MAPPING RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT CAPSTONE EVENT OCTOBER 3, 2016

As the three-year country-level mapping program approached its conclusion, a capstone event at Georgetown University on October 3, 2016, focused directly on the lessons learned through the project and looked ahead to future challenges and possibilities. The event was an opportunity to reflect on the project's research, methodology, and outputs. It was organized as three distinct sessions: a morning "working circle" with a small invited group of external experts to review the project and offer feedback directly to WFDD and the Berkley Center, an afternoon roundtable workshop with a broader group of scholars and practitioners to discuss the roles religion plays in four key development sectors, and an evening public panel featuring prominent scholars and practitioners who reflected on the roles of religious institutions and beliefs in approaching the challenges of modernization and development.

The following paragraphs summarize the discussions and main points that arose.

WORKING CIRCLE: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF COUNTRY-LEVEL MAPPING

The working circle brought together external experts to review the project and offer critiques and recommendations directly to the Berk-

ley Center and WFDD. The closed working circle included 13 practitioners, scholars, and thought leaders, mostly from the four countries where the research was focused. Participants drew on their various specialties within the fields of development and peacebuilding, each bringing a deep understanding of religious engagement within these areas. The Berkley Center and WFDD challenged participants to offer specific feedback based on a thorough prior review and evaluation of project methodology and the content of project outputs.

Working Circle Participants

- Agnes Abuom, Ph.D.
- Mustafa Ali, Ph.D.
- R. Scott Appleby, Ph.D.
- Rebecca Blachly
- Benedict D'Rozario, Ph.D.
- Nazrul Islam
- Thomas Lawo, Ph.D.
- Cecelia Lynch, Ph.D.
- Sheikh Saliou Mbacké
- Penda Mbow, Ph.D.
- El Hadji Mansour Sy
- Paul Townsend
- Miguel von Hoegen

Bangladesh

Working circle participants found the reports, briefs, and case studies on Bangladesh reader-friendly, but offered specific suggestions that might enhance accessibility and dissemination. They saw substantial value in the reports but suggested that reports solely in English are inaccessible to grassroots workers who do much of the development work. Suggestions include further work to summarize findings and to translate key documents into Bangla to increase circulation. More use could be made of social media to disseminate information.

Bangladesh saw dynamic changes in 2016, with shifting tensions and security concerns. These undercurrents render some information and references a bit outdated. An emerging challenge is balancing staying up to date on the current climate with producing robust and durable products.

Guatemala

The experts found the Guatemala publications to be done well, providing a general overview that could be useful for practitioners. With a full-length report forthcoming, they recommended key areas of focus, including corruption, malnutrition, and the effects of marginalization of the indigenous population.

The contemporary challenges around migration within the Guatemala-U.S. context represent a topic that should be explored further. The question of what causes individuals and families to choose whether or not to migrate is central to understanding migratory patterns.

Kenya

The group found the Kenya written outputs to be easily understandable, yet comprehensive. They would recommend the materials for a diverse audience, including both religious and non-religious actors. The exploration of root causes of conflict, including inter-ethnic and interreligious tensions, was especially appreciated. The group suggested that the country report highlight gender, the role of religious and faith-based media, peace initiatives of community-based leaders, employment, corruption, and the youth bulge. The report should cover as much as possible of the broad spectrum of development organizations, balanced with an account of historical issues and recent developments.

The experts recommended delving deeper into several topics to bring out greater nuances. These include explicit review of Islamic interventions in development work, the potential effects and consequences of Brexit on policy, sectarian and intra-reli-

gious conflict around ideology, the role of social media in radicalization, and the effects of extremism on women.

Senegal

The Senegal publications were seen as providing a comprehensive and descriptive account of the complex and dynamic situation on the ground. One participant stressed the importance of acknowledging and understanding the historical background for mapping work. The number of interviews, including those conducted with religious leaders, lends credibility to the reports. Questions centered on how to communicate research findings to stakeholders, particularly those in government and grassroots communities. It was suggested that the research could be used to encourage dialogue between government and religious leaders in order to build a stronger consensus on critical issues.

The topic of education provoked lively discussion. Experts suggested diving deeper into the different education systems and the issues within each system. Language of instruction, mandatory schooling, impact of population growth, and questions of financing are central issues for public education. The Berkley Center/WFDD research could inform and direct longstanding debates on *daaras* (Qur'anic schools) and the well-being of *talibé* (pupils at Qur'anic schools), navigating the need to modernize these schools while preserving the values education that the system provides. *Daaras* fill gaps in the public education system, but the widespread begging by *talibés*, often intended to teach humility, has been perverted by some instructors. A suggestion to regulate *daaras* by integrating them into the formal school system sparked debate, as the government's education budget is already stretched thin, and the feasibility of integration is unclear.

Overall Feedback

The working circle participants saw the materials produced as remarkably rich and innovative resources. The mapping work is distinct from other similar efforts in both breadth and depth. Project publications show care in considering religious, historical, and cultural factors. They will be useful for practitioners and students alike. For practitioners, it would be helpful to include practical information on contacting the organizations and individuals highlighted.

The interviews are a crucial aspect to the research, even if potential response bias and sampling largely within the capital cities could skew the information obtained. Supplementing the hard data and statistics with information from interviews provides a more comprehensive picture. The policy briefs lay out the problems in an adequate way but could provide more pol-

icy recommendations. The experts would like to see materials written about land issues, corruption, colonial ties, and power dynamics, as well as transnational religious trends and their impact on development.

The group discussed targeted dissemination of materials. At the international level, religious literacy among development practitioners and development literacy among religious actors are prime concerns, and these materials make a noteworthy contribution. At the national and local levels, the policy briefs could be disseminated widely among different communities. Overall, the experts thought research in the four countries could be deepened on certain issues, especially education, which has links to a wide range of other development topics. The mapping process was well received, and the products were found to be useful.

The group was asked a central operational question facing the Berkley Center and WFDD: Should future work deepen work to date in the four focus countries, or extend to other countries using the methodology developed to date? The basic answer was: Both are important. A broad suggestion was that research should focus on the same group of countries in the next phase to probe deeper into particular issues. Sharp issue briefs on pertinent topics were seen as especially useful. However, there was also a call to work in a widening group of countries.

ROUNDTABLE SESSION: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONS OF RELIGION AND GENDER, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND PEACE AND CONFLICT

This roundtable session convened specialists engaged in work on religion and development to discuss particular themes emerging from country-level analysis conducted by WFDD and the Berkley Center and to explore cross-country comparisons. The event focused on religious roles in four specific areas (gender, health, education, and peace and conflict), with separate tables taking up the different issues. Roundtable participants provided specific feedback and recommendations based on WFDD and Berkley Center research and outputs. The session concluded with a broad discussion responding to comments from the various tables.

Discussions ranged quite widely, from the roles of religious texts to specific actions linked to development policies and programs. There was especially lively discussion around the challenges of gender and religion. Linking religious texts to efforts to fight gender inequality was advanced as one illustration of a place where understanding can be furthered with a deliberate linking of religious beliefs and development/human rights principles. Translating development and rights principles into

religious language can help to demonstrate their congruency. A participant pointed to the pitfall of seeing gender ideology as an invention of feminists; this contributes to tensions between the Catholic hierarchy that traditionally keeps males in leading roles and radical secularists who may view religion as the greatest threat to women. Ordinary people, however, rarely put aspects of the gender revolution in an all-or-nothing package. The role of education in creating gender identities was a topic of particular interest. Economic autonomy and family planning are likely to continue as critical issues at the intersection of gender and religion. Governments and groups cannot wait to educate people; if action is not taken, health and education risks will only grow.

On the topic of health, strong historic links between health and religion were highlighted. Churches have long involvement in establishing hospitals and service delivery; however, there is a lack of coherent and effective religious advocacy for improved policies. Government-religious partnerships focused on expanding access to healthcare could make a significant difference. Organizations could benefit from looking at wellness through a wider lens, rather than focusing primarily on service delivery, in order to broaden health education to health promotion. A white paper for service deliverers on how to engage in policy for the benefit of healthy, strong communities could be useful. While community-level services show results, there must be crossover to policy. This concept can be applied broadly in the development sector and is particularly applicable for mitigating conflict and promoting peace.

Practitioners, it was suggested, can usefully distinguish themselves as influencers of, rather than agitators for, policies. Key questions to ask include: What is our message? Where is our evidence? How does the government actually see our value in influencing policy? The complex map of advocacy groups and aid should be considered in combining service experience and policy advocacy. Players include not only community groups, but also national and international partners and influencers. How does one create a voice on behalf of an organization and a community that also intersects with other crucial institutions? A frequent suggestion was to focus on public-private partnerships that include religious figures. Declarations of support make too little impact; there must be country and group representation and participation. Effective partnership models, many practitioners noted, produce the long-term effects that are needed across the board.

Practitioners need to understand how different industries use tools to understand knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in a quantitative way if they are to be effective in shaping policies. However, available, practical tools to help understand how religious leaders can be influencers are limited. In terms of moni-

toring and evaluation, one religious leader stated that churches focus on what they need to do, rather than proving that they were successful. This kind of approach tends to contrast with the emphasis within the development community on collecting data and demonstrating project impact and results.

The potential for partnerships and collaboration was a common theme in discussions. How can churches come together more effectively to promote health, education, gender rights, and conflict resolution? Consultation and interfaith dialogue can be helpful in establishing a space where leaders are able to think through issues; the need to create and foster safe spaces where differences can be aired openly and without undue risk was emphasized. Many encouraged further studies about the intersections of development with policy and religion. However, many participants agreed that more must be done to ensure that governments, influencers, and donors receive and consider these reports if there is to be an appropriate influence not only at the community, programmatic level, but also at the level of policy.

PANEL DISCUSSION: MAPPING RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT

The third event was a panel discussion, moderated by Katherine Marshall, that focused on the significance and impact of the country-level mapping project. What lessons were learned, and has this project helped to sharpen goals for the future?

Scott Appleby, dean of the Keough School of Global Affairs at the University of Notre Dame, addressed the project's key questions: What is religion and development about? Why does the intersection matter? How has this area evolved in recent decades? Appleby reflected that faith-based groups both inside and outside a country can engage in development, intentionally or inadvertently, on a range of issues, such as healthcare and conflict resolution. He sees the most significant engagement in the area of education, where religion plays vital roles. Education is an area with notable knowledge gaps in scholarship and policy; there need to be platforms, like the country-level mapping research, to fill these gaps.

Appleby saw the project work as playing an important role in raising new questions. In shifting terrain where secular, state, and religious education change our paradigms of understanding, it is crucial to study these issues. For example, project work highlights how media has different impacts on various facets of knowledge and education. This encourages a broader view of development that enriches wider understandings of the future of religion and education in a transnational, globalized world.

Thomas Lawo, senior advisor at the German Society for International Cooperation, reminded the group of Hans Kung's assertion that peace among nations cannot occur without peace among religions, and peace between religions cannot occur without dialogue. Development, he argued, is truly a global phenomenon. Thus, development cannot occur with, for example, the German government alone pushing its own agenda.

There must be input from NGOs, global initiatives, and bilateral agreements. The integration of government and religious leaders in policymaking encourages religious literacy and interreligious understanding. Timing also matters in the government agenda; international coordination and action contribute to success. This involves including multiple organizations, meeting in different places, on different topics, and at appropriate moments to take advantage of the presence of diverse leaders.

Miguel von Hoegen, economist, former vice-minister of urban and rural development, and twice secretary of planning in Guatemala, highlighted his perspective after the Guatemalan Peace Accords. Despite the agreement, the percentage of people living in poverty in Guatemala has increased. Many Guatemalans, he suggested, wanted churches to play a more significant role in the 1996 agreements and in ensuring their implementation. Twenty years later, many now acknowledge that the church needs to be considered far more purposefully in the still much needed work of peacebuilding.

Benedict D'Rozario, former executive director of Caritas Bangladesh, focused on how his nation, which is traditionally very peaceful, dealt with violence earlier this year. Events prompted serious reflection and discussion about how government initiatives can address the critical issues facing the nation and individual communities. Although Bangladesh has made progress in healthcare, education, and livelihoods, complex issues like poverty, unemployment, and underemployment are still only partially addressed, and there is a widening gap between the rich and the poor. International events have influenced violence, with many youth recruited by non-state groups. This situation must inspire organizations and governments to unite, reflect, and address these negative trends. While the government emphasizes expanding education in Bangladesh, family remains the most important factor in ensuring education and development. Limited democratic space and lack of confidence between political parties that do not communicate or trust each other compound the issues. It is vital to pursue various initiatives to bridge these divides. D'Rozario remains hopeful that Bangladesh can return to its tradition of harmony, tolerance, and peace with the help of NGOs, government, and other partners.

Agnes Abuom from Kenya, who serves as moderator of the World Council of Churches Central Committee, reflected that every society has wounds that fuel marginalization and religious tension. These must be addressed to move forward. In Kenya, historical wounds from the colonial period have separated communities, but there are also political wounds from the postcolonial period that have harmed Christian-Muslim relationships especially. For example, the violence among youth that occurs in central Kenya results from the wounds related to land questions that were never properly addressed. These issues go beyond Christian-Muslim relationships; rather, they are about how identities and relationships are understood in terms of ethnic, religious, and geographic communities. She recommended examining the changing relationships between religious groups and how movements for positive changes are formed in government and international agendas. Christian and Muslim groups need to address the wounds from radical groups and specific tensions linked to refugees who spend long periods in Kenya. The WFDD report on peacebuilding in Kenya reflects this in its coverage of organizations that are working to restore trust, heal wounds, and create a positive future for Kenya. Abuom advocated for creating a space for dialogue between government and non-state actors, such as faith leaders, to discuss and address issues that have been swept under the rug. These partnerships must not instrumentalize faith-inspired institutions, but they should establish a relationship based on equality where both parties contribute their specific talents to building a dignified, just community.

CLOSING REMARKS

Katherine Marshall emphasized the broadening of development agendas reflected in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The global development agenda now explicitly includes environmental challenges, peacebuilding, and humanitarian action, as well as the more traditional, but broad, sectors associated with international development (health, education, economic management, governance, infrastructure, etc.). This new architecture translates into a still more ambitious and complex set of challenges and imperatives. They include integrating private-sector and religious leaders in official development-related policy. The central question is how to do this most effectively.

The session concluded with appreciation for the insights of a panel approaching the question from different religious and regional perspectives, illustrating how the global and the local are tightly intertwined. What is the most effective way faith groups stay true to themselves while working to shape development policies? The project and the capstone discussions highlighted the need for continuing robust research, conversation, and advocacy that portray religious actors in development as constructive, holistic, and healing, even as less positive dimensions are recognized and taken into account. WFDD's and the Berkley Center's mapping of the constructive players in development is not blindly optimistic, but it looks to continue dialogue, pose questions, and reflect on solutions.

Watch the capstone video at: https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/events/mapping-religion-and-development