Religious organisations in development: are they distinctive?

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Introduction

Aim: to analyse the scale and scope of FBOs’ development activities and assess whether they make a distinctive contribution

Outline:
1. The supposed advantages of ‘FBOs’
2. Mapping the development activities of ‘FBOs’
3. The development activities of religious and secular NGOs: are FBOs distinctive?
4. Some questions for discussion
1. The supposed advantages of ‘FBOs’

- Draw on spiritual and moral values
- Can mobilise religious adherents estranged by secular development discourse
- Organizational structure, including rural/remote areas, trusted
- Grassroots links, responsive, close to the poor
- Well networked nationally, embedded in politics and governance, high legitimacy
- International links
- Less dependent on donor funding than NGOs
- Capacity/expertise in key development areas
2. ‘Mapping’ the development activities of ‘FBOs’

**The research:** overview of the scale and scope of religious organizations’ humanitarian & development activities (2006-8)

– Pune & Nagpur, Maharashtra, India (2007)
– Pakistan (focus on Sindh) (2006-7)
– Tanzania (focus on Dar es Salaam) (2007-9)

**Methodology:** use of secondary sources (grey literature, directories), key informant interviews, visits to selected organizations
Working definitions:

- **Broad**: “…religious & religious-based organisations, places of religious worship, specialised religious institutions, and registered and unregistered non-profit institutions that have religious character or missions” (Global Health Council, 2005)

- **Focused**: “…formal organizations whose identity & mission are self-consciously derived from the teachings of [a]…religious or spiritual tradition & which operate on a nonprofit, independent, voluntary basis to promote & realize collectively articulated ideas about the public good…” (Berger, 2003, p. 16)
• Scale and scope of ‘faith-based’ development activity depends on
  – How ‘FBO’ is defined e.g. whether to include religious establishments, unregistered organizations, only those claiming explicit religious motivation.
  – Colonial history
  – Religious composition
  – Local philanthropic traditions
  – Post-independence politics and government policies
  – Aid dependence
General features:

i. The term ‘FBO’ is problematic, because
   – it arose in the W and is not used or is associated with the aid industry
   – It does not capture the organizational expression of religious traditions
   – It is difficult to distinguish between ‘FBOs’ & non-FBOs

ii. Scale of involvement in development activities unknown but often significant (esp. Christian)
iii. Charitable/welfare, some also development (especially some Christian, those with international links, those funded through aid). Some inclusive and pro-poor.

iv. Engagement in socio-political activities less common and varied.

v. Range of activities + organizational forms vary between and within faith traditions; influenced by relationships with government. Some have major influence, legitimacy, capacity and fill gaps; many are restricted. Evidence on efficiency and effectiveness is limited.
3. The development activities of religious and secular NGOs (2009)

3.1 Nigeria

- The study: characteristics, faith manifestation, activities, ways of operating and perceived performance of selected FBOs/NGOs engaged in development activities, especially HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care

- Methodology:
  - case studies of organizations in good standing: 3 Christian, 3 Muslim, 3 secular
  - secondary sources, observation, key informant interviews with staff, local officials & religious leaders, FGDs (residents, beneficiaries)
• Locations & case study organizations:
  – Kano State (mainly Muslim) (3 LGAs)
    • Islamic Foundation Health Services (AI-Noury Specialist Hospital), Community Support & Development Initiatives (CSADI)
    • Society for Women and AIDS in Africa (SWAAN)
    • People Oriented Development of the Evangelical Church of W Africa (POD-ECWA)
  – Lagos State (mixed) – Taurani LGA
    • Nasiru-Ilahi Fati Society of Nigeria (NASFAT)
    • Methodist Church of Nigeria (MCN)
    • Redeemed Christian Church of God AIDS Programme Action Committee Society (RAPAC)
    • Humanity Family Foundation for Peace & Development (HUFFPED)
• The development-related aims, values and activities of FBOs and NGOs

i. Share charitable and service delivery aims; some do development and advocacy

ii. FBOs’ activities generally justified in overtly religious terms and combined with evangelism

iii. NGOs use secular language even when staff religiously motivated
• Differences between FBOs and NGOs

i. Programme design and operations

ii. FBOs combine material and spiritual aims, influencing programme content and delivery; NGOs concentrate on material > beneficiaries seem to prefer the former approach

iii. FBOs manifest faith in recruitment, funding and use of religious practices and symbols
Perceptions of effectiveness/performance

i. Performance of case study organizations generally perceived positively

ii. Limited differences in FBOs’/NGOs’ perceived performance identified, but few do systematic monitoring and assessments of outcomes and impacts are rare

iii. FBOs have local roots & ties > trusted + rely on religiously mandated giving > perceived as more autonomous, responsive, sustainable BUT NGOs may have expertise and be better at some activities

iv. Extent & nature of collaboration vary
3.2 Pakistan

• The study examines
  – How ‘FBOs’ are defined (and whether they exist in Pakistan)
  – how religion manifests itself in religiously and non-religiously affiliated development organizations: activities, values, organizational characteristics, relationships + beneficiaries

• Methodology:
  • Case studies of 6 prominent locally-driven charitable/development organizations in Sindh (mainly Karachi) + interviews in range of others
  • Methodology: secondary sources, 83 semi-structured interviews with staff and volunteers
• Al Khidmat family of organizations associated with Jamaat-e-Islami (including Al Khidmat Welfare Society, Al Khidmat Khawateen Trust, Al Khidmat Foundation)
• Alamgir Welfare Trust
• Saylani Welfare Trust
• Edhi Trust (associated with religion, rather than explicitly religiously affiliated)
• Behbud Association (non-religiously affiliated)
• Caritas (Christian, locally run)
• Additional interviews: 11 professional development organizations & research centres
• Findings
  – Term ‘FBO’ is problematic in Pakistan:
    • Islam mandates charitable/welfare giving/activity for all (+ voluntary organizations favoured over government zakat collection)
    • ‘FBO’ associated with ‘radical’ religious organizations (conservative, fundamentalist, extreme)
  – Main distinctions are between locally-driven charities and ‘professional development organizations’ rather than religiously/non-religiously affiliated organizations
### Local charities

**Sources of funding**
- Individual donations

**Focus of activities**
- Mainly charity, relief & welfare

**Relationship + religion**
- Islamic motivation & identity > sincere, cost-effective, widely supported
- Islamic injunctions guide choice of activities

### Prof. dev’t organizations

- International (+ national) institutional donors

- Long-term development
- Secure livelihoods
- Empowerment, sustainable development

- Mostly explicitly secular, many not trusted
- Choice of activities influenced by intl dev’t thinking
3.3 Tanzania

- The study: to analyse the work done by key local development providers (state, NGOs, FBOs) and the relations between them in two rural districts
  - To understand the history of and relationships between NGOs and FBOs in context
  - To compare the development aims, values, activities, organizational characteristics and perceived performance of CSOs

- Methodology
  - Interviews with CSOs, including NGOs, FBOs, CBOs, local residents, religious leaders, local gov’t officials
  - Observation including HIV/AIDS stigma workshop, condom distribution
• **Location**
  – Newala: remote, poor, largely Muslim (in south)
  – Magu: prosperous agricultural region, north (near Mwanza), largely Christian

• **Context**
  – Traditional churches established + continue education and health services (13% of dispensaries, 22% of health centres, 40% hospitals in 2008) + organizations for other development purposes – important at national level, own resources
  – BUT often not prominent locally
• Findings
  – Most CSOs depend on external donors, most funding since mid-2000s for HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention + welfare support for poor children and orphans > main activities for most CSOs
  – Supply-driven funding > increased number of CSOs + competition to undertake similar activities
  – Formal registration required, skills contracted in
  – Muslim organizations less well developed
- Boundaries between secular and faith-based organizations dissolve in donor-driven, aid-dependent, largely religious context
  - FBOs do not appear to be close to the poor or to have a distinctive view of development; success in obtaining funding is related to organizational competence
  - It is difficult to assess CSO contribution to development because funding is for intangibles or short-term; or FBO contribution because most people are adherents
4. Possible questions for discussion

i. Does it make sense to use the term FBO?

ii. Would a more complex typology be more appropriate? Does it make more sense to consider the various ways in which faith manifests itself in all organizations?

iii. Are FBOs distinctive? If so, how can partners understand them? If not, should they be singled out as partners?

iv. Is a standard preference for FBOs any more appropriate than the earlier preference for NGOs?
v. Is religious organizations’ reliance on local individual giving desirable, given that it seems to lead to a focus on charity, relief and welfare?

vi. Is it desirable for FBOs to seek external donor or government funding?

vii. Are links between NGOs and religious leaders/FBOs a good idea?

viii. What are the implications of the lack of systematic information on FBO/NGO activities and assessments of performance (especially outcomes/impacts) for potential development partners and FBOs themselves?