

Study Looks at the Role of Religion in Development

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A research partnership between India and the UK is investigating the relationship between religious beliefs and development.

Academics at the University of Birmingham, the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi and the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies are looking at how faith communities and faith based organisations have engaged with post-conflict situations in Mumbai and Ahmedabadd which experienced wide-spread communal conflict and large scale violence against the local Muslims.

Researchers are also comparing the development activities of faith based organisations in Maharashtra.

The studies are ascertaining the reasons for the selection of development activities by different organisations, the role of religion in the motivations and values of staff, their sources of funding and management structures and their developmental outcomes.

Findings from these studies will be compared with studies of secular non governmental organisations in order to ascertain similarities and differences between their ways of operating, ability to reach those in need and development effectiveness.

Professor Carole Rakodi, the director of Religions and Development Research Programme, University of Birmingham, reveals that: "In this programme, our role as researchers is not to make judgements about the truth or desirability of particular values or beliefs, nor is it to urge a greater or lesser role for religion in achieving development objectives. Instead, our aim is to produce systematic and reliable knowledge and better understanding of the social world."

The research findings will provide inputs into the formulation of development and poverty reduction policies, and generate materials that can be used by a range of partners, including international agencies, governments, civil society organisations, and education and training institutions.

The Religions and Development Research Programme, at the University of Birmingham, is an international research partnership that explores the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction.

It focuses on four countries - India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Tanzania - enabling the research team to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional belief systems.

For more details, please visit: <http://www.rad.bham.ac.uk/index.php?section=12> (<http://www.rad.bham.ac.uk/index.php?section=12>)

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