

Religion and gender in donor policies and practice

A reflection on government ministry and intergovernmental agency engagement with religious actors in pursuit of SDG 5

The report delivered by:



**Joint Learning Initiative
on Faith & Local Communities**
Strengthening Evidence-Based Faith Engagement

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Executive summary

Introduction

Commissioned by DanChurchAid, Side by Side, Act Church of Sweden and Christian Aid in the light of Sustainable Development Goal 5, this study reflects on how select donors, government ministries and intergovernmental agencies (IGAs) are engaging (including partnership and providing funding) with local, national and international religious actors on gender justice, gender equality, and GBV. It was guided by two main research questions:

- Do major donors, government ministries and IGAs have official policies, guidelines, or written protocols on engaging faith actors on gender equality, gender justice and GBV?
- How do representatives of major donors, government ministries and IGAs experience their engagement with religious actors on gender equality, gender justice and GBV?

Using a qualitative approach which included a brief literature review, document review and key informant interviews (KIIs), the study engaged with four institutions: the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), UN Women, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development Cooperation (BMZ), and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The original plan was to include up to eight different donors, government ministries or IGAs, but due to significant difficulties (which ranged from COVID response pressures/fatigue to a reluctance to share on this subject) in getting potential informants to agree to take part, only these four could be included.

Data analysis was conducted using ATLAS.ti8 and a hybrid deductive/inductive approach. The study was conducted with international ethical clearance, applied for from Stellenbosch University's Research Ethics Committee.

Findings

Based on the how the informants from the Finnish MFA, UN Women, the BMZ and Sida described and reflected on the policies, guidelines and protocols within their institution that dictate engagement with religious actors on gender, a number of learning points emerged:

- While all of these institutions define themselves as secular, they are all open to partnering with religious actors on gender.
- An institution's ability to partner with religious actors may be impacted/limited by its own institutional identity.
- Only within one institution are certain funding streams reserved for religious actors and there are no special funding or partnership routes for religious actors working on gender. However, institutions' attitude towards religion and religious actors is also reflected in the ways the contribute to creating a climate that recognises religious actors' contribution.
- All three government ministries (all three from majority Christian countries) have a long history of partnering and funding religious development organisations representing mainstream Christianity.
- Even though some departments may be, not all departments within an institution are necessarily supportive of working with religious actors.
- Having formal and informal partnerships with religious actors on gender-related issues does not automatically mean that there is comprehensive, sustainable support for religious actors working on gender.
- The development of new policies or funding streams can open new doors for partnership and funding and improve institutional understanding of the role of religious actors.

Institutional Environment

Reflecting on the influence of the institutional environment, it emerged that many staff members remain uncomfortable or even resistant to working with religious actors on gender-related issues, often as a result of their personal views on religion. Engagement with religious actors tend to be driven by specific staff members. The broader national and international political environment also impacts an institution's willingness to partner and/or fund religious actors on gender. An institutional environment positive towards engaging religious actors on gender can be facilitated by

- an institutional history of working with religious actors
- having key leaders within the institution promote such engagement
- having policies and guidelines for such engagement
- specific case studies and examples of such engagements being effective in achieving gendered development outcomes
- emphasising how religious actors are key role players in achieving specific gendered development objectives.

Lessons learnt by informants

Based on the lessons they have learnt from engaging with religious actors, the informants offered concrete advice to donors, government ministries and IGAs working with religious actors, but also to religious actors seeking partnership and funding from government agencies and IGAs.

Government ministries, donors and IGAs are encouraged to challenge themselves to not automatically exclude religious actors as potential partners around gender equality, gender justice and GBV. Such partnerships can facilitate two-way learning that challenge both partners to develop and grow. When working on sensitive gender-related issues, it is important to be flexible and able to compromise. For example, different entry points or terminology might be needed for religious actors to come on board. It may also be needed to work through other local, national, or international partners. At the same time, compromise is not always possible and government ministries, donors and IGAs should be clear on what they cannot compromise on. Finally, they are challenged to embrace the complexity of engaging with religious actors on gender equality, gender justice and GBV.

Religious actors seeking funding from and partnership with secular donors, government ministries or IGAs are encouraged to use language and terminology that are appropriate and understandable for those they are targeting with their applications, clearly showing how they fit into the bigger picture of work being done on gender. They have to ensure that their own organisations abide by the gender equality and gender justice principles that they want to promote through their gender programming. Finally, they should be open to honest dialogue with potential donors and partners, where trust and understanding can develop.

Concluding recommendations

In the light of the findings, a series of recommendations are offered with the aim of promoting partnership (including funding) on gender-related issues between religious actors and secular donors/government ministries/IGAs.

Recommendations for donors, government ministries and IGAs

- Do not automatically exclude, but rather systematically consider, the possibility of partnering with and/or funding religious actors on gender equality, gender justice of gender-based violence.
- Developing the religious literacy of staff members should be a priority.
- Partnerships should be a two-way learning and growing experience between you and those you are partnering with.

- Put knowledge management and communication systems in place so that there is a better overall understanding within your institution of what work is being done with religious actors.
- Honestly reflect whether mainstreamed engagement with religious actors is enough to ensure that your institution and its staff recognise religious actors' role and contribution to addressing gender inequality, gender injustice and GBV. Consider developing the needed policies that will concretely motivate and enable staff to engage with religious actors.
- Challenge yourself to also create avenues for partnership with religious actors who are not only large, mainstream, Christian development networks or organisations.
- To widen the scope of potential religious actors that you can partner with, intentionally communicate with religious actors around the funding and partnership opportunities available at your institution.
- Intentionally create opportunities for engagement and discussion on gender between your institution and religious actors.

Recommendations for religious actors

- Identify the opportunities available to civil society organisations and position yourself accordingly.
- A potential way to partnership and/or funding is through the religious networks/organisations that a donor, government ministry or IGA has a long history of partnering with.
- Identify the specific individuals within funding institutions, government ministries and IGAs that drive engagement with religious actors and build relationships with them.
- An entry point into partnership and funding is to identify an institution's niche area and explain, using evidence, how working with you as religious actor can promote not only their objectives, but also their reputation as innovative trendsetter.
- When seeking funding and/or partnership, be honest and strategic about your religious affiliation.
- While funding applications should make an argument for supporting you, it is important not to exceptionalise religion and/or you as religious actor as the only solution. Rather, tie your work into the broader civil society picture.
- You have to ensure that you are representing the gender principles that you wish to promote through your gender interventions.
- Donors, government ministries and IGAs are influenced by their political environment, both national and international, thus this can be an indirect way to ensure institutions' willingness to partner with and fund religious actors on gender equality, gender justice and GBV.
- Develop short (1-2 page) evidence-based case studies which showcase gender interventions done with and by religious actors, to motivate partnership and funding.
- The policies, strategies and approaches of donors and especially government ministries and IGAs are constantly evolving and changing. Stay up to date and grasp new opportunities.
- Intentionally create opportunities for engagement and discussion on gender between religious actors and donors, government ministries and IGAs.

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Acronyms

BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (German Federal Ministry for Economic Development Cooperation)
GBV	Gender-based violence
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IGA	Intergovernmental agency
JLI	Joint Learning Initiative on Local and Faith Communities
KII	Key informant interviews
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Finland)
UN	United Nations
PaRD	International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights

1. Introduction

In December 2020, DanChurchAid, Side by Side Faith Movement for Gender Justice, Act Church of Sweden and Christian Aid approached the Joint Learning Initiative on Local and Faith Communities (JLI) to assist in a research project exploring the stances (both formal and informal) of government ministries, intergovernmental agencies (IGAs) and donors towards engaging with religious actors¹ on gender justice, gender equality and/or ending gender-based violence (GBV). For those commissioning the research, the hope was that it would enable better understanding, relationships, collaboration and accountability between government ministries/IGAs/donors and religious actors in the light of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5). While there are examples of such engagement and collaboration between religious, bilateral and multilateral actors on gender, for example the gender workstream of the International Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), there needs to be a better understanding of whether this is happening elsewhere, to what extent, and what is promoting or inhibiting such collaboration. In the light of this, the overall objective of the study was to reflect on how select donors, government ministries and IGAs are engaging (including partnership and providing funding) with local, national and international religious actors on gender equality, gender justice and GBV.



1.1 Background

Over the last three decades the international development community has increasingly recognised the role of religion and religious leaders in development issues and practice – as is reflected in the dramatic rise in research on the issue. Part of the reason for the increased engagement with religion and religious groups is as their role and influence are finally being recognised. Religious communities are present everywhere, even in the most fragile, unstable settings. They continue to exist, and even thrive, in challenging circumstances, including armed conflict, where they offer community, identity and security. What people believe in and hold to be true influence norms, convictions, and behavioural choices. This is why engaging with religion, religious leaders and religious communities can be influential ways of doing development work.

Photo: ACT Alliance



As recognised in the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ending gender inequality and GBV is critical to achieving development goals, and the religious politics of gender is seen as one of the most important issues facing humanity worldwide (Casanova & Phillip, 2009:17). But while the role of religion, religious leaders and religious communities in development in general is recognised, there appears to be some resistance to engaging with religion and religious actors around gender equality, gender justice and GBV. This is as many see

religion and religious communities as being complicit, and even key actors, in maintaining the beliefs,

¹ 'Religious actors' is used as a catch-all term that includes faith-based organisations, religious networks, church-based agencies, religious groups, religious associations and charities, interfaith networks and councils, missionary organisations, religious community organisations and religious leaders.

norms and practices that subjugate women and girls and cause them harm. This is true. Evidence has been collated over the past two decades showing how religion, religious leaders and religious communities promote and sustain gender inequality and violence against women and girls (see, for example, Bayes & Tohid, 2001; Ehrlich, 2006; Gish, 2016; Le Roux & Cadavid Valencia, 2020; Le Roux & Palm, 2018; Levitt & Ware, 2006; Petersen, 2016; Tomalin, 2013; De Roure & Capraro, 2016; El-Hage, 2015). While this may be a deterrent to working with religion and religious actors on gender, it does beg the question of how gender inequality and violence against women and girls can end without engaging with these actors and spaces that play such a role in promoting inequality and violence.

Furthermore, this remains only one part of the full picture. Religion and religious actors can also play a key role in addressing gender inequality and GBV, and promoting gender justice and non-violence (see, for example, Adedini et al, 2018; Anwar et al, 2009; Beasley et al, 2010; Karam, 2015; Kaviti, 2015; Kaybryn & Nidadavolu, 2012; Latha, 2010; Le Roux et al, 2020; Le Roux et al, 2016). Khalaf-Elledge (2021) recently conducted a literature review reviewing the roles that religious actors have played in advancing and hindering gender equality since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. Using the SDG 5 targets to explore how some religious actors have been agents of change and others those hampering change, she uses evidence from around the world to show how a simplistic understanding of religious actors (as only ‘bad’ or only ‘good’ in terms of gender equality and non-violence) is not reflective of the reality. In ending discrimination against women and girls (Target 5.1), ending GBV (Target 5.2), ending early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (Target 5.3), recognising the value of unpaid care and domestic work (Target 5.4), increasing women’s participation and leadership in decision-making (Target 5.5), and ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights and access (Target 5.6), there are striking examples of religious actors advancing these causes, as well as condemnatory evidence of religious actors obstructing advancement (Khalaf-Elledge, 2021: 15-32). Three key elements are identified for partnering with religious actors for achieving SDG 5: choosing partners who are leaders on gender-related issues in their contexts; encouraging the religious literacy of development practitioners, so that they are able to engage with religion; and conducting comprehensive gender analyses prior to projects and partnerships,

in order to grasp the context-specific ways that gender and religions intersect in a given setting (Khalaf-Elledge, 2021: 34-36). International faith-based development



Photo: Jakob Dall

organisations, such as World Vision International, Tearfund and Islamic Relief Worldwide, have a long history of developing and implementing faith-based programming promoting gender equality and non-violence in many different countries. It is less common, however, for governmental ministries and IGAs to implement and/or fund such programming, although there are notable exceptions. For example, a recent brief published by the

UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls (UN Trust Fund, which is managed by UN Women) on engaging religious and traditional actors, showcased the work done – and lessons learnt – about working with religious actors on violence prevention by a range of projects across the world (Le Roux & Palm, 2021). All of these projects were funded by the UN Trust Fund. Another example is the Spotlight Initiative, a global multi-year partnership between the European Union and UN working on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, which is funding several projects that engage intentionally with religion and religious actors to end gender equality and VAWG.

In 2015, the UK Department for International Development (now the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) funded a scoping study on the role of religious communities in the prevention of and response to GBV (Le Roux, 2015). As part of the scoping study, 20 key informant interviews were conducted with religion and GBV experts from 15 different international organisations, of which 13 organisations were overtly faith-based. Due to these informants' positioning, it was possible to explore the perceptions of religious actors about working with secular funders, government ministries and IGAs (Le Roux & Loots, 2017). A key finding was that religious actors working on gender equality and GBV experience themselves as being automatically marginalised and stigmatised by secular actors *because they are religious actors*. Where there is engagement and partnership, they find that it is often instrumentalising of religion, religious leaders and religious communities, and while "a lot of talk has been going on, policy papers written, meetings held, and Memorandums of Understanding signed, the secular development and health sectors are still wary of working with faith-based actors" (Le Roux & Loots, 2017:738). This finding was supported by a research project conducted from 2015-2019, engaging with development practitioners to explore their attitudes towards engaging with religion (Khalaf-Elledge, 2020). The study found that:

[A]n outdated, normative, and binary understanding of secularity's neutrality and religion's irrationality has rendered Western development organisations significantly religion-blind and skewed their sense of objectivity. A lack of knowledge, interest, and engagement with religion may have fostered an Orientalist mindset that essentialises religion as backwards and subjective. Addressing personal attitudes and bias is crucial for enabling meaningful and more representative considerations of religion. (Khalaf-Elledge, 2020: 669).

This study aims to build further on this research, by focusing specifically on the policies and practices on engaging religious actors as it relates to gender. Genuine collaboration and partnerships between religious and secular actors on gender equality, gender justice and GBV can only be possible and fruitful if each try to understand the positioning, experiences, and worldview of the other. Therefore, this study not only explores existing policy and practices by government ministries and IGAs, but also delves into the informants' experiences and opinions on engaging with religious actors on gender equality, gender justice and GBV.

1.3 Research objectives and research questions

The study was guided by two main research questions:

- Do major donors, government ministries and IGAs have official policies, guidelines, or written protocols on engaging faith actors on gender equality, gender justice and GBV?
- How do representatives of major donors, government ministries and IGAs experience their engagement with religious actors on gender equality, gender justice and GBV?

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Qualitative approach

The study followed a qualitative approach and included a brief literature review, document review and key informant interviews (KIIs).

The literature review served as a background to the study, framing the issue of engagement between religious actors and secular actors on gender. The review of relevant policy documentation, as provided by informants taking part in the study, was a second component of the study. Informants were asked to complete a policy template (provided by the research team and included here as an appendix) but could also provide other relevant documentation as they saw fit.

The person who completed the policy template document was also invited to take part in a virtual KII. The KII had both an identified section (where the informant's reflections were linked to his/her institution) and an anonymous section (where it was not linked to his/her institution). In other words, during the first part of the KII the informant spoke as representative of their institution, and this part of the KII focused on seeking additional clarity on the policy documents and implementation practice of the institution. During the second part of the interview, the informants shared their personal reflections and experiences regarding their institution's policies and practice in engaging with religious actors.

1.4.2 Sampling

The study originally planned on interviewing representatives from up to eight different donors, government ministries or IGAs. The group who commissioned the research were responsible for sourcing these participants and had significant difficulty in getting potential informants to agree to take part. This included time-pressure and general overwork and fatigue due to COVID-19, but also an unwillingness to engage around the particular topic of study. Through existing relationships with staff members within different donor agencies, government ministries and IGAs, they requested participation in the project, highlighting that staff members involved in gender and/or religion should be approached. The fieldwork period was extended repeatedly so as to allow for participation from those stating that they were too busy but would be able to take part at a later date. However, as the study report was to be ready for the PaRD Annual Forum and General Assembly in November 2021, the data collection period could not be extended indefinitely. In the end four institutions took part:

- One representative from the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)
- One representative from UN Women
- Two representatives (in one interview) from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development Cooperation (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung - BMZ)
- Two representatives (in one interview) from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

Interviews were done virtually, using MS Teams. The interviews all happened in February and March 2021.

1.4.3 Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed. Transcriptions, along with the completed policy template documents as well as any other documentation provided by the informants, were analysed using ATLAS.ti 8, using a hybrid deductive and inductive approach.

1.4.4 Ethical approach

The entire research process was conducted with international ethical clearance, applied for from Stellenbosch University's (SU's) Research Ethics Committee (REC). This ensured that the project abided by the highest standards in ethical research practices and that the researcher was held accountable by SU's REC. Observing ethical research standards ensures that (amongst other things) the study was conducted in the following manner:

- All informants voluntarily participated and agreed to be part of the study and were aware that they have the right to refuse to answer and can withdraw from participation at any time
- Consent forms were signed by all participants prior to partaking in research activities
- The line manager of each informant agreed to the informant participating and being interviewed

- Informants were at all times aware which questions being asked elicited information that will be identified with their organisation
- Informants were at all times aware which questions being asked elicited information that will be anonymised
- Data was protected from unauthorised access at all times, by saving it on password-protected computers
- The informants were invited to review a draft version of the report and provide feedback.

1.5 Limitations

The study had certain limitations

- It is a small study that only engaged with four different institutions, and only with one or two representatives of each institution. It can therefore not categorically state that what is found in this study, is true of all donors/government ministries/IGAs, or even necessarily of the donors/government ministries/IGAs included in this study. Nevertheless, it offers a first important step in understanding how key government ministries and IGAs approach engagement with religious actors on gender.
- No institutions focused solely on distributing funding took part in the study. This limitation was partly overcome by the fact that all of the institutions that did take part also act as donors within many programmes.
- Some of the informants that were asked to participate had limited knowledge on some of the issues being discussed. This limitation was partially mitigated by asking them to prepare the policy information in a Word document, which meant they could consult with colleagues. They were also offered the choice of inviting to the interview a colleague that they felt was knowledgeable on those issues.
- The reflections and actions as captured are self-reported. Representatives of the institutions may have decided to not fully reflect or report on issues that may put their institution in a bad light. This limitation was partially mitigated by having an anonymised component to the interview, in the hope that this would ensure greater transparency and openness.

1.6 Structure of the report

In the next section, the findings are discussed, organised around three main themes. This is followed by the concluding recommendations, where separate recommendations are offered for a) donors, government ministries and IGAs, and b) religious actors. The report concludes with a bibliography and two appendices (containing the interview guide and the policy template).

As part of the ethical requirements of this study, the informants are never named. However, where information was shared as part of the first part of the interview, their comments and reflections are connected with their respective institutions. This is why, for example, the four case studies can be captured and clearly linked to specific institutions in Section 2.1. However, as explained earlier, the second part of the interview was anonymised. All information shared during this part of the interview is *not* linked to a specific institution. Where quotes are used from this part of the interview, it will be referenced as coming from an anonymised informant.

2. Findings

The findings are organised in this section around three key themes. First, there is a reflection on the policies, protocols, and actual engagement with religious actors in each of the four institutions (Finnish MFA, UN Women, BMZ and Sida). Second, there is a discussion of how the institutional environment, both formal and informal, is influencing staff members' willingness and ability to engage with religious actors on gender equality, gender justice and GBV. Third, lessons learnt are discussed, first in terms of advice to donors, government ministries and IGAs around working with religious actors on gender, and then for religious actors around applying for funding and partnerships with secular actors around gender.

2.1 Reflecting on four cases

The informants were asked to identify and reflect on the policies, guidelines and protocols within their institution that regulate engagement with religious actors on gender-related issues. They were invited to complete a policy template (designed by the research team and included in Appendix B) and it was also discussed during the first part of the interview. Below the learning from these documents and interviews are captured in four different cases.

Case 1: Finland

Gender equality is a major priority for the Finnish government, defined by Programme of the Government, with a number of policies, guidelines and protocols developed as a result of this prioritisation. Religion is recognised as being a role-player in gender equality. The domestic religious scene in Finland is secular and ecumenically orientated with relatively little religious tensions. Nevertheless, the government recognises the significant role of religion in international politics, and the promotion of freedom of religion or belief is important to the Finnish government.

There are no specific policies (on gender or any other issues) within the MFA that dictates engagement with or funding of religious actors. In terms of funding applications, religious actors are seen as part of civil society and can therefore apply for programme-based support (the biggest form of support for CSOs). It should be kept in mind that, even though there are no specific streams of funding for religious actors only, engagement with religious actors is nevertheless seen as an important part of Finnish foreign policy, especially in the light of its work on peacebuilding.

The MFA has for almost two decades had an official partnership with Finn Church Aid, who uses the funding they receive from MFA to implement many different development projects that involve religious actors in many different countries. MFA also works closely with the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, which is run by Finn Church Aid. Finn Church Aid's peace building work is religion-neutral, and they intentionally engage with actors from all religions. Aside from Finn Church Aid, MFA has also funded other faith-based organisations, such as the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission and other smaller NGOs that work with religious actors. Again, it should be noted that this funding was for development work in general, and not specifically for work on gender.

Case 2: UN Women

Partnerships are at the heart of UN Women's strategic work, recognising that aligning the strengths of all essential civil society actors, including religious leaders, faith-based organisations, and other social justice actors, is critical to take us up the path towards gender equality. UN Women continues to bring together faith actors, feminists, and social justice activists to develop the religious narrative that supports women's rights to physical integrity, autonomy, security and safety, to economic empowerment and right to decent work and productive employment, public and social participation, voice and leadership in private and public spheres. In this regard, UN Women has conducted initiatives with faith-based institutions, organisations, and actors at the global, regional and country level.

As part of the ongoing movement building and sustainability work in support of gender equality and women's empowerment, UN Women has made spaces in the Commission on the Status of Women for critical reflection, recommendations, and action-oriented advocacy to advance and deepen the engagement of key constituencies in the breaking of stereotypes and social norms that perpetuate and condone discrimination and inequalities. A specific focus has been given to the development of a collaboration and dialogue among feminist faith organisations and men and boys, with the objective to articulate common narrative and strategies for sustainable change. Moreover, UN Women continues to deepen collaboration among the men and boys and faith constituencies, by supporting their joint engagement in global policy dialogue, normative spaces, high level political advocacy as well as support to country-based initiatives through advocacy campaigns community dialogues and more, to foster democratic and inclusive spaces.

Engaging religious actors is a cross-cutting issue within UN Women, with a range of formal and informal partnerships in place to promote such engagement. UN Women is part of the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development; UN Women's Executive Director is a member of the Standing Commission on Advancing Gender Equality, which is managed by Religions for Peace; UN Women collaborated in the forming of a global Platform on Gender Equality and Religion; and UN Women as a whole aim to mobilise religious actors to speak out against GBV. While recognising the various ways in which UN Women staff work with religious actors, such engagement appears to be regional and somewhat piecemeal, depending on the regional and national political climate. A specific policy guiding engagement with religious actors would facilitate more coherent engagement with an expanded constituency of different religions actors on national and regional level.

UN Women has had memorandums of understanding (current and past) with several faith-based organisations, as well as organisations that work with religious actors or has programming that intentionally target religious actors and communities. UN Women's engagement with and/or funding of religious actors on gender equality, gender justice or GBV appear to be on a case-by-case basis, depending on the region and the issue. Intensive work with religious actors has been done in Africa and Latin America, while the engagement in the Arab region has been mostly around child marriage and FGM/C. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) section of UN Women has a longer history of engaging religious actors, especially in implementing the WPS agenda through engaging women in peace processes, and the documentation of good practices to inform policy and programming situations. In terms of funding, UN Women is partner to the Spotlight Initiative, where some of the funded projects are by religious actors and/or engage religious communities.

Case 3: Germany

The BMZ is a secular ministry. Yet it has a special departmental budget allocation for supporting development projects implemented by (German) churches. Federal budget is therefore allocated specifically for development projects by partners of the German Church Organisations in developing countries. To quote from provided documentation: "Consequently, the Churches occupy an exceptional – almost privileged – position amongst the organisations receiving development funding allocations from the BMZ" (Background paper on BMZ's collaboration with the Churches, 2021). It should be noted, though, that this funding is for development projects in general, and not necessarily and only for projects on gender.

In the light of the special funding stream available to churches in Germany, BMZ funds two church development agencies: Brot für die Welt – Protestant Development Service, and MISEREOR (linked to the Catholic Church). In the light of funding revisions finalised in 2015, these two church agencies receive a 'block grant', which means that they have sole responsibility to decide on the development cooperation projects that they will fund, and the German government cannot influence their decisions. The church agencies do not themselves implement any programming, but instead partner with local organisations and support their programmes. Other church-based agencies, faith-based organisations, religious actors or

individuals in foreign or domestic territories thus submit project proposals to Brot für die Welt or MISEREOR.

The BMZ is also supporting work with religious actors on gender in other ways. The federally owned Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH acts on behalf of BMZ and is tasked as non-profit enterprise to support the federal government's development policy. GIZ has different intergovernmental and governmental clients as e.g. the German Federal Government, institutions of the European Union, the private sector and governments of other countries. However, GIZ's main client is the BMZ. As such, a significant component of BMZ's budget flows through GIZ to support technical development programming in roughly 120 countries. Some of these funded projects are by religious actors and/or targeting religious communities on gender-related issues. For example, as part of GIZ's regional project Partnerships for Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls in Southern Africa, GIZ funded a pilot project working with religious and traditional actors to end VAWG, implemented by Caritas (the development partner affiliated with the Catholic Church) in Zambia's Southern Province.

Furthermore, in 2016, BMZ launched the strategy "Religious Communities as Partners for Development Cooperation" and has since then engaged in agenda-setting to systematically take religion into consideration in order to tap the positive potential of religious actors in development cooperation. The idea is not to take away those partners that have already traditionally worked with the churches, but rather to get a hold of new religious actors and those whom church-based development cooperation cannot reach. Through pilot projects, carried out by the GIZ Sector Programme Religion and Development, BMZ gained experiences regarding the potential as well as ambivalence of religious actors promoting new forms of cooperation between national and religious actors. The projects focus on key issues of German development cooperation and, among others, target also gender equality. For example, GIZ piloted on behalf of BMZ an interfaith project with the project partners World Vision and Islamic Relief in Mali, on the prevention of GBV and especially FGM/C.

Case 4: Sweden

Sida has no specific policies on engaging religious actors. This is intentional, as they wish to avoid development work being done in siloes, with specific tasks only being done by specific actors. Rather, religious actors are recognised in several policies and papers as influential societal actors that can play an important role in development work. For example, the policy framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance states that "religious communities can play an important role in the fight against intolerance, discrimination and restrictions of human rights", while Sida's strategy for global gender equality and women's and girls' rights (2018-2022) stipulates that:

[b]road and transformative work for gender equality involves a wide range of actors. Besides women's rights organisations, feminist movements and other organisations working on gender equality, other actors such as academic institutions, **faith communities** [emphasis added], cultural practitioners, trade unions and business can become involved in dialogues and collaborations for gender equality.

(Sida's Completed Policy Template, 2021) ²

Religious actors are therefore seen as part of civil society, and they can apply (like any other civil society actor) for available funding if they can help meet the objectives of a specific Sida strategy.

Within Sida's different strategies it is funding various faith-based organisations, e.g., Diakonia, ACT Church of Sweden, the Swedish Mission Council, and Islamic Relief. It has two major partnerships with religious actors specifically on gender equality. Sida is funding the gender equality programmes of two faith-based organisations, ACT Alliance and Musawah. This funding comes from the funding pool of Sida's strategy for global gender equality and women's and girls' rights, and the relevance of the programming of ACT Alliance

² The Sida informants completed the Policy Template document (as included in Appendix B) provided by the research team. This quote from the strategy for global gender equality and women's and girls' rights was included in this completed document.

and Musawah for promotion of gender equality and women's and girls' rights was the reason they received the funding. ACT Alliance is the world's largest network of Protestant and Orthodox churches and agencies and 70% of its members are national churches or church-related organisations from the Global South. Musawah works for gender equality in family law in the Muslim context. Both organisations are funded extensively, with ACT Alliance receiving SEK 44 000 000 to support its Global Gender Justice Programme 2019-2023, and Musawah receiving SEK 20 000 000 to implement its strategic plan for 2020-2025.

What do we learn from these four cases?

- While all of these institutions define themselves as secular, they are all open to partnering with religious actors on gender equality, gender justice or GBV. While such partnership with and funding of religious actors is for all these institutions a possibility, it is not an explicit priority for any.
- An institution's ability to partner with religious actors may be impacted/limited by its own institutional identity. For example, some institutions may by law not directly fund religious actors.
- Institutions' attitude towards religion and religious actors is not necessarily (only) reflected through specific funding allocations. Through their support of broader conversations, partnerships, networks, and collaborations they can contribute to creating both an internal (institution-wide) and external (development sector-wide) climate that recognises the particular contribution of religious actors to addressing gender inequality, gender injustice and GBV.
- Only within one institution are religious actors privileged, namely with the specific stream of federal funding that the BMZ allocates to German churches' development programmes. With the other institutions, religious actors are seen as part of civil society and can apply for programming support and funding in the same ways that other civil society organisations can.
- There is no special funding or partnership routes for religious actors working on gender equality, gender justice and GBV.
- All three government ministries have a long history of partnering and funding religious development organisations representing mainstream Christianity. This shows a willingness to partner and fund religious actors and is also a potential entry point specifically for partnership and funding around gender. At the same time, it also highlights that it may be extra difficult for smaller, independent and/or non-Christian religious actors to access funding and form partnerships.
- While certain departments within an institution may be active in working with religious actors, it does not mean that all departments do so and are supportive of doing so.
- Having formal and informal partnerships with religious actors on gender-related issues does not automatically mean that there is comprehensive, sustainable support for religious actors working on gender equality, gender justice and GBV.
- The development of new policies or funding streams can open new doors for partnership and funding and help improve the institutional understanding of the particular role religious actors play in promoting change towards gender equality.

2.2 The influence of the institutional environment

The informants were asked to reflect on the general environment within their organisation regarding working with religious actors on gender. These reflections were part of the anonymised part of the interviews and will therefore be grouped by theme and not by country. Where a specific institution is mentioned, this reflection was part of the first part of the interview and can therefore be linked to a specific institution.

Within all four institutions there are staff members who are uncomfortable, or even resistant, to working with religious actors on development issues in general and/or on gender-related issues specifically. This appears to usually be because of their personal experiences with religion. So, for example, if a staff member grew up with churches that promoted and enforced a very conservative, harmful agenda, the staff member would usually by default distrust religious actors. In some countries it appears that it is usually older staff

members who have this mistrust; in other countries it is the younger staff members who do. Their home country's religious history can play a strong role in how staff members feel about engaging with religious actors on gender. As a Sida informant explained:

But I would say that when it comes to religion as a factor in development, I think it can often originate from the person's own position, not officially, I'm talking unofficially. And I think it has to do also with a generational factor. Because...if you grew up with the free churches in Sweden, they were very strong social movements in Swedish society. But they also had in many cases strict positions on gender matters - abortion, homosexuality, sex before marriage, all these things. So, I think for some staff at Sida that are perhaps born in 1950/ 1960s, you might easily get into these stereotypical views [that most religious actors promote conservative stances on gender-issues]...[Y]our own worldview will in that way, influence how you approach faith in your development work for better, for worse.

(Sida informant, March 2021)



Some staff members also tend to see religion as being a private matter. Especially if it is seen as a private matter in their home country, they struggle to move away from this worldview when they are working with or in countries where religion is not relegated to the private sphere. One informant therefore argued for the need to help development staff approach religion structurally, rather than based on their personal views. This would enable them to analytically interrogate how religion and religious actors can be partners in dynamic and effective aid-giving.

Photo: Jakob Dall

In general, it still appears that engagement with religious actors – on gender-related issues or on any other development issue – often comes from individual commitment to doing so. It is especially the staff members who are religious themselves who tend to engage with religious actors, for they are the ones who tend to recognise the value of doing so. Of course, there are also non-religious staff members who are convinced about the relevance of religious actor engagement and have therefore decided to ensure that such engagement happens. With staff often being overworked and overwhelmed, it requires such personal commitment to make them add this dimension to development work.

The informants' reflections highlighted that the institutional environment regarding engaging religious actors impacts staff members' willingness to do so. This institutional environment is influenced by different factors. First, it appears that engagement with religious actors become mainstreamed and normalised where there is a long institutional history to such engagement. This is, for example, the case with Sida. When Sida was started, almost all of the development actors in Sweden were faith-based, and therefore partnering and funding religious actors became normalised within the Sida structures.

Second, in settings where it is not common to engage religious actors, or where there is resistance to working with religious actors, those in high positions within the institution are influential in transforming the status quo. If there is energy and push from senior-level leadership, staff become encouraged to partner with religious actors. But third, while



Photo: Nils Carstensen

this high-level buy-in helps legitimise such engagement, it appears that (at least in some institutions) specific policies and guidelines are still needed for such engagement to become common and normalised.

Fourth, staff members can be motivated to work with religious actors on gender if they are shown case studies and examples of where such engagements were effective in reaching development outcomes. People get excited, and eager to try similar things, if they are confronted with the evidence of it being effective. As one informant from the BMZ explained:

Normally you don't get new policies or strategies on the ground when you invite people for three weeks or two-day seminars...But working through pilots and working through interesting partners, that spreads the word. If you really have good examples, other colleagues say 'what are you doing in Mali? Why are we not doing this in Burkina?'

(BMZ informant, March 2021)

A final way to motivate staff to engage with religious actors, is to *not* make it about religion and religious actors. Rather, the focus should be on the development outcome to be achieved. For example, engaging and transforming social norms is recognised as an important way to promote gender equality. If staff understand the role that religious actors play in establishing and promoting social norms, they may be much more motivated to work with religious actors on gender equality. In other words, the way to motivate staff is by emphasising how religious actors can uniquely contribute to the priorities that have already been set within the bigger, multi-sectoral, holistic response to gender inequality and violence.

Photo: Heine Pedersen

It is important to note that the broader national and international political environment also impacts how ministries and IGAs view religious actors and their role in gender equality, gender justice and GBV. For example, when a new government comes into power, or new government policies are developed, it may lead to renewed attention and funding. Sida's new strategy on gender equality and women and girls' rights opened up a whole new avenue for funding (which in turn led to funding for two faith-based organisations that work on gender equality). International political discussions and developments can also impact a ministry or IGA's willingness and ability to engage with religious actors on gender. For example, with the recent pushback internationally against women's rights, some governments may in turn emphasise (in statements, policies and funding) projects on gender equality. It may also happen that one government's promotion of conservative religious ideologies surrounding gender, may lead to another government's renewed emphasis (in statements, policies and funding) of the inclusive, transformational role of religion and religious actors in gender equality, gender justice and GBV. Thus, we see that the national and international political environment is fluid and ever-changing and can impact how a ministry or IGA approaches religious actors on gender, and the funding that becomes available.



2.3 Lessons learnt

The informants were asked to reflect on what they have learnt from engaging with religious actors generally, but also specifically from engaging religious actors on gender. Based on these lessons, they offered concrete advice to donors, government ministries and IGAs working with religious actors, but also to religious actors seeking partnership and funding from government agencies and IGAs.

2.3.1 Advice to donors, government ministries and IGAs

Government ministries, donors and IGAs are encouraged to challenge themselves to not automatically exclude religious actors as potential partners around gender equality, gender justice or GBV. Religious actors should be included in stakeholder mapping and the potential

Photo: Sandra Cox

for engagement explored. All of the informants emphasised that partnerships with religious actors should be relationships where both partners enrich and learn from each other: “[My advice to ministries and IGAs] is to consider a partnership that is not one-sided. You know, partnership that doesn't just drive the donor agenda, but it's also to look at the two-way part of it” (Informant, anonymised, 2021). While the secular funder can challenge the religious actor being funded (for example, by stipulating that the funded programmatic work of a Christian organisation programmatic should also engage Muslim community members), the secular funder should also be challenged to understand the worldview and circumstances of the religious actor. Furthermore, government ministries, donors and IGAs are encouraged to have multiple strategies for funding and engagement. For example, engaging with religious actors and communities in rural settings requires different infrastructure and resources than engaging with religious actors and communities in urban settings. Engagement and funding strategies should be responsive to the diversity of religious actors and communities.



When working on sensitive gender-related issues, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), it is important to be flexible and able to compromise. Religious partners can sometimes simply not offer certain specific services, or promote certain messaging, because of their religious values. Instead of automatically refusing partnership or funding, donors, government ministries and IGAs should see if there are work-arounds. For example, where a religious actor cannot promote contraception, work with them to identify a local partner that can provide that component of comprehensive SRHR programming. It may also require a different entry point, e.g. ‘responsible parenting’ rather than ‘contraception’. It is about taking the time and having the dialogue to identify the type of agenda that a religious actor can commit to:

I would also say that you know it's a matter of identifying on, you know, what sort of agenda you can attach it to. For example, when we're talking about menstrual hygiene, it's often very difficult to approach this from an angle of sexual reproductive health and rights...Often we found it's easier to attach that to the WASH, water and sanitation component...You know, you have to identify your ways in which it is actually feasible to make progress.

(Informant, anonymised, 2021)

This does not mean that it is always possible to find a compromise. Some of the informants explained that it is important to know what cannot be compromised on, and that this might mean that partnership with certain religious actors is impossible:

I think there are borders we are allowed to draw because, you know, we are standing for human rights, we are standing for gender equality. And you know, if we draw a line there that we do say with certain religious leaders, we are not cooperating, then I think it's also, it should be acceptable.
(Informant, anonymised, 2021)

Some religious actors in developing countries may view certain government ministries or intergovernmental agencies as 'too Western' to engage with, especially around sensitive topics like contraception or female genital mutilation/cutting. In such cases, some informants advised engaging another institution, IGA or local partner to work through. For example, in such situations the BMZ often works through the UN:

[W]hen it comes to sexual reproductive health and rights, it's often very difficult, you know, as a Western actor, to work directly with the local partners...The UN is perceived as much more neutral than we are, so you know, we always find the actors that have more access to the religious communities where we find it's controversial.
(BMZ informant, March 2021)



Photo: Jakob Dall

Overall, government ministries, funders and IGAs are challenged to embrace the complexity of engaging with religious actors on gender. This includes recognising how religion and religious actors may contribute to gender inequality and GBV, but also how religion and religious actors may challenge and transform it. It requires realising that religious actors may be motivated by different principles and logic, but that these principles and logics are not necessarily incorrect or invalid. Religious actors are also not only religious but contain a host of intersectional identity markers which all play a role in how they perceive and address gender

equality, gender justice and GBV. Finally, government ministries, funders and IGAs also need to recognise that their secular positioning is not without its biases:

[The] secular position is not neutral position...[I]t's very important to say that being secular or being a person of faith, both are positions and...selected worldviews. And I think we're still not 100% there yet. I think we still tend to value a secular worldview as neutral, and if someone has a religious world view, you have to argue why, what's your justification? And so, I think there we have a work to do.
(Informant, anonymised, 2021)

2.3.2 Advice to religious actors seeking partnership (including funding)

Based on their experiences in partnering and funding religious actors on gender-related issues, the informants noted a number of items that religious actors should pay attention to when seeking funding from secular donors, government ministries or IGAs.

First, it is important to find a middle ground in terms of the language that religious actors use in funding applications. Programmatic objectives need to be explained in terms of developmental goals and impacts,

and not using religious language. While there should be openness about the religious motivation and background of the religious actor, there should also be an honest engagement with both the positives and negatives of this religious framing in terms of gender equality, gender justice and GBV. This allows for framing the unique value-add of the applicant *as a religious actor able to engage religious communities*.

Second, there should be an awareness of the bigger picture within which the religious actor's programmatic activities will happen. In other words, religious actors should not be exceptionalising themselves, but clearly show how they fit into the bigger picture of work being done (for example) on gender equality or GBV. While a religious actor may have a unique constituency or a unique entry point, these do not function independent of other actors and factors. Applications should show such awareness.

Thirdly, if religious actors want to be partnered with and be funded on gender, they need to ensure that their own organisations showcase gender equality and gender justice:

...[T]hey need to get their houses in order. Because if, for example, [a specific faith-based organisation] comes to me and says, OK, we've got this gender justice program, we would like more funding. And what if I do a simple Google search and I find that, OK, they've got a gender justice [issue] within the organisation itself, I mean, you don't see much gender equality. If I go to their partners, it's worse... So, I think, especially I'm talking from the perspective of gender equality, and I think faith-based organisations really need to look at how they do that.

(Informant, anonymised, 2021)

Photo: Jakob Dall

Fourth, for a government ministry or IGA to fund a religious actor on gender-related issues, there has to be trust between the partners. The government ministry or IGA has to be able to trust that the religious actor will in fact use grant money to promote gender justice. For such trust to develop, and for funding to be made available, there has to be open dialogue between the potential partners. Government ministries and IGAs may find it difficult to partner with religious actors that are not open to reflective dialogues around their principles and programming:



But if we find that faith actors are very stubborn, not interested to dialogue, not interested to change or to reflect on theological standpoints, then it's quite hard for us at [our institution] to engage in new partnerships because we have to have this openness for dialogue and the transformational approach. Because then we can trust. But otherwise, I think there will always be this dilemma of mistrust. You know: what is really happening in the work we do not see or do not engage with?

(Informant, anonymised, 2021)

As this quote illustrates, partnership requires open dialogue where both partners contribute and listen, with a willingness to learn and develop.

3. Concluding recommendations

Many donors, government ministries and IGAs were invited to take part in this study and the fact that so few agreed to do so it is perhaps telling of many institutions' attitude towards gender and religion. Nevertheless, this study, while small, has allowed exploration of how certain government ministries and IGAs view and experience working with religious actors on gender equality, gender justice and GBV. The informants' honest reflections have highlighted how both sides can do more to facilitate understanding, collaboration, and partnership around achieving the aims of SDG 5. In the light of these reflections, a series of recommendations are offered below, with the aim of promoting partnership (including funding) on gender between religious actors and (secular) donors/government ministries/IGAs.

3.1 Recommendations for donors, government ministries and IGAs

- Do not automatically exclude the possibility of partnering with and/or funding religious actors on gender equality, gender justice or gender-based violence. Be open to exploring the possibilities of doing so with specific religious actors in specific settings on specific projects.
- The religious literacy of staff members is very important. This is not just about improving their understanding of religion, religious actors and religious communities within their setting. It should also include engaging with their own entrenched views of religion, eliciting honest reflections on how these views can be blinding them to possible avenues for achieving development outcomes. Engaging around religious literacy may also include working with staff members who are actively hostile towards the idea of engaging religious actors to understand their positions and work through barriers.
- Partnerships should be a two-way learning and growing experience, underlining a capacity *sharing* approach between religious and secular actors. Even though you are the one providing the money, you should also be listening, reflecting and adapting. You should also do your part to make partnerships work, e.g. creatively think about language and entry points.
- Put the needed knowledge management and communication systems in place so that there is a better overall understanding within your institution of what work is being done with religious actors. Especially within big institutions, staff are often only aware of what is being done within their own departments. Collating the information on what is being done with religious actors, why and how, can lead to a better institution-wide understanding of the different possibilities, as well as build energy around doing so.
- While there might be efforts within your institution to create better understanding of the role of religion or religious actors, there could be a need for concrete policies that guide this engagement. Honestly reflect whether mainstreamed engagement with religious actors is enough to ensure that your institution and its staff recognise religious actors' role and contribution to addressing gender inequality, gender injustice and GBV. The development of new policies can help improve institutional understanding of the particular role religious actors can play in promoting positive change towards gender equality, and thus facilitate the formation of partnerships. Such instruments can help motivate staff who may be hesitant to work with religious actors or are unsure of how to do it. But even for staff members who are highly motivated to work with religious actors, such instruments can enable their engagement as it guides them on how to navigate their own institution's requirements. This is especially needed when it is a secular institution.
- Challenge yourself to create avenues for partnership with religious actors who are not only large, Christian development networks or organisations. It may be easier to only continue with existing, long-term partnerships with specific religious actors, especially if these religious actors are affiliated with the dominant religious communities in your home country. However, this may mean that you are missing or ignoring religious actors who can be effective partners around gender, even though they are smaller or do not belong to a mainstream religious group.

- To widen the scope of potential religious actors that you can partner with, intentionally communicate widely with various religious actors (e.g., through religious networks and mother bodies) around the funding and partnership opportunities available to them within your institution.
- Intentionally create opportunities for engagement and discussion on gender between your institution – also at decentralized level – and religious actors, in order to create mutual understanding, learning and relationship-building. Ensure that not only mainstream religious actors are invited to these meetings.

3.2 Recommendations for religious actors

- Many (if not most) donors, government ministries and IGAs do not have a special category of funding for or partnership with religious actors. They see religious actors as part of civil society. You will therefore have to identify the opportunities available to civil society organisations and position yourself accordingly.
- Donors, government ministries and IGAs may have certain religious networks or organisations that they have a long relationship with. A potential way to partnership and/or funding is through these partners.
- Specific individuals within funding institutions, government ministries and IGAs tend to drive engagement with religious actors. Identify these individuals and build relationships and trust with them, while encouraging the sector and donors as a whole to work more systematically and across thematic areas to support a move away from an overreliance on one staff member or one department to lead all religious engagement.
- Often institutions believe they have a certain niche area within development, where they believe they are the most creative and progressive and set the trend. An entry point into partnership and funding is to identify these niche areas and explain (with evidence) how working with you as religious actor can promote not only their objectives, but also their reputation as innovative trendsetter.
- When seeking funding and/or partnership, be intentional about how you present and explain what you do. Do not hide your religious affiliation, as it is your unique value-add, but do not try to sell religion as the cure to all gendered harms. Rather, show how you are aware of both the positives and negatives of religion in relation to gender, and how you are going to leverage the positives while addressing the negatives. Also, try to use the terminology that those you are approaching use, as this makes it easier for them to understand what you do.
- While funding applications should make an argument for supporting you, it is important not to exceptionalise religion and you as religious actor. Applications should show that you are aware of other actors working on the issue. While you should of course emphasise your unique contribution as religious actor, it may be unwise to argue that engaging religion is the only solution to gendered harms.
- If you wish to get partnership and/or funding for interventions around gender equality, gender justice or GBV, you have to ensure that you are representing the principles that you wish to promote through your interventions. For example, a faith-based organisation seeking funding for work on gender equality cannot only have male leaders.
- Donors, government ministries and IGAs are influenced by their political environment, both national and international. For example, if the national or international environment is pushing for engagement with religious actors on gender, these institutions are affected. Influencing the national or international environment can therefore be an indirect way to ensure institutions are willing to partner with and fund religious actors on gender equality, gender justice and GBV.
- Develop short (1-2 page) evidence-based case studies specifically for sharing with donors, government ministries and IGAs, which showcase gender interventions done with and by religious actors. These practical examples of what has been done and how it worked can be a great motivation for partnership and funding.

- The policies, strategies and approaches of donors and especially government ministries and IGAs are constantly evolving and changing. Priorities and interests change. Ensure that you stay informed about relevant developments, especially as new funding opportunities may arise for which you may qualify.
- Intentionally create opportunities for engagement and discussion on gender between religious actors and donors, government ministries and IGAs. This can help in creating mutual understanding, learning and relationship-building, as well as help build religious understanding/literacy among government/IGA staff.

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Appendix A: Interview guide

The interview is seen as having two distinct components – it may even be done at different times, should that be preferred by the participant. The first part is to allow further exploration of the information provided in the Policy Submission Template. The information offered in response to these questions are therefore still linked to the participant’s organisation/agency.

KII – Part 1

The questions in this guide will depend on the information the participant has shared in the policy template document. Therefore, whenever we have questions remaining unanswered or information missing on the organisation/agency’s specific policies and guidelines, those are questions will be asked. Some of the questions from the policy template document may therefore be asked in this interview, again, if needed.

- Thank you for the document compiling the information on your organisation/agency’s policies on engaging and funding faith-based actors on gender-related issues. Since you sent that, is there any other policies or guidelines that you have remembered about, that you think should also be included in the document? Or do you believe it is the full picture?
- In your organisation/agency, does everyone know the policy/guidelines you shared with us? Why do you say so?
- In case people don’t know about the policies/guidelines you shared with us, why do you think that’s the case? What could be done to help change that?
- Are there any other rules, policies or guidelines that may hinder the implementation of the policies on engaging faith-based actors on gender? In other words, are there clashing policies that limits the roll-out of the policies on faith-based actors?
- Why is that the case? What could be done to help counter/mitigate/prevent any negative effects of this?
- If you reflect on the bigger political environment in which your organisation/agency has to function: is it conducive to the use and roll-out of these policies and guidelines on engaging faith-based actors on gender-related issues? Why? Why not? If not, what could be done about it?

KII – Part 2 (anonymous)

We have spoken a lot about your organisation/agency’s official policies and guidelines on engaging and funding faith-based actors on gender-related issues. The focus in this session is now much more on the informal, rather than the formal environment. I am hoping to get a better sense of what happens in practice. Everything you say in from this point forward will be anonymised. In other words, it is not linked to you or to your organisation.

- Have you worked with, or funded, a faith-based actor on a gender justice, or other gender-focused, intervention?
 - If not, why not?
 - If you have, can you tell me a bit more about that?
 - Which organisation did you work with? What type of partnership was it? *Why did you do it? Who initiated it? What was the cooperation like? What worked and what didn’t?*
 - If you look back on that experience, what have you learnt about working with or funding FBOs on gender-focused interventions?
 - *Positives and negatives*
- I want you to think a bit about the environment within your organisation/agency. What do you think is the general feeling about working with or funding FBOs on gender-focused interventions?

- *Are people hesitant or eager? Sceptical? Is it not even on their radar?*
- Are FBOs seen as fringe organisations, or as the same as any other civil society organisations?
- Are there differences with regards to different types of FBOs?
- If you think about your organisation/agency, do you think it is doing enough to engage with faith actors, or should it be doing more? Or is it perhaps doing a lot, but the focus is not quite right?
 - Why do you say so?
- Based on your experiences, here in your current organisation, but also at any other places where you've worked: what advice would you offer FBOs that are seeking funding and/or partnership with major donors or intergovernmental agencies?
 - How should they 'sell' themselves?
 - What should their gender-focused interventions look like, for it to be 'attractive' to an organisation/agency such as yours?
 - What are potential pitfalls to avoid?
 - Where are the spaces for partnership and collaboration (for example, in advocacy, funding and / or educational spaces?
- Based on your experiences, and also your experiences within your specific organisation/agency: what advice would you offer to major donors or intergovernmental agencies who are considering partnering with or funding faith actors on gender-focused interventions?
 - How should they be approaching such work?
 - What should they understand about working with FBOs and faith-based interventions?
 - What are advantages/potential challenges? How can these be overcome/mitigated/prevented?
 - What policies and guidelines should they have in place in their own institutions?

Appendix B: Policy template

‘Religion and Gender in Donor Policies and Practice’

Policy Submission Template

Thank you for participating in this research project on religion and gender in donor policies and practice. Please complete the following template and send it back to Dr Jennifer Philippa Eggert.

Feel free to cut and paste from other documents when answering these questions.

- 1. Does your organisation engage with faith actors around gender-related issues? This could be in the form of informal engagement, formal partnerships, or funding.**

- 1.1. Why? Why not?

- 1.2. If you do, please give more information on this engagement, partnership or funding.

- 1.3. If not, is your organisation planning to start engaging with faith actors around gender-related issues? Why? Why not?

- 2. Does your organisation have policies, guidelines or written protocols that guide how you engage with faith actors around gender-related issues? This could include policies, guidelines or written protocols around informal engagement, formal partnerships, or funding (with a focus on faith actors and gender-related issues).**

If your organisation has policies, guidelines or written protocols that guide how you engage with faith actors around gender-related issues:

- 2.1. Can you include the policies, guidelines or written protocols and highlight any particularly relevant sections?

- 2.2. When were these policies, guidelines or written protocols developed and adopted?

2.3. Who was involved in the development of these policies, guidelines or written protocols?

2.4. Why did your organisation see a need to develop policies, guidelines or written protocols that cover engagement with faith actors on gender-related issues?

2.5. Can you give us concrete examples of how these policies, guidelines or written protocols have guided your decisions about engagement, partnerships and/or funding?

2.6. Do you see any gaps not covered by these policies, guidelines or written protocols?

2.7. Are these policies, guidelines or written protocols being reviewed regularly? By whom?

If your organisation does not have any policies, guidelines or written protocols that guide how you engage with faith actors around gender-related issues:

2.8. Is your organisation planning to develop policies, guidelines or written protocols that would guide how you engage with faith actors around gender-related issues? (Why? Why not?)

2.9. If your organisation plans to develop policies, guidelines or written protocols that guide how you engage with faith actors around gender-related issues, how will they develop these? Who would be involved?

2.10. How do you expect these policies, guidelines or written protocols to guide your decisions about engagement, partnerships and/or funding of/with faith actors that work on gender-related issues?

3. Is there anything else you would like to add about your organisation's engagement with faith actors around gender-related issues (or the policies, guidelines or protocols that guide this engagement) that has not been covered in the questions above?

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