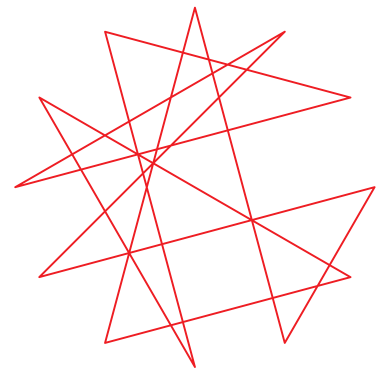
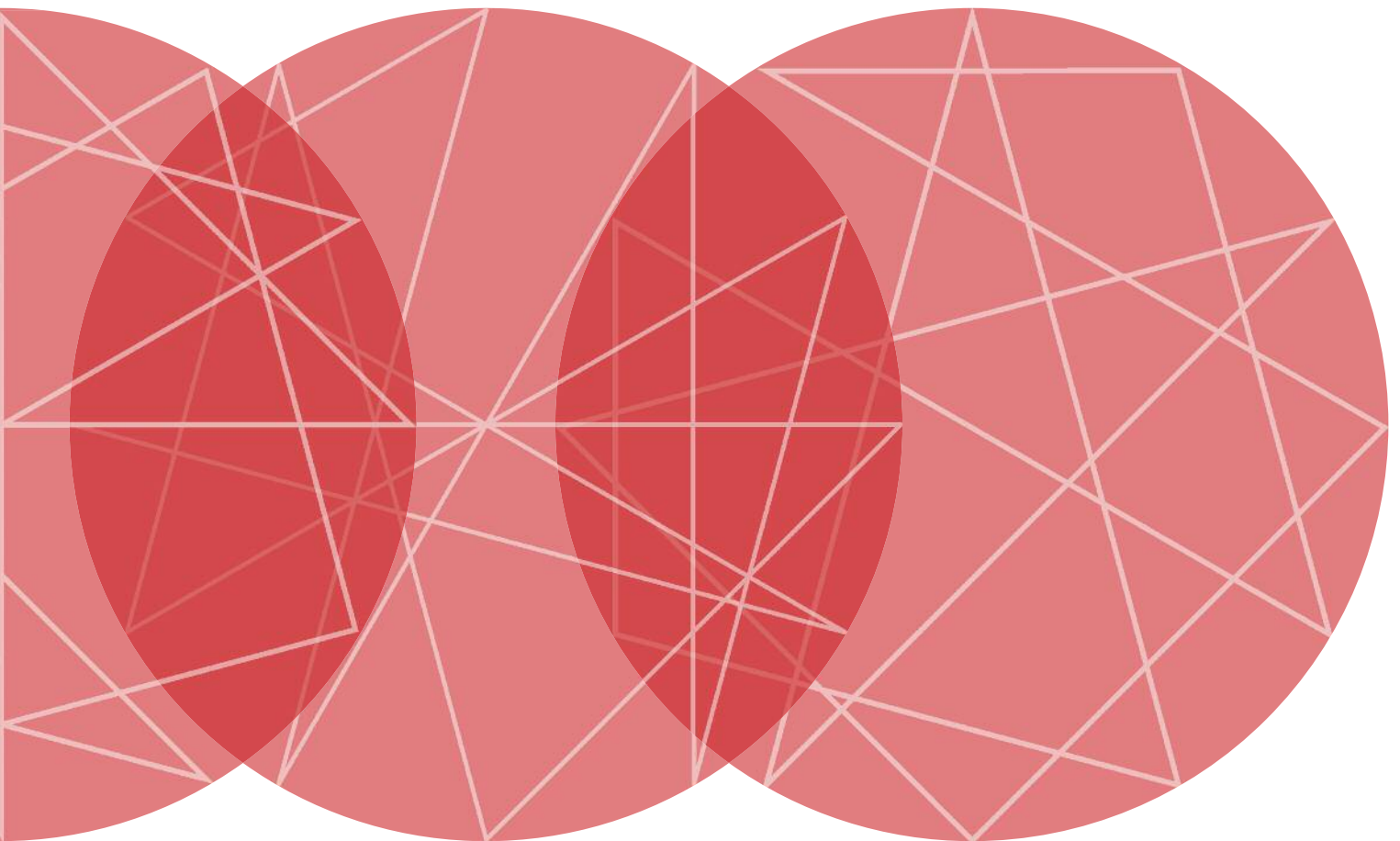


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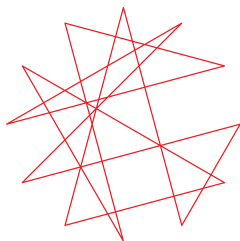


# Security Risk Management and Religion:

Faith and secularism in  
humanitarian assistance



eisf



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EISF and Lucy Hodgson are very grateful to Bruno de Cordier for providing the section 'Historical antecedents' along with additional expertise and research support. Dr Bruno de Cordier is a professor at the Department of Conflict and Development Studies of Ghent University. Before joining academia, he worked as a field officer and programme coordinator in the humanitarian aid sector, especially for the UN, in the former USSR and South Asia. He wrote his doctoral thesis on Islamic aid organisations, and researches and lectures on the political economy of humanitarian aid and on identity issues.

Special thanks also to Christina Wille of Insecurity Insight and Larissa Fast of the Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame for providing data from their Security in Numbers Database (SiND) and drafting the section 'Humanitarian access and faith'. The SiND documents incidents affecting the delivery of aid in stable and insecure environments. It covers threats and violence against aid workers (including kidnapping, death, and injuries) and aid agency infrastructure as well as general impediments to aid delivery and access for a range of humanitarian and medical providers. More information and additional data can be found at [www.insecurityinsight.org](http://www.insecurityinsight.org).

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# Contents

<b>Preface</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>1 Humanitarian Assistance and Religion</b>	<b>04</b>
Historical antecedents	04
Humanitarian action post-9/11	08
Humanitarian access and faith	09
Perceptions of humanitarian and religious values and identities	11
Values	11
Identity	12
Security challenges linked to religious/secular perceptions	13
Religious and secular proselytism	15
Misconceptions of faith and risk within the humanitarian sector	16
<b>2 Security Risk Management and Religion</b>	<b>17</b>
Context assessment	17
Context analysis	17
Analysing the religious dynamic	18
Actor mapping	20
Negotiating access with religious extremist groups	21
Situational analysis	22
Threat analysis	24
Vulnerability analysis	26
Risk analysis	27
Security strategies: the importance of acceptance	30
Key area: faith/secular identity	30
Key area: relationship-building	31
Key area: faith literacy	31

Organisational management	32
Staff management	32
Image management	33
Incident management	34
Working with partner agencies	34
Funding and donors	35
Conclusions	36
<b>3 Tools and Guidelines</b>	<b>37</b>
A Faith-sensitive security management	37
B Integrating religion into the security management framework	38
C Integrating religion into context analysis	39
D Organisational values, identity and image	39
E Faith considerations and measures to take in risk mitigation	40
F Training and learning	41
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Bibliography and Resources</b>	<b>43</b>

# Preface

Religion is both an actual and perceived driver of political, social, cultural and economic decisions in many places where humanitarian aid is delivered. Humanitarian agencies can enhance security risk management by understanding the religious dynamic of each operating environment and considering how their values, mandate, composition and perceived religious identity are articulated and viewed. This understanding is equally relevant to faith-based and secular agencies alike. Within the humanitarian sector there are different opinions as to the role and relevance of religion to security practice and to the wider sphere of humanitarian principles, identity and delivery of humanitarian aid. In contexts where religion permeates all aspects of society, nationals, including national staff, may have a lack of understanding of secular values or feel uncomfortable with them. Understanding personal or organisational faith, and the religion and religious dynamics of the operating environment, may impact security risk management.

There is a practical need, both on the ground and in terms of strategic risk management, to think about the implications of the religious dynamic for security, acceptance and access. Although the existing Security Management Framework does provide space to examine the impact of religion in determining risk and informing risk reduction measures, there is a utility in having further tools to help in doing this in practice. Aid agencies need to do more than just understand the values and motivations of religious actors. They need to analyse how these impact on programme delivery and staff safety and security. Links between religious and secular values of assistance can in some circumstances be used to improve programming and increase acceptance. In a changing global environment, where both religion and Western secularism can play an increasingly divisive role, wider debate is needed to examine the complexities of delivering relief and development aid.

*Lucy Hodgson, 2014*

## Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

‘There is an arrogance of secular agencies in that they consider themselves to be neutral. Nobody’s neutral. [We] need to go with humility into other people’s space. Secular agencies perceive themselves to be value neutral, but in fact are far more vehement about their value system than faith-based agencies.’

*Key informant, Islamic agency*

Religion plays a pivotal role in the lives of many, with over 70% of the world population identifying as members of a religious community.<sup>1</sup> Religion influences the values, beliefs and behaviours of groups and individuals both within the humanitarian sector and within its operating environment. Opinions, values, understanding and actions can influence the risk environment. Historically, religious organisations and motivations have been a driving force in the provision of relief and development assistance. Today, faith-based organisations (FBOs)<sup>2</sup> continue to play a key role in the delivery of aid, both as part of the international humanitarian relief system, and as an alternative source of assistance.

This report examines the impact that religion has on security risk management practice for humanitarian agencies<sup>3</sup> and considers whether an improved understanding of religion can improve the security of organisations and individuals. This report also studies how religion (and secularism) can impact and influence the identity of an organisation and the values, beliefs and practices of staff and partner agencies. In order to do this, differing opinions, approaches and vulnerabilities between secular and faith-based agencies are examined. We assess how understanding the religious dynamic can assist with the selection of an appropriate security strategy, in particular with regard to the development of an effective acceptance strategy.

The study is designed to be of interest to faith-based and secular humanitarian agencies alike, and references ways to increase debate and dialogue within the sector to improve understanding of religion and its impact on risk management for all agencies.

The majority of the agencies consulted within this study work along the relief-development continuum, running or supporting immediate humanitarian interventions, as well as being involved in longer-term development, human rights or peace-building work. Whilst this study is focused on the humanitarian side of the sector, it also incorporates learning from mission societies, and development and human rights interventions, in order to capture best practice.

## Objectives

The objectives of this research paper are to:

1. Generate increased understanding of the relationship between religion and risk within humanitarian action.
2. Examine the relationship between security risk management and religion, assessing:
  - How the role and importance of religion in the operating environment can be better assessed and understood within context analysis.
  - How understanding the religious dynamic can inform a security strategy mix and risk reduction measures.
  - How religion can affect image, perception and acceptance.
  - How current risk management tools and practices can be improved to take the religious dynamic into account more effectively.

## Methodology

Background research included reports and publications from the development and academic sector on the role of religion within development, as well as reports and guidance from the humanitarian sector on security risk management and acceptance.

<sup>1</sup> UNFPA (2013).

<sup>2</sup> When the defining factor being referred to is an agency's faith, the term faith-based organisation (FBO) will be used.

<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this research, a humanitarian agency is considered to be any agency implementing humanitarian response.

### Online survey

An online survey was published to capture a cross-section of responses from humanitarian aid workers. A total of 164 individuals responded. 52% of survey participants worked for large NGOs, 30% for medium organisations, and 14% for small NGOs. The majority of participants (69%) worked in middle or senior management roles, with a further 15% working in expert (mainly security management) roles. 70% of NGO respondents were HQ-based with the remainder being country or field-based staff. The greatest proportion of respondents worked within security, international programmes, humanitarian or operational departments. The vast majority (89%) of the faith-based NGO respondents identified themselves as being of the same faith as their agency.

### Key informant interviews

Interviews were held with 37 individuals: four academics, three independent consultants, three from umbrella groups<sup>4</sup> (one Christian, one Islamic, and one covering all agency types) and three from mission societies. Of the informants from aid agencies, nine represented Christian agencies, two Islamic, two Jewish and 11 secular agencies. Representatives from four Nigerian organisations were also interviewed.

### Focus group discussions

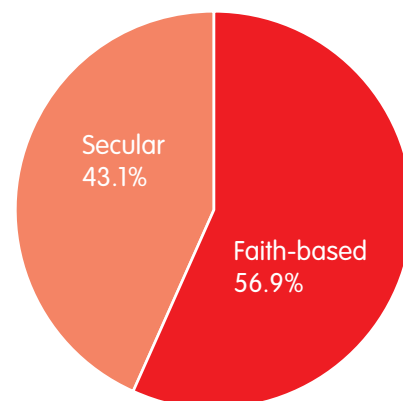
Focus group discussions were held with representatives of European INGOs in Utrecht and London.

### Limitations

The data collected in this research via surveys, interviews and discussions largely comprises qualitative evidence. Diversity was captured where possible in the range of respondents and sources consulted. In the initial stages of the project, there was far greater engagement from Christian FBOs than any other affiliation. This was then balanced by an increased effort to engage key informants from secular and non-Christian NGOs into a second round of interviews. Still, the majority of respondents represent Christian or secular agencies.

Over 70% of survey participants were HQ-based staff. Some regional focus was given by holding interviews with Nigerian organisations and through discussions with representatives overseas. This research should be complemented and reinforced by field level studies.<sup>5</sup>

**Fig. 1 – Is your NGO faith-based or secular?**



<sup>4</sup> Umbrella group: an NGO with the key function of uniting other NGOs.  
<sup>5</sup> For instance, Abu-Sada (2012).



# Humanitarian Assistance and Religion

## Historical antecedents<sup>6</sup>

The overlap between humanitarian and charitable action on one hand, and religious institutions and faith-connected actors on the other, has been more rule than exception throughout history, at least until the promotion and generalisation of secular modernist aid policies by dominant donors and institutions after the decolonisation wave of 1946-62. For centuries, in Europe, the Islamic sphere and elsewhere, activities known today as humanitarian took place on the initiative of groups including: private philanthropists who funded or organised charitable activities on the occasion of religious holidays; guilds; charitable institutions set up by Roman Catholic monastic and military orders; the numerous *waqf* for Islamic legates and foundations; rich Arab and other Muslim merchant families; and, later, the Protestant churches. Besides conducting classical charity actions and distributing relief aid to victims of epidemics and war, a whole range of faith-connected actors and institutions ran more sustainable and institutionalised activities such as hospitals, leprosy missions, orphanages, hospices and soup kitchens. These were often financially supported by wealthy laymen and rulers seeking to boost their popular legitimacy and religious credentials.

Immigrant communities and diasporas regularly occupied an important position in the mobilisation of aid for countrymen and coreligionists in their countries of origin. This was often facilitated by the active involvement of religious structures and leaders. Collection of humanitarian aid and donations was often combined with support for political opposition movements in historic homelands and with advocacy and lobbying in host countries. Migrant and other transnational or de-territorialised networks continue to play an important role in aid mobilisation, often in interaction with religious structures and personalities.

## Where does religion end and faith begin?

Theologians have wrestled with this question for centuries. Religion can be seen as an organised collection of beliefs, cultural systems and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and the supernatural. Many religions have narratives, symbols and sacred histories that are intended to explain the meaning or origin of life. From these beliefs are derived practices, organisations, morality, ethics, religious laws and preferred lifestyle. Faith in itself refers to a set of beliefs based on spiritual conviction rather than proof. Religion differs from private belief, or faith, in that it has a social component. Individuals can have a certain faith, hold certain beliefs, without being part of any organised religion.

Long before nation states became actively involved in the social field during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and long before the appearance of state donors of aid, these channels and structures, along with culturally-ingrained hospitality and generosity among members of natural solidarity groups like extended families, clans and micro-regional groups, comprised the individual's main social safety net. In much of the world this is still the case to some degree. Much of this proto-humanitarian activity was local or micro-regional in scope and certainly not framed by international norms. Catholic monastic and military orders and Sufi Muslim brotherhoods ran regional and even transcontinental networks of relief posts and charitable institutions along overland trade and pilgrimage routes. The Crusades, in particular, lent impetus to the rise of military-monastic orders which gradually made charity and aid their core activities: for example, the Hospitaller or Malta knights, the Templars, and the Order of Saint Lazarus. Their initial purpose was to offer protection and social and practical support to pilgrims to the Holy Land. In the Islamic sphere, similar initiatives existed for pilgrims to

<sup>6</sup> For references for this section, see 'Bibliography for "Historical antecedents" section'.



Mecca and Medina and to the Shi'ite centers of Najaf and Kerbala.

Many of the structures that were established during the Middle Ages have continued to function in one form or another through to the twenty-first century. With the expansion of overseas Roman Catholic missions during the sixteenth century, missionaries and their respective orders and denominations organised field hospitals, schools and other charitable activities in faraway, newly-colonised territories in addition to conducting religious propagation. This was done not only to make local populations more receptive for the religious message, but also to insert Christian charity and societal prescriptions into communities and societies that were considered to be a blank slate. Missionaries regularly sent detailed reports to their superiors, kings, princes, nobles and philanthropists in their European home countries. These communications included testimonies about the living conditions and real or perceived humanitarian needs of the native African, American and Indian populations, accompanied in most cases by pleas for financial and in-kind donations. This is a distant precursor of what is nowadays called 'humanitarian advocacy'. A similar pattern and dynamic emerged later in Protestantism.

The growth of the Christian workers' movement in several European countries after the issuing of the *Rerum Novarum* encyclical in 1891 and the institutionalisation and centralisation of disparate Catholic charitable initiatives in the Caritas network, starting with the foundation of the Caritasverband für das katholische Deutschland in Germany in late 1897, created a new and more formal space for Roman Catholic social and humanitarian action. Later, between 1948 and 1951, the global Catholic aid umbrella Caritas Internationalis was formed to become the humanitarian wing of the Vatican. During the first two decades after the Second World War, it gave special attention to Catholic communities in the Soviet states of Eastern Europe as well as to Latin American societies with active left-wing opposition movements.

By the early twentieth century, the development and scope of faith-based humanitarian action was largely determined by, first, the presence and expansion of competing secular (if not outright anti-religious) ideologies and societal projects like socialism; and second, the appearance of state and governmental or quasi-governmental structures as donors, initiators

and outsourcers of humanitarian action. The increasing role of these structures can be observed in actions carried out by the US in parts of Europe during and immediately after the First World War (1914-18) and during the famine and typhoid outbreak following the Russian Civil War (1921-23). In the latter context, the American Relief Administration, an official organ funded partly by government and partly privately, delegated a sizeable part of its aid deliveries through a dozen predominantly faith-based organisations. These included the Quakers, various Roman Catholic, Baptist and other Protestant organisations, as well as Jewish and Russian Orthodox immigrant associations. The *modus operandi* of delegating official humanitarian aid from the US to a range of private faith-based organisations exists up to this day. With regard to competing secular humanitarian action, the foundation of the International Red Cross in 1863 laid the grounds for non-religious and universal humanitarian norms, as opposed to a faith-connected humanitarian approach. Nonetheless, the initiatives that led to its formation were partly inspired by the Calvinist background of the founder, Henri Dunant, and his involvement in Calvinist charitable and philanthropic work.

Armed conflicts and humanitarian contexts which were perceived to be frontlines between colliding ideologies and societal projects, and which engendered solidarity reflexes far beyond their geographic limits, have often led to a surge in faith-based humanitarian actions. This was the case, for example, with the plethora of Catholic – and, in the case of Greece, also Orthodox – aid initiatives for the displaced, refugees and orphans during the Spanish (1936-39) and Greek (1946-49) civil wars. Christianity and Christian civilisation in general were perceived, in some international circles, to be under threat from socialist and communist expansion. Catholic and Protestant churches were also active initiators and providers of humanitarian aid during the war in Korea (1950-53). Here, Christianity benefited from a certain popular goodwill because of earlier support by Christian missionaries to the nationalist opposition against imperial Japanese rule (1910-48). In a similar vein, during the socialist regime and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (1978-89), pan-Islamic solidarity against 'atheist socialism' played a role in mobilising both private and governmental aid from the wider Muslim sphere.

The Quakers, a pacifist and arguably liberal Protestant denomination founded in Britain which gradually acquired a following in the wider Anglo-Saxon sphere, became actively involved in international humanitarian action and made it one of their core activities from the late eighteenth century onwards. During the American War of Independence (1775-1783), the Great Famine in Ireland (1845-52), the Crimean War (1853-1856) and the South African Boer Wars (1899-1902), Quakers were not only involved in the provision of assistance to famine-stricken populations, injured combatants and civilian casualties, but also in attempts at conflict mediation. The space for the latter, however, was affected by the fact that many Quakers were British citizens in armed conflicts in which Britain was a belligerent. In 1942, a group of British Quakers founded the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, the precursor of Oxfam.

The secularisation of aid and welfare that gradually occurred from the 1950s onwards was unevenly distributed globally both in terms of geographic scope and intensity. It was especially strong, and still is to this day, in northwestern Europe, Canada and Australia. Among industrialised OECD countries the US constituted a major exception, in that faith-based organisations and religious actors played a very important role in aid and welfare. So they did in much of the global periphery, although in a number of Arab and African countries, in India and in Indonesia, for example, the faith-based aid sector's space was clearly affected, from the 1950s to the early 1980s, by attempts by the state to set up a secular aid and welfare sector. During the same period, a range of political and social movements in the global periphery also maintained hopes in different variations of socialism as alternatives to economic inequalities and to the real and alleged legacies of Western colonial rule.

The OPEC oil boom (1971-73) brought the emergence of major oil producers like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya as donors of humanitarian aid. To one degree or another, all appealed to pan-Islamic solidarity in their aid policies. 1978 saw the formation of al-Igata, better known as the International Islamic Relief Organisation, in Saudi Arabia. Institutionally independent but government-associated, it is still Saudi Arabia's main aid provider in many African countries as well as in populous Muslim societies like Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Islamic revolution in Iran (1978-79) confronted the world with the reality that secularisation and cultural westernisation are not

irreversible. In 1980, Ayatollah Khomeini instigated the foundation of the Imdad, a quasi-governmental welfare foundation that soon became Iran's main organ for international relief in a variety of contexts from the Balkans to Lebanon and Tajikistan. Similarly, Colonel Gaddafi's Libya became an active donor of humanitarian and other aid, primarily in Saharan Africa and the Sahel region.

The Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005), which is schematised as a multilayered conflict between an Islamic government and 'Arab' North, and separatists in the 'African' Christian and animist South, emphasised the potential for humanitarian space to become a confessional-ideological frontline. The arrival of Christian and Western aid organisations and African missionaries in the South and in IDP camps primarily populated by people of Muslim background led to the foundation of, or to an increasing presence of, Islamic aid structures to counter what was increasingly perceived in governmental as well as wider Islamic opinion as a 'humanitarian crusade'. In 1981, the Islamic African Relief Agency was founded as an independent organ that was nonetheless closely affiliated with the Sudanese government. Initially deployed in Sudan, it later expanded its activities to other parts of Africa where Islam was perceived to be under threat. Charities from the Gulf also deployed a range of aid activities. In 1985, at the initiative of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian Islamic scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the International Islamic Charitable Organisation was formed in Kuwait specifically as a response to real or reported attempts to convert needy Muslims to Christianity through humanitarian aid. On the whole, the Sudanese context of the 1980s put Islamic-initiated modern humanitarian action in the international picture.

Islamic and other faith-inspired political opposition movements made aid and welfare part of their anchoring into society, while members of new economic elites in non-OECD societies increasingly supported religious institutions and faith-based charity to enhance their popular legitimacy. Although organised humanitarian and social welfare activities in other confessional spheres like Hinduism were less prevalent than in Christianity and Islam, the growth of a Hindu diaspora in the West, the Gulf and some parts of Africa since the 1960s and the rise of Hindu nationalism in India during the 1980s and 1990s lent impetus to a range of non-governmental humanitarian and welfare initiatives there too. Long under-estimated or ignored because of the

assumption of a linear development process towards secular modernity and cultural westernisation, over the last two decades the religious clearly became an expanding segment in the societies of the so-called global South.

As a result, the overall space for Christian, Islamic and other faith-based humanitarian action expanded between 1988 and 1993. This occurred alongside the dysfunction and eventual demise of socialist and Soviet-aligned societal projects in Africa and the Arab world, the withdrawal of the state from the social sphere (often under pressure from international financial institutions), and the redefinition of identity in societies affected by the stark social changes brought about by conflict, urbanisation, migration, the dark flipside of secular modernity and by the social impact of the current phase of globalisation. In different ways and degrees of intensity, the latter processes gave a new and revitalising dynamic to something that was and is part of traditional society and of a transnational sphere, namely religion. In turn, this has translated into the renewed presence of faith and of religious actors in the social sphere, humanitarian action included.

Finally, the proliferation of humanitarian NGOs since the 1980s and the issuing of international humanitarian principles and development goals in the 1990s and 2000s led to the emergence of another category of faith-based organisation. These organisations refer to old faith-induced charitable traditions in their discourse and in dialogue with their support base. On the other hand, they officially separate aid from proselytism; stress universality and non-discrimination; subscribe to the secular norms, principles and policies of the international aid sector; and are open to inter-confessional partnerships and institutional donor funding. Initially, this trend was prevalent among Christian organisations, with Christian Aid and CAFOD as the best-known examples. Since the mid-1980s a number of Europe-based Islamic aid agencies such as Islamic Relief Worldwide and Muslim Aid have joined this movement. They add to an increasing diversification of faith-based humanitarian action at times when the effectiveness, if not the credibility, of secular approaches and international norms is no longer taken for granted.

Practitioners' Guide: Religion and Development<sup>1</sup> discusses the differences between types of NGOs, and sub-divides them into the following categories:

**Faith-permeated:** organisations that centre on the religious dimension both in their internal organisation and in their operations.

**Faith-centred:** organisations that provide religious activities and are governed by a religious disposition, but leave it up to the participants to join in or not on religious projects.

**Faith-affiliated:** organisations influenced by the religious background of their founders, without this affecting staffing or operational projects.

**Faith-background:** organisations which appear on the surface to be secular, but historically are linked to a certain religious tradition.

**Faith-secular partnerships:** joint ventures between secular organisations and faith-based ones.

**Secular NGOs:** organisations with no religious footing or influence on their mandate, mission, staffing or activities.

A **faith-based humanitarian agency** will be defined as a humanitarian agency 'motivated by its faith, that has a constituency which is broader than humanitarian concerns'.<sup>2</sup> It is however important to note that 'the distinction between secular and faith-based NGOs is better understood as a continuum, as few agencies fit neatly into one box or the other'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Boender, Dwarswaard and Westendorp (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Ferris (2005), p. 316.

<sup>3</sup> Berger (2003).

## Humanitarian action post-9/11

The events of September 11th 2001 and their repercussions on the global stage brought about a new range of complexities for deliverers of humanitarian aid, whether faith-based or secular. The military action launched under the title of the 'global war on terror' has led NGOs to examine and develop strategies with regard to positioning themselves within a geopolitical framework in which they are deeply embedded, culturally, politically and financially. This integration of humanitarian action within international politics is in part by virtue of the fact that the cultural, religious and political values of humanitarian organisations reflect the values of the societies and communities of which they are a part.<sup>7</sup>

This geopolitical environment has repercussions for neutrality, and for the extent to which NGOs can use humanitarian principles to enhance acceptance and provide a degree of security. In environments such as Afghanistan, NGOs have faced challenges to their principles, with the efforts of the US – and the US-led coalition – to subordinate the aid effort to counter-insurgency and reconstruction objectives making it difficult to change the perceptions other parties may have of aid organisations as agents of an imperialist, Christian west.

Alongside political rhetoric on humanitarian military intervention, and the use of NGOs as a force multiplier, it can be argued that some NGOs 'abandoned neutrality as a guiding principle of their humanitarian action and directed their aid in accordance with the political and military objectives of the "legitimate" side.'<sup>8</sup>

Non-Western audiences sometimes regard Western humanitarian agencies as *de facto* Christian, owing to different notions of the separation between religion, state, society and individual beliefs. As discussed in the previous section, Western humanitarianism in its current secular form has many of its roots in Christian traditions of charity and philanthropy. As nation states sought to consolidate their global empires, missionaries arrived offering people Western education and medical care. Whilst many of these early missionaries were motivated by a religious calling and by humanitarian needs on the ground, they were also seen by many as furthering the aims of colonisation.

This was mirrored in the early twenty-first century, with the arrival in countries like Afghanistan or Iraq of evangelical Christian organisations alongside US coalition forces, engaging in projects in which activities linked to conversion (such as the distribution of Bibles by the organisation Samaritan's Purse) provoked allegations of proselytising – understood as attempting to convert someone from one religion, belief or opinion to another. In this century as in previous ones, for some stakeholders in some contexts, there is an association of Christianity with Western dominance and imperialism, based both on historical and current perceptions and actions.

In some locations 'Western values' may be seen as equally, or indeed more loaded and divisive than religious ones. It is often assumed that humanitarian principles and human rights frameworks are neutral and impartial, but agencies should be aware of the origins of these principles and how they relate to religious understandings, as well as to understandings of secularism and secularity.

The increase in secularisation of aid and welfare from the 1950s onwards led to an association within the humanitarian sector of secular with neutral and impartial, and with religion as something that faith-based agencies had to manage carefully, to avoid damage to these principles. Within non-faith-based NGOs there are different notions of what it means to be secular, with some tracing their roots to the Christian tradition of charity, while others saw the humanitarian movement as inspired by the Enlightenment idea of reform. This is particularly true of the French humanitarian movement, which became and remains linked to the secular legacy of French republicanism and the belief that it is essential to maintain a separation between the public and private spheres, with religion belonging to the private sphere.

Events throughout history have attested the power of religion to motivate extreme action. Ignoring this power and emphasising principles and frameworks developed in the West can lead to operational and security problems on the ground. Western secular agencies may also be perceived as actively promoting secularism, which in some contexts may be more threatening to society than promoting an alternative religion.

<sup>7</sup> Macrae and Harmer (2003), p.1.

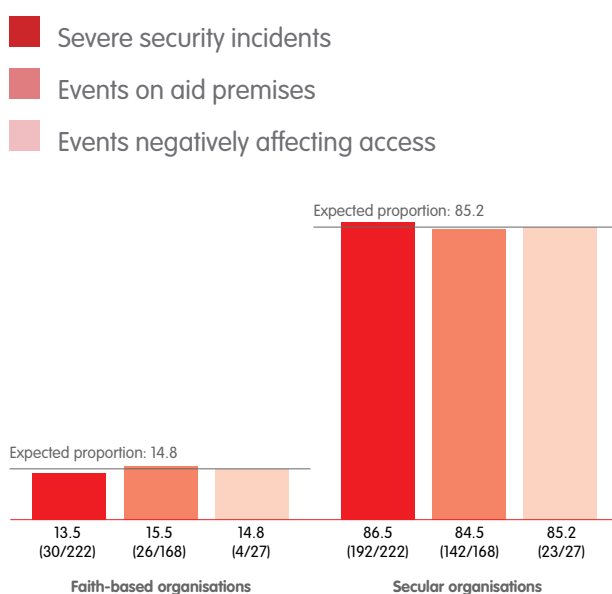
<sup>8</sup> Terry (2011), p. 176.

'The fact that most Islamic manifestations of humanitarian action, and even some Church-based agencies are perceived less harshly and not targeted so much seems to confirm that hostility is reserved for a certain type of secular humanitarian action – part of which sometimes also announces itself as king-maker, nation-builder and saviour of civil society.'

*Slim (2004), p. 6.*

For Islamic humanitarian agencies there has been another set of implications within the post-September 11th operating environment, with some coming under (or fearing) increased scrutiny for alleged links with 'terror groups'. This perceived association has the potential to affect both operations and funding sources.<sup>9</sup> For those Islamic organisations that also consider themselves to be professional humanitarian aid agencies, the association some make between humanitarian aid and the promotion of Western interests puts their support from a largely Islamic donor community at risk. Several Islamic agencies have put considerable work into mitigating this risk by highlighting the emphasis in Islamic texts on meeting human needs and humanitarian principles.

**Fig. 2 – Comparison of secular and faith-based INGOS in terms of expected and actual proportions of security incidents – event type.**

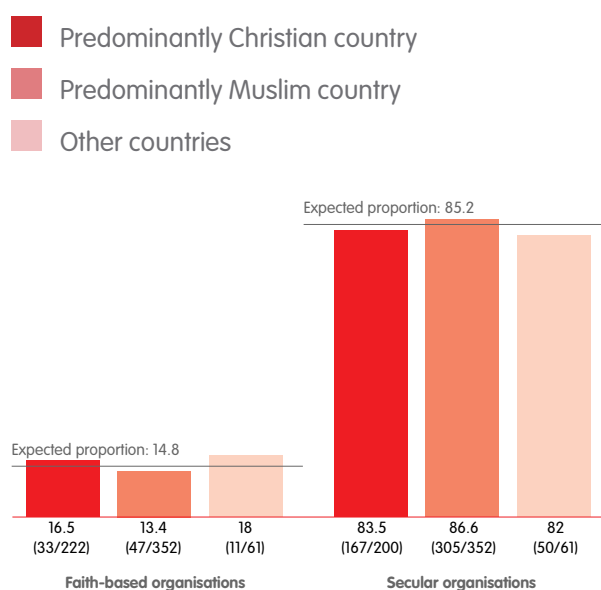


## Humanitarian access and faith

To analyse patterns in incidents impeding the delivery of aid for faith-based and secular organisations, we try to respond to the following questions using data from the Security in Numbers Database (SiND) produced by the organisation Insecurity Insight:

- Is there a difference in the types of violent events that affect the delivery of aid for faith-based and secular organisations?
- Do staff of faith-based organisations experience more or less severe security events than those working for secular organisations?
- Is it more or less common for faith-based agencies to experience security incidents on or around aid agency premises?
- When agencies are prevented from accessing a beneficiary population or particular geographic areas, does this affect secular and faith-based organisations in distinct ways?
- Is there a difference between the security patterns affecting faith-based and secular organisations depending on whether the host population is predominantly Muslim, Christian or adheres to another religion?

**Fig. 3 – Comparison of secular and faith-based INGOS in terms of expected and actual number of security incidents – country type.**



Source: Security in Numbers Database (SiND) <http://insecurityinsight.org/projectshumanitarian.html>. © 2013

<sup>9</sup> The vast majority of NGOs investigated (not convicted) under counter-terrorism legislation in the US and UK are Islamic organisations. This is having an impact on their ability to implement humanitarian programmes.

In this analysis we report only on events affecting Christian faith-based INGOs. We excluded Muslim organisations as the available sample of Muslim faith-based organisations is not yet large enough to conduct a separate analysis. Remarkably few differences exist in publicly reported security incidents affecting faith-based Christian and secular INGOs. The available open source data do not suggest a distinct pattern of security incidents affecting the work of Christian INGOs as compared to secular ones (see figure below). Reporting of severe security incidents affecting aid workers, events occurring on or around aid agency premises, and deliberate acts preventing access do not indicate that faith-based and secular agencies have been more or less frequently affected by one or the other type of events. Although this report only shows a selection of the Insecurity Insight analysis here, we also found no distinct differences in comparing the location of events (urban/rural) or the gender of affected staff.

There is no noticeable difference in the proportion of security incidents affecting faith-based or secular organisations in predominantly Muslim or Christian countries. We classified all countries with reported security incidents by the predominant religion in the country, using statistics from the CIA World Factbook<sup>10</sup> and grouping them as predominantly Christian or Muslim, combining all sub-groups (e.g., Protestant and Catholic, Sunni and Shia), or as 'Other' for all other religions or atheist societies. The analysis indicates that overall, remarkably little difference exists between faith-based and Christian organisations operating in countries with a population that is predominantly Christian, Muslim, or another religion (see figure below).

As with the difference with respect to type of events, the observed differences rarely exceed one percentage point. However, it may be noted that if there is any trend, it would suggest that open sources report slightly fewer events affecting Christian organisations in Muslim countries than they do in predominantly Christian countries or countries of other religious traditions. Because the total numbers within these categories are low (i.e., there are only 11 security incidents reported from 'Other' countries affecting faith-based organisations) it is necessary to collect additional data to verify this trend.

In summary, when we analysed the available data for differences between faith-based and secular agencies in terms of severe security incidents, events occurring on or around agency premises, and access constraints, we found no real differences in the

proportions affecting these types of agencies. There are also remarkably few differences between country contexts. Open source data do not report proportionally more incidents in Muslim countries affecting Christian organisations than secular ones.

What can this finding tell us about the specific risks for faith-based or secular organisations? While bearing in mind that real differential risk cannot be calculated on the basis of these data, the available evidence suggests that faith-based agencies do not necessarily face a greater or lower risk of violent or threat events when compared to secular INGOs. This supports findings from other research.<sup>11</sup>

## Methodology

To examine security incidents affecting faith-based and secular organisations, Insecurity Insight analysed a subset of 613 events, chosen to fit the criteria discussed below and to reduce the effects of the biases inherent in the dataset. Although this report attempted to reduce the biases in the data, the sample is neither complete nor representative of security events affecting secular or faith-based aid agencies, or INGOs as a whole. To work within the limitations of our data this report compares the proportions of events affecting secular and faith-based organisations in relation to the extent we would expect them to be represented in our sample. As information is lacking regarding the total numbers of secular and faith-based organisations, how many staff members they employ, the size of the projects, and the areas in which they operate, the total number of reported incidents affecting either secular or faith-based INGOs cannot tell us whether there are any differences in the rate of security incidents affecting either group. Without information on the rate, we cannot calculate the differential risk.

Faith-based organisations make up 14.8 percent of our sample (91/613) and secular organisations represent 85.2 percent (522/613). If there are no differences in the extent to which insecurity affects the work of faith-based agencies, we would expect to find similar proportions reflected in our analysis of different types of incidents, specifically severe incidents (defined as death, kidnapping, or injury), events occurring on or around aid agency premises, access constraints, and events in countries with a host population that is predominantly of one faith tradition. Where the proportion of faith-based organisations is different from what we would expect from our sample for these types of events, we report the differences and consider possible explanations.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>, accessed 5 November 2013.  
<sup>11</sup> Stoddard, Harmer, and DiDomenico (2009).

### Limitations of data:

1. Because Insecurity Insight's partner agencies are primarily secular, to use the full dataset would give additional weight to events affecting secular agencies. As a result, we used only events reported in publicly available, open sources for this analysis. The data therefore reflect the biases of open source information, which tends to privilege severe events. We expect severe events to be over-represented in the sample we used but we also expect that this bias affects information on faith-based and secular organisations in a similar way.
2. The analysis focuses of the impact of insecurity on INGOs and excludes events that affected local humanitarian providers, UN agencies, Red Cross organisations, and other type of aid providers. We chose to compare only secular and faith-based INGOs to reduce the biases that might stem from differences related to the type of organisation rather than the values (faith-based or secular) that guide their work.
3. In this analysis we report only on events affecting Christian faith-based INGOs. We excluded Muslim organisations as the available sample of Muslim faith-based organisations is not yet large enough to conduct a separate analysis.
4. We classify events by whether the mission of the affected INGO is faith-based (91 events) or secular (522 events) using public information from the organisation's website.

### Perceptions of humanitarian and religious values and identities

'One must always be aware of how one's organisation is likely to be perceived by the local community, and act to maintain an organisational posture that will foster acceptance rather than rejection or suspicion.'

*Survey participant, FBO.*

### Values

Risk flows from the interaction between an NGO and the context within which it operates. This means that an organisation needs to have awareness and understanding of how it sees itself and how others see it. All organisations have values and an identity, although how these are embedded, disseminated and shared by staff may vary. These values and identity may be linked to or driven by the faith identity of the organisation, or of individuals and groups within the staff team, with the diversity of staff having a

bearing on these values and how they are shared.

Whilst the majority of international faith-based humanitarian agencies consulted in this study stated that their organisations employed staff from all faiths, this did not always mean all faiths were equally represented at all levels. Management or board positions were sometimes mainly or only filled by staff who shared the organisation's religion, which is not necessarily due to the organisation's preference to hire from within the same faith – although for some FBOs it was policy that board members needed to share the organisation's faith – but it can also be due to higher positioned employees choosing organisations aligned with their faith.

When it was the norm for agencies to recruit from within the faith, exceptions were made for national staff/key international staff positions in contexts where it was difficult or inappropriate to recruit from within the same faith, or for certain positions within the agency. In some FBOs, some staff members stated off the record that although those not of the faith were officially welcome and fully included as staff members, they themselves did not feel fully valued or part of the organisation on account of faith differences. They had the sense that the lack of shared faith might affect their career advancement or the extent to which they were included in activities, debate or discussion.

Examining, clarifying and confirming organisational values can help to reduce risk by influencing decisions concerning image management, developing acceptance and communications strategies, and informing risk reduction measures. An agency's values, structure and staffing can also influence the extent to which it has access to different information, opinions, skills and concerns. There was a sense from many respondents that agencies, whether FBOs or secular, that were inclusive, had access to diverse perspectives and did not either deliberately or inadvertently exclude particular religious or non-religious beliefs from their staff teams, might have access to a better diversity of opinion, which could be an asset in understanding and working within complex environments.

Regardless of agency type, organisations need to be cognisant of faith issues and understand how people can be influenced by religion and faith. Some respondents felt that the extreme ends of both secular and faith-based organisations risked disconnect from the worldviews of others by excluding or dismissing alternative viewpoints. This disconnect could influence security and programming decisions.

For organisations wishing to embed an organisational culture of security risk management, it is crucial that there is top-level involvement. It is also vital to discuss organisational values with staff, and to ensure that the values, concerns and beliefs of individuals are taken into account. This debate should examine how religion sits within these values, regardless of whether an organisation is faith-based or not. Faith and religion may play a significant part in the lives of some staff members and influence their vulnerabilities, actions, behaviour and therefore risk.

If an agency does not understand and support its staff, or staff do not share and support the values and ethos of an agency, this could potentially lead to misunderstandings and affect relationships internally and externally, with consequences for the risks that the organisation may face. Organisations also need to consider how to reconcile agency values, culture and programme activities with those of the operating environment. Leadership at country level was seen as being at its most effective where it maintained independence from religion but understood and facilitated understanding amongst staff of the interplay between religion and politics.

### Identity

Agencies need to be clear about their organisational identity and make strategic and operational decisions about how this is communicated. However, opinions and impressions are more frequently based on individuals' actions and behaviour than on strategically chosen messages. Moreover, there is little control over how such messages are interpreted by the receiver, or over messages communicated by others. The perception that people have of humanitarian agencies, or of a particular agency, can impact on the security of staff, programmes and beneficiaries, and will be influenced by a vast array of factors, many of which may be difficult to identify. Religion is one influential factor among many.<sup>12</sup>

'The societies in which MSF works are often very religious, and that has an effect on the way people perceive the organisation and its activities. Communities may give a religious connotation to organisations working in their country because that is the "analytical framework" they use. MSF has always positioned itself outside the secular/faith-based dichotomy, considering the debate irrelevant for the implementation of its medical activities in the field. Surveys have revealed, however, that religion influences the way its operations are perceived.'

*In the Eyes of Others*, Abu-Sada's report for MSF, notes that the previous associations that members of communities (particularly in Africa) may hold, linking relief and development aid to charity and Christian mission work, mean that for many beneficiaries, aid deliverers often appear as agents of the divine – regardless of actual religious affiliation. In the majority of cases, this presumed religious connection had a positive effect on the agency's image and helped establish trust. On the other hand, in other contexts like Kyrgyzstan – where the communist regime banned religion and imposed secularism – being considered non-denominational rather than secular has been important in building trust.

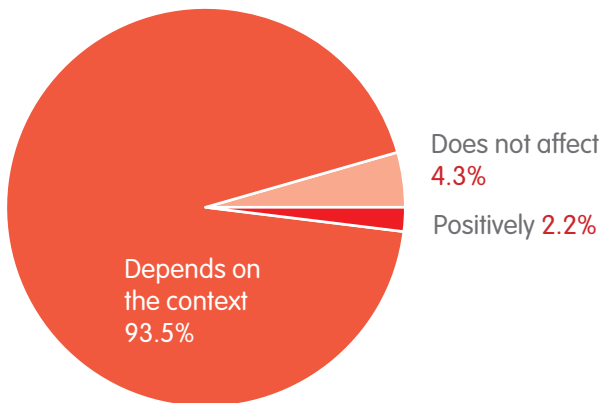
*Abu-Sada (2012).*

As Abu-Sada's work highlights, actor groups in a given context will view an organisation through their own worldview or value framework. Even a non-denominational or secular agency cannot therefore operate in complete isolation from the religious dimension. How the religious or secular nature of an organisation impacts on image and acceptance was perceived by survey respondents to be largely a function of context, although 13% of FBO respondents thought affiliation could have a positive impact globally as opposed to 2% of secular respondents.

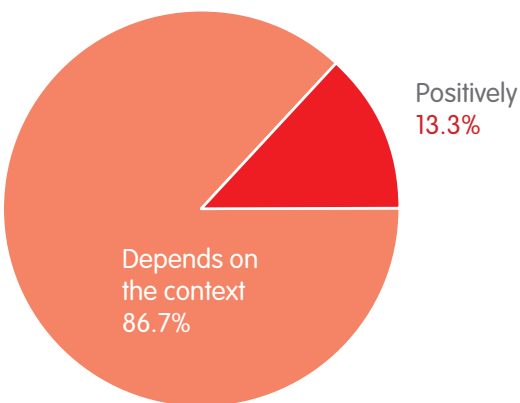
<sup>12</sup> This is demonstrated by the MSF 'Perceptions Project', launched in 2007 to assess context-specific perceptions of humanitarian aid. Initially religion was not identified as a fundamental consideration, but during field research in West Africa, East Africa, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan and the Middle East it emerged that given the value frameworks of these societies it was extremely difficult to remove the topic of religion from perceptions of humanitarian action. See Abu-Sada (2012).



**Fig. 4** – Does the religious or secular nature of an organisation affect image and perception? (Secular respondents)



**Fig. 5** – Does the religious or secular nature of an organisation affect image and perception? (FBO respondents)



Organisations need to understand their own ideology, values and drivers as well as the religious environment in which they are operating, and use this understanding to assess and reduce risk, as well as to inform programmatic approaches. To understand perceptions within each context, agencies need to identify and assess commonly held perceptions whilst maintaining an awareness that these may change or be inconsistent. Whilst this should be done within context analysis and actor mapping, it also needs to be an on-going activity, and agencies need to be aware of limitations in assessing, measuring and monitoring perceptions. To have an effective acceptance strategy it is crucial to understand these perceptions and to examine which aspects of identity, values and behaviour are likely to reduce or increase acceptance.

‘The key is balance, having respect for values, beliefs and practices, and having a proactive mix across the organisation, with different staffing for different contexts. An organisation needs to understand how people can be influenced by their faith, and secular organisations may need to work harder at this. Both types of organisation need to be very aware of faith issues, and include faith literacy in briefings. The extreme ends of secular or faith-based organisations can end up excluding those of other viewpoints, and this can be problematic, and lead to a disconnect.’

*Key informant, independent.*

### Security challenges linked to religious/ secular perceptions

Survey participants were asked to list what they thought to be the key challenges that religion posed to security. Over half of the 83 responses received related to perception. These can be grouped into the following three main areas:

- a. Perceptions of being biased towards or over-associated with faith-based beneficiaries/stakeholders
- b. Perceptions linked with the promotion of Western/secular agendas and values
- c. Perceptions linked with behaviour at the local level

### a. Perceptions of being biased towards or over-associated with faith-based beneficiaries/stakeholders

'It depended mostly on the quality of the orientation and dialogue with the target communities and the acquired approval of the community elders/leaders. If the goals of the organisation align with the goals of the community, then generally it is easier. If the NGO is perceived to be addressing felt needs, then they are often welcome. If they are perceived to be proselytising, then it's another story.'

*Survey participant, secular NGO.*

Respondents<sup>13</sup> from faith-based agencies mentioned problems with being perceived as only helping those of their own denomination in a multi-faith or inter-faith context, and were concerned about this impacting negatively on image, acceptance and therefore on security. Contexts such as Bangladesh and Myanmar, where there are tensions between different faith communities, were flagged by respondents as situations where a perceived close link between an organisation and a particular community could increase the risk of certain threats. As noted above, there was a perception that a shared faith can open doors, expand networks and foster acceptance and access, but there was also recognition that this is a delicate balance. There was a sense that sometimes agencies would want or need to distance themselves from the actions of other faith-based organisations and groups, in particular where these actions or values conflicted with humanitarian principles. During interviews in Nigeria, members of faith-based partner agencies said that they would not wish to work with Western partners who were (perceived to be) working on topics that conflicted with the local church and community interpretation of moral values.

### b. Perceptions linked with the promotion of Western/secular agendas and values

'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a different set of reference documents that say what is right and wrong. Like religious teachings there is a strong moral element, just the specifics look different. If we are driven by values that we wish to uphold we can be impartial, but cannot ever truly be neutral.'

*Key informant, secular NGO.*

For both faith-based and secular agencies,<sup>14</sup> negative perceptions associated with being seen to be promoting a Western agenda or ideology were raised as a potential driver of risk. In some contexts, the motivations and values of faith-based agencies delivering humanitarian relief were considered to be more comprehensible to stakeholders than those of a secular agency. Agencies and staff sometimes face accusations of being driven by a political or Western agenda, or of being agents for foreign governments. Some FBO correspondents felt that they had sometimes been able to use their religious identity to explain the humanitarian imperative and to strengthen their independence from political action. Attempts to explain the humanitarian imperative may not be fully understood by stakeholders. There is a tendency, particularly among staff of secular agencies, to believe or assume that because they are not religious, they are therefore neutral. These values may appear threatening, or confusing. In some communities, people will perceive a Western secular agenda as more aggressive than a Christian one.

To address this perception, agencies need to work with stakeholders to find common values to assist in addressing humanitarian needs. Agencies have their own value systems, which need to be understood and examined in the light of the value systems of the operational context. Whilst the issue of independence from a political agenda is not directly driven by religion, in some contexts independence may be an important distinction to make, and one which can impact on funding choices, leading some NGOs to take decisions to refuse funding from particular donors in certain contexts. How religion intersects with availability and choice of donor funding is discussed in more detail in the 'Funding and donors' section.

<sup>13</sup> Total number of respondents: 17 respondents.

<sup>14</sup> Total number of respondents: 9 respondents.

### c. Perceptions linked with behaviour at the local level

'A Christian agency I used to work with in Somalia was considered acceptable by the local population, as they implemented relevant life-saving programs. Local staff did not want to have a cross on their t-shirts so would hide it. The presence of Christians in Somalia was also acceptable, provided the local population perceived them to be adhering to Christian values. If Somalis saw Christian staff breaching values (e.g. by drinking or non-married couples/mixed gender staff sharing accommodation) they were expelled. The request from the local population was "for Christians to behave like they are Christians".'

*Survey participant, FBO.*

For all types of agencies,<sup>15</sup> behaviour is critical to perception. Security incidents are often driven or influenced by the behaviour and perceptions of NGO staff. This can cause difficulties when values and acceptable forms of behaviour contradict the standards of the local community. For faith-based agencies and individuals this may impact on how openly they can practice or share their faith. In some countries, failing to restrict certain religious practices could have severe consequences if the individual or organisation is subsequently alleged to have been proselytising, as the report addresses in the next section.

Problems can arise where notions of individual freedom of choice and expression held by NGO staff differ from those held by other stakeholders. This can be particularly relevant to expressions of sexuality and gender, which may be perceived as going against local or religious values or traditions. Such issues are relevant for staff vulnerability and staffing decisions, such as whether to deploy female managers in a context where it is unusual for women to work, or to deploy LGBTI staff to contexts where that is perceived as contrary to the local interpretation of religious values.

When establishing risk reduction measures, organisations should take into account behavioural guidance and advice for all staff that fit in with the agreed image and values of the organisation and are appropriate within the local context. This is best developed in consultation with staff, including national staff and partners.

### Religious and secular proselytism

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'to proselytise' is 'to convert or attempt to convert (someone) from one religion, belief, or opinion to another.' In common usage, proselytising is often seen as a pejorative term, and most respondents cited negative perceptions around the use of the word. When talking about propagating a religious message, evidencing this via actions or sharing one's faith, most FBOs preferred to use the term 'evangelising'—understood as sharing their faith—which they perceived to have fewer negative connotations. In real terms, the difference between evangelising and proselytising is subjected to different interpretations, and one man's evangelising is another's proselytising.

'All of us are against proselytising if we take that as foisting our worldview on others. Knowing what our worldview is as Western aid agencies or mission societies, and how this affects our perceptions of the world, and how these may differ from those of others, is vital.'

*Key informant, mission society.*

It can be difficult to judge what might be considered by another to be aggressive and this can pose problems for FBOs with an evangelical aspect to their activities. The different definitions of what constitutes proselytising may further compound the problem. Since secularism and humanitarianism also have their own values and principles, an argument can also be made that accusations of proselytising, defined as aggressively imposing one's value system on another and attempting to change their worldview, are not exclusively a risk for FBOs. Being accused, either directly or by association, of proselytising came up as a common concern throughout the survey and key informant interviews, with questions being raised on where the boundary is between sharing one's faith and proselytising, or whether in certain contexts a secular agency can also be accused of proselytising if they zealously promote secular beliefs and values.

<sup>15</sup> Total number of respondents: 23 respondents.

## Misconceptions of faith and risk within the humanitarian sector

There are a number of common misconceptions held by staff of different types of humanitarian agencies about each other. For instance, there is the general impression – held by both FBO and non-faith-based organisations – that secular agencies consider themselves to be more professional, humanitarian and neutral than their faith-based counterparts, which sometimes leads to them distancing themselves from FBOs, or being less willing to collaborate and share information. Likewise, some respondents with religious beliefs recounted instances of being accused by secular colleagues of being reckless because of their faith, or belief in a supreme being. Within FBOs, some managers expressed a view that some staff might feel that their faith afforded additional protection, or that risk was part of God’s plan (see ‘Situational analysis’ section).

**‘There is a certain naivety amongst Muslim charities. They may not be fully aware and may think their Muslim identity will protect them when it does not.’**

*Key informant, Islamic agency.*

**‘[There is] suspicion between the two. Humanitarian agencies look on mission agencies as foolish and amateur. Mission agencies look at humanitarian agencies as more transitory, risk adverse and distinct from the population.’**

*Key informant, mission organisation.*

It was notable that in some cases the differences between agencies were greater than the similarities. The convergence was predominantly around the middle of the continuum:<sup>16</sup> secular agencies which were open to working with the religious dynamic, and FBOs that employed a diverse range of staff including secular staff, seemed to have more in common with each other. Extremes at both ends of the spectrum were seen, in cases, as organisations that could become closed off to alternative viewpoints and miss opportunities for effective programming and risk management. FBOs tended to have more contact with and be more open to ways to learn from the mission sector than secular agencies, but there was often a lack of understanding between humanitarians and missionaries. For further detail on the interaction between missionary agencies, FBOs and secular organisations, see ‘Risk analysis’ section.

<sup>16</sup> See ‘Introduction’ for an explanation of types of NGOs, Berger (2003).



# Security Risk Management and Religion

## Context assessment

The standard approach to security risk management, as practiced by the majority of international NGOs, places great importance on contextualising the approach at field level, taking into account both organisational characteristics and activities and analysis of the external environment, including context analysis and actor mapping.

*'A context and risk assessment that did not consider religion would be as flawed as one that ignored gender relations, power structures, ethnic identity markers, or other key social drivers of people's vulnerability/capacity. Indeed, in many countries it would be impossible to understand any of the latter without considering the former. That is not to say that religion is an equally relevant social force in all contexts, but one can only gauge the relevance of religion after considering it in a context assessment.'*

*Survey participant, FBO.*

*'We need to examine how we are relative to the context, looking at questions such as: Who are they?/who are we?/where are we?/what are we doing? Failure to do so, or to not understand the role of religion in this could be catastrophic.'*

*Key informant, FBO.*

## Context analysis

Context analysis is an essential part of effective security risk management. It is often impossible to completely separate religion from other contextual aspects such as politics, society, culture and gender, but religion can be a key factor in power dynamics and conflict and thus cannot be ignored. A strong context analysis, incorporating the religious dynamic, enables agencies to reduce risks and identify opportunities.

When asked for information on how religion was considered within context analysis there seemed to be an absence of systematic approaches or tools, beyond standard security risk management approaches. Whilst religion is a key element within contextual analysis, in generic security trainings very little time is spent on practical consideration of it. Several respondents stated a need for agencies to develop better tools for understanding the role of different religions in terms of social and cultural interaction. From the perspective of context analysis, how this was done was delegated to country level and was dependent on the skills, knowledge and capacity of staff on the ground.

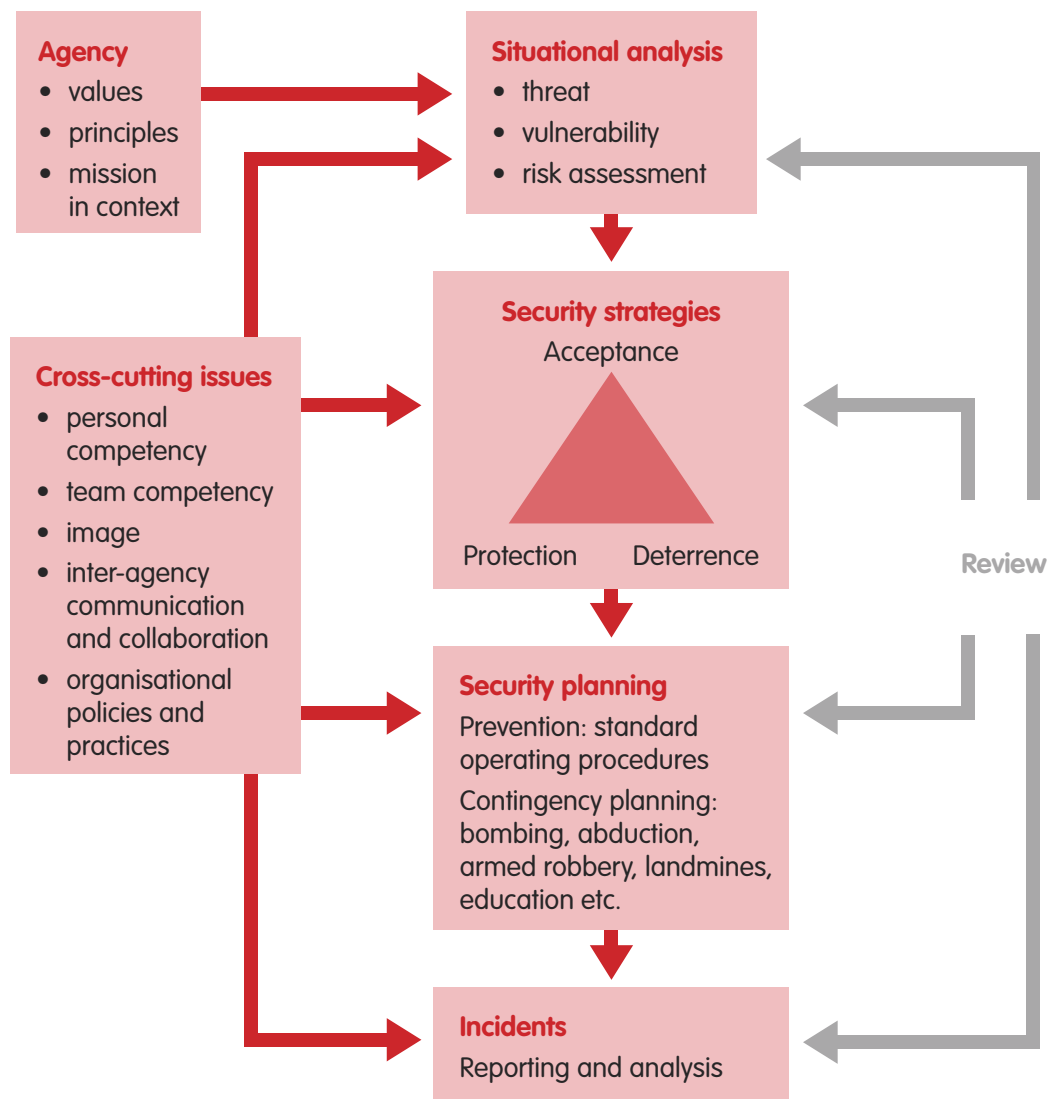
The extent to which religion permeates society will also influence other aspects of the context, including demographic distinctions, minorities and attitudes to them, political context and conflict dynamics.

Questions to consider include:

- Is religion divisive, part of the conflict or a motivator of conflict?
- If religion is a motivator, are there any particular advantages/disadvantages of working with this within programming?
- If religion is a flash point for conflict, how does an organisation's own (faith-based or secular) identity interact with it?

As mentioned earlier, differing contexts may entail variation in the level of separation of religion from professional or personal life. Whilst an agency may wish staff to separate their religious beliefs from their professional life, for many individuals this may not be possible. In some contexts, to be secular could have its own associations; the concept of being non-religious or atheist could be an alien one, and difficult to understand.

**Fig. 6 – Van Brabant’s Security Management Model**



Source: Van Brabant (2000).

Within these contexts agencies need to think carefully about how to translate their identity. Suggestions on identity management for secular agencies within these contexts focused largely on stressing their independence from religion, rather than absence of religion, and on extending this to inclusiveness and consideration of the religious beliefs of staff, beneficiaries and other stakeholders, rather than ignoring these beliefs and their influence. The issue is discussed further in the section ‘Perceptions of humanitarian and religious values and identities’.

### **Analysing the religious dynamic**

Given the influence that the religion of an agency, staff, partners and stakeholders can have on risk, security management approaches need to take the religious dynamic into account. Three principal barriers to taking religion into account in security risk management were identified during this study.

The first obstacle was linked to the taboos and sensitivity around talking about religion in the first place. Several respondents either noted personally or

referenced a tendency amongst secular organisations and individuals to try to avoid examining and discussing religious issues, insofar as these could be potentially damaging to the principle of neutrality. The code of conduct of the Red Cross/Red Crescent explicitly states that ‘aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint’,<sup>17</sup> and for some this has translated into an avoidance of religion. Religion can be a divisive factor, particularly in conflict; to engage with religion was sometimes seen as potentially damaging to impartiality.

**‘Because of the past, religion is seen as a dirty concept.’**

*Key informant, independent.*

**‘If you bring your religion with you, even if it is the same religion, you risk being drawn into debate about these differences.’**

*Key informant, secular NGO.*

A second barrier comes from agency perceptions of the context. Most respondents stated that when operating in contexts where inter- or intra-religious conflict was an obvious feature, religion was a vital factor in risk assessment. In contexts where religion is a less obvious feature its significance and its role in affecting risk might be missed. Where staff members do not grasp the relevance of religion to the context, or make a determination that religion is of no significance on the basis of inaccurate or incomplete information, this can result in an inappropriate selection of risk management measures.

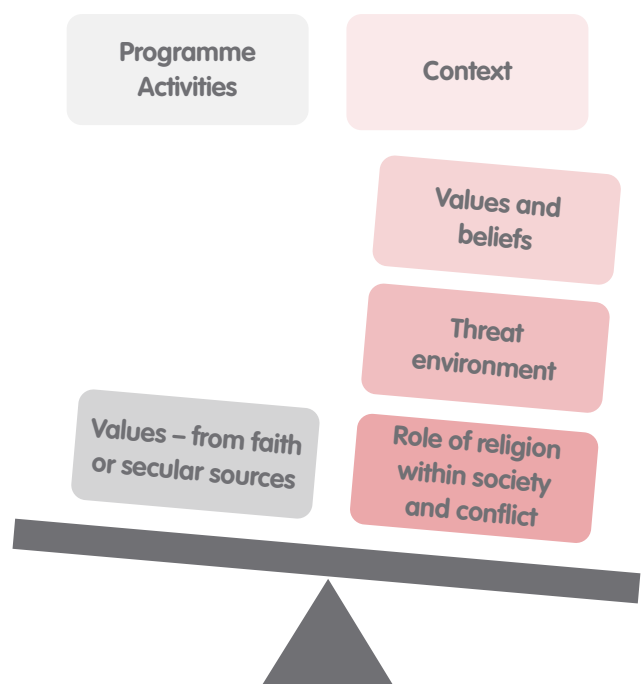
The third barrier relates to where responsibility for, and expertise in analysing the religious dimension sits within an agency. Often relevant skills and insight were confined to certain individuals within agencies, with information not shared sufficiently across, or even within departments. During the course of this study some respondents from different parts of the same agency expressed divergent opinions as to whether and how the agency assessed and incorporated the religious dimension. In some agencies, debate, discussion and valuable knowledge about the role of religion in programming and partnership decisions was not always shared with humanitarian departments by sections with relevant expertise, such as the advocacy section.

There seemed to be a consensus that whilst agencies could do more to improve the analysis of religion within security risk management, there was not so much a need for new tools and processes as there was a need to improve the systematic, consistent and effective use of existing guidance, tools and processes. The following key areas need to be considered, both in terms of understanding the role they play within the context, as well as in terms of how they could impact on programmes and security.

### Values and belief

Understanding values and belief systems and how they influence beneficiaries and other stakeholder groups can assist an agency in providing effective programming and risk management. In particular, respondents working on rights-based issues emphasised the importance of engaging with the value sets of beneficiaries and other stakeholders in order to programme successfully in these areas.

**Fig. 7 – Balancing agency values**



Once these values and beliefs have been identified, an agency needs to consider how these might impact on programmes and security. Might proposed activities be considered sensitive given these religious practices, beliefs and values? How might these activities be

<sup>17</sup> IFRC and ICRC (1995), Principle 3.

engaged in with sensitivity and respect, in a way that does not increase risk for staff, programmes or beneficiaries? It is also important to remember that values that may be perceived as cultural to outsiders may be considered as religious to the population.

In summary, there was a consensus that religion should be considered during context assessment and that it needed to be weighed against organisational values and programmatic activities in order to manage programmes and risk effectively. There were differing opinions on the extent to which this needed to be done, as dictated by the relevance of religion within any on-going conflict or tension on the ground, as well as by the identity of the NGO itself.

For some agencies, whilst this dimension was assessed, it was never explicitly referred to as religion, but incorporated within the wider context analysis. In some conflicts, analysis might be facilitated and risk reduced by not using the term 'religion', given the potential sensitivities and undue attention which could be attracted by asking questions about this topic. What is critical is that religion is not ignored. An organisation may ultimately decide that to engage openly with religion is inadvisable within a particular context, or that religion does not have a significant impact on programming or risk, but this should be an informed decision based on contextual analysis.

### Practices, behaviour and actions

As well as examining how religion influences practices and behaviour within a given society, an organisation needs to reflect on if and how it will cater for these practices within programmes, and within standard operating procedures. One example of this is the problem of reaching female beneficiaries within those Islamic contexts where male staff are not able to work closely with, or give medical treatment to, women and yet it is not the norm for women to work. For some secular or faith-based organisations, employing non-Islamic female staff may provide a solution. Some Islamic agencies in conservative contexts have typically employed Muslim males as field staff but are now employing female staff and volunteers to increase their ability to access these populations. This has been facilitated by employing suitable chaperones (*Mahram*) to work alongside female staff members. This approach has also been used successfully by non-Islamic agencies in conservative Islamic contexts.

'We will work with religion where it is useful to implement our programmes, and try to understand it so as not to offend local norms and approaches, and utilise local religious leaders as appropriate. For example our hygiene programme in Afghanistan includes working with *Mullahs* in the local mosques to spread the message of hygiene promotion.'

*Key informant, secular NGO.*

'After the earthquake in Pakistan our male and female staff were not segregated in the initial stages of the response. This caused some concern and was brought up by a religious leader as helpful guidance. We immediately segregated the camp, and built up a relationship with him, asking him to bring up anything else that was causing problems. This opened up a strong channel of communication and information sharing.'

*Key informant, secular NGO.*

Another area to consider is whether staff will be able to continue their religious practices within the work environment. How should staff adjust their behaviour to take into account local religious practices? How will the staff practices and behaviour be perceived? The host population's notions of faith and morality may influence behavioural guidance for staff.

### Actor mapping

Religious leaders should be incorporated into the process of listing all the principal actors and stakeholders that have an influence on an agency's operations and security. Actor mapping of the religious dynamic should also identify the distribution of power and influence and relate this to religion where relevant. Questions to consider include:

- Are they seen as advocating for peace or as fuelling an on-going conflict?
- Are religious leaders valued and respected by other actor groups?
- How does religion influence other types of leaders, such as politicians, military or militia leaders, and how are these leaders perceived?
- Is the agency already perceived as linked with or influenced by any of these religious leaders, and how might perceived linkages affect other relationships?



Once these questions have been answered, an organisation can consider whether and how to build relationships and work with these leaders. This may imply training and engagement on a deeper level, and an approach not purely focused on what the agency needs, but also on what these leaders need from the agency, and the consequences of meeting these needs – similar to the approach to be taken with any other power broker.

**‘Our South Asia-wide programme on domestic violence was potentially controversial, in a conservative society. But instead of importing materials we did it through the local Imam, and had scholars convert the context into the Qur’anic texts.’**

*Key informant, secular NGO.*

Another consideration is the extent to which religious organisations are involved in the delivery of relief and development aid on the ground. In some contexts local religious organisations may have better access to vulnerable communities than the more mainstream humanitarian agencies. In other contexts being seen as having too close a relationship with local religious groups, whether or not in a formal partnership, could have a negative effect on perception and risk. In some contexts religious organisations and institutions can also present an obstacle to humanitarian aid. If an agency is to navigate this obstacle successfully then an understanding of who is interested in maintaining the obstacle and for what reasons can be a distinct asset.

### **Negotiating access with religious extremist groups**

A particular difficulty raised by participants across faith lines was the problem of developing relationships and negotiating access with religious extremist armed groups. Many respondents stated that regardless of whether their faith identity assisted with acceptance with local stakeholder groups, acceptance from the community or local faith leaders would often have very little influence on relations with active Jihadist or other extremist armed groups that were seen as ‘external’ rather than local actors. These extremist groups can often be largely comprised of foreign fighters who may be alienated from local communities.

Negotiation with these groups is a tricky business, and while in some circumstances agencies might be able to use shared faith as a starting communality, all organisation types saw this as a high-risk activity. Respondents that had successfully negotiated access with these groups stressed the importance of consistency between the organisation’s stated values and actions globally and on the ground.

Religious extremist groups are often highly suspicious of aid agencies and skilled at researching organisational background. If an organisation is thought to be masking key factors of its identity such as institutional funding sources or religion, this could jeopardise access negotiations, expose the agency to risk of targeted attack, and render programming impossible. Whilst religious leaders or local faith organisations might be one source of contact with these groups, secular respondents cited that they were able to use local independent fixers successfully to broach contact. As such, whilst some humanitarian agencies will make the decision not to operate within these environments, others may avoid contact by engaging local partners to carry out work and negotiate access themselves. To avoid this being merely risk transference, the international agency should work with the local partner to ensure that they are not put at unnecessary risk and are equipped with the skills and resources for appropriate risk management. It is also important to bear in mind that local fixers (or any other intermediaries) are also likely to have a religious dynamic. While this does not preclude their use, it is important to understand what that dynamic might be and what perceptions others hold about a particular fixer.

**‘When it comes to negotiating access with these groups, you must be 100% transparent about who you are and cannot play with secularity/non secularity. If you are at such a level that you are able to discuss with these groups, they are already aware of your identity.’**

*Key informant, secular agency.*

**‘These groups cannot be argued with, talked to or reasoned with. They act with arrogance, confidence and apparent impunity. They answer only to their God.’**

*Survey participant, FBO.*

For some respondents there was a wider problem of counter-terrorism legislation and its impact on donor funding and conditionality. Whilst this is a risk for all agencies, it was perceived as a particular problem for Islamic agencies, who felt that as a result of prejudice they were more likely to be suspected of collaborating with or supporting such groups. This requires careful context and risk assessment with local partners, and is further complicated by ambiguous definitions of what constitutes a terrorist group. This can make it difficult to operate, as rebel-held areas are often those that are the most in need of humanitarian aid, and it is difficult to operate effectively within a conflict zone (like Somalia, for instance) while avoiding any kind of activity that could be remotely argued to fuel the terrorist economy or contravene counter-terrorism legislation. For more information on donors' policies, see 'Funding and donors' section.

## Situational analysis

Is there a relationship between religion and risk, what is the nature of that relationship? In NGO security terminology, risk means the likelihood of encountering a particular threat, and the impact of that threat if it does occur. Risk is therefore a function not only of the threat itself but also of the particular vulnerability of an organisation, group or individual to that threat. As well as security incidents, the category of threats can include threats to the continuation of programmes and to the reputation of agencies.

Vulnerability affects susceptibility to a particular threat as well as the ability to withstand it if it does occur. Religion can impact on risk positively, by making security incidents less likely to occur, or by strengthening organisational and individual resilience to them; or it can impact negatively, by being a factor in increasing the likelihood of incidents, or decreasing the capacity to respond to them.

Gerrie ter Har and Stephen Ellis break religion down into four components:<sup>18</sup>

- a. Religious ideas: The perceptions of the universe, the world, life, nature, evil, the sacred, up to and including the virtues and values that guide actions.
- b. Religious practices: The actions, customs, places and objects that link perceptible reality with imperceptible reality.
- c. Religious organisations: The religious movements, communities and organisations, their leaders and the networks in which they cooperate.

d. Religious experiences: People's experiences in relation to the transcendent. The transcendent here is a generic term for the ultimate, the divine, spirits, ancestors and gods. Religious experience can be at the root of transformations, both individually and collectively.

To examine the relationship between religion and risk, it is useful to look at how risk could be influenced by the four components of religion proposed by Gerrie ter Har and Stephen Ellis.

### a. Religious ideas

How the world is perceived, and the values that guide an individual or group in their actions, can have an impact on risk. Individuals, organisations and communities all have their own views of the world, shaped by background, culture, education and other factors. If religious ideas influence values and perceptions, this in turn can influence how different religious groups interact with each other within a given context, and how they view outsiders. In some cases this can assist in building strong relationships between groups and individuals that can assist with security. In other cases this can build up into hostilities with one group targeting those that hold a different worldview.

Whether faith-based or secular, self-awareness can assist in examining how a particular worldview interacts with the views and values within the operational context. In contexts where religion and religious values permeate, to a great extent, other aspects of society (professional, political, social, economic and personal) agencies need to take into account the role religion plays in the lives and belief systems of stakeholders, including their own staff and partners.

### b. Religious practices

These are the actions that a group or individual takes based on their belief or value system. Such actions and practices may influence how open or closed a community is to outsiders, or how tolerant it is of differences. Those with shared practices may be viewed as having commonalities, and thus be considered less outsiders than those with different practices. However, even though faith may be shared, religious practices may be different and organisations should not make assumptions that their values will be the same. In some cases threats may be posed as actions against those who are thought to be acting in a way that either contradicts or threatens religious practices.

<sup>18</sup> Boender, Dwarswaard and Westendorp (2011).

The way in which staff members evidence their own value system (by attending a place of worship or engaging in certain kinds of social behaviour, for example) may increase their vulnerability by establishing predictable patterns of behaviour or angering stakeholders who could pose a threat, or reduce it by building strong relationships with people who share those values or practice in a similar way. Rituals of religious practice could also be argued to assist in building resilience and in improving an individual's or an organisation's ability to withstand a serious incident. (See 'Incident Management' section.)

In some contexts there may be an overlap between religious practices and the activities addressed by NGO programming. Issues such as female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage, women's rights, child education and sexual and reproductive health may be highly contentious in some communities, given religious and traditional practices. It is noteworthy that traditional practices are often integrated and seen by the local community as religious. If NGOs are to work successfully on these issues, they must do so with an understanding of the practices of the community. There are many programmatic examples of how, by working with local religious leaders and understanding the value systems of different societal or cultural groupings, NGOs have managed to use collaboration rather than conflict to tackle these potentially contentious issues successfully.<sup>19</sup>

### c. Religious organisations

In many conflict, post-conflict or disaster contexts, religious organisations, actors, partners and institutions play a pivotal role in the delivery of assistance, and maybe the most effective means of reaching the most vulnerable. For FBOs, there may already be access to these networks and key opinion formers by virtue of a shared religion. Equally, for secular agencies or those of a different faith, understanding the role and influence of religious organisations and institutions in the context should be part of actor mapping. For humanitarian aid to be delivered safely and securely there needs to be analysis and understanding of the power dynamics and hierarchies within the operating environment.

Rather than considering religious practices and beliefs as a barrier to the humanitarian response or as an obstacle to programming, agencies can become more adept at engaging with religious, cultural and traditional leaders to determine effective ways of supporting positive change and meeting human

needs on the ground. An understanding of the religious dimension and a degree of faith literacy can be an asset in achieving this. This is explored in more detail in 'Security strategies: the importance of acceptance'.

### d. Religious experiences

As religious experience can have a transformational effect on organisations and individuals, this can also affect behaviour and actions. Religious experiences can strengthen individual or organisational resilience, and thus potentially lessen the impact of a security incident. However, as previously noted, religious beliefs and faith can also mean that people consider themselves protected by a 'higher power' and may take less notice of security risk management practices.

*'Faith runs deep in the veins of conflict and disaster-affected communities and plays a major role in their lives. It helps people cope with trauma; it validates their humanity; it informs their decisions; and it offers guidance, compassion, consolation and hope in their darkest hours. At-risk or affected communities turn to FBOs for physical protection, material assistance, guidance and counselling, spiritual confirmation, compassion and understanding.'*

*UNHCR (2011).*

Given the influence that religion can have on the ideas, values, practices, structure and behaviour of organisations, groups and individuals, it is logical that it should affect risk. It is, however, not always straightforward to determine exactly what is influenced by religion and what is influenced by culture, background, social and traditional norms or politics. This is further complicated by the different notions of the nature of religion and by differences in belief between international humanitarian agencies, staff, partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. In the Western world there is a separation between religious/spiritual life and public/professional life and religion is largely seen as a private matter and an individual choice. This can contradict the experience in other societies where religion may form an integral part of society, informing and dictating norms, values and behaviour.

<sup>19</sup> For further detail and examples, see UNICEF (2011).

## Threat analysis

This section and the next one examine whether, and how, religion can impact on the threat itself and on the vulnerability of an agency or individual to that threat.



### Who?

'Often faith-based international organisations can be linked in the minds of fighters to local groups which they oppose, support, or treat with benign disregard, whether or not that link actually exists.'

*Key informant, secular NGO.*

Who are the perpetrators of the threat? Who are the victims? There is scope to examine whether religion is a motivating factor for the perpetrators or if it influences the selection of victims. A key concern raised by respondents was the fear of being targeted because of perceived religious affiliations.

After witnessing kidnappings carried out by fundamentalist groups in contexts such as Somalia and northern Kenya, the agencies that continue to operate have had to find ways to ensure security for Western staff. The presumed reasons behind these kidnappings are a complicated mixture of religious, political and socio-economic factors. In the majority of complex risk environments there are elements of fanaticism and fundamentalism, and humanitarian crises can be a fertile ground for radical messages. Interviewees and survey participants perceived this to be more of a problem than religion per se. The relationships that radical groups have with other stakeholders can be linked to the choice of victim, but can also be a way of working on solutions. Whilst extremist groups can be perpetrators of a host of threats, agencies may often need to negotiate with them to secure access. (See section above on 'Negotiating access with religious extremist groups'.)

### When/Where?

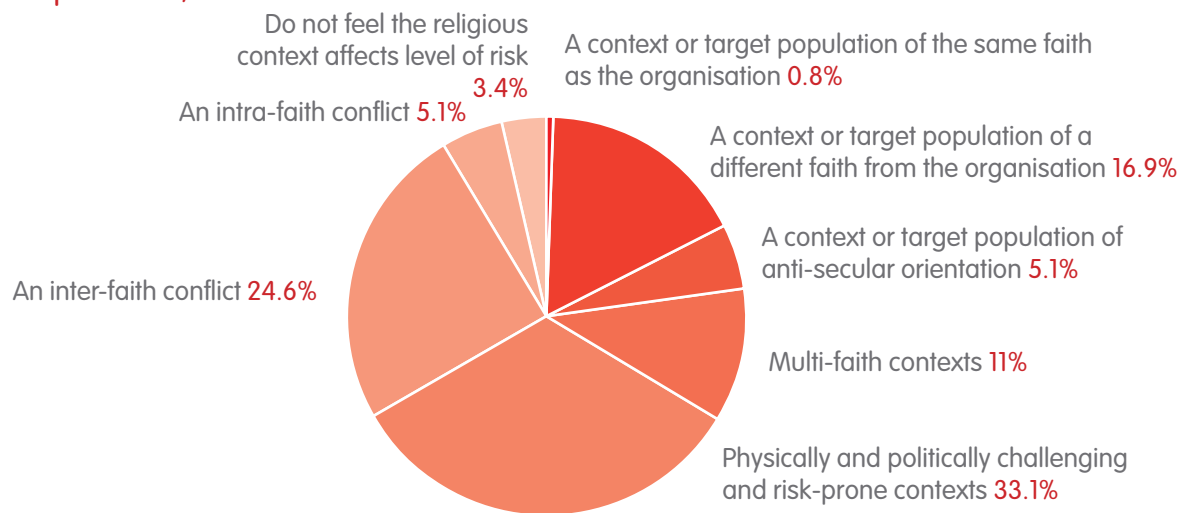
'It is often easier to carry out a humanitarian operation in multi-faith contexts and even in inter-faith conflicts than in intra-faith conflict situations. When you have an inter-faith conflict, any FBO is an outsider to someone. Religious leaders may then be an invaluable resource in bridging different religions/fractions. What is said above may be very true in intra-faith conflicts as well. However, they sometimes tend to be bloodier and more complicated than conflicts between different religions. When dealing with other religions we may have lower expectations on results.'

*Key informant, secular NGO.*

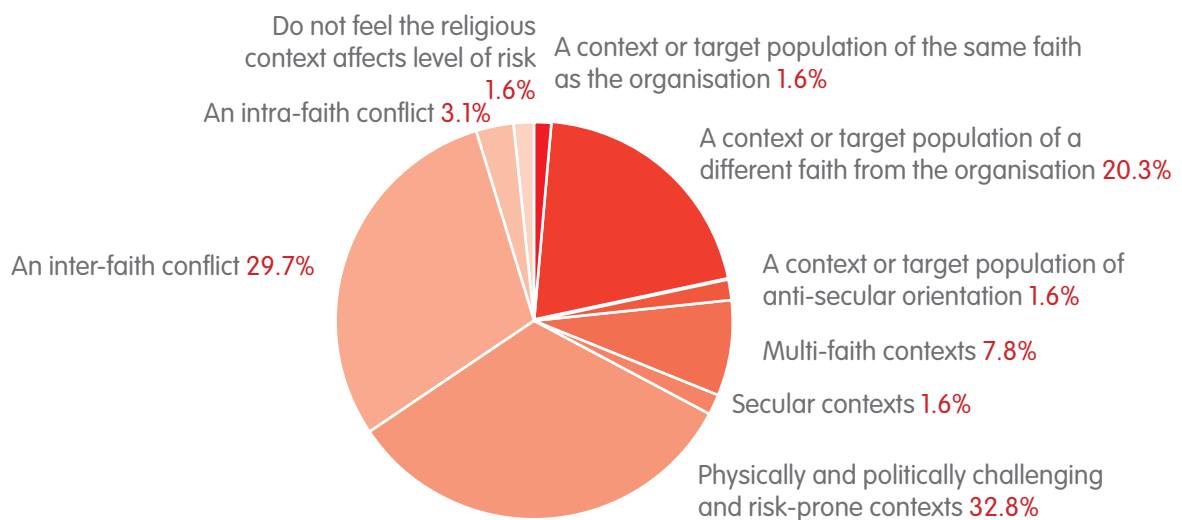
Is the threat more likely to occur in certain areas? Is there a link between threat and the religious composition of the population in that area? Are there particular locations of operation where threats are most likely to occur to (certain types of) NGO staff?

Participants were asked which contexts they thought posed the greatest risk for humanitarian agencies. 33% stated these to be 'physically and politically challenging and risk-prone contexts'. 25% of survey participants identified inter-faith conflicts, while 17% identified contexts where the target population was of a different faith from the organisation. There was some variation between responses from FBOs and secular organisations, as shown in the graphs below. The main variations, as might be expected, were that FBOs thought that there was more risk in working in environments of a different faith from the organisation, while secular organisations saw risk in environments with anti-secular sentiment.

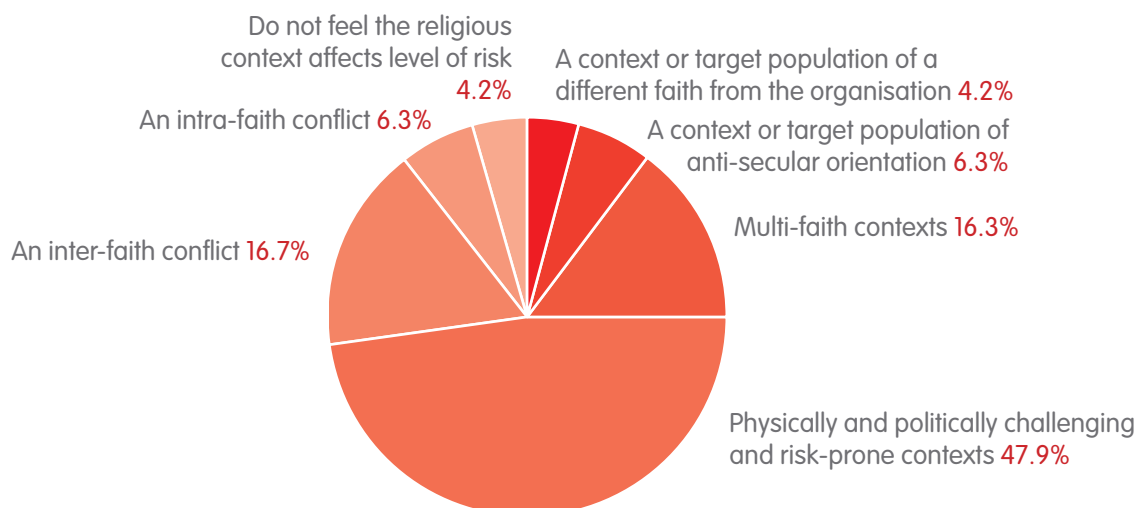
**Fig. 8 – Which of these contexts carry the greatest risk for humanitarian agencies? (All respondents)**



**Fig. 9 – Which of these contexts carry the greatest risk for humanitarian agencies? (Faith-based respondents)**



**Fig. 10 – Which of these contexts carry the greatest risk for humanitarian agencies? (Secular respondents)**



## Causes

This aspect of threat analysis involves exploring the possible root causes and drivers of identified threats. In areas of religious tension, religion can be one of these drivers or underlying causes. By identifying causes, an agency is better informed and better able to address them by programming or by the adoption of appropriate risk reduction measures. Where the causes are tensions, activities or misunderstandings that an agency has control over, action can sometimes be taken to address these.

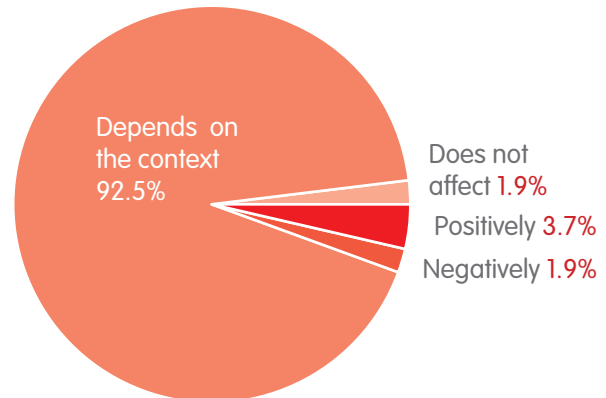
As seen in the above graphs, there was a difference between participants in the risk they perceived in inter-faith conflicts, which staff from FBOs identified as higher risk than staff of secular organisations. However, the level of perceived risk was much more linked to the level of violence within the conflict than the drivers behind it. Participants were asked to expand upon what they considered to be these most challenging contexts. Frequently named countries/regions included: Syria, Afghanistan, the Sahel Region, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. The main features of these challenging contexts as identified by respondents included elements of both inter- and intra-faith conflict combined with national and international political interests and divisions, as well as contexts where impartiality or the human rights framework could be misconstrued or come into conflict with cultural and religious beliefs.

## Vulnerability analysis

Vulnerability is the likelihood that organisations or individuals will experience a particular threat, as well as how resilient they might be to that threat if it does occur. Vulnerabilities may be linked to the identity of an organisation or individual, or come from the perceptions others hold. Within a staff team, different staff will be exposed to different threats according to a number of factors (gender, age, job title, etc) and this also needs to be considered during the vulnerability analysis. The perceived religion of an organisation or staff member is one of these factors, and can affect vulnerability both positively and negatively. If a particular individual or group is deemed to be at significantly greater risk, there may be the need for specific risk management measures. This includes increased restrictions on religious practice or debate, behavioural guidance or additional protection measures.

The effect on vulnerability will depend very much on the context. This opinion was shared by respondents from both secular and FBOs with only a 2% variation.

**Fig. 11 – Does the religious or secular nature of an organisation affect staff vulnerability?**



*'In Lebanon we have Shia staff for Hezbollah Areas, Sunni staff for other Muslim areas and Christian staff for Christian areas. In religious contexts atheist attitude should not be displayed. Usually we advise staff to avoid all issues of religion (talking, debating, judging, commenting). Religion is a no-go area in everyday programme work.'*

*Survey participant, FBO.*

Differential vulnerability can also influence deployment decisions, insofar as staff of a particular religious persuasion or ethnicity might not be deployed to certain locations or in certain roles.

Equally, knowledge of how religion affects vulnerability can lead to strategic deployment decisions, selecting teams of staff members that will have the least risk and the greatest chance of negotiating access and gaining acceptance.

'[My Islamic agency was] trying to get access in [Myanmar after the cyclone] but [we] had issues [in London] with processing the visa. We therefore went via the Myanmar embassy in Sri Lanka. Our Head of Emergencies was a Sinhalese Christian married to a Buddhist and talked about the history of relationships for a couple of hours. Playing the close affinity with Sri Lanka card and selecting as our Head of mission a non-Muslim who knew how to deal with Chinese and oriental culture, and working with different partners, not only enabled us to work, but we were able to also assist other agencies with achieving entry. Our diverse staffing meant we were seen as non-proselytising and this helped.'

*Key informant, Islamic agency.*

If an organisation is considered to be at significantly greater risk because of its religious identity this may also influence programmatic decisions. These include remote management, working through local partners or in collaboration with other agencies of a different (perceived) identity where this is estimated to reduce risk and increase access. A significant number of secular and Christian FBOs described partnerships with Islamic agencies as a way of continuing to provide assistance to Islamic communities where difficulties had previously been encountered when implementing directly. While this might be expected in well-known complex operating environments such as Central Asia and the Middle East, it was not confined to these areas. One informant spoke of an instance in Zanzibar where a major secular agency, facing difficulties in working with a conservative Muslim community, was able to improve access and programming by taking on an Islamic partner who was able to work effectively with local religious leaders. If an agency's vulnerability due to religious factors cannot be reduced, or a joint working solution found, this may ultimately lead to a decision not to operate, or to cease operations within a high-risk environment.

'In Muslim countries being an organisation with the name "church" in it poses some significant challenges, in some other contexts it can be an added protection as religious organisations/people are respected in a different way than "secular" organisations.'

*Survey participant, FBO.*

## Risk analysis

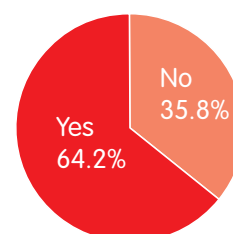
'In some cases, we have elected to remain in locations where other INGOs have left because we not only consider the humanitarian imperative but also the Lord's calling for us. Therefore, our risk threshold can and does vary based on the Lord's discernment.'

*Survey participant, FBO.*

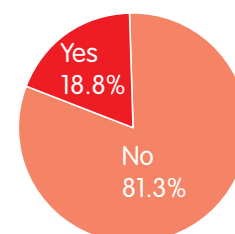
Different organisations and individuals will have different opinions on what constitutes a level of risk worth taking. The level of risk that an organisation or individual is prepared to accept in order to carry out their humanitarian work may have links to the perceived benefits of the programme, the extent of humanitarian needs on the ground, beliefs and values, and the level of empathy and attachment that they feel towards their beneficiaries.

As the pie charts illustrate there was, as might be expected, a far greater link between religion and threshold of risk for FBOs than for secular organisations. The majority of respondents from FBOs felt that faith-based values influenced organisational decisions as to where to operate and the circumstances in which it was viable to remain. Many individuals and organisations 'of faith' referred to the importance of a higher calling, the sense that a 'higher power' was working with them, as well a strong sense of commitment and loyalty to beneficiary populations.

**Fig. 12 – Do religious values/beliefs have an impact on your agency's acceptable threshold of risk? (Faith-based organisations)**



**Fig. 13 – Do religious values/beliefs have an impact on your agency's acceptable threshold of risk? (Secular NGOs)**



Some respondents felt that this attitude was diminishing as FBOs professionalised. Other respondents stated the contrary viewpoint: they felt that their interpretation of faith-based values could lead them to be more risk averse, as they would put increased emphasis on the safety and security of staff.

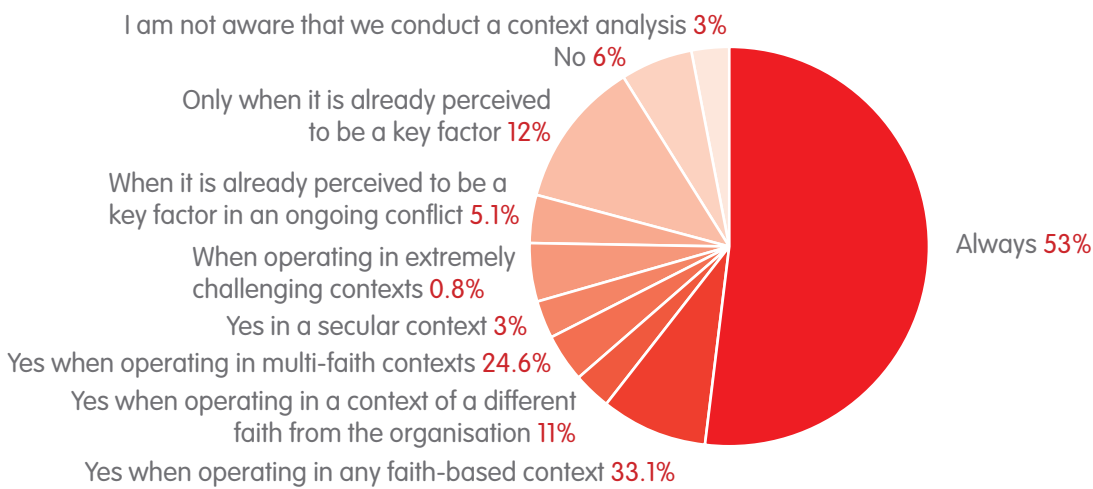
Other respondents cited evidence that it tended to be the secular agencies such as MSF or the ICRC who were the ones that were most likely to stay and operate when other agencies had made a decision to leave, although this decision could be attributed to the respective mandates of these agencies more than their secular identity.

In our survey, respondents were asked if their agency considered religion within context and risk assessment processes. The responses are shown in the pie charts below for all NGO respondents. When this was analysed separately for FBO and secular agency

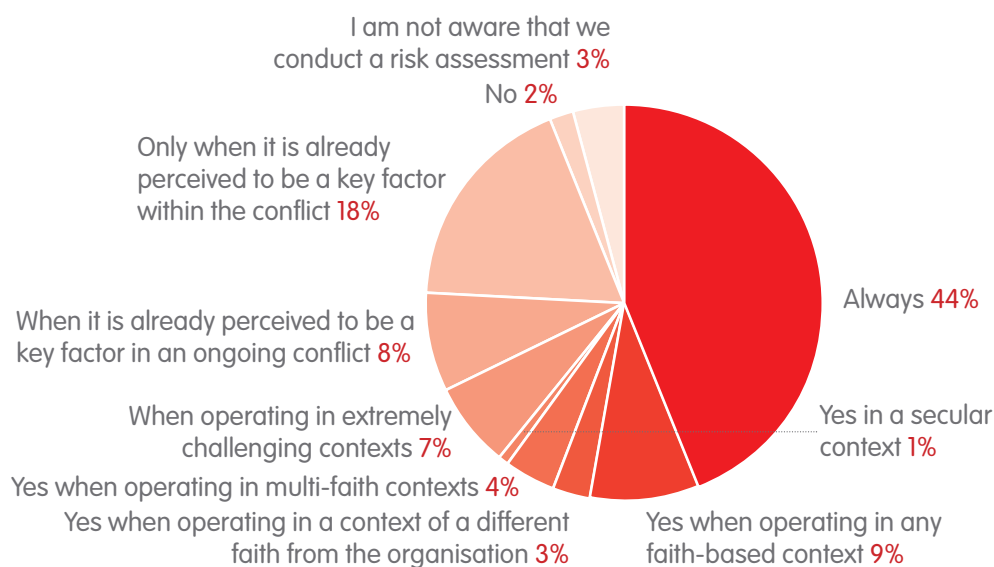
respondents, there was little difference. The most significant variation was that whilst 55% of FBO respondents stated that religion was considered within context analysis, this fell to 49% for secular respondents.

When asked if religion should be considered within context and risk assessment processes, only 5% of respondents thought that it was not necessary in any context. This view was held by only 1% of FBO respondents, while 9% of secular respondents felt it was never necessary to consider religion.

**Fig. 14 – Is religion considered within your context analysis?**

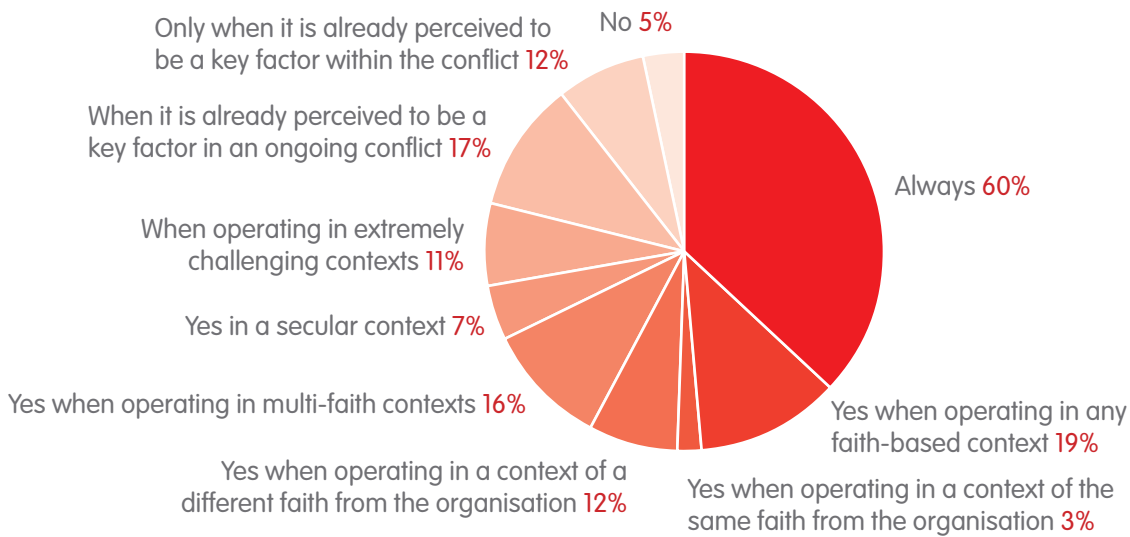


**Fig. 15 – Is religion considered within your risk assessment processes?**





**Fig. 16 – Should NGOs consider religion within context and risk assessment processes?**



**Shared Humanitarian Space: Missionary Agencies, Christian Organisations and Non-Faith-Based Organisations**

‘[Mission staff] stay long after others, due to living with the community and having strong acceptance. Supporters and families may also have higher tolerance for liability. We want people to make home where they are staying, people are less likely to want to leave a place that is home. [They] might also relocate rather than evacuate.’

*Key informant, mission society.*

Although missionary agencies may not strictly work in crises or the immediate aftermath as humanitarians do, there may be occasions where mission staff and humanitarians share the same space. This is the case of humanitarian contexts that have evolved to a development scenario, or in the contrary, countries where the security situation has deteriorated and humanitarians intervene. A fundamental distinction must be made between missionaries, and Christian humanitarian agencies whose identity and whose humanitarian action is inspired and legitimised by Christianity or specific Christian ethics and tenets, but who do not necessarily want to anchor and expand the presence of the faith or the specific church or order in the contexts where they deliver aid. The perception of FBOs as more likely to evidence commitment to the community and to their calling by staying put in high risk circumstances may be more linked to the historical actions of missionaries and mission-based organisations than to the actions of mainstream faith-based humanitarian agencies. During the

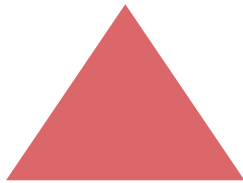
colonial period there was a recognition that missionaries might not return or survive, and it was common for missionaries to take their coffins, often used for transport of their belongings, as they left for foreign climes.

Drawing on that historical background, it is interesting to note that missionaries are more likely than humanitarian workers to see where they were living as their home rather than a temporary working environment. Many missionary organisations also spend far longer than the average humanitarian organisation preparing individuals, and in many cases their families, for an assignment. This training often includes cultural awareness and language training which can facilitate the establishment of acceptance within the community. The respondents from mission agencies highlighted a difference between expatriate aid workers, whom they saw as perceived by communities as ‘doing a job’, and expatriate missionaries, whose goal was to be accepted within the community, working with them to develop well-being, both physical and spiritual.

The duration of assignment for missionaries is usually long-term and far exceeds that of the average humanitarian worker, which in its turn may influence the acceptable threshold of risk. This could arguably be linked to the nature of mission work, which tends to be focused on medium- to long-term development. One informant from a mission society cited an increase in the deployment of volunteers to shorter to medium-term projects as a key reason for their organisation considering a more systematic approach to security risk management.

## Security strategies: the importance of acceptance

Acceptance: political and social consent for an agency's presence and work



Protection: the use of protective devices and procedures to reduce vulnerability to a threat

Deterrence: posing a counter-threat

The religious dynamic can influence the choice and implementation of the security strategy mix. Survey participants provided 54 examples of religion being managed or presented to reduce risk. When these examples could be classified according to the different security strategies, we can conclude that:

- Deterrence: Whilst it was rare for religion to play a part in deterrence if strong alliances were forged with religious leaders and groups, there could be the implicit deterrence of religious sanction or action. Respondents highlighted that this option needed to be approached with caution owing to other risks that could result from being perceived as being too close to particular power-brokers.
- Protection: Of the 54 examples, seven related to protection strategy. In situations where a perceived religious identity could be seen to increase risk, organisations may incorporate standard operating procedures to downplay this. This included adopting of a low profile approach, downplaying a faith-based identity by restricting or giving guidelines on personal behaviour and religious practice, and not branding vehicles or premises with an agency logo. As stated by a survey participant from a faith-based organisation,

The logo used in Muslim contexts is different to the normal one we use elsewhere. Staff are briefed carefully when they go into these contexts on how they can and can't share freely their thoughts about faith.

- Acceptance: As religion can impact on the political and social spheres and values within a given context, it is to this particular component of the security strategy mix that religion may have the most relevance. Of the 54 examples received from survey participants, 35 were related to acceptance strategy. These broke down into three key areas: faith/secular identity, relationship building, and faith literacy.

### Key area: faith/secular identity

'We regularly make positive experiences in Muslim countries because people are able to relate to other people who pray and believe in God and have their lives impacted by that faith and find this much less offensive than what they perceive as atheism and random life choices.'

*Survey participant, Christian organisation.*

15 of the 54 responses related to use of faith identity to increase acceptance and therefore security. A majority of respondents from FBOs felt that in certain contexts stressing their faith-based identity and using faith-based common values could assist their acceptance strategy. This was considered to be the strongest where local institutions and organisations of the same faith group already had extensive networks and were already trusted. However, just sharing faith-based values (whether they are based on a common faith or not) can also lead to a better acceptance.

The extent of the reach of the Catholic Church, and how this has facilitated access and acceptance for Catholic INGOs, was cited by a significant number of survey participants. Whilst these networks were not necessarily closed to secular agencies, engagement would not begin from the same point, requiring further development. In the same vein, Islamic organisations were sometimes thought to be better at engaging with Islamic actors and leaders. In many cases this led Christian and secular agencies to work with Islamic Relief as a partner to increase access and effectiveness of programmes in Islamic contexts.

Whilst it was important to consider and demonstrate respect for religious beliefs, secular agencies felt that they were able to build acceptance best by promoting their non-denominational approach. In some situations the independence of secular organisations could lead to them being seen as an honest broker and less likely to prejudge different types of actors.

## Key area: relationship-building

‘Openness and good understanding of local traditions (including local languages) have contributed a lot in complicated contexts. We have learned by experience that an openly religious background is often an invaluable tool even in discussions with other religions, provided that organisation understands its own limitations.’

*Survey participant, FBO.*

An effective acceptance strategy builds on context analysis and actor mapping to look at what kinds of relationships an organisation needs to have with different stakeholders in order to ensure sustainable or safe delivery of aid. This means using staff’s interpersonal skills to establish, develop and maintain these relationships. Although some FBOs did feel that they were better at it, as what is required is religious understanding and respect, this does not exclude secular agencies from being able to build strong relationships and networks to improve security. A faith or secular identity could be either positive or negative depending on how it was communicated to, and perceived by, stakeholders on the ground. If agencies are not able to link and explain their work in an accessible manner then they risk being resented and rejected.

Respondents from some Christian agencies and mission societies also cited the use of a relational approach as a perceived asset for acceptance. Being relational was seen to convey that the organisation did not base everything on outcome or objectives. Communities were seen as more likely to relate to those that demonstrated respect and love, values that these respondents associated with Christianity. Other respondents felt that the key was to assess and understand local attitudes, whilst being clear and open about their own identity, and that this was enhanced by language and culturally appropriate communication skills.

## Key area: faith literacy

‘What is culture? What is religion? We cannot easily divorce them, religion forms a fundamental part of culture, values and practice. If you take it out, then you will not understand the context adequately. Conflict can be about resources, or politics, but can still be about religion, to divorce it is to remove the identity. To not acknowledge religion, is to not acknowledge the identity of people.’

*Key informant, FBO.*

The importance of cultural sensitivity to an effective acceptance strategy is already understood by many relief and development practitioners.<sup>20</sup> This cultural literacy extends to faith literacy, that is, to understanding the key effects of each religion/belief system by means of the values, attitudes and influence it causes in individuals, families and communities, and to communicating in line with this influence. Faith literacy can (but does not need to) include using religious texts to underpin principles, values or arguments.

Whilst faith-based survey respondents seemed of the opinion that risk was reduced where the agency and the population shared the same faith (identified as the least risky context by 40% of survey respondents), there was also an awareness that agencies needed to be more self-aware as to their identity, and how this was managed within different contexts.<sup>21</sup> In certain contexts, acceptance can be improved through understanding and working with those of a different faith identity. Humanitarian values can be confusing if not explained to communities in a language that they understand.

In some environments faith-based agencies argued that they are better positioned to understand the religious dimension. However, this is not exclusively the preserve of FBOs, and secular NGOs also acknowledged that being faith-literate could be an asset in environments where religion has a major influence on communities.

<sup>20</sup> In their publication *Culture Matters*, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) highlight the development and use of culturally-sensitive language as fundamental to effective implementation, as well as the avoidance of judgemental and negative language concerning accepted attitudes. UNFPA (2008).

<sup>21</sup> For statistics and further analysis on incidents patterns impeding the delivery of aid for faith-based and secular INGOs, see the full report by Insecurity Insight in the section ‘Humanitarian access and faith’.

'There is a need for increased and improved religious literacy between the religious and the secular, which moves the discussion on from simply tolerating diversity to valuing, sustaining and promoting it.

All development actors, from policy makers to those providing on-the-ground technical assistance should also be given the skill necessary for religious literacy, including the knowledge not just that religion matters, but how it matters.'

*Wilton Park Conference Report, Religion, Change and Development, 2011, p.1.*

Often this literacy was provided by staff who shared the religion and supported and educated their secular colleagues. Agencies that integrated faith literacy within a secular approach stated that the key was not to see it as conflicting, but to use understanding of faith literacy to assist in identifying common values. While some secular agencies were already working on this area, there was a perception from both Islamic and Christian agencies that their secular counterparts would benefit from increased faith literacy and that interagency debate and joint working in this area needed to be encouraged and developed.

Survey data and interviews seem to point out that the key is to understand and work with the intersection between different belief systems, regardless of whether these are motivated by religious or humanitarian values and principles. A greater understanding of and connection between the values held by communities and international humanitarian actors can improve relationships and therefore security. When trying to address complex problems on the ground, getting support from religious leaders across faith lines can have a dramatic impact on access and security.

Dialogue and debate within the sector can assist different types of NGOs in utilising their individual strengths and weaknesses to collectively improve security and programming. As such, several faith-based agencies were involved in projects around translating and presenting humanitarian values in a way that could be more readily accessed by religious staff, supporters or beneficiaries. Examples of this

include the work of Islamic Relief and others on explaining and translating humanitarian principles into Islamic texts, as well as work from both the Islamic and Christian NGO communities on the importance of spiritual capital within humanitarian assistance. At an internal level, informants from Christian humanitarian agencies and mission societies cited on-going work using religious texts to promote security awareness amongst staff and partner agencies, as well as to improve the mainstreaming of security management.

#### **Inter-faith action at field level: Sri Lanka, Muslim Aid partnership with United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)**

Muslim Aid and UMCOR were working in Sri Lanka responding to a mass displacement of people from north to east, and decided to combine efforts. The displacement was mainly of the Muslim community. UMCOR had financial resources, whilst Muslim Aid had human resources and access. Muslim staff in UMCOR vehicles operated as one agency on the ground, and used that partnership to form better relationships between the church and mosque communities. For Buddhist monks, used to seeing NGOs working on their own turf, to see two NGOs working together in this way was considered unique. The fact that they were able to bring Muslim and Christians together evidenced to the Buddhist monks that religion was not a discriminatory factor, and relations with the Buddhist community were also improved.

## **Organisational management**

### **Staff management**

A key challenge from a security perspective is sensitising staff to the implications and effects of religion. Individual faith is very personal and each person practices and interprets their faith differently. It is hard to get people's attention when explaining local religion and how one's conduct can shape the public's view of the individual and the organisation. Some staff may feel that they should be able to be who they are and free to express their views, but exercising this freedom can have consequences for security.

Secular agencies employ personnel from a wide variety of religious backgrounds, as do many faith-based agencies. Some individuals and groups are more enthusiastic and serious about their faith than others. Another key challenge for agencies regardless of religious identity is how to communicate and reconcile values internally and manage that diversity. Where staff feel that they are not respected or supported by their organisation, this can be a source of dissent, and potentially of security threats. According to a key informant, '25–35% of threats came from disgruntled staff' (Regional Manager, Asia).

**'National staff are an organisation's strongest link to communities and their actions affect the way the organisation is perceived. It is vital to manage the staff's understanding of the organisation's values and mandate as it is interpreted very differently in different contexts.'**

*Survey participant, FBO.*

This emphasises the importance of integrating all staff within the organisation and providing proper induction on the organisation's values and activities. This may also include recruitment of staff members who will be more likely to be accepted by power groups or beneficiaries, navigating expressions of religious extremism, and discussion around faith values and humanitarian principles.

A key informant from a secular agency reported that in field teams, international staff tend to be very secular, and need to take religion into account within context and programming. For national staff religion was often a key part of their commitment to the work. It is important that organisations understand and cater for these differences in an impartial way. This is crucial in terms of training staff and equipping them to represent the agency in a way that works within their own value system and worldview, and balancing this with organisational values and identity.

Where organisations had a very good grasp of the relationship between the religious dynamic and risk, and were able skilfully to manage this, this seemed to be very much a result of staff team composition, capacity and skills on the ground. This emphasises the importance of appropriate recruitment and training for staff.

## Image management

Alongside an awareness of organisational values and identity, humanitarian agencies need to consider the public image that they wish to present, and how to achieve this image both at a strategic level and within specific operational environments.

Risk factors on the ground influence decisions related to image management and positioning which need to be balanced against global identity. It is vital that information concerning image and how to convey it is disseminated and delegated to staff across all levels. A good information flow needs to be maintained, with staff and other stakeholders feeding back as to how this self-image matches perceptions on the ground.

Over 50% of respondents from Christian NGOs stated that they would consider downplaying aspects of their religious identity at field level if this was deemed to reduce risk or facilitate programming. Given the global information age, it is vital to ensure that these two levels of image link up. Whilst it may be to the advantage of an organisation locally to promote or downplay certain aspects of their religious identity or value system, to be seen to be manipulating image and concealing facts could in itself damage relationships, programmes and security. This means decisions at field level need to be cross-checked against the global communications strategy to ensure consistency.

Events and decisions in one operational environment can be quickly communicated across the world, and this can impact on image, perceptions and security of field teams in another context. It is also necessary to cross-reference messages that others may be disseminating about the organisation. The global reach of Facebook, Twitter and other forms of social media increases the likelihood of news and rumours about actions of humanitarian agencies being spread. This can have a negative impact on an organisation's reputation, particularly in conflict situations. Organisations need to be clear about the image that they wish to project, and whilst this may vary with location, they need to balance the different aspects of their image and try to avoid accusations of misrepresentation. This is delicate, since different stakeholders such as donors, supporters, beneficiaries and local actors may have different perceptions and value different parts of an agency's identity.

## Incident management

Many individuals, when in a difficult situation or crisis, instinctively look to their faith to assist them in managing that situation. That might be faith in God and in religious values, faith in humanity or simply faith in life itself or in family and friends. Whilst faith is not the sole preserve of FBOs, there may be aspects of religion that FBOs in particular draw on to assist with crisis management or resilience and stress management. One reason cited by informants for choosing to work with an organisation that shared their faith values was the sense of community derived from working and worshipping together. An argument can be made that for these individuals and organisations the shared practice of religion may help with team bonding, offer a sense of common purpose and identity, and aid in resilience during and after field deployment. Many Christian agencies also fostered very close links between supporters and staff, which were seen as enhancing a sense of community and a supportive environment.

One FBO that employs the majority of its field staff, and all international staff, from within the same faith, stated that this shared faith identity and the additional sense of community and resilience that it brought was an asset in terms of crisis management. At HQ level, regular prayer meetings provided an opportunity for HQ staff to be aware of and to pray for support for their colleagues in the field. This existing forum then provided an ideal opportunity in the event of a crisis for the whole staff body to be updated on events and lend collective support, both practically and spiritually, to their colleagues in the field. This was seen by the agency as powerful and therapeutic, and added to the organisation's crisis management capacity.

*'A Christian kidnap victim (who was taken with two other non-Christians) was able to say, due to her faith "at the end of the day, if I don't make it home, its not because he doesn't love me" and to know God's love was not contingent on her getting out. This allowed her to have peace and calm and hold onto a piece of joy.'*

*Key informant, FBO.*

Psychosocial considerations and support are a key aspect of incident and post-incident management. The spiritual dimension can play a role in recovering from physical or psychological harm. Religious beliefs may also affect the type of physical support that an individual feels is appropriate to them after a violent event, such as choices around provision of medical care and emergency contraception, in particular for survivors of sexual assault. Among faith-based agencies, several organisations mentioned the importance of pastoral care via the religious community in assisting staff recovery. For the majority of FBOs this was as an additional option, rather than a substitute for other forms of psychosocial support.

Religious beliefs may have an impact on the extent to which a survivor of a violent incident feels social stigma from their community if the attack is known about, and may thus influence decisions around reporting an attack in the first place. By considering religion as part of security risk management planning, an organisation can make sure that a range of post-incident support is available and appropriate to the different needs of staff.

## Working with partner agencies

Image and acceptance at country level are dictated to a great extent by the perceptions stakeholders have of those directly implementing the aid. This means that the actions of partner agencies can affect security. Given that many international humanitarian agencies channel their relief aid via partners, it is crucial to examine if and how religion underpins the values and approaches of partner agencies, how they are perceived, how they perceive the international partners, and how that relationship might be perceived by other stakeholders. Many local FBOs have strong links within their communities, which can lead to great levels of trust, access and information. Local religious leaders may be well placed to negotiate access, positively influence humanitarian aid efforts, and facilitate a safe and secure environment for delivery.

'Our partners may not share all our values. The absolute minimum in development and emergency work is that they respect human rights, are bound to gender equality, prefer [protect] minorities (including sexual minorities) in their work and respect key humanitarian principles.

- Partners from a majority religion can bring widespread acceptance – but they can also implicate us in unpopular power structures (e.g. when corrupt power-holders are closely involved in the majority faith).
- Partners from a minority religion can be mistrusted as disloyal or heretics – or they can be welcomed as “honest brokers” (especially in a multi-faith context where multiple larger groups are in tension or conflict).
- Secular partners may be trusted as honest and neutral – or they may be mistrusted as spies or “just in it for the money” by a deeply religious population which does not understand what motivates “godless” aid work.'

*Survey participant, FBO.*

When selecting and developing partnerships at field level, religious dynamics should be taken into account. Where possible, partners should be chosen who understand the social, cultural, religious and ethnic dynamics of the environment in order to enhance community acceptance as risk mitigation. Partnership models between INGOs and local partners may vary and this can affect the legal and moral responsibilities of both partners.<sup>22</sup>

### Funding and donors

An organisation's religious identity and its approach to combining faith with humanitarian principles may affect the type of donors it attracts or impact on a donor's willingness and ability to provide funding. FBOs have a wider constituency and can access funding from within the faith community. Whilst this can increase an organisation's funding pool, Islamic and Christian agencies often had to work hard to balance needs-driven humanitarian work with the preference of some faith-based donors to support those of the same faith.

Participants from Islamic agencies were very aware of the need for internal discussion within Islamic agencies and with the Islamic community to ensure an understanding of the reasons that contributions were not just for Muslim beneficiaries. The concept of *zakat* (solidarity tax) is one of the five pillars of Islam and is expected to be paid by all practicing Muslims who have the financial means. It thus opens up a substantial revenue stream to Islamic agencies in particular. Whilst *zakat* is primarily destined for Muslim recipients,<sup>23</sup> the categories of those qualifying for it can be seen as incorporating the majority of humanitarian needs.

Islamic respondents referenced the importance of working with donor communities to ensure an understanding of how different humanitarian programming activities fit within the categories of beneficiaries of *zakat* funding. According to the Qur'an, there are eight categories of people (*asnaf*) who qualify to receive *zakat* funds:<sup>24</sup>

1. Those living in absolute poverty (*Al-Fuqar*).
2. Those restrained because they cannot meet their basic needs (*Al-Masikīn*).
3. The *zakat* collectors themselves (*Al-Āmilīna 'Alaihā*).
4. Non-Muslims who are sympathetic to Islam or wish to convert to Islam (*Al-Mu'allafatu Qulūbuhum*).
5. People whom one is attempting to free from slavery or bondage (*Diyya*) (*Fir-Riqāb*).
6. Those who have incurred overwhelming debts while attempting to satisfy their basic needs (*Al-Ghārimīn*).
7. Those working in God's way (*Fī Sabīllillāh*).
8. Children of the street/travellers (*Ibnus-Sabīl*).

Agencies need to be aware of how they are viewed by donors, and how those donors are perceived within the operating environment. The religious dynamic may also impact on funding decisions: which donors to accept funding from, and which partners to channel funding through. Many agencies, both secular and non-secular, will decline funding from institutional, private or religious sources where this is thought potentially to impact on programmes, access or security on the ground. Although in the last decade the percentage of major donor funding being channelled through FBOs has increased, there was a perception that secular organisations had less explanatory work

<sup>22</sup> EISF paper *Security, Management and Capacity Development: International agencies working with local partners* examines in more detail the ways in which international agencies can support local partners with risk reduction. EISF (2012).

<sup>23</sup> *Zakat* is a more specific and obligatory payment, whereas *Sadaqa* is the voluntary act of giving alms and can be destined to any person or organisation, not necessarily Muslim.

<sup>24</sup> Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan (2003), pp.9-12.

to do and that faith-based organisations often had to work harder to convince donors of their neutrality and credibility.

Given how the interplay between religion and politics affects risk in many of the most complex conflict situations where humanitarian organisations operate, it is important that all agencies understand their operational constraints and donor profile. It is vital to be aware of how religious or institutional donors may be perceived, and may themselves perceive the conflict, and to examine closely any donor conditionality against operational and security concerns on the ground. Agencies should also examine how to manage and communicate their funding sources and decisions both at field level, and to donors and supporters.

## Conclusions

There is a need for more debate and discussion on this issue, both within the humanitarian sector and externally. Although there has up till now been a lack of research and dialogue on the impact of religion within the humanitarian sector, practitioners can tap into and learn from the work done in neighbouring fields, such as the emerging debate in the development sector.

This research shows that **whether an organisation is able effectively to take the religious dynamic into account within risk management measures seemed to be more dependent on the faith-literacy, skills and capacity of the staff team on the ground, than on the organisational faith identity.** As this report flags up, positive examples of this in action came from a variety of agency types. Given that so much hinges on the skills of staff on the ground, their training needs to take into account the religious dynamic. Staff working in complex environments where religion plays a critical role may benefit from cultural awareness and faith literacy training, to assist them with context analysis and developing acceptance on the ground. More consultation with national staff, partners, religious leaders and beneficiaries can better inform analysis.

Regardless of faith, if an organisation is to manage security effectively, **there needs to be awareness of what the organisational identity and values are, how these are perceived by different stakeholders, and where there may be a gap between self-image and perceptions on the ground.** Risk flows from interaction with the context, so organisations need to understand how values, whether driven by religion or otherwise, are perceived within the operating environment. Whilst from a Western perspective it may be instinctive or convenient to divorce religion from the public sphere, there needs to be awareness that this view is not shared by people across different operating environments. Religion is a central factor in defining the identity and governing values of FBOs, but secular agencies also have value systems and worldviews.

Therefore, security risk management is not just about dealing with threats, vulnerability and risk. It is also about organisational culture, values, attitudes and behaviour. All humanitarian agencies are shaped by their values and vision, and if staff and partners are to be able to represent an agency fully there needs to be debate, discussion and understanding of these values. This is as true for secular agencies as it is for FBOs. While current approaches to security management do enable agencies to take the religious dynamic into account, this is not done consistently across the sector or across different field sites within the same agency. Agencies need to incorporate this dynamic more effectively and systematically within risk management processes. If this is to be done, it will involve not only processes, but also examination of organisational values and culture.

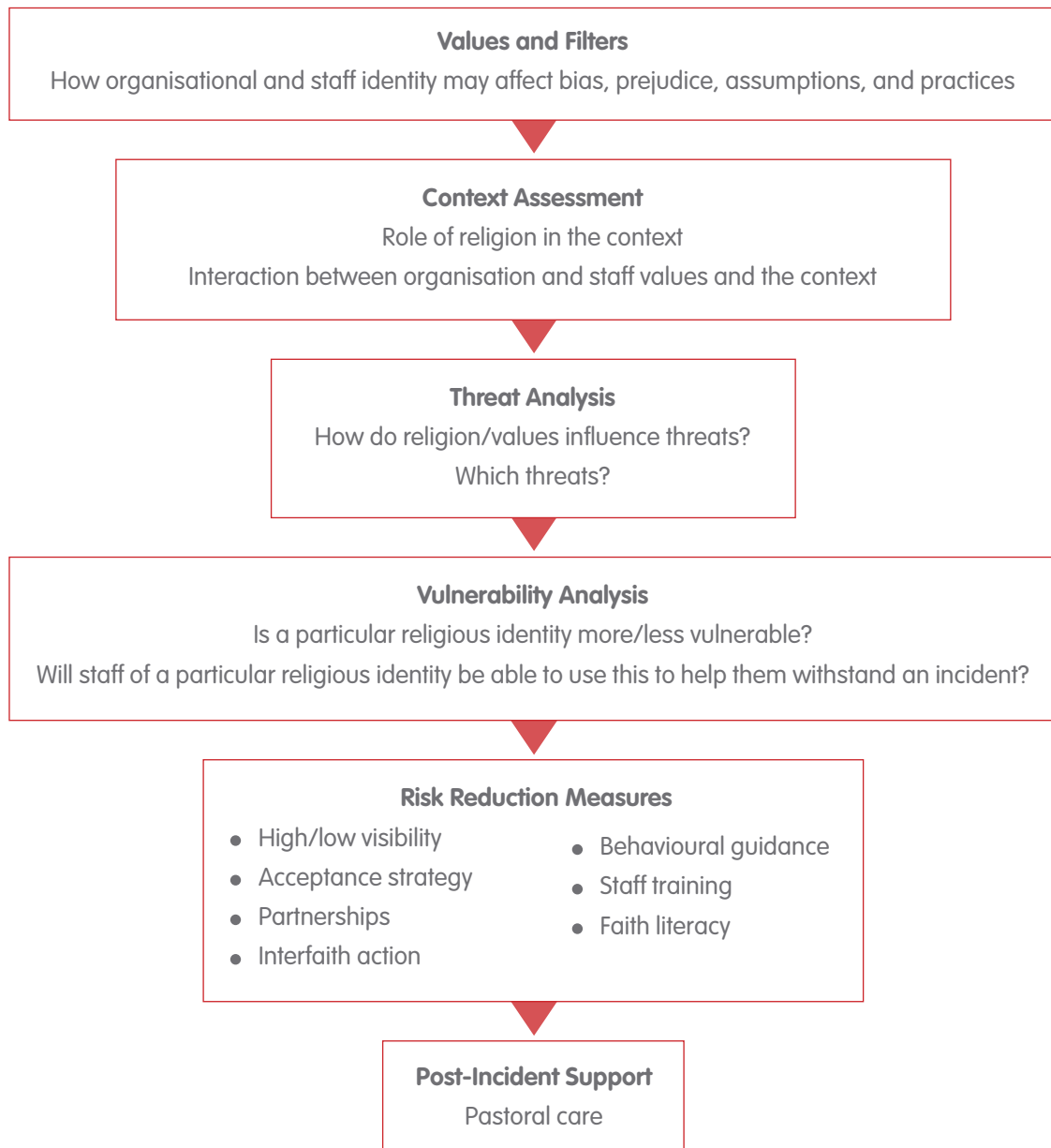




# Tools and Guidelines

The frameworks, checklists and approaches outlined in this section are only suggestions, and should be developed, discussed and adapted by agencies and specialists. Organisations are also encouraged to consult with country offices and staff to evaluate existing approaches that have worked successfully at field level.

## A. Faith-sensitive security risk management



## B. Integrating religion into the security management framework



### C. Integrating religion into context analysis

- What is the historical background to religion within the context? What role has religion played in the past?
- What religions are practised?
- What is the breadth and depth of religion within the context?
- Does the country have established religious structures? How are these perceived by different communities?
- Do these religious organisations and structures play a role in the delivery of relief and development aid? What is this role?
- Do religious organisations or structures play a role in blocking the delivery of relief and development aid?
- How do the various religious groupings in the country relate to each other?
- What is the attitude to minority religious groups, between religious groupings and to secular actors and organisations?
- Do any religious groupings have aspirations for geographic expansion or growth?
- What is the power structure at national and local level?
- How does religion influence different actors and power-brokers?
- What is the role of religion as a motivator/driver/dynamic within conflict?
- What role does religion play in moral, social and legal norms?
- Are certain programme activities sensitive? Which are these areas, and how might they be addressed within programme planning and implementation?
- Are there faith actors that have influence over or ability to negotiate access to areas of humanitarian need? What are the pros and cons of engaging with these actors?
- How does religion intersect with cultural, traditional and social norms, influencing key behaviours, beliefs and practices?
- What are the general characteristics of each present religion as practised locally? How might these interpretations differ from those of international or relocated staff of the same faith?
- How does religion affect relationships between people, and how they relate to the physical world?
- What are attitudes towards conversion?
- How are various religious communities organised in terms of:
  - Hierarchies
  - Balance of power
  - Social class
  - Gender
  - Attitudes to vulnerable groups (e.g. disabled, homeless, LGBTI, children, elderly)

### D. Organisational values, identity and image



## E. Faith considerations and measures to take for risk mitigation

<b>Staffing and staff management</b>	<p>Does staff composition represent diversity of the religious context?</p> <p>Staff vulnerability analysis</p> <p>Staff recruitment and selection</p> <p>Staff training - how to present organisational activities and values, interpersonal skills</p> <p>Organisational culture that enables openness, transparency, discussion and reporting</p> <p>Operational culture that enables openness, transparency, discussion and reporting (check security considerations of asking about and discussing religion)</p> <p>Space for religious practice is appropriate</p> <p>Respect/adherence to religious holidays/fasting/festivals</p>
<b>Personal conduct</b>	<p>Behavioural guidance: respect, dress, language, interaction with different stakeholders</p> <p>Compliance with national law</p> <p>Respect for social and cultural norms</p> <p>Faith-specific considerations – restrictions/guidance for personal practice</p>
<b>Acceptance</b>	<p>Actor mapping and analysis of power dynamics and relationships</p> <p>Selection and analysis of partner agencies</p> <p>Demonstration of religious sensitivity and respect</p> <p>Cultivation and maintenance of relationships with religious organisations and leaders where appropriate</p> <p>On-going dialogue and transparency about programme and presence with local stakeholders</p> <p>Staff and community participation in programme design, implementation and evaluation</p>
<b>Travel and movement</b>	<p>Travel restrictions/selection of least vulnerable staff teams for travel to areas of religious conflict</p> <p>High/low profile – will agency logos/vehicles reduce risk, or is it better to travel by public transport?</p> <p>Negotiating access – via independent fixers/religious networks</p> <p>Authorisation procedures</p>
<b>Facilities and premises</b>	<p>In line with religious social norms?</p> <p>Separate accommodation/bathroom facilities for male/female staff?</p> <p>Space for worship/prayer</p>
<b>Resilience and post incident</b>	<p>Stress prevention measures</p> <p>Prevention of spiritual harm</p> <p>Use of faith as psychosocial support</p> <p>Mechanisms for communicating with organisation in crisis</p>

## F. Training and learning

Humanitarian staff may need additional training to engage in operating environments where faith and religion permeate society to a greater degree than in their home environments. Whilst the religious dimension is mentioned within most security trainings, in particular with regards to context analysis, this

could be explored in more depth, especially within context specific trainings.

Additional training on key aspects such as cultural awareness and faith literacy is available from external providers and may be of interest to some agencies.

Topic	Objectives	Level	Targeted staff
<b>Security Management Framework</b>	Understanding how religion and values intersect with the SMF	From personal security through to security management (level of depth varied to audience)	All
<b>Organisational values and vision</b>	Understanding organisational values and vision and how to disseminate these in different contexts taking into account the social, cultural and religious background	Developed by mixed staff group with senior management support	All
<b>Context analysis</b>	What to take into account How to do it Actor mapping Power analysis	From personal security through to security management (level of depth varied to audience)	Country Office and Programme staff
<b>Acceptance</b>	What do we mean by acceptance? Who are the groups we want acceptance from? How does religion influence these groups? How are we going to negotiate/communicate/behave with these groups? How can we demonstrate respect for their religious values? Are there parts of our/staff/partner identity that will cause friction? How to manage this?	From personal security through to security management (level of depth varied to audience)	Country Office and Programme staff
<b>Personal security and vulnerability</b>	Vulnerability analysis Identifying strengths and weaknesses of individuals and team Perception analysis - how are we perceived? Awareness of stereotypes Interpersonal communication skills Standard Operating Procedures for personal conduct/dress/religious practice	From personal security through to security management (level of depth varied to audience)	All

# Glossary

These definitions are based on terminology used by the wider humanitarian and development community and draw on existing policy documents and reports. The latter include *The Good Practice Review on Operational Security Management in Violent Environments* (GPR8 2010) and the *Religion and Development Practitioners Guide* (2011).

**Acceptance:** An approach to security that attempts to negate a threat through building relationships with local communities and relevant stakeholders in the operational area and obtaining their acceptance and consent for the organisation's presence and its work.<sup>25</sup>

**Acceptable threshold of risk:** the point beyond which the risk is considered too high to continue operating.

**Drivers of change:** structures, institutions, actors and events within society that have an influence.

**Duty of care:** a legal concept presuming that organisations are responsible for their employees' wellbeing and must take practical steps to mitigate foreseeable workplace dangers.

**Faith:** strong belief usually in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual conviction.

**Faith-based organisation:** an NGO whose identity and objectives are based on one or more religious traditions.

**Non-governmental organisation (NGO):** a government-independent organisation, centred in one way or another on an assumed social interest.

**Partner Organisation:** organisation collaborating on the ground with donor organisations from the West.

**Proselytise:** to convert with (aggressive) zeal; to persuade others that your faith is superior to theirs and that it is in their best interests to convert to your belief and achieve salvation.

**Religion:** an organised collection of beliefs, cultural systems and worldviews that relate humanity to the supernatural, and to spirituality. Many religions have narratives, symbols, and sacred histories that are intended to explain the meaning of life and/or to explain the origin of life or the universe. From these beliefs, practices, organisations, morality, ethics, religious laws or a preferred lifestyle are derived. Religion differs from private belief in that it has a social component.

**Religious empathy:** empathy for and sensitivity towards other people's religion.

**Religious dynamic:** How religion is viewed and influences the context and stakeholders within it, through the convergence and/or conflict of religious ideas, practices, organisations and experiences.

**Risk:** the likelihood and potential impact of encountering a threat.

**Risk analysis:** an attempt to consider risk more systematically in terms of the threats in the environment, particular vulnerabilities and security measures to reduce vulnerability.

**Risk reduction measures:** strategies devised to tackle security risks.

**Secular:** not connected with religious or spiritual matters or institutions.

**Secularism:** an assertion or belief that religious issues should not be the basis of politics, state or public life.

**Secular state:** a concept of secularism, whereby a state or country purports to be officially neutral in matters of religion, supporting neither religion nor irreligion. A secular state also claims to treat all its citizens equally regardless of religion, and claims to avoid preferential treatment for a citizen from a particular religion/non-religion over other religions/non-religion. Secular states do not have a state religion or equivalent, although the absence of a state religion does not guarantee that a state is secular.

**Security strategy:** the overarching philosophy, application of approaches and use of resources that frame security management practices, usually combining to different degrees acceptance, protection and deterrence.

**Standard operating procedures:** formally established procedures for carrying out particular operations or dealing with particular situations, specifically with regard to how to prevent an incident happening, survive an incident, or follow up on an incident as part of an agency's crisis management planning.

**Threat:** a danger in the operating environment.

**Vulnerability:** susceptibility or propensity to suffer/withstand a particular threat.

<sup>25</sup> GPR8 (2010).

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Persaud, C. (2012) *Gender and security: Guidelines for Mainstreaming Gender in Security Risk Management*. EISF

Singh, I. (2012) *Security Management and Capacity Development: International agencies working with local partners*. EISF

Van Brabant, K. (2010) *Managing Aid Agency Security in an Evolving World: The larger Challenge*. EISF

## Other resources

Acceptance Toolkit, available at <http://acceptanceresearch.org/acceptance-toolkit/>

INTRAC, available at <http://www.intrac.org/>

Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities, available at <http://www.jliflc.com/>

Reflection Network: Cultural Awareness Training, available at <http://www.reflectionnetwork.org.uk/>

The Knowledge Centre on Religion and Development, available at <http://www.religion-and-development.nl>

Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding: Resource pack, available at [www.saferworld.org.uk](http://www.saferworld.org.uk)

Christian perspectives on disaster management: A training manual, available at <http://desastres.unanleon.edu.ni/pdf/2002/agosto/pdf/eng/doc3788/doc3788.htm>





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If you are interested in contributing to upcoming research projects or want to suggest topics for future research please contact [eisf-research@eisf.eu](mailto:eisf-research@eisf.eu).

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### **Security Management and Capacity Development: International agencies working with local partners**

December 2012

Singh, I. and EISF Secretariat

### **Gender and Security: Guidelines for Mainstreaming Gender in Security Risk Management**

September 2012 – *Sp. and Fr. versions available*

Persaud, C., and Zumkehr, H. J., EISF Secretariat (eds.)

### **Engaging Private Security Providers: A Guideline for Non-Governmental Organisations**

December 2011

Glaser, M., supported by the EISF Secretariat (eds.)

### **Abduction Management**

May 2010

Buth, P., supported by the EISF Secretariat (eds.)

### **Crisis Management of Critical Incidents**

April 2010

Buth, P., supported by the EISF Secretariat (eds.)

### **The Information Management Challenge**

March 2010

Ayre, R., supported by the EISF Secretariat (eds.)

## Reports

### **The Future of Humanitarian Security in Fragile Contexts**

March 2014

Armstrong, J., supported by the EISF Secretariat

### **The Cost of Security Risk Management for NGOs**

February 2013

Finucane, C., and Zumkehr, H. J., EISF Secretariat (eds.)

### **Risk Thresholds in Humanitarian Assistance**

October 2010

Kingston, M. and Behn O.

### **Joint NGO Safety and Security Training**

January 2010

Kingston, M., supported by the EISF Training Working Group

### **Humanitarian Risk Initiatives: 2009 Index Report**

December 2009

Finucane, C. and Kingston, M. (eds.)

## Articles

### **Incident Statistics in Aid Worker Safety and Security Management: Using and Producing them**

March 2012

Van Brabant, K.

### **Managing Aid Agency Security in an Evolving World: The Larger Challenge**

December 2010

Van Brabant, K.

### **Whose risk is it anyway? Linking Operational Risk Thresholds and Organisational Risk Management**

June 2010, (in Humanitarian Exchange 47)

Behn, O. and Kingston, M.

### **Risk Transfer through Hardening Mentalities?**

November 2009

Behn, O. and Kingston, M.

## Guides

### **Security Audits**

September 2013 – *Sp. and Fr. versions available*

Finucane C., and French, E. and Vazquez, R. (Sp. and Fr.), EISF Secretariat (eds.)

### **Managing the message: Communication and media management in a security crisis**

September 2013

Davidson, S., and French, E., EISF Secretariat (eds.)

### **Family First: Liaison and support during a crisis**

February 2013

Davidson, S., and French, E., EISF Secretariat (eds.)

### **Office Closure**

February 2013

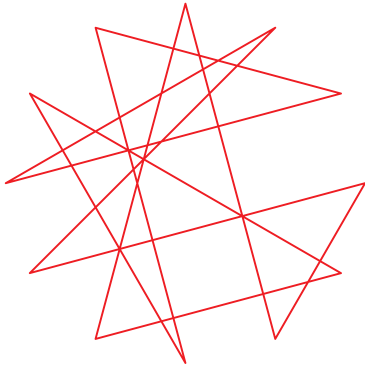
Safer Edge, and French, E. and Reilly, L., EISF Secretariat (eds.)

## Forthcoming publications

### **Office Opening Guide**

### **Communications Technology and Humanitarian Delivery: Challenges and Opportunities for Security Risk Management**

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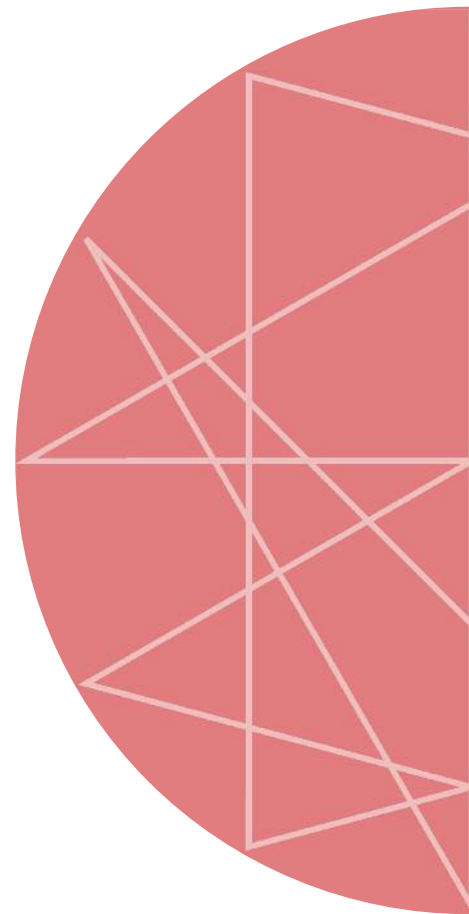


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