



# Religion and development:

Australian Faith-Based Development Organisations

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## Author's note



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The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) is the peak council for Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the field of international aid and development.

ACFID has more than 70 members operating in over 100 developing countries worldwide. ACFID administers a rigorous Code of Conduct, representing the active commitment of over 120 overseas aid and development agencies to conduct their activities with integrity and accountability.

This report is intended to contribute to the debate about faith-based and secular development organisations.

## ACFID member organisations (as at 30 June 2011):

40K Home Foundation Australia  
Act for Peace – NCAA  
ActionAid Australia (formerly Austcare)  
Adventist Development and Relief Agency  
Afghan Australian Development Organisation  
Anglican Board of Mission – Australia  
AngliCORD  
Archbishop of Sydney's Overseas Relief and Aid Fund  
Assisi Aid Projects  
Australasian Society for HIV Medicine  
Australia for UNHCR  
Australian Business Volunteers  
Australian Conservation Foundation  
Australian Doctors International  
Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations  
Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific  
Australian Lutheran World Service  
Australian Marist Solidarity  
Australian Medical Aid Foundation  
\* Australian Red Cross  
Australian Reproductive Health Alliance

Australian Respiratory Council  
Australian Volunteers International  
Baptist World Aid Australia  
Burnet Institute  
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CBM Australia  
ChildFund Australia  
Credit Union Foundation Australia  
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Partners in Aid (formerly Action Aid Australia)  
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Quaker Service Australia  
RedR Australia  
\* Refugee Council of Australia  
RESULTS Australia  
Salesian Society  
Save the Children Australia  
Sexual Health & Family Planning Australia  
TEAR Australia  
Transparency International Australia  
Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA  
Uniting Church Overseas Aid  
WaterAid Australia  
World Education Australia  
World Vision Australia  
WWF – Australia

\* consulting affiliate

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## Glossary

ACFID	Australian Council For International Development
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AOMF	Archbishop's Overseas Ministry Fund
AusAID	Australian Government Overseas Aid Program
CBM	Christian Blind Mission
DFID	Department for International Development, United Kingdom

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FBO	Faith-based organisation
FBDO	Faith-based development organisation
JAA	Jewish Aid Australia
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ORAF	The Archbishop's Overseas Relief and Aid Fund
WVA	World Vision Australia

# Introduction

## Executive Summary

Faith plays a crucial role in development, yet 'faith-based' organisations (FBOs) continue to face ambivalence towards their religiosity and how it may impact upon the development work they do. As a result they have undergone structural changes to ameliorate the pressures arising from mainly government related outcome oriented funding structures. This also relates to the dual role FBO legitimacy plays ensuring both public donations at home and successful outcomes in the recipient country. FBOs have significant advantages over secular organisations in their ability to harness moral will at home and abroad as well as tap into transnational religious networks and local communities in aid recipient countries. Australian faith based organisations involved in international development are a diverse and under-researched category that is difficult to define. Thus this paper seeks to make inroads into this group of organisations to better understand them and their missions, the challenges they pose to development and the challenges they face in development.

The role of religion in state affairs has a long history. Tied into this history are the experiences of religious expeditions overseas: first to conquer heathens, then to convert and finally to help. Especially the missionary activities during the nineteenth century figure in the imagination, and with them the ambivalent picture of on the one side selfless agents of change helping the downtrodden and on the other stories of abuse and forced conversion. Undoubted achievements that are of importance to this day include the provision of health services, begun as missions. Missionary activity in the nineteenth century created a health infrastructure as it became a key component of its civilising and modernising project.<sup>1</sup>

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) have been experiencing somewhat of a renaissance. Significant shifts in global politics such as the attacks of 9/11, the subsequent 'war on terror' and the 2002 Bali bombings have brought religion, especially Islam, more prominently into the Australian public sphere. Debates around the infamous 'clashes of civilisations' thesis, largely based on religious traditions, also fermented a sense of global religious divides that have erupted most recently in Europe, where calls for Judeo-Christian European values abound.<sup>2</sup> On a more constructive note, institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations have acknowledged that FBOs have a unique role in facilitating development outcomes where western state/church separation development models have failed.<sup>3</sup>

The growth of FBOs in the Australian context is evident. In the 2005 Boxing Day tsunami response, for instance, Baptist World Aid Australia, AnglicORD, CARITAS, World Vision Australia (WVA), Christian Blind Mission International and Uniting Church Overseas Aid were just some of the FBOs to receive significant Australian Federal Government grants.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Australian faith-based development organisations are seldom acknowledged in the development literature, even though their charitable imperatives predate development theory.<sup>5</sup>

## Methodology

There exists no registry for FBOs in Australia, so this mapping exercise of FBOs involved in international development started out with the list of signatories to the ACFID code of conduct<sup>6</sup> and also the list of tax-exempt funds in Australia, which are part of the Overseas Aid Gift Deduction Scheme (OAGDS).<sup>7</sup> Each non-governmental organisation (NGO) on each of the lists was followed up to attain more information regarding their key areas of work, their mission and values.

Key criteria for selection were that the organisation:

- Is Australia based, i.e. has their head office in Australia, is fundraising principally in Australia, and/or is founded in Australia (this includes subsidiaries of international faith based organisations);
- Operates an overseas program that is missionary and/or involved in international aid;
- Is based on some religious teaching or run by a religious organisation;
- Is constituted as an organisation and not just a single person.

1 Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).  
2 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).  
On the rise of reactionary politics based on religio-cultural heritage see the latest inflammatory book: Thilo Sarrazin, *Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab: Wie Wir Unser Land Aufs Spiel Setzen*, 4. Aufl. ed. (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt). And my analysis in brief: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/there-are-votes-to-win-in-the-politics-of-fear/story-e6frg6zo-1225928554866>  
3 Jenny Lunn, "The Role of Religion, Spirituality and Faith in Development: A Critical Theory Approach," *Third World Quarterly* 30, no. 5 (2009): 492.  
4 Patricia O'Keefe and Susan Conway et al., "Impression Management and Legitimacy in an Ngo Environment," *School of Accounting and Corporate Governance, Faculty of Business* 2 (2008): 18.  
5 Lunn, "The Role of Religion, Spirituality and Faith in Development: A Critical Theory Approach." 943.  
6 <http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/current-signatories>  
7 [http://www.ausaid.gov.au/ngos/approved\\_funds.cfm](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/ngos/approved_funds.cfm)  
[http://www.ausaid.gov.au/ngos/pdfs/oagds\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/ngos/pdfs/oagds_guidelines.pdf)

## Faith in development

Faith is a constitutive reality and an important part of the everyday life of most people. Its organisational form of religion is equally ubiquitous in public as well as private life. The development community (practitioners and academics) has only quite recently begun to problematise the role of religion beyond simple matrices of religion as inhibitor to development or religion as a source of development.

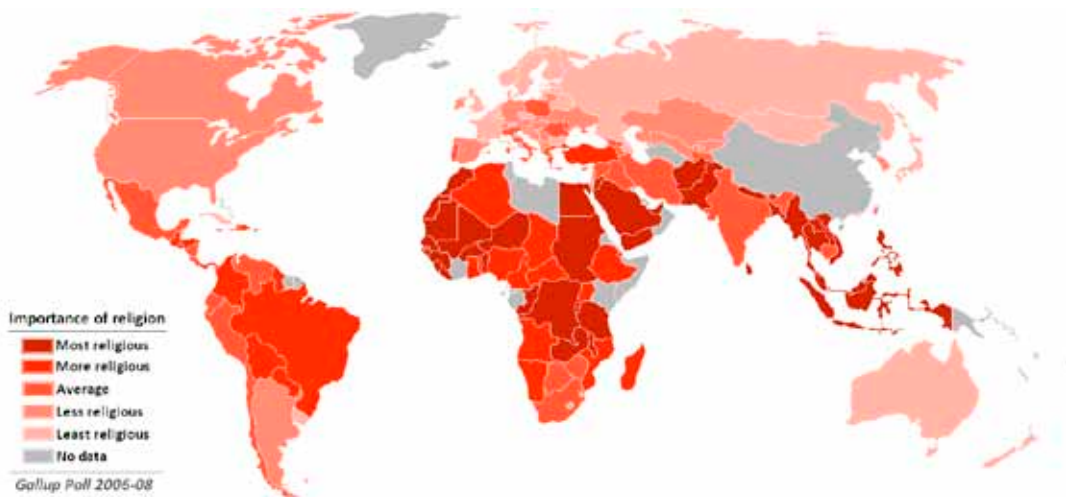


Figure 1: Importance of religion in the world, from Gallup poll 2006-2008

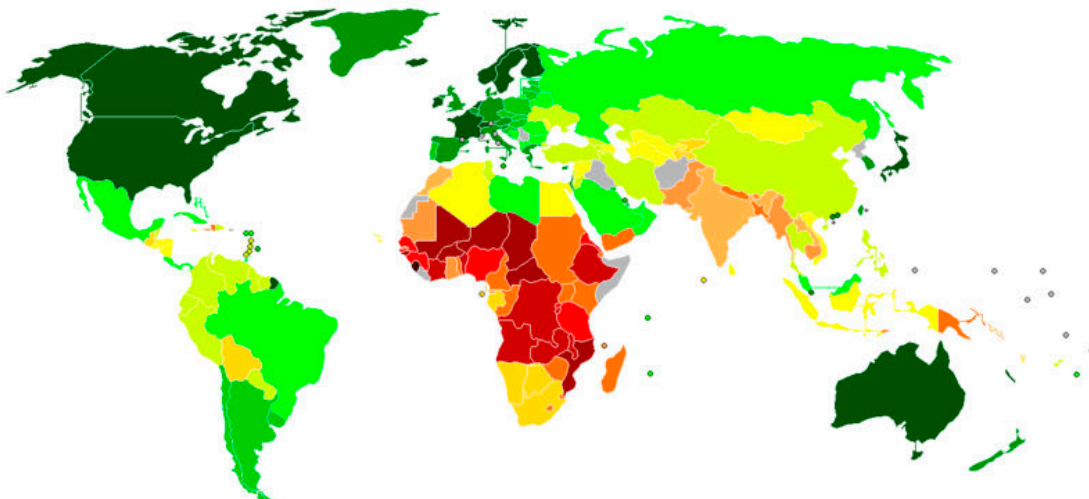


Figure 2: Human Development Index 2010

The above maps show that international development aid is most needed in countries that are also very religious. This means that most development agencies have to navigate religion, religious customs and authorities at some stage in their interactions with aid recipients. Apart from faith playing a big role in development on the ground, there are also a range of FBOs engaged in international development, taking faith abroad. World Vision Australia, Australia's largest FBO, has a map of operations that demonstrates their active involvement in a range of countries that feature on the above map bringing them in contact with Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and many other religious groups.



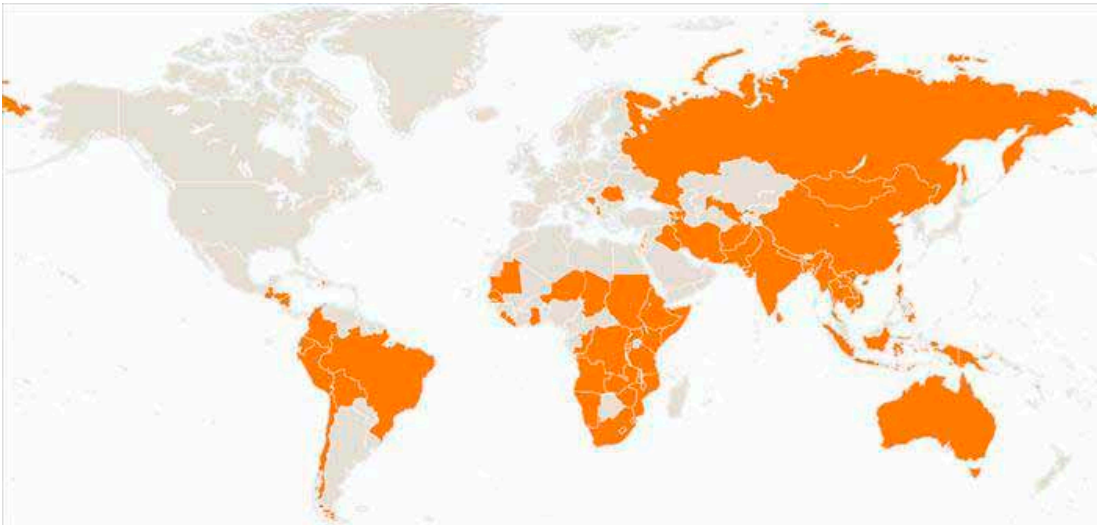


Figure 3: Map of where WVA works<sup>8</sup>

Faith thus becomes an important issue for development from two points of view. At the local level, faith plays an important role in people's lives and thus has ramifications for development work being done at any given locale. At the international level a growing number of FBOs are engaged in delivering development projects around the world.

## Faith returns: Or the importance of faith in development

When faith is a part of people's identity, they look up to leaders of faiths, be they imams, priests or monks. Often these faith leaders are also community leaders. As such they command respect and influence when it comes to decision making and can act as role models and early adopters. At the same time, they can inhibit change and cling onto traditional roles and customs that may run contrary to much development work. This is a perennial problem with any identity marker as it creates increased trust and legitimacy internally, but may create tension and mistrust externally.

Internally religious identity can act as social capital. Putnam defines social capital as the "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them".<sup>9</sup> This is particularly evident with churches and faith based organisations engaged in their communities, acting on behalf of, with and through the local people. Thomas notes that people in poor communities "often voiced a much higher degree of confidence in religious leaders and organisations than with their own corrupt government, public sector welfare services, and ... secular NGOs"<sup>10</sup> So for other development agencies FBOs are of great benefit when seeking to establish an immediate and deep rapport with local communities.

Riddell show how FBOs either take a needs based approach by identifying the poorest members of poorest communities or take a rights base approach with an emphasis on human dignity.<sup>11</sup> Faith-based organisations offer several advantages over their secular counterparts in this regard. For instance, FBOs can help the poorest members of communities and can identify them better due to their local embeddedness.<sup>12</sup> From there FBOs can help empower the local communities through community building and other participatory mechanisms. Moreover, FBOs have the ability to act bi-focally by addressing both the spiritual and material concerns of their constituents, although plural versions of faith make FBO approaches to these concerns as varied as those of their secular counterparts.<sup>13</sup> However, it must be noted that concepts such as 'community', 'empowerment', and 'participation' are often appropriated or understood differently in secular and faith-based organisations and can also lead to misunderstanding and problems in this engagement:

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.worldvision.com.au/ourwork/WhereWorldVisionWorks.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 19.

<sup>10</sup> Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations: The Struggle for the Soul of the Twenty-First Century*, Culture and Religion in International Relations. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 225.

<sup>11</sup> Roger Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).160.

<sup>12</sup> Sabina Alkire and Edmund Newell, *What Can One Person Do?: Faith to Heal a Broken World* (New York: Church Publishing, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Olson, "Common Belief, Contested Meanings: Development and Faith-Based Organisational Culture," *Royal Dutch Geographical Society* 99, no. 4 (2008): 402, Erica Bornstein, *The Spirit of Development: Protestant Ngos, Morality and Economics in Zimbabwe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

While faith-based groups are often mentioned as sources of help, in Panama, “discussions revealed that Christian sects have occasionally had a divisive effect among indigenous communities. In one Kuna island community, for example, part of the community refuses to recognize the *Asambleos de Dios*, with their congress ‘not wanting any more churches’ because the proliferation of churches is seen as fragmenting the community into small ‘units’ . . . If the community is divided, those divisions are reflected in church organizations”<sup>14</sup>

Thus the role of religion in development is at once instrumental and yet problematic.

With the enlightenment project religion was relegated to history. The idea was that as the state and society developed, became more rational and knowledgeable, religion would naturally wane and fade into the distance.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently religion was not given its due attention until its ‘return’ into the spotlight in the wake of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the events of 9/11. Ever since the fall of the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe, civil society has been hailed as a motor for progressive change, democratisation and participation. The role of the churches in Poland and East Germany also figured greatly in the following decades as examples of the power and potential to enact change these organisations have. Civil society groups and especially churches proclaimed themselves to be the ‘moral conscience of the nation’ around the world.<sup>16</sup> This came on the back of the period of prominence for liberation theology in Latin America, further arguing for the important role churches had to play in resistance to authoritarianism and ideologies that curbed religious and other freedoms. The underlying assumption about civil society was that it has a capacity and wish to mobilise and make change happen. However, religious communities and/or the institutions associated with them can and do also act in self-preservation, which may counteract progressive change.<sup>17</sup> AusAID’s view, in this case the former Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs Chris Gallus, has also grappled with this paradox, i.e. that “Race and religion can play a part in creating conflict but more importantly they can assist in resolving conflict and restarting dialogue”.<sup>18</sup> In scholarship, too, there was a turn from seeing churches as passive to studying them as policy shapers and active agents of change to work with the development sector.

Indeed, there are now several research projects, university centres and government offices involved in bringing FBOs into community and international development debates. The most visible sign of a policy shift towards more engagement was the US establishment of a White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighbourhood Partnerships, formerly called the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, established by George Bush in 2001.<sup>19</sup> Although this is largely aimed at domestic partnerships, it has helped bring faith back into policy debates at a national level there.

The World Bank’s established a dialogue as far back as 1998 between faith leaders and the development agencies. Then World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn and then Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey launched the World Faiths Development Dialogue, which has met regularly to discuss matters of faith and development. A separate unit of the World Bank, the Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics has also been involved in a range of other activities around these issues. As a result the World Bank published a series of studies called ‘Voices of the Poor’ that added weight to the role of religion in development and especially the work FBOs do in the developing world. Here are a few excerpts to illustrate the point:

Church affiliated entities represent probably the most visible and far reaching safety net presently operating in Benin.<sup>20</sup>

In Cotonou, the Catholic Church is arguably the strongest presence helping the most vulnerable” (Benin 1994). In Panama (1998), over half the communities recognised churches and schools for their support. In Vietnam (1999b), poor catholic households in need of support turned to the church. In Pakistan (1993), the PPA [Participatory Poverty Assessment] reports “a deeply entrenched tradition of private charity and welfare reinforced by Islamic religious obligation.” Mosques and shrines were valued as sites of charity. Ashrams were mentioned in some places in India as places of refuge for the poor.<sup>21</sup>

In Umuoba Road, Nigeria participants value the local churches for both their spiritual and “welfarist” roles, such as “feeding of and caring for the very poor, provision of funds for personal expenses, conducting befitting funerals for dead members and offering compassion in addition to serving as a medium of communication with God.”<sup>22</sup>

The executive director of the World Faiths Development Dialogue and former advisor to Wolfensohn, Katherine Marshall,

14 Deepa Narayan-Parker and World Bank, *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?*, *Voices of the Poor* (New York: Oxford University Press for the World Bank, 2000), 109.

15 Peter L. Berger, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999).

16 e.g. Kwasi Yirenkya, “The Role of Christian Churches in National Politics: Reflections from Laity and Clergy in Ghana,” *Sociology of Religion* 61, no. 3 (2000).

17 Ronald Kassimir, “The Catholic Church in Uganda,” in *Readings in African Politics*, ed. Tom Young (Oxford: James Currey, 2003).

18 [http://www.aisaid.gov.au/media/release.cfm?BC=Speech&ID=430\\_4987\\_9322\\_8770\\_5507](http://www.aisaid.gov.au/media/release.cfm?BC=Speech&ID=430_4987_9322_8770_5507)

19 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ofbnp>

20 Narayan-Parker and World Bank, *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?*, 104.

21 *Ibid.*, 105.

22 Deepa Narayan-Parker and World Bank, *Voices of the Poor: Crying out for Change*, *Voices of the Poor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the World Bank, 2000), 191.

now heads the Georgetown University Berkley Centre's Religion and Global Development program, which aims to further collaboration and investigate best practices in the religion/development nexus.<sup>23</sup>

In the United Kingdom, the Department for International Development (DFID) has funded a major research project at the University of Birmingham called the Religions and Development Research Programme Consortium that aims to explore the relationships between religions, development and poverty reduction with an emphasis on several case studies.<sup>24</sup>

In Australia such research and even debate on faith in development remains sparse. This is of major concern as Australia embarks on a major budget increase for its international aid and becomes more dependent on FBOs in its service delivery. In 2010 the Catholic Alliance for International Development was launched. It brings together Catholic Religious Australia, Caritas Australia and the Australian Catholic University and aims to pool resources in the area of international development based on Catholic social teaching.<sup>25</sup> In the same year Matthew Clarke at Deakin University launched an annual Religion & Development roundtable, which marks a promising start to further discussion in this area.

## Defining Faith Based (Development) Organisations

As with many concepts and terms within development,<sup>26</sup> a precise definition of 'faith-based organisations' and 'faith based development organisations' (FBDOs) does not exist. Various authors have come up with definitions; mainly from a community faith based organisations background and predominantly based on research in the United States.<sup>27</sup>

Based on an unpublished Aspen Institute report by Jim Castelli and John McCarthy, Vidal identifies three typologies of faith-based organisations: 1) congregations affiliated with a physical structure of worship or geographical grouping of worshippers; 2) national networks of congregations, including national denominations and their social services affiliates, as well as other networks of related organisations, such as the YMCA and YWCA; and 3) unaligned or freestanding religious organisations that are incorporated separately from congregations and national networks.<sup>28</sup>

The specific nature of working in the development sector is not clearly captured using Vidal's three typologies. Therefore a fourth definition typology will be introduced to properly capture those organisations that do work to improve the conditions of the poor in developing countries. Within these typologies, FBOs will also be organisations that are incorporated independently of religious congregations, but self-identify as have a religious motivation or heritage. Thus, whilst these FBOs remain incorporated separately from religious congregations or doctrine, they may maintain self-identification with a specific religious belief system and are motivated to enhance human dignity by its tenets and teachings.

An often cited definition is by Gerald Clarke, who defines five different types of FBOs depending on their missions and representative status:

- **Faith-based Representative Organisations or Apex Bodies:** rule on doctrinal matters, govern the faithful and represent them through engagement with the state and other actors.
- **Faith-based Charitable or Development Organisations:** mobilize the faithful in support of the poor and other social groups; and which fund and manage programmes which tackle poverty and social exclusion.
- **Faith-based Socio-Political Organisations:** Interpret and deploy faith as a political construct, organizing and mobilizing social groups on the basis of faith identities but in pursuit of broader political objectives or alternatively promote faith as a socio-cultural construct, as a means of uniting disparate social groups on the basis of faith-based cultural identities.
- **Faith-based Missionary Organisations:** spread key faith messages beyond the faithful by actively promoting the faith and seeking converts to it or by supporting and engaging with other faith communities on the basis of key faith principles.
- **Faith-based Illegal or Terrorist Organisations:** engage in illegal practices on the basis of faith beliefs or engage in armed struggle or violent acts justified on the grounds of faith.<sup>29</sup>

23 <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/programs/religion-and-global-development>

24 <http://www.religionsanddevelopment.org/>

25 <http://www.catholicreligiousaustralia.org/en/903>

26 see Andrea Cornwall, "Buzzwords and Fuzzwords: Deconstructing Development Discourse," *Development in Practice* 17, no. 4 (2007).

27 see for example Maria Roberts-Degennaro and Sondra J. Fogel, "Faith-Based and Community Initiative -- Service Providers and Approaches to Studying Service Outcomes," *Journal of Policy Practice* 6, no. 2 (2007), Avis Vidal, *Faith-Based Organisations in Community Development* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2001).

28 Vidal, *Faith-Based Organisations in Community Development*.

29 Gerard Clarke, "Faith Matters: Faith-Based Organisations, Civil Society and International Development," *Journal of International Development* 18, no. 6 (2006).



Others have focused on the intensity faith plays in an organisation by dividing FBOs into:

- faith-permeated organisations,
- faith-centred organisations,
- faith-affiliated organisations,
- faith-background organisations,
- faith-secular partnerships.<sup>30</sup>

Thaut on the other hand classified the modality of faith and theological roots in humanitarianism practised by FBOs in three categories: accommodative-humanitarian, synthesis-humanitarian and evangelistic-humanitarian.<sup>31</sup> A focus of definitions has been to try and understand FBOs in a holistic way, from their theological basis to their modes of engaging people they work with. All these definitions attempt to make sense of what is a very varied and diverse group of organisations.

## Faith in development: limitations and opportunities

FBOs have proliferated over the last two decades and filled gaps left resulting from the implementation of neo-liberalist (development) policies that prioritised market efficiency. The market place, it turns out, was full of ideas and money, with evangelical FBOs leading the aid agendas and increasingly drawing on state development aid funding. This raises questions about advocacy and service provision of FBOs. How much does the faith dictate or steer development work? FBOs differ widely from those with the clear intent to missionise with aid to those who separate their aid work from their faith framework with many shades in between. It is this spectrum this paper seeks to map for Australian FBOs to better understand the work of FBOs in their religious context as well as the work they actually do on the ground.

FBOs now account for just over half of the funds raised in Australia, with World Vision raising 42 per cent alone.<sup>32</sup> Thus there is a vital role for religion in fund- and awareness raising that needs to be acknowledged. However, this financial might also poses questions about their accountability and governance structures. The organisational ethos can (and does) have direct effects on the development work its employees/volunteers engage in. It is well documented that churches/FBOs can act as both motor for change or inhibitors of change. These interrelationships of operating within a religious framework and what that actually entails require further investigation. Indeed, religion can be a tool for radical change, as was the case in liberation theology, or simply a necessary tool in order to be heard by the powers that be as well as the people. Other critical questions to explore pertain to what FBOs do not do or which services they do not administer and what repercussions on a social, ethical and political plane this entails. This also raises policy questions in terms of government funding for FBOs who operate within a certain religious framework that proscribes some proven interventions in favour of others less efficient ones. Controversy continues around reproductive health and reproductive health rights where the Vatican and some Islamic groups oppose some development work on issues such as abortion and family planning more broadly. It must be said that on many occasions the debate and discourse on these issues is led at a high level and has a very varied response and implementation on the ground. There are instances of open opposition by practitioners on the ground to religious doctrine and strictures such as Catholic priests and nuns handing out condoms in their communities, for instance.<sup>33</sup>

In the fight against HIV/AIDS religious organisations, too, have been hugely influential both in a good and bad way. On the one hand religious organisations have taken part and sometimes initiated the exclusion and discrimination of individuals, which happens both in their lifetime and after death, in excluding them from community burial plots or acknowledging the cause of death. On the other hand, some religious groups have been instrumental in both the health provision and shifting perception of the disease in the social and cultural worlds through education and compassion. In Papua New Guinea, Australia's second largest development aid partner, churches play a very significant and visible role:

With 96% of Papua New Guineans being members of Christian Churches, the role and influence of the Churches is significant to the social, political and economic life of the country. Among their broad range of contributions, the Churches provide many of the services in health and education, particularly in rural areas. The Churches run 46% of health facilities in PNG including 60% of rural health services, 5 out of 8 nursing schools, and all 14 Community Health Worker schools.

HIV&AIDS is a critical health issue in PNG and the Churches play an important role in tackling the spread of the virus. The Churches are now operating a total of 24 Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centres, providing communities across all provinces with access to rapid testing, pre- and post-test counselling and follow up counselling and care. All the CPP Churches also run awareness raising programs across the country.

30 Rose Melville and Catherine McDonald, "Faith-Based' Organisations and Contemporary Welfare," *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 41, no. 1 (2006).

31 Laura Thaut, "The Role of Faith in Christian Faith-Based Humanitarian Agencies: Constructing the Taxonomy," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 20, no. 4 (2009).

32 <http://www.acfid.asn.au/resources/facts-and-figures/which-agencies-raise-most>

33 <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/lifestyle/50787779-80/aids-catholic-condoms-pope.html.csp>

In the education sector, the Churches run 47% of elementary schools, 53% of primary schools, 30% of secondary schools, 41% of vocational schools, and 67% of teacher education institutions. There are also Church-run schools for the disabled.<sup>34</sup>

In Samoa, as elsewhere, the church is often the glue that binds community together. It provides parishioners with resilience and the church serves as a rock and mainstay within the community, especially at times of economic, social and political uncertainty. In rapidly and ever-changing times the church can provide a resource centre for human security for a community, providing everything from health services, economic support, political protection to community cohesion. This extends to other religions and regions too: "The mosque is our court, school, and lawyer. – A 51-year-old poor man, Urmamal, Kyrgyz Republic".<sup>35</sup>

However, religious groups also operate exclusive organisations that are closed to the uninitiated, or have boundaries placed around some services that are only provided for their own flock or adherents. Thus churches/mosques etc. can be exclusionary in the way they view community and subsequently disperse services and resources. Even if the programmes the religious organisations run are open to all there remains a question of proselytising, whether openly or by default.

## Faith based development organisations in Australia

A major issue is recognising which organisations are FBOs and which are not, where to look and who to include. In this paper I have utilised two lists of NGOs engaged in international development: the ACFID signatories to the code of conduct and those that have tax exempt status for their fundraising efforts. Annual reports showed that FBDOs received donations and gifts, both monetary and non-monetary, from Australia and overseas, along with legacies, bequests and investment income. The majority also received grants from other sources in Australian and internationally, most notably AusAID. Some FBDOs also received income from merchandise sales.

ACFID's code of conduct makes reference to religion twice. The first is to emphasise the need for agencies to respect the people they work with and their religious beliefs:

In all of its activities and particularly its communications to the public, the Organisation will accord due respect to the dignity, values, history, religion, and culture of the people with whom it works consistent with principles of basic human rights.<sup>36</sup>

The second makes special mention of the prohibition against using aid funds for missionary work, thus precluding purely missionary FBOs from signing up:

Funds and other resources designated for the purposes of aid and development will be used only for those purposes and will not be used to promote a particular religious adherence or to support a political party, or to promote a candidate or organisation affiliated to a political party.<sup>37</sup>

The Overseas Aid Gift Deduction Scheme similarly precludes raised funds to be used for missionary activities:

Development activities seek to improve the well-being of those in need without favouritism or discrimination by race, religion, culture or political persuasion.

### Evangelistic/missionary Activities

Organisations which do conduct evangelistic/missionary activities may still be eligible for OAGDS status, but they must be able to demonstrate that the activities for which they seek tax deductibility do not include any evangelistic/missionary components.

Evangelism (also called proselytism and missionary work) is the practice of attempting to convert people to another religion or faith. Though the words are of Christian origin they can also refer to other religions' attempts to convert people to their religion or faith. Evangelistic activities may discriminate on the basis of belonging to a particular group or aim to persuade or develop religious beliefs and faith practices among project beneficiaries. Tax deductible funds cannot be used for evangelistic purposes, nor for missionary activities. Missionary activities include evangelism but also extend to activities designed to build up the knowledge and faith of believers including theological training and training in and study of works of religious wisdom such as the Koran, Torah or Bible. The building and maintenance of places of worship are also ineligible.<sup>38</sup>

34 [http://www.pngcpp.org.au/pngcpp/country\\_information.cfm](http://www.pngcpp.org.au/pngcpp/country_information.cfm)

35 Narayan-Parker and World Bank, *Voices of the Poor: Crying out for Change*, 222.

36 <http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/acfid-code-of-conduct>

37 <http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/acfid-code-of-conduct>

38 [http://www.ausaid.gov.au/ngos/pdfs/oagds\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/ngos/pdfs/oagds_guidelines.pdf)

Some agencies have responded by making differences clearer between their agency's activities by forming new and separate entities. For instance, the Archbishop's Overseas Relief and Aid Fund (ORAF), now ANGLICAN AID, is a separate fund to the Archbishop's Overseas Ministry Fund (AOMF). The latter was established in 2001 and is specifically earmarked for overseas missionary work, whilst the former is aimed at development work.

The majority of ACFID signatories (62%) and overseas relief funds (56%) remain secular NGOs as the following diagrams show:

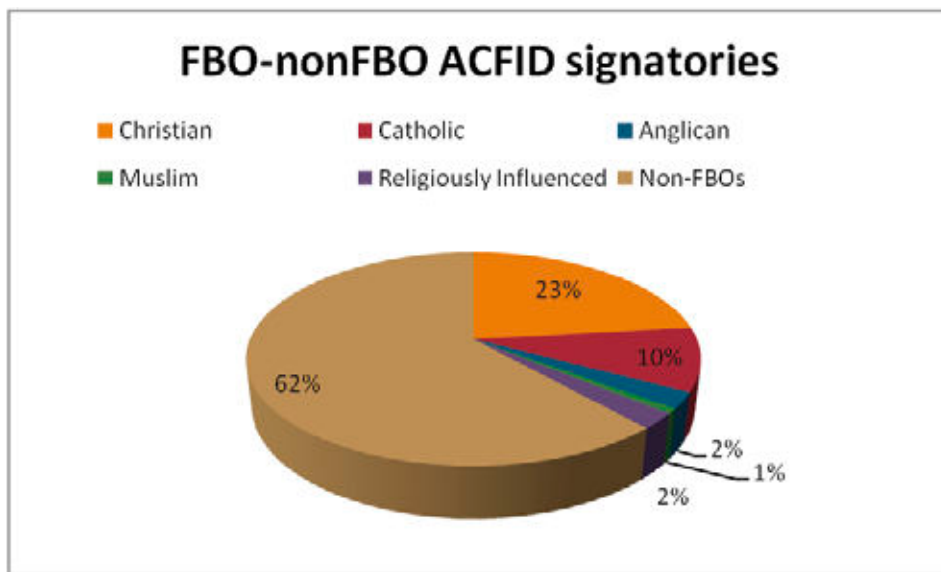


Figure 4: ACFID signatories

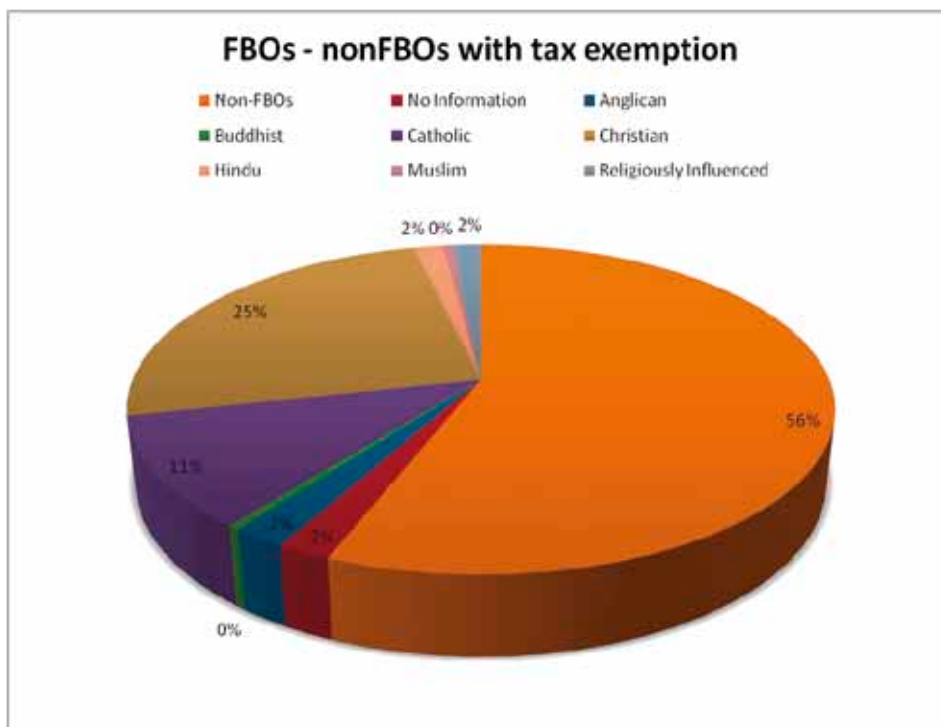


Figure 5: Australian overseas relief funds with tax exemption

In both cases Christian FBOs were the majority amongst the faith based ones, with a sizable proportion of specifically Catholic organisations/funds. Smaller religious communities in Australia also have organisations; however, there are methodological issues with some FBOs. Jewish Aid Australia, for instance is listed on neither list, yet “since 1994, JAA has raised approximately \$700,000 for international emergency relief”.<sup>39</sup> Thus there are a range of FBOs that fall through the cracks of simple data mining. Furthermore many religious congregations send money as individuals (such as diaspora remittances), collectively through transnational or personal networks and hold vigils, pray and offer non-material (i.e. non-traceable) support to people in need.

The majority of FBOs had missions across a variety of nations including Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Africa, South-East Asia and the Pacific and South America. However, it was noted that some organisations had a specific target location and undertook their mission solely in that location. For instance, African Enterprise Australia particularly focused on aid and development, evangelism and peacebuilding in Africa, whilst Asian Aid Australia targeted education and vocational training with children and young adults through sponsorship programs in India, Nepal and Bangladesh.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, the Mary MacKillop International Mission only have a project in Timor-Leste, whilst Partners in Relief Australia work with communities affected by the conflict along the Thai-Burma border and the Watoto Child Care Ministries focus on the plight of fatherless children in Uganda.<sup>41</sup>

Although religious affiliation has decreased over time in Australia, some form of religious affiliation was still at 72.9 % of the population in the 2001 census, with Christian churches making up 68 % of that figure, which explains the predominance of Christian FBOs. This presents a huge potential for mobilisation and allows FBOs to tap into a corps of volunteers, funding opportunities and other ways to generate interest, resources and leverage.

Some smaller FBOs such as ‘Youth Off The Streets’, a non-denominational organisation and run by Father Riley, a member of the Salesian order, retain a focus on domestic issues, but have added an international aspect to their work. In this case, the ‘Youth Off The Streets Overseas Relief Fund’ operates in East Timor since 2002, have assisted in Aceh after the 2004 tsunami and have projects in several other international locations.<sup>42</sup>

World Vision remains the biggest FBO in Australia with a total revenue of around AUS \$350 million in 2009. Over AUS \$200 million was revenue from child sponsorship and the value of AusAID projects amounted to only AUS \$18 million.<sup>43</sup> The table below illustrates World Vision’s dominance in the sector in attaining AusAID grants, with the *Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)* and the Christian Blind Mission (CBM) as distant second and third recipients. Overall revenue from AusAID to FBOs was just over AUS \$32 million, around a third from the total figure provided to NGOs, which was just under AUS \$95 million (see Figure 7).

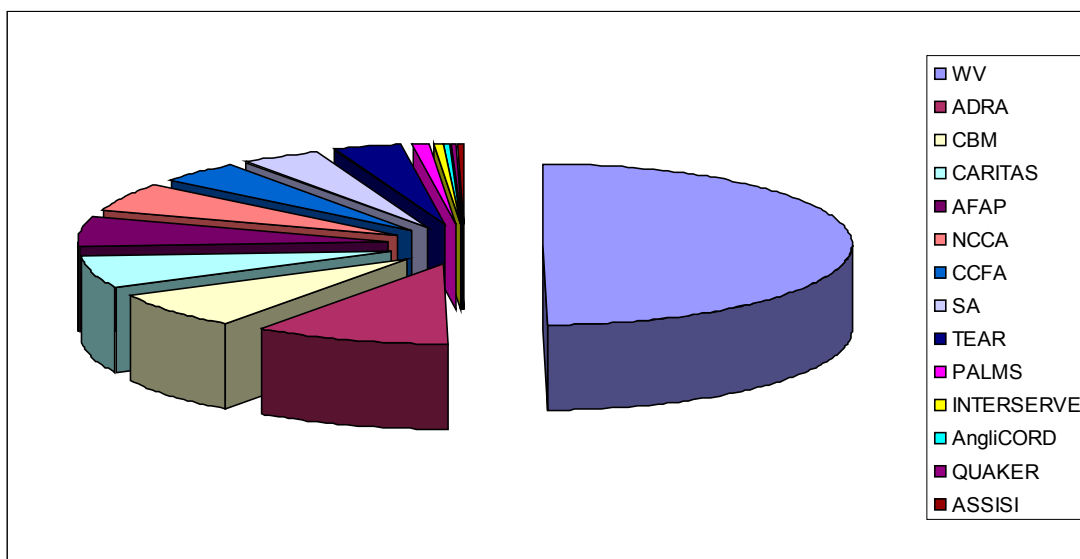


Figure 6: 2003-2004 AusAID FBO Expenditure (1/3 of total awarded to NGO)

39 <http://www.jewishaid.org.au/history.html>

40 [www.africanenterprise.com.au](http://www.africanenterprise.com.au); [www.asianaid.org.au](http://www.asianaid.org.au)

41 <http://www.mmiets.org.au>; [www.partnersworld.org.au](http://www.partnersworld.org.au); <http://www.watoto.com/home>

42 <http://www.youthoffthestreetsoverseas.com.au/>

43 [http://www.worldvision.com.au/Libraries/Annual\\_Report\\_2009/Part\\_4\\_2009\\_at\\_a\\_Glance\\_and\\_in\\_Numbers.sflb.ashx?download=true](http://www.worldvision.com.au/Libraries/Annual_Report_2009/Part_4_2009_at_a_Glance_and_in_Numbers.sflb.ashx?download=true)

FBO	AusAID funding (\$AUS)	% of total NGO funding
WV	15,996,491	16.87%
ADRA	3,286,932	3.47%
CBM	2,400,048	2.53%
CARITAS	2,050,750	2.16%
AFAP	1,977,611	2.09%
NCCA	1,890,180	1.99%
CCFA	1,370,814	1.45%
SA	1,298,378	1.37%
TEAR	1,178,804	1.24%
PALMS	291,000	0.31%
INTERSERVE	150,000	0.16%
AngliCORD	100,000	0.11%
QUAKER	100,000	0.11%
ASSISI	55,430	0.06%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32,146,438</b>	<b>33.92%</b>

Figure 7: AusAID FBO funding in 2003-2004, adopted from AusAID reports

## Australian Christian FBOs: values and mission

Some FBOs are adamant in their mission to evangelise and spread their religion in the developing world, such as this mission statement from Every Home Global Concern attests:

Every day our workers visit more than 190,000 homes. We have reached over **1.34 BILLION homes in the last 64 years**, and seen over 89 million people respond to the gospel! Just last year alone (2009) we reached over 66.5 million homes! We continue to hear amazing stories and testimonies of this work many of which are told in our monthly newsletter and quarterly CD/tape.

Every Home for Christ (EHC) works in countries where they have little or no opportunity to know about Christ, using national Christians to visit door to door every home in a village, city or country, witnessing and distributing Gospel literature. As men, women and children respond, Bible Correspondence courses are used for follow-up and Christ groups are formed where no churches exist to help these fledgling Christians develop in their understanding of the Bible and the Christian way of life.<sup>44</sup>

Conversion is part and parcel of such approaches and follows from providing information and the building of Christian communities:

Every Home for Christ has created a strategy for reaching every home on earth with the gospel. We use local indigenous workers with face-to-face evangelism whenever possible, and when it's not, substantial gospel literature for both adults and children in the local language and dialect are left at the home. Each response is followed up, and many times results in individuals – and even entire families, giving their hearts to Jesus. Every Home for Christ disciples new believers, and channels them into local churches. If there is no local church, we establish **Christ Groups** – small fellowships of believers that are then nurtured and disciplined in their spiritual walk.

In the last 64 years 187,000 Christ Groups have been established around the world through Every Home for Christ.<sup>45</sup>

This work is separated from their humanitarian work, which is tax deductible; however, often operations are in the same country and it follows that there will be considerable overlap in operations on the ground.

44 <http://ehcaustralia.com/door2door.shtml>

45 <http://ehcaustralia.com/groups.shtml>



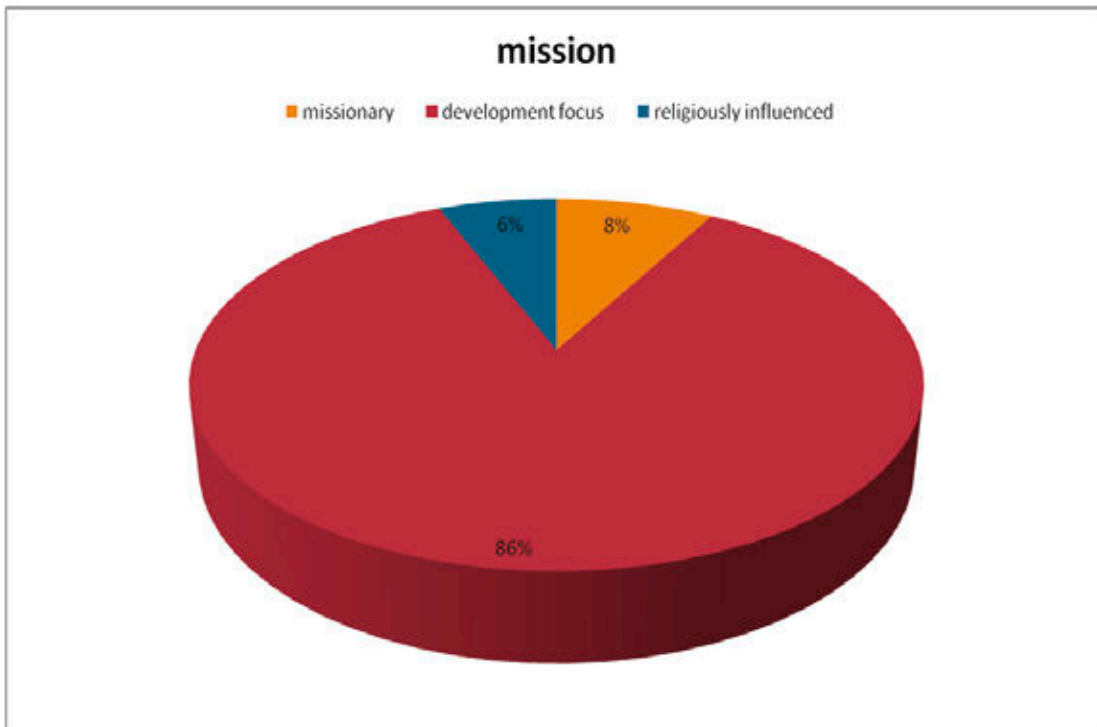


Figure 8: Breakdown of ACFID signatory Australian FBOs that have direct missionary goals or a development focus

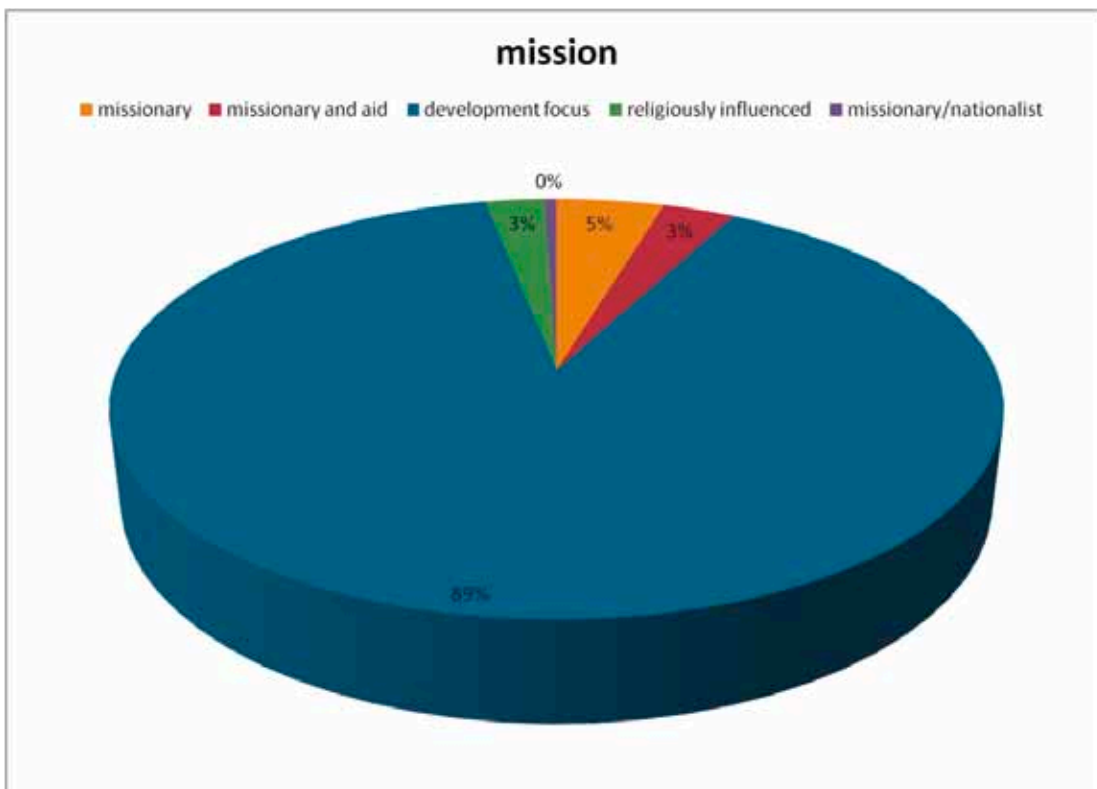


Figure 9: Breakdown of missionary activities of Australian FBOs with tax exemption status in Australia

Mission is downplayed by many organisations and development aid played up as the core business. Sometimes the two start at home and may have little impact on the international development work. And it is here there is great potential for FBOs to build a domestic constituency for development. Baptist World Aid Australia argues that “because Australians participate in global social, political and economic systems that contribute to poverty Baptist World Aid Australia considers pro-poor development among its domestic support base an integral part of its development work.” This work is shaped by the bible and includes a range of tools, one of which is prayer.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, TEAR Fund works in Australia “to inform and empower Christians, in partnership with local churches, to make a Biblically-shaped response to suffering and oppressed communities,”<sup>47</sup> whilst Grace Ministries Overseas Aid “is committed to spreading the gospel and is actively involved in poverty relief, education and pastoral support & training.”<sup>48</sup> They also help fund a bible institute in Tamil Nadu, thus blurring the lines of involvement in mission work and development aid work further. To draw a line between the two is not only difficult, but arguably impossible. Many people working in development do so because of strong convictions and beliefs that are a part of their everyday lives and this is sure to impress upon the people they work with. This belief can be about God and Jesus or the free market and democracy.

However, this is also where most misunderstanding and mistrust between secular development and FBOs lies. A secular worldview still predominates the international aid and development community.<sup>49</sup> There also exists in the wider aid community what Carter has termed in the American social policy context a ‘culture of disbelief’.<sup>50</sup> This means religion has been trivialised and thus ignored, or worse, taken over by the political Right – a matter that Wallis seeks remedy for. He argues that “Only a new moral, spiritual, and even religious sensibility, in relation to the problems of global poverty will enable us to reach that critical tipping point”, at which point a minority opinion will become mainstream and poverty will be addressed adequately.<sup>51</sup> These debates in the US have less bearing on the Australian political scene, but remain forceful as reminders that the debate now must include religious sentiment and religious groups in order to move forward. Faith is a force that people like Wallis want to utilise for the broader development agenda in a domestic arena. This has many precursors as faith has been a potent force in rallying support for the Jubilee 2000 coalition, itself based on Biblical inspiration. The Micah challenge and Make Poverty History are further examples of the mobilising power FBOs command.

Gerard Clarke argues FBOs have become “agents of transformation, by shedding their traditional focus on charity and by galvanising their moral authority to demand better governance.”<sup>52</sup> This view is supported by Tripp’s argument that faith values enhance their capacity to deal with the spiritual and emotional issues that surround development. World Vision Australia developed its gender policy framework by using examples from the Bible to support a gender equality stance. This faith framework provides a stronger emotional support mechanism for women suffering fistula in Africa, for example, than might otherwise be possible from technical assistance alone.<sup>53</sup>

It is important to acknowledge limitations to moral drivers in aid. In particular, Flanigan highlights the disadvantages of FBOs providing aid in situations of religious conflict. He argues FBOs are less likely to provide aid to individuals of other religions and there is significant risk of evangelical coercion where there are uneven power dynamics in communities.<sup>54</sup> As globalisation increases, religion plays a stronger role in mobilising transnational networks. Bruno De Cordier argues, for example, the concept of the Muslim Ummah was hugely important for mobilising transnational donations to UK Muslim FBOs during the Bosnian and Palestinian conflicts.<sup>55</sup> Andrew McGregor builds on this argument by contending that secular transnational networks need to “acknowledge, incorporate, and involve religious spaces and institutions rather than continue to promote a culture of secularism.”<sup>56</sup> This relationship is increasingly two-way. The FBO sector has harnessed international rights-based frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals in recent times as a basis for action. World Vision’s 2006 research into the aid gaps in South-East Asia, for example, demonstrated their commitment to working within this particular framework.<sup>57</sup>

With such overlaps, the artificial divide between FBOs and non-FBOs is increasingly being bridged. However, a first step must be to better understand the positions various voices and movements are coming from. Taking religions and their traditions seriously and engaging them in a dialogue is clearly the way forward. Rowan Williams calls for a better understanding of religion by secular NGOs and argues that it “requires a deepening fluency in the language of religious discourse, to understand the intention and nuance behind religiously inspired definitions of mission and human development”<sup>58</sup>.

46 [http://www.baptistworldaid.org.au/pdf/BaptistWorldAidAustralia\\_ATheologyofDevelopment.pdf](http://www.baptistworldaid.org.au/pdf/BaptistWorldAidAustralia_ATheologyofDevelopment.pdf)

47 <http://www.tear.org.au/about/>

48 <http://www.graceministries.com.au/>

49 Jim Wallis, *God’s Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn’t Get It*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).

50 Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1993).

51 Wallis, *God’s Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn’t Get It*, 271.

52 Gerard Clarke, “Agents of Transformation? Donors, Faith-Based Organisations and International Development,” *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (2007). 90.

53 Linda Tripp, “Gender and Development from a Christian Perspective: Experience from World Vision,” *Gender and Development* 7, no. 1 (1999). 66.

54 Shawn Flanigan, *For the Love of God: Ngos and Religious Identity in a Violent World* (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2010). 11.

55 Bruno De Cordier, “Faith-Based Aid, Globalisation and the Humanitarian Frontline: An Analysis of Western-Based Muslim Aid Organisations,” *Disasters* 33, no. 4 (2009). 613.

56 Andrew McGregor, “Geographies of Religion and Development: Rebuilding Sacred Spaces in Aceh, Indonesia, after the Tsunami” *Environment and Planning A* 42 (2010). 730.

57 World Vision Australia, *How Are the Neighbours? : The Millennium Development Goals & Our Region* (Melbourne: World Vision Australia, 2006). 2.

58 Rowan Williams, “New Perspectives on Faith and Development,” <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2606>.

## Challenging development and the market maxim

To FBOs the secular aid agencies, especially government ones, may seem implicated in the neoliberal model of development that focuses on economic growth as the key determinant of development.<sup>59</sup> For many faith leaders this is counterintuitive, as they would argue that justice and well-being, concepts that make measurement very difficult, are paramount to development. The Archbishop of Canterbury has also weighed in on the debate, raising the spectre of economic liberation as opposed to the “dangerously naïve hope” of the unrestricted economic growth model:

To talk about ‘economic liberation’ is to bring us back to the aim of making persons and cultures agents on their own behalf, able to exercise some creative freedom in regard to their conditions of living; and that is a different matter from simply guaranteeing material growth at a certain level, because it factors in the criterion of how human dignity is to be served.<sup>60</sup>

In this vision development is imbued with human dignity and the task of development becomes to seek not just material wealth, but a measured and qualified path to being human. Pope Benedict further laments: “In the context of cultural, commercial or political relations, it also sometimes happens that economically developed or emerging countries export this reductive vision of the person and his destiny to poor countries”<sup>61</sup>. This is where FBOs and FBDOs can offer a different outlook and philosophy. Indeed, Marshall and Keough argue that the “primary concern of faith leaders and institutions is people’s spiritual well-being, over a long time horizon, while development institutions have tended to focus on the material, in the here and now”.<sup>62</sup>

The two often go together, of course as Baptist World Aid Australia in its theology of development states:

Because poverty is far more complex than a simple lack of material things, our work focuses on community development. That is, we do not simply provide people living in poverty with material goods they lack but work to help people living in poverty transform the systems in which they live so that they are able to access and utilise the resources they need to lift them out of poverty.<sup>63</sup>

Religion plays a big role in the lives of people development agencies engage with. Spirituality and a more holistic way of conceiving well-being are fast becoming buzzwords for the entire development community. Whether praying for others actually helps or not is irrelevant. What is measurable is the impact community building and resilience can achieve. For some this effort starts and ends with a prayer, for others it could not be achieved without the prayer. What must not be ignored is that those who do not pray can also have a spiritual and holistic engagement far beyond any religious one. Furthermore FBOs do have a great impact upon communities, especially those that are partners within their faith and thus bolster faith communities and their influence.

## Governance issues: structure and accountability

In general, faith is regarded as a personal set of moral values, while religion is taken to be an institution representation of those moral values. Ann Jensen defines FBOs as representative of moral communities with shared priorities.<sup>64</sup> In the last twenty years, there appears to be diminishing exclusivity for religious institutions to define the personal faith drivers for FBOs, their employees and aid recipients.<sup>65</sup> This point is particularly relevant in Australia, where the distinction between religious institutions and faith driven communities is much more loosely defined. Melville and McDonald suggest this is because there is a relatively short history of religious institutions in Australia compared with countries such as the United States, thus creating more fluid and inclusive definitions of faith. <sup>66</sup> In addition, unlike the US, Australia does not allow FBOs to discriminate along faith lines when it comes to hiring staff, nor can it make staff commit to a statement of faith, as is the case with World Vision US.<sup>67</sup>

Faith-based development organisations differ from their secular counterparts in that faith acts as the power mechanism by which FBOs deliver relief to local communities.<sup>68</sup> Somewhat cynically perhaps, Gerard Clarke defines this faith-

59 The Human development index has undergone significant changes to include non-economic measures for a long time and continues to improve its breadth of indicators but quantitative measure remain the most important measures for development modelling.

60 <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2606>

61 Pope Benedict XVI, “Caritas in Veritate: Charity in Truth,” [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html).

62 Katherine Marshall and Lucy Keough, *Mind, Heart, and Soul in the Fight against Poverty* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2004), 2.

63 [http://www.baptistworldaid.org.au/pdf/BaptistWorldAidAustralia\\_ATheologyofDevelopment.pdf](http://www.baptistworldaid.org.au/pdf/BaptistWorldAidAustralia_ATheologyofDevelopment.pdf)

64 Ann Jensen, “No Drum to Beat, No Can to Carry – the Alienation and Loss of Religious Ideation on the Frontline of Children’s Welfare Service Provision. The Possibility for Moral Proportion in the New Culture,” in *Australia and New Zealand Third Sector Research: Navigating New Waters* (Adelaide: University of Western Sydney, 2006), 9.

65 Ibid.10. See also; editorial, “World Vision Blinders: Publicly Funded Agency Fired Staff for Religious Errors,” *Church and State* 63, no. 7 (2010), 16.

66 Melville and McDonald, “‘Faith-Based’ Organisations and Contemporary Welfare.” 73.

67 FBOs in the US are exempt from the 1964 Civil Rights Act that prohibits religious discrimination, a decision a court case recently upheld: <http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/8998016041.html> and the court’s decision: <http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinions/2011/01/25/08-35532.pdf>

68 Tamsin Bradley, “A Call for Clarification and Critical Analysis of the Work of Faith-Based Development Organisations,” *Progress in Development Studies* 9, no. 2 (2009), 103.

development relationship as being primarily a fiscal hierarchy, whereby wealthier donors use faith to understand their role in offering assistance to communities in need.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, aid partnerships between Australian FBOs and the Australian Government continue to grow. In 2008-09 year the Australian Government provide \$3.8bn in overseas aid. The AusAID program has increased in size by 42 per cent since 2004-05 and will continue to grow to increase official development assistance from 0.33 per cent of gross national income in 2008-09 to 0.5 per cent in 2015-16.<sup>70</sup> FBOs have benefited from much of this growth in AusAID funding, as the agency seeks to distribute an increasing pool of funds to trusted NGOs and partners in the field, with Africa and Asia-Pacific being the primary growth areas.<sup>71</sup>

FBOs are thus an important part of international development efforts in Australia and intrinsically tied into state affairs. This is so both at the level of in-country service delivery and national campaigns to create a domestic constituency for international development. There are two main arguments about FBO involvement with government aid programs:

1. Leads to compromise, especially on the FBO side, diminishing religious/spiritual aspect of development (pro-faith in development)
2. problematic to distinguish between evangelism and development work, which may jeopardise the national aid program (anti-faith in development)

The usual response is to form a synthesis view or middle ground by arguing that whilst FBOs have privileged access to some areas and peoples and are therefore a valuable partner – without whom much aid could not be delivered – there are reservations in how far faith should play a constituent role in development policy.

But the debate goes beyond service delivery. It is also about the well-being of the aid recipients and their attitude towards religiosity/spirituality on the one hand and the religiosity/spirituality of aid practitioners on the other. Is it possible to divorce the two? Internally it is impossible, though externally, i.e. in practice, it may be. Thus some agencies who continue missionary work have split their organisations to accommodate government guidelines for funding/tax exemption (see pp.19-20)

As a result FBOs differ greatly in their organisational structures, which in turn influence how aid is distributed. FBOs can be loosely split into those that offer aid in the community, act as intermediaries or missionary organisations.<sup>72</sup> In recent years, in response to the rise in accountability structures through the Australian Government, there has been a rise in the number of ‘super FBOs’ such as World Vision Australia, which administer programs in partnership with smaller in-country FBOs.<sup>73</sup> Internationally, Leiter’s analysis of the US and Australia’s NGO sector showed significant similarities in the internal structures of NGOs in both countries. He highlights there are now global understandings of how “non-profits look and behave, for example, what functions should be executed in distinct departments, how many levels of hierarchy to have, and how formalized policies and procedures should be.”<sup>74</sup>

Since the 1990s there has been a “change of mind-set” between funding bodies and FBOs, where there is a greater demand for funding and evaluation to be tied together.<sup>75</sup> AusAID’s 1998 NGO audit report heavily emphasises that NGO accreditation “gives due consideration to [their] success in achieving activity outcomes.”<sup>76</sup> The report also suggests the introduction of standardised projected rating systems which assess partnership projects’ “value for money”.<sup>77</sup> These measures apply directly to FBO partnerships with AusAID and there is a growing body of literature focusing on how FBOs can improve their financial accountability and transparency.<sup>78</sup> FBO end of year reports, in particular, highlight this shift in FBO accountability processes. The AngliCORD 2009-2010 annual report is one example of this, where the program manager letter emphasises “high quality outcomes”, “monitoring” and that finances are spent “in the most efficient way possible.”<sup>79</sup> The recent establishment of the Catholic Alliance for International Development (mentioned above) that brings together Catholic Religious Australia, Caritas Australia and the Australian Catholic University is another example as its collaboration aims to “maximise the synergies of the groups and ... be more efficient. Working together also allows you to do more as you can bring a greater richness to any one program and provide a more holistic approach.”<sup>80</sup>

69 Clarke, “Agents of Transformation? Donors, Faith-Based Organisations and International Development.” 78.

70 Australian National Audit Office, “Ausaid’s Management of the Expanding Australian Aid Program,” ed. Aus AID (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). 4.

71 Jo Hall, “Working Paper: Good Practice Donor Engagement with Civil Society,” ed. Office of Development Effectiveness (AusAID, 2010).; AusAID, “Evaluation of Australian Government Funded Ngo Projects in Africa,” ed. AusAID, Quality Assurance Series (Commonwealth of Australia, December 2000).

72 Bradley, “A Call for Clarification and Critical Analysis of the Work of Faith-Based Development Organisations.”

73 Ian Smillie and Henny Helmich, eds., Stakeholders: Government-Ngo Partnerships for International Development (London: Earthscan Publications, 1999). 7.

74 Jeffrey Leiter, “Nonprofit Isomorphism: An Australia–United States Comparison,” *Voluntas* 19 (2008).88.

75 Ian Smillie, “Ngos and Development Assistance: A Change in Mind-Set?,” *Third World Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1997). 569.

76 Australian National Audit Office, “Accounting for Aid — the Management of Funding to Non-Government Organisations — Follow up Audit,” ed. AusAID (Commonwealth of Australia, 1998). 16.

77 *Ibid.*14.

78 Ken Crofts, “Perceptions of Accountability in Australian Faith-Based Social-Welfare Organisations,” *Third Sector Review* 15, no. 2 (2009). 40.

79 “Anglicord 2010 Annual Report,” (Melbourne: AngliCORD, 2010). 1.

80 <http://www.catholicreligiousaustralia.org/en/903>

These are important steps as many FBOs are increasingly under pressure to conform to outcome-driven work expectations by their funders in the areas of administrative costs of doing business, quality control, overpromising work capacity and quantitative accountability.<sup>81</sup> The hierarchical nature of the funding relationships means FBOs must produce quantifiable outcomes where this is often difficult to achieve.<sup>82</sup> The 1998 AusAID audit report, for example, emphasises regulation of the structures and hierarchies between FBOs and its own organisation. The report splits AusAID funding into projects, grants and contracts and the NGO organisations into 'entry level', 'project level' and 'program level'. These levels corresponded directly to the NGOs' funding autonomy.<sup>83</sup> On the FBO side, both World Vision Australia and AngliCORD's annual reports focus heavily on 'population catchment' quantity markers to show the numbers of recipients benefiting from their aid.<sup>84</sup> Smillie highlights that in social care programs; in particular, these types of quantity markers are unhelpful in assessing a program's impact within a community.<sup>85</sup>

Dicklitch and Rice, in their evaluation of FBO aid to Africa, suggest a 'listen and learn' holistic grass roots approach to accountability, which moves away from the quick fix outcome approach taken by current government funding bodies.<sup>86</sup> Many FBOs supplement their incomes with long-term public donor strategies as a way of overcoming these expectations. Organisations such as World Vision use child sponsorship strategies as a means of securing ongoing and long-term sources of funding, to avoid the pitfalls of short-term government grant schemes.<sup>87</sup> There remains a significant gap in literature as to new and emerging approaches to funder/FBO accountability strategies and how they differ from funder/NGO accountability strategies.

## Perceptions of FBOs: Developing legitimacy

Public perceptions of FBO legitimacy play a large role in how successful they are in gaining ongoing public and government support. Australian FBOs often face higher public scrutiny of their funding during and after large natural disaster periods and there has been a move towards higher levels of public disclosure by FBOs.<sup>88</sup> After the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, it was noted by Patricia O'Keefe that FBOs such as AngliCORD, CARITAS, and WVA received higher levels of public scrutiny about their expenditure, but did not subsequently employ any defensive self-disclosure tactics (in relation to financial records) as a way of improving their public legitimacy.<sup>89</sup> By contrast, it is interesting to note the Australian Federal Government scrutiny of FBO funding use was found to drop significantly after the tsunami, due to the limited capacity of the Government to deal with simultaneous large funding donations to many FBOs.<sup>90</sup>

FBO legitimacy is important not only from a public stand point but also amongst aid recipients. Bruno de Cordier argues legitimacy for FBOs is more important amongst its donor recipients, where legitimacy is derived from culturally appropriate aid.<sup>91</sup> This is particularly true for aid delivered by western organisations in Islamic countries, where the perception of political hegemony by donor recipients is much higher than in other contexts.<sup>92</sup> This theory is supported by Andrew McGregor's research into Australian FBO responses to rebuilding Aceh in 2005. McGregor found Christian FBOs such as World Vision and CARITAS played down their Christian identity and instead adopted an interfaith approach to providing aid in the region.<sup>93</sup> He suggests the secular funding approach used by AusAID was inappropriate because it did not address specific community wishes, such as the rebuilding of mosques.<sup>94</sup> This is a powerful argument used by FBOs to justify their role in giving aid, given the porous nature of state/church boundaries in many donor countries and the moral authority given to religious intuitions in general.

Identity clearly matters. In the context of determining FBO identities, many are focused on specific small-scale projects (mostly small funds or organisations), whilst bigger FBOs get involved in many projects in many regions over a sustained periods of time. Few FBOs deliver aid in long-term projects and engage in crisis response. For those who can, it appears that much of their large scale development work begins as a crisis response and develops into long-term engagements after the initial crisis abates. World Vision's 1995 report into its partnership with AusAID in Ethiopia provides an example of how crisis response projects can develop into long-term development partnerships. During the 1991 famine in South

81 Smillie, "Ngos and Development Assistance: A Change in Mind-Set?." 568.

82 Smillie and Helmich, eds., Stakeholders: Government-Ngo Partnerships for International Development. 11.

83 Australian National Audit Office, "Accounting for Aid — the Management of Funding to Non-Government Organisations — Follow up Audit." 27.

84 "World Vision Australia Annual Report," (Melbourne World Vision Australia, 2009). 11.

85 Smillie, "Ngos and Development Assistance: A Change in Mind-Set?." 567.

86 Susan Dicklitch and Heather Rice, "The Mennonite Central Committee (Mcc) and Faith-Based Ngo Aid to Africa," Development Practice 14, no. 5 (2004). 660.

87 Karlyn Eckman and Tim O'Shaughnessy, Slowly, Slowly, the Egg Will Walk (World Vision Australia, 1995). 10.

88 Smillie and Helmich, eds., Stakeholders: Government-Ngo Partnerships for International Development. 15.

89 O'Keefe and Conway et al., "Impression Management and Legitimacy in an Ngo Environment." 13.

90 A Abraham, "Accountability in the Tsunami Aftermath," In the Black 75, no. 11 (2005). 54.

91 Bruno De Cordier, "The 'Humanitarian Frontline', Development and Relief and Religion: What Context, Which Threats and Which Opportunities?," Third World Quarterly 30, no. 4 (2009). 851.

92 De Cordier, "Faith-Based Aid, Globalisation and the Humanitarian Frontline: An Analysis of Western-Based Muslim Aid Organisations." 663.

93 McGregor, "Geographies of Religion and Development: Rebuilding Sacred Spaces in Aceh, Indonesia, after the Tsunami ". 737.

94 Ibid. 736.



Kalu, Ethiopia, AusAID provided funding for World Vision food provision. This crisis response subsequently developed into a four year multi-faceted food security project in Ethiopia which included justice, gender empowerment and resource development.<sup>95</sup> Gerstbauer argues, in general, FBOs adopted long-term community engagement strategies because of their religious and moral frameworks, rather than because of state failures to address long-term community need.<sup>96</sup> This view is contradicted by Roger Riddell, who argues that in the long-term, it is FBOs' flexible structures which allowed them to bypass traditional government recipient networks that have led them to have a growing role in long-term development work.<sup>97</sup> World Vision's peace-building efforts in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 provides an example, where the organisation led trauma healing work using AusAID grants, when the Rwandan government was unable to coordinate a response.<sup>98</sup>

In the past, most long-term FBO programs have focused on the areas of HIV/AIDS, women's empowerment and poverty reduction.<sup>99</sup> Today, however, both crisis response and long-term community building strategies are becoming necessarily intertwined. A particular growth area for FBOs in the Asia-Pacific region will be, no doubt, its responses to climate change. WVA is already shifting its priority basis to addressing the issues of climate change and the large-scale poverty and displacement it is causing.<sup>100</sup>

## FBDOS: Room for improvement?

Under the modernisation theorem there is a progression towards development (the economic stage the OECD countries find themselves in) and those who are following in their footsteps are 'developing' whilst the very poor (in economic terms) are the 'least developed'. This linear progression can be theorised as a being-towards, as having a purpose (economic). So, for instance, a developing state sets up tax breaks to initiate investment, which in turn pushes up growth and allows the economy to develop by proxy. This paradigm is concurrent with the neo-liberal approach and its domesticating logic that attempts to capture everything it sees within its domain. At the same time neo-liberal approaches have allowed market forces to take over state functions and subsequently encouraged FBOs and other organisations to fill the void the state left behind as it focuses its gaze squarely on observing and intervening rather than preventing, building and creating (for instance sustainable and resilient communities). Indeed, unchecked market approaches to development destroy communities and their resilience. Faith based organisations counteract these moves and have filled gaps left behind by neo-liberal policies towards development.<sup>101</sup>

This is interesting, as the development and secularisation paradigms saw religion withering away, whilst under neo-liberal market conditions a new paradigm emerged that accommodates religion and FBOs as partners. It is interesting in how far FBOs operate outside this logic towards purpose or have other purposes towards which being is oriented (i.e. salvation). So the question becomes one of: Are FBOs willing handmaidens to neo-liberal policy or is their increased involvement in international aid and development creating new possibilities and spaces outside of this logic? In other words, are FBOs helping there spaces for indigenous logics and for genuine negotiation between these modes of being, such as the church has established over a long time in parts of the world and created hybrid and syncretic modalities.

The danger clearly is that FBOs become another arm of government policy and a service delivery agent. What requires further research in the field is to see whether there exist real possibilities for FBOs to open up and engage (as equals) and negotiate development in novel ways.

95 Eckman and O'Shaughnessy, *Slowly, Slowly, the Egg Will Walk*. 13.

96 Loramy Conradi Gerstbauer, "The Whole Story of Ngo Mandate Change: The Peacebuilding Work of World Vision, Catholic Relief Services and Mennonite Central Committee," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 39, no. 5 (2009). 846.

97 Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* 160.

98 Gerstbauer, "The Whole Story of Ngo Mandate Change: The Peacebuilding Work of World Vision, Catholic Relief Services and Mennonite Central Committee." 853.

99 Clarke, "Faith Matters: Faith-Based Organisations, Civil Society and International Development." 836.

100 Alexandra de Blas, "Acting in Good Faith," *Ecos Nov-Dec* (2009). 24.; "World Vision Australia Annual Report." 11.

101 David Sogge, *Give and Take: What's the Matter with Foreign Aid?* (New York: Zed Books, 2002), 20.

# Conclusion

This working paper presents a first foray into studying FBOs and in particular FBDOs in Australia. Faith is clearly a potent force in the world and continues to play a significant role in international development both at home and overseas.

Faith-based organisations have grown significantly in the last twenty years and while there is a lag in the literature assessing its roles, broadly, FBOs are being embraced as useful intermediaries between secular states funders and aid recipients due to their local networks and social capital. Funding accountability strategies remain an area where more research is needed, particularly as FBOs are expected to conform to government outcome driven models even when it is inappropriate to assess aid programs in this way. As religion continues to play a central role in world conflicts, FBOs have a larger role to play in delivering culturally appropriate assistance, with perceived neutrality on the part of public donors and aid recipients. However, FBOs are also engaging in the big policy debates and in some cases actively driving them. The move away from economic indicators to measure development and towards more inclusive and broad indicators around well-being and human dignity are but one example.

FBO strategies in delivering aid are divided between crisis response and long-term community development, with significant growth in crisis response in the Asia-Pacific region. There appears to be significant gaps in the assessment of FBOs' role in long-term strategies to tackle climate change in particular. Finally, FBOs have an advantage of secular institutions in their ability to tap into transnational religious networks and harness moral will. There needs to be more assessment of the power differentials between FBOs and their recipient communities, where there is the potential for undesirable evangelical coercion to arise.

The topic warrants further research and especially field research in Australia as well as overseas to better understand what role faith plays in the service delivery and outcomes of faith based development work on the ground.



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