

Sector programme Values, Religion and Development

Recognising and harnessing the potential of religion

The challenge

The world is facing existential challenges on a global scale. Climate change, population growth, violent conflicts, the widening gap between rich and poor and increasing numbers of refugees are all making themselves felt. Overcoming these challenges requires not only technical expertise but also new forms of partnership and cooperation based on values. It is therefore in everyone's long-term interest to work towards sustainable development where values do not take second place to short-term considerations or the interests of donors or recipients.

The German Government is committed to a development policy based on values and human rights. The state's neutral stance towards ideologies and beliefs does not imply neutrality towards values. German development policy is guided by the conviction that a 'good' life and 'good' governance are shaped by ethical values.

Our approach: Religion Matters

Religion is a key source of values. As the challenges facing humankind can only be overcome through cooperation, it will be necessary to negotiate a common value base. This calls for ongoing, open dialogue. With more than 80 per cent of the world's population expressing a religious affiliation, religion can make an important contribution to this. Religious and traditional values influence the thoughts and actions of billions of people.

In the field of development cooperation, little systematic work has been carried out to date on the potential of religion. In the public eye, the abuse of religion for power struggles and economic interests, and even for legit-

imising violence, is more immediately visible than the contributions of religious actors to development. Yet long before state-run development cooperation came into existence, religions were contributing to people's welfare. Today, they provide support where state institutions come up against their limits, help people deal with setbacks and disasters, and confer a sense of identity.

BMZ has commissioned the Sector Programme on Values, Religion and Development to anchor religion's significance as a resource more firmly in development policy and international cooperation. The intention is to utilise the potential of religion for sustainable development and peace in programme work. Taking the new BMZ strategy, 'Religious communities as partners for development cooperation', as a starting point, new partnerships are being forged that will generate a contribution to the 2030 Agenda informed by dialogue with religious and other civil society actors.

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



Launch of PaRD at BMZ, Germany



Hindu woman at a well, Bangladesh



Muslim schoolgirls, Afghanistan

Success factors

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

Develop capacities

The sector programme elaborates technical principles and supports BMZ in preparing strategies and position papers. It collates information on successful measures that show how cooperation with religious actors brings added value to efforts to achieve sustainable development. The brochure *More than anything* presents a selection of best practices as inspiring entry points for work with religious actors.

A key goal is to increase religious literacy among experts working in development cooperation and international cooperation, and a training module has been developed to this end. Knowledge about religions and their impacts on society is a prerequisite for engaging in a professional manner with religious actors and for working successfully in programmes and projects. The programme also publishes specialist literature, such as the book *Voices from Religions on Sustainable Development*, which was produced in close cooperation with religious actors.

Expand cooperation

Institutionalising the topic of development and religion in the long term will encourage networking between partners, both nationally and internationally. At national level, for example, a series of dialogue-based events involving representatives of religions, *Religion matters – Rethinking the challenges of the future* has been established. It offers a forum for exchange between representatives from the fields of religion, politics and civil society. In February 2016, the *International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD)* was launched, with its secretariat based at GIZ. The part-

nership brings together bilateral and multilateral development partners with the aim of working towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda in cooperation with religious organisations (RO).

Implement activities in partner countries

In Jordan, a project is under way to improve local acceptance of refugees through social participation based on religious values and norms. One of its aims is to boost social cohesion among Syrian and Jordanian young people.

Measures are also planned in Tanzania and Nigeria and with the African Union (AU). All these activities have one thing in common: They harness the potential of religion and religious actors to contribute to solving the wide-ranging social challenges facing our globalised world.



Muslim man performing ritual ablutions in the mosque, Jordan

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