

The Devil is in the Details

At the Nexus of Development, Women's Rights,
and Religious Fundamentalisms

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is an international feminist, membership organization committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's human rights. AWID's mission is to strengthen the voice, impact and influence of women's rights advocates, organizations and movements internationally to effectively advance the rights of women.

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Thank you all.

Ayesha Imam

Introduction

In August 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the agenda that will guide global development priorities until 2030. The landmark document, *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was the result of a three-year process which included the most extensive consultations ever led at the UN.¹

Despite resistance from some states, some success for women's rights came in the form of a stand-alone goal to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (Goal 5). The goal details governments' commitments, among others, to end discrimination and gender-based violence; ensure access to sexual and reproductive health care services and education for all; provide education that promotes gender equality and human rights; expand women's economic opportunities and recognize their rights to resources; and reduce the burdens of unpaid care work on women and girls.

Furthermore, gender equality and women's empowerment is recognized in the outcome document as "a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets"² and the Secretary General has affirmed that all 17 SDGs are interlinked, indivisible, and mutually reinforcing.³ The Agenda also emphasizes the universality of the Goals and makes strong references to human rights and non-discrimination throughout, as well as recognizing the importance of decent work and social protection.⁴

The final agenda is not without its shortcomings.⁵ Nonetheless, the above inclusions constitute a significant step up from the minimal gender commitments of its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This reflects the increased understanding amongst today's development actors of the importance of making women's rights and gender equality central to development, and of the need to tackle the structural foundations of inequalities and violations of rights.

The task now is to lay out the steps that must be taken to implement this Agenda. At this juncture, one of the most significant impediments to achieving the transformation envisioned by the SDGs is the large presence and growing strength of religious fundamentalisms. Religious fundamentalisms, intersecting with other

structural factors, are responsible for the degradation of human rights standards, the rollback of women's rights, the entrenchment of discrimination, and a rise in violence and insecurity.

Religion, along with culture, tradition, and nationalism, has been used as a justification for violence and violations of rights at multiple levels: at a structural level through states and institutions, by non-state actors, within communities and families, and by individuals. The discrimination, persecution, and violence that religious fundamentalists perpetrate is targeted particularly at girls, women, women human rights defenders (WHRDs), ethnic and religious minorities, people expressing non-normative gender identities and sexualities, and people who dissent from or challenge fundamentalism.

The control of women's bodily autonomy is a hallmark of fundamentalist ideology that crosses religious boundaries, and is central to the way that fundamentalist ideologues exercise power. These violations attack the very core of aspirations for women's equality and gender justice: bodily integrity; sexual rights and reproductive rights; freedom of expression and movement; rights to political and economic participation; right to education; and equal rights in citizenship, property, inheritance, divorce and child custody.

Discriminatory religious ideologies have been codified in public policy at local and national levels and have been enforced through regulation, coercion and violence which disproportionately affect women and girls. Fundamentalist forces have also systematically obstructed and rolled back the development of progressive international human rights standards and misused the regional and international human rights systems to advance their agendas. Selective and misleading uses of human rights language and agreements, together with cultural relativist arguments have undermined the very basis of the human rights system: the principle that every person without distinction has the full set of fundamental rights and freedoms.⁶

Given this situation, the collective capacity of development actors to recognize and collaboratively address religious fundamentalisms is prerequisite to advancing social, economic, and gender justice and the human rights of all people in sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides the opportunity to learn from the widespread failure to achieve the Millennium Development Goal 3 on Gender Equality (and the other gender equality related targets and indicators). To realize the SDGs, we must begin by understanding the underlying social currents and structural factors that give rise to gender inequalities, one of which is religious fundamentalisms.

Interviews

This paper draws on two sets of interviews. All quotations from named interviewees (unless otherwise cited) are taken from a series of interviews conducted by Ayesha Imam in November 2014 and January 2015. The full details of these interviews can be found in Appendix 1. All anonymous quotations (unless otherwise cited) are taken from interviews conducted by Everjoice Win during 2014 as part of research for AWID—these interviewees did not give permission for their names to be published.

Terminology

This paper employs the term “religious fundamentalisms” on the basis that it is the term most commonly understood by activists and used in academic literature, and that can most easily be applied across a variety of contexts. However, the term is contested. For some, it is imprecise and not relevant in all contexts. Others object because of the way it has been used to stereotype and target particular communities. In some contexts, the term has a positive connotation because it is assumed simply to mean following the fundamentals of a religion.

To what extent does terminology matter? Like any other development and human rights issue, how that issue is defined, framed, and understood is extremely important. At the same time, it is very easy to get caught up in debates about terminology and definition, which are contested and vary according to context, and it is important that development practitioners and women’s rights activists find a way to move forward. Perhaps, the issue is less about finding the right words and more about conveying context and impact. In other words, it is better to talk about concrete development issues and how religious fundamentalisms are impacting human rights in that work.⁷

What are religious fundamentalisms?

This paper uses the term “religious fundamentalisms” to refer to ideologies which exhibit the following features:

- The use of religion, often along with other identity markers, to gain political, social and economic power; the use of the same to justify discrimination, intolerance and violations of human rights
- The control of women’s bodies and sexuality as a central avenue of social control
- The reinforcement of male authority and rigid, heteronormative, and patriarchal gender relationships
- Reference to a specific interpretation and practice of religion as the only truth and only legitimate way of being
- The use of coercion and violence to impose this ideology
- A communal identity of “us” against all others

“Religious fundamentalisms” are present in every religion, including Christianity (Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, Evangelical etc.), Islam (both Sunni and Shia), Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Judaism.

Who are development actors?

“Development actors” are not a homogenous group. The term includes:

- International NGOs (INGOs)
- UN agencies and international financial institutions (IFIs)
- Bilateral aid agencies
- Single-issue regional networks (on women’s rights in development, participatory development, trade, environment and agriculture, for example)
- National NGOs
- Community-based organizations working on development issues

Development organizations have diverse program approaches. In this paper, we define development programming as comprising three main areas:

- Long-term development work: this includes raising awareness and working to realize people’s rights (e.g. provision of water, schools, health care, energy, agricultural development, infrastructural development, etc.)
- Humanitarian support/emergency response: response to natural disasters, conflict and war, droughts, health epidemics, etc.
- Advocacy and campaigning: influencing policies and laws from local levels to the global, and holding duty bearers accountable. This would also include some elements of changing mindsets, challenging norms and societal values in order to facilitate development and upholding of rights.

While these three are presented here as if they each stand alone, most development work tends to do one or more, and to see them as interlinked.

Addressing gaps in development & religious fundamentalisms

In recent years there has been research on religion and development.⁸ However, there remains very little that addresses the specific challenge of religious fundamentalisms to development and how to formulate effective responses. Similarly, some development organizations are only starting to grapple with fundamentalisms' implications for sustainable development and their strategic approach to the issue.⁹

Many development organizations have policies and internal capacity-building programmes designed to ensure staff are aware of “gender and diversity” issues. These also offer some space for opening up discussions that can relate to religious fundamentalisms. However, diversity training tends to focus on the “surface” and might not examine the politicization of identities and question who benefits from promoting the notion of homogeneity. In many cases, discussions on diversity do not get to the root of problems and are devoid of a strong power analysis. Instead, they simply reinforce the notions that we are diverse, and must all respect one another. Fundamentalists can also manipulate ideas of diversity for their own gain, shutting down criticism of their brand of women's oppression with complaints of cultural insensitivity.

The reluctance to discuss in depth the use of religion to justify discrimination and violence may also be because religion overall is seen by many development policy-makers as simply “too touchy”. There may be a general “risk averse” culture within some organizations, which limits willingness to take on such challenges. Moreover, they may also feel that this area is best left to others, and there may be a fear of getting in above their heads, tackling forces that they might not be able to deal with or offending both local staff and beneficiaries.

While some institutions may acknowledge the challenge of gender equality in relation to fundamentalisms, they may not have the appropriate analysis and strategies to respond, without which it is difficult to move forward. Many development actors have recognized the need to fill this gap.¹⁰

“We need more boldness by development organizations to confront religious fundamentalism”

Nigerian respondent,
AWID survey of activists

Religion overall is seen by many development policy-makers as simply “too touchy”.

Susanna Fried,

then UNDP Deputy Cluster Leader MGM and Senior Gender, HIV and Health Advisor

”

“It is necessary to do a bit more education with development actors, because we don’t always understand what religious fundamentalisms are and what that has to do with development.”

Ramona Vijeyarasa,

Senior Programme Manager for Women’s Rights, ActionAid International

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“Essentially, there remains a very narrow conceptualization of fundamentalisms, focused largely on Islamic fundamentalisms. Lesser or insufficient attention within the development sector is given to other religious fundamentalisms (Christian, Hindu, Buddhist etc.). These are often seen as sources of good when it comes to development work and yet may be among the most detrimental in promoting heteronormative and patriarchal values.”

Shawna Wakefield,

then Oxfam International Senior Gender Justice Lead

”

“Oxfam has not grappled with this issue enough as an institution...Working for development and gender justice, including by addressing social attitudes and roles, and trying to get to places where there are deep-seated inequalities sometimes requires working with religious leaders. Many programs are doing this in practice, but we need to think more about which religious leaders to work with, when, why, and how.”

Ozonnia Ojielo,

Regional Cluster Leader, Governance and Peacebuilding, UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa, speaking about conflict prevention and recovery.

”

“Fundamentalisms are seen as a question of religion only. The “War on Terror” is perceived as anti-Islam, and “violent extremism” as a framework is further perceived as focusing on Muslims rather than more broadly on the structural and other conditions that give rise to these extreme behaviours and more broadly ignores actions that can be seen as terroristic by Christians and people of other beliefs...We need to...look at the conditions and processes which result in the formation of particular kinds of group identity, sharp “othering”, and how people are required or coerced to comply with these identities and the resulting behaviours.”

Ramona Vijeyarasa,

Senior Programme Manager for Women’s Rights, ActionAid International

”

“A big challenge is how to work with religious authorities in local communities, often elders, and traditional male leaders...in an ideal world we would challenge these structures altogether but in a realistic world we have to go through the existing structures...but is it not necessary to ask “are we reinforcing local patriarchies when we adopt this approach?” We also do not think enough about the unintended impacts of [international development organizations] and how a rights-based approach must challenge fundamentalisms across all areas of work...religious fundamentalisms is not just a women’s rights issue and yet it is often relegated to the responsibility of women’s rights activists to tackle.”

This paper aims to be a resource that improves understanding of how religious fundamentalisms constrain development and women's rights in particular, and, how development actors can challenge rather than facilitate religious fundamentalisms. The paper pursues this aim by providing insights and concerns drawn from the experiences of development actors who have already been resisting religious fundamentalisms.

After outlining the state of religious fundamentalisms globally, the paper puts forth six main recommendations: addressing the structural conditions which facilitate religious fundamentalisms; acting on the warning signs of fundamentalism; promoting pluralism and diversity; avoiding homogenous notions of identity; working with partners; and supporting those already resisting fundamentalisms.

The paper applies a feminist lens to each of these areas. A feminist approach is vital in addressing the nexus of development, religious fundamentalisms, and women's rights; it allows one to see gender-based violence as it occurs across social levels from the state level down to the family, to understand women's bodies as a site of control for religious fundamentalists, and how this may inform policies and approaches of development actors. A feminist approach also helps us imagine ways of combatting fundamentalisms that do not create further conflict, inequality, or oppression.

A feminist approach is vital in addressing the nexus of development, religious fundamentalisms, and women's rights.

Global religious fundamentalisms: Proliferation of groups, escalation of violence

Globally and in every religious context there has been a growth in the power and influence of religious fundamentalist actors. Although the violence that they are wreaking on women's rights and human rights may differ and manifest in specific ways depending on the context, it is clear that this escalation is taking place across the world.

Fundamentalist non-state actors

Recent years have seen an escalation in the number and influence of violent religio-political non-state actors. It is estimated that since 2010 there has been a 58 per cent growth in the number of Islamist terror groups, a doubling of Jihadist fighters, and a tripling of attacks by Al-Qaeda.¹¹ ISIS¹², now the richest terrorist group in history,¹³ is responsible for mass executions, rape, and torture of civilians, including Yazidi women and children in Iraq.¹⁴ In Nigeria, it is estimated that Boko Haram¹⁵ has been directly responsible for the deaths of over 10,000 civilians between May 2011 and February 2015.¹⁶ In 2012-2013, a Tuareg revolt in Mali was taken over by fundamentalist groups that introduced ultraconservative interpretations of Muslim law enforced through public amputations, whippings, and executions. Yet, although Muslim fundamentalisms have received the most attention, persecution and violence by non-state actors is certainly rising in other religious contexts.

Russian Orthodox fundamentalists have formed their own armed units; the Russian Orthodox Army provides military support for pro-Moscow secessionists in eastern Ukraine and claims to be "based on the Christian religion and motivated by a feeling of lost honour and victories..."¹⁷ In the Central African Republic, a fundamentalist Christian militia known as Anti-Balaka has killed, mutilated, and displaced thousands of Muslim civilians, with the stated intent of eliminating Muslims from the country.¹⁸ Between 2000 and 2008, the number of hate groups in the USA rose 54 per cent, and white supremacist groups (many claiming Christian inspiration) had an "explosion" in recruitment after Barack Obama was elected the country's first African-American president.¹⁹

Christian fundamentalisms have resulted in increased discrimination, attacks, and killing on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and towards those offering reproductive health services. For instance, there has been an estimated ten-fold increase of attacks on gay people in Uganda since the passing of anti-gay legislation in 2014.²⁰ In the USA the National Abortion Federation documented over 2,500 attacks on abortion providers between 2005 and 2013, including murder, arson, and assault, directly committed or inspired by Christian fundamentalisms like the Army of God.²¹

There has also been a rise of Buddhist fundamentalist nationalist groups in Myanmar and Sri Lanka. In 2012-2013, the 969 Movement attacks resulted in

hundreds of Muslims (mostly Rohingya, a minority Muslim community in Myanmar) being killed, raped, and tortured, with over 150,000 people homeless and displaced.²² In 2014, riots in Sri Lanka led by the Buddhist fundamentalist Bodu Bala Sena (Buddhist Power Source) against Muslims left at least four people dead and 80 injured, as hundreds of homes, shops, mosques were attacked.²³

In the first 100 days following the election of the Bharatiya Janata Party, an explicitly Hindu nationalist party, in India, over 600 “communal incidents” against Muslims and several forced “re-conversions” of Christians and Muslims were recorded.²⁴ In September 2015, Muslim farmer Mohammad Akhlaq was killed by a mob in Uttar Pradesh after it was rumoured he had eaten beef. Lawyer and activist Madhu Mehra observed:

In the last year we have seen writers intimidated, rationalists killed, coercive ‘re-conversions’ to Hinduism, and vigilantism against Muslim men marrying Hindu women. Hindu Right vigilantism is not new but is clearly more bold and active now, fearing little from the state or the law.

A 2013 US Department of State report indicated at least 339 attacks by ultra-orthodox Jewish settlers in Palestine, resulting in injuries, property damage and defacement of both mosques and churches.²⁵ Several incidents of violence, including throwing stones and feces, have been reported in ultra-orthodox Jewish neighbourhoods against women and girls (including some as young as seven) for not dressing “appropriately” or for refusing segregation in public spaces.²⁶

Political influence, legislation, and policies

At the same time as the increase in religious fundamentalist violence, there has also been a sharp rise in the strength of religious-political parties, some of which are in government (for instance, in Tunisia after the uprisings, in India, and in Israel). There has also been an increase in religious figures present in political spaces at both local and national levels (for example, pastors or rabbis running for office), as well as politicians allying with fundamentalist figures and using conservative religious rhetoric in public speeches.

Consequently, there are increased initiatives to codify religious fundamentalist ideology in legislation and public policy, and to block initiatives for equality and choice. The Israeli Cabinet approved a “Jewish Nation-State Bill” as part of Basic Law in December 2014, which would explicitly reserve full citizenship rights to Jews, privilege religious “Jewish law” in law-making and judicial decisions, and give constitution-like backing to the over 50 laws which already discriminate against non-Jews—Muslims, Druzes, Christians, Palestinian citizens of Israel (over a fifth of the population).²⁷ In 2014 in India certain village councils adopted resolutions banning entry of non-Hindu religious leaders and banning all non-Hindu religious propaganda, prayers and speeches in the villages.”²⁸

Globally, 47 per cent of all countries retain laws criminalizing blasphemy, apostasy, and defamation of religion.²⁹ In recent years, many countries have tightened such legislation or begun pursuing more vociferous implementation of existing laws.³⁰ There is a global trend of shrinking secular spaces accompanied by a trend of silencing those who speak out: the criminalization, persecution, and assassination of activists, authors, and journalists; the surveillance of social media; the closing of human rights organizations. This climate in turn silences the majority, who may not necessarily agree wholly with fundamentalist rhetoric, but whose options are limited by the risks that come with dissent.

Many religiously-justified policy initiatives are designed to curtail women's rights and autonomy. In 2014, for example, Brunei introduced a new Penal Code based on an extremely conservative interpretation of Muslim law, which included death by stoning as a punishment for adultery.³¹ In early 2015, four laws titled 'Laws on Protection of Race and Religion' were enacted in Myanmar after the Buddhist fundamentalist 969 Movement lobbied the government. The laws stipulate that official investigations must be carried out before conversion to religions other than Buddhism, restrict Buddhist women from marrying Muslims, and curtail the reproductive rights of Muslim women.³²

Other initiatives, backed by reference to religious fundamentalist discourses on sexuality, have been used to justify human rights violations on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The 2014 Penal Code of Aceh, a semi-autonomous province of Indonesia, penalizes gay sex with 100 lashes or 100 months in jail and applies to anyone residing or present in Aceh regardless of religion. In 2014, Uganda and Nigeria signed into law the Anti-Homosexuality Act and the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act respectively. These laws criminalize same-sex displays of affection and organizing meetings of gay people or those in support of non-discrimination against gay people.

Similarly, a Russian "anti-propaganda" (anti-gay) law was passed in 2013 with discriminatory laws under consideration in Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Moldova and Ukraine, spurred by a strong lobby from the Orthodox Churches. This type of legislation has widespread implications for freedom of information, association, and expression. As activists against the Same-Sex Marriage Bill (now Act) in Nigeria pointed out, "the implications and effects of the [Act]...go far beyond the prohibition of same sex marriage...and will result in widespread human rights violations, censorship, impediments to open and democratic process, fear, repression...for all Nigerian citizens irrespective of their sexuality."³³

It is estimated that between 68,000 and 78,000 women die as a consequence of unsafe and illegal abortions every year. Despite this horrifying number the Catholic, Evangelical and Orthodox Churches have all actively lobbied to ban birth control and criminalize abortion. In 2012, the Russian government, with the backing of fundamentalist Christian Orthodox Churches, eliminated all social grounds for abortion between 12 and 22 weeks of pregnancy, with the exception of rape. Similar initiatives to restrict access to abortion have also been taken up in Armenia, Azerbaijan,

Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine in 2014. In the United States of America, with the strengthening of the Christian religious right, 200 laws impeding access to abortion were enacted from 2011 to 2014.³⁴ More recently, there has been a concerted attempt to defund the Planned Parenthood Federation in the USA, on the basis of fraudulent videos purporting misuse of foetal tissue.

In the Philippines, the Reproductive Health Bill, which would legalize contraceptives, met 14 years of strong opposition from the Catholic Church.³⁵ When it was finally passed in 2012, conservative Catholic groups challenged it in the Supreme Court as unconstitutional, delaying its implementation for more than a year. The Supreme Court upheld the legislation. However, it struck down several of its provisions. In his visit to the country in January 2015, Pope Francis vigorously defended the Church's opposition to contraception. The experience in the Philippines is far from isolated; El Salvador, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Brazil are all examples of countries where the influence of the Catholic Church has been central in severely restricting or fully criminalizing access to abortion.

Cross-region and cross-religion alliances

Religious fundamentalisms are not only growing in every region of the world, they are also sharing resources and strategies, and coming together in alliances across regions. For instance, in 2014, the 969 Movement in Myanmar formally joined hands with the Bodu Bala Sena, an extremist nationalist group in Sri Lanka, also headed by hardline Buddhist monks. Christian evangelical groups in the USA deliberately support churches in Eastern and Southern Africa and in South America. The 2013 “One of Us” campaign—aiming to prohibit European Union funding for NGOs which provide sexual and reproductive health services in Africa, Asia, and South America unless they refuse to counsel, refer, or carry out abortions³⁶—was clearly modelled on Ronald Reagan's Mexico City Policy. The influence, links, splits, and splinters of Muslim fundamentalist groups are also evident: Al-Qaida has been nurtured by the Taliban and vice versa,³⁷ and in turn has links with Ansar al-Din in Mali and Al-Shabaab in Somalia; ISIS formed from a split with Al-Qaida and went on to inspire Boko Haram to claim territory, and so on.

There is also increased cooperation across religions within international policy spaces, with fundamentalist actors frequently coming together to limit progress on women's rights and derail advances already made. The United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994) and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) were significant turning points for women's rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and gender equality. It was also at these conferences where fundamentalisms, first the Vatican and then increasingly fundamentalists from other religious contexts, came together in what has been described as an “unholy alliance,” to make their presence felt in international discussions. Since then there has been a notable increase in the activity, influence, and aggressiveness of fundamentalist forces, often working in collaboration, in international spaces.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) has been the site of ongoing contestation of women's rights by religious fundamentalists. In 2012, states failed to reach any Agreed Conclusions at all due to fundamentalist opposition.³⁸ The following year, states including Russia, Iran, Egypt, the Holy See, and some states in the African Group worked together to block language on "intimate partner violence" and towards the protection of women at risk of violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity³⁹.

Meanwhile, at the Human Rights Council, recent years have seen coalitions of conservative states bring forward resolutions that undermine human rights protections for women, children, and sexual minorities, including the "traditional values" resolution⁴⁰ sponsored by Russia and partner countries, and an ongoing series of "protection of the family" resolutions sponsored by Egypt,⁴¹ Such collaborative activities are fostered by connections between Catholic, Evangelical, Muslim, and Jewish fundamentalist civil society groups,⁴² through delegate trainings⁴³ conducted by such groups, and by regular convenings such as the World Congress of Families. Most recently, several states have expressed and affirmed their reservations to Goals 3 (health) and 5 (gender) of the post-2015 development agenda, in attempts to undermine their commitments to gender equality under the new regime.⁴⁴

The costs of religious fundamentalisms

The human costs of fundamentalist violence are obvious: death, injury, pain, bereavement, and fear. However, there are also other costs. Direct economic costs include the loss of property, health costs for survivors, and expenditure to support internally displaced people and refugees. There are also secondary costs such as loss of household income due to deaths or the inability to farm, and loss of jobs and trade or possibilities of investment because of repeated attacks and insecurity. In addition, there are the opportunity costs; resources that could have been devoted to education, health and infrastructure, for instance, and which would have in turn created jobs in these sectors.

The focus of attention is often the inter-sectarian nature of religious fundamentalist violence and coercion, and in particular Muslim fundamentalist violence against non-Muslims. These deaths are tragic and indefensible. However, the focus tends to obscure the fact that targets of religious fundamentalisms include those who also identify themselves as being members of that religious community but do not accept fundamentalist discourses. Indeed, the painstaking analysis of Chouin et al estimates that between 2009-2012 the majority of civilians who died due to Boko Haram were Muslim and more than three times as many Muslim clerics were killed as Christian.⁴⁵ The same is true elsewhere: the majority of victims of Islamist terrorism have been Muslims living in impoverished conditions. Similarly, the majority of women whose health and lives have been damaged due to Christian fundamentalist laws on reproduction are also Christian.

Religious fundamentalisms have particularly high costs for women and girls. Fundamentalist reinforcement of regressive, patriarchal social norms are leading to the rise of violence against women, girls, and women human rights defenders (WHRDs). Rashida Manjoo, then United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, noted in her 2012 report the alarming growth of gender-based violence including targeted killings of women and girls, often justified by reference to religion, culture, tradition, and social norms.⁴⁶ WHRDs are particularly at risk of violence, targeted both for their defence of women's rights, and because they are women. Fundamentalisms also contribute to increased violence within the home; they promote authoritarian and patriarchal controls of women and often condone familial violence against women to "correct", "discipline", and "prevent sin." Furthermore, religious fundamentalisms impede development programs aimed at women.

It is clear then, that fundamentalisms are rising in multiple forms and across all levels from the local to the international, and that the human and societal cost of this is enormous. Effective responses to religious fundamentalisms must therefore involve institutions and advocates at various levels, working on and across many different issues, and in strategic collaboration.

Addressing the structural drivers of religious fundamentalisms

In order to challenge religious fundamentalisms at their roots, it is necessary to understand and address the conditions that facilitate their growth.⁴⁷ The rise of religious fundamentalisms must be understood as part of the interrelated crises the world is facing: growing inequality and poverty; failure of states to provide essential services; lack of real democracy and civil liberties; militarism, insecurity, conflict, and displacements; and depletion of energy resources.

Economic conditions

The correlation between economic conditions and the propensity for people to join extremist groups is not straightforward. However, there is strong evidence from those working closely with affected communities that relative poverty (the gap between rich and poor), and an accompanying sense of injustice, is a significant factor in creating the conditions that fuel religious fundamentalisms.⁴⁸

It is no coincidence that Borno State is the stronghold of the severe political and social unrest that has led to Boko Haram, or that the north is the site of fundamentalist armed violence in Mali. In 1994 UNDP stated that regional disparities in Nigeria were among the worst in the world and as recently as 2011 the GDP per capital in the south of the country was reported to be twice of that in the north.⁴⁹ Similarly, the neglect of northern Mali compared to southern Mali has been a long-standing injustice, born out of colonial divisions and the desire to centralize

The rise of religious fundamentalisms must be understood as part of the interrelated crises the world is facing.

Where states have ceased to provide services such as healthcare and schooling, fundamentalists have stepped into the breach.

resources into the hands of a few.⁵⁰ 70 per cent of surveyed women's rights activists representing a spectrum of religious contexts said that religious fundamentalists actively recruit in community centres in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.⁵¹

Such inequalities are largely a product of neoliberal economic policies, which prioritize debt repayment, cut social expenditure, and focus on export-oriented production and privatization.⁵² In particular, the destruction of welfare states that has come with neoliberalism has provided fertile ground for the growth in power of conservative religious actors. Where states have ceased to provide services such as healthcare and schooling, fundamentalists have stepped into the breach.⁵³ For this service they reap rewards: the loyalty of the populations they serve and access to new channels to spread ideology.

The focus on consumerism that comes with neoliberalism has also fed into the rise of fundamentalisms. On one hand it has fostered the "prosperity theology" booming within the Evangelical and Pentecostal Christian traditions in Latin America and parts of Africa. On the other hand, it has aided the appeal of those fundamentalists who portray themselves as an antidote to the excesses and corruption of modern capitalism.

In turn, various fundamentalists have themselves contributed to the persistence of poverty and inequality, despite their claims to stand up for the marginalized. For example, Jennifer Butler has pointed out that "in the United States the Christian Right has played a major role in undermining public support for anti-poverty policies,"⁵⁴ which has in turn led them to receive more support from economic and social conservatives who find them useful.

The aim at the global level for all those that seek social justice, including development actors, must be **to enable the adoption of 'heterodox' economic approaches which: incorporate attention to distribution and redistribution as well as production and growth; reduce poverty; value care work; and are gender sensitive.** It must be **recognized that economic policies are not neutral** but are developed in and reinforce or construct power relations in societies.⁵⁵

It must be an aim to **hold states, international financial institutions, and transnational corporations accountable for the implications of their economic and fiscal policies for human rights and gender justice.**

At national levels, development actors must **reject programs and policies which minimize state responsibility for the realization of economic rights**, especially provision of health, education, basic infrastructure, social safety nets, and people's security in private as well as in public.

At local and sectoral levels, development actors need to **avoid support for the spread or enforcement of conservative and fundamentalist ideologies via access to resources, whether schooling, charity and disaster or poverty relief ("food for faith").**⁵⁶

Political marginalization and alienation

When poverty and inequality are combined with a sense of marginalization and injustice, and disillusionment with the alternative paths offered in the past, this creates a “push” factor towards fundamentalisms. Fundamentalist groups capitalize on the grievances of those who have little hope of gaining social and economic power or being represented through democratic political means.

The rising numbers of Western recruits (including middle-class, educated individuals) to terrorist organizations like ISIS draws attention to the racism and alienation experienced in Europe and North America by non-white, non-Christian youth.⁵⁷ In this instance, anti-terrorist policies themselves are fuelling recruits to religious fundamentalism, as domestic anti-Muslim rhetoric, racial profiling and interventionist foreign policy are reacted to defensively. Evidence from a study in Somalia has suggested that “feeling humiliated and excluded are factors that lead young people to join or support extremist movements or violent groups...[hence] in some contexts, young people’s levels of civic engagement and perceived political voice can play a more influential role than employment opportunities in reducing their vulnerability to recruitment or exploitation by extremist groups” (Wolfe and Kurtz 2013).

There are reasons why such grievances often take particular forms of identity politics that centre on religion. Corruption with impunity is widespread, with many governments and politicians concerned primarily with consolidating their own power and defending corporate interests—here we see the effect of neoliberalism again.⁵⁸ In many countries “progressives” (leftists, pro-poor, anti-imperialists) have been unable to muster sufficient support to pose a credible alternative to elites in power. With a lack of alternative discourses for hope, the strength of religious discourses grows. In some countries, such as Poland and Egypt, religious organizations have historically been persecuted as dissidents, which has given them credibility as noble alternatives to corrupt regimes.

As a solution to alienation and dislocation, fundamentalisms offer their followers hope, certainty, a sense of purpose, and an emotional community. In today’s world, older systems of value and identity are being challenged, while newer ones are not yet widely accepted as norms, resulting in anomie in the Durkheimian sense.⁵⁹ Identities built on privilege (due to gender, race, class hierarchies, for instance) are challenged by human rights values of equality and social justice.

In the context of changing gender roles, the way religious fundamentalisms construct womanhood can appeal to threatened masculinities. As Nira Yuval-Davis puts it:

Fundamentalist movements play upon the threat that the changing economy has posed to masculinities: [In a context where] the women have money and go to work now, and men feel completely powerless, there is often some kind of exchange relationship: [the

As a solution to alienation and dislocation, fundamentalisms offer their followers hope, certainty, a sense of purpose, and an emotional community.

fundamentalists say to the men] “We will make you feel good at home; you can control your environment, your women, your children,” and then people will be willing to accept all the changes in society [that fundamentalists want to introduce]⁶⁰.

Economic development interventions alone are therefore insufficient. It is important to **work concomitantly on the politics of inclusion and representative, responsive governance**—which includes, but goes beyond the minimal requirement of voting periodically—to ensuring that there is effective participation by people, including groups often marginalized, in decision-making.

Such interventions must be fine-tuned to the dynamics of the particular context.⁶¹ There is also a need to **ensure programmes that cultivate the values of and skills for peaceful negotiation and dialogue, not only for marginalized groups but also for those with power**, to ensure that the various levels of governance and administration are responsive to dialogue.

Sustained and sustainable economic prosperity for all requires not only the economic interventions discussed earlier, but also attention to **ensuring the rule of law and eliminating corrupt practices, and ensuring access to the human rights of freedom from discrimination and to participation in governance**, which supports the enjoyment of other rights.

With regards to changing gender roles, an important response to counter fundamentalisms is to foster understandings of privilege and oppression and to nurture inclusive identities.

External support and geopolitical factors

Contrary to the common belief that they arise simply from indigenous factors and beliefs, religious fundamentalisms are often strategically fuelled by external actors and are the result of geopolitical dynamics.

The growth of religious extremist groups and ultra-conservative nationalism is fuelled in part by frustration with years of imperialism and subjugation of global South countries. Furthermore, religious fundamentalisms have been spread, sometimes quite deliberately, through regions and across national borders by states in order to further their “national interest”. It is a matter of record that the USA and its allies have repeatedly funded, supplied weapons, and supported training camps for fundamentalist groups with the aim of destabilizing governments and promoting regime-change in order to protect western interests, including the control of energy resources and access to markets. This has been in the case in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Iran, and Afghanistan. Beyond this direct support to fundamentalist groups, Western nations have long propped up despotic regimes in the global South—these regimes have brought about the alienation of citizens mentioned above, and thereby increased the appeal of conservative religio-political movements.

In a similar vein, it has been the policy of states like Saudi Arabia and Qatar to spread their particular brand of Wahhabi-Salafism throughout the Middle East, North and West Africa, and South Asia. In Pakistan, for instance, hundreds of mosques and madrasas are externally funded from Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait, as well as Saudi Arabia and Qatar.⁶² The link between at least some madrasas and fundamentalist groups engaging in violence has been established.⁶³ More common however is the dissemination of intolerant worldviews and discriminatory gender ideologies.

The export of religious fundamentalist ideologies and external support of fundamentalist organizations via funding and training is also undertaken by non-state actors. For example, Jessica Horn notes of Christian fundamentalisms in Africa

The most common origin of external funding is from institutions in the United States that support the growth of conservative Christianity and an ultra-conservative stance on issues of the family and sexuality. There is evidence to suggest that the U.S. Christian right and U.S. Christian fundamentalists are providing targeted financial support to key African clergy and churches in both the mainline and charismatic Protestant traditions. This support has focused on pushing a homophobic legal agenda.⁶⁴

In addition, diaspora communities are a significant source of funding and other support for fundamentalist groups.⁶⁵

The global annual expenditure on arms is an alarming USD 1.7 trillion. As UNICEF has pointed out, just eight days worth of global military expenditure would be enough to fund twelve years of free quality education for every child on the planet,⁶⁶ Military spending correlates with social and economic inequalities; violence and rights violations; gender-based violence; and sustains patriarchal constructions of masculinity.⁶⁷ The global arms trade is an important avenue of support for armed fundamentalists. As such, violent fundamentalisms are bolstered by insufficient international law on arms trading; the unwillingness of states to adhere to existing international treaties and conventions; and a lack of regulation of arms brokers.

Development actors must apply a gendered lens to issues of peace and security, and work for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.⁶⁸ **Stronger analysis must be introduced in the international sphere outlining the links between militarism and sustainable development** (there is no mention of this connection in the SDGs⁶⁹)

All actors striving to achieve sustainable development must push for international standards, such as the global arms trade treaty, to be upheld, and for loopholes to be closed, such as the ability for states to continue to sell arms to embargoed states if manufacturing has been outsourced to a third country.

Violent fundamentalisms are bolstered by insufficient international law on arms trading.

Acting on the warning signs of fundamentalisms

A defining characteristic of religious fundamentalisms is that they try to impose their worldview on everyone else—via physical force, economic pressure or incentives, legislation and policy frameworks, and community pressure. However, religious fundamentalisms do not spring up fully grown. Indeed, it has been noted that:

The warning signs are there, to observe and resist. But they are often ignored for the sake of national and religious unity, or dismissed as a passing fad... As has so often been pointed out (and ignored), it is usually women's interests that are sacrificed in this political power play⁷⁰.

Controls on women's bodies, their sexual and reproductive autonomy, along with the policing of a strict gender binary and gender roles, are frequently ways in which religious fundamentalists begin to exert control. Generally, there is "a gradual process, often beginning with dress codes, the valorization of the family and its patriarchal controls, the imposition of heterosexual 'normalcy' and the regulation of marriage alliances."⁷¹

As such, it is important for development actors to **take seriously the alarms raised by women's organizations regarding increasing limits to women's bodily autonomy, and by sexual minorities that their freedoms are being eroded**. Responding to this warning sign must mean **supporting those on the ground in their efforts to resist the rise of fundamentalisms**.⁷²

As Ojeilo put it, ignoring these warning signs, when fundamentalists "have sowed their seeds in the last 40 years, just means there are 'accidents' waiting to happen. We need to interrupt this process."

Shutting down space for dissent and discussion, and curtailing freedoms of expression and association are not only symptoms of religious fundamentalisms, but are also a facilitating factor in their rise—another warning sign that must be heeded. Therefore, **it is important for development actors to continue to support debate and discussion**, and in particular opportunities for women and other marginalized groups to debate on their own terms and to contribute to decision-making processes. **It is also imperative that policies that curtail civil liberties, including freedom of expression, are not accepted under the premise of resisting fundamentalisms**.

Ojeilo has stressed the importance of development actors, including civil society, conducting a range of substantive engagements with governments and local authorities, even where those bodies exhibit significant shortcomings. This can act as part of developing "new narratives of inclusion... where no voice is drowned out, to set new norms and agenda, where each has their own niche but a common goal."

In supporting women's participation in debate, the importance of **enabling women to have economic opportunities and access to economic resources** should not be forgotten. Women with economic resources are more likely be heard than

those without. Supporting women's access to economic resources—and better yet economic autonomy—through initiatives such as collective organizing helps women's voices be heard in their households, in their local communities, and in wider arenas.

Pluralism and cultural diversity⁷³

Sustainable human development requires an environment in which pluralism and diversity are preserved and promoted.⁷⁴ Some religious groups or authorities claim to represent local cultural authenticity and resist domination by “foreign”, “alien” or “westernized” forces. However, in reality they often introduce homogenized practices that destroy cultural diversity and negate pluralism.

The myth of a single “Islamic law” has long obscured the actual complex diversity of Muslim laws and practices and their intersection with culture and history across the world.⁷⁵ The increasing dominance of fundamentalist Muslim discourse, based on a particular, selective patriarchal and ascetic form of Islam, is leading to the loss of this rich diversity (as well as of women's rights), in the name of protecting the religion. Religious fundamentalists in Argentina promote a heteronormative vision of “the Argentine family”. However, this is questionably “local” since the Vatican in Rome provides the materials upon which the vision is based. In African contexts, anti-gay rhetoric is often framed as “authentic” or “indigenous” culture. This overlooks both indigenous histories of diverse sexualities and the fact that growing anti-gay sentiment in many African countries is fuelled and funded by Christian fundamentalists from the USA.⁷⁶

Once claims to authenticity become accepted as the norm, they are hard to defy. It can be difficult to question or challenge community leaders or national leaders when they define how things are supposed to be done on the basis that it is “our culture” — an argument which is especially appealing, given the colonial histories of much of the world. It is especially difficult to challenge mindsets around notions of women's “acceptable” behaviour.

Gender relations in general, and women in particular, are often used to symbolise the collectivity, its “culture and tradition”, its boundaries and its future reproduction. For this reason, women tend to bear the brunt of identity politics in terms of control of their life choices; they are made to follow “authentic” notions of identity and behaviour.⁷⁷

While gender equality remains a cornerstone of human rights and sustainable development, sometimes development initiatives appear to accept the cultural relativist arguments that curtail women's rights, often out of a pragmatic desire to enable a development project to move ahead. For example, in Orissa, India, a cash-for-work programme was initially obstructed by a local religious figure who argued

that the religion did not permit women to engage in such projects. Eventually a compromise was reached whereby the women were able to participate — provided they covered their heads.

Everjoice Win has illustrated this imposed homogeneity with reference to contexts in which Christian Pentacostalism is dominant, where meetings and workshops begin and end with Christian prayers, which has become so commonplace that it is taken as the norm. This happens even when the grant is from an institution defined as secular and whose principles expressly oppose proselytizing, as well as in communities with multiple faith traditions:

However, since Christians are in more powerful positions and many of the local NGO staff themselves are Christians, it is assumed that everyone consents to these single-faith religious observances. The implications in terms of diversity and exclusion are hardly appreciated or even problematized. On the part of the INGOs, there is fear of being seen as ‘imposing values’, or even disregarding ‘local customs/ways of doing things’. So they generally keep silent.⁷⁸

Religious fundamentalisms have a homogenizing effect and actively oppose cultural diversity. However, “culture” is also being contested all the time, and is reshaped and adapted even if religious fundamentalisms reduce the space for that contestation. How then should those invested in sustainable development and women’s rights approach the question of cultural diversity?

Framing culture, religion, and rights

Viewing culture and attendant beliefs, including customs, traditions and religious interpretations, as ‘static’ obstructs the realization of women’s human rights.

Farida Shaheed, then UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights⁷⁹

Religious discourses change over time and place. They are not static, but are continually contested, reinforced, and altered.

It is important to have a clear understanding that religious discourses, like all discourses, change over time and place. They are not static, but are continually contested, reinforced, and altered — sometimes slowly and sometimes very quickly. Furthermore, religious discourses always contain dominant (often conservative) and subaltern (often more liberatory) threads. What becomes dominant is an issue of power (gender, class, ethnicity, geopolitics) rather than theology per se. Religious discourses must also be recognized as one part of a broader social context housing multiple individual and collective identities (religious and non-religious), and in which collective identities are being constantly contested.

Religious fundamentalists tend to claim their vision to be a return to the basic tenets of their religion (“the fundamentals”). However, religious fundamentalists’ visions are not the literal “truth” of religious texts. There is selection and interpretation always, and in some cases even invention. For instance, in constructing their visions of authority and gender relations many Christian fundamentalists choose to

prioritize verses of the Old Testament of the Bible over the new, or the Epistles of St. Paul⁸⁰ over the Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John.⁸¹ Similarly, Muslim fundamentalists prioritize the Qu'ranic Surahs 28:224 and 229⁸² over Surahs 4:1 or 9:72.⁸³

Furthermore, one text can be understood in quite different, even oppositional, ways. Surah 4:3 is often interpreted as permitting Muslim men to marry up to four women, but it has also been understood as indicating a religious preference for monogamy (and was the theological justification for the Tunisian law prohibiting polygamy). Similarly, Genesis 21-22 has most often been interpreted as indicating women's inferiority to men, but can also be seen as espousing a lateral relation between men and women as partners side by side.

The meaning of texts is mediated through people's experiences, contexts, histories and intellectual paradigms. Feminist hermeneutics has identified the many ways in which male dominated societies produce male dominant discourses; religious interpretations are no exception.

Beyond the texts, traditions and histories associated with every religion are also laden with ideology. In constructing their vision of collective identity religious fundamentalisms usually propose a return to a past unsullied by immorality and corruption. However, any religious "golden age" is always mythical: visions are creative re-constructions, often foreign imports, rather than a return to any actual historical past. They often essentialize, erasing complexities and actual historical details.⁸⁴ Religious fundamentalisms are in fact modern phenomena; they harness the power of modern communications technology and weaponry, and are embedded within current geopolitics and flows of capital.

The above conceptualizations of culture and religion can act as an important conceptual grounding, so that development actors are not inhibited from working when references to religion are made. This can be especially useful for ensuring that "taboo" topics, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, are not omitted from development agendas. Hence it is important that development actors at all levels have clarity about the internal as well as external diversity of cultures and histories, the nature of cultural change and the power relations involved in establishing norms, in order to ensure that women and other marginalized groups are able to effectively participate in, access and define culture and religion. However, mobilizing this analysis in any specific place requires a level of in-depth knowledge, and those operating from "outside" the geographical and cultural context may not be received well.

Therefore, it is neither feasible nor necessarily prudent that each individual development actor become competent to argue within all the nuances of the religious discourses in a given context. Rather, **development agencies should support the local actors who are developing, disseminating and enabling people to discuss alternative discourses that are congruent with human rights and gender justice.**

This raises questions about the appropriate modes of work for development interventions.⁸⁵ Simply presenting people with alternative religious interpretations, as a *fait accompli*, seldom works and is arguably just another imposition of an

Religious fundamentalists' visions are not the literal "truth" of religious texts. There is selection and interpretation always.

Any religious "golden age" is always mythical: visions are creative re-constructions.

“absolute truth”. More fruitful is giving people the opportunity to work through religious ideas themselves.

The approach of BAOBAB for Women’s Human Rights in Nigeria has been to make available knowledge of the range of understandings and practices in given faith communities (Muslim and Christian) over time and place, from the most conservative to the most liberatory.⁸⁶ They then give people the opportunity to discuss, critique, and develop their own informed positions over a series of participatory workshops, first in separate faith groups and then together. The aim is to find common ground, areas in which participants can agree to work together to promote women’s rights.⁸⁷

During the workshops, participants did often feel empowered to move from automatically accepting the dominant patriarchal interpretations of their faith, as the information and discussions enabled them to consider other possibilities. But, even those few who remained staunch gender conservatives developed respect for different views. These workshops were an important part of BAOBAB’s strategy to mobilise support and build coalitions, which was in turn successful in overturning the convictions and preventing the stoning of women (and one man) for adultery.⁸⁸

Such initiatives may not always seem most attractive to funders, owing to the long and gradual processes they often entail. However, they hold the potential to bring sustainable change. As such, **it is important to recognize the benefits of supporting existing actors to foster progressive cultural and religious discourses, and to ensure funding for such initiatives.**

Beyond religion: Defining people as more than their faith

Another important factor in development actors’ approach to religious fundamentalisms is the need to resist defining individual and community identities by religion alone. As then UN special rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Farida Shaheed, explains:

Collective identities never encompass all the characteristics of any individual: they are formed on the basis of privileging certain parts of individual identities...every “collective identity” is in a constant state of flux, being defined and redefined in response to external factors and internal reflection. Collective identity thus entails contestations over meanings and definitions, and is always linked to the underlying structures and dynamics of power related to accessing and exercising control over economic, political and cultural resources.⁸⁹

Thus, reducing a community to a single identity and addressing them in those terms essentializes that community and the individuals who constitute it, in a similar manner that religious fundamentalists do. Furthermore, religious discourses are often used to protect power and privilege, so allowing an issue to be framed in

religious terms alone can risk not only conceding the terms of debate, but also missing the chance to effect change. As Shaheed points out, “recognizing and protecting multiple identities helps to resist and overcome political forces, in particular identity politics, which seek to deny any possibility of pluralism within self and society, as well as gender equality”.⁹⁰

Development objectives could be better reached by **marshalling non-religious discourses in discussion and engaging multiple individual and collective identities**. For instance, people might be addressed, not only or primarily in terms of a religious identity but as parents, farmers, residents of a particular locale, or citizens. Development actors can **frame activities around positive reference to common objectives**, such as peace, dignity, reduced poverty, access to water, or better health.

Focussing on empirical information is also a powerful strategy. Emphasis on the concrete effect of religious fundamentalisms and conservative ideologies can be effective; the actual consequences of early marriage on girls’ health and on child mortality, or the benefits of girls’ education for themselves and their communities, for example. **Accompanying empirical information with arguments from multiple sources** can also reap results — human rights and gender equality principles, national law, and religious principles, for example.

Fostering positive alternatives: Inclusive identities and intersectional understandings

As well as moving away from using religion as the primary or sole identity marker, it is important to foster positive alternatives. For those feeling alienated, religious fundamentalisms appeal precisely because of their certainty, their clear roles and definite answers to complex problems. Added to this is a powerful (and gendered) romanticism — the heroism of fighting for the right thing in a hostile world with clear enemies. To counteract this part of fundamentalisms’ appeal it is crucial to foster instead a recognition of multiple and overlapping identities; to encourage inclusivity and the valuing of diversity; and to increase understanding of systems of privilege and oppression.

As Amina Mohammed said, “there is seriously still a battle of values...there must be national ownership of the need for exclusion and marginalization to be ended, and to make that our moral compass.” Maria Mejia highlighted the importance of aiming for affirmative changes in values: “instead of an approach against religious fundamentalists, we would rather have a positive approach to highlight and view favourably women’s rights.”

This requires a careful look at how “diversity” is constructed. Too often, concepts of multiculturalism have often homogenized and essentialized minority groups or followers of religions. This has led to cultural relativist approaches which have hampered minority women’s struggles for rights. **Those pursuing sustainable development should strengthen understandings of intersecting systems of privilege and oppression, to replace neatly-bounded notions of community.**

“Instead of an approach against religious fundamentalisms, we would rather have a positive approach to view women’s rights favourably.”

Maria Mejia of Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir - Mexico (Catholics for the Right to Decide - Mexico)

Emotional resonance with liberatory and solidarity identities promotes the possibility of working across community divides.

Privilege, whether in the form of advantages or protections, is accorded to individuals who fit into a specific group category based on socio-economic strata, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality amongst others. The concept of intersectionality recognizes that one can be both oppressed and privileged at the same time; for example privileged by class and oppressed by gender. Putting this understanding into practice means people must learn to push back against their privilege, whilst listening to the views and respecting the experiences of those who are excluded from their particular privilege(s), so that people with different levels of privilege can work together to challenge the systems that allocate benefits to some categories of people and not others.

Emotional resonance with liberatory and solidarity identities promotes the possibility of working across religious, social, economic and other community divides. For example, in some contexts violent religious fundamentalism has meant that boys are burnt alive and shot in schools, girls are abducted from schools and subjected to sexual assault, teachers are attacked and both schoolgirls and schoolboys are forced to convert at gunpoint. In this setting, the focus for intervention cannot be solely to address girls' insecurity in schools. An intersectional response means focusing on making all schools secure for all girls, boys and teachers, while paying particular attention to the specific vulnerabilities arising from gender relations, socio-economic status, ethnic and religious identity.

Working with any organization helps build their legitimacy, authority, and access to economic and other resources.

Making the right partnerships

An important step for interrupting the entrenchment of fundamentalist power is **for development actors to refrain from supporting conservative religious agendas and institutions**. This involves careful attention when choosing partners.

Interaction with religious organizations and institutions

We cannot assume that faith-based-organisations are automatically the answer. That is context specific. It does seem to be evident that religious leaders have the possibility to change attitudes. However, we should address religious leaders along side other activities to empower women. In engaging with religious actors, there needs to be an enhanced awareness about who to go to and work with – diverse actors, not just the religious establishment.

Emma Tomalin

Many development actors opt to work with religious organizations.⁹¹ In part, this is due to the important role religion plays in many people's lives, but it also a direct consequence of the fragility of states. Agencies often choose to partner with religious organizations on the assumption that they are most effective at delivering

relief or that they have the closest links to local communities.⁹² However, making religious organizations a default choice for partnerships can have negative implications for human rights, and especially for women, sexual and gender minorities, and other marginalized groups.

Working with any organization helps build their legitimacy, authority, and access to economic and other resources. Simultaneously, it often means excluding others—most often women’s voices, minority voices, and non-religious groups—from discussion spaces and hampering their legitimacy and access to resources.

Culture-sensitive approaches are good but there is not enough representation of women’s organizations, and there are not many faith-based organizations where women are leaders. So it depends a lot on who the person is in [the local office of the development organization] to select which leaders to engage with. How can we influence that space? We should be able to talk too, if they are talking about our rights.

Maria Mejia of Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir - Mexico
(Catholics for the Right to Decide - Mexico)

Partnering with conservative religious organizations also means supporting their conservative gender ideologies. Even if the organization does not formally insist on adoption of their beliefs and practices to access benefits, people suppose that believers (or certain “types” of believers) will have more access and therefore adopt conforming dress and behaviour. Furthermore, there is some evidence that at least some religious organizations have used services and relief to introduce narrower interpretations of religion and adoption of rigid gender roles, heteronormativity, conservative dress codes and behaviour.⁹³ In addition, assumptions about the reach, trustworthiness, and efficacy of religious organizations remain unproven.⁹⁴

Development aid — the colour of money⁹⁵

Nearly half of women’s rights activists in AWID’s research report said that bilateral and multilateral donors as well as international NGO donors are a “significant” source of income for the most influential religious fundamentalist groups in their context. The most commonly cited examples in AWID’s 2007 survey were USAID⁹⁶ and PEPFAR influencing HIV and AIDS work. However, most comments about donor funding of fundamentalisms were more general.⁹⁷

Across regions, religious fundamentalists have established charities and NGOs that actively promote a fundamentalist vision, taking advantage of the tax breaks and legitimate status accorded to charitable works. Just over sixteen percent of women’s rights activists where Catholic fundamentalism is most influential named a Catholic charity or NGO as one of the “influential fundamentalists” in their context. Rights groups in Britain have documented how SEWA International, a charity with links to the Hindu fundamentalist Rashtriya Swayasevak Sangh (RSS),⁹⁸ gathered donations after natural disasters and used them for the Hindu Right’s organizing.⁹⁹

Humanitarian response

Religious fundamentalisms definitely have an impact in the humanitarian sphere if they are a factor in that country, especially where there is conflict and they are not allowing or are limiting access to the population. It affects assessing need, agreeing (on) priorities, providing water, sanitation for women...

Senior manager in a leading INGO

When disasters strike, very often the need to respond quickly means that there is little time to scrutinize who is getting or doing what. Urgency trumps politics. And because people are desperate, they also are grateful for whatever help they get without asking too much where that help comes from or what is attached to it.

Many religious organizations providing humanitarian aid condemn proselytization, and most organizations subscribe to a code of conduct developed by the International Red Cross/Crescent Movement for organizations providing disaster relief. It categorically states that “the Humanitarian imperative comes first” and “aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint”. However, **it is necessary to scrutinize whether codes of conduct are applied all the way down: from headquarters to the locale where a humanitarian disaster has struck.**

Kurdish Yezidi parliamentarian Vian Dakhil has reported:

Following the Islamic State [ISIS] attacks on Shingal and Zumar districts, thousands of Yezidis were displaced who mainly resettled in Kurdistan regions. Meanwhile, many organizations [that] endorse Christianity in the region have taken advantage of the Yezidis situation and have started their advertisements to make Yezidis convert to Christianity...Attached with humanitarian aids they distribute Bible and pamphlets.¹⁰⁰

In 2010 the networks established by Pentecostal Christian groups enabled them to reach isolated communities in Haiti’s earthquake-hit areas and made them partners of choice in the immediate aftermath. After the earthquake in Nepal in April 2015 evangelical Christians were some of the first on the scene. In both these instances, there were reports of groups using the “opportunity” of the disaster to try to convert people.¹⁰¹

But there are also longer-term social and political impacts of providing groups resources and recognition from mainstream INGOs that need to be questioned. In the aftermath of Pakistan’s 2005 earthquake and 2010 floods, humanitarian partnerships led to the strengthening of Islamist groups. There were documented reports of INGOs and the UN establishing working relationships with Islamist groups, even those linked to terrorist activities in Pakistan, in 2005 and channelling aid and relief through their networks.¹⁰² Reports of similar happenings also came in the wake of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.¹⁰³

Although these groups were the first responders in the crisis, local non-sectarian aid organizations also engaged in relief were overlooked. There seems to have been a lack of consideration given to the consequences of strengthening groups with fundamentalist ideologies, including their increased ability to influence reconstruction efforts, or the re-building of schools, or to the long-term political landscape of the area.¹⁰⁴ One INGO employee has predicted:

With the increasing impacts of climate change, in years to come there is likely to be greater scope for fundamentalist groups to use the provision of shelter, food and other aid services during famine and drought as entry points to promote their vision.

HIV and AIDS

Historically, religious groups have played a significant role in the health sector on the African continent, delivering 25-75 per cent of services¹⁰⁵ and playing a key role in the provision of care and treatment in the wake of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Not all the engagement of these groups was problematic, but because HIV is largely spread through sexual contact, this provided them with opportunities to “moralize” messages around sexuality, gender roles and prevention. Blaming and stigmatization came in its wake. Sex workers, drug users, and LGBTQI persons were blamed in different contexts and denied services. Emphasis was put on abstinence and monogamy with much less stress on the use of condoms or safe sex practices — or the capacity of women to insist on monogamy, fidelity, condom use or safe sex from their partners. The underlying structural factors remain unaddressed; gender norms, unequal power relations, or gender based violence.

This was further exacerbated by the Bush administration and PEPFAR¹⁰⁶ where faith-based organizations were explicitly named as partners and legitimized. This led to a huge international move in the involvement of Christian churches (especially Pentecostal and Catholic) in HIV and AIDS services and education. They were prominent, for example, in the abstinence only campaigns, which capitalized on this funding. PEPFAR explicitly combined religious fundamentalism and official policy responses to HIV and AIDS with religious INGOs, and local and national African actors responding to (and making opportunistic use of) new funding opportunities and unprecedented political access.

In the post-Bush era Christian fundamentalist discourses continue to affect policy and practice on HIV and AIDS, and broader discourses relating to gender and sexuality. Some prominent Christian fundamentalist groups have shifted their focus from abstinence and anti-condom campaigning to rallying homophobia. The continued practice of “miracle cures” through charismatic faith healing undermines the health and survival of individuals living with HIV and AIDS, and compromises

efforts to roll out effective HIV treatment.¹⁰⁷ At community level, a Ugandan women’s rights activist living with HIV notes:

HIV and AIDS is increasingly a burden for women and the poor, and it has increasingly become a disease of exploitation and extortion. Don’t forget that the majority of the people you see in HIV clinics are women. And these are the same women in the churches [seeking healing].¹⁰⁸

Progressive Partners

Based on work with Oxfam Great Britain, Cassandra Balchin provided a useful typology distinguishing “progressive,” “conservative” and “fundamentalist” religious groups, noting that these are not exclusive categories, with equal numbers of each type, but exist along a spectrum and vary from context to context.¹⁰⁹ Progressive religious groups with a rights-based framework exist amongst all faith communities, as do conservative and fundamentalist groups.

Progressive positions on human rights and gender equality practices should be amongst the essential criteria, not merely desirable, for partners in development initiatives. UNDP’s guidelines on partnering with religious organizations and leaders state “it is unacceptable to engage with faith actors who promote negative and harmful gender stereotypes, and disregard the vulnerabilities of women in contexts where sexual and gender-based violence are widespread.”¹¹⁰ These guidelines are an important reference for development actors, which should be followed and in the future built upon.

For example, religious schools should not be supported without attention to the range of subjects taught and the gender and racial ideologies being disseminated — both formally in the curricula and informally in the way teachers treat male and female students. Supporting religious schools is often defended as necessary to enable girls to access schooling at all. But, if education is reduced to literacy and skill acquisition, and combined with gender ideologies promoting female subservience, the ability to read might merely enable the wider spread of conservative religious teachings, especially in a context where other alternatives have been closed off.

Furthermore, in some settings the teaching materials themselves may not be concerning and gender biases may not be immediately apparent, such as in Buddhist ‘Sunday schools’ in Myanmar. However, if the teaching is conducted by monks who impart negative stereotypes about Muslims, this is likely to indicate an ideology in which not only are Muslim women discriminated against, but Buddhist women’s freedoms are curtailed under the guise of “protecting” Buddhism from the threat of Islam.¹¹¹

It is also important to **investigate differences between a group’s public messages and those that feature in private sermons or meetings, or in their media output in other languages.** Fundamentalist groups often have one discourse for

public dissemination which uses the language of human rights, while circulating very different messages internally.

Furthermore, development agencies need to be careful not to channel further funds and resources to fundamentalist groups directly or indirectly. It is therefore necessary to **examine the links that a local or international religious organization has with other religious groups** — oftentimes more moderate groups have informal or clandestine ties with outright fundamentalists.

Careful mapping of each context will reveal conservative and fundamentalist religious organizations, but also religious groups which champion women's rights, diversity and tolerance, with which to partner. Many of these, as with some traditional and cultural groups, hold that human rights principles are compatible with their faith, culture or traditions. These pose partnership possibilities that development actors should take advantage of.

As Tadros points out:

[There are] Interfaith organizations, networks and alliances of FBOs [faith-based organizations] that engage with questions of gender and development in policy and practice, including service delivery. In the past decade, a series of important networks have emerged, such as the Women, Faith and Development Alliance which draws on FBOs from different faiths, as well as ones emerging to address gender issues in contexts of particular religions to advance progressive gender agendas...Further there are networks and coalitions which mobilize around particular faiths, such as the Women Living Under Muslim Laws network.¹¹²

Additionally, it is important to **choose development partners based on common long-term objectives for rights and well-being**, not merely short-term expediency.

However, this is not to say that conservative religious and traditional groups should not be engaged at all, bearing in mind that engagement has a range of possibilities, from exploration to full partnership.¹¹³ These bodies are also community stakeholders, and often very influential ones. Initiatives which enable new and alternative discourses (as discussed in the preceding section) can result in these groups becoming allies, or at least minimizing hostility (as in the example of BAOBAB's work discussed above).

Supporting Those Who Challenge Religious Fundamentalisms

For rights-focused development initiatives to be effective, they must be rooted in local contexts and histories, not only in international discourses. Consequently, it is important to recognize the history of local struggles over rights and to build on them by supporting local, national and transnational organizations. These actors are

There is now strong evidence that the single most important factor in promoting women's rights and gender equality is an autonomous women's movement.

already fighting religious fundamentalisms, contesting narrow discourses, reclaiming and reconstructing religious and cultural resources, and expanding democratic and secular spaces.

Women's organizations have long been active in challenging and countering religious fundamentalisms. The Women Reclaiming and Redefining Cultures programme, for instance, successfully developed 12 strategies to counter disempowering cultural and religious discourses and claim women's rights.¹¹⁴ Similarly, Gokal et al document 18 case studies of resisting Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu fundamentalisms in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East.¹¹⁵

There is now strong evidence that the single most important factor in promoting women's rights and gender equality is an autonomous women's movement. A global comparative study that analyzed 40 years of data on violence against women from 70 countries concluded that strong feminist movements was the single most important factor in a country's willingness to address gender-based violence: "The autonomous mobilization of feminists in domestic and transnational contexts—not leftist parties, women in government, or national wealth — is the critical factor accounting for policy change."¹¹⁶

Development actors should make it a priority (or for those who already do, continue to make it a priority) to support the women's organizations which are already heading the struggle for human rights, gender and social justice in their communities. These organizations, because they are based on lived experience of discrimination, violence and inequality, tend to have unrivalled understanding of the way multiple forms of oppression intersect in their societies.

This makes it important that country offices and other **development actors are able to identify the in-region or in-country actors, and women's organizations in particular, who are already working to resist fundamentalisms and be willing to work with them.** This may entail looking beyond the mainstream or established organizations.

Funding women's rights organizations

Despite the recognition of the importance of women's rights and gender equality, women's rights organizations remain massively under-resourced in absolute terms¹¹⁷ and by comparison to other types of NGOs, often having access only to project funding for direct service provision.¹¹⁸

Whilst new actors deploying resources have entered the field over the last five years or so, much of those new resources are directed to individual women and girls, thus "watering the leaves and starving the roots."¹¹⁹ Lydia Alpizar puts this very clearly:

The steady and essential processes of organizing women, raising their consciousness, helping them analyze the root causes of their disempowerment, building women's collective power and collective strategies for change, supporting women to challenge the

cultural and social norms that justify their subordination—in other words, the core elements of a sustainable long-term struggle for transforming the institutions and structures that perpetuate both gender and other forms of discrimination and exclusion—are considered too slow and difficult to measure, and receive little or no support, except from a handful of insightful and experienced donors.¹²⁰

Srilatha Batliwala, analyzing the impact of the Dutch MDG3 Fund,¹²¹ notes the “significant amount of evidence...demonstrating how organizations with a strong focus on women’s rights and gender equality can “move mountains” in a relatively short space of time” when they are adequately resourced over a reasonable period of time, and supported to use the strategies they have crafted rather than donor-driven approaches. She concludes:

[It is] the lack of adequate resources—rather than lack of capacity to absorb and deploy more resources—[that] has been one of the key factors preventing women’s rights organizations and movements from having a greater impact. [The] data shows that when adequately resourced, women’s organizations and NGOs with a commitment to gender equality can go to scale, mobilize, empower, and organize far more women and unreached constituencies of marginalized women.¹²²

In this sense, **it is important that development actors (including donors) partner with and direct resources towards women’s rights organizations that build and support autonomous women’s movements.** Furthermore, in light of the length of time this takes, it is important that it include multi-year and core funding. This gives organizations the ability to scale up the strategies that they have already honed to resist religious fundamentalisms. Recently, there have been moves by some development agencies and donor organizations towards this approach, which represent welcome steps.

Strengthening resistance across border and issues

Religious fundamentalisms have gained great influence in part through working across religions and regions. Effective resistance similarly requires coalitions across national and religious borders. Development actors are in a position to help **strengthen networking and solidarity amongst women’s rights initiatives across nations and regions.** Such initiatives should include those for sharing information and strategies from others in the same broad religious traditions and similar contexts, and between those with different religious traditions but facing similar struggles.

As already discussed, religious fundamentalisms are bound up with other patriarchal ideologies, with global neoliberalism, militarism, and with weak and corrupt states. Therefore, it makes sense that resisting fundamentalisms must involve coalitions across different causes. Development actors are well placed to strengthen

Effective resistance requires coalitions across national and religious borders.

coalition-building and foster common understandings across different social justice movements and organizations.

Social justice actors may be “progressive” on some issues (e.g. climate change, or workers’ rights) whilst remaining “conservative” on others (such as women’s reproductive rights, or sexual orientation). Working to bridge single-issue understanding with intersectional analysis strengthens the recognition of the indivisibility of rights, challenges “divide and rule” tactics, and supports the transformation of power relations. It also improves the possibility of mass mobilization in cases where rights are threatened.

Conclusions

Religious fundamentalisms are gaining ground within communities, political systems, international arenas, and spreading unthinkable fear and destruction amongst ordinary people. Across regions and religious contexts, fundamentalists are responsible for increases in violence against women, regression in legal rights, and are policing women’s bodies and limiting their freedoms. There is an urgent need for action to push back. Development actors are in a position to take a strong role in this; indeed, they will need to do so if the aspirations of the SDGs are to become reality.

With women’s bodies being the first sites of control of nascent fundamentalisms, those in development must take cues from the analysis of women’s movements, taking action when they raise the alarm about threats to women’s rights and freedoms. Responses, too, must be informed by feminist understandings of power, thus moving beyond the usual security paradigms.

As it has been seen, religious fundamentalisms must be understood as a product of interrelated structural factors. Without such an analysis, responses risk being at best superficial and at worst misdirected — lack of structural analysis can lead to responses based on militarism and closing of civil freedoms. And where such responses prevail, sustainable right-focused development, and women’s rights in particular, will continue to be compromised.

Fostering an environment of pluralism and diversity is important for resisting the growth of fundamentalisms. This means promoting positive inclusive identities to counteract the bounded, othering identities fostered by fundamentalists. It means encouraging intersectional feminist understandings of power and privilege, and applying these ideas about culture and religion in order to see the latter as contested and power-laden. Furthermore, development actors themselves need to apply this analysis in the international arena; they must challenge the advance of fundamentalisms in norm-setting spaces by standing firm on human rights norms and refusing any justifications for discrimination based on religion, culture, or tradition.

Those leading development interventions, including emergency relief, must take all care to avoid giving credence or material support to religious groups with fundamentalist tendencies or conservative gender ideologies. To do otherwise is to gain short-term expediency at the price of long-term rights and development. Development actors need to identify progressive local groups with whom to partner, and to value and support women's movements and organizations, who have consistently been at the forefront of resisting fundamentalisms. Existing knowledge and strategies are already there to be built upon, and investment into cross-issue coalitions will help them reach new heights.

The overarching need is for development actors to engage critically with the rise of religious fundamentalisms, and do so with a sharpened gender analysis. This means conducting an assessment of how fundamentalisms affect the ways we strive towards the vision for development and gender equality set out in the SDGs, and altering strategies accordingly. This necessitates a more holistic view of development activities; one in which areas such as education, health, governance, peace and security, human rights, gender justice, and religious fundamentalisms are treated as intrinsically connected.

Recommended follow-up activities



Further research on the impact of culture-sensitive development interventions, comparing how these were implemented and what impact they had on women's rights and gender equality



Strengthened analysis of the diversity of religious organizations, especially religious development organizations



Increased spaces for cross-sectoral exchange and dialogue between women's rights organizations and development actors to better understand each other's priorities, work, and possibilities for collaboration



Initiation/strengthening of discussion amongst development actors, and also with multi-sectoral stakeholders, about religious fundamentalisms in relation to development work, human rights, and gender equality



Creation of safe spaces that allow respectful and open ways of discussing the relationship between religious fundamentalisms, rights, and development



Tracking and analysis of the impact of religious fundamentalist actors in the international human rights system, such as reservations on development goals and indicators pertaining to gender equality, and implementation of the SDGs



Inclusion of the issue of religious fundamentalisms in strategic plans of development bodies — a recognition of the problem, and an intention to explore the appropriate institutional responses



Increased empirical documentation of the structural drivers of fundamentalisms, such as flows of capital and arms, and the effects of neoliberal economics

Footnotes

1. UN 2015
2. UN 2015, paragraph 20
3. UN-DPI 2015
4. http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/MDGs/Post2015/OHCHR_UNEP.pdf
5. See, for example, Abelenda 2015.
6. This section draws on an unpublished concept note for the 2015 International Strategy Meeting of AWID's Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms program.
7. This paragraph draws on E. Win 2014 (unpublished).
8. See Tadros 2010, *Faith-Based Organizations and Service Delivery: Some Gender Conundrums*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. Tomalin (ed) 2011, *Development In Practice* Vol. 22 Nos 5-6 August 2012 for example
9. It should be noted, of course, that some development agencies have been amongst the leaders examining the intersections of religious fundamentalisms, development and women's rights.
10. The four preceding paragraphs are adapted from Win, 2014 (unpublished).
11. <http://www.newstatesman.com/international-politics/2014/06/isis-and-global-rise-non-state-actors>
12. *ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah fil-'Irāq wash-Shām* (DAESH) known as ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) or ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) in English
13. <http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-worlds-richest-terrorist-group-2014-8>
14. This is not to exonerate the Asad regime who have also killed thousands of civilians through indiscriminate airstrikes. Between 2012-2014, ISIS and the Asad regime have killed over 180,000 Iraqi civilians <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2014/>
15. The *Jamā'atu ahl al-Sunna li'l-Da'wa wa'l-jihād* (Association of Sunnah People for Proselytisation and Armed Struggle) are commonly referred to as Boko Haram, which in Hausa means "secular education is forbidden".
16. <http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>
17. <http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2014/07/window-on-eurasia-russian-orthodox.html>
18. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/02/12/central-african-republic-muslims-forced-flee> Muslims in CAR were approximately 24 per cent of the population. The Anti-Balaka attacks followed attacks by the Seleki rebel group (membership of which is predominantly Muslim, but which does not define itself in religious terms).
19. <http://thinkprogress.org/justice/2014/12/04/3599271/austin-shooter-christian-extremism/>
20. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/12/uganda-anti-gay-law-rise-attacks> ,
21. <http://prochoice.org/education-and-advocacy/violence/violence-statistics-and-history/>
22. The name refers to attributes of the Buddha, his teachings and devotees <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/27/us-myanmar-969-specialreport-idUSBRE95Q04720130627>
23. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/03/opinion/sri-lankas-violent-buddhists.html>
24. <http://www.sacw.net/article9608.html>
25. <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2013/224823.htm>
26. <http://www.thejc.com/node/67126>
<http://thinkprogress.org/world/2015/04/21/3649582/jewish-feminists-israel-defy-ban-read-full-size-torah-western-wall/>
<http://freemuse.org/archives/5152>

27. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/netanyahus-nation-state>,
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/are-not-citizens-with-equal-rights-201412214135428310.html>,
<http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/1.628365>
28. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/raipur/Christian-body-challenges-Bastar-village-ban-on-non-Hindus/articleshow/42155034.cms>
<http://www.sacw.net/article9608.html>
29. <http://brianpellot.religionnews.com/2013/12/19/journalists-face-religious-straitjackets-half-countries>
30. See for example, Sudan, Bahrain, Pakistan, and Canada. <http://end-blasphemy-laws.org/news/>
31. https://womenscaucusonasean.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/wc_concern_brunei-penal-code_final.pdf
<http://www.wluml.org/action/brunei-darussalam-fundamental-rights-and-freedoms-violated-under-new-shari%20%80%99-penal-code>
Stoning and other punishments related to ‘zina’ or sex outside of marriage are particularly directed at controlling women. See <http://www.wluml.org/resource/stoning-legal-or-practised-16-countries-and-showing-no-signs-abating> and Mir-Hosseini, Ziba, and Vanja Hamzic’. 2010. Control and Sexuality: The Revival of Zina Laws in Muslim Contexts. London: Women Living under Muslim Laws.
32. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16015&LangID=E>
33. Nigerian CSOs *et al* 2011
34. <http://www.reproductiverights.org/press-room/new-report-global-trend-of-expanding-legal-abortion-services-continues>
35. <http://www.pri.org/stories/2015-01-22/catholic-leaders-battle-against-free-birth-control-philippines>
36. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/apr/28/religious-campaign-eu-abortion-funding>
37. http://articles.philly.com/2005-08-24/news/25424871_1_al-qaeda-taliban-returns-zabul
38. Positions became polarized amid conservative refusal to move forward on language promising access to sexual and reproductive health services and reproductive rights. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/17441692.2014.917381>
39. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/susan-tolmay/csw-resisting-backlash-against-womens-human-rights>
40. <http://arc-international.net/global-advocacy/human-rights-council/hrc12/tv-fact-sheet/>
41. <http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/protection-family-resolution-increases-vulnerabilities-and-exacerbates>
42. <http://www.norad.no/globalassets/import-2162015-80434-am/www.norad.no-ny/filarkiv/vedlegg-til-publikasjoner/lobbying-for-faith-and-family.pdf>
43. <http://equalitymatters.org/blog/201105240010>
44. <https://www.justsecurity.org/26330/ga-reservations-gender-womens-rights/>
45. Chouin, Gérard, Manuel Reinert and Elodie Aparé 2014 “Body Count And Religion In The Boko Haram Crisis: Evidence From The Nigeria Watch Database” in Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security and the state in Nigeria, Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos (ed), West African Politics and Society Series, Vol. 2 African Studies Center, Leiden / Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique, Ibadan, 213 – 236
46. UN Human Rights Council 2012a Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, “Gender-related killings of women” A/HRC/20/16

47. See Sani and Mustapha 2015 for a brief overview of the literature conceptualising the processes of radicalisation distinguishing structural and systemic factors and individual factors.
48. Balchin 2011, 3. Horn 2010, Christian Fundamentalisms and Women's Rights in the African Context: Mapping the Terrain, AWID, 8. FATA Research Center (FRC), "Extremism and Radicalisation, an overview of the Social, Political, Cultural and Economic Landscape of FATA" as cited at Express Tribune 2012 <http://tribune.com.pk/story/409639/poverty-breeding-extremism-in-tribal-areas/>
49. Bismark Rewane, as quoted in This Day Live 2011 <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/income-disparity-between-north-and-south-widens/91392/>
50. As indeed for the Delta area of Nigeria also.
51. Balchin and Shankaran 2008, p. 23
52. Decades of structural adjustment programs in the global South, and more recent austerity measures in the global North have illustrated that neoliberal models cause inequality to grow, poverty to persist or worsen, and contribute to the feminization of poverty. There is now a huge amount of literature and studies demonstrating this. For an accessible overview see <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/mar/23/neoliberal-policies-discredited>. See also UNDP Development Reports since the mid-1990s. The idea of a 'feminization of poverty' dates back to the 1970s but was popularized from the 1990s by some United Nations documents.
53. See Balchin 2011a Towards a Future without Fundamentalisms p.3
54. Quoted in Balchin and Shankaran 2008, 23
55. See, for example, Sen, Balakrishnan et al 2010, Jolly et al 2004, DAWN 1987 and 2014 amongst many others.
56. This will be discussed further below in the section on partners.
57. <http://theconversation.com/why-hundreds-of-westerners-are-taking-up-arms-in-global-jihad-28302>
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/17/how-isis-persuaded-thousands-of-westerners-to-fight-its-war-of-extremism/>
<http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/07/world/isis-western-draw/>
<http://www.rferl.org/content/why-young-women-go-to-syria/26906089.html>
<http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/the-question-we-really-need-to-answer-about-young-jihadists#full>
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daoud-kuttab/how-to-win-the-ideologica_1_b_6610442.html
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/i-was-nearly-an-american-jihadi--and-i-understand-why-young-men-are-joining-isis-9710619.html>
58. See also George Monbiot on definitions of corruption and their use in the global North and South <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/18/corruption-rife-britain>
59. Emile Durkheim (1897) developed the concept of anomie as a social (not individual) explanation for the rise in suicide rates during capitalist industrialisation as resulting from rapid shifts in social norms resulting in social alienation, in particular a mismatch between professed values and ideals and what is achievable in a context of economic and social change, as older norms are no longer commonly held and newer ones have not developed into social facts.
60. Quoted in Balchin 2011a Towards a Future without Fundamentalisms, p. 17
61. For example, in both Somalia and Afghanistan, conflict-ridden over decades, with severe poverty and ineffective governance, increased civic engagement by youth correlated with higher propensity to violence. Wolfe and Kurtz suggest that as "much of Somalia is a society where most change occurs through violence, and few role models espouse non-violent change. So when youth feel capable of bringing about change, they may believe the best way is through violence."

62. <http://en.shiapost.com/2015/02/20/over-230-madrassas-receive-foreign-cash-in-balochistan/>
63. As part of attacking terrorism, the Pakistan government said in February 2014 that it would scrutinize all foreign funding by individuals or organizations to private entities. This has been widely interpreted as a rebuke to Saudi Arabia, though no countries were named (<http://www.dawn.com/news/1162720> <http://www.dawn.com/news/1165018>) and was received with mixed feelings by civil society organizations, as up until now, government scrutiny of external funding had been directed at NGOs (<http://www.civicus.org/index.php/en/link-to-related-newsresources2/2133-government-restrictions-on-foreign-funding-alarms-pakistani-csos-a-civicus-interview-with-qamar-naseem>).
64. Horn 2010, Christian Fundamentalisms and Women’s Rights in the African Context: Mapping the Terrain, AWID. An account of the history of the anti-gay legislation in Uganda is at <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2013-09-16-africas-new-colonists-rabid-anti-gay-american-evangelical-christians/#.VO8XecYwfOo>. See also <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/24/evangelical-christians-homophobia-africa>
65. For example, certain sectors of the Indian diaspora send funds to Hindu fundamentalist organizations and lobbied the UK and USA governments to rescind their decisions not to grant a visa to Narendra Modi based on Modi’s role in the 2002 Gujarat massacre <http://indiafacts.co.in/narendra-modis-visa-denial-still-an-unhealed-wound/> <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/indian-muslims-in-uk-want-modi-denied-visa/article1-1108850.aspx>
66. UNICEF on Twitter July 8, 2015
67. http://www2.kobe-u.ac.jp/~alexroni/IPD%202015%20readings/IPD%202015_9/Gender%20and%20Militarism%20May-Pack-2014-web.pdf pp. 15
68. This is made up by seven UN Security Council resolutions: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/wps.shtml>
69. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-uns-sustainable-development-goals-global-schizophrenia/5480114>
70. Imam and Yuval-Davis 2004, “Introduction”. Warning Signs of Fundamentalisms WLUML, Imam, Morgan and Yuval-Davis eds., WLUML, London, xiv
71. Srinivasan 2004.
72. This is discussed in more detail in the sections below entitled “Supporting those already resisting fundamentalisms”
73. This section (until “Framing Culture, Religion, and Rights) is adapted from Win 2014 (unpublished)
74. See the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted by UNESCO in 2001, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/diversity.htm>
75. See, for example, WLUML 2006 for the range of Muslim laws relating just to family laws and customs in the Muslim world.
76. See, for example <http://www.arsrc.org/features/sex-in-africa-is-more-diverse-than-gay-or-straight.html>, Tamale (ed) 2011, Nyeck and Epprecht (eds) 2013
77. Imam and Yuval-Davis 2004, xiii
78. Win 2014 (unpublished)
79. Thematic report A/67/287, <http://daccess-ddsny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/459/30/PDF/N1245930.pdf>
80. Some examples: Genesis 3:16 Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you (NIV) Exodus 20:17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s. 1 Timothy 2:11-12 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp

authority over the man, but to be in silence. Corinthians 11:3-10 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ. ... For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man... (NRSV)

81. See for example Luke 8:1-3 and 10:38-42, Mathew 27:55-56, where Jesus departs from the norms of his time in having women travel, learn and be with him as well as male disciples.
82. Qu'ran 28:224 Your wives are as a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how ye will.
Qu'ran 28:229 And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them. (Yusuf Ali translation)
83. Qu'ran Surah 4:1 O humankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord Who created you from a single person created of like nature its mate and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; reverence Allah through Whom ye demand your mutual (rights) and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for Allah ever watches over you
Qu'ran Surah 9:72 The believers men and women are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil (Yusuf Ali translation)
84. See for example Shah 2004 and Srinivasan 2004 on Hindu religious fundamentalism in India.
85. Emma Tomalin noted that development actors have “sometimes complained that they presented women with alternative interpretations, but they didn’t accept them.” Interview with Ayesha Imam November 19, 2014
86. See BAOBAB 2005 Women’s Rights in Muslim Laws and BAOBAB 2007 Women’s Human Rights in Christian Belief Systems
87. The facilitation guides were: to recognize that a diversity of beliefs exist sincerely; to jointly examine the bases for each; each person is entitled to defend their own position but not to impose it on others; the group would examine if there were areas of common ground.
88. See Imam 2005
89. UN Human Rights Council 2012b, Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights on the enjoyment of cultural rights by women on an equal basis with men, Farida Shaheed A/67/287, 6
90. UN Human Rights Council 2012b, 7
91. The term religious organizations is used in this paper, rather than the common ‘faith-based organization’ as being less value-laden. There is a large literature on definitions and roles of religious organizations in relation to development (see, for instance, Tadros 2010, Leurs 2012). In this paper it refers broadly to groups self-identifying, adopting and carrying out their mandates in religious terms.
92. <http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/06/when-faith-meets-disaster-management/>
93. See Tadros 2010 for example, as well as the footnotes to the section on Humanitarian Response below.
94. Olivier and Wodon 2012, Leurs 2012, Taylor 2012, Tadros 2010, Tomalin (ed) 2011, White et al 2012.
95. These two sections (“Development aid—the colour of money” and “Humanitarian response”) are adapted from Win, 2014 (unpublished)
96. For details, see Eman Ahmed, A Dangerous Mix: Religion and Development, WHRNet, July 2005, available at <http://www.awid.org/Library/A-Dangerous-mix-Religion-Development-Aid>

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103. <http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/news-features/nepal-earthquake-how-religious-groups-prey-on-the-victims-of-natural-disasters-20150429-1mw0fu.html>
104. Jawad Hussain Qureshi “Earthquake jihad: the role of jihadis and Islamist groups after the 2005 earthquake,” Humanitarian Exchange Magazine, Issue 34, July 2006, <http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-34/earthquake-jihad-the-role-of-jihadis-and-islamist-groups-after-the-2005-earthquake>
105. See Wodan and Olivier 2012 on the (often under-founded) empirical foundations of many claims about health provision by religious organizations
106. The now defunct US government agency that delivered HIV and AIDS services
107. Horn 2012
108. Horn 2012.
109. Balchin, 2011, 26-29.
110. UNDP 2014b, 10
111. <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/12/16/what-are-myanmars-buddhist-sunday-schools-teaching/>
<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2015/03/12/buddhist-nationalism-threatens-myanmars-democratic-transition/>
112. Tadros 2010, 8
113. See Balchin 2011 for a discussion of this.
114. WLUML and IWE 2011
115. Gokal et al 2010, Key Learnings from Feminists on the Frontline – Summaries of Case Studies on Resisting and Challenging Fundamentalisms, AWID
116. Htun and Weldon 2012:548
117. The median annual income of 740 women’s organizations in 140 countries in 2010 was USD20,000 (Arutyunova and Clark 2013)
118. The combined income of these 740 organizations was roughly 1/3 of that of Greenpeace worldwide, less than 1/10 of Save the Children International, and less than 5% of World Vision International (Arutyunova and Clark 2013)
119. Miller et al 2013
120. Foreword to the AWID studies (ibid) on women’s rights organizations funding,
121. The MDG3 fund was a grant programme of the Dutch government, which supported 45 projects worldwide with the aim of promoting equal rights and opportunities for women and girls. Batliwala et al 2013
122. Batliwala et al 2013

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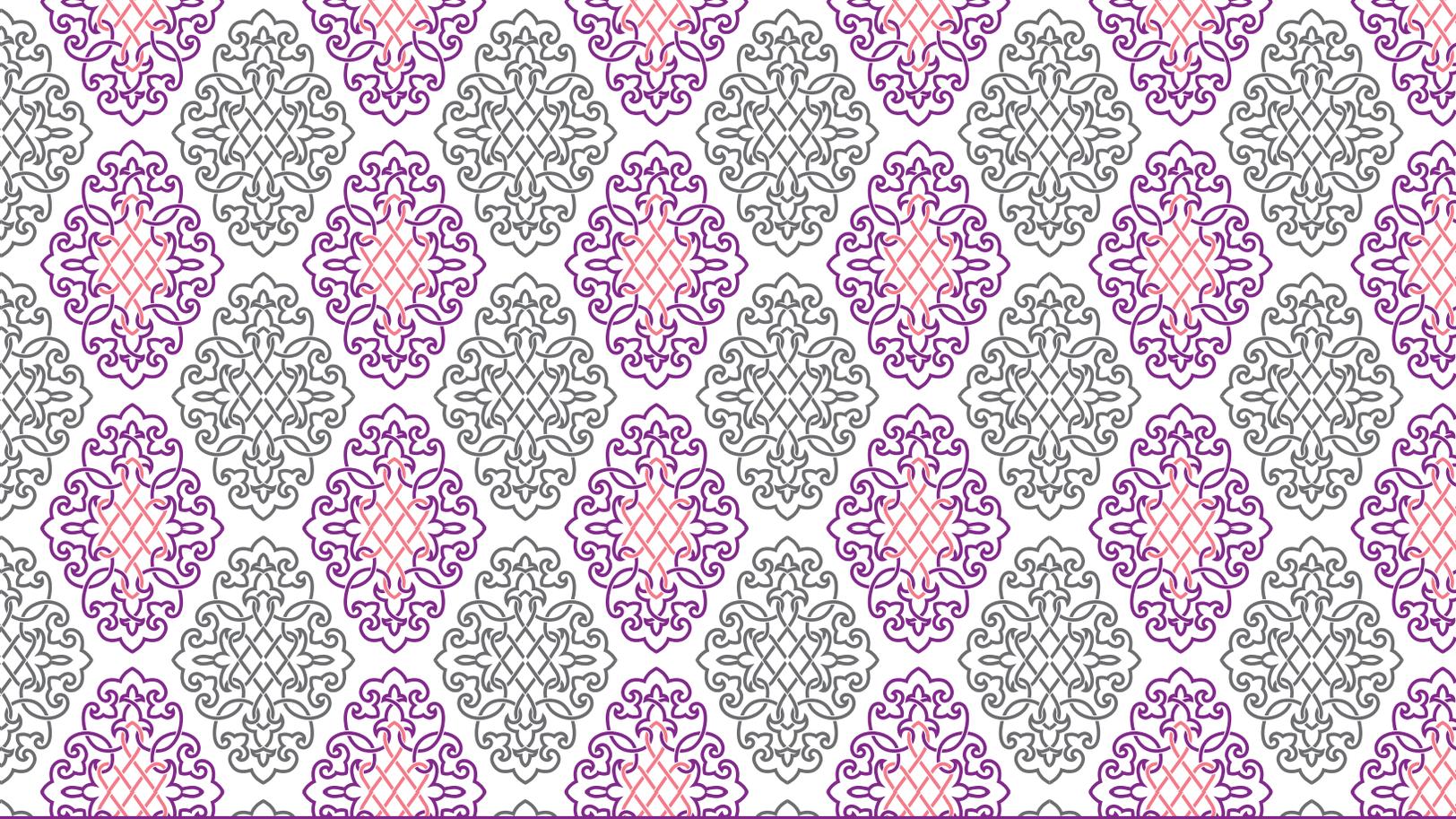
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Appendix 1: List of Interviews

Susana Fried	UNDP Deputy Cluster Leader MGM and Senior Gender, HIV and Health Advisor (to December 2014). Interview November 21, 2014
Maria Mejia	Director, Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir (Catholics for the Right to Decide) Mexico. Interview November 21, 2014
Amina Mohammed	Special Adviser to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Post-2015 Development Planning. Interview November 22, 2014
Ozonnia Ojielo	Regional Cluster Leader, Governance and Peacebuilding. UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa, Addis Ababa. Interview November 20, 2014
Emma Tomalin	Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, Leeds University, UK. Interview November 19, 2014
Ramona Vijeyarasa	Senior Programme Manager for Women’s Rights, ActionAid International. Interview January 28, 2015
Shawna Wakefield	Oxfam International Senior Gender Justice Lead. Interview November 18, 2014



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