



Praxis Paper 22

What is Distinctive About FBOs?

How European FBOs define and operationalise their faith

by Rick James

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1. What is the added-value of faith?

'Faith matters' in development¹. Faith-based organisations (FBOs)² have historically been in the forefront of service delivery and social movements in development, but have been disregarded by donors for decades. Religion has largely been viewed as anti-developmental. To survive in such a secular climate, many FBOs in Europe have downplayed their faith identity. But as the aid climate changes from 'estrangement' to 'engagement' with faith (Clarke and Jennings 2008), so FBOs are reassessing what their faith identity means to them and how it influences their work.

The Dutch government recently surprised some church-related agencies they fund by asking them: "What is the added-value of your faith to your work?" Other donors, like DFID and Sida, are funding research and convening conferences to better understand the relationship between religion and development. Post- 9/11 the World Bank has set up a Directorate on Faith.

Yet many Christian FBOs in Europe are reticent about their faith identity. They fear opening a 'can of worms'. They have good reasons to avoid the topic, as we shall see in Section 3. Many have reached a tolerable compromise between their faith and their work. This enables them to distance themselves from the worst excesses of their faith, access secular funding, keep a diverse staff team together, and support partners in a variety of faith contexts.

But is this enough? As donors push for international agencies to define their distinctiveness, as poor communities emphasise the importance of their faith, as some staff look for a direct connection between their faith and their work, FBOs in Europe will once again have to address their faith identity. As Mukarji points out: "For me the greatest challenge for charitable organisations such as Christian Aid is how you keep your identity and purpose clear. Our name says it; our heritage is Christian, so how do you keep that dimension of Christian Aid, and so that we're not just another development agency that has a prayer and a hymn?" (2005)

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In contrast, Muslim FBOs tend to be clearer about their faith identity³. Being younger, more homogeneously staffed and less dependent on public funds (traditionally funded by Muslim community *zakat* giving), Muslim FBOs have been less influenced by the secular environment.

The faith identity can have profound organisational implications. It can affect how they operate internally – the leadership, relationships, culture, and policies of an organisation. It can alter how they relate externally and with whom – partners, donors or other interested parties. It can affect how they build their own capacity and that of others. More attention to faith, however, is not necessarily a good thing. Faith has an undeniably dark side. It can do more harm than good. So engaging with faith has to be done with great care – in an inclusive, positive and sensitive way.

1 Clarke, G (2005) 'Faith Matters: Development and the Complex World of Faith-Based Organizations' *Journal of International Development* Vol 18 Issue 6. pp 835-848

2 Clarke defines a faith-based organisation as "any organisation that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within that faith". (2008:6)

3 Particular thanks to Ajaz Ahmed and Mamoun Abuarqub of Islamic Relief, and Susannah Pickering of Muslim Aid, for their invaluable insights into Islamic FBOs in preparation of this paper.

While INTRAC itself is not faith-based, as capacity building specialists we know how important values and beliefs are to any organisational behaviour and change. We believe that such contentious aspects of an organisation's identity are better managed consciously than ignored. We assume FBOs will be more effective in achieving their missions if their staff and board are in broad agreement as to what their faith identity means in practice. We believe, as with any organisation, that they are likely to be more effective if their strategy, systems and staffing are consistent with their core beliefs.

Based from Europe, our experience is primarily with Christian FBOs. Although we have increasing experience of working with Islamic FBOs though our work in the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia, we hesitate to generalise our conclusions to FBOs of other religions. It would appear, however, that our analysis is relevant at least to 'Western-style' FBOs from other religions, such as Islamic Relief Worldwide.

The initial focus of INTRAC's work will continue to be FBOs in Europe as those are the ones with which we have most experience, relationships and access. We accept that this risks maintaining a Eurocentric perspective. Our Western ideas about civil society and organisation may not be relevant to other religious cultures. But although secular, INTRAC cannot pretend away our European (and therefore Christian-heritage) base and experience. As we deepen and extend our work, so we will broaden our scope and perspectives.

INTRAC and faith-based organisations

INTRAC is not faith-based, nor faith-favouring. We work with all agencies regardless of their faith. We are a secular agency, but one which acknowledges the importance of beliefs and values in influencing organisational behaviour and performance.

FBOs are the best and the worst of NGOs INTRAC has worked with. Our experience of FBOs is mixed. There have many positives, but also a dark side to them. They can be the most exciting and effective, but also the most frightening and frustrating.

We are not theologians, but organisational specialists. We will therefore focus on how faith identity is interpreted and implemented in organisational life and relationships.

Limits of understanding

The term FBO is highly problematic. For some people FBO smacks of right-wing American politics. For others it is the foreign language of the aid industry. For many, the term 'FBO' conceals much more than it reveals. It gives the impression FBOs are the same. Yet FBOs are extraordinarily heterogeneous in the ways in which their faith identity plays out in their work.

FBOs are products of completely different world faiths. Even within each faith there exist highly diverse strains, whether we are talking about the Catholics, Methodists, Baptists, Anglicans, Reformed, Lutherans or Adventists in Christianity or Sunnis, Tablighis, Shi'as, Sufis, Wahabis/Salafis in Islam. Even the term 'secular' is "more multi-variant and complex than normally indicated" (Linden in Clarke 2008:75). To a degree our analysis will be limited by the necessity to generalise.

Furthermore there are radically different interpretations of faith in different cultural, social, political and geographic contexts. For example, FBOs in Europe are more like secular NGOs than like churches or mosques in Africa. Islamic agencies are different in sub-Saharan Africa than the Middle East. As the forthcoming Praxis Note on Islamic FBOs in Malawi states: "It is difficult to speak generically about Islamic FBOs because the Islamic element of their faith identity is not always the best basis for predictive behaviour analysis. This research has shown that the organisational leadership's understanding of religion is contingent upon their level of education, their ethnicity and the religious traditions they follow" (Saddiq 2009). Indeed some would argue that religion is so embedded in culture that the distinction is meaningless. Because of these substantial cultural differences, this paper concentrates on European FBOs (acknowledging the inherent cultural diversity even in that), and not FBOs

from Africa, Asia, South America or North America. We also focus on FBOs that are part of the recognised international aid system.

The organisational forms of these FBOs are distinct again. For example if we are talking about church FBO partners we might be thinking of any one of a number of distinct organisational forms, such as national denominations or regional dioceses; development department of the denomination; local church congregations; associations of churches; umbrella bodies; theological colleges; bible schools; Christian student unions; international mission agencies or missionary orders; Christian hospitals; 'para-church' Christian development agencies (e.g. Christian NGOs, missionary orders); associations of Christian NGOs....

We also know that faith is highly personalised. Each person interprets their own faith differently and to a different degree. Some people and organisations are more intense and 'serious' about their faith than others. Any generalisation even about 'FBOs in Europe' invites criticism for over-simplification. In addition, by treating FBOs as distinct, there is the danger of underplaying the universal 'human' element. FBOs as well as secular organisations are all staffed with human beings and therefore experience many of the same organisational issues and challenges. It is clearly impossible to separate the significance of non-religious values or religious values in individual people, let alone organisations. As Ian Linden points out: "Many people would not find the distinction between 'culture' and 'religion' meaningful" (Clarke and Jennings 2008:75).

Despite these limitations, it is necessary to develop a more nuanced understanding of what faith means to an FBO. How a faith identity plays out in FBOs is highly complex and contested. As Jeavons points out: "The current catch-all term FBO confuses and divides because no clear definition exists of what it means to be faith-based. The failure to recognise varieties of FBOs can lead to incongruous decision-making. One-size-fits-all language yields one-size fits all policies; what we need now is a whole wardrobe of options." (1997)

"The current catch-all term FBO confuses and divides because no clear definition exists of what it means to be faith-based."

Outline of this paper

This paper first analyses the changing context of faith in development. We observe the old certainties of the twentieth century and neat separation between faith and development breaking down. Instead of the predicted decline in religion, in most parts of the developing world, it is increasing. "A century on...the predicted secularisation of modern society looks far from complete. Over the past decade a global resurgence of religion, especially conservative religion, has transformed national and international politics" (Clarke and Jennings 2008:261).

We observe increased donor interest in the role of religion and development. Donors recognise the historical and contemporary contribution of FBOs to service provision and advocacy. Their value in grassroots reach and legitimacy with poor communities is more appreciated. Post-9/11 there is a general recognition of the power of faith to motivate action and change.

Yet many FBOs in Europe, particularly Christian ones, have been reticent to articulate too close a connection to their faith identity. They have been anxious to portray their professionalism in development and understandably want to avoid the inherent dangers of a faith connection being abused to manipulate staff and exclude others of different faiths, or no faith.

But as donors are asking agencies to clarify their value added, some FBOs are turning to their faith base and their partnerships with other FBOs. We identify ten areas of organisational life where faith can make a significant difference to an FBO. FBOs have important choices to make in the internal functioning of the organisation, its programmes with

beneficiaries and its external relationships. But these are contentious choices that need careful negotiation. The decisions FBOs make in these areas (consciously or not) make for very different types of FBO. A typology of FBOs may be useful to bring a more nuanced understanding of important differences between them.

European FBOs and donors need better understanding of the particular characteristics of FBOs in order to work effectively in partnership with them. We also need this understanding in adapting our capacity building content and processes to the particular nature of FBOs.

We believe that sensitive and inclusive clarification of faith by European FBOs will be beneficial for their long-term organisational performance. It will need conscious, visionary, and careful management to bring greater congruence between organisational beliefs and actions.

INTRAC is left wondering 'how do European FBOs define and operationalise their faith?'. We are initiating an applied research programme to explore:

- How big an issue is faith identity for European FBOs today? Who or what is driving the issue?
- How are European FBOs experiencing the increased donor interest in faith?
- What do European FBOs see as the value added that comes from their faith?
- To what extent are the organisational implications of faith identity (drawn from largely Christian experience) relevant for FBOs of other faiths (Islamic, Hindu or Buddhist)?
- How do FBOs clarify their faith base in an inclusive and positive way?

2. The changing context for FBOs

The climate for faith in development is changing. Donor scepticism is being replaced by active interest⁴. There has been "a resurgence of interest in the developmental role of faiths, even in such non-spiritual organizations as the World Bank" (Edwards 2002:46). Official aid departments in North America and Europe are now actively trying to understand and engage with the faith dimension to development. They are particularly interested in the local religious institutional expressions of faith, such as churches, temples, mosques or *zakat* committees. They see the potential for them to reach the poorest communities and provide a motivation to change that transcends a secular materialist incentive. Some donors, like the USA, have significantly increased their support to FBOs. Others, especially in Europe, are more supportive in their thinking, but their funding practice remains ambivalent.

In 2001 the World Bank invited representatives of nine of the world's religions to make a 'fundamental contribution to the thinking behind' the World Development Report (WFDD 2002:2). They have set up a 'Directorate on Faith', now called the Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics. According to Katherine Marshall, its first director, the World Bank now recognises: "we cannot fight poverty without tending to people's spiritual dimension and its many manifestations in religious institutions, leaders and movements" (Marshall quoted by Barron 2007).

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Such statements have been echoed at a variety of international conferences in the last fifteen years. Governments at UN conferences have committed themselves to:

- 'spiritual development' (UN Conference on Environment and Development 1992)
- 'initiatives that require a spiritual vision' (Habitat Agenda 1996)
- 'addressing spiritual needs' (Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development 1995)

⁴ Bakewell and Warren 2005

- recognising that “religion, spirituality and belief play a central role in the lives of millions of women and men” (Platform for Action 1995).

As the World Conference of Religions for Peace concluded in 2001, “Religious communities are without question the largest and best organized civil institutions in the world today, claiming the allegiance of billions of believers and bridging the divides of race, class and nationality. They are uniquely equipped to meet the challenges of our time: resolving conflict, caring for the sick and needy, promoting peaceful co-existence among all peoples.” In the same vein the Commission for Africa report recommended that donors channel increasing funding for service delivery through FBOs (2005:306).

Bilateral donors also exhibit new interest in engaging with faith in development. In the UK, Hilary Benn, the then Secretary of State for International Development wrote: “As I visit communities around the world I am always struck by the extent to which it is faith which inspires people to do something to help their fellow human beings” (DFID 2005). There is a “growing interest among DFID departments for a more systematic understanding of the role that faiths play in achieving the Millennium Development Goals” (DFID 2005:14). Consequently DFID launched five-year, £3.5 million research program on faiths in development in 2005. Faith is now prioritised as one of its eight strands for research.

Other European government aid departments are also seeking to develop their understanding in this area. In 2004 Sida convened a workshop to explore the ‘Role of Religion in Development’. Similarly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands has created a Policy Platform on this same theme.

The government in the USA has gone the furthest. President Bush almost doubled the US foreign aid dollars going to faith-based groups. In 2001 it amounted to 10.5% of aid, by 2005 it had reached 19.9% (Stockman Boston Globe 2006). In 2001 Bush commissioned the Unlevel Playing Field report, which through the 2001 Faith-based and Community Initiatives Act (also known as the Charitable Choice Act) weakened some of the rules designed to enforce the separation of church and state. Now church groups can use religious structures and have religious symbols on display in places where US aid is distributed. They are only encouraged, but not required, to make clear to recipients that they do not have to participate in religious activities. This was reinforced by the 2004 USAID ruling on ‘Participation by Religious Orders in USAID programs’ which stated that USAID cannot discriminate against organisations which combine development or humanitarian activity with “inherently religious activity, such as worship, religious instruction or proselytization”.

Donor recognition of FBO potential

The donor context for faith is changing as donors recognise that many FBOs, even more than NGOs:

- provide efficient development services
- reach the poorest
- are valued by the poorest
- provide an alternative to a secular theory of development
- ignite civil society advocacy
- motivate action.

Provide efficient development services

As donors are questioning the role of the state in service delivery, they are realising that in Asia, Africa and Latin America, FBOs have always been important in providing development services. FBOs provide vital services to the poor particularly in health and education. The extent of this contribution is now being recognised by donors. According to DFID,

FBOs provide 50% of health and education services in sub-Saharan Africa.

FBOs provide 50% of health and education services in sub-Saharan Africa (2005:4). Some see that faith-based provision is not only more efficient than state-run services, but because they are subsidised by the faith community, they cost the state less.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic and resulting need for care further demonstrates the importance of FBOs. One third of all AIDS patients in the world are served under the auspices of the Catholic Church (Headley n.d.)

Reach the poorest

FBOs are also in favour with donors due to their grassroots presence. For example, "the FAO reported that Islamic social welfare organisations were collectively the largest food donor in the occupied Palestinian territories after UNWRA" (Benthall 2008:23). FBOs are found even in the most inaccessible areas where government services do not reach. According to Kumi Naidoo of CIVICUS, "FBOs probably provide the best social and physical infrastructure in the poorest communities...because churches, temples, mosques and other places of worship are the focal points for the communities they serve" (2000: CAF *Alliance*, 5,1).

Are valued by the poorest

Poor communities are largely faith-based communities. In most villages there is a mosque, a temple, a church or a traditional healer. A World Bank study (Narayan 2000) concluded that "religious leaders and institutions were often the most trusted institutions in developing countries". Religion is still central to the social, cultural and moral life of these communities. "The worldview of the majority of peoples in the South, faith and religion are central to daily life. Spirituality, faith in God and connecting to the sacred in nature are an integral part of poor people's lives in many parts of the world" (ibid).

"Religious leaders and institutions were often the most trusted institutions in developing countries."
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Religions are also strengthening in importance, particularly in Africa where "people are converting in large numbers to Christianity...and to Islam" (Commission for Africa 2005:27). The vast majority of Africans are religious. "99.5% of people in Africa have some religious connection" according to Michael Kelly S.J (Barron 2007:3)

Provide an alternative to a secular theory of development

Religions broaden our understanding of development, bringing the focus back to human development, not merely income, GDP and economic development. Religion brings in questions of values and meaning. It links into people's sense of well-being. The paradigm shift to seeing development in terms of 'well-being' has also enabled faith issues to be more easily incorporated. Faith is a key aspect of cultural identity and well-being (Clarke 2007). As Goulet points out "most persons in developing countries still find in religious beliefs, symbols, practices and mysteries, their primary source of meaning." (1980). Embracing human development implies taking peoples' worldviews seriously. Thomas argues that successful development can only take place if "due attention is paid to the different ways in which people give meaning to the world and their existence in it" (2004:223). The introduction of social capital into the development discourse has also worked in favour of FBOs. They build and are a crucial repository of social capital (Thomas 2004).

Ignite civil society advocacy

The important historical and current contribution of churches in advocacy is also increasingly recognised. The church was at the forefront of the civil rights movement in the US; in the democratisation process in Latin America (though the influence of liberation theology); and in the Solidarity movement in Poland. Gordon Brown recently described Jubilee 2000 as the most important church-led social movement in Britain since the campaign for the abolition of

slavery two hundred years ago. In the aid world, the shifting role of civil society towards providing a countervailing power to the state and holding government to account has made FBOs more influential. In Malawi, for example, the Bishop's Letter catalysed the end of President Banda's dictatorship and the resistance of these same churches then prevented the next President from rewriting the constitution to extend his rule. Religions can provide a degree of protection to risky advocacy work – oppressive governments can balk at the international fallout from taking on religious bodies. As Mark Malloch-Brown, the UK Minister for Africa, Asia and the UN, said: "The enormous political voice of faith communities and their equally significant role in delivering social services, suggests that they are critical development partners and agents of change" (Marshall and Marsh 2003).

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Motivate action

There is also an increasing recognition that for most people logic alone does not lead to decisive action as effectively as logic along with belief. Religions therefore have a 'high coefficient of commitment'. As the Commission for Africa advised: "For the African state to become effective, it needs to understand what it is about religion that builds loyalty, creates infrastructure, collects tithes and taxes, and fosters a sense that it delivers material as well as spiritual benefits" (2005:27). Religion is a powerful motivating force in development through emphasis on concepts like compassion and service; unity and interconnectedness; and justice and reconciliation. It is particularly effective when issues relate to matters of ethics, personal morality and justice. People still make time for religious activities. It is faith motivates people to give *zakat* or tithe money. Perhaps most importantly, faith brings hope and courage to overcome their fear and powerlessness.

Addressing HIV/AIDS shows the influence that the faith has in influencing people's behaviour. Knowledge about HIV has not been enough to bring behaviour change. Faith groups have played a strong role in determining the appropriateness or otherwise of different responses, such as condoms, faithfulness and care.

The tipping point came with 9/11. It showed in a violent way the power of religion to motivate extreme action. Prior to that Jim Wolfenson the President of the World Bank was unable to interest the World Bank Board in engaging with religions. Indeed it was completely ruled out, but after 9/11 the Board reversed their decision. It became clear that faith was a powerful motivating force, for good or evil. The previous strategy of ignoring faith as irrelevant in aid was clearly defunct.

Ongoing ambivalence

There is undoubted greater donor acceptance of the importance of faith, but funding has not changed at the same pace. Certainly in the USA there have been considerable increases of support to FBOs and some Muslim organisations like Islamic Relief have "clearly noted an increased interest from various western institutional donors to actively fund our work"⁵. In 2008 Muslim Aid were awarded their first mini-grant from DFID for development awareness work in the UK. But on the whole donor attitudes in Europe are still largely ambivalent. Most governments still view development as a secular enterprise. They want to engage with the institutional forms of faith (the religious institution), but remain concerned about the spiritual dimensions of faith (belief in God). This spiritual element of faith can alter both the 'means'

⁵ Personal communication. Islamic Relief now raises 40% of its funding from official sources, up from 5% in the last 10 years. They now have a three-year partnership project agreement with DFID, the first Muslim FBO to have this status with one of its objectives to 'reflect on Islamic stances regarding development related issues'.

(spiritual power) and the 'end' (spiritual growth) of development. Not surprisingly secular donors still would like a sanitised separation between the institutional and spiritual elements. They believe: "It is alright for faith groups to be inspired by the love, compassion or sense of justice or moral obligation their faith bring them, but they should not use it to proselytize or influence the content of development" (Thomas 2004).

Interviews Clarke conducted at DFID revealed "significant concerns about the erosion of DFID's traditional secularism...They fear donor entanglement in sectarian or divisive agendas. They argue that faith identifies of the poor should not be privileged over their other myriad identities (such as class or gender)" (Clarke 2008:262).

FBOs can still have an undeniable dark side. As Father Sjeff Donders states: "We should realise that there is good religion, bad religion and very bad religion" (quoted by Hope and Timmel 2003). Pearson and Tomalin sound "warning notes about the ways in which the new-found enthusiasm of development organisations to engage with FBOs could jeopardise hard-won commitments to gender equality" (Clarke and Jennings 2008:65)

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In more prosaic terms, perceived performance in many of these agencies is closely related to the size of budgets disbursed. Many small FBOs close to the grassroots are not able to absorb large budgets easily. Most donors have little time or inclination to engage themselves with religious networks and establish trust necessary for effective development (ter Haar n.d.).

Furthermore while some Islamic FBOs have received increased official aid funding from agencies like DFID, others have been targeted for heavy scrutiny and some been blacklisted for alleged links with terror groups. So on the one hand, official donors are attempting to engage more with Islamic NGOs, while on the other "Islamic NGOs figure amongst the global casualties of the war on terror, particularly Saudi 'Wahabi' organisations" (Kroessin and Mohamed in Clarke 2008:206).

Such apparent donor ambivalence is why many FBOs, both Christian and Muslim, are still reluctant to articulate their faith too openly.

3. Reticence to articulate faith

Undoubtedly some FBOs have explicitly tried to define and articulate their faith identity. Christian FBOs like World Vision and Tearfund continue to invest considerable time in such initiatives. Some Muslim FBOs, such as Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid, have done the same. As Islamic Relief explain: "It is hard to avoid it!. Our name includes 'Islamic' and our logo features a mosque with two minarets! Post 9/11 Islamic Relief has made conscious decision to articulate its position of working with all ethnic and religious groups, and employs increasing numbers of non-Muslim staff."

The majority of FBOs, particularly Christian ones, have been more reticent. There are good reasons for FBOs to be wary of clarifying their faith identity too tightly. Many fear stirring up trouble by opening up the issue for discussion.

Most European FBOs operate in highly secular, 'post-Christian' societies. To a degree they are products of their environments. To survive they must adapt.

Faith is a personal thing. In some countries, discussion of faith is taboo; at best irrelevant, at worst regressive. Many do not want to emphasise the faith-base of their organisation because they fear that this will be interpreted as 'arrogance', saying to secular agencies 'we are better than you'. Faith is a

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flammable subject, which easily causes offence. There are diverse interpretations of faith and different intensities of belief. It is difficult for any organisation, even small ones, to reach a meaningful understanding of what faith is to them and what it means to their work.

Some FBOs react against the ways in which faith has been manipulated in the past. There are all too many examples of religion being abused in an un-developmental way, such as propping up apartheid in South Africa or maintaining the subservient role of women. FBOs do not want to be associated with such abuses and thereby some may distance themselves from their faith.

Others have downplayed the importance of faith in an effort to be more professional. They want to overcome the problems from believing that the motivation to 'do good' was enough. But some staff now feel they are too busy with demands of professional bureaucracy to integrate their faith. Heavy workloads with relentless deadlines make it difficult to be both professional and 'faith'-ful at the same time.

The need for many FBOs to work in 'restricted contexts' where another religion is the state religion means that FBOs downplay their faith in order not to offend host governments and communities (such as with Christian organisations in Afghanistan or parts of India). They do not want to attract suspicion and constraint.

Perhaps most influential, however, is the desire to attract secular funding sources. This encourages FBOs to dis-integrate their faith from their development work. The constitutional separation between state and religion makes European governments extremely sensitive to FBOs using public funds to propagate one faith over another. 'Proselytising' may be perceived by some as worse than corruption.

While Muslim FBOs appear to have less problem explicitly integrating their faith with their work (as *zakat* or obligatory almsgiving is the third pillar of Islam after belief in Allah and prayer)⁶, the mainstream Christian FBOs in Europe have found this more challenging. Clarke points out that "legislative conventions on Church–State boundaries, media antipathy...and the need for sensitivity in increasingly multi-cultural and multi-faith societies" have forced European FBOs to wear their faith lightly, to be 'quasi-secular' (2008:4). They have had to modify the language of faith to bring it into line with the dominant development discourse (Verhagen 2001).

European FBOs [have been forced] to wear their faith lightly, to be 'quasi-secular'.
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Some have gone further than simply modifying language. Many FBO recipients of government money feel they have to separate out the spiritual dimension in their mission. This can be a dis-integrating process for FBOs. Hovland's analysis of Norwegian FBOs concludes: "In this way they are splitting the very integrated value base that arguably gives them their added value... NORAD funding throws them into a somewhat schizophrenic mode." One Catholic sister describes this separation as "almost challenging the very authenticity and validity of being a missionary, fragmenting what in essence is an integrated whole and devaluing one aspect while valuing the other" (Barron 2007).

In consequence Plant's analysis of a sample of Christian FBOs in the UK concluded:

Many FBOs believe there is a direct relationship between faith and development, but are unable to give an adequate account of how faith relates to development...They find it hard, inconvenient or unnecessary to draw upon Christian scripture and tradition to shape rather than merely decorate them...in this case...it is difficult to see why it should be necessary, other than for fundraising purposes, to call it Christian at all. (2007)

6 Muslim Aid's Ramadan magazine in 2007 consciously tried to integrate the religious and development discourse. for example.

4. Distinctive organisational features

Yet as donors are asking for agencies to clarify their value-added and define their distinctiveness many FBOs mention their faith. This quickly reveals internal differences and confusion. As one senior Dutch FBO staff said: "We must clarify our faith identity – it is a matter of our survival."

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A faith identity can potentially make a considerable difference – positively or negatively. It depends how this identity 'lives' in the organisation. As Clarke points out: "The faith element of the FBO is not an add-on to its development activity. It is an essential part of that activity, informing it completely. This makes the FBO both distinct (to the extent that faith values imbue it very identity) and yet also reflecting a broader non-governmental response to poverty and development, sharing many of the same values" (2008:15).

Faith can be expressed through a number of organisational features. Choices made in these areas can distinguish FBOs from secular counterparts. Work with Christian FBOs⁷ reveals that faith can make a difference to:

1. Structural affiliation and governance
2. Values and staff motivation
3. Mission
4. Strategy and theory of development
5. Selection of partners and choice of beneficiaries
6. Faith practices and teaching in programming
7. Staffing and leadership
8. Organisational culture and decision-making
9. Constituency and sources of funding
10. External relationships

We examine each of these elements in more detail below.

Obviously different faith-based agencies will come to different decisions about how it chooses to apply its faith in these critical areas. Some will interpret faith more broadly or narrowly than others. There are different intensities of faith. FBOs "differ in the extent to which faith provides the impulse for action" (Clarke 2008:7). Different agencies from different parts of the religious body and different parts of the world will make different choices.

Because of these inherent differences many FBOs prefer to leave their definition of faith vague as this allows individuals to live and work with their own interpretation of faith. But whether done explicitly or not, choices will be made by default. These choices will indicate the 'type' of the faith base. There are already some useful typologies (Sider 2004 and Clarke 2008) which shed light on important differences between FBOs. Clearly leaders, boards, staff, supporters, donors, partners, regulatory bodies all have an interest in understanding what type of FBO they are dealing with.

Typologies of FBOs

Any typology will oversimplify complex, dynamic entities. Real organisations and programmes rarely fit into ideal types. But typologies can still be a useful starting point for understanding, provided their inherent limitations are acknowledged. FBOs and their programmes will fall into the grey area between the types or will combine elements of different categories. Different parts of the organisation display characteristics for different types and change over time. As one FBO said in response to this draft: "I think we actually

⁷ It is not yet clear how transferable these elements are to FBOs of other faiths.

move between the different typologies described here when carrying out different tasks and according to when it suits us!"

These differences may well be culturally nuanced and give rise to problems of interpretation. Furthermore, in any typology it is easier to identify the tangible ways that religion may be present, through observable and explicit phenomena, such as language, symbols, policies and activities. It is much harder to ascertain the behavioural manifestations of religion, such as values, like mercy and justice, motivate and give deeper meaning. This creates a problem for measurement, especially if behaviour does not mirror official policies. In addition, some faiths or denominations express their religiosity in more tangible and open ways than others. But this does not mean they are more 'faith-ful'. Two recent typologies merit consideration.

The first can be downloaded from <http://nvs.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/33/1/109>

Sider's FBO typology

Faith-permeated: the connection is evident at all levels of mission, staffing, governance and support. The religious dimension essential to program effectiveness.

Faith-centred: founded for religious purpose, remain strongly connected but participants can readily opt out of religious elements

Faith-affiliated: retain influence of founders, but do not require staff to affirm religious beliefs or practices (except for some board and leaders). They may incorporate little or no explicitly religious content, may affirm faith in a general way and make spiritual resources available to participants.

Faith-background: look and act like secular NGOs. They have a historical tie to faith tradition. Religious beliefs may motivate some staff, but this is not considered in selection.

Faith-secular partnership: whereby an FBO works together with secular agencies to create a temporary hybrid that resembles faith background.

Clarke (2008:32) uses a different typology to assist analyse the differences between FBOs:

Clarke's FBO typology

Passive: Faith is subsidiary to broader humanitarian principles as a motivation for action and in mobilising staff and supporters and plays a secondary role in identifying, helping or working with beneficiaries and partners.

Active: Faith provides an important and explicit motivation for action and in mobilising staff and supporters. It plays a direct role in identifying, helping or working with beneficiaries and partners, although there is no discrimination against non-believers and the organisation supports multi-faith cooperation.

Persuasive: Faith provides an important and explicit motivation for action and in mobilising staff and supporters. Plays a significant role in identifying, helping or working with beneficiaries and partners and provides the dominant basis for engagement. Aims to bring new converts to the faith or to advance the faith at the expense of others;

Exclusive: Faith provides the principal or overriding motivation for action and in mobilising staff and supporters. It provides the principal or sole consideration in identifying beneficiaries. Social and political engagement is rooted in the faith and is often militant or violent and directed against one or more rival faiths.

To a large degree where an FBO fits in these typologies will depend on how it chooses to operationalise its faith in the following areas:

i) Structural affiliation and governance

The most formal element of being faith-based is the registration and governance structure. This is usually a 'given' from history. Some FBOs are structurally affiliated to one denomination, such as many of the Catholic or Lutheran agencies; others to a 'brand' of the church (such as evangelical), others to a national church (such as Church of Sweden). In many countries, the mainstream Protestant churches have an 'official' relief and development agency (ICCO or Christian Aid).

Even within denominations there can be important differences. Linden highlights the organisational differences that arise for two large Catholic FBOs in the UK; CAFOD, with its governing body appointed by the Church; and Progressio, an independent lay organisation with no formal link to the church. Islamic Relief is more like Progressio in this as it relies on theological advice of religious scholars, but its trustees are laymen.

How this structural affiliation affects the organisation's work depends on the governance. A FBO's faith identity may be strongly influenced by the degree to which the board and trustees share a common faith and understanding of how it should be implemented in development programmes.

ii) Values and motivation of staff

The most commonly quoted value of faith in development is as source of motivation. Faith provides an impulse and a direction for action. As Wiktorowicz states: "What differentiates Islamic NGOs from their secular counterparts is...not the particular Islamic nature of their activities, but volunteer beliefs that they are promoting Islam through their work" (2001 quoted by Clarke 2008:35). The notion of 'witness' (rather than simply conversion) is strong in many religions. Most Christian FBOs in Europe describe themselves as being based on Christian/gospel principles of justice and compassion. For example, Catholic Relief Services state that: "The fundamental motivating force in all activities is the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it pertains to the alleviation of human suffering." Tearfund has outlined clear operating values for Christian development: "compassion, justice, character, cultural sensitivity, cultural transformation, accountability, leadership, empowerment for service, participation, sustainability and integration". These do not appear too dissimilar from Muslim Aid's values of "accountability, justice, compassion and empowerment".

But many of these values are shared by many secular agencies and indeed they may practice them more consistently. Faith-inspired notions of justice and compassion are so present in many cultural heritages that almost all NGOs would also publicly ascribe to such 'humanitarian' values. Yet faith can add a different dimension to these principles. It adds the notions of divine duty and of calling.

A recent INTRAC consultancy with Catholic nuns clearly demonstrated that there could be a tangible difference in commitment from faith. Their motivation and 'extremist commitment' to the poor came from a deeper place than simply holding onto humanitarian values. As the consultants said:

The nuns in particular were working from a sense of calling not career. They displayed extraordinary, long-term commitment. They coped with incredible difficulties in a sacrificial way "*Even if you are having an awful time in Soweto watching necklace killings you go on*". They expected testing and suffering and accept difficulties with humour. They were in a different league to career-oriented NGO workers.

iii) Mission

The mission of FBOs is often different to that of secular NGOs. This is because FBOs may have a different 'end' goal they exist to achieve. For some Islamic FBOs in the Middle East

for example, there are strong connections between charity and politics. More universal amongst FBOs, however, is that their definition of 'development' includes a spiritual dimension (consistent with their theological beliefs about the spiritual nature of human beings). The main mission choices consciously or sub-consciously made by FBOs are that 'development':

- has no spiritual dimension
- has a spiritual dimension, but we will not address that
- has a spiritual dimension and we aim for beneficiaries to be strengthened in their relationship with God
- involves conversion to a particular faith (proselytising).

Proselytising is a critical issue for both Islamic and Christian FBOs. As Kroessin and Mohamed assert: "Islamic charitable practice is often, but not always, coupled with *Da'wah* – inviting to Islam" (in Clarke 2008:188). Most Islamic organisations carry an element of *Da'wah*. Bellion-Jourdan argues that "the da'wahist attitude towards aid is always present: it justifies the universality of aid by the universal ambition of Islam as a religion destined for the whole of humanity" (quoted by Clarke 2008:197). But some Islamic FBOs such as Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid renounce proselytism (Benthall 2008), and emphasise instead that "there is no compulsion in Islam".

The sensitivity of this issue in European societies and governments has led some agencies to develop formal policies on proselytising. But in practice the distinction between spiritual development and proselytising is not so obvious. Policies at head office are not perfectly enacted in the field. When nuns pray with dying AIDS patients, is this proselytising? Is *Da'wah* proselytising if it is only an 'invitation' to Islam not a conversion step?

The distinction between spiritual development and proselytising obviously depends on who makes judgement. Rather than see proselytism as simply a black and white issue, there are many shades of grey in the middle. It may be that these grey areas are in fact full of colour, purples and golds, some light, some dark, but undoubtedly more complex and nuanced than simple black and white.

Perhaps we need to look at how such 'proselytising' is carried out. As Chester says: "A commitment to gospel proclamation does not mean a commitment to bad, uncontextualised, manipulative or crass gospel proclamation" (2002:12). A simplistic, black and white attitude can be counter-productive, as Hovland's analysis of one Norwegian FBO concluded: "This separation does not seem to stand much chance of bring anything other than an exceptionally theoretical exercise...They are splitting the very integrated value-base that arguably gives them their added value...One could say NORAD throws them into a somewhat schizophrenic mode" (2005).

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iv) Strategy and theory of development

Faith can and should also affect the strategy of an FBO. Their beliefs about the process of human change should affect the way they do development. Theology has practical implications.

One obvious and important implication of belief is whether development is a human process of change or involves divine power to effect human change. FBOs that believe that divine power is part of the development process should operate in a different way to those who do not. One indicator of this is the importance given to prayer in the organisation's life and work. Prayer expresses a human dependence on God. For some FBOs prayer is an integral part of

what they do, but others display a somewhat ambivalent attitude, exhorting supporters to pray, but excluding it from internal organisational processes or in relationships with partners.

Faith can also affect an FBO's strategy in terms of its overall approach to development. FBOs feel obliged to respond to short-term, immediate needs. In many FBOs this leads to the common welfare-oriented approach amongst both Christian and Islamic FBOs. In contrast, other FBOs, for example Catholic FBOs from a more 'liberation theology' background, take a much more empowering approach.

Islamic Relief advocates for closer examination of Islamic teachings that will take agencies beyond food distributions and providing medical care, to building poor people's self-reliance and economic independence. They have gone further than most Islamic FBOs to consciously worked on developing its stances and policies from an Islamic perspective (such as on reproductive health, HIV and AIDS and gender justice). They feel this will help redress some of the current cultural beliefs and practices currently mistakenly attributed to Islam; help the organisation express its identity internationally as a holistic and inclusive organisation, and to engage meaningfully in the international discourse on development.

In mainstream Protestant FBOs in Europe, however, "Theology has predominantly played a peripheral and secondary role – one which has tended more to confirm actions already taken. It has tended to follow rather than map out. Most staff believe that theological reflection has little or nothing of substance to add to the work being done and to the ordering of priorities" (Riddell 1993).

"Theology has predominantly played a peripheral and secondary role – one which has tended more to confirm actions already taken. It has tended to follow rather than map out."

v) Faith practices and teaching in programmes

Faith can make a difference to development programmes in the field. Many FBOs are in the same position as one who admitted: "We have not taken professional approach to our faith. We have not really considered how faith is integrated into our programmes".

"We have not taken professional approach to our faith. We have not really considered how faith is integrated into our programmes."

There are a number of ways in which FBOs can integrate their faith practices and teaching in their programmes. Again, different agencies do this in different ways. Some FBOs:

- take a clearly secular approach to development to ensure no pollution between the spiritual and the material
- use spiritual symbols and structures in development work (such as using church buildings, temples or mosques to distribute aid, or linking development projects with religious meetings)
- use spiritual teaching to promote change, such as Catholic Social Teaching or *hadith*
- use spiritual practices (e.g. prayer, devotions) without direct evangelism. The goal is spiritual support and development without proselytising.
- undertake evangelism activities, where the goal is conversion.

vi) Choice of beneficiaries and partners

Faith-based agencies can also be distinct in their choice of beneficiaries and selection of partners. For many FBOs an approach of non-discrimination towards beneficiaries of a different faith is absolutely critical. They believe it is absolutely essential to adhere to International Red Cross codes of conduct of non-discrimination. They offer assistance regardless of race, gender, belief, nationality, ethnic origin or political persuasion.

Other FBOs, however, are intentionally exclusive in focussing on members of their own faith. According to Ferris of the IFRC: "Jewish and Islamic NGOs primarily serve members of their own religious communities" (2005:317). Certainly the need to use *zakat* support to benefit Muslims biases some Islamic FBOs towards Muslims, but others take a more inclusive approach by setting up separate accounts to channel non-*zakat* funding to people regardless of religion (Saddiq 2008:9). For example, while many Muslim agencies restrict their support largely to Muslim beneficiaries, Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid both extend support to non-Muslims in many places.

While one agency may be clear about its stance on this issue, development programmes are often implemented through local partners. These local partners may have a different view about the value of targeting benefits to members of the faith. This is an important element to explore in all faith-based partnerships.

FBOs can also be distinct from secular NGOs in their choice of partners. As one FBO recently commented: "Our faith identity is seen 'more in who we work with, not how we work'". For some FBOs, they partner exclusively with FBOs of the same faith and denomination, such as local churches or Islamic associations and madrassas. Other FBOs are more inclusive and work with FBOs of other faiths and of no faith. Many of the mainstream FBOs in Europe have moved away from their traditional support to church-based development agencies in the South in an effort to focus more on development results. The increasing secularisation of their partner portfolio has raised questions about their distinctiveness and led some to reverse this trend. CORDAID, for example, in preparing for a new strategic plan 2006-10 highlighted one of their core areas for exploration was 'cooperation with the church and church-related organizations'. They are profiling themselves as 'more of a Catholic organization' and seeking to increase the proportion of Catholic partners.

"Our faith identity is seen 'more in who we work with, not how we work'".

vii) Staff and leadership

To the degree that national labour laws allow, FBOs have a choice in how much 'faith' they look for in recruitment of staff. Many Christian development agencies require merely that staff 'have respect for' the faith base, share the values of justice and compassion, behave and dress in a way consistent with the tenets of the faith, but do not necessarily have to actively share that faith. This has meant that as Linden points out: "An increasing number of staff of Christian agencies, particularly in policy departments, are not believers, while this is not the case for the Muslims" (2008:89).

"An increasing number of staff of Christian agencies, particularly in policy departments, are not believers, while this is not the case for the Muslims."

Others require a definite faith commitment for 'key positions' depending on the function of the role. At leadership level in FBOs, faith commitment is more frequently required. Christian Aid for example requires that its leaders be Christians, but not its other staff. Still others even require membership of a particular denomination. The Salvation Army, for example, says that this "personnel policy of the organisation is key. Officers have to believe in the mission and also embody the mission".

viii) Organisational culture

The leaders' attitudes to faith can obviously influence how distinct is the organisational culture of an FBO. This culture can be visible through the rituals of the organisation. For example, staff may participate together in organised religious practices, such as prayer meetings or services. For some FBOs participation is voluntary. For others it is mandatory.

...extent to which the 'holy virtues' of humility, compassion, patience, forgiveness, diligence, generosity, self-control, honesty are lived out in the day-to-day frustrations in the office.

Faith can also affect the ways that decisions are made (such as prefacing discussion and decision with prayer). Some agencies actively create opportunities and support the spiritual development of staff. Others believe this should be the individual's responsibility.

But more than simply rituals, faith can influence relationships. What may be more important for FBOs for example, is the extent to which the 'holy virtues' of humility, compassion, patience, forgiveness, diligence, generosity, self-control, honesty are lived out in the day-to-day frustrations in the office.

A faith identity can also contribute to a different sort of team spirit. For example, in INTRAC's work with Catholic nuns, one consultant observed there was a "remarkable unity between 70 nuns whether 80 year olds from Ireland, 20 year olds from Nigeria, or 30 somethings from Peru. These relationships were not without their tensions, but there was something more that kept them together".

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But faith identity can also encourage a more hierarchical leadership style. With FBOs led by religious leaders (more frequent outside Europe), there is often an extra dimension of power because they have spiritual authority. What they say can be interpreted as the word from God. As a result some leaders in FBOs have much greater power in promoting or blocking change. Some FBOs can also have more 'closed' organisational culture, as the two forthcoming Praxis Notes from Malawi demonstrate. There can be considerable FBO unwillingness to admit any weakness for fear of washing dirty linen in public.

ix) Constituency and sources of funding

Funding (financial and in-kind) for FBOs can come from a variety of sources, faith-based and secular. Support can be given by: individuals with faith; religious institutions; government; trusts or the general public. For example, much of the money for Islamic FBOs in Europe comes from individuals motivated by religious responsibilities, rather than from religious institutions such as mosques. Ferris argues that one criterion for being faith-based is that financial support must come from religious sources, though she does not specify how much (2005).

The mix of funding is a conscious choice open to an FBO. For example in the UK, "In the face of declining church attendances, Christian Aid is intentionally moving away from its faith-based constituency to raise money from a non-faith based general public. It is increasingly incorrect to suggest that Christian Aid's supporters lie exclusively 'within the churches': they lie both within the churches *and*, increasingly, well beyond them."

"Funding plays a major role in determining the character and agenda of a given institution".

In so far as funding constrains or influences strategy it can make a big difference where support comes from. Berger's analysis of religious NGOs in the USA concluded: "Funding plays a major role in determining the character and agenda of a given institution". The faith base of the funder may influence how the FBO operationalises its faith. Funds may be restricted to particular purposes. Secular sources of funding, such as government or the general public, are likely to have greater reticence about integrating faith in development, than supporters from a particular faith constituency.

Faith-based funding can also bring with it particular restrictions. Many Islamic FBOs receive a significant proportion of their funding from obligatory giving – *zakat* – from Muslims. The Qu'ran stipulates certain rules on the spending of *zakat* money. Traditionally many believe that this funding can only be used to benefit Muslims. However, this may be changing as

FBOs like Islamic Relief have encouraged and benefitted from more modern interpretations that enable *zakat* and *sadaqa* giving to be used for those in most need (Benthall 2008:6).

It can also affect accountabilities. Kroessin and Mohamed point out that *zakat* funding “may create a lack of accountability and transparency, given donors anonymity on the basis of Islamic sentiment that alms given discretely are better than those publicised” (in Clarke 2008:193). Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan conclude that amongst the voluntary sector in the Islamic world: “a serious lack of accountability is widespread” (2003:107). Conversely Islamic Relief note that *zakat* funding may encourage greater accountability to beneficiaries “who are much more demanding of Islamic FBOs...because they feel they have a right to that money” (personal communication).

x) External relationships

Faith can affect an FBO’s external relationships in a variety of ways. For example, many FBOs are part of global networks. This gives them an international ‘club’ to belong to. For example, many Catholic FBOs belong to the CARITAS network, with 162 national members worldwide. The highly networked Ismaeli communities worldwide may be less institutional, but are powerful particularly in fundraising.

FBOs may be distinctive in their ability to bridge legitimacy at grassroots level with global reach and influence. Many of the FBOs INTRAC has worked with, whether nuns or Aga Khan, are respected and trusted by local people. They have a different quality of relationship with communities to many NGOs. But they also have access to global decision-makers through their international structures.

Another way in which faith can affect external relationships is how the FBO chooses to work with other faith groups. There appear to be three main theological standpoints:

- separation from others
- ecumenism (cooperation with groups from the same faith)
- inter-faith (cooperation with other faiths)

Different FBOs make different choices in this area.

In recent years there appears to have been a marked increase in the number of inter-faith partnerships in development. Muslim Aid for example have entered into a global partnership with the United Methodist Committee on Relief; Christian Aid and Muslim Aid have collaborated on the Love Water Love life campaign; CAFOD and Islamic Relief have developed a Memorandum of Understanding which entails that they transfer funds to each other where the other has a presence and where they are not operating...Such collaboration is obviously a key hope for interfaith initiatives like the Tony Blair Foundation.

5. Conclusions

From INTRAC's experience of working with a wide variety of FBOs over the last 16 years, as well as by a recent literature review on FBOs, we have arrived at important conclusions.

Faith is no longer the taboo subject it once was in aid circles. There is increased donor interest in understanding the role of faith in development and enthusiasm for engaging with FBOs. They want to become 'faith literate'. But in Europe government relations with FBOs are still ambivalent. Tensions still exist about separating the secular from the spiritual, although interestingly Islamic Relief observes: "governments tend to be more accommodating with Muslim FBOs – perhaps because they work largely with Muslims and religion is more integrated into the daily life of Muslims" (personal communication).

Organisational theory and INTRAC experience suggest that organisations are more effective if they have a clear identity and their beliefs and values permeate throughout their organisation. We believe that a clearer identity is likely to lead to a more effective organisation. We assume that the historical separation by Christian agencies in secular Europe is not organisationally healthy. We observe that Islamic agencies may be less prone to this separation.

We identified ten areas of organisational life where faith can make a significant difference to an FBO. These areas relate to choices made in the internal functioning of the organisation, its programmes with beneficiaries and its external relationships. But there are contentious choices in these areas. The choices made lead to very different types of FBO. A typology may be useful to bring a more nuanced understanding of important differences between FBOs.

We believe that European FBOs will be more effective if their choices about operationalising faith in one area are consistent with their choices in other areas. This consistency is needed to realise potential comparative advantages. We also believe that the organisation will be much stronger if there is broad consensus on these choices amongst staff, rather than allowing major inconsistencies to fester below the surface.

Although it is risky and uncomfortable we believe that sensitive and inclusive clarification of faith by European FBOs will be beneficial. It will not occur naturally or by accident. It needs conscious, visionary, sensitive leadership. Organisations like Islamic Relief, Tearfund and World Vision for example have ongoing work in this area. But perhaps this is because they are starting from a more homogenous identity. For others with a less clear cut faith-base and more diverse staffing, the process may be more costly.

This is why the process needs to be done well and 'do no harm'. Faith should not be abused as a weapon for exercising control, nor to encourage judgmental, exclusive and intolerant attitudes. Clearly embarking on such a process is not without risk. It carries the danger of being manipulated and fuelling misunderstanding and disaffection. Addressing faith needs to be done with great care and in an ecumenical spirit. It needs to be done sensitively and inclusively, with compassion and in ways that lead to greater self-awareness and humility.

Donors and European FBOs need to better understand the particular characteristics of FBOs in order to work effectively in partnership with them. We also need this understanding in adapting our capacity building content and processes to the particular nature of FBOs. We begin to explore the implications of faith for capacity building in the two forthcoming Praxis Notes with church and also Islamic groups in Malawi.

Outstanding questions

Yet this paper may raise more questions than answers. The beliefs and assumptions we have, largely borne out of experience with Christian NGOs, need testing with a variety of denominations and also faiths. We are not sure how relevant our conclusions are relevant to other religions.

INTRAC will be initiating a research project to explore how FBOs in Europe define and operationalise their faith. This will involve finding out:

- How big an issue is faith identity for European FBOs today? Who or what is driving the issue?
- How are European FBOs experiencing the increased donor interest in faith?
- What do European FBOs see as the value added that comes from their faith?
- To what extent are questions of identity, distinctiveness, partnerships and capacity building drawn largely from INTRAC experience with Christian FBOs echoed by FBOs from other faiths - Islamic, Hindu or Buddhist?
- How do FBOs clarify their faith base in a way that is inclusive and positive?

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