosques have been shut down by government authorities. The government regulates religious education; 19 religious madrasas and one which teaches secular and religious education are registered. The only higher education Islamic institution is the Islamic Institute of Tajikistan, where all faculty and curricula must be approved by the government ministry.

Religious interpretations in Tajikistan often infringe upon women’s rights and freedoms. A 2006 Council of Ulema fatwa against women attending mosque remained in effect as of November 2010. Female students must follow traditional Tajik dress while attending school.³⁵¹

Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development

The role of faith-inspired actors in development is complex. On the one hand, faith-inspired and religious actors are governed by strict government controls, while at the same time, they do play active and growing roles, and several development organizations engage religious leaders.³⁵² International faith-inspired organizations, local NGOs, and local imam khatibs are active in areas including HIV/AIDS, health, peacebuilding, and humanitarian relief, among other sectors.

Tajikistan receives Islamic law-compliant loans from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). IDB financing supported construction of the Murgab-Kulma Pass Highway, and the IDB, in partnership with the Regional Committee of the Red Crescent Society, provided baby food and supplies to support the nearly five thousand people affected by severe floods in May 2010.

Some international Muslim-inspired development organizations have offices in Tajikistan. The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) has been in Tajikistan since 1992 and employs almost 3000 people. Sectors of focus include institutional strengthening, rural development, financial services, tourism, and education. AKDN coordinates a network of development organizations and companies, including the Pamir Energy Company (created in collaboration with the IFC following the civil war to rebuild electric infrastructure), Indigo Tajikistan (the second largest by subscriber, and largest by revenue mobile phone company in Tajikistan), and is constructing the five star Serena Hotel in Dushanbe (AKDN already runs the Serena Inn in Khorog) to further develop the tourist industry. AKDN runs educational institutions, including a private school (Aga Khan Lycée – grades 1 -11), and the University of Central Asia, as well as scholarship programs. It also collaborates with the government to support existing government schools.

The Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation (IKRF), an Iranian humanitarian and relief NGO based on Islamic values, began working in Tajikistan during the civil war in 1995. IKRF’s work focuses primarily on widows and orphans, both important tenets of Islamic charity; they also work with poor female heads of household. As of spring 2007, IKRF had five offices in the country, with plans to establish two more.³⁵³

The Turkish-Muslim-inspired NGO, IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation, also works in Tajikistan on programs for orphans, disaster relief, and assistance to families during Muslim holidays.

Several international Christian organizations have an in-country presence. From the ACT Coalition of Christian organizations, Christian Aid has a permanent office, focusing on women and youth, health, and disaster relief programming. Five ACT member organizations implement programs in Tajikistan through local partners: Bread for the World, DanChurchAid, ICCO, Kerk In Actie, and Lutheran World Relief. The consortium supports different programs, including the creation of Self Help Groups to mobilize communities to engage NGOs, religious organizations, and local authorities to solve community problems.

Other Christian-inspired organizations in Tajikistan include Caritas, Catholic Relief Services, and Habitat for Humanity.

Peacebuilding and Education

Religious leaders play important roles in peacebuilding, particularly at the local level. Communities often approach religious leaders to resolve disputes before exploring other avenues of resolution.³⁵⁴ Past initiatives, such as the Tajik Dialogue Program (2003 – 2009) of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, focused on confidence building between secular and religious actors to find peaceful solutions to conflicts with religious dimensions.³⁵⁵

In education, in addition to the AKDN schools, the Gülen movement operates six Turkish-Muslim-inspired schools. Unofficial private schools/madrasas and hujras are widespread; as they are illegal, they tend to operate in secret, and exact numbers and range of curricula are not known.³⁵⁶ Development practitioners in Tajikistan have expressed concern that a general lack of education on Islam among many imam khatibs is a barrier to quality education, especially in unofficial schools. Caritas and some Baptist organizations also support education.

HIV/AIDS

Faith-inspired organizations and religious leaders have made particularly progress in HIV prevention. In May/June 2009, DanChurchAid, ICCO, and Christian Aid conducted a study in the border regions between Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic. The study surveyed attitudes of religious leaders towards HIV/AIDS, with an aim to increase cooperation between development and local religious institutions in Central Asia. The study reported that some 80 percent of imams in Tajikistan thought that mosques should be concerned about the spread of HIV epidemic in Central Asia.³⁵⁷

The local Muslim-inspired Tajik NGO, Center on Mental Health and HIV/AIDS runs a training program for imams on HIV prevention. The seminars are taught by other influential imams and train participants to teach HIV prevention during weekly sermons. Imams also hold community groups in the mosques to discuss social issues, including HIV prevention.³⁵⁸ As of January 2011, the government must approve all sermons; it is yet to be determined what, if any, effects this will have on program implementation and effectiveness.³⁵⁹

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, along with CAPP (Central Asia Prevention Program), actively seek to engage religious leaders in their programming. The UNDP Program on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria Control (the principal recipient of the Global Fund in Tajikistan) signed an agreement with Islamic Institute of Tajikistan for a project entitled “Islam and Healthy Life Style/Prevention of the HIV/AIDS from Islam’s Point of View;” the first training was held in September 2010.³⁶⁰

Partners and Coordinating Bodies

UNDP is the principal coordinating body for NGOs and development organizations and works with over 80 partner organizations; faith-inspired partner organizations include: AKDN, Christian Aid, and Caritas.³⁶¹

The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the Tajik Aid Coordination Unit within the government also organize coordination meetings among donors and development organizations.

TURKMENISTAN

Turkmenistan's transition from Soviet Republic to independent nation in 1991 has been marked by many challenges, especially for human development and governance. Under Saparmurat Niyazov, president from 1990 until his death in 2006, Turkmenistan followed isolationist, authoritarian, and deeply centralized economic and social policies, in addition to imposing what many have termed a cult of personality, whereby months of the year, common vocabulary words, and even cities were re-named after himself or his family members. Notwithstanding substantial income from oil and gas exports (Turkmenistan has the fifth-largest gas reserves in the world), human development indicators suffered greatly during the Niyazov period, and freedoms of expression and association (including religious) were highly restricted.

Since he took office in 2007, President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov has pledged to build “a harmonious, inspired, humane, and developed society” in Turkmenistan.³⁶² In the social sectors, especially health and education, the government has pledged reforms to bring Turkmenistan to par with international standards.³⁶³ Turkmenistan is also a signatory to the Millennium Declaration and is working to achieve the MDGs. Progress, however, is elusive and data on development indicators is especially poor. Rural infrastructure projects are a top priority for the government, as is improvement of agricultural production, which accounts for 22 percent of GDP. However, still higher priority goes to expanding oil and gas markets outside of Russia, its main trading partner to date, and improving its foreign relations.

Activities of faith actors, in both the religious and development contexts, are severely restricted; apart from officially approved religious institutions and officials, faith actors play negligible roles in civil society and social development.

Socio-Economic Background

Turkmenistan's population of almost 5 million is about 89 percent ethnic Turkmen, with minorities of Uzbeks (five percent) and Russians (four percent). The GDP per capita in 2009 was estimated at \$6700. After an uncertain period following independence, Turkmenistan saw rapid economic growth (official figures put annual growth at 12 percent), fueled by large oil and gas exports to Russia and Ukraine. As a result of a gas pricing dispute with Russia, growth declined in 2007, which halted all exports for nine months.³⁶⁴ This partly explains recent efforts (namely, new pipelines) to diversify hydrocarbon exports to include China and Iran.³⁶⁵

The majority of Turkmenistan's population has benefited little from this rapid growth, and their welfare is stymied by endemic corruption, a poor educational system, and a highly centralized economy.³⁶⁶ Some 30 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line (2004), and unemployment stood at 60 percent. Close to half of Turkmenistan's workforce is engaged in the agriculture sector, but productivity is limited due to poor growing conditions (Turkmenistan has a desert/arid climate), poor irrigation techniques, and a quota system that offers limited incentives for increased productivity.

Turkmenistan defines itself as a secular democracy and the first elections were held in 2007, after the death of President Niyazov. However, opposition political parties are banned from the public sphere, and many continue to regard the government as strictly authoritarian. The government is currently transitioning to a civil law system with influences from Islamic law tradition.³⁶⁷

Religion, Law, and Society

Turkmenistan's contemporary religious history, like many of its Central Asian neighbors, was heavily influenced by the Soviet Union. Islam is the predominant religion; about 89 percent of the population is Sunni Muslim. Nine percent of the population identify as Eastern Orthodox (Christian). Under Soviet rule (1924 to 1991), religious practice was banned and criminally prosecuted, and many mosques were shut down or used for other purposes. After independence, President Niyazov declared Turkmen cultural (including religious) revival one of his key priorities and ordered public schools to teach basic Islamic principles.³⁶⁸ The revival, however, was very much along the lines of his personal ideology, which was later published in the *Ruhnama*, a collection of his writings that was mandatory reading material for all Turkmen citizens. Prayers were followed by an obligatory oath to Turkmenbashi, or leader of Turkmen, as Niyazov frequently referred to himself.

Although President Berdymukhammedov has dismantled his predecessor's personality cult, religious organizations remain tightly controlled by the state authorities. In 1994, Niyazov created the Council on Religious Activities (*Gengenshi*) which, together with the Cabinet of Ministers, remains in charge of training and appointing all clergymen, along with monitoring their activities. All religious institutions, including madrasas, must be licensed by the Justice Ministry.³⁶⁹ Religious political parties are banned, and clergymen must be trained in Turkmenistan to be approved and promoted by the authorities.³⁷⁰

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion and separation between church and state. However, the government monitors all forms of religious expression, and unregistered religious activity is banned. The government limits the activities of unregistered religious groups, prohibiting them from holding public gatherings, proselytizing, or disseminating religious materials.³⁷¹ Few religious groups are allowed to register; as of August 2010, only eleven religious groups (aside from Muslims and Russian Orthodox Christians) were successfully registered.³⁷² "With significant barriers to registration, some groups choose to forgo the bureaucratic process and operate covertly, although the penalties for unregistered activity can be severe."³⁷³ Amnesty International reports that since the mid-1990s, hundreds of foreign members of minority religious groups have been deported.

Development Challenges and Progress

Turkmenistan's health and education sectors were particularly neglected during the Niyazov era. The current government has announced strategies to improve both sectors, highlighted in the National Socio-Economic Development Program for 2011-30, released in May 2010. Turkmenistan signed the UN Millennium Declaration, but data on the progress of the MDGs is unreliable.

Government sources claim that 100 percent of Turkmen citizens are literate, but that reforms are needed. These include extending the mandatory years of schooling (reduced under Niyazov) from 9 to 10, reducing teacher workloads, and increasing salaries, and teaching Russian and English, previously banned.³⁷⁴ The government has reinstated the standard 5-6 year period for obtaining a university degree (it had been reduced to two years, even for medical school). University enrollment declined from 40,000 in the 1990s to 3,000 in 2004.³⁷⁵ The government plans to invest further to modernize infrastructure in the education and health sectors.³⁷⁶

Poor data in the health sector makes it difficult to assess quality, access to healthcare, and priority areas for intervention. By 2006, it is believed that all rural healthcare facilities had been closed, while access to facilities in the capital, Ashgabat, was extremely limited.³⁷⁷ The government has begun to report some data to the WHO, but only for some indicators; mortality rates for different age groups, for example, are not reported. Much data that is reported is believed to be unreliable, especially data on HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality, which is probably severely under-reported (the government denies that there are any HIV cases in the country).³⁷⁸ Though the government has pledged support for hospitals and health facilities, there are serious concerns about the quality of healthcare personnel and accessibility of these facilities. The government's commitment to improvements in the healthcare system has been questioned by many external organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders; their offer to assist the government on an MDR-TB (Multi-Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis) strategy was refused.³⁷⁹

Collapse of the social security system during the Niyazov presidency increased levels of poverty. The current government has restored pension payments for women over 57 and men over 62 (previously cancelled in 2006³⁸⁰). Internal travel restrictions have been relaxed; previously, Turkmen citizens were required to carry internal passports and needed express permission from the authorities to travel within the country. In rural areas, where most poverty is concentrated, a National Rural Development Program (2008-2020) emphasized improving rural infrastructure such as water, electricity, health facilities, schools and roads. As agriculture (mainly wheat and cotton) is a source of livelihood for over half of Turkmenistan's population, the government has raised internal prices under the state-controlled system and provided access to soft lines of credit.

Women are treated equally under the law, which guaranteed full political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms. Although Islam is the religion of the majority, women do not usually wear the veil nor do they practice strict seclusion, although most women work in the home.³⁸¹ Many women, both in urban and rural settings, have begun to work outside of the home out of economic necessity and are a significant part of the workforce, particularly in the health and education sectors. Most NGOs are led by women, predominantly Turkmen, as many Russian speaking people that previously held the posts have left the country.

Women do not represent a powerful political force, but some do hold high-ranking government positions. The Union of Women of Turkmenistan, the most important women's organization, "promotes the role of women in social, political and cultural life". Its leaders are members of the People's Council (or Khalk Maslakhat, the 2,507-member executive branch of government).³⁸² Turkmenistan still faces challenges on gender. Wage parity and marriage laws weigh against women, and many existing anti-discrimination laws are not strictly enforced.³⁸³

Development Organizations and Faith-Inspired Actors

Given legal restrictions, few faith-inspired NGOs can operate in Turkmenistan. An NGO law adopted in 2003 severely restricted the operations of civil society groups, religious or otherwise.³⁸⁴ Many NGOs cut back their activities or stopped their operations altogether. Gradually, some space is opening for secular NGOs, with some initiatives to develop civil society capacity, but these initiatives are limited and activities are restricted. A few organizations have found creative ways to work, as commercial entities or other alternate registrations, but none with a known religious affiliation. The Catholic Church and a few other churches have been permitted to register with the Ministry of Justice, but the nature and extent of their activities beyond traditional ecumenical functions, is not known. Even the groups that have been allowed to register face numerous obstacles in finding places to worship.

Education is a sector where some faith-inspired organizations operate, among them the Gülen Movement from Turkey, which operates 14 high schools and one university for over 3,200 students and 350 teachers.³⁸⁵ (See Text Box 17 on Gülen Schools). Madrasas do exist, but are under state jurisdiction both operationally and regarding curricula.

The Bahá'í community in Turkmenistan promotes community development as a pillar of their faith beliefs. Their reported activities include community meetings, communal worship, and classes for children and youth emphasizing moral education. Local Bahá'í communities are establishing projects aimed at social and economic development.³⁸⁶

USAID supports a three-year program through Counterpart International, the "Community Empowerment Program" (TCEP), focused on building the capacity of civil society groups who seek greater participation in local governance at the community level.³⁸⁷ The project has not engaged faith-inspired actors, though indirectly, Islam is an important factor in society and cultural traditions.

Coordinating Bodies and Development Partners

There are no coordinating bodies for development partners, and no umbrella organizations for NGO coordination. Turkmenistan is a member of the World Bank and IMF, as well as the United Nations, but is not an aid recipient. UNDP and UNICEF operate in the country with a limited mandate.

UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan faces a range of development challenges; the direction development in the country takes is largely dependent on the government's choice of development strategy. Uzbekistan confronts economic stagnation, social discontent, rising unemployment, and emigration of educated youth. Yet Uzbekistan has rich natural resources and impressive human development indicators. Tight political and social controls are epitomized in its president, Islam Karimov, in power since independence in 1991. While Uzbekistan has held several elections, they are not seen as allowing free and fair participation. Public space for civil society is limited, social protest has been met by violent suppression, and respect for human rights is an international concern.

Few international development organizations operate in Uzbekistan, and those that do are subject to strict government regulation that severely limits the scope of their activities. Religious activities in this heavily Muslim country are highly restricted, with the government often equating social activity by faith-inspired organizations with religious extremism. Limited instances of faith-inspired development work do take place at the community level.

Socio-Economic Background and Development Challenges

Uzbekistan has a population of about 28 million, comprising about half of the Central Asian population as a whole. The population is approximately 80 percent Uzbek, 6 percent Russian, 5 percent Taji, three percent Kazakh, and 6.5 percent other ethnic groups. Following independence in 1991, Uzbekistan saw a decade of rapid economic growth, followed by economic stagnation, rising unemployment, declining living standards, social discontent, and large scale emigration, particularly of the young educated workforce. Today, an estimated 30 percent of Uzbeks live below the poverty line, of which nine percent live in extreme poverty.³⁸⁸ In 2009, GDP per capita PPP was estimated at \$2,800.

Uzbekistan's economy is structured around industries developed during the Soviet Union. It is the second-largest cotton exporter and is rich in natural resources including oil, gas, and gold. It was the only former Soviet Republic that surpassed its estimated 1989 level of GDP by 2001.³⁸⁹

The record on social indicators is mixed. It has achieved the MDG for gender equality at primary and secondary school levels and has nearly universal access to quality education. It is probable that it will attain the MDGs for quality education and gender equality in higher education as well (some 45 percent of students at the post-graduate level are women, and 37 percent at the doctoral level).³⁹⁰ The 2009 literacy rate was 99 percent, and Uzbek adults have received on average ten years of schooling.³⁹¹ Moreover, Uzbekistan's highly educated and skilled labor force faces close to 20 percent underemployment, in the face of limited economic opportunity. Life expectancy at birth is just over 68 years, though healthcare quality has declined since the breakup of the Soviet Union.³⁹²

Since independence, and despite gender equality in education, there has been a gradual return to traditional gender roles (from relative gender equality during the Soviet Union). Women's participation in the labor force (58 percent) is lower than that of men (70 percent), and women are increasingly seen as homemakers subordinate to men in the household.³⁹³ Women in government leadership positions, however, rose from six percent in 1994 to 16 percent in 2005.

Women's health indicators have shown some improvement. The maternal mortality rate dropped to 30 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2008 (compared to 53 in 1990), although there is significant variation in rates across Uzbekistan's provinces.

Uzbekistan has rather tense relationships with Western countries, in large measure due to its human rights record. Ties have improved somewhat in recent years, in part because the US has sought military bases, and Europeans alternative

energy sources. Uzbekistan's public/civic sphere is limited. Political opposition is tightly restricted, the media is censored, and the president holds most decision making power, (despite constitutional provisions for separation of powers).³⁹⁴ Religious extremism and terrorism tend to dominate the political agenda.

Religion and the State

Islam plays important, though often complex, roles in Uzbek society. Uzbekistan has the largest Muslim population in Central Asia; approximately 26 million, or 96 percent of the country, identify as Sunni Muslim. About five percent are Russian Orthodox. Sufism has witnessed a strong revival in Central Asia, particularly with the Sufi Naqshbandi order in Uzbekistan, and is often portrayed as an alternative to extreme adherences.³⁹⁵ The government reached out to the Sufi-led Islamic Supreme Council of America (ISCA) and asked representatives to observe the 2000 presidential elections.³⁹⁶

Since independence, Uzbekistan has witnessed an Islamic revival, and the government is concerned with a rise in religious fundamentalism. Although the constitution mandates freedom of religion, the government bans all non-approved religious activities, while promoting a state-sponsored Islam.³⁹⁷ Unregistered organizations and those who practice outside state control are subject to persecution; some 6,500 Uzbeks are in prison charged with religious extremism, or because of their political beliefs.³⁹⁸ The Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Uzbekistan is in practice a state-controlled agency which oversees mosque functions and religious sermons.³⁹⁹ The government has responded forcefully to civic protests believed to have extremist elements. A 2005 government crackdown on a civilian protest (said by the government to have been organized by Islamist extremists who aimed to overthrow the government) resulted in hundreds of casualties.

Faith-Inspired Organizations and Development

Civil society has a limited role in social and development work in Uzbekistan. Relatively few NGOs, secular or faith-inspired, have a presence in the country. As of 2005, the government requires the re-registration of all NGOs, in practice severely restricting NGO activities. Official government figures as of November 2010 report that over 5,100 NGOs operate in Uzbekistan, more than double than in 2000.⁴⁰⁰ However, outside reports suggest a far smaller number (415), with tight restrictions imposed on foreign and domestic NGOs, including controlling of funds, forced closures, or denied registration.⁴⁰¹ The mandatory registration process for NGOs is complicated and bureaucratic, and registered NGOs must ensure that the government has access to all program details. Even so, a few NGOs and other development organizations, including faith-inspired organizations, do implement diverse development programs in the country.

Uzbekistan joined the Organization for the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1995 and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in 2003. In 2009, the IDB, in conjunction with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), established the \$500 million Islamic Infrastructure Fund to make Islamic law compliant equity investments accessible to twelve member countries, including Uzbekistan.⁴⁰² The IDB has supported various projects, including supplying regional healthcare branches with technical equipment and adding in the reconstruction of major roads.⁴⁰³

Few international Muslim organizations operate in Uzbekistan. The Aga Khan Development Network runs programs to provide villages with solar power. Mosques are involved in charity at the local level through the Islamic practices of zakat, waqf, and sadaqah. Shrines serve as vehicles for channeling government funding into welfare services, and development of these shrines is one of the few areas where the government promotes independent Islamic development. The Oltin Meros Foundation, with the support of UNESCO, develops shrines around specific programs designed to promote economic development, including tourism and folk handicrafts.⁴⁰⁴

Several international Christian faith-inspired organizations operate in Central Asia, and some implement projects in Uzbekistan; programs focus on limited and clearly defined interventions and largely avoid politically sensitive areas, including human rights and advocacy.

Caritas International has branches in five regions of Uzbekistan, including the capital. Services include soup kitchens targeting the elderly and homeless, an after-school children's club, a medicine distribution project, and sports and computer literacy initiatives for children.⁴⁰⁵ World Vision, operates eleven community development programs that assist homeless children, promote HIV/AIDS prevention, and provide healthcare for people with disabilities. Habitat for Humanity currently provides water filters to villages.⁴⁰⁶

Some Christian groups have been particularly active in refugee assistance. The 2010 ethnic violence in Kyrgyz Republic left many ethnic Uzbeks dead or displaced. The ACT Central Asia Forum members in Kyrgyz Republic (Christian Aid, DanChurchAid and the Inter Church Organization for Development [ICCO]) maintained contact with partners in the border region to identify urgent needs, working with World Vision Uzbekistan.⁴⁰⁷ DanChurchAid is scoping possibilities for further engagement within Uzbekistan.

The government strictly regulates religious schools, and all religious education centers must be officially sanctioned and staffed by state-approved instructors. There are ten madrassas, including two for women; students who wish to become imams generally pursue university-level education at the Islamic Institute in Tashkent. The government does not permit Shia-inspired schools or private religious instruction. Many imams do, however, offer informal religious education, albeit illegally.⁴⁰⁸ Gülen Movement schools were banned in 2000.⁴⁰⁹

Imams belonging to registered mosques visit prisoners convicted of religious extremism to persuade them to follow a more moderate religious practice.

The U.S. Government has reached out to Islamic leaders in Uzbekistan to promote religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence. In 2004 deputy mufti and head imams from Samarqand and Surkhondarya traveled to the United States to study religious diversity in the U.S. A three-year Comparative Religious Studies Program, funded by the US Embassy in Uzbekistan, encouraged the development of school curricula teaching religious tolerance.⁴¹⁰

Women from local communities hold traditional regularly scheduled social or religious gatherings called gap. Gap in Uzbek means a gathering of women who adopt strategies for pooling their money and alternately using it in an effort to redistribute wealth. Gap networks tend to have limited financial or material resources, and they do not have formal relationships with development donors.⁴¹¹ Gap networks are a potential development tool utilizing traditional cultural practices to encourage women's engagement in development planning.⁴¹²

Partners and Coordinating Bodies

UNDP is the primary coordinating body between the government and other development organizations. World Vision Uzbekistan has worked to establish a development network with government institutions.⁴¹³ USAID, the ADB, UN Agencies, and the IMF also report some contact with faith-inspired groups. The ADB and UN collaborated alongside the government of Uzbekistan to create a "Living Standards Strategy" based on MDG targets.⁴¹⁴ The government produced its first MDG progress report in 2006.⁴¹⁵

APPENDIX 1: MAP OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA



APPENDIX 2: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT REPORTS – ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following articles (a selection of the entire series) were written as working papers and policy briefs through the Religions and Development Research Programme, undertaken by the University of Birmingham and funded by the UK Department for International Development. All articles can be accessed at <http://www.religionsanddevelopment.org>.

Mapping the Terrain

Muhammad Asif Iqbal, Saima Siddiqui, “Mapping the Terrain: The Activities of Faith-based Organisations in Development in Pakistan,” 2008.

This article maps faith-based activities in Pakistan, highlighting the key role they play in development. The study begins with a contextual historical study delineating the political history and religious demography of Pakistan. The growth of the faith-based development sector in Pakistan is discussed with reference to the colonial period, during which several of these organizations were formed. This article describes the religious terrain in Pakistan as pluralist and religiously vibrant. Despite the political reputation of the country as an Islamic Republic, there are vibrant non-Muslim religious communities, including Christian, Hindu, Sikh, and Zoroastrian (Parsi). Several members of these communities are active in the welfare and development arena, providing healthcare and education, and alleviating poverty. The article examines the emerging trends in the FBO sector, discusses the role of international FBOs in Pakistan, and analyzes how the development sector is changing.

The authors argue that FBOs in Pakistan are emerging as important members on key social and political issues. One area, however, where Islamic FBOs are not as engaged as their Christian colleagues is in interfaith dialogue. The authors suggest that while multiple FBOs are active in Pakistan – largely dealing with the same health, gender, and welfare issues – they do not often find consensus on how to approach particular issues. The largest FBOs involved in HIV/AIDS are local or

international Christian agencies, while most Islamic FBOs in the country do not focus on this particular health issue.

In a similar trend, Islamic FBOs are not as involved with drug rehabilitation as Christian development agencies, according to the authors’ findings. However, the Muslim FBOs are more likely (perhaps because of their majority religious status) to participate in some controversial political debates. For example, the authors assert that it was primarily Muslim FBOs that fought against the implementation of the Hudood Ordinance, a regressive aspect of Sharia Law that blurred the lines between rape and extra-marital sex. The authors use this example to discuss the role of FBOs in shaping the political and religious discourse of the country.

The authors also note that while Christian and Muslim FBOs are still active in Pakistan, the Hindu and Parsi FBOs are losing momentum and are closing down operations. Some of this decline is explained through the size of these minority communities, though the authors hint that interreligious and communal violence may also be another cause, particularly for the Hindu FBOs. For further areas of research, the authors highlight Sufi shrines as an unexplored potential development area. In addition, they note an emerging trend of urban FBOs providing religious and modern education, thereby presenting competition to the traditional madrasa system that only provides theological education. Because of their relative similarity in size, the authors suggest that a comparative study of Christian and Hindu FBOs in Pakistan would yield interesting analysis of minority religious traditions and their faith-inspired activities.

Masooda Bano, Padmaja Nair, “Faith-Based Organizations in South Asia: Historical Evolution, Current Status and Nature of Interaction with the State,” 2007.

This article maps the historical development of faith-inspired organizations in South Asia and their responses to colonial rule, revealing the complex relationship of faith-inspired organizations in South Asia to the state. For some organizations

involved in welfare work, the government is a complementary partner; for others, like madrasas, the state often questions the role of religious education within a modern worldview. Further, the report highlights, the relationship between political parties and the faith-inspired welfare organizations that they fund, as a feature of development work that is unique to South Asia.

In the first section of the article, the authors discuss the unique features of some of the largest religious traditions in South Asia, such as Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. They briefly describe passages in the sacred texts of each of these traditions that emphasize charity, almsgiving, and philanthropy.

After discussing the religions' commonalities on charity, the authors describe their differences in approach. In Hinduism, for example, there is an emphasis on temple worship, and many organizations are focused on constructing new temples or repairing old ones for the benefit of the public. In Islam, there is an emphasis on waqf, movable or immovable property that is used for Islamic religious purposes as a means of providing social services to the poor. Christianity, in contrast, has long held a clear focus on education and health, resulting in Christian mission hospitals and schools operating throughout the South Asian region. The authors suggest that not all religions are equally active in all sectors of welfare and development service provision. Health-based FBOs are weaker in Islam compared to Christianity. Religious education FBOs (such as madrasas) are much stronger in Islam than in any other religion, while Hindu organizations tend to offer the widest range of social services. And despite many FBOs seemingly overt religiosity, there are also a number of development organizations that are faith-inspired and yet choose not to identify as religious organizations.

The authors also take a historical approach, highlighting the development of FBOs from the colonial period into the modern era. During the colonial era, there was family prestige associated with philanthropy; the authors suggest that this is why such a large number of educational institutes and hospitals were established during that period. Other influences that contributed to the growth of FBOs include the rise of an educated middle class and local reactions to Christian missionary work (such as the emergence of several Hindu reform movements that also had a development focus).

The post-partition and post-independence era has ushered in more complex forms of FBOs in the region, including political parties that also engage in social welfare activities. As migration to the US, Canada, and Britain increase, what were once local religiously-inspired organizations are now growing into transnational or international movements and/or organizations. Donations are collected from diaspora communities overseas to build educational facilities, hospitals, and rehabilitation centers in local neighborhoods in South Asia. This growing trend has changed the dynamic between the state and FBOs. While some governments are happy to work with FBOs because of their international recognition and increased funding, other governments prefer to keep them at bay. The authors conclude that the future of FBOs in

South Asia, a religiously pluralist region, is particularly strong and that their range of activities will continue to grow wider and deeper.

Gender and Development

Sarah C. White, "Domains of Contestation: Women's Empowerment and Islam in Bangladesh," 2009.

This article analyzes Islam's ability to empower women in the context of development in Bangladesh, a country where gender inequality appears to be on the decrease at the same time that Islam is more engaged in development and civil society. Bangladesh is an odd mix of the secular and the spiritual, making it a particularly interesting site to research the intersection of gender, religion, and development. The author argues that although the state was founded on largely secular grounds, it has become more and more identified with Islam through the rise of madrasas and more public displays of religious observance. At the same time, women's participation in politics has also increased, along with a rise in literacy levels.

In order to delve more deeply into the complex forms of female empowerment in Bangladesh, the author focuses her ethnographic research on two women: a lower-middle-class woman who is also a member in the reformist missionary group Tablighi-Jama'at, and a wealthy urban woman with some informal religious roles. Both women value their faith and believe that it teaches respect and engagement in society; however, both are also part of a patriarchal society that places women in the center of the home with family.

The author finds a complex and diverse picture: the influence of Tablighi Jama'at motivates some women to pray and adhere more strictly to their religious obligations, while the Islamic political party Jama'at-i-Islami encourages women to stay with the family and abstain from political participation. The author asserts that both situations can be interpreted as methods of empowerment for these particular women in their specific contexts. She concludes that Western academics must expand their current models of empowerment models beyond a focus on sexual freedoms toward a framework that engages the complexity of Islam, development, and gender in Bangladesh.

Education (Madrasas)

Masooda Bano, "Allowing for Diversity: State-Madrasa Relations in Bangladesh," 2007.

In this article, Bano examines madrasa reform in Bangladesh as a potential model for other South Asian countries. After tracing the history of the madrasa system in Bangladesh from the colonial period into the post-independence era, Bano argues that there is a real divergence between the objectives of

reform for the traditional ulema and the educational standards of the modern government. At the same time, Bano notes the efforts and interests of the ulema themselves in improving the madrasa curriculum; one such example is the development of the Deoband schools as a reform movement from within the Islamic tradition- one that was met with resistance from more conservative groups. The ulema in Bangladesh and Pakistan are also committed to reviewing their texts so they can improve the level of education they provide for madrasa students.

Yet Bano highlights the discordance between the type of reform the ulema is willing to engage and the government's interest in making the madrasa curriculum more in line with modernity. The majority of the ulema sees this kind of reform – such as introducing secular and scientific subjects into the curriculum – as a betrayal of Islam and is hesitant to let the government control the dissemination of religion. This leads to a contentious relationship with governing bodies and an increased government suspicion that madrasas have a radical agenda.

The reform efforts have led to two madrasa systems in Bangladesh: the state-funded Aliya madrasas, which have integrated secular subjects along with Islamic education, and the traditionally structured Qomi madrasas. While the state-funded Aliya madrasa system has expanded over the years, the Qomi madrasa system has the strongest leadership and the most unity. And while graduates from the Aliya madrasas are competing for jobs in the open market, graduates from the Qomi system are fulfilling religious positions in mosques, leaving control of religious authority and interpretation in the hands of the Qomi madrasas. Hence, the Bangladeshi reform program is not the best model for integrating madrasas in a liberal society, but is a viable means of providing education in conservative societies. Anon concludes that any reform agenda, whether sponsored by the government or introduced by the ulema, will take time and a deeper understanding of the how the system works and its public appeal.

Masooda Bano, “Contesting Ideologies and the Struggle for Authority: State-Madrasa Engagement in Pakistan,” 2007.

In the post-9/11 environment, there has been considerable international attention on the madrasa system in South Asia, particularly in majority-Muslim nations like Bangladesh and Pakistan. Thus, the ulema and the madrasa leaders in Pakistan consider any government reform agenda to be associated with U.S. policy and are resistant to the changes. However, Bano suggests that the Pakistani government has itself had a madrasa reform agenda since the 1960s; it has been engaged in a tug-of-war with the ulema since that time to introduce modern subjects into the school curriculum and thereby integrate the madrasa students into mainstream society.

Bano contends that the madrasas have been able to resist reform because of the strong links between political agents and Islam and because of the strong support base between the more conservative elements of society and the senior ulema.

Bano also suggests that one of the major areas of contention is that the government tries to secularize the curriculum using a top-down approach, essentially telling the madrasa leadership to introduce secular subjects into the schools in addition to teaching Islamic subjects.

However, what the government fails to fully realize is that the madrasas are the main disseminators of Islamic education. Although the general population of Pakistan is a mix of socially liberal and conservative, there are a fair amount of parents that would like their children to be well-versed in Qur'anic studies and find the madrasas a viable and inexpensive option. Bano suggests that the government resist the temptation to integrate modern subjects into the curriculum, and instead push for modernization through allowing new interpretations of Islamic texts to be taught. This method would ensure that the students were engaging modern methods of interpretation and learning about the diversity within their own religious tradition. This type of education, although based in the traditional madrasa system, enables the students to integrate more fully into society and compete with graduates from elite private schools.

Bano notes the complexity of the situation in Pakistan where the government tends to be mostly secular, although the avowed ethos of the nation is Islamic, and concludes that until the governments of Islamic nations solidify their own identity as either religious or secular, madrasa reform coming from the government will be difficult to produce and sustain.

Padmaja Nair, “The State and Madrasas in India”, 2009.

Madrasas in India, where Islam is a minority religion, are in a unique position. They have the dual duty of providing education while maintaining the religious and cultural identity of their community. In India, the relationship between the state and the madrasas is immediately different because the government is both secular and democratic, and while it promises freedom of religion for all, it is still overwhelmingly Hindu.

The report notes that roughly 15% of India's population is Muslim- by far India's largest religious minority. But Nair asserts that despite these large numbers, Muslims are not fully or equally integrated into the social fabric and in some cases are heavily disadvantaged. One of the main areas of inequality that Nair describes is in the educational arena, where most Muslim communities are not as educated as Hindu communities and have less access to schools. The Muslim community, anxious to improve educational access for their youth, consider madrasas a viable option; however, the socio-political context of Muslims in India and the fear of radicalism mean that the madrasa system has met political resistance.

The first part of the article describes the historical evolution of madrasas in India, focusing on the period just before British rule. Nair goes on to address the post-independence agenda of the secular state and its relationship to minority rights

for the Muslim community. Employing a review of policy and program documents as well as interviews with leaders of national Muslim parties like Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind, Nair depicts the complex relationship between modernization, the madrasa system, and the Muslim minority. The report reveals that there has always been a strong relationship between the state and the madrasas, though this relationship has recently grown more complicated because of international politics and the increased fear of alleged terrorism linked to madrasa education. The Indian government legitimizes its interventions into madrasas because of their constitutional commitment to education for children between the ages of 6 and 14. In turn, the madrasas invoke their constitutional right to provide an Islamic education for their children. The report finds that – whether for political reasons or not – government intervention of madrasas in India has managed to dilute the religious content of the curriculum. Further, the report argues that the low numbers of Muslim children attending madrasas suggests that support for madrasas is influenced more by political and populist agendas than by a genuine interest in raising literacy levels.

The report suggests that the relationship between the state and madrasas in India is intimately linked to financial support. If the madrasas are receiving generous financial aid, they are willing to be more flexible with their curriculum, adding secular and vocational subjects to replace strictly Islamic ones. But the financial support varies from state to state and is often determined by partisan politics, thus creating further electoral tensions in areas with smaller Muslim communities. The constitutional obligations to minority communities also influence the government reform agenda, which differs from urban to rural settings. Nair notes that this study is limited to two particular Indian states with a specific historical relationship to the Muslim community and suggests that more extensive research be carried out in the region.

Masooda Bano, “Female Madrasas in Pakistan: A Response to Modernity,” 2010.

This paper addresses the recent demand for female educational facilities in Pakistan. Bano traces the historical developments of female madrasas in Pakistan since the 1970s. The demand for Islamic education among young women who have already received secular education is on the rise. Bano argues that globalization, mass media, and increasingly exposing women from middle income families to western notions of gender equality and independence create anxiety for educated women. Because they are educated, they want to find jobs and have careers that match their aspirations. Bano argues that research reveals that female madrasas are regarded as complementary to secular education rather than a substitute. The perception of family members is that madrasas increase piety and family-oriented values and provide knowledge and contacts for girls from rural areas. Furthermore, most families believe that madrasas increases the social status of female graduates in their local community.

Bano argues that the periods in the 1960s and 1970s which introduced new levels of liberalization within the country are responsible for the increase in female madrasas. In the 1960s, Ayub Khan, the country’s first martial law administrator, tried to emulate aspects of the west that he found progressive. He introduced Family Law Ordinances that discouraged polygamy by making it difficult to have a second wife without the permission of the first. In addition, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto encouraged women to participate in politics at the grass roots level and in senior positions.

These enhanced and more publically visible opportunities for women in politics and society caused the ulema to question whether they were doing enough to ensure that the women in their communities were not seduced by the liberal values of the west. Female madrasas emerged as a method to protect the traditional family unit and the family from what was considered pervasive western liberalism. Bano asserts that the notions of western feminism cannot accurately gauge the types of female empowerment that exist in Islamic contexts. Many Muslim women consider their engagement at female madrasas as a type of empowerment and compare their own role as the source of the Islamic family foundation with Western feminism. They argue the latter has resulted in high divorce rates, the breakdown of the family, and putting the elderly in nursing homes, all behavior that is reprehensible in Islam.

Bano argues that while secular education fills the youth with a sense of self-worth that is tied to economics and employability, the madrasa system goes beyond that. The female graduates from madrasas function to fulfill the girls’ desires as well as the practical aspects of their lives. The madrasa education makes them feel like they are more than just numbers in a capitalist market. Further, the girls note that their peers in secular institutions are filled with material desires for good clothes and jewelry. The girls from the madrasas, however, claim they have enough knowledge of the Prophet’s life to guide them through this life without getting attached to materialism. Therefore, they have more freedom than their peers and find pride in their duties as wives and mothers as well as students and teachers. Bano suggests that the main reason for the popularity of female madrasas is the value put on divine rewards over material success.

Faith-Inspired Political Parties and the State

Masooda Bano, “Markers of Identity: Religious Political Parties and Welfare Work- The Case of the Jama’at-i-Islami in Pakistan and Bangladesh,” 2009.

This paper addresses the reasons why so many political parties in South Asia also have substantial welfare programs that they organize, fund, and manage. Is it possible that welfare work is merely a way to win votes, or is there more substance to their behavior? If indeed the political parties only offer welfare services as a means of securing votes, it is worth asking why some very successful welfare organizations have little success in the polls.

An investigation of the welfare work of the Jama'at-i-Islami in Pakistan and Bangladesh reveals that this political organization is involved in a wide range of charitable, welfare, and development services, including healthcare, education, emergency relief, and orphan support. The organizations also charge a lower fee than the market rate for every service they provide.

Bano observes that the Jama'at-i-Islami is organized very differently in Pakistan than in Bangladesh because of historical, political, and practical reasons. Whereas the Jama'at in Pakistan has a strong network of welfare services, in Bangladesh the Jama'at members play key roles in a number of independent organizations that reflect their religious ideology and their commitment to social justice. While the Jama'at is a registered political party in Pakistan, it is periodically restricted and banned in some parts of Bangladesh. The study also reveals that although religious political parties are complex organizations and have difficult, often contentious relationships with the state, they do provide a number of welfare services to a large base of people and have strong networks with voluntary organizations.

Bano questions how the Jama'at decides to get involved in different projects and how, as an organization, it determines where its focus will lie. Bano suggests that the Jama'at's inspiration lies at the intersection of their religious commitments and the needs of the community. Therefore, education is a large concern for the Jama'at organization because it is an important emphasis of the Prophet and because it is critical for the economic and social development of the community. In addition, Bano argues that the Jama'at in Bangladesh and Pakistan are always seeking opportunities to help their community while remaining true to the tenets of Islam.

Bano concludes this article by noting that Western political theorists have not accurately understood the phenomena of the religiously-inspired political parties in the South Asian contexts. While these parties might reap some material benefits during the course of their work, the primary motivation is the welfare of the ummah and the promulgation of their religious ideology. Yet, they are competing for membership, citizen loyalty, and resources. This makes their relationship with the state and with other political organizations and actors particularly tricky because although they have a spiritual agenda, it is enacted in the political sphere. Bano also suggests that organizations in South Asia undertake welfare work because they consider it an integral part of their religious identity. The importance of welfare work also motivates party members and followers and provides them with tangible evidence of their work and of God's approval in this world.

Padmaja Nair, "Religious Political Parties and their Welfare Work: Relations between the RSS, the Bharatiya Janata Party and Vidya Bharatiya Schools in India," 2009.

This article addresses the distinctions between two of the largest political parties engaged in welfare and development services in India. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya

Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) have unique characteristics that blur the line between political party, religious party, and/or religiously-inspired welfare organizations. The BJP, which has held power at the national level multiple times, would not self-identify as a religious political party, although, arguably, their behavior is in part motivated by some religious commitments. In contrast, the RSS actively pursues a Hindutva agenda, while having strong ties in the political and welfare context with the BJP.

This study is based on ethnographic research in multiple states, particularly Madya Pradesh, the key state for BJP power, and Uttar Pradesh, where the group lost their political standing. Nair relies on interviews with key informants in several states. Further, the study tries to analyze the popularity of the Vidya Bharatiya Schools, their relationship to the RSS, and their role in education as well as increasing the RSS's Hindutva agenda.

After completing this research project, Nair found that the RSS promotes the idea of an idealized Hindu nation and the doctrine of Hindutva, which argues that Indian culture and identity is defined by Hindu culture. In many areas, especially where there are large numbers of Muslims, Sikhs, or other religious minorities, there has been criticism that Hindutva is a Hindu religious agenda. However, the RSS would argue that Hindutva is beyond religious identity, that it is a type of nationalism that encompasses other religious identities. Therefore, if one is an Indian, regardless of whether s/he is a Muslim, Christian, or Sikh, one is automatically also a cultural Hindu and should believe in the promotion of Hindutva. The leaders of the RSS have also been heavily criticized for promoting the interests of the upper castes and using welfare services as a method to invite conversions to Hinduism or to stop conversion out of Hinduism (a pertinent issue in the subaltern or Dalit community).

Nair asserts that the BJP was formed to further the political aspirations of the RSS, while the concept of the Vidya Bharatiya Schools arose from the desire to groom young minds to desire Hindutva for the future of their nation. Whereas the BJP is willing to dilute the Hindutva ideology to secure more votes, and hence keep them in power, the RSS is unyielding in the missionizing of their message. The secular ideology of the Indian government is also facing some complexities because of the Vidya Bharatiya Schools, as there is pressure from the state ministries to "saffronize" or in other words, "Hinduize" the school curricula. Some of these changes include rewriting Indian history to reflect a very particular Hindu perspective. As the Vidya Bharatiya Schools are state-funded, this causes issues for the secular government.

The article describes the difficulties in drawing sharp lines between the activities and ideologies of these three organizations. Despite its Hindutva agenda, the RSS is a welfare organization not a religious group, while the BJP is a political party that is hesitant to address its religious inspirations. Furthermore, the links between the three organizations are tenuous and, depending on the nature of the political environment, can run the spectrum. Sometimes, the BJP supports the RSS; yet at other times, the two organizations claim they have no

ideological connection. The Vidya Bharatiya Schools, while promoting an active Hindutva agenda, are also providing good education to the poorest members of society as a welfare service and do consider their activities as a form of missionizing. To conclude, Nair argues that the boundaries between religious organizations and political organizations with Hindutva agendas in India are difficult to define, and the borders between these organizations are also in constant flux.

Gurpreet Mahajan and Surinder S. Jodhka, "Religions, Democracy, and Governance: Spaces for the Marginalized in Contemporary India," 2009.

The authors discuss the role of the constitutional commitment to freedom of religion as the backdrop for the role of marginalized communities in India. The study recognizes that the diversity of India often means that organized religious parties do not always succeed in addressing the needs of the majority members of their community. On the contrary, not all members of the community choose to align themselves with one single party, but rather choose political representation due to affiliations such as caste, tribe, and clan. In this report, Mahajan and Jodhka engage case studies from Punjab and Maharashtra to discuss the political engagements of three religious communities: the Muslims, the Sikhs, and the Hindus. They suggest that despite globalizations and western influences, religious identity continues to be the most important determining factor of life in India. In addition, religion has both moral and social dimensions, and hence affects both the social and political decisions of religious individuals.

The study considers the elements of communitarian discord and empathy in these three distinct religious communities. The Muslims in Maharashtra are the largest religious minority, and yet politically they have been on the periphery. Communal violence and internal caste politics have further divided the Muslims in India and keep them from being a united political force. Similar to the subalterns, the Hindu Dalits, or Scheduled Castes of India, the Muslim population is internally divided and has not articulated a single, unified agenda. Further, there is a new trend of OBC or "Other Backward Classes" movements in which the marginalized Muslim community actively participates. This causes tensions within the Muslim community, as the OBCs are not comprised of the poor Muslims while, they claim, the wealthy elite Muslims largely ignore their complaints. Further, the formation of new OBC groups create complications with Hindu subaltern or Dalit communities who argue that the newly formed OBC groups are in the position to steal government benefits that should rightfully be theirs.

Other complications have arisen from the creation of OBC groups. Although the original census by the Mandal Commission did not consider religious distinctions to be a factor in determining the disadvantaged position of social groups, other communities have argued that religion is indeed a factor. While Muslims, Sikhs, and other minorities have formed OBC groups and are seeking government

benefits and welfare services, some Hindu groups argue that the OBC category is limited to those with caste discrimination and prejudice. This places non-Hindu communities in the unique position of bearing the burden of proof to prove to the government that the discrimination they face is due to caste pollution and politics as opposed to any other type of prejudice.

The report discusses similar issues in the marginalized Sikh community, describing the ex-Hindu community in Maharashtra that converted en masse to Buddhism post-independence, as well as hinting at potential issues in the Christian population as well. The authors argue that while religious beliefs and commitments can enhance a community's struggle for inclusion and political power, it can also hinder equal access to opportunities. In addition, as the diversity of their case studies reveal, it is not helpful to think of religious communities as monolithic groups that all agree on the same agenda. While religion is a part of an individual's identity, it is simply one of many identity markers, and for marginalized groups, this particular identity can take a back seat to their identity as marginalized peoples. In conclusion, the study asserts that personal religious freedom and religious expression in the political sphere are distinct and can often create contradictory and problematic responses.

Mohammed Waseem and Mariam Mufti, "Religion, Politics, and Governance in Pakistan," 2009.

The report discusses the role of Islam in Pakistan, and the relationship between Muslim organizations and development of welfare policy by government bodies. The study argues that the traditional role of Islam in the Pakistani political sphere has been functionalist. The state has employed Islamic language and pursued an Islamic agenda for the benefit of the country's long-term political goal. It has also tried at various points to control the religious message by co-opting the religious leaders, trying to change the curriculum at madrasas, influencing the ulema, and levying heavy taxation policies on religious shrines.

The ideology of Pakistan has been pulled in multiple directions since its formation in 1947. The report notes one dominant ideology in Pakistan that wanted the state to have a secular constitution after the Westminster model with a healthy dose of Western, liberal character. However, the study asserts that the country, its leaders, and its citizens have also struggled to define religion in the context of the country and in its political discourse. Further, the ulema have struggled to introduce religion into the political sphere through implementing sharia, while the elites have generally resisted and fought for a Western-style legal system with a few sharia accommodations. The tug-of-war between the complete implementation of sharia and maintaining the more liberal legal system has been a major factor in political discourse for the past 50 years. To complicate matters further, the country has experienced period of internal strife with violent attacks on the Christian and Hindu minorities as well as the Ahmediyya and Shia Muslim minorities.

This study traces the roots of Islamism in the political arena in Pakistan beginning with the Pakistan movement through the post-partition era and into the development of religiously-inspired or influenced political parties. The study then examines the special case of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and a specific study of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), a unique alliance of religious political parties with a dynamic role in government. The study addresses the ways in which religiously-inspired political parties have multiple layers of commitment and action. Waseem and Mufti try to depict the complexity of the relationship that religiously-inspired political parties, in this case Islamic ones, have with other political parties, with donor agencies abroad, with the central or federal government, and with other Islamist parties that stand in opposition to their own. Therefore, this study also notes the voices of dissent within the Islamic context and highlight the fact that religious actors and adherents are not a monolithic group, but exist in contexts that are replete with disagreements and discord.

The report pays close attention to the political situation in NWFP as a pertinent case study for Islamist politics. The case study reveals that Islamism thrives on elite politics and intra-communitarian conflict. The conflicts were used to further their appeal at the polls, and research also showed that Islamist groups were willing to sacrifice ideology for future electoral wins that guaranteed power. In addition, the military has often turned to these religious political parties to garner support and help them control the citizens in times of need, thereby establishing a firm relationship between the two groups. Furthermore, the growth of madrasas have allowed religiously inspired political organizations more control and allowed the ideology of Islamization to become more integrated into the mainstream. The study concludes by suggesting that the analysis of the MMA as an example of an Islamist political party is inconclusive. In many ways, the organization engages in providing good development services for issues related to gender, health, and education. These parties are also adroit at securing donor parties from overseas and getting local news the attention it deserves; however, the overall long term goals of the organization and whether they will be good for the country remains to be seen.

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Gülen, M. Fethullah and Mehmet Unal, Naglihan Haliloglu, Mustafa Mencutekin, Korkut Altay, and Hakan Yessilova, trans., *Toward a Global Civilization of Love & Tolerance*. Third Impression Press, 2004.

This book is written by Fethullah Gülen and aims to awaken Muslims across the world to a greater awareness of Islam as a religion that teaches love and tolerance. With narratives from his own life and study of Islam, Gülen expounds his own pluralistic beliefs and calls upon Muslims to be witnesses to God's universal mercy and work in devotion to his service through dialogue and interreligious cooperation throughout the world.

Khan, Yasmin. *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

The author examines the context and aftermath of the partition, weaving together local politics and ordinary lives with the larger political forces, including the role of the British in fostering the Independence movement. She notes that poor planning and lack of long-term thinking played a large factor in the division of India along religious lines and contends that the aftershocks are still in effect today economically, politically, and socially.

Marshall, Katherine Marisa Van Saanen, *Development and Faith: Where Mind, Heart, and Soul Work Together*. Washington, DC: World Bank Publications, 2007.

This book assesses the intersection of faith and development and the individuals who are inspired by their faith that work for social change and social welfare. The book highlights that some of the most devoted people in the development field are faith leaders who live and work with poor communities. The authors hope to build partnerships between development practitioners and faith-inspired actors and organizations.

Fair, Christine and Ali Riaz, eds., *Political Islam and Governance in Bangladesh*. New York: Routledge Press, 2010.

This is an edited volume bringing together journalists and academics with different backgrounds and field experiences to assess the present situation in Bangladesh. The articles include

discussion on the political environment of Bangladesh, Islamist ideology, and Islamic organizations that are part of the society and affect the political and social arena through their particular ideology.

Shankar, Sri Sri Ravi, and James Larsen. *Wisdom for the New Millennium*. Washington, DC: The Art of Living Foundation Press, 1999.

This book is written by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the co-founder of the International Association for Human Values, a non-profit organization with an immense following and international recognition and praise. The book addresses the importance of incorporating spirituality as a necessary part of human development and the role of meditation for personal healing.

Sharma, Jyotirmay. *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism*. Delhi: Penguin Global Press, 2004.

This book addresses the complexity of the term Hindutva in the modern Indian context and its connection to Indian politics. The book traces the historical development of the term, its contested usage in the political context, and the various philosophers, idealists, and reformists that have focused on the reinterpretation of Hinduism and that have, in some way, affected the evolution and emergence of this term.

Srinivas, Tulasi. *Winged Faith: Rethinking Globalization and Religious Pluralism through the Sathya Sai Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

In this book, the author explores the emergence of the Sathya Sai Movement and the implications for religious pluralism in the global context. The Sathya Sai global civil religious movement incorporates Hindu and Muslim practices, Buddhist, Christian, and Zoroastrian influences, and New Age rituals and beliefs. The author analyzes this movement and suggests new methods for studying the role of religion in light of new global developments, including international religious movements.

Sikand, Yogindar. *Origins and Development of the Tablighi-Jama'at (1920-2000): A Cross-Country Comparative Study*. Delhi: Sangam Books Ltd, 2002.

The author traces the history and development of the Tablighi-Jama'at from a small pietistic movement in India before Partition into the largest Islamic religious movement in the world. Sikand describes the political changes that helped the Jama'at in *dawa* (missionary) activities and the role that politics have played in the growth of this pietistic movement and in their development from India, to Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and eventually into the international community.

Sugirtharajah, R. S. ed., *Towards a Dalit Theology*. Delhi: Delhi Press, 1990.

This is an edited volume of articles from Dalit Christians who describe the various forms of inter-caste and intra-caste discrimination towards Dalits in modern India. The authors describe caste violence in rural areas and the debates surrounding the inability for Christian Dalits to acquire affirmative action or Scheduled Caste benefits from the Indian government.

Articles

Bano, Masooda. “Contesting Ideologies and the Struggle for Authority: State-Madrasa Engagement in Pakistan.” *Religions and Development Research Programme. Working Paper 14 (2007) University of Birmingham.*

This article argues that the relationship between madrasas and the government in Pakistan is contentious and rife with difficulties. In the post 9/11 environment the ulema and the madrasa leaders in Pakistan consider government reform agenda as part of US policy and are resistant to changes. However, the author contends that the Pakistani government has had a madrasa reform agenda for many years and has engaged in a tug-of-war with the ulema to modernize the curriculum.

Bano, Masooda. “Female Madrasas in Pakistan: A Response to Modernity.” *Religions and Development Research Programme. Working Paper 45 (2010) University of Birmingham.*

This paper addresses the recent demand for female madrasas in Pakistan. The author traces the historical development of female madrasas in Pakistan since the 1970s and argues that globalization, mass media, and western notions of gender equality create anxiety for educated women. Research reveals that female madrasas are preferred to secular education in some areas. The perception of family members is that madrasas increase piety and family-oriented values.

Bano, Masooda. “Allowing for Diversity: State-Madrasa Relations in Bangladesh.” *Religions and Development Research Programme. Working Paper 13 (2007). University of Birmingham.*

State-madrasa relations in South Asia are a complex issue. In this article, the author examines madrasa reform in Bangladesh as a model for other South Asian countries. The Aliya madrasa system in Bangladesh was able to integrate

secular subjects along with Islamic education, while the Qomi madrasas remained more traditionally structured. While graduates from the Aliya madrasas are competing for jobs in the open market, graduates from the Qomi madrasas are fulfilling religious positions in mosques.

Bano, Masooda and Padmaja Nair. “Faith-Based Organizations in South Asia: Historical Evolution, Current Status and Nature of Interaction with the State.” *Religions and Development Research Programme. Working Paper 12 (2007). University of Birmingham.*

This article maps the historical development of faith-inspired organizations in South Asia and their response to colonial rule. The authors describe the diversity of religious traditions in South Asia including, Sikhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Jainism. Each religion is unique with different rituals and practices however: one common element between them is a shared love of humanity and the desire to engage in welfare/development work.

Corley, Felix. “Turkmenistan: New Religion Law Defies International Human Rights Agreements.” *Worldwide Religious News. Forum 18, November 11, 2003 (2003).*

This article discusses the new religious law in Turkmenistan which declares all unregistered religious activity illegal. It also discusses how the role of religious education is severely restricted, creating strife among the religious communities who would like their children to have access to traditional Islamic education. For further information see: <http://wwrn.org/articles/8604/>

Hayward, Susan. *Religious Contributions to Conflict Prevention and Transformation. Catholic Peacebuilding Network Conference, Kroc Institute, Notre Dame University, (2008).*

Hayward addresses the need to engage religious actors and institutions in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. She describes how religious leaders and organizations have the capacity and resources to reach communities torn by conflict and empower them to move towards reconciliation. For further information see: <http://cpn.nd.edu/assets/14644/hayward.pdf>

Mahajan, Gurpreet and Surinder S. Jodhka. “Religions, Democracy, and Governance: Spaces for the Marginalized in Contemporary India.” *Religions and Development Research Programme. Working Paper 26 (2009). University of Birmingham.*

The authors discuss the role of the Indian constitutional commitment to freedom of religion, equal treatment, and liberty for all peoples as the backdrop for the role of

marginalized communities. Communal violence and internal caste politics have further divided India. Conflict exists between Hindu Dalits, or Scheduled Castes, and the Muslim community, creating interreligious conflict and strife.

Kadyr Malikov, “Muslim Community in Kyrgyzstan: Social Activity at the Present Stage.” Social Research Center. (2010). American University of Central Asia.

This article provides an overview and analysis of the role of Muslim communities in development activities in Kyrgyzstan, including providing a lens through which to categorize the actors and their involvement. The author argues that the Muslim community, particularly the youth, are passive in their social involvement and could better mobilize themselves for the current socio-economic challenges facing Kyrgyzstan.

Nair, Padmaja, “The State and Madrasas in India.” Religions and Development Research Programme. Working Paper 15 (2009). University of Birmingham.

Madrasas in India are in a unique position in South Asia because in the post-partition era, Islam is a minority religious tradition in India. Madrasas in India have the dual duty of providing education and also maintaining the religious and cultural identity for their community. This article addresses some of the tensions for madrasas and the Muslim community in modern India.

Nair, Padmaja. “Religious Political Parties and their Welfare Work: Relations between the RSS, the Bharatiya Janata Party and Vidya Bharatiya Schools in India.” Religions and Development Research Programme. Working Paper 37 (2009). University of Birmingham.

This article addresses the distinctions between two of the largest political parties Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) that also engage in welfare and development work in India. The authors also address the concept of Hindutva and its role in the Hindu reform and development agenda.

Nolan, Tricia D., “Perceptions and Portrayals of Faith-Based Organizations in Education in Emergencies: A Case Study from Sri Lanka” in Education in Emergencies and Post-Conflict Situations: 71 Problems, Responses and Possibilities, Vol. 2, Spring (2005).

This article discusses the role of FBOs and development and questions how, and if, these organizations differ from secular development agencies. The author examines different countries to analyze the need for faith engagement. Further, she questions the dangers of neo-religious imperialism with the U.S. sending FBOs to countries for development projects.

For further information see: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/students/sie/journal/Volume_2/Nolan.pdf

Siddiqui, Saima and Muhammad Asif Iqbal. “Mapping the Terrain: The Activities of Faith-based Organizations in Development in Pakistan.” Religions and Development Research Programme. Working Paper 24 (2008). University of Birmingham.

This article maps faith-based activities in Pakistan, highlighting the key role of faith-inspired organizations. The article describes the religious terrain in Pakistan as pluralistic and religiously vibrant. Despite the political reputation of the country as an “Islamic Republic,” there are vibrant non-Muslim religious communities, including Christian, Hindu, Sikh, and Zoroastrian (Parsi). Several communities are active in welfare and development, providing healthcare, education, and alleviating poverty.

Tyson, David. “Shrine Pilgrimage in Turkmenistan as a Means to Understand Islam Among the Turkmen.” Central Asia Monitor. No. 1 (1997).

This article provides a glimpse into Islam in Central Asia and highlights the fundamental traits and aspects of shrine-centered religious practice in Turkmenistan. The author tries to underscore the importance of these religious structures to the well being of society and for the faith of the Muslim community. For further information see: <http://www.uga.edu/islam/turkmen.html>

White, Sarah C. “Domains of Contestation: Women’s Empowerment and Islam in Bangladesh.” Religions and Development Research Programme. Working Paper 36 (2009). University of Birmingham.

This article addresses the intersection of religion, gender, and development and discusses how women’s roles are evolving in the largely Islamic society of Bangladesh. The author describes how gender inequality is decreasing in Bangladesh while Islam is correspondingly more engaged in development and civil society. There is evidence that women are becoming more religiously committed while gaining empowerment.

White, Sarah C. and Joe Devine. “Religion, Politics, and the Everyday Moral Order In Bangladesh.” Religions and Development Research Programme. Working Paper 40 (2009). University of Birmingham.

The authors argue that most of the contemporary analyses between religion and development tend to focus on the role of religion in the political sphere and how it affects governance. In the past, Bangladesh has been largely ignored as a site for potential research on the role of religion and development.

Although it is a “secular” country, religion is far more integrated and integral than in most western secular societies.

Reports

American University of Central Asia Social Research Center Report (Kyrgyzstan)

This report assesses civil society organizations and participation in Kyrgyz Republic. The report analyzes Islamic educational institutions, public organizations, and local Muslim groups. The report also discusses the interaction between government bodies and Muslim communities. For further information see: [http://elibrary.auca.kg:8080/dspace/bitstream/123456789/466/1/SRC_Muslim%20community%20in%20Kyrgyz Republic_Social%20activity%20at%20the%20present%20stage_eng.pdf](http://elibrary.auca.kg:8080/dspace/bitstream/123456789/466/1/SRC_Muslim%20community%20in%20Kyrgyz%20Republic_Social%20activity%20at%20the%20present%20stage_eng.pdf)

Asia Development Bank Report on Poverty (India)

This report by the Asia Development Bank describes poverty rates and alleviation strategies for India. The report also discusses gender discrimination in rural areas, including the socio-economic and cultural difficulties faced by the girl child, infant mortality rates, and gender violence. For further information see: http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Defining_Agenda_Poverty_Reduction/Vol_1/chapter_23.pdf

Asia Development Bank Report on Women (Pakistan)

This report by the Asia Development Bank addresses the status of women in Pakistan and argues that it is connected with other forms of societal exclusion. The report describes that there is diversity regarding the status of women across social classes, regions, and the rural/urban areas due to the impact of tribal, feudal, and cultural differences. Included are statistics on education, training, health, nutrition, legal status, and the affects of the Hudood Ordinances. For further information see: http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Country_Briefing_Papers/Women_in_Pakistan/chap01.pdf

The Asia Development Bank Country Report (Afghanistan, Nepal, Maldives, and Sri Lanka)

Country reports by the Asia Development Bank describe the development challenges in each of the focus countries named. The reports provide statistical information for a variety of development sectors, including the rate of gender discrimination, infant mortality, and violence. The reports also describe the ADB projects in the area to increase/promote economic growth. For further information see: <http://www.adb.org/Countries/default.asp>

Asia Development Bank Reports on NGOs (Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Turkmenistan)

These three reports describe NGOs working in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan, discussing their origin and growth, their sectoral focus, and coordination and networking. The reports also analyze the relationship between the government and NGOs, including the legal framework, policy regarding registration, and the tensions between them. For further information see: <http://www.adb.org/NGOs/docs/NGOSriLanka.pdf>; <http://www.adb.org/ngos/docs/NGOPakistan.pdf>; : <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Civil-Society-Briefs/TKM/CSB-TKM.pdf>

The Asia Foundation (Nepal)

This report outlines the community mediation program in Nepal pioneered by the Asia Foundation. The program, now in its eighth year, has provided a platform for local people to respond to conflicts and address their underlying causes through mediation. The program enables people from different communities to come together and solve conflict using mediation strategies. For further information see: <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2010/06/25/local-mediation-a-transformative-approach-to-conflict-in-nepal/#more-5398>

AusAID Report (Pakistan)

This report addresses Australia’s strategic approach to aid in Pakistan including the development agenda after the flood. The report provides a country overview, a brief outline of the economy and development challenges, as well as the current aid projects that are being implemented across the country. For further information see: <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/country/country.cfm?CountryId=11>

Caritas International Report on AIDS (India)

This report addresses the leadership role exercised by the Catholic bishops of India, particularly through the national Episcopal conference in the prevention HIV/AIDS in India. The report notes the interaction between the government, faith communities, and non-governmental organizations and the impact of their work on persons living with and affected by HIV. For further information see: <http://www.caritas.org/includes/pdf/bestpracticereport.pdf>

Center for Constitutional Dialogue CCD (Nepal)

This CCD report addresses the interaction between the new secular government of Nepal and the role of religion in Nepali culture and society. The report reveals that while the constitution of Nepal is secular, religion plays a distinct role in Nepali society. The report also addresses the attempts by the government to be more inclusive of minority religious traditions. For further information see: <http://www.ccd.org.np/new/publications/State%20and%20Religion%20English.pdf>

Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU) Report (Afghanistan)

The report analyzes the extent to which Afghan religious leaders been involved in the post-2001 efforts to foster development and engage in peacebuilding. The authors highlight the role of religious leaders in the community and addresses ways to better engage them to work for stability and long-term peace in the area. For further information see: <http://www.cpauf.af/docs/ReligiousCivilSocietyinAfghanistan.pdf>

European Centre on Health of Societies in Transition and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine Report (Turkmenistan)

This report authored by Martin McKee, Bernd Rechel, and Inga Sikorskaya provides an assessment of the state of health in Turkmenistan after the change in the country's leadership and the death of President Niyazov. The report includes information on infant mortality, life expectancy rates, maternal health, HIV, and viral Hepatitis. For further information see: http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/centres/ecohost/public_health/niyazov/health_in_turkmenistan_after_niyazov.pdf

Freedom House, Nations in Transit Report (Turkmenistan)

This report addresses the development challenges in Turkmenistan including national democratic governance, the electoral process, civil society, and the role of independent media. The authors provide statistical information on poverty, crime, and corruption and analyze the factors that are slowing the rate of economic growth in the country. For further information see: <http://www.freedomhouse.eu/images/Reports/NIT-2010-Turkmenistan-final.pdf>

Gross National Happiness Commission Report on Education (Bhutan)

This report is a proposal for the integration of Gross National Happiness (GNH) into the school curriculum, teacher training, classroom teaching, and textbooks. The value-based education suggested in the proposal hopes to integrate good governance, psychological well-being, and a moral values system in the current education system. For further information see: <http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/PowerPoints/value-education.pdf>

Hunger Project Report on Women (India)

The Hunger Project delineates the issues facing women in rural India, including malnutrition, poor health, lack of education, and overwork. The report links female mortality and infant mortality rates to cultural norms that enable gender inequality to persist particularly in rural areas. For further information see: http://www.thp.org/where_we_work/south_asia/india/research_reports/chronic_hunger_and_status_of_women

IPCS Issue Brief on the Role of Madrasas in Society (Pakistan)

This report analyzes the role of madrasas in Pakistan from the 1970s into present day. It includes statistics on the number of madrasas in the country, their relationship with the government, and a brief description of curriculum. It also describes the difficulty of governmental control over the school curriculum and the role of the religious leaders in the in the reform process. For further information see: http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/2032153432IB11-SubaChandran-MadrassasInPak.pdf

Institute of Policy Studies, Pakistan (Afghanistan)

This report draws attention to the Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran as a protracted problem that still awaits resolution. The report analyzes long-term affects of refugees living in Pakistan and how this will create issues with relations between the two countries. The report also makes suggestions for long-term rehabilitation solutions for refugees. For further information see: <http://www.ips.org/pk/international-relation/the-muslim-world/988.html>

Institute and the Silk Road Studies Program Report (Central Asia)

This report analyzes the role of Islam in Central Asia and notes that most of the available information is based on anecdotal evidence of religious activity. The evidence ranks Muslim populations in terms of their religiosity and addresses the role of the government as a repressive force toward religious behavior. Next, the author discusses the nature and depth of the Islamic revival and the future of political stability in the region. For further information see: <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/silkroadpapers/1003Abramson.pdf>

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Maldives)

This report addresses the development projects of the Red Cross in the Maldives. Projects include health indicators, communicable disease, climate change, and disaster relief efforts. The report also describes the work they engage with their partner organizations. For further information see: http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual11/MAAMV00111plan.pdf

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education Report (Afghanistan)

This report outlines the plans for madrasa and education reform for Afghanistan in order to improve educational access and standards. The report describes various projects that will be implemented by the government to introduce secular subjects into madrasa curriculum, train teachers, and engage other Islamic nations to improve education in Afghanistan. For further information see: http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/News_And_Events/pdf/2010/Afghanistan_NESP.pdf

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government of Maldives (Maldives)

This is a government report on the Maldives issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The report includes a description of the legal system, the level of political participation, the status of human rights, and government mechanisms for long term development in the country. For further information see: <http://www.foreign.gov.mv/v3/pdf/Maldives%20UPR%20National%20Report%20-%20submitted%20Aug%202010.pdf>

National Report on the Development of Education (Bhutan)

This report provides an overview of the challenges facing the educational system in Bhutan in the 21st century. It discusses the organization and management structure of the Ministry of Education, the curricular policies, educational content, and teaching and learning strategies in the schools. For further information see: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/bhutan_NR08.pdf

OECD Development and Climate Change Report (Bangladesh)

This report addresses the impact of climate change on development in Bangladesh. The report is from the OECD Development and Climate Change project, an activity being jointly overseen by the Working Party on Global and Structural Policies (WPGSP) of the Environment Directorate, and the Network on Environment and Development Co-operation of the Development Cooperation Directorate. For further information see: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/46/55/21055658.pdf>

Socio-Economic Implications for Climate Change in Bangladesh (Bangladesh)

This report addresses the impact of climate change on the Bangladeshi economy, as well as the social and cultural impact of natural disasters in the country. The report provides statistical information on the rise of disease, loss of agriculture, and issues of food security as a result of floods and cyclones in the country. For further information see: <http://www.waikato.ac.nz/igci/downloads/BriefingDoc4.pdf>

United Nations Report (Afghanistan)

This is an in-depth country strategy report that discusses the main development challenges facing women in Afghanistan. The report addresses the issues for women during the Taliban regime and strategic methods to improve the way forward including viable projects to promote education, gender empowerment, and peacebuilding. For further information see: <http://www.un.org/events/women/2002/sit.htm>

UNDP Reports (Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan)

The UNDP produces country reports that serve as operations profiles of UN agencies. The country report for Bhutan describes how UN support focuses on five priority areas as derived from the UNDAF, namely, Poverty Reduction, Health, Education, Governance, Environment, Disaster Management and the achievement of MDGs. For Nepal, the report includes the MDGs and progress reports including sections on education, extreme hunger, and poverty. In Afghanistan, report focuses on the importance of securing governance in the country. To access UNDP reports and country office sites, see: <http://www.undp.org/mdg/countries.shtml>

UNICEF Reports, Country Overviews (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan)

These UNICEF reports delineate the challenges facing children in Bangladesh and Pakistan respectively. The reports describe literacy levels, health factors, and country-specific natural and political crises that impact education. Reports provide information on various UNICEF projects in the countries that are working to raise education and improve health for children. For further information see: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan_39946.html; <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/bangladesh.html>; <http://www.unicef.org/pakistan/overview.html>

UNICEF Report on the Role of Faith Leaders (Bangladesh)

This UNICEF report describes the role of religious leaders in HIV/AIDS prevention with sections on the activity of imams in Bangladesh. The report analyzes the role of the government in training imams in HIV/AIDS prevention and the impact their involvement has on the community. For further information see: <http://www.unicef.org/rosa/Faith.pdf>

UNESCO Report on Forms and Patterns of Social Discrimination (Nepal)

This report draws attention to the various forms of gender and caste-based social discrimination that is operative in various parts of the country. The report addresses the caste related tensions in different regions of Nepal with a special focus on Dalit groups and Dalit women, paying attention to the multiple ethnic and tribal conflicts that affect relationships in the country. For further information see: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001460/146086e.pdf>

UNHCR Report (Nepal)

This report outlines the country operations profile for Nepal. The report discusses the Maoist conflict and the ensuing refugee crisis that is drawn on the resources of the country. The report discusses the current conditions in camps and analyzes the need for Nepal to follow refugee conventions to successfully rehabilitate the refugees into civil society and improve socio-economic conditions. For further information see: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e487856.html>

USAID Report (Pakistan)

This report analyzes Pakistan's development challenges. The country has widespread poverty and weak governance structures, and now faces additional burdens related to the war on terror in neighboring Afghanistan, religious militancy, and insurgency. The report addresses the issues facing the country in education, healthcare, and governance. For further information see: http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2004/asia_near_east/Pakistan.pdf

USIP Reports (Afghanistan; Pakistan)

These reports describe two ongoing projects per country to promote peace-building by engaging local religious leaders in conflict mediation and madrasa reform. The Afghanistan report also discusses a dialogue project between Afghanistan and Pakistan to aid the conflict at the border. For further information see: http://www.usip.org/files/regions/faqs/PIP%20Afghanistan%202-2010_0.pdf; : <http://www.usip.org/religionpeace/index.html>

World Health Organization Reports: Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives

These reports by the World Health Organization outline the major health factors in the focus countries. The reports include statistical information on communicable disease, malnutrition, maternal health, and infant mortality rates.

The World Bank Country Reports (India, Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Nepal)

These World Bank country reports describe population statistics, poverty, and healthcare concerns in the named focus countries. The report outlines World Bank programs working for poverty alleviation, peace-building, and agricultural and rural development across the each of countries. Some reports include case studies. For further information see: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/0,,me nuPK:115635~pagePK:64020917~piPK:64021009~theSite PK:40941,00.html#CountryReports>

The World Bank Report on HIV (Bhutan)

This report analyzes HIV/AIDS rates in Bhutan and then discusses the factors that could increase infection, including cross-border migration, international travel, behavioral risk factors, and sexually transmitted infections. For further information see: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/>

The World Bank Report on Women (Afghanistan)

This World Bank country report describes population statistics, poverty, and healthcare concerns in Afghanistan. The report focuses primarily on the role of women in Afghan society after the end of the Taliban regime and offers strategies to reduce gender discrimination and empower women from rural and urban parts of the country. For further information see: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/223546-1151200256097/chap1.pdf>

ENDNOTES

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- ¹¹ "Bombay Parsi Panchayat," Encyclopedia Iranica, <http://www.iranica.com/articles/bombay-parsi-panchayat-the-largest-zoroastrian-institution-in-modern-history> (accessed February 9, 2011).
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