



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

The role of religion

in German development policy



bmz.de



»Religion can build bridges and motivate people to take action on behalf of others and for the sake of the environment. We have neglected this potential for far too long.«

Dear readers,

In Africa, but also in many other places, I have often met people whose motivation for all their committed work comes from their faith. I know of the hard work being done by many Sisters from religious orders, and I remember the Priests in the Central African Republic who have opened their churches for refugees, and the Imams and Bishops who are jointly working for peace and dialogue in Nigeria. In most of our partner countries, religion is the central source of values. Religion has a strong influence on social life. It helps people to understand, to build understanding and to change things.

We have great respect for this potential that religion holds for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Now that we are trying to forge a pact on the world's future for the period after 2015, working with religious communities is an effort that offers unique opportunities. If the paradigm shift toward sustainability is to become a success, we need to combine all forces – including religious communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerd Müller', with a horizontal line above the second name.

Dr. Gerd Müller, Member of the German Parliament

Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development



Young monks at the Buddhist monastery of Amarbayasgalant in northern Mongolia

Why does religion matter?



RELIGION IS A CENTRAL PART OF LIFE. In 40 of our partner countries, four out of five people say that religion is very important to them.

FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS PLAY A PART IN PUBLIC WELFARE. In sub-Saharan Africa, half of all health and education services are provided by faith-based agencies.

RELIGION PROVIDES SPACE FOR DISCUSSION. Churches and mosques serve as a forum for people to talk about what is on their minds: health, family planning, environmental protection, peace.

RELIGIOUS ACTORS HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON DECISION-MAKING. Unlike government institutions, the representatives of religious communities often enjoy special confidence among the people. They reach the hearts of all people and are thus able to change attitudes and behaviors.



RELIGIONS FORM GLOBAL NETWORKS WHICH OFTEN REACH INTO THE MOST REMOTE CORNERS OF THE WORLD. Wherever we go, religious communities have had a local presence for a long time.

RELIGION HAS AN INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL COHESION, as it provides guidance for human interaction, far beyond legal regulations.

RELIGION STRENGTHENS THE RESILIENCE OF INDIVIDUALS AND ENTIRE SOCIETIES because it offers ways of dealing with failure and disaster.

WHEREVER RELIGION IS PART OF THE PROBLEM, IT MUST ALSO BECOME PART OF THE SOLUTION. In many of our partner countries, religious leaders traditionally act as conflict mediators.

RELIGION SHAPES PEOPLE'S IDENTITY. It links people with one another, across cultures and nations, income groups and social backgrounds.

Muslim fishermen praying on the beach of Nouakchott, Mauritania





IN MAURITANIA and other African countries, it has been possible to get Muslim scholars to support the fight against female genital mutilation. With a view to protecting women and girls, it is important that religious authorities condemn the practice.

We build on practical experience.

There are a number of German development cooperation projects in which there has been successful cooperation with religious representatives.

→ **IN INDONESIA**, it only became possible to set up a civil registry in Aceh following the 2004 tsunami when the council of Islamic scholars published a statement in which it said that official registration of vital statistics was a contribution to the public good. Previously, large sections of the population had been opposing registration on the grounds that it was a “Christian” concept.

→ **IN ALGERIA**, support was provided to Imams who were working with government representatives to draft positions on environmental protection. This resulted in a handbook for the training of Imams on the role of mosques for environmental education. The handbook is now being used to teach the new subject of “Biodiversity” that was introduced at Koran schools. It will also be made available for use in Pakistan under a South-South cooperation project.

→ **IN BURUNDI**, Germany’s Civil Peace Service is working with local churches to revive dialogue between groups that are deeply divided after years of civil war.

What are our aims?



We want to **better harness the potential of religion** for sustainable development and peace. What does that mean?

1. We are starting with ourselves. We need to **learn more** about religious aspects in our partner countries, and we need to improve the integration of that **knowledge** in our country strategies and projects.
.....
2. In future, projects in our partner countries should give greater attention to ways in which they can help **reduce religious hatred and prejudice**.
.....
3. Wherever we can achieve more by working together, we want to enter into new national and international **cooperation arrangements with religious communities**.
.....
4. We want to foster platforms for **inter-faith dialogue** – in our partner countries, in Germany, and in international organizations.
.....
5. Together with other donors, we want to firmly establish this topic on the international agenda. **International processes** such as the drafting and implementation of a post-2015 agenda need to include representatives of religious communities.



*Pilgrim during a service at the
Church of St. Catherine, Bethlehem,
Palestinian territories*

What we are doing

Charter for the Future



Through the drafting process for a Charter for the Future, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) launched a broad-based dialogue on how we want to live.

Thousands of interested citizens and representatives of civil society, religious communities, academia and the private sector helped write the Charter.

In the drafting process, we had an in-depth discussion about the contribution of religion. Its results were put together in a joint effort with civil society and summarized in a chapter entitled *Respect and protect cultural and religious diversity*. The Charter thus provides an important basis for the BMZ's further dialogue with religious communities.



*German Chancellor Angela Merkel
and Minister Gerd Müller at the
ONE WORLD Forum for the Future in
Berlin in November 2014*

What we are doing

Religion matters!

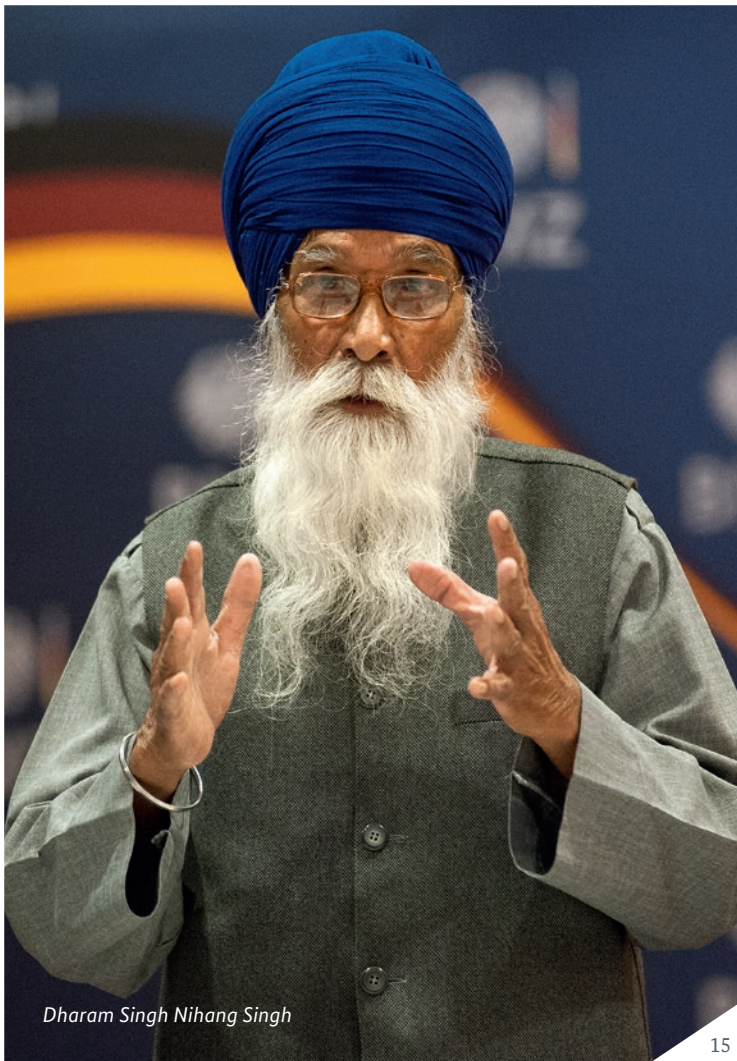
Dialogue with religious representatives



Extraordinary people can set extraordinary things in motion. Thanks to their insights and experience, they offer new perspectives on, and answers to, vital questions and global challenges that humankind is facing. The BMZ launched a new series of talks entitled *Religion Matters!*, under which it regularly invites religious leaders to provide fresh input on values, religion and development in an informal setting.

»Successful development is characterized by modesty and the humble realization that we are guests on this planet.«

Dharam Singh Nihang Singh, a leading Sikh scholar, opened the new dialogue series in February 2015.



Dharam Singh Nihang Singh

What we are doing

Cooperation with the churches in Germany



Together with their partners, the German churches have been involved in development cooperation for more than 50 years. Their work is characterized by being particularly close to the poorest of the poor.

Often, church aid agencies are still able to act in settings where official development agencies cannot, or may not, become involved – especially if the political environment is unfavorable.

The BMZ supports the work of the churches with more than 200 million euros a year through the Protestant Association for Cooperation in Development and the Catholic Central Agency for Development Aid.



Worshippers during a service at a free church in Karagita, Kenya



Minister Gerd Müller visiting a Caritas training project for former prostitutes in Bogotá, Colombia

What we are doing

International alliances



In its work on religion and development, the BMZ does not only cooperate with **religious communities**. It also liaises with **international development organizations and other donor nations**. Its long-term goal is to build a network in order to learn from each other's experience and explore potential areas for cooperation.

In that context, one important partner is the **World Bank**. At the initiative of World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, the Bank has been undertaking targeted efforts to expand its cooperation with religious communities. Just like the BMZ, the Bank believes that this offers an opportunity to mobilize more people for the fight against extreme poverty and for more justice.



In May 2014, Minister Gerd Müller laid the foundation for an **international alliance** during a meeting with World Bank President Jim Yong Kim and religious representatives in Berlin.

We can learn from others!

United Nations

The United Nations Population Fund has been developing guidance for its own work since 2001 under the heading of “Cultural Lens,” and it has set up the Inter-Faith Network on Population and Development. The Fund also coordinates the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-based Organizations for Development.

World Bank

The World Bank has been engaged in a close dialogue with religious representatives since the turn of the millennium. Initially called the World Faiths Development Dialogue, the process is being further developed by World Bank President Jim Yong Kim.

United States

At USAID, the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives coordinates the Agency’s dialogue with religious communities.

United Kingdom

The UK Development Ministry financed an extensive research program with many country studies (www.religionsanddevelopment.org). In 2012, the UK Development Minister presented Faith Partnership Principles together with religious representatives.

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) supports the BMZ’s work with its new sector program entitled *Values, Religion and Development*.

Worshipper at Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar



Figures on religion

30 to 40 per cent of all health services worldwide are provided by religious organizations.



8 out of 10 people worldwide say that they are part of a religious community.

Several thousand faith communities exist in our world, over and above the world's ten largest religions.

1.2 million people are employed by the Roman Catholic Church, including well over 5,000 Bishops, which makes it one of the largest employers in the world.



Young Muslims at a mosque in the old city of Sana'a, Yemen

SHARE OF WORLD RELIGIONS AND ATHEISM

2.01% Atheists

9.66% not religious

11.06% other religions

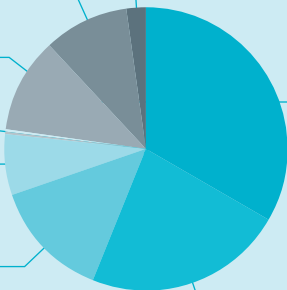
0.22% Jews
0.35% Sikhs

6.77% Buddhists

13.80% Hindus

33.39% Christians

22.74% Muslims



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