Global Development and Faith-Inspired Organizations in Europe and Africa: Meeting Report
Consultation on June 24–25, 2008
The Hague, Netherlands

A project of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs and the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University

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Global Development and Faith-Inspired Organizations in Europe and Africa

CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

**Moderators**

**Katherine Marshall**, Senior Fellow, Berkley Center and Visiting Associate Professor of Government, Georgetown University  
**Gerrie ter Haar**, Professor of Religion, Institute of Social Studies

**Participants**

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**Brenda Bartelink**, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Groningen, Netherlands  
**Welmoet Boender**, Stichting Oikos, Netherlands  
**Omer Caha**, Professor, Fatih University and Director, Deniz Feneri Association, Turkey  
**Jacques Dinan**, Executive Director, Caritas Africa  
**Melody Fox Ahmed**, Berkley Center, Georgetown University, USA  
**Peter David Grant**, International Director, Tearfund, United Kingdom  
**Adu Grema**, Director of Northern Office, Nigeria, DFID  
**Muhammed Haron**, Professor of Religion, University of Botswana  
**Willem Jansen**, Stichting Stek, Netherlands  
**Tural Koc**, Islamic University of Rotterdam, Netherlands  
**Piet Kuijper**, Cordaid, Netherlands  
**Nigussu Legesse**, Director, Inter-Church Aid Commission, Ethiopia  
**Richard Marsh**, ImpACT Coalition, United Kingdom  
**Dele Olowu**, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria  
**John Padwick**, Communications Director, Organization of African-Instituted Churches, Kenya  
**Bastijn Ravenshorst**, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
**Lazare Rukundwa Sebitereko**, Executive Secretary, Eben-Ezer Ministry International  
**Elly Urban**, PRISMA, Netherlands  
**Lisette van der Wel**, Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation, Netherlands  
**Msgr. Robert Vitillo**, Head of International Delegation in Geneva, Caritas Internationalis  
**Brady Walkinshaw**, Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics, World Bank, USA

*Could not be in The Hague but their interviews provided invaluable insights.*
INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS

Husnul Amin, Ph.D. candidate at the Institute for Social Studies, highlighted his work with religious educators and madrasas in Pakistan, and their role in providing education to the most disadvantaged sectors of the population. He urged more reflection among mainstream development actors whom he perceived as having scarce, if caricatured, knowledge of these organizations; a thoughtful look at the scope of madrasa activities, particularly in vocational areas for youth, could yield important lessons for public education [Box 13]. The madrasas play important roles in post-conflict situations, and, in more normal times, as vehicles for peace education. Poor coordination among development actors and large knowledge gaps are particularly significant for Muslim run education systems. A good starting point is to understand better the way knowledge does, or does not, flow between faith-based and secular organizations.

Welmoet Boender, with Stichting Oikos, a Dutch ecumenical NGO, reflected on that institution’s relationship and approach to the southern faith-based partners who implement programs on the ground [Box 6]. She highlighted strong linkages and thus strong partnerships between Stichting Oikos and other faith-based actors in the Netherlands.

Omer Caha, professor of political science at Fatih University and a founder of the Turkish NGO, Deniz Feneri, drew on his work on relationships between Islam, philanthropy, and a vibrant civil society [Box 4]. He described Deniz Feneri’s theory of change and its role in advocacy and public life, and in development within Turkey and in other Muslim societies.

Jacques Dinan, General Secretary of Caritas Africa, stressed the need for deepened and consistent communication strategies. Particularly with the resource constraints that face many faith-inspired networks of development organizations, he is concerned about duplication and lost opportunities for sharing best practices [Box 9]. He spoke about accompanying the underprivileged rather than administering to them. Finally, he characterized the long-term investment of religious actors in local communities as a feature of social life that practitioners must grapple with in locally-driven development.

Melody Fox Ahmed, Program Manager for the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, described the program’s nascent but emerging work in areas from religion and politics, to the global development program led by Katherine Marshall.

Peter Grant, Tearfund’s International Director, highlighted the role of local churches as bedrock for development activities at the grass roots [Box 2]. This continuity is what accounts for the high degrees of local trust in the institutions and their sustainable, long-term presence, though he also noted the pressing need to invest in operational capacity.

Mr. Grant also highlighted Tearfund’s recent advocacy with partner FBOs on climate change. Through the Micah Network and others, a growing number of Christian Evangelical relief organizations are committing to the integrated mission of the Micah Network (a global network of relief and advocacy organizations).

Audu Grema, DFID’s field director in northern Nigeria, raised a broad set of issues around donor coordination, harmonization, and ownership by local governments of their development agenda. He pointed to the imperative need for interreligious dialogue in northern Nigeria, and for religious literacy as an inescapable prerequisite for development practitioners in the region [Box 8 & 12].

Muhammed Haron, professor of religion at the University of Botswana, brought perspective on a range of issues, including HIV/AIDS, faith-based organizations and the media, human rights, and the complexities of religious conversion and development activities. His work draws attention to the escalating presence of FBOs in both radio and television media [Box 10].
Piet Kuijper, with Cordaid, a Dutch Catholic development organization, highlighted the shifting partnerships between northern and southern FBOs. Urged by partner organizations in the global south, Cordaid and other Dutch donors had begun an “inward” exercise of reexamining their own religious identity vis-à-vis their approach to development. Cordaid is focusing far more sharply today on defining its Catholic identity and how that applies to its development approach.

Nigussu Legesse, director of the Inter-Church Aid Commission in Nigeria, urged sharper focus on the anti-corruption and transparency activities of religious leaders at the grassroots level to hold government accountable for public spending. Among his challenges were inconsistent funding from northern funders, and the flexibility and resources of his organization to adapt to the demands of new donors.

Richard Marsh, director of the ImpACT Coalition in the U.K., admonished participants leading FBOs to develop cogent platforms for communication and to invest in results-based monitoring. His observation is that faith-inspired organizations lag behind many other NGOs in conveying and marketing their achievements.

Dele Olowu, with the Redeemed Church of God, and a former professor at the Institute for Social Studies and practitioner with the African Development Bank, highlighted the spread of Pentecostal churches across Africa and in diaspora enclaves in Europe. In many instances, they are invested in social welfare programs though they collaborate infrequently with governments and donors, largely reliant on local funding and on remittances from northern churches [Box 5].

Lazare Rukundwa Sebitereko, Executive Secretary, Eben-Ezer Ministry International, joined the group for the second day and focused on the complex experience of addressing conflict, returning conflict, and post conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Elly Urban highlighted the breadth of activities and challenges of PRISMA, a new coordinating association comprised of faith-inspired organizations.

Lisette van der Wel, policy advisor at the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO), a Dutch Protestant NGO, spoke particularly about how Netherlands faith-based development partners are re-examining the theology and religious identity that underlies their approach to development [Box 7]. The network of Dutch faith-based aid NGOs is organizing actively to engage with the Netherlands government, and specifically to affect the Ministry’s policy toward religious issues (taking it more thoughtfully into account) as well as advocating for levels and direction of development aid. Religion is an essential motivating and social force, giving direction to value structures in societies. Religion has critical effects on issues ranging from governance and democracy to gender roles and the path towards equity and social justice. She highlighted the integral approach to development, attendant to the whole individual and accompanying the poor.

Brady Walkinshaw, with the World Bank’s Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics, spoke of the mutual perceptions and misperceptions between faith-based and mainstream development partners. He highlighted the need for substantive networks among faith-inspired organizations with a clearer view toward communicating results and documenting activities.

While they were unable to participate in the consultation, John Padwick’s (Communications Director for the Organization of African-Instituted Churches) and Fr. Robert Vitillo’s (Special Advisor on HIV and AIDS to Caritas Internacionals) contributions are reflected in excerpts from their interviews, highlighted in various parts of the report and particularly in Boxes 3 & 11.
LUCE/SFS PROGRAM ON RELIGION AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

From 2006–08, the Berkley Center and the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service (SFS) collaborated in the implementation of a generous grant from the Henry Luce Foundation’s Initiative on Religion and International Affairs. The Luce/SFS Program on Religion and International Affairs convenes symposia and seminars that bring together scholars and policy experts around emergent issues. The program is organized around two main themes: the religious sources of foreign policy in the US and around the world, and the nexus between religion and global development. Topics covered in 2007–08 included the HIV/AIDS crisis, faith-inspired organizations in the Muslim world, gender and development, religious freedom and US foreign policy, and the intersection of religion, migration, and foreign policy.

THE BERKLEY CENTER

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, created within the Office of the President in March 2006, is part of a university-wide effort to build knowledge about religion’s role in world affairs and promote interreligious understanding in the service of peace. The Center explores the intersection of religion with contemporary global challenges. Through research, teaching, and outreach activities, the Berkley Center builds knowledge, promotes dialogue, and supports action in the service of peace. Thomas Banchoff, Associate Professor in the Department of Government and the School of Foreign Service, is the Center’s founding director.

THE EDMUND A. WALSH SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE

Founded in 1919 to educate students and prepare them for leadership roles in international affairs, the School of Foreign Service conducts an undergraduate program for over 1,300 students and graduate programs at the Master’s level for more than 700 students. Under the leadership of Dean Robert L. Gallucci, the School houses more than a dozen regional and functional programs that offer courses, conduct research, host events, and contribute to the intellectual development of the field of international affairs. In 2007, a survey of faculty published in Foreign Policy ranked Georgetown University as #1 in Master’s degree programs in international relations.

PARTNER: THE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL STUDIES (ISS), THE HAGUE

ISS is an international graduate school of policy-oriented critical social science. It brings together students and teachers from the Global South and the North in a European environment. Established in 1952 as the International Institute of Social Studies by Dutch universities and the Netherlands Ministry of Education, it does research, teaching and public service in the field of development studies and international cooperation. Located in The Hague (known as “The World’s Legal Capital”) ISS is a leader on development studies today in Europe, attracting students and scholars from all over the world and engaging actively on key issues of our time—relations with the Islamic world, migration, and youth and children, among many others.

Religion is a new but active area for ISS. Current interest arises both from faculty and student perceptions of global challenges and from mounting interest in interfaith relations as well as faith development links in the Netherlands.
Framing the Discussion

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs and the Institute for Social Studies (ISS) hosted a two day consultation in The Hague, Netherlands on June 24–25, 2008, engaging a diverse group of practitioners, technical specialists, and religious leaders. The topic was the emerging issues in religion and development in Africa and Europe. The event was a part of a three-year Berkley Center project to explore both the landscape and potential issues for faith-inspired organizations in international development. The project is supported by the Henry R. Luce Foundation. This program segment focuses on different world regions, and builds on earlier consultations in Doha, Qatar in December 2007 on the Muslim World, and in Washington, D.C. in April 2007 on the United States. Further consultations are to address Latin America (January 2009) and Asia. Publications present highlights of each of these events and results of background research.

Willem Jansen and Nigussu Legesse
The Religion and Global Development program examines both the role of religious groups and ideas in donor and developing countries, and the prospects for greater religious-secular cooperation in the development field. Its components include graduate student research fellowships; a religion and development database; and the creation and dissemination of “religious literacy” materials for development professionals in government, NGOs, and international organizations. Through a series of meetings with stakeholders and background reports, the Luce/SFS Program on Religion and Global Development maps the role of faith-based organizations around the world and points to best practices and areas for collaboration.

The multi-year project explores issues involving institutions that play critical roles in social and economic development and that are, in various ways, inspired by and linked to religious faith. The objectives are to establish a solid information base about the nature of institutions and the work they do (a “mapping” of organizations and activities), to take stock of the dynamics and direction they are taking, and to explore the range of policy issues involved: including, for example, relationships with secular development institutions, political and social ramifications of their work, and approaches and work styles that distinguish these institutions and their leadership from other institutions working in the development field.

The work program involves a sequence of distinct reviews focused successively on issues in different world regions and faith traditions. The investigation entails research papers (involving substantive input by Georgetown graduate student research teams) followed by a focused consultation meeting with small groups of academics and practitioners engaged in the field. A particularly useful feature of the approach is proving to be in-depth interviews with leading practitioners to explore their individual, thought-provoking, and differing approaches to emerging issues.

The work will be summarized at its conclusion in a book. Over the course of its life, the program is seen as a dynamic and “living” effort, where information, interviews, and tentative findings are an evolving and expanding part of the Berkley Center’s work and website. The work is pursued in partnership with other institutions active in the field, both in the United States and overseas.

**Faith-Inspired Institutions and Development: The Backdrop**

The worldwide resurgence of religion and its greater presence on public policy agendas are important contemporary global phenomena. There
is growing awareness in both policy and religious circles of the powerful roles, both potential and actual, that faith-inspired institutions can play in a variety of social programs. One such area is international development work, which seeks both to relieve poverty and address humanitarian crises, and work for longer term human and socio-economic development. Until recently, religion and religious institutions were only partially engaged with the major secular development institutions, with the notable exception of humanitarian aid and emergency work. This picture is changing as a growing group of faith institutions build on their traditional work in health and education and expand their development work, propelled by issues such as the HIV/AIDS crisis and rising consciousness of the pain of world poverty.

The leading development institutions are showing greater interest in learning from this experience and in building partnerships that reflect both different and complementary approaches to development challenges. There is still much uncharted ground, however, because there has been little systematic investigation into the work of faith-inspired institutions. The area is complicated by tensions and failures in communication, between different faiths and between faith-based and secular development institutions. There is an urgent need for better knowledge and understanding. These offer the potential to enhance both the quality and reach of global development work.

**Phase 1: The United States: Faith-based Organizations Working in International Development.** The first stage of investigation focused on the United States. It culminated in a conference at Georgetown University in April 2007. A student team reviewed the academic literature on the topic, assembled information on the wide range of institutions from different faith traditions working in the field, and investigated emerging issues. Leading practitioners participated in the conference, examining issues such as distinctive elements of faith-inspired development work, financing sources and trends, relationships with governments, sensitivities around proselytizing work, their views on priorities, and areas of focus.

**Phase 2: Development and Faith in the Muslim World.** The second stage focused on the Muslim world. This addressed the role of non-state institutions in majority-Muslim countries, with special focus on those inspired by faith, and on the emerging role of global Muslim-inspired institutions, including Islamic Relief, the Red Crescent Society, the Aga Khan Network, and the Islamic Development Bank. Building on background research and discussions with quite different practitioners leading a spectrum of institutions and with scholars, a consultation meeting was held at the Georgetown campus in Doha in December 2007. That discussion addressed institutional arrangements and trends in Muslim-majority developing countries, relationships among public, private, and religiously inspired actors, financing issues (including the post-September 11, 2001 landscape), and approaches to leading issues such as children, education, health, and gender. The review highlighted active and widely differing work by emerging institutions in the Muslim world, especially those with explicit faith links, and the issues of social and economic development.

**Phase 3: Europe and Africa.** Approaches to faith-inspired organizations differ across the European Community and within individual European countries. As in other world regions, there is fragmented data and little systematic stock-taking. Africa presents an extraordinarily varied tapestry of organizations working in development, many of them inspired and often founded by faith traditions. Recently their work has received greater focus (prompted above all by the HIV/AIDS pandemic), but still little systematic information is available, and policy implications have barely been explored. The stock-taking consultation in The Hague, jointly organized with the Institute of Social Studies, on June 24-25, 2008, is the focus of this report.

**Phase 4 and 5: Latin America and Asia.** Further phases explore similar issues for Latin America and Asia, beginning with a consultation for Latin America in Antigua, Guatemala in January 2009.
The Hague Consultation

The Hague meeting, held at ISS, aimed to spark engaged dialogue. It was a private, two day event, though ISS students were welcomed, with an explicit objective of generating lessons and operationally-relevant observations.

The co-moderators, Katherine Marshall (Berkley Center) and Gerrie ter Haar (ISS), led an active dialogue. It was informed by Berkley Center background research (reflected in a background report, published by the Berkley Center) and by in-depth interviews conducted and shared with participants in advance; extracts are presented in boxes throughout this report.

The first day’s session covered a broad range of issues: naming and reflecting on the range of activities carried out by faith-inspired organizations, probing the growth of new religious movements and the role of religious institutions in local development, exploring relationships of northern FBOs to their southern partners, and reflecting on relationships among different partners, public and private, in the development arena.

From the outset the multiple roles of faith leaders and institutions were stressed. They play vital roles as advocates capable of building support for effective development policies and holding governments accountable for public spending. They are vital providers of social services at the grassroots level. Often mentioned was the view that faith-inspired organizations take an integral approach to development, administering to both material and immaterial needs. These immaterial needs were explored, with discussions highlighting the ‘transformational change’ to which Peter Grant, from Tearfund alluded, and ‘visions of the good life’ that the Dutch participants, in particular, highlighted.

Participants from southern countries, particularly Nigeria, Kenya, and southern Africa, stressed how far and fast the religious landscape at the grassroots level is changing. They saw many relevant issues linked to the explosive growth of Christian charismatic and Pentecostal communities, with effects on both social and economic processes [see Boxes 3 & 5]. This presents real issues to understand and confront, especially from a development perspective. Some participants termed these shifts “transformational movements;” while their social teachings vary substantially, they share a fervor for evangelism, and describe a more direct relationship between the disciple and the divine being, contrasted with those embodied in either the Roman Catholic or more traditional Anglican or Protestant traditions. The true motivations and impact of prosperity theology were explored (under this doctrine, it is believed that God blesses his followers with material wealth). Among other indigenous movements, theology centers on notions of collective and communal responsibility, often espoused by the older pre-independence churches and tied closely to African indigenous theology. Urbanization and modernity were seen to come into conflict with traditional teachings.

The active group of Dutch NGOs drew on the earlier Soersterberg Process [see Boxes 6 & 7]; their comments reinforced the notion that a strong current of thought
among northern faith-based aid NGOs, particularly in Western Europe, observes an important shift; it is prompting these organizations to reaffirm their own religious identity as a motivating factor for their work. Identity issues were viewed both as a distinguishing source of strength and as a formative factor in determining levels of development aid.

The shift can be explained, in part, by various tensions that arise. Some are sparked by a perception among southern development partners that northern faith-based NGOs lacked the introspective commitment to religious identity that was the heart, soul, and strength of grassroots work. Concerns manifest themselves in practical ways; some leading organizations have established new staff positions to reflect their Protestant and Catholic identity and have worked out new mission statements. The challenge has obliged institutions to look inwards to founding principles. Caritas and Tearfund’s discussions about accompanying the underprivileged reflect this change.

The second day’s session centered on the work and role of faith leaders and institutions in post-conflict environments, especially in fragile states. Several broad themes emerged: unanimously the group stressed that religion has received inadequate and/or misguided attention from donors, even though it can be a positive resource for development. This is true both at the level of policy dialogue and at the point of implementation. An example is the common pattern whereby the health facilities managed by religious communities during conflict are poorly taken into account and integrated into new strategies when public health systems are rebuilt in post-conflict programs.

At the policy level, several Dutch participants from Protestant and Catholic aid organizations saw real shifts at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has a far keener interest in considering religion as a positive resource for development, especially in fragile contexts. The pioneering role of the World Bank in the late 1990s in these areas, under the tenure of President James D. Wolfensohn, was seen as a key to initiating these discussions at the bilateral level.

Nonetheless, especially in their programs in fragile states, aid organizations lack the sensitivities and literacy to understand the scope and role of religious actors, be they madrasas in Pakistan or peace education curricula in faith-based schools in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Mapping activities have begun in some areas, but the resounding consensus was that we have insufficient knowledge of how the range of faith-inspired groups work in areas of health, education, governance, and even less understanding about their impact.

The theme of complexities in relationships prompted by dual work for development and conversion came up often. Tensions and unease often force actors to better define their relationship to religion, especially in relation to civil society more broadly.

Issues of Coordination and Capacity

Weak coordination and a wide range of capacity issues were highlighted in the consultation by virtually all participants, from start to finish.

Audu Grema, as a “secular” development specialist, highlighted what he saw as the remarkable emergence of faith-based organizations and the wide variety of approaches they follow with respect to funding. He also accentuated that this diversity entails problems, poor coordination and overlapping work prominent among these organizations. Further, the “match” around funding can distort, as programs respond more to availability of funds than to organization capacity and local need. One result is a phenomenon whereby faith-inspired organizations (as with many other non-governmental organizations) may not operate in their primary areas of expertise because they are drawn to areas where funding is available. Because religion is so significant across such a wide set of development issues, there is a need to discuss its impact and the implications of differences. Religion, as we are aware, is a source of many complications, whether on issues of gender, hierarchy, or stigma related to communicable disease such as HIV/AIDS. For clearer coordination and partnership, there is merit in confronting some of the normative assumptions that people hold about religion and how these affect the approach to development work. Grema noted the perception that it can be difficult in Muslim societies to encourage accountability and to confront hierarchy. Capacity building can be particularly difficult in religious societies when development practitioners are not sensitive to the role of religion and culture in these processes.
Peter Grant also reflected on the need for capacity building at the grassroots level and focused on churches and faith-based organizations [Box 2]. At the village level, he drew attention to the critical role of faith in guiding local development, citing findings in the Voices of the Poor studies (Narayan 2004) on high levels of confidence in faith leaders and institutions. Especially in service delivery sectors, i.e., health, education, and HIV/AIDS, he viewed the faith-based approach as being integral to addressing the immaterial aspects of development, and as complementary to secular development actors. The recurring difficulty was to address the capacity gaps of these faith-based providers at the grassroots level; although they so often hold both trust and moral authority, they frequently lack the knowledge and stable resources needed to implement necessary changes.

Ample instances were described of gaps in coordination between national governments and faith-based organizations that provide social services. This prompted reflections about whether these service delivery roles are seen primarily as central or as residual, and, further, the differing perceptions of faith and secular organizations. Jacques Dinan stressed that national governments are often eager to allow faith-based organizations in sectors like education and health to assume responsibilities which are the primary concern of the state but may change course abruptly or exclude them from policy discussions. Faith-based organizations, he argued, need to be more effective in sharing lessons and capacities with governments to increase their efficiency and impact.

**Box 2**

**Perspectives on the Role of Churches in Local Development**

Adapted from a conversation with Peter Grant, International Director, Tearfund

Tearfund, founded in 1968, has grown from very small beginnings to a turnover of around 60 million pounds per year. We work in two main areas, disaster management and development, with some 300 staff at headquarters and 1,000 working overseas. Tearfund’s development activities revolve around working with partners and churches in some 50 countries. This takes the form of grants to partner organizations, but we also aim to journey with these partners and build their capacity. Our ten-year vision is to see 50 million people released from material and spiritual poverty through a worldwide network of 100,000 local churches. Fighting poverty is central to our vision of both Christianity and development.

The issue at the forefront of our consciousness is the role of churches in development work, especially local churches. We are very much invested in these issues; for us the bottom line is delivery, and the quality of assistance. This presents issues like the capacity of local churches, the priority they should give to poverty issues, and the dilemmas that arise around resources that come in for development work. Many practical questions arise in looking at the balance between working with NGOs and a more grassroots, church-focused approach. What are respective roles in the implementation of development programs? The church is indeed civil society in remote villages, and we are pushing the discussion of what that implies.

HIV/AIDS reflects a fantastic picture of our role. We provide community-level support; but, beyond that, we are able to bridge the gap between churches and the development community. We see what the church can do, and what it is doing. There is so much HIV and AIDS work done through churches, and we highlight this to development agencies. We also talk to the church, noting where their stance is compounding the problem, for example in stigma. We thus have an ability to speak to both sides. We can do this especially for evangelical churches, which will really only respect an organization that is committed to same biblical principles that inspire their work.

I cite an example of church partnerships showing what an empowered church can do. At a congregation in northern Rwanda I met a woman who had been on a Tearfund course. She was determined afterwards to go back to her community and get her hands dirty. She organized a water scheme run by the women; then the men were galvanized, and started a home building program for the community’s poorest members. I was part of an amazing worship service, with a wonderful spiritual vitality, where it was evident that the community’s life was being improved. They were already thinking of another village nearby, and what they might do to help there.
The Changing Landscape: New Movements and Trends

Peter Grant pointed to the important but insufficiently understood impact of transformational religious movements: how they view and affect development. Citing the explosive growth of Pentecostal churches, he questioned how the theology of these movements affects areas from education to financial decision-making for the poor. He considers that the development potential of these movements comprised an untapped, if misunderstood, resource for development. Teachings like prosperity theology may shift the views of the poor toward education or financial incentives that can affect project outcomes. These issues were extensively explored by John Padwick as he described the path of the Organization of African-Instituted Churches, a loose network of pre-independence churches in Africa influenced by indigenous theologies, and accounting for some 60 million members [Box 3].

Climate change is of great concern to all the institutions represented, leading them above all to advocacy. Katherine Marshall and others noted how climate discussions in recent years are bringing a sharper focus to the need for equity and balance. Peter Grant highlighted Tearfund’s active role in working with theologians as part of the Creation Care network to mobilize churches and local communities. Nigussu Legesse drew attention to the June 2008 statement of the All Africa Council of Churches on climate change, which recognized the role of churches and faith-based organizations to pressure national governments, influence UNFCCC negotiations, and engage in joint lobbying efforts with northern organizations, inter alia.

A common thread running through many faith-inspired responses to climate change is the implicit focus on the poor and vulnerable communities where the adverse effects are or will be most strongly felt. There is also the notion of theological common ground across faith traditions (particularly the Abrahamic faiths), and incorporating discussion of issues like environmental sustainability and climate change into the theological training of religious leaders. This theme has been a core component of outreach activities by the Creation Care movement, and the AACC statement calls for curricula in theological institutions to “develop in-service training for clergy and lay leaders to integrate the theme of climate change at all levels.”

Husnul Amin underscored human rights as an area of growing interest among FBOs and related media. In Botswana, the government’s active effort to work in partnership with faith-inspired organizations has brought these issues to the forefront.
History of African-Instituted Churches

I am involved with the Organization of African-Instituted Churches (OIAIC), and have worked largely from that base since 1978, living in Nairobi, Kenya. My interest is what faith brings to what the churches do at the grass roots level for the community.

OIAIC has had a low profile in Africa until recently, particularly in Kenya, where we have deliberately wanted to stay away from Kenyan politics. AICs form, in essence, a movement representing an African Christian response to the missionary movement in Africa. The earliest manifestations were the foundation of churches around the 1880s and 1890s, but the most important growth came from the 1920s onward, when the first churches were established in Kenya. The churches emerged most clearly where the missionary presence was strongest, and where scripture was translated into African mother tongues earliest.

Early AIC growth was partly political and partly religious. Local leaders took part of what was brought by missionaries, but also rejected many of the values, especially social values. The missionary movement was perceived as being largely responsible for creating an emerging middle class on many parts of the continent, in part through the training of an elite cadre of Christian leaders, capable of working easily within colonial government and benefiting from its financing. This emergent middle class was understood to break with the traditional community of many communities, especially in villages. They saw the traditional economy of reciprocity, where people felt strongly responsible for one another, coming under serious threat. This understanding was a central impetus for the foundation of AICs. They represented an attempt to recreate the relationships of reciprocity that seemed most in danger, using concepts, values, and imagery taken from Hebrew and Christian scriptures. In Kenya, the new AICs first emerged in the western and central regions, especially strong in Nyanza.

The Orthodox Coptic Church in Egypt received various requests from AICs for affiliation and responded positively. Some AICs were seeking validation as Christian churches as they were largely rejected by the traditional Protestant mission churches. The understanding was that the Orthodox Church was fulfilling the mission of St. Mark in the very founding of the Coptic Church. More practically, with a sense that the Orthodox part of Christianity had lost out in the evangelization of Africa, some leaders saw an opportunity in opening to the AICs. The Coptic role in the development of the AIC remained significant; it became the spiritual father to the OIAIC, headquartered in Kenya, whose mission is to unify the churches.

Today we calculate that there are some 60 million AIC members across the continent, representing tens of thousands of denominations. The historic AICs are largely growing through births rather than...
conversion. Growth rates are highest among the indigenous Pentecostals, and in many quarters the AICs are losing members to the indigenous Pentecostals.

**African-Instituted Churches and HIV/AIDS**

AICs are essentially involved in community-building. Over the past 16-17 years, OAIC has been involved in participatory development at the grassroots level, taking on an HIV/AIDS component in the 1990s that is now run together with other community development activities as a “livelihoods and HIV” program. At the grassroots level, the development work comes in part from engagement with the AIC world view and values—what we call the founding vision of the churches—and seeing how that relates to contemporary society.

With HIV/AIDS initiatives, through our participatory approaches—participatory learning in action (PLA) and participatory rural appraisal (PRA)—we have sought to facilitate processes that allow the grassroots and communities to identify their own priorities, and analyze their own problems and develop initiatives to cope with their problems. The process aims to engage with communities’ existing belief systems; we do not attempt to correct or bring in any official kind of faith, but we try to draw on what they actually believe.

An example is that when we began teaching scientifically how the HIV virus spreads, and then when we went back months later to groups and ask what people actually believed about HIV/AIDS, we realized that their response was spiritual; that the disease was caused by evil spirits or a curse of the ancestors, or because people had broken taboos. In order to engage people’s motivation, a motivation derived from faith, we had to listen much more carefully to what people believed, and to create situations where their beliefs could be acknowledged and where their own leaders could begin to engage with them on aspects of their faith.

Faith can be positive, and it can also be negative. Many pastors we have trained can go back to congregations and enable congregations to confront issues of stigmatization and marginalization: for example, banning spontaneous choruses that condemn people suffering from AIDS as sinners and worthy of God’s punishment. Once they had understood the scientific side of the process, and once they understood a little about poverty and the imbalance of power relations, how the powerful can take advantage of the weak in a sexual context; when they began to grasp a much more holistic picture of how the virus is spread, then they could begin to deal with the stigma and marginalization that came from certain negative aspects of their faith. It was then possible for people with AIDS to be given decision-making roles and welcomed back into the church.

**African-Instituted Churches, Wealth, and Savings and Loans Associations**

Many AIC churches support savings and credit associations that help micro enterprises. As they develop, the associations begin to take stronger interest in community activities. They help orphans, vulnerable children, they buy their school...
uniforms, they engage with local authorities over the rights of orphans to inherit land and to attend school. Widows are in the same vulnerable situation, and play significant roles in the programs. These savings and credit associations offer insight into perceptions of wealth in these communities and related shifts in theology.

The churches tend to have somewhat mixed approaches to wealth. Looking to African traditional values, we see wealth seen as positive: God is supposed to bring prosperity. Poverty is more troubling, because it suggests the question, what have the poor done wrong? Are they cursed by ancestors? You hear such views in the AICs, with spiritual causes or explanations for poverty and wealth: poverty could result from evil spirits or witchcraft, or the curse of the ancestors.

Concerns about the emerging middle class and elites are also important, as AICs were reacting when they were founded to perceptions that wealth is created through oppression, through unfair trading, and through an unjust process. Wealth can thus be seen as unjust in some way: that strand tends to justify poverty, as the poor within communities have been wronged. Another strand is reciprocity. In traditional value systems, a lot of assistance was to be given to the poor to help them help themselves out of poverty. The poor man might be assisted with a plot of land or a cow and would be expected to take advantage of what he had been given.

There is a negative side to reciprocity: it leads people to expect to get assistance from their neighbors and development organizations, and this can create problems. It can lead to dependency on others. This can act at the community level as a constraint against the emergence of entrepreneurial skills, justified by the suppositions that ‘you only get rich by exploiting others,’ and ‘poverty avoids the sin of exploiting others.’

Savings and credit associations work because they are rooted in principles of reciprocity, with benefits channeled into individual entrepreneurial enterprises. You contribute to the group funds, and the group lends to you, but at the same time provides moral support, and makes sure that your business succeeds. In a traditional setting it works quite well; people are willing to charge themselves high rates of interest, because they see that high rates of interest go back into the communal pot. When you get to a certain level, however, there can be problems. For example, when someone wants to go beyond the village level to buy a shop in a local market or a vehicle, the village scheme may not be able to offer a large enough loan.

Members who want to progress are obliged to go outside the cooperative to microcredit institutions and banks. Rates of interest there are probably similar to the village savings and credit scheme, but are often regarded by members as too high because they are not grounded in reciprocity, and the profit is seen as going outside the group to someone else. The gambles are seen as too great when you enter into these formal relationships outside of reciprocity, and that non-payment of loans can result in the seizure of all that you possess. AIC members

| BOX 3 (continued) |
may find it difficult to leap into the free market.

Savings and credit schemes can rise and fall, but overall, even if they last only 3-4 years, they achieve something worthwhile. The incidence of people running away with money, at least in the villages, is not high. We have village schemes that have been going for 15 years, now expanding into other development activities.

**African-Instituted Churches and Education**

Some AICs, particularly those from central Kenya and the nationalist AICs have always played a central role in education. Church leaders have often emerged from the independent schools AICs established. The school structures came first; in the 1930s, until 1952 in Kenya, the African Independent Pentecostal Church in central Kenya ran many schools, imbuing the values of African nationalism. They were a thorn in the colonial flesh. All these schools were either burnt or handed over to Catholics or Protestants when the Emergency began in 1952. Many Roho churches also tried to establish their own schools but the colonists prevented them from doing so.

As a result, many church leaders lacked adequate formal education, and no matter how they had wanted schools in the early days, as time went on, they tended to devalue education simply because they didn’t have it. A theology built up that the Holy Spirit alone is enough; we don’t need education. That is declining now, as everybody knows the value of education. The growing number of small nursery and primary schools being set up in an informal way by AICs in informal urban settlements over the past ten to fifteen years shows their understanding of the value of education. In the DRC, where there is a strong presence of AICs, the Kimbanguist church, the largest AIC on the continent, run many schools and hospitals, and has its own university in Kinshasa.

**Future Directions for African-Instituted Churches**

A feature of these churches is that very few of their theologies are written down. To facilitate their engagement in what is happening on a policy front, they want their theologies to emerge. The process in turn helps them to own their own theology, and allows them freedom to change it where necessary. This malleable and adaptive feature of the theology has been affected in different ways in different contexts, through processes like migration and market pressures.

Three broad categories of AICs have somewhat different responses to modernity and the free market. The first category is that of the so-called ‘nationalist’ churches and politically motivated churches, which struggled to overturn colonialism through education and sometimes by force. The values of these churches are more instrumental, and they believe in building the kingdom of heaven on earth. They have fewer qualms about engaging with the urban setting, and they have the education to be successful.

The second category of AICs is the Spiritual churches (which include the Zionist Churches in Southern Africa, Roho (Spirit) Churches in West Kenya, Aladuta churches in West Africa and others). These churches are what most people imagine when they think of African independent churches. Their members often wear white robes, and believe in gifts and power of the Spirit and laws of purity and impurity. This group of AIC churches, generally speaking, does not engage very effectively with these market and urban environments. The third category is the indigenous Pentecostal churches, with a more modern orientation. Their strength is that they support individuals who go out and become entrepreneurs, in ways the more traditional independent churches do not. It is in this latter group of churches where the prosperity gospel is the strongest.

The independent and Pentecostal churches are both groups that fit naturally into more informal settings, as they have the flexibility that is needed. Traditional protestant churches, for example, tend to like to own the land where they build structures, while for the AICs or Pentecostals this is less important. This poses the question on whether AICs, and their theologies and teachings, promote effective engagement with the free market and the urban setting. In historic AICs, the sense is usually that people’s real home is back in the village; they rarely buy property in the city.

There is also movement across boundaries. Some of the most successful churches working in development, HIV/AIDS, and advocacy on orphans and widows are from Uganda. They are rural Pentecostal churches, and retain some of the communal values of the rural churches and at the same time look ahead. They are halfway between the spiritual and the indigenous Pentecostal churches.
Perceptions, Typologies, and Definitions for Religious Actors

The group saw pitfalls in defining and categorizing faith leaders, institutions, and communities. Whether faith-based organizations feel a close affinity to civil society varies. It is in part a question of self-definition and is frequently context specific. Where in civil society do faith-inspired organizations fit? By the judgment of many civil society experts, religion fits within the broader precepts of civil society. While faith-inspired organizations may describe themselves as civil society organizations, by any objective measure, faith-based organizations account for the largest subset of CSOs and they generally view their roles and institutions as more lasting and deeper rooted than most secular organizations. Many civil society actors and observers contest this assertion as a sweeping generalization. It does not take account of many of the more transformational religious movements that engage in development.

Thus the group returned frequently to the challenge but also the need to develop sensible and sensitive typologies.

Lisette van der Wel recounted the experience of ICCO around issues of self-understanding and perception among their faith-inspired partners in the south. Secular civil society organizations tend to view FBOs as not being professional, lacking technical capacities and development literacy. In contrast, FBOs often see CSOs as not having constituencies in their work. Concepts of civil society in the West are alien to many FBOs, particularly for the Pentecostal and African indigenous movements that are now increasingly involved in development activities. Western civil society actors have very different views of how society is constructed and where the bridging role is necessary between religion and development. Perspectives from Dele and Bukky Olowu highlight some of these instances [Box 5].

Husnul Amin described religious organizations in Pakistan, studied in his fieldwork, that do not view themselves as a part of civil society. Instead, they see themselves as ‘moral purifiers’ who take a systemic approach to development and change. Similarly, in Turkey, Omer Caha noted the distinctive role of Muslim charities, and how they frequently viewed themselves as separate from civil society [Box 4].
Perspectives on Islamic NGOs in Turkey and the Role of Deniz Feneri
Adapted from a conversation with Omer Caha, Fatih University, Istanbul, Turkey

Teaching political science at Fatih University in Istanbul, I have been deeply involved in the work of Deniz Feneri, a humanitarian NGO in Turkey. In my academic work, I have compared Turkish NGOs with other groups working in the United States and Europe. I have wondered why civil society seems to be so weak in Turkey and in other Muslim countries, when compared to the civil society in the west. The strong state tradition in Turkey and in other Muslim societies seems to be an important obstacle preventing the development of an influential civil society.

In Turkey and elsewhere, civil society NGOs active in tackling social issues like poverty appear to focus on four areas: providing services; launching education and advocacy campaigns often to influence government; encouraging investment-based activities for poor people in a sustainable way (as in the case of Deniz Feneri); and taking on the policy or think tank function, to inform the approach to issues.

The Deniz Feneri Association, established in 1998, grew from a television program of the same name first broadcast in 1996. That program drew the attention of audiences to the poverty in urban areas. Broadcasting during the month of Ramadan, it elicited an important social reaction to ways to tackle poverty. Following massive public demand, the program’s organizers formed an association to respond to issues of poverty in Turkey initially, and later in poorer countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Deniz Feneri provides support in areas of food, clothing, health, training, fuel for heating, shelter, business development, and to aid people in times of natural disasters and conflict.

The philosophy of Deniz Feneri is to reach to the “last poor over the earth,” a target inspired by the religious understanding of Turkish Islam, characterized by a Sufi way of life. This belief system has motivated a mass of pious Muslims to aid others and seek ways of assisting and fostering solidarity with them. The growing number of faith-inspired charity organizations in Turkey over the course of last decade can be linked to this fact.

Today, the organization’s headquarters is in Istanbul, with regional centers in some capital cities and branches in nearly all cities in Turkey. Over 130 full-time staff are employed in the centers, and the organization mobilizes an estimated 50,000 volunteers throughout the country. Religion and faith play a great role in motivating people to donate to Deniz Feneri, independent of religious background. While the organization has remained rather religious in the public eye, we sustain activities in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries, and we recruit both religious and secular people.

One project is the “81 Province and 40,000 Families Project.” It aimed at reaching 40,000 poor families in 81 provinces of Turkey to raise their living standards. The initial goal was to reach 500 families in each province, but in practice the number was greater because demand was so high. Started in 2002, this project was completed by 2004 and more than 50,000 families were provided with various kinds of aids and assistance. Other international projects are directed to areas of natural disasters. Deniz Feneri gave support of about US$ 20 million to the victims of the Pakistani earthquake through allocation of food, cloth, medicine, tents, and blankets, and construction of shelters, constructing some tent cities, and training many people living in these cities to produce goods for the market.

Omer Caha
I have spent much of my life between careers in teaching and in development practice, first in Nigeria, and then with the United Nations in Ethiopia and the African Development Bank in Tunis, before coming to the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague in 1995. I began my ministry in Nigeria with a Pentecostal Church, the Redeemed Church of God. Since then, we have planted parishes in Nigeria, Ethiopia, and in Tunisia, and now in the Netherlands. Coming to Europe we saw a chance to begin growing our church, and since 1995 we have formed some 21 or so new parishes where many people have joined us, especially the African diaspora.

We see the Pentecostal movement as a sort of reform movement within the protestant churches. In Europe especially, people have tended to think that the age of miracles has passed. We take the opposite position and believe that God is still able to do miracles, and we see the Bible as the word of God. In Africa, we work with communities in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Tunisia. We support the work of those who are taking care of people. Many members of our church are sponsoring orphanage homes. Our work in Holland and abroad is rarely directly with either national or local governments; we ourselves sponsor all the things we do.

During the time I worked for the African Development Bank, I was aware of how difficult it was for the government and the traditional development agencies to reach out to people and to be effective in helping them. The discourse focused above all on how the government could help the people, but ironically, the governments were very disconnected from their own people. What has emerged is a new framework for delivering aid that presents many problems. Countries now have to be in the good books of the development agencies as so much of their funding comes in the form of direct budget assistance. This places pressure so that all agencies must put their money into projects of the government. The underlying idea is for the government to direct the flow of funds to projects and, often, actually be responsible for implementing the projects. I fully understand why this focus has emerged and it responds to the many problems of aid coordination.

But there is a large drawback because if the government is not working, there is almost no way for projects to work these days. There is virtually no mechanism for aid to go to projects other than through the government. And to the extent that the government is at war with the NGOs, especially faith-based organizations, there is a large sense of disconnect, and agencies cannot see eye to eye with each other or with the government. In many countries, the complete failure of state agencies—especially outside their state or regional capitals—is ameliorated only by FBOs. Ethiopia and Mozambique are good examples.

International development agencies have generally tended in Africa to focus their attention (at times almost exclusively) on state agencies and even other non-state actors without reference to FBOs, in spite of their rich history and continuing achievements in the development field. The Paris Declaration on Development Cooperation of 2005 is an illustration of this orientation. FBOs are not even recognized as a development actor at a time when there is a commitment to building the capacity of the state. The failure of the state in many countries, especially in health and education sectors, stands in marked contrast to the positive roles of FBOs in these areas and in other areas such as rural and agricultural extension and even tertiary education.
‘Inreach’ and Development

Participants from European faith-based NGOs who participated in the Hague consultation brought to the table earlier reflections that were part of the “Soesterberg process,” a series of reflections that sparked discussion among Dutch organizations who work with faith-based partners in the south. Welmoet Boender and others described the Soesterberg process, a set of dialogues that began in 2005 [Box 6]. An outcome was an earnest recommendation to donors to reexamine their focus on economic growth as the main goal of development. Material dimensions, they argued, have been too limiting; religious and spiritual issues also play an important role. The process challenged faith-based organizations to discuss what ‘integral development’ means in practice. Integral development asks about the significance of the different visions of the ‘good life.’ At the urging of southern partner NGOs, the Soesterberg process pressed the network of Dutch faith-based NGOs to reexamine their own religious identity.

Lisette van der Wel observed that the Soesterberg dialogue had prompted a process of “inreach,” now being undertaken by ICCO and Cordaid among others; this entails a refocusing and new look at the spiritual values that underpin the visions of development that translate into their relationships with southern partners [Box 7]. Peter Grant noted processes similar to ‘inreach’ being undertaken within his own organization, Tearfund, especially at a time when Western Europe was becoming increasingly less secular. At their core, he asks, are we trying to do development or are we trying to do faith-based development?
The Knowledge Centre emerged in 2006, as a cooperative venture led by five faith-based Dutch non-governmental organizations: ICCO, with Protestant roots; Cordaid, a Catholic organization; the SEVA network, which is Hindu; the Islamic University of Rotterdam; and Oikos, an Ecumenical organization. As we have all recognized, religion is a theme that has come up from all sides of development cooperation, not solely in the implementation of programs with local partners. Our organizations have begun to ask what our faith means for our organizational identity, for individual staff, for our institutional policies, and in our general approach and philosophy of action.

Through the Knowledge Centre we also wanted to reflect on what religion means for our partner organizations in the South, in terms of relationships between different kinds of institutions working together across various dimensions. Especially salient has been their relation to the identity of the donor organizations: who are their traditional partners? Do they look primarily to those with similar ties or outlooks? Do they share these same vision and outlook?

These reflections have taken place as we look to how religion can serve, in some cases, as an “instrument” for sustainable development. What visions of sustainable development circulate within different religions and how can development organizations take account of them when drawing policies? These questions guided the early work of the Knowledge Centre as donor organizations engaged with local partners. Religions react to modernization, but they also tend to shape it. As we look to the future, we are focusing increasingly on religion in fragile states, an area of immense opportunity and needed attention.
ICCO was founded in the 1960s by the Protestant churches of the Netherlands as a conduit for government funding for development programs. Our staff numbers about 300, including a larger number of part-time staff, and we focus on three areas: fair economic development, access to basic services, peace building, and democratization. We operate in some 50 countries. Our funding is now about 75 percent from the Dutch government, with a remaining 25 percent from our sources both private and public.

For the past several years I have worked at the policy level (my initial work was on Southeast Asia), and most recently I have focused particularly on religion and development, including the role of religion in resolving conflict and sustaining peace. In my work at ICCO, religion is a frequent topic. The role it should play in ICCO's work was so much debated that I felt over time that the organization needed to reflect more on the context of our work within our faith.

We are examining religion and development from two angles: the first centers on external relations, including with the Dutch government, as it concerns integrating religion in ICCO projects of many kinds, including HIV/AIDS, economic development, and conflict. This I do largely through research, building a database, and gathering experience from partners through trainings and workshops. The second angle is largely “inreach” within the organization. It involves probing what it means for ICCO to be faith-based in its relation to its role as an NGO, and also the significance of its Christian roots.

This reaffirmation of values has become increasingly important as ICCO decentralizes its work. It is vital that all staff, in different cultures and countries, feel that our values are part of the institution’s and their own identity. We do not want to dilute our Christian character or call in question our roots, but are looking for a grounding that is inclusive. Our approach is a pragmatic one.
Conversion

Jacques Dinan brought into the discussion the topic of conversion, especially where development goals of working with the poor intermingle with the interest to spread faith. Issues around conversion require some systematic thinking because they present frequent obstacles to development cooperation and are the source of many misgivings and misperceptions. At the grassroots level, he found the conversation difficult to broach among faith-based NGOs because many find that they are better able to build trust if they steer away from these conversations.

Muhammad Haron stressed that it is important to unpack the issues of conversion in development activities if more coordination and complementarities are to be systematized with donors and national governments. He compared the Islamic Da’waa movement, also active in social welfare, with the work of Christian evangelicals. While these traditions are distinct in many ways, with the possibility of misleading comparisons, both raise questions about the purpose of social welfare and development work.

Gerrie ter Haar noted that one experience of religion is that identity is often connected to our faith traditions which may not be captured entirely by the concept of conversion. Religion is often more fluid in Africa than in Western society and thought, and it is often unclear when development activities by faith-based organizations become conversion efforts. Lisette van der Wel affirmed that some deep thinking is needed on the mission of development activities in the proper context and the possible need for a code of conduct on conversion issues.

Katherine Marshall saw two very different ways to view religious freedom in development activities: one is freedom to practice, and the other is the freedom to proselytize, and the two often come together. Issues of perceptions are critical; the perception that one is proselytizing can create tensions, misgivings, and suspicions that hamper the work of different organizations. These issues can complicate the relationships of faith-based organizations to their donors, many of them quite secu-
lar in mission and outlook. In emergency response situations, codes of conduct are often more clear because the timeframe may be finite, whereas with longer term development projects consensus on codes of conduct are more complex.

Audu Grema touched on some of the religious complexities inherent in development work in northern Nigeria [Box 8]. The problem of security in Nigeria is a huge issue, and potentially destabilizing for a continent where one in four Africans are Nigerian. The country is very religious, with an especially strong Pentecostal following in the south. Traditionally, though, among Christian denominations, it has been the historically well-established churches that have been most active in development (e.g. the Catholic Church, Methodists, and Presbyterians).

In the past decade, he has seen churches begin to diversify their activities, spreading into areas like agricultural extension, and they have substantial needs for technical assistance (TA). For DFID, he noted that nearly all funding is now done through TA. In contrast to budget support, DFID perceives a need for more people to manage aid, particularly in fragile states. However, this comes with concern for fatigue on TA and capacity building among the grassroots level. DFID works with religious leaders in several areas, especially on HIV/AIDS.

**BOX 8**

**Interfaith Dialogue for Development in Northern Nigeria**

*Adapted from a conversation with Audu Grema, DFID*

After I finished my degree in agriculture on a scholarship at the Cranfield University in the United Kingdom, I returned to the University of Maiduguri in Nigeria, teaching and doing research. I was drawn to development work, which I have always found fascinating. I wanted to find ways to translate my knowledge about farming systems and the life of farmers into practice by connecting it with the surrounding policy environment. I worked initially as an advisor to DFID, focusing on NGOs in agriculture, then in the central policy unit in DFID Nigeria. After a 2004 reorganization, I was asked to open the northern regional office, with a mandate to look at the whole northern Nigerian region, comprising 13 states.

The religious landscape is important to our work. An example is the provision of insecticide treated bed-nets to prevent malaria. Some Islamic sheikhs on the conservative side came out and said publicly that these bed-nets were impregnated with birth control medication and the program was thus population control by the back door. We rely heavily on evidence to counter views like this, working to be as transparent as possible. We show exactly what goes into the treatments of bed-nets and the recipient state governments have arranged visits to other countries with similar programs, like Indonesia, and visits by Muslim leaders from other countries to Nigeria also. The evidence shows clearly that the bed-nets have no negative effects.

Over time this has helped to defuse the controversy. We had similar controversies around childhood immunization, ordinary vaccinations like chicken pox. Again, there were accusations that the vaccines were impregnated with birth control medications, and again we responded to the challenges with facts and exchanges. Dialogue is key to bringing religious leaders along with us.

Several Muslim leaders in northern Nigeria play central roles in promoting education. The Emir of Zaria and the Sultan of Sokoto are examples. They are strong supporters of education and have been for many years. They also advocate unequivocally that their followers send their daughters to school. We include them in the dialogue processes in which DFID is involved. We have organized visits of British Muslim leaders to northern Nigeria, including some who are in Parliament, as well as academics and businessmen, and that has had important benefits. There has been much learning from such processes and it creates much good will. The work is all about building bridges. Interfaith dialogue is quite active in northern Nigeria and DFID has supported it with funds, granted through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, specifically through a small grant to the interfaith council in the region that has done important work. It includes imams, sheikhs, and bishops.
Recurring Themes: Governance, HIV/AIDS, and Education

Richard Marsh stressed the need to communicate the differences that NGOs make more effectively, through accountability and transparency in their activities. There is a massive gap between what people think charities do, and what they actually do. How do we communicate the impact we make? Many FBOs refuse to begin to practice good transparency and governance, though there are certainly good examples that can be drawn on to instigate change. Jacques Dinan described the concern of Caritas in Africa for governance issues on the ground, raising the potential for coalitions of religious leaders to promote accountability in the public sector [Box 9].

Participants viewed issues of HIV/AIDS as a point of both mainstreamed collaboration between faith-inspired and mainstream development actors and as a sector rife with distinct approaches on issues from stigma to abstinence. Fr. Robert Vitillo highlighted the now mainstreamed and consistent coordination between Caritas Internacionales and a set of other development actors, particularly the UN agencies [Box 11]. Muhammed Haron provided a case example of the relationship of the Botswanan government with faith-inspired organizations on HIV and AIDS prevention [Box 10].

Both Audu Grema and Husnul Amin drew attention to faith-based schools in Nigeria and Pakistan, respectively [Boxes 12 & 13]. Their commentary focused on a need for understanding local contexts and engaging with religious actors on areas of common ground. Mr. Grema noted DFID’s support for curricular reforms in the Qur’anic system.
I am president of Caritas in Mauritius, recently called to be Executive Secretary for the Secretariat of Caritas Africa. Our work is in 45 countries in Africa; it includes the sub-Saharan countries, from Cape Verde through the Indian Ocean islands of Mauritius and Madagascar. Our role in the secretariat is to animate our country partners. On the continent, we now have some 40,000 volunteers on the ground. We intend not only to coordinate but also to spread the spirit of Caritas, an organization looking after the poor, not as assistance but in the form of development. Decades ago, the concept in Caritas was rather different, and focused on assistance and charity as a way to help the poor. With Populorum Progressio, Paul VI’s 1967 Encyclical, the very concept has changed, and the spirit is now one of accompanying and rehabilitating people. For the Church, the new way of peace is development.

If you want to help the poor and the vulnerable, you want to help them to participate in society. One of our greatest challenges in development is to find clarity in understanding responsibilities, and that begins with Africans themselves. We cannot wait for help from the outside, and our challenge is to spark an understanding that people can truly help themselves. The main issue here is the way we look at the individual, and more particularly at the poor, as a “beneficiary”; even that word can be misleading. If you look at a poor person as someone benefiting from your services, then there is more paternalism. If, instead, we look to the person with his or her rights, with his duties, then we can work to make sure that these people are really being developed.

Alongside our work in areas of HIV and AIDS, education, microfinance, and elsewhere, we are keenly aware of the issues of corruption and governance. This is an important theme and one that is not easy to discuss. When dealing with corruption in practice, it is often difficult to know who is corrupt and who is not. But the Church can at least come forward with a set of principles, and perhaps use them to help organized civil society, so that civil society can provide added transparency to check what is going wrong and where aid funds have gone. There are ways of making certain that funds reach the places they are supposed to go, more often than not, without making accusations. I believe there is a big role here for churches.
I have worked now for a few years in the area of religion and development, particularly since joining the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Botswana. My research has veered especially into the area of religion and media, and the responses of religious actors to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Most recently, we led a project assessing the role of faith institutions in HIV/AIDS prevention, and concluded, among other things, that much more focus on the work of FBOs in this area is needed. FBOs have generally been very active in working with local communities on social welfare issues. We are now in a position where both government and FBOs have a shared vision for dealing with the pandemic.

In Botswana it is predominately Christian organizations that have been active; still, there are many identity issues centering on people who may see themselves as Christian, but who also see themselves primarily as members of the African traditional religion still practiced in their villages. African traditional religion (and, more specifically, African cultural practices) has made a great impact on the response to HIV/AIDS, most significantly at the village level, where incomplete understanding reflected in prevention programs has led to less effective policies.

FBOs associated with specific mainline churches, such as the Catholic Church, have been active in the urban and rural sectors of Botswana. In fact, the mainline church representatives have been more active than non-mainline churches such as the Zion Christian Church and other indigenous churches. The active participation of the mainline churches could be ascribed to various theological understandings and perceptions of disease. Apart from the socio-historical differences between the mainline churches and the African Independent Churches (AICs), there have generally not been close working relations among them with regard to HIV/AIDS; this has resulted in the appearance of ruptures and gaps in the work that has been undertaken up to this point by FBOs, belonging to, for example, the Catholic Church.

Pentecostal churches have also been very active in southern Africa. These churches have mushroomed during the past few years, and they have made ample use of the media via advertising and programming on TV and radio. Being the youngest of the churches in southern Africa, they have made a great impact through their methods of preaching and teaching. Since Pentecostal churches have attracted many adherents, they have faced their own internal problems: one of these is how to unify various groups that claim to operate under a similar banner. Externally, with a few exceptions, Pentecostal churches have been less willing to work closely with members of the mainline churches to deal with HIV/AIDS. There is a certain reticence on the part of many churches because of their perception of the pandemic; some argue that it was God’s curse, and others attribute it to the spread of immorality.

Most recently, the government has realized that it is not able to deal with the pandemic on its own, and has thus had to approach NGOs, specifically FBOs. Whilst the government has been promoting the use of condoms as a method of prevention, many churches have been preaching abstinence as a viable strategy. Despite the churches’ emphasis on the latter, some representatives have been aware of the fact that this strategy is insufficient, and there has been support of the government’s policy to make condoms available to young men and women. I presume these important debates around ethics and public morality, and the necessary role of religious actors in prevention, will continue into the future.
Caritas has been deeply engaged on HIV and AIDS since the 1987 Caritas General Assembly, which chose HIV/AIDS as a priority area. The heavy impact of HIV/AIDS was already becoming apparent in East and Central Africa, and Caritas members realized that there was a need for training and capacity building. A major need emerging then, and continuing today, is that of capacity-building for Caritas, other Catholic organizations, and of religious leaders more broadly, through regional and national training.

Since 2005, I have served in Geneva as our Caritas Special Adviser on HIV/AIDS. Progress has been made in strengthening the relationships among Caritas Internacionalis and UNAIDS, the WHO, and the Global Fund. Our work is active and diverse. Much concentrates on advocacy with UNAIDS and WHO, where we try to represent actively the concerns and needs of Caritas and other Church-related organizations that serve those who are most poor and vulnerable.

The Global Fund organized a meeting with FBOs at the end of April 2008 in Dar es Salaam. One issue was to get a clearer idea of what funding is actually going to FBOs. The initial estimate was very small - around 2%, but the Global Fund argued that this involved only principle recipients, and if secondary financing was taken into account the amount would be much larger. When they did such a review with consultants, the amount was still small, around 5.8%. While Global Fund leadership and staff often give the impression that many FBOs are not very involved, they in fact are, working with most of the Country Coordination Mechanisms (CCMs). Then there is the argument that FBOs do not apply, or do not apply properly. During the Dar es Salaam meeting, there were open and frank discussions of these questions. In my opinion, however, we must make progress in influencing governments to be more open to partnerships with FBOs, and to pass on much-needed funding to these organizations.

We frequently collaborate with interfaith and ecumenical groups to present the perspectives and experiences of people of faith engaged in the global AIDS response. We hope that the increasing openness of some UN and other international organizations to recognize the invaluable contribution of faith-based organizations to the fields of humanitarian assistance, health, and development, will encourage others to abandon their prejudices and to collaborate with organizations such as Caritas, and thus to be able to reach many more people in need.
In education, I have found parents in Northern Nigeria to be very uncomfortable with sending their daughters to secular schools. They find the secular schools too empowering. The fact of the matter is that they prefer their daughters to be rather docile. This may be selfish, but it is the reality. Parents also face the challenge of marrying off their daughters, as they have to send off a girl fully equipped, with furniture and all. Thus, they often prefer to see their daughters involved in petty trading so they can build up some funds, rather than going to school.

With this in mind, DFID is now supporting curricular reforms in the Qur’anic system, especially in integrating math, English, and social sciences into the curriculum. This reform has the support of the emirs, who are advocating for more secular content in the Qur’anic system. Our view is that, if we want to ensure that more girls go to school, we have to work through this system. And the genuine support of the enlightened Muslim leaders in the north for education has great importance.

There are two different kinds of Qur’anic schools. One, the Tsan Gaya, is the traditional system. A young sheikh sets up a school and perhaps 30 to 40 or so young people attend classes. Mostly it involves memorizing the Qur’an and writing on slates. This happens in the morning and at night, and during the day the students are sent out to beg to find ways of funding for and feeding themselves through menial jobs, but mostly through begging.

The teacher has no resources, and the idea is that this will teach resilience and toughness.

The students go in a group, with the idea that they are safer. They emerge with knowledge of the rudiments of the Qur’an and with survival skills, though the system is subject to abuse. There are some variants today in this system (which is very local and decentralized), with some adding more content to the curriculum and some focusing on artisanal and trade subjects. Some schools teach carpentry and other skills.

The second type of school is more formal. These are full schools, with structured hours. They are based in individual communities, run by a community committee, with a principal of the school. They teach in Arabic and have a full curriculum. Some are financed by the waqf, the religious endowments, and are either independent or tied to the community. Over all, the system is extremely decentralized. The emirs do have a quality control board governing regulations for Qur’anic schools. The system is changing today, especially with the sharp increase of new private schools. This is a very large and important trend. Most are entrepreneurial, some are financed by philanthropists. A few are religious, but most are not.
Conflict and Fragile States

Katherine Marshall delineated the work for faith leaders and institutions in post-conflict and fragile states, highlighting its importance but also depicting large gaps in knowledge. An important area of work is the process of peacemaking and transitional justice. In addition, faith communities play vital roles in coping with the results of conflict: refugees, social cohesion, reconciliation, and the transition to normal life. Finally, Marshall commented that human development can be an important form of conflict prevention.

Lisette van der Wel described the joint ownership of the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development with the Minister of Development of an ongoing effort to examine how religion can be a positive resource in the dialogue on fragile states. Religion can either exacerbate or ease fragility. A policy dialogue on fragile states was planned at the close of 2008 with the Minister. ICCO’s experience has been that people take different and often opposing positions on issues, in part, because religious groups can become very fragmented on the ground, and religion has the potential to be divisive. There is a host of issues on how religious actors really differ from other actors. Examples of distinctive religious roles are expressed as these actors’ connection to power as a moral authority, their ability to play a mediating role, and their role in service delivery.

Omer Caha saw service delivery as a place of intersection for local faith communities and a framework for groups to provide public services. He found the tendency of development organizations to be more interested in post-conflict management than in the prevention of conflict paradoxical. Nigussu Legesse commented on ways of mediating conflicts through faith institutions because of their widespread safety nets and ability to work with the families of victims and to rehabilitate and integrate soldiers after conflict. The post-conflict rehabilitation activity by faith communities also extends to local committees for peace education in rural areas.

Dele Olowu noted how important it is to pay attention to existing networks and to levels of communication that are native to many networks. Religious communities can enable women to take on the role of remaking the web once it has been damaged. In conflict-afflicted areas, he has seen very little cooperation between faith-based services and public services. One struggle here is capacity building: because, in spite of local initiatives, there is such limited capacity to use funds well.
In the Congo, Lazare Rukundwa Sebitereko stressed that faith leaders should speak the language of local communities. He is convinced of a higher-level and often-ignored dimension going far beyond building peace with money. The questions turn on what we change, and how we go about it, in the way communities work. Government has not been involved in schools, for instance, for many years in his region of the Congo. “This has been done by religious groups for many years,” he said, “and we have been actively teaching curricula for peace education in many instances. We do need to document cases that help us convey this language.”

Caritas, Jaques Dinan noted, with its large networks, is immediately affected and active in zones of conflict. They are integrated in emergency response, and then in peace and reconciliation work. Muhammad Haron focused on justice and reconciliation, though he is concerned about high levels of duplication in this area. Haron noted that while women have been involved in issues of justice and reconciliation, they are seldom acknowledged. Within Muslim networks, he observes that coordination among the various voices has been lacking.

Lazare Rukundwa Sebitereko discussed the role of peace education in the Congo in faith-administered schools. Training teachers in peace-building is a lifetime process, nurturing peace and administering care. Quick solutions to conflict resolution are ineffective, and peace is more a part of development and is a continuous process. Religious institutions stay with people, and they can be helped and trained to build peace. With this in mind, Muhammad Haron suggested the necessity of strong lateral, horizontal, and dynamic networks that snowball and gain critical mass for sharing information and practices among faith organizations. Husnul Amin contributed on the role of madrasas in fragile states [Box 13].
Country Realities

A frequent refrain was that each country is distinct and different. Box 14 gives one example, of Ethiopia.

**BOX 14**

How Issues Play Out at the Country Level: Ethiopia

Adapted from a conversation with Nigussu Legesse, Executive Director, Church Aid Commission (DICAC) of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

DICAC (Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission) is the development wing of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, one of the oldest and the largest denominations in Ethiopia if not in Africa, has over 40 million members, about a half million clergy, over 40,000 churches, and 44 dioceses, each headed by an archbishop. It is huge; there are some 6.5 million young people officially registered as members of the Sunday school. It has been the state religion in Ethiopia from the fourth century onwards, up until 1974 when the communists took over power and afterwards.

It is no easy task to bring together different faiths around any topic, including development, but there are positive experiences. The churches and faiths tend to work rather independently. The Orthodox Church often sees itself as the largest, if not the only actor. From our Orthodox tradition, working closely with the Muslim institutions has never been easy. The same is true for the Protestants and the Catholics. But there is no reason why we cannot sit around a table and discuss issues of common concern, especially for our people and the nation. Thus progress in building the Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA) is encouraging. Its members are open and friendly, showing respect for one another, and the cooperative spirit that is emerging seems to be coming into the minds of our leaders of the various faiths. The Patriarch of the Orthodox Church is the group’s chairman.

Government civil society relations in Ethiopia have always been difficult, for various reasons, social and political. The issues are live today because new draft legislation about nongovernmental organizations is under active consideration that would greatly affect the work of civil society organizations. A key provision is that nongovernmental organizations, including those linked to faith organizations, which receive more than 10% of their funding from overseas could not be considered local; they will be subject to a regime that applies to international NGOs. They could not work on advocacy issues, including human rights, peace building, governance, rights based approaches, justice, community development, voters education, etc. If they do so, they could be taken to court, and the government would have the right to close their offices immediately. A new regulating body (agency) is to be established. Organizations will have only 12 months to register as either national or international. I am
concerned as to whether we really could operate under the new proposed regime (law). Of special importance is the proposed regulatory agency. All organizations would need to submit reports, accounts, etc. to it. It would have excessive and broad powers, including the power to remove the director of an NGO and name a replacement.

DICAC is a large multisectoral organization with many activities. Particularly significant among them is food security work. We have nine large projects throughout the country. We also work on environment and agriculture, with small scale irrigation schemes and other activities. We do a great deal of work on water supply and sanitation. And we are very active in HIV/AIDS prevention and control. DICAC is a major recipient of PEPFAR funding (US Government HIV/AIDS program), with projects of some US$8 million, now underway, and others committed but with the funds still to come. We have been awarded, with other faith groups, a large grant from the Global Fund for AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, under Round Seven. We also work with the Population Council, UNFPA, Geneva Global, and other organizations. Our programs include initiatives on safe marriage and efforts to change harmful traditional practices, gender and development, peace building and conflict transformation. We also have a huge refugee support program in which we provide services including education, health and provision of subsistence allowance for the refugee community. Peace building and conflict transformation are important parts of our agenda, as are gender. In short, we are involved in many activities.

DICAC engages with the government on policy issues mainly when specific questions arise, and above all at the local level. For example, we are involved in production discussions, in the context of food security, and through our integrated development work we are very much involved with regional governments. The same applies for water. Much planning takes place at the local and regional level and the authorities seek data from us. So we are part of the parts but not necessarily in the overall process and reflection. There is a definite missing link here. Important policies and issues, real obstacles to development, cannot be addressed or changed. Land policy may be the most important issue, because of the absence of private ownership. All land belongs to the state so those who use the land are just tenants. Regional governments, however, have begun to issue certificates of user rights to the tenants or farmers who use the land. This does not satisfy the farmers as they can be evicted anytime from the land if a private investor wants the land. The previous government nationalized all land, and that is the way things remained. With no privatization, there is no security of tenure and therefore little to no investment. In the rural areas, there is little improvement in productivity, and virtually no incentive to conserve or protect the land.

Large family size is another important topic. Families may well have at least five children (an average figure for an Ethiopian family). They tend to keep the children out of school or send only one child to school so the children can help work the land. But that family holding will be subdivided among the children. So a one acre plot becomes half an acre and smaller and smaller. People are reluctant to leave the land because they fear they will lose it, and they cannot sell it. Investors cannot buy land to invest and farm on a significant scale. Meanwhile, land is becoming ever more fragmented and productivity overall is not increasing.

Even the Church, which has been here for years, has little voice on these matters. Most major faith traditions tend to be reticent about voicing their views on policy issues, and may be quite internally divided. My Church has been hesitant to differ with government positions. Much the same is true for the Muslims. The Protestants have their own internal problems, making it difficult for them to disassociate themselves from the government. The Catholics are somewhat better placed, and ready to speak out, but they represent only about 1% of the population.

There is considerable agreement among the different faith communities, including the Muslims, and activities are not very different. The Muslims are very much involved in HIV/AIDS, as are most faith organizations. The Catholics focus mostly on education and health. The Protestants tend to focus on health, environmental protection programs and relief.

Very little is really known about the work of faith-inspired organizations. Information and public relations have special importance and so does monitoring and evaluation and the set of issues around accountability. Faith institutions could be much more active on the issue of corruption. The environment needs far more attention.
Ideas for Action and Closing Comments

The workshop’s closing session focused on drawing out policy ideas and recommendations and suggestions for next steps. Each participant offered ideas. A striking common theme was concerns that communications gaps truly impede action and a conviction that these gaps could be narrowed with creative, respectful, and determined effort. While these gaps are prevalent among faith institutions they also occur between faith institutions and communities and secular development agencies. Weaknesses in current partnership approaches and mechanisms, another shared concern, were linked in part to these communications challenges. The challenges are amenable to and demand robust action. In their rich menu of action ideas, the group gave priority to peace, education, and climate change.

Communications and transparency were linked. Working for far more transparency around funding of faith-inspired work is a top priority; Husnul Amin suggested that greater clarity around sources of funding for faith-based organizations might help dispel perceptions and misperceptions that hinder their work. Richard Marsh returned to the imperatives of improving accountability tools and practices.

Transparency has significance beyond the sphere of finance. Understanding the work of others can truly improve quality of all development work and enhance its impact. Audu Grema said he often felt boxed in by his own development space, and saw many benefits for his own work in illuminating faith-based institutions’ work in for mainstream development work. He planned to organize a seminar for his colleagues to share insights from the Hague discussions. Jacques Dinan also stressed these imperatives and sees many tangible opportunities for communication, especially if the task is imbued with true respect. Such dynamic communication in turn can work to build commitments and can help address the impediments to partnerships that so many presented as a priority problem.

Many looked to the power of networking but highlighted a need to push for more specific action ideas on how to use them. Engaging youth here (as in all domains) offers one good avenue, and it goes well beyond youth as “subjects” to true engagement. Documenting lessons and case studies is another productive avenue. The academic participants engaged themselves to work together in this area. A first suggested step follows directly from the current project: to deepen and disseminate the review of the literature about faith organization roles in development and the record to-date of state-focused development assistance, especially in Africa. One suggestion was that each institution involved in the program assesses their development-activities, with a specific proviso that they address how women’s roles are truly engaged.

Peace was an important, underlying theme and it evoked both specific proposals and admonitions for attention. Lazare Rukundwa Sebitereko urged more integrated approaches, drawing on grassroots. Women, he stressed, offer enormous and untapped potential to advance peace: “If we look at the charisma of women in building...
peace, then we have an untapped resource, but they tend to be marginalized by cultural norms.” Religious actors can do much more to shift and remove these cultural impediments, making peace efforts stronger.

Sharper focus on basic services, especially education, was another priority. As Lisette van der Wel underscored, new paradigms are needed here, and thoughtful examination of shortfalls and concerns voiced by faith communities about contemporary international programs. An important and often neglected avenue is theological training. Inclusive, interfaith theologies are needed, designed to promote and support the emergence of a new generation of pastors and imams who are sensitive to poverty and development.

The issue of climate change was a deep and shared worry. Climate change needs urgent, concerted action, and it is far more directly linked to conflict prevention than most recognize.

The moderators (Gerrie ter Haar and Katherine Marshall) in closing returned to the power of youth and its potential to bring together the many strands of insight and ideas suggested through the consultation. That in turn underscores challenges for academic institutions as well as the faith-inspired organizations that were the workshop’s central focus. The workshop’s central outcome was an appeal for continued dialogue. Lessons from the Hague discussions and from participants’ experience can help spark interdisciplinary discussions among policymakers, practitioners, academics, and religious leaders.
About The Berkley Center Religious Literacy Series

This paper is part of a series of reports that maps the activity of faith-based organizations around key development topics and regions. These reports explore the role of religious groups in addressing global challenges as a way to bridge the coordination gap between secular and religious organizations in the common effort of international development work.

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