



Sector Programme Values, Religion and Development

Recognising and harnessing the potential of religion

The challenge

The world is facing existential challenges on a global scale. Climate change, population growth, violent conflicts, the widening gap between rich and poor, increasing numbers of refugees, and shifting centres of power are all making themselves felt. Overcoming these challenges not only requires new forms of cooperation and technical expertise but also a value-based culture of cooperation. It is therefore in everyone's long-term interest to embrace forms of sustainable development in which values are not subordinate to short-termism or the interests of donors or recipients.

The German Government is committed to a development policy based on values and human rights. Through its work, it aims to promote freedom, equality of opportunity, solidarity and human dignity. The state's neutral stance towards religions and beliefs does not imply neutrality towards values. German development policy is guided by the conviction that a 'good' life and 'good' governance are shaped by ethical and moral values. Affirmation of a value-based culture of cooperation provides common ground for tackling the challenges the world is facing.

Our approach: Religion Matters!

The major challenges facing humankind can only be overcome through cooperation. It will be crucial to agree on a basic set of values that differentiates between core values and their embodiment in individual political and cultural contexts. To do this, ongoing and open dialogue is essential.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has therefore commissioned a new sector programme entitled Values, Religion and Development to drive forward the implementation of value-based development policy while also ensuring that religion's significance as an important source of values gains greater recognition in development policy and international cooperation. Essentially, it will be asking how we can leverage the potential of religion for sustainable development and peace. Working together with civil society and representatives of religions, the aim is to develop measures that can be applied in practice.

With more than 80 per cent of the world's population expressing a religious affiliation, religion can make an important contribution. Of these, 2.2 billion espouse Christianity (approx. 32 per cent of the global population), 1.6 billion Islam (approx. 23 per cent), 1 billion Hinduism, just under 500 million Buddhism, 23 million the Sikh Religion and 14 million Judaism. More than 400 million people practise traditional religions. Religious values thus influence the thoughts and actions of billions of people around the world.

In the field of development cooperation, there has been little systematic work carried out to date on the potential of religion. In the public eye, the abuse of religion for power struggles and economic interests, and even for legitimising violence, is more immediately visible than the contributions of religious actors to development. Yet religions contribute to people's welfare, providing support where state institutions come up against their limits; they help people deal with disasters and setbacks, and they confer a sense of identity.



Muslim boys reading



Dome of the Rock and Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem



Hindu woman praying

This is the motivation for identifying and harnessing the potentials of religious communities for development policy, with the BMZ's Charter for the Future and the sustainability development goals currently being drafted providing the framework.

Programme name	Values, Religion and Development
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project area	Global
Lead executing agency	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Overall term	1 November 2014 - 30 April 2017

Success factors

Together with civil society and representatives of the religions, the sector programme aims to:

Develop capacities

The sector programme elaborates technical principles and supports the BMZ in preparing strategies and position papers. Successful approaches in which religion has made a contribution to development are regularly analysed and documented. On this basis, proposals for working with and in partner countries are developed.

One of the programme's goals is to increase the religious literacy of experts working in development cooperation and international cooperation. Knowledge of religions and the ability to understand them is a prerequisite for discovering common ground in diversity.

Expand cooperation

The establishment of dialogue platforms will increase national and international networking between experts and cooperation partners and thereby promote long-term cooperation and exchange. One example of this is the new dia-

logue series *Religion Matters – Rethinking the challenges of tomorrow* involving important religious representatives. This provides a forum for exchange between representatives of religions, politics and civil society in a spirit of partnership. To take the topic forward at international level, the sector programme will support the BMZ in bringing together a group of like-minded donors. Improved cooperation between religious communities and state actors will lead to tangible benefits for sustainable development in partner countries.

Implement pilot measures

In a number of partner countries, pilot measures are being implemented to align the theoretical approaches with the needs of the partners. The sector programme's advisory services are guided by the following principles:

1. We are not only concerned with formally established religions. We also concern ourselves with human values and spirituality and what holds societies together at their core.
2. We treat religions with respect and do not exploit religious communities for the purposes of development cooperation.
3. In dialogue with policymakers and civil society, we want to harness the potentials of religion without losing sight of the risks, for example using religion to justify violence.

Jordan: An example from the field

The project 'Improving the efficiency of municipal water supply through cooperation with religious authorities' aims to harness common religious values to raise awareness among Syrian refugees and the population in the host communities about using water and resources more sparingly. There is close cooperation not only with the local authorities but also with Islamic theologians and teachers, ministries and university representatives. The focus is on refitting selected mosques as water-saving 'Water-Plus' mosques (December 2014 to December 2017).

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