ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

A REFLECTION AND WORKING PAPER

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Written by Anne-Marie Holenstein

Cover pages: "The Gateway to Heaven"

"Tunduk", the smoke hole at the zenith of a Kyrgyz yurta, where the outer world (the realm of heaven) meets this world (the realm of human life)

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Foreword

Religion and spirituality are sources of world views and views of life; they constitute creative political and social forces; they are forces for cohesion and for polarisation; they generate stimuli for social and development policies; they serve as instruments for political reference and legitimacy. Development co-operation cannot afford to ignore religion and spirituality.

Development work is to a large extent inter-cultural work and this dimension often has to do with religion. The separation of the sacred and the secular is alien to many people and societies. The socio-religious context is very important and sound knowledge of it is necessary to achieve good development work. The religious and spiritual values that promote development are expressed at the level of individual and collective behaviour. Where religion and spirituality are rooted in the every day life of people and society they can make an important contribution to sustainable development. They can also strengthen the culture of dialogue.

But religion and spirituality can also constitute elements of risk when they are used by power interests or when they influence the social and political balance of power, especially in situations of social insecurity or socio-cultural alienation. The taking over of religion and spirituality for political ends, the erosion of tolerance, and conflictive religiously based separation and segregation of population groups are dangerous for development and peace. The limits lie where there is no more willingness to dialogue.

Religious organisations play an important role in many situations as providers of social services and as social safety nets or as real forces for social organisation. All over the world, organisations with a religious background are actors and partners in relief, reconstruction and development work.

Against this background, since 2002 the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation and Swiss relief and development NGOs have been engaged in a process of reflection on the theme of the *Role and Significance of Religion and Spirituality in Development Co-operation.* This process was meant to outline the multiple dimensions of this topic and to derive from them guiding principles and quality criteria for dealing with the potential and the risks of religion and spirituality as well as for partnerships with faith-based organisations.

The present publication is the result of this process of reflection. It is intentionally written as a reflection and working paper and as a contribution to the discussion. This publication is an invitation to debate in order to strengthen present levels of recognition and of knowledge about the role of religion and spirituality – as well as dealings with them - in the discourse about normative, strategic and operative questions of development and humanitarian co-operation.

Walter Fust
Director General, Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation

Introduction

"Religion and Spirituality - a taboo in development co-operation?"[1] This question was the title of the conference in the autumn of 2002 at which the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) initiated a process of reflection about religion, spirituality and development with Swiss NGOs. The entry point was the observation that religion and spirituality as important socio-cultural factors remain to a large extent ignored in both the thematic discussions and the operational programmes of development co-operation[2].

The result of the conference confirmed the hypothesis. The participants worked out a broad spectrum for the analysis of relevant issues but consistently evaded questions about the significance of religion in the fields of work of their own organisations. The theme of the conference had evidently touched on an area of mental taboo. A longer period of reflection was needed. Thus, the NGO Division of SDC decided to embark on a more intensive process of reflection with the NGOs on the significance and role of religion and spirituality in development co-operation. Anne-Marie Holenstein, consultant, was mandated to guide and manage this process.

In the course of five workshops during the year 2003, representatives from the NGOs and SDC dealt with the following issues:
- religion and spirituality in the holistic understanding of development co-operation;
- religion and spirituality as important socio-cultural factors; observation of their impact in the context of development programmes and projects; implications for programme partnerships and programme/project cycle management (PCM)
- elaboration of key questions for dialogue about programmes

In addition, Matthias Schnyder, then a staff member of the NGO Division, produced an academic paper for reflection with the title "Secular order, notion of State and religion.[3]

The present document sums up the results of this reflection process by giving a preliminary overview of the knowledge gained. This will now have to be scrutinized and studied further in discussions and co-operation programmes with partners.

The ambivalence of the religious factor will be the guiding focus in the next phase of the reflection process. Religion and spirituality are powerful socio-cultural forces for motivation, inclusiveness, participation and sustainability. At the same time, spiritual and material resources of religious communities are prone to the risk of misuse und instrumentalisation from within and from without. In the context of some case studies, we will therefore endeavour to deepen our joint reflections with NGOs on how to deal with this ambivalence in a creative way, based on principles of partnership.

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[1] Referring to: Kurt Alan Ver Beek "Spirituality, a Development Taboo" in Development in Practice, Volume 10, Number 1, February 2000.
[2] Exceptions to this are to be found in the missionary and pastoral co-operation of protestant and catholic organisations.
[3] Matthias Schnyder, "Säkularisierung, Staatsverständnis und Religion. Rahmenbedingungen der EZA". The paper is available from the NGO Division of SDC.

We are grateful for the committed co-operation of our colleagues from the NGOs and from SDC who have taken part in our processes of quest and discussion. We are looking forward for them to stay on board also for the next steps. Special thanks go to the members of the accompanying advisory group who time after time challenged us to critically think over the results.

Bern, February 2005

Konrad Specker
Head NGO Division, SDC

Part 1: Basic questions concerning religion and spirituality

Only once we are reasonably clear about some basic questions, can we speak meaningfully about the significance of religion and spirituality in the context of development co-operation:

- What understanding of religion are we starting out with, given the historically loaded Eurocentricity of the concept "religion"?
- In view of the obvious cultural achievements of religion and spirituality, how do we handle the danger of instrumentalising them on the one hand or showing an inappropriate respect towards them on the other?
- What is the cause of the radical ambivalence of religion? On the one hand it is a source of empowerment but on the other, religion and its followers are prone to abuse of power, totalitarianism, fundamentalism and even to warmongering.
- Are we sufficiently aware that the perception of the relationship between religion and the state established in our constitution is the result of a particular West European historical route?
- What conclusions do we draw from the historical conditioning of our West European model of the order of church and state with regard to our dialogue with partners in development co-operation but also with regard to the structures of our own post-modern immigrant society?
- How far can we declare the achievements of our secular order, which include the recognition of human rights, to be binding values in development co-operation?

The concept "religion"

> The word "religion" does not occur in the Bantu languages. Where it is found, it has probably been incorporated as a result of Islamic or Christian missionary activities. De Rosney (a Belgian Jesuit) gives the beautiful example of the expression "ebasi" in the Duala language that nowadays is translated by "religion". However it really means a silk scarf with which Christian women cover their head before they go into church. It is therefore clear that it was only in contact with Christianity that the meaning of religion was applied in this way.
>
> *Al Imfeld in Entwicklungspolitik, 21/22/2004, p.56*

First of all a warning that we take from the Theological Encyclopaedia: On account of its history, "religion", the central concept of the present *Reflection and Working Paper*, is Eurocentric in nature. In most languages of non-European cultures the term has no exactly corresponding equivalent, either semantically or as regards its content. There is, therefore, no concept of religion that is usable in an inter-cultural or inter-religious context.[4]

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[4] Compare Hans-Michael Haussig, "Der Religionsbegriff in den Religionen", Philo, Berlin und Mainz 1999, pages 4 and 18.

The following episode should illustrate this: in the context of a research project on "Religion and modernisation in Singapore", a sociologist of religion carried out an interview with a young Indian woman living in Singapore. The Indian woman came from an immigrant Brahmin family with a rich Hindu tradition. At the end, she said:

"You have asked me to tell you how I understand myself as a Hindu. I have responded to this request to my very best. But, please, do not understand all that as if I have talked to you about my 'religion'. I have passed through a Western system of
education here in Singapore, and I think I know quite well how you Western people are used to think about man and God and about 'religion'. So I talked to you as if 'Hinduism' were my 'religion', so that you may be able to understand what I mean. If you were a Hindu yourself, I would have talked to you in quite a different fashion, and I am sure both of us would have laughed about the idea that something like 'Hinduism' does even exist. Please, don't forget this when analysing all the stuff you have on your tape".[5]

This is why the practice of development co-operation has to reckon with a far more complex set of relationships determining religion and culture than that suggested by West European concepts and our use of language. In our co-operation with partners[6] and actors[7] we should not start out with the supposition that the religious factor can be isolated from the general context of life.

With this necessary caution about a Eurocentric narrowing of vision we suggest the following description of religion and religiousness, based on contemporary religious theory:[8]

Religions provide concepts in answer to people's existential questions. These concepts turn into religiousness[9] within individuals as meaning meets human needs.

There are three distinguishing characteristics:

1. Religiousness has to do with what is not evident. By embodying something that eludes ordinary and immediate access, religious actions hold a fascination for people.
2. Although religiousness has to do with things that are not immediately accessible, it lives through the interaction and communication of its believers. Religious communication is always the point of intersection of two levels: dealings with the unseen on the one hand send signals to concrete social situations on the other. Wherever this happens, we are concerned with religions.
3. Each religion lays claim to a particular seriousness of purpose, an "ultimate concern". "Religion is what absolutely concerns me" (P.Tillich). The believer cannot escape from it, so that religion can, in certain circumstances, drive him/her even to death.

In this context the reader may also refer to the contribution by Ruedi Högger in the appendix which the author sees as a help to understanding the religious-spiritual dimensions of development co-operation.

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[5] From "Religion: eine europäisch-christliche Erfindung?" Beiträge eines Symposiums am Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin. Hg. Haussig u.a., Berlin 2003, page 14.
[6] Partner = partner organisations on the spot, that is both NGOs and grass roots organisations.
[7] Actors = beneficiaries, target groups of development projects.
[8] after: Söling, Casper, "Gottesinstinkt, Bausteine für eine evolutionäre Religionstheorie", Dissertation, Giessen 2002.
[9] In the present document we use the term "spirituality" for "religiousness".

The cultural achievements of religion

Religion and spirituality make an essential contribution to cultural achievements:

1. in providing metaphysical meaning and expectations of well-being (ways of be-lieving)
2. in shaping individual and collective behaviour, that is to say way of life, mode of production and every day culture (ways of life)
3. in social and political values for cohesion in communities and society.

Thierry Verhelst's expanded concept of culture has proven fruitful for the discussion about the meaning and role of religion in the practice of development co-operation:

"Culture embraces the totality of all the creative solutions that a group of people find in order to adapt to their natural and social environment – but also to do justice to the re-quirements and needs of the soul."[10]

Respect for culture and its achievements, religion and spirituality included, is to be clearly distinguished from an inappropriate respect for traditions that hamper develop-ment while seeking legitimacy on religious grounds.[11] Religious justification for male dominated gender roles, human rights violations against women (e.g. circumcision), fanatical fasting, and restrictions regarding productive work is often based on ambigu-ous basic religious texts and used to push through power interests.

> Culture is not a frozen set of values and practices. It is constantly recreated as people question, adapt and redefine their values and practices to changing realities and exchanges of ideas.
>
> Cultural liberty is the capability of people to live and be what they choose.
>
> "Culture", "tradition" and "authenticity" are not the same as "cultural liberty". They are not acceptable reasons for allowing practices that deny individuals equality of opportunity and violate their human rights – such as denying women equal rights to education.
>
> *UNDP Human Development Report 2004 Cultural Liberty in Today's World, p. 4*

In the face of this complex problem area, the study "Cultures, Spirituality and Develop-ment" by World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) concludes: "It is not purity which is important in a culture, nor necessarily its antiquity, but its ability to adapt and be crea-tive, and to screen and select from the many outside influences with which it is con-fronted. What matters in a culture is its capacity to generate self-respect, the ability to resist exploitation and domination, and to offer meaning to what people produce and

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[10] The expanded definition of culture after Thierry Verhelst was introduced by Ruedi Högger at the workshop of 29 October 2003.

[11] Compare "Islam and Development Co-operation. Some Recommendations", SDC, Berne 2003.

consume, to land, liberty, life and death, pain and joy. Culture is, in the final analysis, about meaning. That is why it is related closely to spirituality."[12]

Sustainable development is dependent on dealing consciously with the cultural achievements of religion and spirituality. This requires work with their potential but also sensitivity with regard to their instrumentalisation and diversion from their real purpose. Culture, and religion with it, must not be reduced to the role of an instrument that may serve any type of objectives. It should be able to play a constructive, formative and creative role.[13]

The ambivalence of the religious factor

Religions and faith communities can be effective as "angels of peace" as well as "war-mongers". This ambivalence of the religious factor has a lot to do with the fact that the relationship of the world religions to violence is equivocal. All great God-narratives are familiar with traditions that legitimise force in certain circumstances, claim victims in the battle for their own beliefs and demonise people of other religions. However, at the same time there are sources that proclaim the incompatibility of violence with religion, demand sacrifices for peace and insist on respect for people of other religions. If we are to assume that, for the foreseeable future, the religions of the world will continue to be a factor in political conflicts, then it is high time that we strengthened the "civilising" side of the sacred and made it more difficult for it cynically to be taken over by political interests.[14] What is said here about the relationship of world religions to violence can be considered generally valid for religions overall.

> The liberation of religious thought from manipulation by power, whether this is politically, socially or religiously based, is a basic condition for conveying a religious "sense" to the community of believers.
>
> *Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, Egyptian literary scholar and philosopher*
> *Literaturnachrichten, October-December 2004, p.7*

On the one hand religions, or rather their followers, develop diverse forms of resistance against the abuse of power, while on the other hand they and their institutions are themselves exposed to the temptation to misuse power. A source of danger lies in the nature of religious conviction:

- Religion is focused on the absolute and unconditional and thus it can take on totalitarian characteristics. Monotheistic religions in particular have difficulty in

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[12] Thierry Verhelst with Wendy Tyndale, "Cultures, spirituality, and development", in:"Development and Culture", Edited by Deborah Eade, Oxfam GB 2002, page 13.

[13] After "Our Creative Diversity", UNESCO Report 1995, page 3: (Culture) "should not be interpreted in such a way as to confine culture to the role of an instrument that 'sustains' some other objective; nor should it be defined so as to exclude the possibility that the culture can grow and develop."

[14] Andreas Hasenclever "Kriegstreiber und Friedensengel. Die Rolle von Religionen und Glaubensgemeinschaften in bewaffneten Konflikten" in epd-Entwicklungspolitik 14/15/2003,with numerous bibliographical references. The author is an academic collaborator with the Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (HSFK) in Frankfurt am Main.

distinguishing between the claims of the absolutely divine and the historical nature of human existence.

- Religious conviction that lays claim to absolute and exclusive validity leads almost inevitably to intolerance, proselytism, missionary zeal and the forming of sects. The different forms in which religious exclusiveness can be manifested are implicitly hostile to pluralism and democracy.
- Religion can increase aggressiveness and the willingness to use violence, by reason of the symbolic value added that is provided by the sanctification of "profane" motivation and aims.
- Religious zeal can also be used by hierarchies within faith-based organisations to legitimise the abuse of power and the violation of human rights. Since these hierarchies are mostly male dominated, gender issues and women's human rights need to be kept under careful observation.[15]

Power interests of any colour make use of these susceptibilities:

- Ethnic-cultural and cultural-religious differences can easily be harnessed for the domination strategies of identity politics.
- Misused religious motivation is experiencing a renaissance in current terrorist activities.
- Leaders of fundamentalist movements lay claim to a single and absolutist religious interpretation at the cost of all others, and they link their interpretation to political power objectives.

> If we are to assume that, for the foreseeable future, the religions of the world will continue to be a factor in political conflicts, then it is high time that we strengthened the "civilising" side of the sacred and made it more difficult for it cynically to be taken over by political interests.
>
> Western governments should, therefore, break out from their secularity and, duly respecting the separation of church from state, make an effort to identify and to promote those trends in all the religions that favour democracy and reject violence as a political instrument.
>
> Paradoxically, secular western states should thus interfere in the religious world in order to increase its autonomy from the political world.
>
> *Andreas Hasenclever in epd-Entwicklungspolitik 14/15/2003, p.64*

However, it would be a disastrous misunderstanding to conclude that because of their potential for dangerous instrumentalisation, religion and spirituality should be cut out from the discourse and practice of development co-operation. As the central theme for the discussion on the agenda, we are emphasising the conclusion that the sociologist Thomas Meyer draws from his copious material on the misuse of cultural differences:

We would "only provide fundamentalism with fresh nourishment if, in the light of the currently growing misuse of ethnic-cultural and cultural-religious differences for the domination strategies of identity politics, we were to come to the conclusion that the

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[15] On this see "Reflection and assessment of gender issues" in the appendix, page 35

religious factor should be banned as such from public life and wholly limited to the private sphere. Such a misunderstanding originates from the unacceptable assumption that we should first recognise fundamentalism as religious belief rather than as a political strategy. Such a misrepresentation provides fundamentalism with an important part of the credit it claims. Fundamentalism is precisely not the return of the religious factor into politics. It is rather the systematic hindrance of religious and moral discourse in politics in so far as it deviates even in the slightest from the fundamentalist variants which currently hold sway. Fundamentalism represents the claim to absolute truth of a particular religious interpretation and its public consequences, at the cost of every other.

Contrary to the expectations of the Enlightenment and to technocratic concepts of development, even in modern culture, religious ways of life are to be counted among the most important grounds for forming personal and collective identity. They are also among the most powerful sources of energy for the cultivation of moral motives for public action."[16]

Secular order, religion and state

In the present environment, the relationship between religion and power, or more precisely between religion and state power, must be a central theme in the discussion about strategy and practice in development co-operation.

As with the term "religion", we should be aware that the separation between the institutions of political and religious power – between the state and the Christian churches – is specific to the history of Western Europe and North America. This relationship between the secular order and religious belief developed during centuries of conflict between the pope and the emperor over the Reformation and the Enlightenment. It forms the framework of our social order that is established in our secular constitution. State-supported development co-operation is also bound into this constitutional framework.

> We in the West naturally assume many ever so beautiful things: the orientation towards the individual, the principle of the equality of all before the law or the separation of powers in the modern political order. But in doing this we forget that these are late products of our own cultural development… The transition from old Europe to the present political culture, which is now by and large no longer disputed, suffered many ruptures. There were revolutions and wars. It was a process that aroused opposition – not something that was already implanted in the cultural genes of old Europe….
> But today's societies of radical change are confronted with the same problems that in the past once kept Europe on tenterhooks… Societies affected by these problems question themselves and this leads to a "clash within civilization".
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> *Dieter Senghaas, peace research worker and development theoretician*
> *SDC-Newsletter, October 2004*

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[16] Thomas Meyer, "Identitätspolitik, Vom Missbrauch kultureller Unterschiede", Suhrkamp 2272, Page 226.

It is important to distinguish between "secularisation processes" and "secular order". The secular order of a state does not necessarily presuppose a non-religious society. On the contrary, it allows different religious communities to live together in one state. A secular order frees the state from being patronized by religion but it also frees religion and religious communities from being patronized by the state.

Our model of separation of powers is not known either in the Byzantine tradition of "Caesaropapism" or in the universalistic political theology of the Islamic "umma". However, incompatibility with our model of separation does not rule out an understanding of democracy and tolerance.

The discourse and practice of development co-operation must be aware of the historical relativity of its own secular order. This should not mean, however, that its values and advantages are given up through showing inappropriate respect in the dialogue with partners.

Religion in the post-modern world

The Enlightenment and also numerous social scientists, especially in the 1960s, put forward the hypothesis that religion would gently die out. Contrary to these expectations, even in modern, or rather post-modern societies, religious ways of life have been preserved and further developed within the framework of a secular system of government. They still form part of the important grounds on which personal and collective identity are formed and they are powerful sources of energy for motives for public action. The Enlightenment and the experiences of boundlessness and de-mystification of the world that went along with it, have met their limits. For this reason, the core of what is religious is visible in the processes of the modern age, in the sense of an immovable boundary, a horizon within which even the "most secularised" world *nolens volens* remains.[17]

In modern societies religion is practised in the context of the technical, scientifically rational and media focused world of our day, even if these points of reference are fought against and contested. Even Evangelical fundamentalists and radical Muslims refer to it – albeit disapprovingly. "Counter-secularisation" would often be a more appropriate term here than the blunt and polemically-inclined term "fundamentalism".[18]

The individualism characteristic of the West leads the churches as institutionalised religion to lose their socially-integrating and dogmatically binding nature. The trend exists that religions will be used as self-service shops, from which rituals, myths, mysticism and dogmas can be obtained at random and integrated into a purely individualistic and consumer-oriented, and therefore non-binding patchwork spirituality.

Europe, continent of immigration: a test case for democracy

In the context of immigration in contemporary Europe the issue of the relationship of religion to democracy acquires new urgency. Western democracies have a common Christian culture as their foundation. While facing up to necessary adaptations to the

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[17] Wolfgang Müller-Funk, "Ende der Religion? Plädoyer für eine Kritik der Religionskritik", Neue Züricher Zeitung, 22 February 1995.
[18] ibid

cultural and religious pluralism of modern society, we must not ignore this common heritage on the grounds of a misconceived tolerance. The debate in the EU convention about the preamble of the new European constitution that evades the facts of Europe's religious past and present serves as an example of this challenge.[19] The need for comprehensive ethical orientation is increasing. Ethical-religious positions are in demand. Those who suppress these needs or evade them are creating a vacuum by leaving no space for fundamental human requirements. Leading figures of new religious youth movements or fundamentalist movements of all kinds know how to fill this vacuum successfully.

All over the world religions and the cultural differences based on them are gaining new momentum for politics and for the functioning of the political regimes of the day. A symptom of this is the headscarf issue and the debate about crucifixes in classrooms in many West European countries. These debates show that religion will become all the more politicised if, on the basis of a radical secularity, politics exclude the religious orientation of a group of citizens - or of the recently immigrated and not fully integrated population. Religion will also become more politicised if politics fail to fulfil legitimate social expectations and needs for orientation. It will then establish itself as the source of alternative identities and social practice. [20]

As the recent debate about the new regulations for the relations between religious communities and the state in the canton of Zurich has shown, the quest for new legal principles is becoming a polarising tightrope walk. With the slogan "No tax money for Koran schools" the adoption of a differentiated, forward-looking body of laws was defeated.[21] The opposition to the proposed new legislation challenged in principle the compatibility of non-Christian religious traditions with democracy.

Development co-operation knows from experience that non-Christian religious traditions can be compatible with democracy and also that religious systems speak with a great many voices concerning their compatibility with democracy. Furthermore, Christian traditions and institutions are not omitted from a critical analysis regarding compatibility with democracy. Unfortunately very little of this rich experience influences the debates within our own society. Should development agencies not try to break through this "splendid isolation"?

Human Rights and Religion

Religion and religiously shaped communities tend to fence themselves off against the outside and to make a distinction between their followers as believers, converted and chosen people, and those outside as unbelievers. On the inside they produce differentiating symbolism as well, for example between priesthood and laity, men and women etc. These distinctions can influence conceptions about different levels of human dignity and human rights conferred on or denied to individuals and groups.

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[19] Klara Obermüller "Gott hat einen Platz in einer europäischen Verfassung. Die Präambel will modern sein; sie ist seltsam unmodern". Neue Züricher Zeitung, Sunday 22 June 2003.
[20] Jenkins, Philip, "The Next Christianity" in The Atlantic Monthly, Number 290, 2002. See also Minkenberg, Michael/Willems, Ulrich, "Neue Entwicklungen im Verhältnis von Politik und Religion im Spiegel politikwissenschaftlicher Debatten" in Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, Beilage zur Wochenzeitung "Das Parlament", B 42-43/2002, Bonn, 21 October 2002.
[21] Vote of November 2003.

Some religious communities derive their canon of human rights directly from their religion. Advocates of universal human rights claim, however, that human rights can never be validated exclusively on religious grounds but rather that their universality is derived directly from the value and dignity of every single person.

We could not deal with these questions in the framework of our project. However there is an urgent need for further work to be done on the question of how much consensus about human rights in the dialogue between partners is necessary for co-operation and, more specifically, how this consensus can be reached.

Part 2: "Then tell me how you feel about religion?"

For the reasons described in Part 1, development co-operation is increasingly confronted with the key question "Then tell me how you feel about religion?" ("Gretchenfrage" in Goethe's Faust). And the answer is, like Dr. Faust's, anything but clear.[22]

In this part we first tackle this question by looking at the origins of development co-operation. We then deal with a change of paradigm in its understanding of culture, and finally we look into possible reasons why religion and spirituality have nevertheless generally remained a taboo theme in development co-operation.

Mission and Development Co-operation

Development co-operation owes its origin, amongst other factors, to the important momentum caused by a radical change in the traditional Christian understanding of mission. From the 1950's onwards, missionary societies began to formulate their task anew. The task of conversion was relegated to the background; mission was understood more and more as work in partnership with the young churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America. At the same time leading missionary societies linked their activity with a religiously motivated understanding of development which called for a political, social and ecological commitment from the churches.

This change of paradigm provided fertile ground for the foundation of the Swiss denominational development agencies, Bread for All and the Lenten Fund at the beginning of the 1960's. Similarly, the existing church-based organisations, HEKS (Swiss Interchurch Agency) and Caritas set up new departments for development co-operation.

Substantial momentum was provided by the general assemblies of the World Council of Churches in the 1960's, where young churches and theologies from the South made their presence felt. On the Catholic side the papal encyclicals "Pacem in Terris" and "Populorum Progressio" promoted the principle of development co-operation and of international solidarity.[23]

In Switzerland, the call by progressive church circles for political action, for changes in economic structures and for social justice led to the setting up of the "Berne Declaration"(1968) and to the "Switzerland – Third World Conference" (1970) hosted in the House of Parliament by the Swiss church leaders. Political and industrial representatives debated and disputed with the "militant students" of the youth coalition. The aim of the conference was to work out new political guidelines for North-South relations.[24]

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[22] This chapter's leading quotation comes from the conversation between Faust and Gretchen in Marthe's garden. (Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Faust, Part 1): "Nun sag, wie hast du's mit der Religion?" The scene, when carefully read, turns out to be a story of seduction in which an enlightened scholar uses his grandiose image of God to break the resistance of the beloved who is bound into a morally authoritarian religion and social order. Faust makes improper use of his intellectual advantage. Gretchen ends up as the murderer of a child.

[23] Compare the comprehensive account in : René Holenstein, "Was kümmert uns die Dritte Welt? Zur Geschichte der internationalen Solidarität in der Schweiz", Chronos Verlag, Zurich 1998.

[24] "We fulfil our obligations to the Third World only when we understand the world in its complex form and the mutual dependence of its parts and then define anew the place and the function of our nation, our churches, our economy etc. as an integrating part of this world." Schmocker, Hans K. and Michael Traber, "Schweiz-Dritte Welt. Berichte und Dokumente der Interkonfessionellen Konferenz, Bern. Zürich/ Freiburg 1971, Page 11.

However, irrespective of this change of paradigm , trends towards conversion and proselytism still prevail in the understanding of mission, both in the South and North. These trends aim at conversion to "their own" that means the "right" faith. The faith of "others" is considered inferior; they must be "saved" from it. The linkage of missionary ideas with conceptions of deficient cultures and people continues to be felt in its secularised form in our own societies today, namely in the belief in our own cultural superiority or in hostility towards foreigners.

For many of our contemporaries "mission" therefore remains a tainted concept. This could be one of the reasons for the fear of contact with religion found in the secularly moulded mainstream of development co-operation.

Development co-operation as secularised mission and doctrine of salvation

US President Harold Truman gave the go-ahead for the invention of "development aid" in his inaugural speech in 1949. Against the background of the East-West conflict, he announced a "bold new" programme to make the advantages of scientific-industrial progress available for improvements and growth in the "underdeveloped regions". Through this, the misery in which more than half of humanity lives was to be brought to an end. It was first and foremost an attempt, to bind the "underdeveloped countries" to the United States at the beginning of the cold war.

The call went out to the industrialised countries of the West to join in with this strategy. That it was understood as a worldly mission was reflected in the choice of words of a memorandum of the Swiss Foreign Ministry in 1950: "Basically it is to win the hearts and minds of people who are threatened by Communism or possibly drawn to it through misery."[25]

The notion of the technical and cultural backwardness of other cultures shaped development aid along the lines of the view that we have seen in the religious field of the inferiority of the "others'" religion. According to this secular doctrine of salvation, "underdeveloped people" should be "saved" from their deficiency by capital and modern western technology.

Development co-operation as a comprehensive policy for peace and solidarity

Furthermore, an important stimulus was given by the widely spread international peace movement and its religious-pacifist and humanistic ideas. In Switzerland, focal points of this melting pot were the religious socialists, the Service Civil International (SCI) and the Swiss Quakers whose section in Geneva gave the impetus for the founding of the Swiss Peace Council.

Besides Regina Kägi-Fuchs, the future founder of the Swiss Workers Relief Agency (Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk), an important spokesperson for this movement was Rodolfo Olgiati. He gained practical experience as the head of the "Schweizer Spende" (fundraising campaign in favour of World War 2 victims) and with the International Committee of the Red Cross. Olgiati did not speak of economically backward or under

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[25] Peter Hug and Beatrix Mesmer (Hg): "Von der Entwicklungshilfe zur Entwicklungspolitik", Studien und Quellen 19, Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, Bern 1003, Page 78.

developed regions, nor of "aid" but of "co-operation" and "solidarity" which should be part of foreign policy. For Rodolfo Olgiati it was also a matter of "psychotherapy for the Swiss people" who, he said, were too inward-looking[26]

Development co-operation as a cultural encounter

In order to follow the route towards understanding development co-operation as a cultural encounter, it was first of all necessary to take a look at our own ideological motives. In 1972, Roy Preiswerk, Professor at the IUED[27] (Graduate Institute of Development Studies) in Geneva, summarised the state of academic research and of his practical experience in the development co-operation of the Swiss government and of non-governmental development agencies.[28] He pointed out the fundamental cultural conditioning of the terms and concepts commonly used in development co-operation and concluded that the latter needed regular cultural reviews. This implies:

- to question the western view of development processes
- to think over the relationship between development and culture. This leads to an enhanced appreciation of the forces in the Third World that have attempted to renew their development concepts on their own initiative and on the basis of their own value systems.
- to give support to such countries and critical forces that are working out a concept of development by themselves and in their own way.
- to foster the socio-cultural competence of experts.

Towards an understanding of the religious-spiritual dimensions of development co-operation

Since this signal was given, development co-operation has learnt that it is part of its set of duties to tackle socio-cultural questions. Accordingly, these have been awarded their place in mission statements, strategies and methods. Socio-cultural competence has become one of the key qualifications required of development co-operation staff and it has won its place in staff training and further education programmes. Reflection about the current value concepts and motivation of development co-operation as well as its rationality must be given room with equal right alongside understanding the culture of "the others".

Peace, freedom, justice, solidarity, human dignity and the guarantee of human rights are the highest value concepts that are found in mission statements almost without exception. However, whether these are consistently based on a worldly, secular view or on an explicitly religious-transcendent one, they all share the opinion that the "rightness" of , for example, human rights or solidarity as ultimate reasons for our action cannot be judged objectively. There is no generally recognised definition of justice or solidarity. Whoever appeals to the authoritativeness of these concepts must in the end *believe* that they are "right" No authority can decide what degree of sharing or distribution is just. In 1971, the American philosopher John Rawls came to the conclusion in his "Theory of

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[26] Peter Hug and Beatrix Mesmer: "Von der Entwicklungshilfe zur Entwicklungspolitik", Studien und Quellen 19, Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, Bern 1003, Pages 61-76.
[27] Institut universitaire d'études du développement, Geneva.
[28] "Entwicklungszusammenarbeit als Kulturbegegnung." Imba/Laetare, Freiburg/Stein b. Nürnberg, 1972.

Justice" that a society is just in the distribution of its wealth and educational opportunities when it is felt to be "fair". The yardstick would thus be a feeling or a belief!

Muslims' ideas about the relation between the roles of men and women are as little able to be proved to be "right" as are the ideas about gender and human rights issues supported by development co-operation. With these concepts we are moving in the area of the not-evident, of the not-clear and of the "ultimate concern"[29]. We are thus moving in the sphere of beliefs and values to which not only individuals but also institutions, right up to the state subscribe, because without such ideas in the end they cannot live, or function.

In the workshop of 29 October 2003, Ruedi Högger substantiated this theme with six theses.[30] Among other things he showed that while many stakeholders ideologically reject religiousness in the sense of a dimension that transcends the rational every day world, nevertheless, in their ideologies of changing the world for the better they use many images and feelings that are actually of a religious nature. The religious dimension is also perceptible in modern humanity's quest for meaning – not least among many development co-operation staff – even though the people concerned are often unaware of it.

Religion and spirituality as taboos of development co-operation

Up to now religion and spirituality as essential cultural factors have hardly been themes in specialist journals on the practice of development co-operation. Kurt Alan Ver Beek looked into this phenomenon and the reasons for it in an essay to which he gave the provocative title of "Spirituality: a development taboo"[31]

This taboo has serious consequences, for many actors/beneficiaries of our development programmes do not recognise the separation of the secular from the sacred, nor the ensuing dominance of goals-based rationality that has moulded western modernity and the concept of development co-operation that goes with it. Decisions about how and by whom a sick child should be treated, when and how fields should be tilled and how social action is to be planned are influenced by spirituality as a matter of course, as well as being - what we describe as - a rational decision.

The question of how to explain the absence of religion and spirituality in the discussion about development theory and practice opens the way to speculation. As the starting point for future more systematic work, we are adopting some of the reasons set out by Ver Beek, briefly summarised as follows:

1. There are many known examples of how religious organisations have instrumentalised and misused "development" programmes in order to manipulate the actors/beneficiaries in a religious sense.
2. Social science publications have tended to devalue religion and spirituality as belief systems which are based on obsolete myths. Their negative influence, they say, should give way to enlightened scientific thought.

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[29] See the explanation above relating to the term "religion", page 7
[30] "The Gateway of Heaven", see appendix page 34
[31] Kurt Alan Ver Beek, "Spirituality: a development taboo", Development in Practice, Volume 10, Number 1, February 2000. www.developmentinpractice.org.

3. On the other hand there are also fears of imposing materialistic-scientific per-
    spectives on local cultures from outside. Respect might be a valid reason for
    the dialogue about religion and spirituality not taking place. However, a subtle
    form of condescension can also be hidden behind this, condescension that
    considers the spirituality of the population as worthy of protection but at the
    same time as too weak for a debate with other opinions such as those of the
    enlightened development aid worker. The dialogue fails to take place but there
    is also an unspoken conviction that science and development will in the end
    persuade people to leave their unscientific perceptions behind.
4. The avoidance of conflict: attempts by individuals and groups to impose their
    religious convictions on others have led time after time to terrible conse-
    quences. A seemingly safe response to this is to avoid these sensitive themes.
    However, in this way conflicts are neither avoided nor dealt with. Development
    co-operation has meanwhile come to consider different opinions on gender and
    environmental questions as well as on ethnic conflicts as important themes in
    discussions among the actors in development programmes. So why, does it
    impose a taboo on religion and spirituality? It is only through thoroughly argued
    debates that people can understand the positive and negative influences on
    their life both of development projects, and of religious opinions and then
    choose the way that they consider right for themselves.

Ver Beek's view is that this situation gives rise to at least two problems:

1. The bias of its representatives influences the practice of development co-
    operation vis-à-vis spiritually shaped practices, e.g. in agriculture and the field
    of health. Because this is seldom openly spoken about, the people for whom
    the inappropriate respect is meant can neither discuss nor evaluate it. Neither
    the "scientific" development aid workers nor the "spiritual" indigenous people
    have the opportunity to think together about these different perspectives.
2. Respectful avoidance does not leave the spirituality of the population uninflu-
    enced. It can end in a blind adoption of scientific-materialist methods in agricul-
    ture, health and social action. People are deprived of the possibility of finding
    out for themselves whether new methods are in conflict with their spirituality or
    if and how both can co-exist and complement each other.

Amartya Sen defends this right of the people to set their own priorities:
"If a traditional way of life has to be sacrificed to escape grinding poverty or minuscule
longevity (as many traditional societies have had for thousands of years), then it is the
people directly involved who must have the opportunity to participate in deciding what
should be chosen."[32]

[32] Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom, Oxford University Press 1999, p.31.

Dealing with ambivalence

Geneva Spiritual Appeal

Because our personal convictions or religions to which we owe allegiance have in common:
- a respect for the integrity of humankind
- a rejection of hatred and violence
- the hope for a better and more just world

representing religious communities and civil society we appeal to the leaders of this world, whatever their field of influence, to strictly adhere to the following principles;
- a refusal to invoke a religious or spiritual power to justify violence of any kind;
- a refusal to invoke religious or spiritual source to justify discrimination and exclusion;
- a refusal to exploit or dominate others by means of strength, intellectual capacity or spiritual persuasion, wealth or social status;
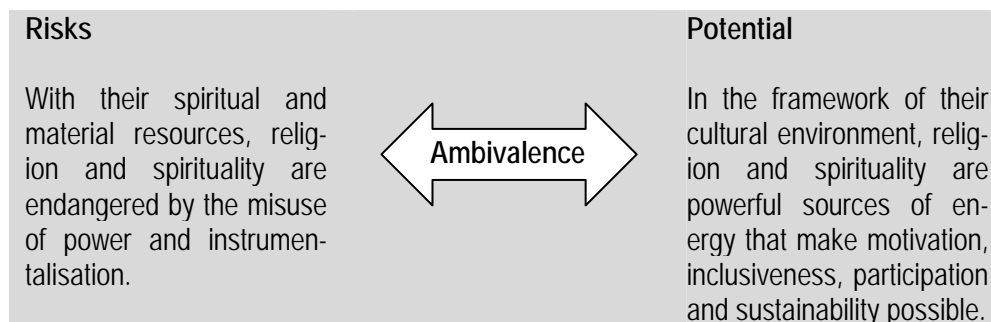
Grounded in the Genevan tradition of welcome, refuge and compassion, our appeal is open to all whose convictions are in accordance with these three demands.

Co-signed 1999 by several heads of international organisations and religious leaders.

In the first part we saw that the ambivalence of the religious factor has to do with the fact that the relationship of religions to violence can be equivocal. [33]
On the one hand, religion and spirituality have the potential to make motivation, inclusiveness, participation and continuity possible. On the other the spiritual and material resources of religious communities are constantly exposed from within and without to the temptation of the misuse of power.

This ambivalence can be reduced to the following denominators:

Risks		Potential
With their spiritual and material resources, religion and spirituality are endangered by the misuse of power and instrumentalisation.	Ambivalence	In the framework of their cultural environment, religion and spirituality are powerful sources of energy that make motivation, inclusiveness, participation and sustainability possible.

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[33] See above "The ambivalence of the religious factor", page 10

These paradoxes and ambivalences are present in the environment of many development programmes. They may be one of the reasons for making religion and spirituality a taboo. However, to evade them in the interest of a superficially understood avoidance of conflict means cutting out a part of life's reality. It cannot be a matter of an either/or between potential and risks. It is more meaningful positively to hold onto ambivalences and to live with risks. The Janus face of dilemmas in the field of religion and spirituality belongs to the human condition and without a willingness to take risks, there will be no inclusiveness or creativity.

Hanspeter Finger has this to say about it: There is an immense area of learning for secular development co-operation. Although intellectual discipline and expert knowledge remain the foundation for practical action, they are enriched by intuitive knowledge about the limits of the possible and they are open to a more all-embracing reality. This enables us to act with a combination of efficiency and "soft" qualities such as patience, wisdom, love and openness. It also puts into perspective the over-powerful orientation towards outcomes from which development co-operation suffers today and by which it is often hindered from doing the right thing in the here and now. Moreover it strengthens our motivation and ability to clear away the slag from our methodological tools. "Be spiritual – act rationally"[34]

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[34] See appendix: Hanspeter Finger's 4th thesis, page 32

Part 3: Conclusions for the practice of development co-operation

Focusing on questions and provisional answers about our own practice, in this chapter we continue to tackle the far from coherent responses about the meaning of religion and spirituality given up to now - or not yet given – by the different trends in the theory and practice of development co-operation.

In the following sections we summarise the conclusions worked out during the years 2002 and 2003 in a series of workshops and meetings by staff members from SDC and Swiss NGOs. We are consciously working here in the "we" form in order to stress the consensus that was achieved by the participants.

A first step: to clarify and communicate our own point of view

In order to make our own value concepts and guiding ideas transparent to our partners, we need to reflect on them over and over again. Our understanding of development also comes in here, since the aims of development are linked to value concepts. These often touch on religious or quasi-religious dimensions. It is in this connection too, that we must clarify for ourselves personally what role the quest for meaning plays in our professional commitment to development co-operation. Has it a religious or quasi-religious function?

Qualifying our own standpoint through establishing a reference to other standpoints also involves becoming aware of our own unacknowledged ideologies of changing the world for the better, for example of the projections of the "ideal people " whom development co-operation should produce. We should get clarity on these issues if we want to carry on a dialogue with religious people from other cultures.[35]

Furthermore, we should analyse the processes of change in our own society, for this enables us to form a differentiated picture of the West and its concepts of development. This is also one of the prerequisites for making our own position clear in the dialogue with partners while at the same time being ready to see it in relative terms.

Different academic fields such as anthropology, ethno-psychology, comparative religion, history and sociology can provide us with a stock of knowledge for dealing with the dynamics and the ambivalences of religion and spirituality. However, knowledge cannot replace the basic mind-sets described here. Above all we should realise that all knowledge is bound to our language and its conceptualisation. That means that we also remain trapped by the term "religion" as a Eurocentric concept. [36]

In this connection, the Catholic theologian, Hans Küng points out that in the end all religions share certain core ethical principles, and thus they share a view of the value of the human being that is independent of religions and confessions. His hope is that the construction of what he calls a "world ethos", that is a global ethic, will elevate these commonalities at the heart of the religions' enduring existence to their basic principles. With this attempt to work on what the religions have in common and what separates

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[35] See Ruedi Högger, theses 5 and 6 in the appendix, page 34
[36] For the term "religion" see above, page 7

them, Hans Küng also makes a contribution to our theme. The idea of a "world ethos" can stimulate partner organisations to reach an understanding about what they hold in common.

To be aware of the reality of the socio-cultural context

Religion and spirituality are often seamlessly bound into every day life and its rituals. Many people do not make the distinction between profane and sacred, that is so typical of the modern world, and their spirituality has little to do with theological doctrines and systems. It reflects life and all the possibilities of human existence rather by *narrating* in the form of stories and mythical figures and by *acting* in rituals that are integrated into every day activities and festivals. We are challenged by the question of how we can be aware of and integrate the mental and spiritual ideas of the actors/beneficiaries into co-operation projects. And how do we do this without instrumentalising religion and spirituality and diverting them from their real purpose for the sake of our programmes' objectives?

The question "What nourishes your soul? What nourishes us?" can be helpful. Needs assessments should not only take material needs into consideration but also consider the interests and needs of the soul. [37]

As staff in charge of programmes we should again and again have the possibility of immersing ourselves in the reality of the lives of the actors/beneficiaries, of taking part in rituals and of trying to understand their farming and eating culture with its material and spiritual dimensions. This fails to happen more often than not on account of our overloaded travel programmes. Why do we not take the necessary time? Why do our travel schedules hinder us from patiently drawing nearer? Has this got to do with quasi-religious value concepts of efficiency-oriented development co-operation?

New trends in development co-operation, over which we as individuals responsible for programmes unfortunately have hardly any influence, are removing significant programmes further and further from the reality of the lives of the people on whom they have an impact. This observation holds good for SWAP (Sector Wide Approach), budget assistance to governments ("basket funding") and to a certain degree also for PRS (Poverty Reduction Strategies).

To be aware of the effects of development programmes in the socio-cultural environment[38]

The aim of development co-operation is change. It therefore intervenes in existing power relations and relations of conflict. Religious beliefs and the institutions that represent them can, in certain areas, be important factors in increasing or reducing tensions. Partners in development programmes face the question of whether and to what extent

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[37] On this see Ruedi Högger's theses in the appendix, page 34
[38] In this section we summarise the results of the workshop of 26 November 2003 that was led by Günther Bächler, Head of the Conflict Prevention Section SDC, and attended by people responsible for projects and programmes as well as specialists from SDC and Swiss NGOs. It was called "Between heaven and hell: dealing with intended and unintended effects of religion and spirituality in development co-operation". Further information on CSPM is available from the specialist section COPRET/SDC.

their programmes contribute to the prevention of violence and to the peaceful settlement of social conflicts or whether they – inadvertently- allow violence to escalate.

> In their earnest commitment to the conciliatory building of bridges between confessions, religions and cultures, church organisations are called upon to make a more accurate analysis of the real religious dimensions of conflicts, to deal sensitively with the over hasty inclusion of these dimensions and to reject their instrumentalisation for economic or political ends.
>
> Because of their proximity to the people, non-governmental organisations and church based agencies are often predestined, as it were, to accompany and deal constructively with conflicts at a level below the state.
>
> *Alexander Lohner, Misereor Aachen, in Entwicklungspolitik 12/2004, p.31*

Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management (CSPM) is one method that serves to integrate the conflict perspective into the programme management cycle. It arose from the experience gained through Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) with which individual development agencies are already working. If it is inclusively and flexibly applied, CSPM facilitates the participation of project partners and actors. By means of "mapping", directly concerned actors work out the cartography of the stakeholders and of their way of seeing things in the environment of a programme. Networks of relationships become transparent and the role played by any particular potential religious conflict can be brought to light. However, a specific local area should not be analysed exclusively from the angle of religion. Social questions, gender relations and political tensions should also be included.

CSPM supports risk assessment based on such questions as:
- What unintended, negative, possibly conflict-exacerbating effects could ensue?
- What must be taken into consideration in the programme so that these do not occur?
- What practices to prevent conflict and promote peace have proved successful?

After the analytic stage, which at the same time is a means to promote dialogue and to link the project with its contextual environment, CSPM aims to observe the desired and undesired consequences of the project. This should be possible with hypotheses about the effects and with one or two reliable indicators at the level of outcome. It is important to take religious factors into account each time as well.

Dialogue with partner organisations on the spot

Local partner organisations are often drawn from the urban intellectual middle class. They are socialised according to western conventions, are used to travelling, and are

proficient in the specialist language and concepts of development co-operation. Often they develop complex identities that also integrate the contradictions between the traditional and the modern. The side they show us is only one part of their personality. It is often only after working with them for a long time, if indeed at all, that we get to know the non-western elements in the socialisation of their identity.

More often than not we start out with the assumption that the staffs of local NGOs have good knowledge of the history and the present situation of the poorest groups of the population, of the landless and of the small farmers. In many cases, however, their historical knowledge, their understanding of culture and their social awareness are shaped by an education system based on analyses originating from outside the society.

Staff responsible for projects, who themselves often have too little possibility of getting close to the world of the lives of the actors/beneficiaries on the spot, should therefore start with the working hypothesis that the local partner organisations can be both a bridge and a hindrance when it comes to understanding the meaning of religion and spirituality for the beneficiaries.

A strong cultural identity of partner organisations and their workers can be an advantage. Provided that we, too, show our identity, a realistic dialogue can be carried out about value concepts, the understanding of development, and religion.

Madagascan women and men are always divided. They stand with one leg in the world of work, in the project, where the tools and an ordered timetable determine the rhythm. Their other side is turned towards nature, rice fields and fish: there the families and above all the ancestors set the tone; there is no time constraint. We are never really clear about this other world. But development will not be sustainable if we do not truly respect both these sides of reality.

An engineer of the Federal Polytechnic Zurich on his long years of professional experience in Madagascar. In Rudolf Högger, Wasserschlange und Sonnevogel, Frauenfeld 1993, p.93

Within the given context, we should look for appropriate opportunities to exchange ideas about religion and spirituality with our partners, without forcing them into our way of thinking. Participation in further training of partner organisations can bring us deeper insights about what meaning religion and spirituality have for them than is the case with intellectual debate. The experience that there are limits to our mutual understanding is also part of the dialogue on culture. We should acknowledge and address this so as not to expect too much of ourselves.

The common ground between partner organisations

What must partner organisations be able to agree on, in order to clarify the basis for their collaboration? What is indispensable, for example, with regard to basic values such as democracy, freedom of religion, human rights, gender questions etc.? We should not approach development projects with religious partners as if they were a special case,

but rather work with the same criteria and methods which have been used and proven in development co-operation. The needs of the beneficiaries will be at the forefront.[39] The partner organisations will question each other about which of their cultural, social and political strengths can contribute to improvements and to empowerment. Together they will try to understand the environment and they will be ready to make their motivation and their value concepts transparent. These do not necessarily need to coincide. Experience shows that in most cases it comes to an impasse if, for example, comparisons between Western and Islamic value concepts take centre stage.

On the other hand it is important to reach an agreement about basic democratic ground rules according to which people have the right to take part in decisions which directly affect their lives. This rules out concessions to extremists and renders the dialogue with fundamentalists very difficult. Staff responsible for programmes faces the dilemma that the systematic and deliberate exclusion of groups with fundamentalist tendencies leads to a hardening of their position.

In co-operation with indigenous colleagues we should acquire basic knowledge and train our powers of discernment so as to be able to distinguish between the teachings of the basic texts of the religions and interpretations of them that can be dominated by power interests that hinder development. Religion is misused, for example, to give false legitimacy to traditions hostile to women.

Stimuli for the management of our institutions

Many of the questions asked are, in the end, about the articulated as well as the hidden value concepts of our own institutions, and thus about our organisational culture. The management of our institutions must be supportive in allowing enough room to make a change of views and openness towards other religious and spiritual realities possible. Is this dimension sufficiently anchored in mission statements and strategies? Even if it is, its implementation requires a constant willingness to be open to unfamiliar questions and processes. That means that not only staff responsible for projects but their organisation, too, should reflect, clarify and communicate their own standpoint.

Lead questions for dialogue about programmes

The following lead questions are directed to all organisations that take part in dialogues about programmes and to their staff responsible for projects. We consciously use the plural here, since these questions equally concern SDC, Swiss NGOs and local NGOs as well as grassroots organisations on the spot. The dialogue with actors/beneficiaries is also important if religion and spirituality are to receive due consideration.

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[39] Compare with this as an example of a practical case: "Rapport de l'atelier - conference sur Genre, Coutumes et Religions: repères pour la compréhension, l'intégration et l'approbation de genre dans nos sociétés.", 17/18 Avril 2002. Intercoopération, Programme Jékasy, Sikasso, Mali.

Questions to our own organisation regarding its attitude towards religion and spirituality, and how it deals with them

- What role do religion and spirituality play in our mission statement and in our strategic aims?
- How does my organisation see the relation between the basic principles of democracy, human rights and religion? How do we reach agreement about them with our partners?
- How do we enable our staff and our management committees to develop sensitivity and competence with regard to the meaning of religion and spirituality?
- Are our staffs that are responsible for projects and programmes trained to deal with the potential and the risks of religion and spirituality? Do opportunities for further training exist?
- Are the potential and risks of religion and spirituality an issue in our quality management?
- Are methods (such as CSPM [40]) known and in use in our organisation, so that the complex religious and socio-cultural environments of the programmes we support can be analysed and their dynamics understood (for example with context and conflict mapping)?
- Are methods (such as CSPM [41]) known and in use in our organisation so that the intended and unintended effects of our programmes in complex religious and socio-cultural environments can be observed? (Levels of output, outcome and impact)[42]
- Is there a dialogue with our partners about these questions with regard to the programmes? (Tackling the potential and risks of religion and spirituality should not lead to new instruments of control over the partners!)
- Does the partners' knowledge and awareness with regard to religion and spirituality influence the design of programmes?
- What do we know about the meaning of religion and spirituality for the actors/beneficiaries of development?
- How do we guarantee that their spiritual experience and needs, and their right to join in with decisions regarding these, are incorporated into the projects and programmes we support?
- Do we have integral guidelines and criteria for the assessment for our projects in the sense that they include the views of the actors/beneficiaries and their spiritual needs?

> As can be seen not least in the example of South Africa, organisations such as the World Council of Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches played a central role in the change of the South African churches from being supporters of apartheid to being its sharpest critics. They enabled the Christian communities in that divided country to take a decisive and critical look at their own tradition and their political responsibility. At the same time they promoted strategies of non-violent resistance in and for South Africa.

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[40] Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management.
[41] idem
[42] Compare the "Discussion about the meaning of the levels of Output – Outcome – Impact" in the appendix, page 37

> The declared aim of the trans-national network of religious communities would be … to strengthen their independence and to make their co-option by party politics more difficult.
>
> *Andreas Hasenclever in epd-Entwicklungspolitik 14/15/2003, p.64*

Questions about the religious profile of organisations and how they see themselves with regard to religion

- How does the organisation deal in practice with religious and other ideological absolutist claims that are put to it from within and without?
- Is the organisation willing to interact with people from other religious communities without exerting direct or indirect pressure?
- Are hierarchy, power structures and decision-making structures transparent?
- How does the organisation deal in practice with its basic religious texts with regard to gender roles? How are women represented at different hierarchical levels? What access do women have to the resources of the respective religious institutions (infrastructure, finance/budget competence, organisational resources, educational and health programmes, participation in strengthening civil society?)[43]

Questions about relationships of co-operation and their effect in the environment of faith-based organisations (FBOs)

- Does the programme make a contribution to social harmony beyond its own faith community?
- Does the programme strengthen group solidarity exclusively inside its own faith community (bonding social capital) or does it have a socially integrating effect (bridging social capital)? That is, do others besides its own people really benefit?
- How is the FBO anchored in civil society? Which organisations does it co-operate with? Does it remain within the circle of its own faith family?
- On what understanding of the roles of faith-based organisations and the state is the organisation's activity based?
- Is the programme linked to national development plans and does it make a constructive contribution to them?

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[43] The crosscutting theme of gender and its meaning for the quality management of missionary/ pastoral programmes was dealt with in depth at the workshop of 5 June 2003. See appendix: "Questionnaire - Assessment – Gender and Church", page 35

Dealing with risks regarding polarisation and instrumentalisation

- Could the programme exclude individual people, groups and faith-based organisations and thus strengthen the delusions of identity of an ethnic or religious type?
- Does the organisation have PCM (programme/project cycle management) capacities at its disposal in order to be able to deal with these risks?
- In the case of programmes for religious and ethnic minorities, are there precautions in the PCM to prevent them from leading to polarisation?

Appendix

Religion and spirituality in the practice of development co-operation: taboo or fig leaf?[44]

Five Theses by Hanspeter Finger

Thesis 1:
Without spirituality there is no sustainable development

Without self-restraint there is no ecological, social and individual human sustainability. Spirituality helps us to see the material part of life in relative terms. It leads, too, to the liberating experience that the key to lasting well-being lies in a certain degree of self-restraint. Spirituality also challenges our orientation towards outcomes and efficiency that is often misleading in view of the "blurred aim of sustainability". It is, then, rather a question of "optimisation with blurred aims". This leads to long-term co-operation rather than to a destructive increase in efficiency for the moment.

Thesis 2:
The universalistic claim to salvation of the monotheistic religions constitutes a threat to the globalised world. Development co-operation is challenged to tackle it critically and constructively.

The universalistic claim to salvation of individual religions leads again and again to mis-understandings, conflicts and wars, not only in politics but also in the practice of development co-operation. It threatens world peace, sustainable development, cultural diversity, and human dignity in dealing with religious-spiritual experience. Even though many religious institutions verbally adapted their understanding of mission it is still necessary to critically analyse the practical implementation on the spot. This is relevant above all for the broad spectrum of socio-pastoral work for whose critical accompaniment an adequate set of development co-operation tools has yet to be worked out.

Thesis 3:
The connection between economic and religious globalisation is an explosive mixture. Development co-operation should beware of it.

Fundamentalism in the South often arises as a reaction against modernisation and de-mocratisation processes of western modernity: against the globalised economy, against the lecturing culture of the West. A source of a separate identity is a separate religion which, in alliance with conservative politics, strives not only for religious but also cul-tural, political, economic and linguistic supremacy. Particular traditional conceptions of order thus constitute a stronghold. Before we turn this theme into the new development co-operation trend setter, we need to make a critical analysis of the deeper connection between the interest in religions of multilateral organisations such as the World Bank and the IMF and the US president George W. Bush's "faith-based initiatives". There is a great danger that religion will be misused and become a fig leaf in order to push through economic globalisation on the western model with even less restraint.

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[44] Seminar paper given at the workshop of 9 October 2002. The theses were illustrated by examples from SWISSAID Programmes

Thesis 4:
Be spiritual – act rationally

Religions say that development calls for the harmonisation of apparently antithetical processes. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, for example, both spoke of a spiritual law that links social transformation (changing outward structures) with personal growth (changing inner structures). There is an immense area of learning here for secular development co-operation. Although intellectual discipline and expert knowledge remain the foundation for practical action, they are enriched by intuitive knowledge about the limits of the possible and open to a more all-embracing reality. This enables us to act with a combination of efficiency and "soft" qualities such as patience, wisdom, love and openness. It also puts into perspective the over-powerful orientation towards outcomes from which development co-operation suffers today and by which it is often hindered from doing the right thing in the here and now. Moreover it strengthens our motivation and ability to clear away the slag from our methodological tools. "Be spiritual – act rationally"

Thesis 5:
If state funds for development co-operation are to flow to religious institutions, then they should do so in proportion to the religious affiliation of the target population

If the governments of western states want to make more development funds available also via religious institutions then there is a danger that the religions that are closest to us will be given preference. This endangers once again the religious and cultural self-determination of a large part of our target population. In order not to jeopardise the fundamental principles of development co-operation, such as equal rights, self-determination and a needs orientation, the religious affiliation of the target population and their institutional environment must receive due consideration and parity must be guaranteed in the distribution of development co-operation funds to religious institutions. If theological seminaries are to be supported, then Islamic Koran schools and the education of Buddhist nuns likewise.

Bern, 9 October 2002   Hanspeter Finger, SWISSAID

"The Gateway to Heaven"
Towards an understanding of the religious-spiritual dimension of development co-operation

Summarising theses of the seminar paper by Ruedi Högger[45]

1. As a first step, we imagined the nature of the religious or spiritual using the picture of the "Gateway to Heaven" (ianua coeli). The picture makes clear that <u>the religious/spiritual dimension is specific neither to culture nor to time but rather generally human.</u>

2. The "Gateway to Heaven" is the point at which a world "on this side" and a world "on that side" touch each other. In practice this means that - whether we like it or not – <u>our rational, comprehensible and controllable everyday world, as well as our thinking that is domiciled there, is related to something larger, incomprehensible and uncontrollable that influences us.</u> The "earth" (the comprehensible this side) is different from "heaven" (the incomprehensible other side). Both, however, make up a whole that we cannot evade.

3. In the phase of going deeper, we first encountered a flowing, living religiousness. This is characterised by the fact that <u>the dimension of heaven, of the bigger whole, is not only experienced in external gods or laws but also (and above all) in one's own soul.</u> Such a lively inner nature does not annul instinct and feeling but rather animates them. It encourages the powers of development in people.

4. In institutionalised religion, however, the other side (the larger, incomprehensible dimension) appears as completely outside the human being. <u>The human representatives of such an alien heaven claim power over other human beings and demand their subordination.</u> This leads to abuse on one side and immaturity on the other. Sustainable development is hindered.

5. Although in quasi-religious movements the dimension of religiousness is ideologically denied, <u>in practice the ideology of changing the world for the better uses many images and feelings that – in our understanding – are actually of a religious nature.</u> As long as this remains unacknowledged, there is a great danger here as well of abuse, of immaturity and of unsustainable development.

6. The religious dimension is perceptible too in modern humanity's quest for meaning - not least in the quest of many development experts – although the people concerned are often unaware of it. This renders dialogue with religious people from other cultures more difficult.

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[45] Seminar Paper given at the workshop of 29 October 2003. The author illustrated his theses with rich pictorial material.

Gender relations in organisations of the Christian churches

In the framework of the project "Religion and Spirituality in Development Co-operation", there was a discussion at the workshop of 5 June 2003 on the meaning of the cross-cutting theme of gender for quality management in missionary and pastoral programmes. Michèle Morier-Genoud and Liliane Studer, who constitute the joint platform on Gender and Empowerment of the Protestant church-based NGOs Bread for All, Swiss Interchurch Agency, Mission 21 and DM Mission Department, presented a gender and empowerment assessment that is being used in development programmes, for example in the health service. From this arose the idea to adapt the assessment for use in church environments.

The history of the roles of men and women in the Christian and especially Reformed churches is complex and far from uniform. It has been influenced by the prevailing socio-cultural and political environment and by the power structures that the churches alternately submitted to or resisted. Furthermore, inculturation into non-European cultures has given rise to a great diversity of gender relations.

The following questionnaire should help in the dialogue between partner churches, as well as between church-based partner organisations, to clarify important questions concerning gender relations in their own institutions. We are dealing here with a common learning process between partners (both male and female), not with an instrument to be used to impose conditions. Development co-operation's usual values and norms of co-operation based on partnership should therefore be respected.

Questionnaire – Assessment – Gender and Churches[46]

Country: Date:
Person/people and organisation in Switzerland participating in the discussion:

Name of the church:
Person/people from the church participating in the discussion

Date of the foundation of the church in its original form (name and founding mission):
Date of the church's independence:
Date of the country's independence:
Number of members: Number of parishes (congregations or other term):
Region covered by the church:
International organisation(s) to which the church is affiliated:
Decision-making authority for accounts and budgets:

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[46] Proposal made by L. Studer and M. Morier-Genoud, March 2004.

|	Estimate for men and women +2; +1; 0; -1; -2 W M	Comments and details
1. Does the church encourage access for women and men to the basic infrastructure (finances, premises)?		
2. Does the church strengthen access for women and men to technological resources – new information and communication technology, transport…?		
3. Does the church encourage training and education opportunities for women and men -　basic theological training, pastoral training, catechism, service?		
4. Does the church give access to women and men to decision-making within the institution? At what levels?		
5. Does the church give access to women and men to posts corresponding to their training? (specify the areas)		
6. Does the church identify barriers that exist between women and men regarding their participation in the church's life? If so, which?		
7. Are there places in the church for debate about these barriers – groups and centres for training, community work, and organisation?		
8. Does the church encourage women and men to organise? In what way?		
9. Does the church encourage access for women and men to the control of resources and/or technical facilities, for example, finance commission, synod, buildings?		
10. Does the church encourage women and men to respect human rights? In what way?		
11. Does the church encourage women and men to undertake activities on social justice issues – for example work with street children, with people living with HIV/AIDS, prostitution, corruption?		
12. Does the church encourage women and men to develop or participate in activities concerning a respect for creation – for example cleaning up the living environment, development of environmentally-friendly technologies, and participation in national campaigns?		
13. Does the church encourage women and men to develop or participate in civil society solidarity networks? If so, in which?		

Comments on the use of the questionnaire

1. This questionnaire is designed as a tool for getting a snapshot of the church on the subject of gender and "empowerment".
2. It would be interesting to have questionnaires filled in by different authorities of the same church at the same moment.
3. In order to get a better picture of the development of a church, it would be interesting to draw up a questionnaire on a past historical moment (the moment of the church's or the country's independence or another).
4. Various annexes can be attached when the questionnaire is filled in, for example:
    - accounts and budgets
    - minutes of a synod or general assembly
    - statues, conventions, confessions of faith
    - newspaper articles

Excursus on the meaning of the levels of
Output – Outcome – Impact

The fact that development projects in religiously shaped environments often operate in situations characterised by dilemmas puts high demands on project cycle management.[47] In such situations, dealing with the three levels of aims and results in the framework of the PCM is important.

Contexts
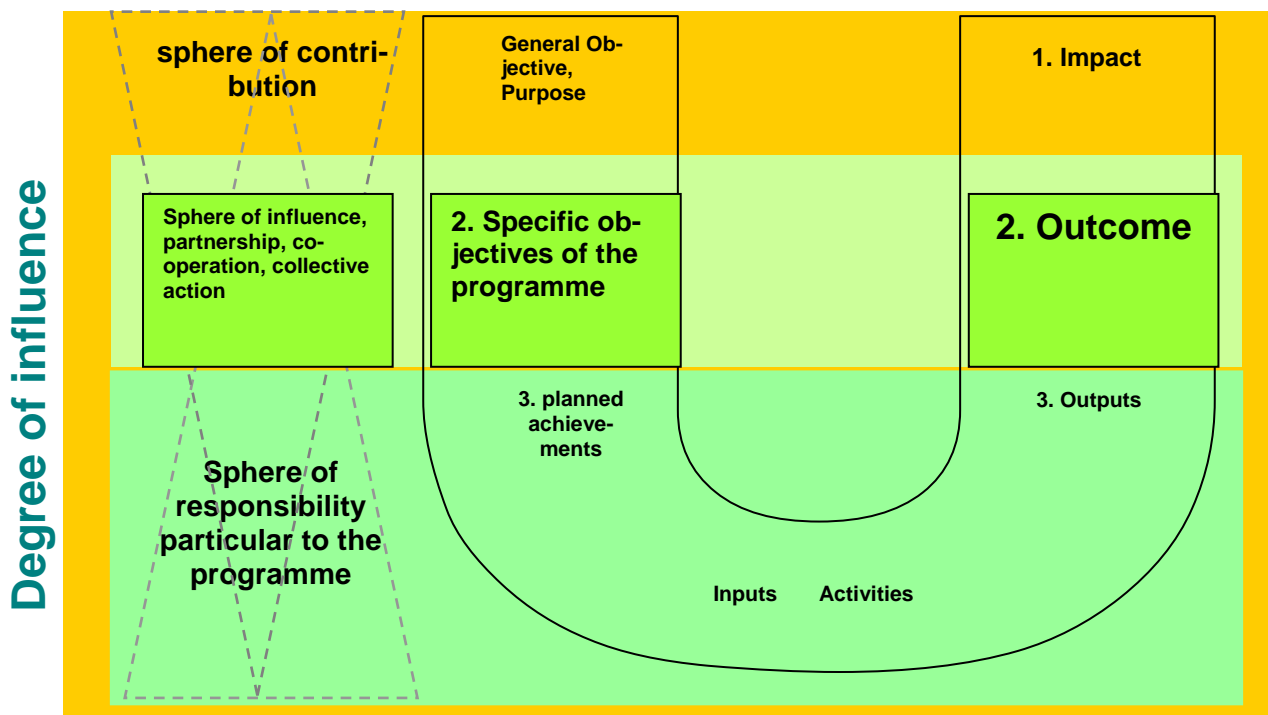
- Outputs: responsibility of the programme - planned achievements
- Outcomes: influence exerted – programme's aims
- Impact: contribution to general development aims

We ask the following questions about these three levels:

- Level "output": What have we directly achieved through our activities?
- Level "outcome": Do we effectively contribute to the programme's aims?
- Level "impact": What do we contribute with regard to the overarching aims of development (combating poverty, improvement of community health, etc)? Are we going in the right direction? Does our contribution make sense?

An illustration is given with an example from a project in the struggle against malaria, part of a health programme:
- Output: mosquito nets are efficiently distributed to the target population with correct explanations and motivation for the right use.

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[47] In the terminology of many Swiss development organisations, PCM is also called PEMU or PUME.

- Outcome: Health promoters convince people of the advantages of the mosquito nets and encourage them to buy more of them. Mosquito nets are bought by the majority of the population and correctly used. It becomes a matter of course to sleep under a mosquito net.
- Impact: reduction of malaria, improvement in community health.

Hypotheses have to be formed at each level about what we want to achieve at the next level up. That means that we must be clear at the output level what results we want to achieve at the outcome level with regard to long-lasting behaviour changes. Merely to distribute mosquito nets at the output level, for example, will hardly result in people regularly using them and acquiring more nets.

If a project description says: "We are building latrines with the population in order to improve community health", the outcome level is lacking, i.e. the aim that the population will permanently use the latrines and change their habits of hygiene.

Equally inadequate is the assumption that contextual biblical studies (output level) lead directly to a more just society (impact level). Hypotheses about effect should articulate what aims should be achieved at the outcome level. In cases where the hypotheses are not directly checkable, indicators that enable conclusions to be drawn about the achievement of the aims are needed.

While we can check at the output level whether the planned activities are actually being carried out and in an appropriate way ("Are we doing it right?), it is only at the outcome level that we find the answer to the question "Are we doing the right thing?

At the outcome level partnership relations become crucially important because we do not direct and control the project alone. The impact level hinges on the outcome level too. That means that hypotheses have to be formulated and checked as to whether the programme really contributes something to reaching the overarching aims. Here the effects at the impact level are no longer measurable. Instead we have to rely on assessments on the basis of hypotheses about the effects in order to judge whether we are moving in the right direction and whether what we are doing is also meaningful.

Many of the key questions that we collected in can only be answered through the exact formulation at the planning stage of specific aims at the outcome level and through careful accompaniment through monitoring and evaluation. Thereby, however, we fall again into the trap of "accurate" and the western conception shaped by it. This makes it difficult for us to have access to the "Mighty" and thus also to the factor of religion and spirituality. We are faced with a dilemma.