Chapter 10

Freedom of Religion or Belief Blind Spots in Development and Peace-Building Theory and Practice[*]

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1 Introduction

Development and peace-building approaches, literature, and especially practice, have not historically integrated considerations of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief. Integration between freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and development and peace-building remains in its infancy and has not yet been pursued in earnest, meaning that for the many reasons this chapter explores and in nearly all cases, FoRB continues to fall through the cracks in development and peace-building work. Likewise, FoRB has not yet been comprehensively expressed in development and peace-building theory and practice-relevant language.

This chapter seeks to provide a non-exhaustive snapshot of the extent of integration of FoRB in some of the major development and peace-building approaches in English-language academic and non-academic literature and practice since 2000. It also starts to unpack the relationships between FoRB and development and peace-building goals, and the relevant synergies. This chapter provides an initial insight into key gaps which require earnest work to address. It is based on an analysis of secondary sources that exist on the synergies between FoRB and development and peace-building and is informed by my praxis: from actively working with policymakers, academics, and practitioners at UK, European Union (EU), and United Nations (UN) level over the past nine years on FoRB. Through different roles in my career, an initial narrow focus on FoRB inevitably widened into the inter-related broader human rights, development, and peace-building work spheres. This broader approach is critical to understand and support the sustainable transformation needed in communities to realise FoRB.

The right to FoRB is an important piece of the puzzle for realising sustainable development goals and better informing processes for building and sustaining peace and long-term development. A 'FoRB lens' in development and peace-building work better enables the consideration of seen and unseen dimensions of people's multi-faceted identities relating to their thought, conscience, religion, or belief systems. This dimension of human identity influences people's actions and can lead to discrimination against and violence towards those perceived as the 'other'. It is this 'othering' that produces or legitimises the different and unequal political,

socioeconomic, civic, and cultural experiences in a society (Tadros and Sabates-Wheeler 2020). Considering the right to FoRB – with the full scope of its meaning and its development context in mind – helps to ensure that all dimensions of human identities, inequalities, and related discrimination and violence are brought to light and analysed. This will be crucial for responding to the existing inequalities that the Covid-19 pandemic has entrenched (PaRD 2020b).

The need to apply a FoRB lens is evident from the statistics alone – over 1.6 billion people now live in fragile or conflict-affected contexts globally (UNDP n.d.a.) and an unprecedented 79.5 million people (and increasing) had been subsequently forcibly displaced by the end of 2019 (UNHCR 2020a). We have also borne witness to systematic violence that has FoRB elements, internationally deemed genocide, in Myanmar, Syria, Iraq, and Nigeria. Blind spots cannot be afforded. Even organisations that deal primarily with the symptoms, rather than the root causes, of discrimination and conflict, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), still have few tools to comprehensively assess dynamics, vulnerabilities, and needs based on religious or belief identities.

Despite these realities, FoRB remains a foreign concept to many working within development and peace-building spheres (even when a human rights lens is applied), despite FoRB's growth in popularity in international policy spheres over recent years. As such, there are numerous blind spots in the application and potential integration of FoRB within development and peace-building theory and practice and vice versa. While attempts at highlighting the areas of overlap or possible integration have begun to emerge, this chapter finds that this work remains in its infancy, with significant scope for further academic and practical enquiry and integration.

Development and peace-building academics and academic practitioners have begun to recognise religion, faith, and belief as a relevant social dimension for their work. They also inherently engage with the social, economic, political, civic, and cultural inequalities that are repercussions of discrimination or violence including that based on 'othering' of a different religion or belief. This engagement, however, scarcely refers to or frames these approaches through the right to FoRB and working on these issues does not inherently entail that FoRB is being considered or sought.

The persistent ambivalence towards the value of accommodating the right to FoRB, a topic viewed as complex and troublesome, in the largely secular Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)-conceived development and peace-building frameworks, has ensured that FoRB has remained a topic that is overwhelmingly overlooked.

In Western secular spheres, there remains a perception that many of those working on FoRB engage with it because of their own religion or beliefs and/or work with a religious or belief-based institution or networks which they want to support (Tadros and Sabates-Wheeler 2020). Supporters of those working on FoRB are then presumed to potentially support hierarchical and patriarchal religious systems (Religion & Diplomacy 2020). This perception misinterprets the nature of the right to FoRB which equally protects the right of individuals to, for example, interpret and practise religion or beliefs that stand against the patriarchal orthodoxy of their own communities (Petersen 2020).

This perception is accompanied by various other practical and theoretical reasons for the disconnection between, and reluctance to integrate, FoRB, development, and peace-building. These include the existing mistrust between people, their work, agendas, and construction of priorities or hierarchies of suffering within the three different spheres; the gulf between the different frameworks of language and reference within the different spheres which means concepts are difficult to translate; and the boundaries of programmes' frameworks set by stakeholders and donors.

The overwhelming disconnects between these spheres of expertise means that work on the different topics continues to operate in silos, undermining the full realisation of development and peace-building objectives as well as the right to FoRB itself. The disconnection is reflected in the literature, approaches, and practice findings below, and signals the need for collaborative action between these spheres of work, based on deep listening. Many voices are also still missing, including those with minority identities within a community. As such, listening to these voices to increase much-needed disaggregated data through this collaborative approach is imperative for understanding and responding to religious and intersecting inequalities and subsequent violence, to enable the realisation of development, peace-building, and FoRB objectives alike.

The term 'development' is inherently broad and contested. In this chapter, it refers to a multidimensional and multisectoral process involving social, economic, and political change that aims to improve wellbeing (Tadros and Sabates-Wheeler 2020). This includes both the institutional processes and dynamics as well as the people involved in meeting development goals. In this chapter, there will be a particular focus on 'development' work that is being taken within the context of the all-encompassing and most recent internationally recognised framework, the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (UN 2015).

The term 'peace-building' and related work in this chapter refers to preventative and post-conflict efforts in conflicts, and particularly in those with religious or belief elements. While there are many elements to this work, Galtung's (1976) seminal work defines it as 'creating structures to promote sustainable peace by addressing "root causes" of conflict and supporting indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution'.

'FoRB' is used as a shorthand for the human right captured in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UNGA 1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (UNGA 1966) which encompasses freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief. This human right inherently sits within the broader context of all other human rights and, as per Article 18(3), cannot be advanced and implemented at the expense of another human right (Bielefeldt 2020).[2] Violations of FoRB signal the existence of inequalities between people of different religious or belief identities, for example affecting their levels of access to socioeconomic, political, cultural, and civic rights and services. These violations may result from various sources including government restrictions, social hostilities, and their interplay. Disaggregating FoRB violations by perpetrator, victim, and context is not always carried out but can be very helpful for determining responses and solutions.

2 FoRB's scope and relevance to development and peace-building approaches

Development and peace-building work inherently engages with the social, economic, political, civic, and cultural inequalities and subsequent violence experienced by people, including because of their religion or belief and intersecting identities (their gender, age, ethnicity, race, and so forth). As this chapter outlines, this work has not, however, tended to focus on 'religious inequalities' *per se*, nor sought to understand how religious or belief identities correspond with experiences of inequality.

Exploration of inequalities in development has focused primarily on economic and, increasingly, gender or disability inequalities. 'Religious inequalities' are widely understood as the marginalisation and exclusion experienced by individuals and groups on account of their actual or perceived religious or non-religious beliefs and affiliation, relating to unequal access to goods and services, and unequal opportunity or treatment (Tadros and Sabates-Wheeler 2020). They may shape experiences of inequality – mild or extreme – in themselves, or exacerbate or entrench experiences of other intersecting inequalities. Experiences of religious and intersecting inequalities vary in different contexts. Even within nominally homogenous groups, experiences differ between people, depending on, for example, their socioeconomic status or geographic location.

These different experiences of religious inequality are a symptom of the discrimination, whether direct or indirect,[3] and/or violence, sometimes systematic, that the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief (Article 18) (UNGA 1966) protects all people from, and promotes a change to. FoRB establishes the right of individuals to have and express, alone or collectively, the religious or non-religious beliefs that shape their internal belief systems and subsequent interaction with the world. Article 18(3) of the ICCPR sets out the contexts within which limitations to this right are legitimate. Importantly, FoRB's situation in the human rights framework means that it cannot be advanced at the expense of another human right.

The UN Human Rights Committee's General Comment 22 (UN HRC 1993) helps further outline **FoRB's scope**, referring to its economic, social, and cultural dimensions. The Committee clarifies that 'policies or practices having the same intention or effect [as compelling people to adhere to a specific religion or belief, by] restricting access to education, medical care or employment [to those who do not adhere, is] inconsistent with [FoRB]' (para. 5). The 2008 UNGA Resolution 63/181 further clarifies FoRB's scope when urging states to step up efforts to protect and promote Article 18 by ensuring that 'no one is discriminated against on the basis of his or her religion or belief when accessing, inter alia, education, medical care, employment, humanitarian assistance or social benefits' (UNGA 2008, para. 9c). Petersen (2020: 21) highlights that 'poverty and socioeconomic marginalisation are both a consequence of other types of discrimination, including religious or belief-based, whether legal, institutional or societal, and an exacerbating factor in these types of discrimination'.

FoRB therefore provides a lens from which to understand, analyse, and respond to the lived experience of inequalities between different groups who are of a religious **or** non-religious background.

Because it supports the analysis of structural inequalities within societies, based on people's often (less visible and) overlooked religious or belief identities and related experiences, a FoRB lens allows us to have a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of, and response to, the inequalities we see. Importantly, for this comprehensive understanding to be achieved and inform policy and practice, FoRB must be understood and explored in its full scope, relating not just to the practice of one's religion or belief but also any negative impacts on one's social, economic, political, civic, and cultural individual or collective experiences on the basis of religion or belief. This includes where any inequalities found between people are between or within minority or majority groups of the same faith, different faiths, or no faith. A FoRB lens is therefore relevant regardless of the intensity of the inequality or conflict and whether it is directly or indirectly perpetrated at the hands of state or non-state actors alike.

Our identities are never one-dimensional. As Tadros (2020: 5) outlines, 'people have many identities that work together to affect their status and their role'. Our religious or belief (including non-belief) identities therefore intersect with other aspects of our identities, including our ethnicity, race, gender, age, disability, origin, and other invisible targets of hate, as the right to non-discrimination in the various human rights treaties recognises (UNGA 1966). Just as a person's socioeconomic status impacts their experience of religious and other inequalities, so too do our intersecting identities. Different intersecting aspects of our identities may compound the inequality experienced, including within a religious or belief community. We may find that Uyghur, Rohingya, Yazidi, and Christian young women disproportionately suffer more from the discrimination and/or violence that underpins the religious inequalities, as a result of their gender and age, in comparison to women in their context from their own or even prevailing faiths. As Petersen (2020: 15) outlines, 'religious-based discrimination has gendered consequences [for example], and gender-based discrimination has consequences for religious minorities or others with a particular religious identity'. Experiences of economic exclusion can 'be further compounded by the fact that not only are the women poor but they belong to religious minorities' (Tadros 2020: 22).

Just as the hierarchisation of rights is not supported by the human rights framework, neither is the importance of protecting one aspect of peoples' identities above others. When working with people through development and peace-building work, it is important that all aspects of people's identities are engaged with. The religious or belief aspects of people's identities and how this influences discrimination, violence, and subsequent societal inequality dynamics should neither be ignored nor prioritised. They need to be understood and 'right sized' (Griffith-Dickson *et al*. 2019) to the context in question. This approach will help to ensure that there are fewer gaps when seeking to address inequalities.

Violations of FoRB also expose the '**identity markers**' attached to humans based on their perceived or actual religious or belief identities. These markers can be used to reinforce difference – our sense of self and what we have compared to others – and the understanding of religious and intersecting inequalities in the societies we live. Collective 'othering' based on religious and intersecting inequalities creates fertile ground for

grievances to build. Perceptions and narratives of religious and intersecting inequalities can be incited at a group level and used to justify discrimination or violence towards identified 'others' (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Keen 2012; World Bank 2011). This occurs across socioeconomic status; relatively privileged groups can be motivated to initiate conflict to preserve access to power and resources (Cederman; Gleditsch and Buhaug 2013; Østby 2013). Even where discrimination or violence is not directly perpetrated, inaction in tackling dangerous 'othering' narratives leads to enabling environments where targeting is more likely to occur. The OECD (2018: 6) estimates that the number of people living in fragile contexts will rise by half a billion to 2.3 billion by 2030.

Religious inequalities differ by context because in different contexts, people's grievances and related needs, and the triggers for discrimination and violence that produce or entrench inequalities differ (Baghat *et al.* 2017). Conflict exacerbates inequalities and the growth of enabling environments for further discrimination, which increases the likelihood of recurrent violence (Petersen 2020). These cycles entrench the vulnerability of those most at risk.

Identifying the particular conflict dynamics in relation to FoRB violations is also helpful for reminding us of the **individual drivers and root causes of discrimination and conflict** that lie in every individual person's thought, conscience, religion, and/or belief. Looking at conflicts solely through a socioeconomic inequality lens misses this important internal or *forum internum* dimension, which the right to FoRB engages with. This level of root cause enquiry into the individual's thought, conscience, religion, or belief is critical for peace to truly be built. This is not an easy endeavour. As political scientist Jonathan Fox (2016: 32) notes, it is 'far easier to uncover and measure the extent, nature, and consequences of religious discrimination than it is to do the same for its causes'.

Agenda 2030 (UN 2015) is at present one of the primary frameworks through which FoRB's relevance to international development, and within this, building peaceful societies, would be expected to be broached. This agenda of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further encompasses peace-building through the promotion of peaceful societies (SDG 16). FoRB's relevance is most evident in relation to SDG target 16.b, to: 'promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies of sustainable development' (*ibid.*: 30) and SDG target 10.2, to: 'empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, **religion** or economic or other status' (*ibid.*: 25, emphasis added). SDG 16 recognises that sustainable development requires inclusive, just, **and peaceful** societies and institutions. This in turn requires there to be 'no discrimination in law or policy', which inherently includes that on the basis of religion or belief as protected by FoRB. SDG 10 recognises that sustainable development also requires reducing inequalities – including religious inequalities – within and among countries. This, in turn, requires 'the social, political and economic inclusion of all, irrespective of … religion' (or belief) (*ibid.*: 25), which FoRB also encompasses.

FoRB also plays a fundamental role in the realisation of other development objectives including those captured by SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8 in relation

to ending poverty, hunger, ensuring good health and wellbeing, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, and decent work, respectively. These goals cannot be reached if people are denied or have unequal access to them on the basis of their religion or belief. In this sense, they will be 'left behind', just as they would be if a FoRB lens is not applied to SDGs 10 and 16. As such, without a FoRB-sensitive lens, the overarching objective of Agenda 2030 – leave no one behind – will remain unmet.

A FoRB lens better supports conflict reduction and prevention processes by helping identify religious and intersecting inequality dynamics and pointing to solutions for root causes and drivers based on their collective and individual thought, conscience, religion, or belief. A FoRB lens therefore also importantly helps ensure that different identities, needs, and experiences are taken into account, as part of developing equitable responses that are needed to realise development goals, including the SDGs. Importantly, the integration of a FoRB-sensitive lens in development and peace-building must not be conflated with a **religious** lens which focuses on the value of religious actors' involvement in, and religious perceptions of, development (Tadros and Sabates-Wheeler 2020). This focus on religion and religious institutions' roles in delivering development initiatives has been the more common association of religion with development and will be explored in Section 3.

3 FoRB's integration into development and peace-building

Although there has been some analysis of the links between FoRB, development, and peace-building in academic and academic-practitioner literature, evidence of its translation into tangible action in programming is scarce. The exploration, communication, and integration of these interconnected topics remains in its infancy. There are gaps and blind spots within the approaches, literature, and practice of each of the spheres of work regarding their interconnectedness and utility for each other. This is even though information and expertise on FoRB is a key piece of the puzzle for realising development and peace-building objectives, and vice versa.

The different frameworks of reference and language for FoRB, development, and peace-building, have developed largely in silos. Difficult and pioneering work to bridge these silos and explore and communicate connections between these spheres of work is required.

There are signs, however, of the emergence of bringing FoRB out of the cold where international development is concerned. CREID (the Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development) and JISRA (the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action) are UK and Dutch government-funded coalition projects respectively that bring together development and peace-building partners to work on implementing FoRB in several countries globally, as well as inform development programming. The US Agency for International Development (USAID 2021b) established an advisory council in November 2020 for promoting religious freedom to build on specific socioeconomic support in Iraq and the region. Petersen (2020), Tadros and Sabates-Wheeler (2020), the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief (UNGA 2020), and others have also started to outline and discuss the relevance and utility of connections between FoRB and development, including through the language of religious inequalities.

Grim and Finke (2010: 216) and Durham and Clark (2015: 298) write on the place of FoRB in structuring peace-building processes and FoRB's role as a 'powerful stabilising force for building lasting peace'. Others have begun bringing stakeholders across peace-building, development, and FoRB spheres together and facilitating a space to start unpacking the relevance of development initiatives to advancing FoRB and vice versa (for example, the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) 2019a).

FoRB academics including Grim and Finke (2010), Philpott (2013), Durham and Clark (2015), and others have also started to outline the connections between FoRB and peace-building. They highlight, for example, that FoRB is an important consideration for successfully structuring peace-building processes and is a powerful stabilising force for building lasting peace. Philpott's (2013: 31) assessment that 'peace-building and religious freedom hardly seem to know each other', because few in the relevant fields have made strong connections between them or integrated them, remains overwhelmingly true.

Disconnects between the different spheres of work have been perpetuated by their differing funding sources and donor expectations. States have, for example, been one of the main FoRB, development, and peace-building funding sources, but FoRB work has been carried out in specific programmatic interventions at a distance from the central strategic and policy frameworks. Disconnection has also been perpetuated by the fears of those within the largely secular spaces of development and peace-building of supporting hierarchical, patriarchal, or otherwise harmful religious beliefs and practices (Religion & Diplomacy 2020). Ambivalence about the role that religion plays in tackling or perpetuating discrimination or conflict has given rise to a pervasive narrative in the West that religion and anything perceived as protecting it, such as FoRB, is deemed too much of a minefield and thus better avoided altogether (Basedau, Gobien and Prediger 2017).

This context was reflected in the work I did with UNHCR in 2018–19 to explore how FoRB considerations were being integrated into their assessments and subsequent practical assistance. UNHCR often deals with the symptoms of conflict, including those with religious or belief elements. Support and integration of non-citizens in a country is also important for that country's development. One in four people in Lebanon were refugees when I visited Beirut and the Beqaa Valley on the border with Syria in January 2019 with UNHCR, the UK All-party Parliamentary Group for FoRB, and the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Aid to the Church in Need.

We found that different refugee communities were being supported by different organisations based on their religion or belief. A mistrust and breakdown of communication between UNHCR and many Syrian Christian refugees meant that they were being supported by Lebanese Christian organisations instead of UNHCR. Different sources of support to different refugees had, in turn, created tension between the refugees along religious identity lines. It also meant that refugee databases were not comprehensive or were out-of-date.

UNHCR's *Guidelines on International Protection (No.6)* (2004) do provide some general overarching guidance around FoRB but it is unclear what mechanisms UNHCR have in place to assess the context-specific FoRB dynamics and subsequent needs of refugees and between refugees and the wider population in the countries they work. There has been no evident engagement or reflection on FoRB and all its intersections with relevant issues across UNHCR as a whole.

Meetings with the UK cross-government Stabilisation Unit in 2019 on the conflict in Nigeria also demonstrated that FoRB dimensions were not engaged with in relation to this and other fragile contexts. There was a preference for focusing exclusively on socioeconomic elements and drivers in Nigeria (Brottem and McDonnell 2020), for example, perhaps relating to the perceived complexities religion or belief engagement brings. For 'hot conflict' policy and engagement, the establishment of a cross-governmental Joint Reconciliation Unit (JRU) in 2019 was sought so that the preventative dimensions of conflict engagement could be pursued. It was hoped at the time that FoRB would be part of the considerations within this work but the JRU was established under the Stabilisation Unit's remit with a smaller-than-expected staff, and the subsequent status of their engagement with FoRB is not evident. While these examples are not being used to generalise, they are indicative of the findings from engagement with other international development and peace-building workers. The findings in this chapter reflect the current status quo, as it is understood.

Deneulin and Bano (2009: 6), and many others, talk about the 'script' of development so far as having been 'heavily inscribed in the secular tradition'. Philpott (2013: 36) highlights that 'secularization theses' within peace-building spheres hold religion as 'either irrelevant or else inherently violent and divisive'. Horner (2017) talks about the need for a 'postsecular alternative framing' to peace-building through a 'deconstruction' of the 'religious-secular binary'.

Tomalin's (2006) framing that 'religious traditions often act against the pursuit of human rights' and Basedau, Gobien and Prediger's (2018b: 1106) finding of 'a negative relationship between religious dimensions and both income and gender equality' are just two examples of stated reasons why many development and peace-building practitioners have steered clear of FoRB. An institutional nervousness remains that because many of those involved in FoRB are religious or belief-based actors, they seek to protect their own communities, including the harmful religious beliefs and practices within them (Tadros and Sabates-Wheeler 2020; Werner 2019). James (2011: 2), for example, warns development practitioners to 'handle' faith-based organisations 'with care'.

This fear, however, obscures the fact that while FoRB does protect the right to believe in (but not necessarily put into practice) patriarchal norms on the basis of one's religion or belief, it also supports the right of each person to reject these norms (Religion & Diplomacy 2020). These misperceptions of FoRB equating it with the protection of religions or beliefs themselves may in part explain the lack of engagement with the discipline among development and peace-building academics and practitioners. FoRB's utility in understanding and addressing root causes and drivers of discrimination or violence is, therefore, overlooked.

Where there is some attention to religious exclusion and inequalities within development and peace-building work, it can often be superficial, as is indicated within some of the approaches below, treating this as one factor among many and a mere tick-box exercise. Work carried out through a human rights-based approach to development and the SDG framework, for example, often lists religious discrimination or inequality as one of many factors (OHCHR 2006; UNICEF 2012; SDG Tracker 2018). A superficial focus on FoRB elements within discrimination and/or conflict dynamics between groups, can miss the important and sometimes otherwise invisible dynamics, including those relating to the individual drivers and root causes, that require addressing.

While FoRB can be a critical tool to unpack inequalities, addressing 'religious inequalities' alone does not inherently entail that FoRB is truly being considered, integrated, and pursued in a way that means it can be tangibly realised. In many cases, even where FoRB or 'religious freedom' is named as an issue in development or peace-building analysis and programming, for example in USAID's **website** (USAID 2020a), Search for Common Ground (2020b), and USIP's literature (Nozell 2019), it is not clear that FoRB itself is being pursued as part of the measures to address any religious inequalities identified. Where the UNDP mentions that it is pursuing FoRB 'to realise their overall objectives', the extent to which FoRB is being pursued as an objective itself or by proxy within this programming is also not clear (UN IATF 2019: 16).

If FoRB violations are identified, the response to consciously pluralise an otherwise predominantly secular space with different religious representatives is sometimes presented as evidence that religious or intersecting inequalities is being pursued. This pluralisation itself is, however, not a proxy for addressing religious inequalities or FoRB abuses in a country context: one does not inherently lead to the other. This has been insufficiently clarified in some contexts, including in some parts of the UNFPA's *Realizing the Faith Dividend* report (Karam 2016) where FoRB and religious voices are indicated as being one and the same. Notwithstanding, the report astutely notes in other parts that 'these gaps help undermine the realisation of FoRB' (*ibid*.: 53). The report (*ibid*.: 52) notes important caveats including the importance of not 'overemphasising religious leaders' or 'over-moralizing the development agenda and partnerships' and that 'increasing religious rhetoric does not automatically lead to social inclusion'.

Narratives within faith and development G20 circles (Petkoff *et al.* 2020) also raise the benefits of religious freedom for building equal societies in the context of pursuing the SDGs but call for the mobilisation of faith-based networks, that include plural religious voices and greater work with religious institutions as the necessary response.

While engaging with faith networks may form an important part of the solution, a collective group identity focus risks missing the purpose of FoRB – to protect individuals' religion or belief as opposed to collective religious or belief systems themselves, as clarified in UN Resolution 16/18 (UN Human Rights Council 2011). It also risks undermining FoRB by reinforcing the power of the (self-nominated) religious spokespeople and the existing norms in a society that may themselves perpetuate certain inequalities.

Even if religious or belief dynamics are specifically looked at through a FoRB lens, attention tends to stay at a collective 'homogenous' group level. This is in part because of the existing misperceptions that FoRB relates to protecting the perpetuation of religions or beliefs themselves (and in doing so, often perpetuates harmful policies). Deneulin and Shahani (2009: 264), for example, specifically warn against working on FoRB due to its use by religious movements to 'endanger other human rights'. A focus on individual root causes and drivers relating to thought, conscience, religion, or belief-related discrimination or violence that FoRB itself engages with, is, as a result, lacking. Moreover, even in cases where this individual level is considered in peace-building work, no (conscious) links have been made to the relevance of FoRB.

It is because of this non-exhaustive snapshot of dynamics that in development and peace-building theoretical approaches, and particularly practice, FoRB falls between the cracks.

4 The development context

4.1 Approaches to religion within development work

Working on religion and with publicly religious persons within development work has become less uncommon since 2000 but has not been free of controversy. The German (Singh and Steinau Clark 2017), UK, Norwegian, and Danish governments as well as academics including Leisinger (2014) and Ulluwishewa (2018) have, for example, begun or advocated for bringing consideration of religion and religious perspectives into development spheres. There is not space here to outline in any detail development work's turbulent engagement with the religious paradigm, and it is important to immediately note that, although evidently linked, such engagement is distinct to engagement with the human right to FoRB. Engaging with religion as a topic *per se* and religious persons in development work does not inherently lead to analysing, pursuing, or addressing religious or belief and intersecting inequalities and related conflict in-country in practice.

In 2000, Ver Beek stated that oversight of religion in a largely secularised development sector had been so systemic that it amounted to 'a taboo' (Ver Beek 2000: 31). When she joined the UN Development Programme in 2004, the Coordinator of the UN Intra-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development, Azza Karam, was told by the UNDP, 'We don't do religion' (Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue 2018). When asked about this oversight and the possibility of missing important FoRB-related dynamics, development and humanitarian organisations still respond that their approach keeps them 'neutral' or 'religion-blind' (Wilkinson 2019: 3), not favouring or focusing on any one religious or belief community over another in their analysis or response to development issues. 'Neutral' is not, however, how many of those supported by organisations perceive them to be. Sceptical voices have raised concerns that development support is provided with a secular bias that is separated from a desired and 'inter-related' spiritual support (Öhlmann *et al*. 2018) or even carries Western imperialistic agendas (Tomalin 2018; Shakman Hurd 2017).

As noted, while consideration of religious dynamics can form an important part of tackling inequalities that stem from FoRB violations, it

does not inherently mean that religious or belief inequalities are being dealt with in any tangible way. In many cases, those considering religion and related issues do not even pretend to link their work to the right to FoRB which means it overwhelmingly gets overlooked.

4.2 Working with faith-based actors in development

Development academics and practitioners alike have recognised that faith-based actors, including religious leaders, can be especially important for reaching development goals such as combating extreme poverty, including through their ability to deliver essential services (Marshall 2005) and their influence in vulnerable, marginalised, and hard-to-reach communities (White and Deneulin 2009). The role of faith actors in tackling the 2013–16 Ebola virus epidemic for example, is often referred to in encouraging partnerships for development agendas (Featherstone 2015). The World Faiths Development Dialogue from 2000 advocated for the 'illumination' (Marshall and Van Saanen 2007: 237) of the 'world of religion... unseen by many development actors' (Marshall and Keough 2004: 2) and a 'move beyond dialogue to ideas for specific joint faith–development initiatives and programs' (Marshall and Marsh 2003: xii).

The subsequent UN Interagency Taskforce on Religion and Development (UN IATF) Guidelines (UNFPA 2009: 1) encouraged 'deliberate engagement' with 'like-minded partners among [faith-based organisations]'. And various initiatives including EU-Cord's (2020) *Engaging with Local Faith Actors and Communities Toolkit* aims to guide this engagement (Watson, McLaverty and Sinibaldi 2020). Some UK and US government initiatives recognise the usefulness of these partnerships: USAID's Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives (USAID 2021c) seeks to increase faith-based organisations' access to funding, and the UK government reportedly works with more than 130 faith groups in 200+ development programmes (PaRD 2020 Annual Forum – PaRD 2020a).

Encouraging faith and development partnerships in the pursuit of the SDGs, is a current exercise for many development and related networks and organisations, such as the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLIFLC) (JLIFLC 2015) and the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) whose 2018 Memorandum of Understanding recognises the need for 'effective faith-based organisation and religious groups' partnership with public sector and secular entities' (PaRD 2019b). Most of the larger development organisations such as the International Red Cross, Oxfam, and UNDP are absent from these networks.

A wider institutional nervousness, however, remains in the development sphere around partnerships involving religious groups or faith-based organisations, including with regard to their 'agendas' (Werner 2019; JLIFLC 2015). FoRB is, by extension, included within this nervousness due to the wide perception that it is a right primarily sought by religious groups to help protect religions or beliefs themselves and related harmful 'traditional values' and practices (Kane 2008: 362; Khalaf-Elledge 2020). Catholic organisations' opposition to contraceptives is an example of perceived clashing agendas that legitimises the avoidance of secular–religious partnerships (Benagiano *et al.* 2011; NSWP 2015). Since the

1990s, post-colonial theorists have challenged Western development agencies' tendency to engage primarily with those 'conforming to their own image' and values rather than context-relevant and legitimate actors and approaches (Rakodi 2015: 17–35).

Despite an increase in encouraging partnerships, Tomalin (2018: 3) highlights that many faith-based development organisations operate as 'secular system culture brokers' on a 'dual register', 'secularising as they professionalise their public face, while retaining religious distinctiveness when engaging with co-religionists' (Lonergan *et al.* 2020: 3). This is evident, for example, in Christian Aid's (2020) report *Building Back with Justice: Dismantling Inequalities after Covid-19*, which does not discuss any religious element to the inequalities they focus on, while, elsewhere, they join others in promoting faith–development organisation partnerships. Meanwhile, faith-based actors in development spaces still report feeling invisible or that a clear space to raise the issues that their communities face is lacking.

4.3 Human development (capability)

Various theoretical and practical development frameworks have relevance to the right to FoRB. Mahbub Haq and Amartya Sen's 'Human Development' work (Tadros 2020: 38) and reports in the 1990s placed people at the centre of the development process. UNDP's 1990 *Human Development Report* (UNDP 1990: 10) defined human development as 'both the process of widening people's choices and the level of their achieved wellbeing' economically, socially, politically, and culturally. On the back of Haq and Sen's work, the World Bank published its *Voices of the Poor* study (Narayan *et al.* 2000) using poverty assessments of 23 countries. The report recognised that social differences including those on the basis of religion, accounted for exclusion seen and those interviewed had more trust in local religious (traditional) leaders than those at state level.

In this human development work (for example, UNDP 2004), religion or belief and the wellbeing resulting from having and practising it, was subsumed 'rather superficially' under the 'cultural area', meaning that the religious and spiritual dimension to wellbeing and capabilities in this area have remained relatively unexamined (Tadros and Sabates-Wheeler 2020). Kirmani and Khan (2008), among others, have analysed the importance of faith in building trust among vulnerable, including displaced, communities and facilitating a greater sensitivity to their spiritual needs. Grim (2008: 3) has prominently advocated that FoRB 'augments socioeconomic wellbeing'.

Deneulin and Shahani's (2009) chapter 'Culture and Religion' in their *Introduction to Human Development and Capability Approach* helpfully analyses religion as a separate moral base dimension of wellbeing, and even as a human right. They quickly warn against working on FoRB as it endangers other human rights, stating that 'all too often, movements asserting religious superiority and seeking to impose their vision of the world on others disrespect their freedom to live lives they value' (*ibid.*: 264). The report subsequently advocates for a focus on democracy as the best way to ensure no trade-off between rights while ensuring the exercise of FoRB (*ibid.*). Deneulin and Shahani, therefore, focus on FoRB in its narrowest sense, failing to consider, among other things, the legitimate

restrictions on FoRB in Article 18(3) and its place within the wider human rights framework. Petersen (2020: 12–13) clarifies that 'there is no inherent contradiction between rights related to FoRB, gender equality' and other rights, and FoRB can 'never be used to justify the human rights of heterosexual women, girls and [sexual orientation and gender identity] SOGI minorities', for example. The perception that advancing FoRB risks undermining other human rights and related wellbeing is not uncommon in non-religious development spheres.

Beyond this work, religion, let alone FoRB, as a dimension of human development and wellbeing, has gained little to no traction in non-religious development spheres. UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP n.d.a.), the primary statistical composite providing indicators of human development, continues to focus on 'life expectancy', 'education', and 'per capita income' as indicators of human development. These more quantifiable dimensions of human development, however, miss other relevant dimensions of human life, choice, and wellbeing, including the more invisible ability to practise one's religious or belief identity. This ability cannot be captured through the limited categories listed. Disaggregation of 'gender, regions, races and ethnic groups' has reportedly been 'widely' carried out for policy formation (UNDP n.d.c.) but disaggregated data on religion or belief, which is needed for FoRB, and not substitutable with ethnicity, is absent. The UN Special Rapporteur on Racism (UNGA 2015) also notes that national aggregates of the HDI alone are insufficient for capturing inequalities that render the most disadvantaged in society visible.

The Legatum Institute's (2020) global Prosperity Index, for example, consists of 12 pillars of prosperity, factors of which include 'personal freedom' and 'wellbeing'. The 'personal freedom' prosperity pillar specifically includes indicators on FoRB, recognising the importance of this element of human development. Capturing some of these more invisible and visible dimensions of human choice and wellbeing would help provide a more comprehensive picture of human development and better enable related objectives to be reached. At present, this remains a gap in the human development framework.

4.4 Human rights–based approach

The 'human rights-based approach' (HRBA) emerged as a new development paradigm in the late 1990s 'when two hitherto distinct strands of foreign assistance and global policy – human rights and development – began to merge, combining the principles of internationally recognised human rights with those of poverty reduction' (Kindornay and Ron 2011: 4; Darrow and Tomas 2005). Here, rights-based experts began urging development practitioners to assess human rights conditions – which, if done comprehensively, would include FoRB – before formulating their plans and projects (*ibid.*). This involved identifying 'rights-holders' and 'duty-bearers' in prospective projects; ensuring local participation in projects start-to-finish; strengthening accountability mechanisms, and, so, reducing discrimination against marginalised groups; focusing on development processes in addition to outcomes; and engaging in advocacy efforts. The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) (2020: 12) states that an HRBA to development 'fundamentally shifts the core mission of

development [...] by integrating human rights norms and principles into every area of development cooperation, including the process itself, and in every thematic area of work'. In its HRBA to development reports, however, the DIHR (2020; Boesen and Martin 2007) only mentions FoRB in relation to the human rights framework, and mentions religion in passing as part of a list alongside other discrimination grounds.

There is a similar story elsewhere. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' HRBA to development cooperation report (OHCHR 2006) and UNICEF's (2012) Global Evaluation HRBA Report mentions religion only in passing as part of a list of protected characteristics. WHO, UNFPA, and others' HRBA Approach to Health Guide (OHCHR *et al.* 2016), makes no mention of religion or belief, despite the role of religious groups in providing health care. Despite professing to have profiled a comprehensive range of topics, the UN's **HRBA portal** (UN HRBA n.d.) has no focus on religion, unlike other identity markers such as disability, gender, age, and other economic, social, or cultural rights. While Act Alliance's important *Rights-Based Development from a Faith-Based Perspective* position paper (Aprodev *et al.* 2015: 9) provides a potential opportunity for 'religious freedom' and related inequalities to be linked, 'religious freedom' is only mentioned as a consideration within faith-based development work and is not linked to an HRBA to development.

In theory, the growth in attention to an HRBA sounds positive for the integration of FoRB into development work and, as Kindormay and Ron (2011: 4) state, 'should entail a substantial shift in development practices. The empirical reality is still unclear and in flux, however'; not least for the role of FoRB within an HRBA to development which the UN Special Rapporteur for FoRB's UNGA report advocates for (UNGA 2020). Tomalin's (2006) paper *Religion and a Rights-Based Approach to Development* highlights that the lack of consideration of religion-related rights means that significant indigenous mechanisms and partnerships for pursuing rights-related development objectives have been overlooked. The discussion in Tomalin (2006: 93) and Deneulin and Shahani's (2009) papers, of how 'religious traditions have often acted against the pursuit of human rights' points, however, to a commonly held concern, likely explaining why FoRB remains conspicuously absent in HRBA work.

4.5 Horizontal and vertical inequalities

Stewart's (2005, 2008; see also Baghat *et al.* 2017) pioneering work on horizontal inequalities provided a sub-section of the inequalities framework within development. This accommodated a novel consideration of religious and ethnic minorities' collective experience of marginalisation and its relationship to violence. Her 2005 work distinguishes between vertical and horizontal inequalities, the former being inequality experienced among individuals or households (income, education, health, and so forth), and the latter defined as inequality among groups, typically culturally defined by religion, race, ethnicity, and other factors. Stewart notes that the group dimension is intended to be added to the individual one, not to replace it. Improving the wellbeing of deprived groups is, therefore, justified because it can improve individual welfare.

Horizontal inequalities are inequalities in economic, social, or political dimensions or cultural status between culturally defined groups that serve to 'bind them together' (Stewart 2007: 21). Stewart, Brown and Mancini (2010) note that although people have many identities, some of which are fluid, religion, gender, and ethnicity, for example, are more permanent and significant personally. Horizontal inequalities, therefore, affect individual wellbeing and social stability in a serious and different way to consequences of vertical inequality, and can significantly increase the likelihood of conflict (Stewart 2005). Stewart (2007) contends that it is not the case that there is an unavoidable 'clash of civilisations' (Huntington 2002) and that those with religious, cultural, and other differences cannot live together peacefully. It is the existence of major horizontal inequalities and subsequent grievances that causes conflict (Østby 2013). Conflict involving religion and non-religious ideology is found to be longer and of higher intensity (Basedau *et al.* 2011: 8).

Vertical inequality is beginning to be recognised as a problem (Cornia 2004; UNDP 2005; Wagstaff 2005) due to a significant focus on poverty reduction and economic dimensions in development work, and because high and growing vertical inequality makes poverty reduction more difficult (Stewart, Brown and Langer 2008). Even so, vertical inequalities have received relatively little policy attention, and horizontal inequalities even less so, as evidenced by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' *World Social Report 2020* (UNDESA 2020). Although group boundaries become endogenous to experiences of inequality, in that people may feel a stronger cultural or other identity-based communal affinity to inequalities being experienced, Stewart (2010) argues that cultural and other horizontal group constructs do matter to people.

Even though Stewart (2010: 3) highlights research findings that 'violent conflict is more likely to occur in areas with relatively low levels of economic development and greater religious polarization', attention to religious or belief-based horizontal inequalities (i.e. relating to FoRB violations) is particularly marginal. Work that engages with intersecting inequalities, such as the UN Economic Commission on Europe's 2013 report (UNECE 2013), UNDESA's (2013) *Inequality Matters* report, and the 2016 *World Social Science Report* (UNESCO 2016) 'typically frames religious inequality as a possible compounding factor, but no examples of how religious inequality interacts with (and reinforces) other inequalities are given' (Tadros and Sabates-Wheeler 2020: 42).

Basedau *et al.* (2018b), Marshall and Van Saanen (2007), and Martin (2008) do specifically analyse how religious identity exacerbates inequality in relation to access to the labour market, housing, and health care, but such examples in a development space are rare. Basedau *et al.* (2017) also note that data-gathering and analysis processes make it difficult to observe how inequalities come about on the basis of religion. Discussion on the intersection of religious inequalities with other inequalities (for example, gender) and related rights violations is almost non-existent in development approaches and literature, despite, for example, the work of Petersen (2020), Tadros (2020), and the UN Special Rapporteur's (UNGA 2020) attempt in his annual UNGA report, to unpack the relationship between religious and gender inequalities, for example. **UN Women's Briefing**

(UN Women n.d.) highlights that faith and related issues have been asked to be 'left outside' when structural determinants of gender inequality in development contexts are being negotiated.

Analysis on religion in development work, let alone non-religious dimensions that would form a necessary part of inequalities based on FoRB violations, remains relatively marginal. Religion is primarily subsumed as a sub-category under 'culture'. For example, a paper by the leading voice on horizontal inequalities, Stewart (2009), on horizontal inequalities experienced by Muslims frames their religion or belief as a component of their culture. Due to this, and the framing of religious (and consequently belief) groups' experiences as largely homogenous, important aspects of FoRB violations and subsequent religious inequalities experienced are missed.

For example, a person's religion or belief is not always synonymous with their culture; people may convert or choose to hold and practise beliefs at odds with what their wider cultural understanding is perceived to be. A person may self-define 'culturally' as Muslim, for example, but has to hide their atheist beliefs. A focus on culture also tends to lead to an aversion to framing religious inequalities through a FoRB lens with a common generalisation that invoking FoRB allows harmful cultural practices to be defended (Abdulla 2018).

Religious or belief inequalities are also not always experienced homogenously within a certain religious or belief group, because religious or belief groups are not homogenous. The religion or belief someone holds and religious inequalities in a particular context do not inherently mean economic exclusion and poverty, for example. Peoples' intersecting identities and the subsequent inequalities experienced lead to different experiences of horizontal inequalities by different people within that religious or belief group. Differences in religious or non-religious beliefs within a religious or belief group, as well as wealth, education (vertical inequalities), geography, age, language spoken, perceived ethnicity, and other factors, further impact how intensely or systematically religious inequalities are experienced by individuals.

Although FoRB violations, such as discrimination or restrictions in law towards a specific religion or belief group (producing religious inequalities), may apply to a whole group, the law may not be felt equally across the religious or belief group due to the identity markers above. For some, the legal restrictions that apply to people of their religion or belief may not be felt at all due to their income, particular beliefs, or other factors. All of these experiences are, nonetheless, experiences of religious inequality, despite their differences. Although some conceptualisations attempt to undermine FoRB's universalism (Bielefeldt 2013), a FoRB-sensitive lens can help work with these nuances because it relates to the individual and sits within a wider human rights framework that pertains to different parts of human identity and experience.

4.6 The SDGs

As acknowledged above, FoRB plays an important role in the realisation of Agenda 2030. It identifies the particular challenges related to religious or belief discrimination and inequalities. It points to their possible solutions,

provides a valuable contribution to the commitment of Agenda 2030 to 'reach those furthest behind first', and directs attention to these issues in broader development, human rights, and peace-building efforts (Petersen 2020). The UN Special Rapporteur's report for the 75th UN General Assembly (UNGA 2020) comprehensively demonstrates the ways in which FoRB and violations of this right relate to and impact the SDGs. The topics on which this chapter demonstrates links with FoRB include security of tenure, health, hunger, and clean water and sanitation, education, violence, and legal identity in relation to SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, and 16. The Special Rapporteur's report (*ibid*.) also provides an indicator framework to help identify where inequalities relating to FoRB dynamics impact the realisation of the SDGs in any given country.

Within development spaces, the case for the usefulness of considering the role of religion and religious partnerships for achieving the SDGs has been acknowledged. For example, a new version of the UN IATF, the UN Interagency Task Force on Engaging Religion for Sustainable Development, has played a role in bringing faith actors into the new SDG process (Karam 2016), including through an event in the SDG stakeholder consultation (SDG-Open Working Group) process. This body has supported joint activities across UN agencies, including engagement with faith-based organisations in the UN system and various countries. Where this engagement allows religious inequalities to be raised by religious and faith-based actors, it is not framed through FoRB *per se* (Tomalin, Haustein and Kidy 2019). Some participants have debated the visibility of faith actors and opportunity to discuss anything 'religious' in these processes (Haustein and Tomalin 2019; Tomalin, Haustein and Kidy 2019).

Equally, faith-based actors are concerned that engagement with them is tokenistic and through the narrow basis of their religious or belief identity. Ten Veen (2020) and others have also emphasised the added value of a faith-inspired approach to the SDGs, which allows them to be made more relevant and engaging for people in different country contexts. Efforts in this vein are, however, fledgling and have not been integrated into any concrete SDG pursuits. For all the reasons mentioned above in relation to approaches to religion in development work, engagement with faith actors and religious considerations in SDG work are not inherent proxies for applying a FoRB lens.

An absence of FoRB and related considerations in this SDG-related work is seen within the SDG framework itself through the relegation of any mention of anything to do with religion – here religious inequalities' only mention is in indicator 10.2, where it is listed as one of many characteristics. No further SDG indicators or even proxies for measuring SDG progress mention religious inequalities.[4] Although not much is immediately known about what was discussed privately in the development of the SDGs, it is unlikely that this is coincidental, and that deletion of FoRB-related considerations was deemed preferable for securing some level of immediate progress rather than keeping in an intensely controversial topic such as FoRB and subsequently religious inequalities. The relegation of FoRB-related considerations is consistent elsewhere: UNDP's (2018) paper and framework for SDG implementation lists religion alongside other

characteristics and the UN SDG Report (UN 2020) only mentions religion in relation to gender discrimination.

There is no evident exploration of FoRB specifically within a mainstream development SDG space, and particularly, nothing operationally in programming and policy where FoRB and related religious inequalities are an integrated consideration. This lack of attention to discrimination and inequalities on the grounds of religion is not only a blind spot in Agenda 2030 but mirrors blind spots in development and peace-building (and human rights) efforts more generally.

4.7 FoRB in development approaches

There are some exceptions to the rule with a few initiatives in development spheres that have started to work on freedom of religion or belief directly, or through related concepts such as religious inequalities.

A significant number of development academics and practitioners have started to recognise faith and belief as an important paradigm to integrate into their work. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)'s (2017) *Voices from Religions on Sustainable Development* report is one of many development spaces that have started to welcome religious voices. From 2005–10, the UK government funded a Religions and Development Research Programme at the University of Birmingham (n.d.) which produced dozens of papers and policy briefs on this intersection. Exploration of integrating religious and FoRB considerations in development programming is underway in Norway (Øyhus 2016) and Denmark through the Danish Mission Council Development Department (DMCDD n.d.). Leisinger (2014), Ulluwishewa (2018), and others have also advocated for the related consideration of people's spiritual aspirations within development work.

Basedau *et al.* (2018b), Marshall and Van Saanen (2007), and Martin's (2008) analyses of institutional discrimination – which produces religious inequalities – in the labour market, housing sector, and health sector respectively, are welcome precursors to the more systematic links made by the UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB's UNGA (2020) report. PaRD (2019a) has, for example, brought stakeholders across peace-building, development, and FoRB spheres together to discuss advancing FoRB through development work. Other such analysis within development literature is, however, scarce or non-existent.

There is also a shift at the state development funding level in a few countries to work on FoRB. The advocacy for this arose from concepts related to foreign policy objectives and did not come from within development bodies themselves.[5] States within the US-led Alliance on Religious Freedom (US Department of State 2020), have, for example, supported a focus on 'marginalised religious minorities in development assistance'. FoRB academics Grim and Finke (2010: 61) and Gill and Shah (2013: 26), for example, advocate that 'religious freedom' is 'a key ingredient to peace and stability and thus environments for economic growth' and 'crucially contributes to promoting stable democracies, from which economic growth follows'. USAID has framed its FoRB-specific work (USAID 2020b) through 'its support for advancing democracy' which includes a 'foundational rights focus' including religious liberty and freedom

from discrimination, embodied in the US constitution and law. Aside from concerns from Durokifa and Ijeoma (2018) and others, that promoting democracy within development is perceived by some as neo-colonial, the translation of FoRB from foreign policy to development objective-relevant remains rudimentary. FoRB and related considerations have, therefore, not been mainstreamed in state development work.

USAID (2020b) lists its work in various countries to prevent further FoRB violations and redress religious inequalities experienced by religious groups. The primary focus of FoRB-specific work by state development agencies here remains on identifying specific geographically limited FoRB violations and seeking to redress their specific outcomes or symptoms (USAID 2021b). There is less emphasis on utilising a FoRB-sensitive lens to engage with religious and intersecting inequalities at a structural level, and to seek to identify their root causes and drivers, which helps reduce and prevent further FoRB violations and related inequalities. Where this is done, it is at best on a time-limited *ad hoc* basis. It is also not clear that FoRB itself is being pursued as part of the measures to address any religious inequalities identified. Where this is done, attention must be paid to ensuring that support of one religious or belief group is not at the expense of another, which can risk breeding grievances.

Where there has been an openness to mainstreaming a FoRB-sensitive lens in development work in the UK, US,[6] and elsewhere, programmes are in their exploratory phase and are not yet incorporated into wider development programming. The Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (CREID) is implementing projects in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Myanmar, and Pakistan to practise and learn from incorporating FoRB into development in practice. The Dutch government has also funded the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) coalition of development and peace-building organisations to engage in a bottom-up societal advancement of FoRB through locally legitimated language and processes in seven countries (Tearfund 2020). The 2019 EU Global Exchange Platform (2019) for Religion in Society also funds peer-to-peer exchanges between EU and non-EU religious and non-religious practitioners working to build inclusive societies and address religious and related inequalities within the context of the SDGs. The FoRB framework is consciously not referenced, however, with a likely ambition to appear legitimate to partners in the global South and EU alike.

Despite the advocacy for an HRBA within a development context, evidence of work documenting the incorporation of FoRB in development approaches remains scarce, and in practice, to date, almost non-existent. A 'literacy' of FoRB's ability and means to uncover and address religious and intersecting inequalities and to be 'rooted in every cultural context' (Bielefeldt 2000: 100) is needed. Those working in development spheres, including on fragile contexts (for example, the OECD's *States of Fragility 2020*), as well as related spheres, including human rights and peace-building, would be better supported and enriched through such a 'literacy' grounded in global perspectives. Developing methodologies and processes for integrating FoRB into development work requires deep listening to people in different contexts with their complex intersecting identities in

mind, as well as listening to development practitioners' existing wisdom and concerns. This has not, as yet, started in earnest.

5 The peace-building context

5.1 Approaches to religion within peace-building: negative, positive, and Justpeace

A FoRB lens has a lot to offer peace-building. It helps ensure that religious inequalities as well as their root causes – including those related to the more invisible beliefs about 'the other'– are identified and considered in 'conflict mapping', and responded to as part of a more comprehensive response. A prevailing 'ambivalence' towards 'the sacred' or religion (Appleby 2020) has, however, helped prevent a FoRB lens from being practically integrated within peace-building. This section explores the relationship between FoRB and peace-building, providing hypotheses towards this ambivalence, and analysing the instances where we do see a degree of intersection between the disciplines.

At the sharp, practical end of peace-building, the role of religious institutions and people's related identities in driving conflict is witnessed often. Despite advocacy that religion is a prism through which peace can be inspired, the legacy of religious violence throughout history has helped cement the prevailing stance towards the topic of religion in peace-building as one of ambivalence. With reference to Østby (2013), Omoeva and Buckner (2015), and others' work, the United Nations and World Bank's (2018: xviii) seminal report *Pathways to Peace*, seeks to comprehensively outline routes for reducing conflict in the context of the SDGs, and notes that group inequalities, including religious and intersecting inequalities, create 'fertile ground for grievances' and act as a 'mobiliser for conflict'. Because of its connection to religion and religious violence, the right to FoRB is, in turn, still widely perceived as a tool to protect harmful religious beliefs and practices that undermine peace by mobilising conflict.

FoRB is therefore, for the most part, missing from the conversation within the peace-building sphere, and is widely overlooked or dismissed.

The 'negative' peace approach in peace-building seeks the absence of violence with a focus on reducing the 'hot' violence or acts that impose immediate harm on a group (Galtung 2011). By isolating these acts, negative peace-building approaches are themselves isolated and unrelated to societal structures and culture, and so do not consider religion, beliefs, or related inequalities. 'Positive peace' focuses on 'structural violence' which includes analysis of the 'suffering caused by economic and political structures of exploitation and repression' and 'cultural violence that legitimises direct and/or structural violence' (*ibid*.).

'Justpeace' intentionally combines positive peace-building methods with building and transforming sustainable relationships through alignment with relevant norms among conflicting sectors and cultures to prevent direct and structural violence (Lederach 2017). Although the 'Justpeace' originator, Lederach, engages specifically with religious identity in his work (2015), positive peace and Justpeace's framing has tended to subsume FoRB under 'culture' more broadly. This risks missing the different identities and experiences of people within a religion or belief community. These different identities and experiences have also been missed due to the

tendency within peace-building to engage with religion and related issues no more than at a homogenous collective or institutional partnership level rather than through a FoRB lens which focuses more on humans' religious or belief identity and subsequent experiences.

Peace-building literature and practice reflect the ambivalence within the field as to whether religion, and by extension FoRB, is helpful or disastrous for negative or positive peace-building approaches. Philpott (2013: 36) advances that the largely secular space within which peace-building theory and practice has developed, has led to religion being regarded either as 'irrelevant', or at worst, 'inherently violent and divisive'. Silvestri and Mayall (2015: 1) echo that religion's role in conflict and peace-building has 'all too often been depicted in binary terms', as either 'a source of violence or reconciliation'. Kofi Annan's 2016 speech (Kofi Annan Foundation 2016) in which he states that 'religion has been a driving force for [personal and] social progress' but also 'instrumentalised [to exclude], to persecute and even to kill "the other"'' reflects this. The *Journal on Religion, Conflict and Peace*'s authors Ensign and Karegeye (2018) and others, do not attempt to disentangle the positive or negative role of religion, or move beyond balancing different perspectives within the field. The World Faiths Development Dialogue (2017) notes in the practical context of Nigeria, for example, that although it is known that religion shapes social dynamics and norms, there remains little consensus on its role or importance.

The contribution of religion in 'crystallising peace' (Durham and Clark 2015: 281) is increasingly raised by FoRB advocates and peace-building academics and practitioners alike. Toft, Shah and Philpott (2011: 9) advocate the 'opportunities posed by globally resurgent religion', Omer (2015: 3) encourages 'reconsidering the presumed unidirectionality of religion in peace-building', and Cahill (2019) encourages the discovery of the historic roots of peace-building in Christian traditions to unlock its potential today. In 2006, the United States Institute of Peace's (USIP) (2006: 1) Religious Contributions to Peacemaking noted the maturing explication of religion's role in peace-building, especially through the 'strong warrants for peacemaking in the Abrahamic faiths'. USIP (2018: 7) cites examples of the Israeli–Palestinian, Sudan–South Sudan, and Sri Lankan conflicts, claiming that 'neglecting or simplifying the role of religion may in some cases have led to an escalation of religious opposition on both sides of the peace process'. Religions for Peace (RfP 2020a, 2020b), the Parliament of the World's Religions (2019), and many others continue to advocate for peace through the voices of religious leaders who condemn violence in the name of religion.

Despite these efforts, very few substantive analyses of faith-based conflict prevention paths and techniques in academic literature exist. The exceptions include Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana and Abu-Nimer (2005) and Hertog (2010), who explore the 'peace-inculcating values and ethics of religion' and their potential for violence prevention. Palihapitiya (2018) also considers faith-based early warning systems which inherently involve the analysis of tensions based on religion or belief and related inequalities, and thus the application of a FoRB lens, within a context. Beyond such exceptions in literature, the ambivalence towards the role of religion or

belief in peace-building, especially in practical approaches, means that a FoRB lens is not applied in conflict or pre-conflict settings.

Some peace-building academics and practitioners even specifically acknowledge and engage with religions and related identities in conflicts but fall short of integrating FoRB as an approach. Malik's (2009) analysis of conflict in Pakistan, Fagbemi (2013) and Search for Common Ground's (2020a) engagement on conflict in Nigeria, and K4D's analysis of conflict in Iraq (O'Driscoll 2018) are examples of this. Despite this analysis and engagement, FoRB, as a framework, is not engaged with or referenced in this work. Generations for Peace's conflict mapping in South Sudan (Morrow 2014), South Ossetia (Beswick 2014), and North Macedonia (Awad 2020) even advance religion as an influential factor in people's identity and the conflict but do not explore the religious inequalities experienced that result from FoRB violations. Interpeace's 2019 and 2018 annual reports investigate gender and youth inequalities but only consider religion or belief in relation to religious leaders' inclusion in high-level meetings rather than in relation to inequalities experienced.

Applying a FoRB lens to a conflict setting involves identifying the role of religious or non-religious belief identity in driving, exacerbating, and prolonging conflict. While some research and theory on conflict in the social sciences does engage religious or belief identities, FoRB-related religious or belief inequality dynamics in driving conflict are often overlooked (Grim and Finke 2007).

When religion or belief-related inequalities are identified within conflict settings, the focus overwhelmingly homes in exclusively on the role of socioeconomic or political factors as drivers in the conflict. The role of religion or belief in a conflict is widely perceived as 'emanating from social conditions that foster a corrupted version of religion' (Juergensmeyer 2003: 283). The social conditions are therefore perceived as the real issue to analyse and address, and neglects the important dimensions to a conflict that applying a FoRB lens would uncover. The United Nations Secretary-General (2018) reflected, for example, that 'religious conflicts are normally the product of political or geostrategic manipulation or proxies for other antagonisms'.

Due to the secular framework through which peace-building theory and practice has developed, even peace-building organisations with faith-based roots, who are well placed to be sensitive to FoRB dynamics, may also follow a narrow secular socioeconomic line of analysis and engagement that overlooks religious or belief inequalities. The Christian International Peace Service (CHIPS n.d.), for example, does not incorporate religious or belief considerations into their work, instead focusing on socioeconomic support.

Where **religious identities** are considered within peace-building literature or approaches, they are sometimes subsumed within ethnic identities. The conflict analysis and responses then focus on ethnic dimensions of the conflict which may exclude religious or belief particulars. This is evidenced in Rohwerder's (2014) engagement on the Iraqi conflict where tensions that risk further conflict between Sunnis and others are raised as 'ethnic', and Belgioioso's (2014) engagement, as part of Peace Direct's 'Peace Insight', with the targeting of Rohingya in Myanmar as an 'ethnic group' having experienced 'ethnic cleansing'. While ethnicity and

religion or belief can be closely related, and for some people mean one and the same thing, one does not always equate to the other. Religion or belief and the subsequent inequalities and violence experienced can, for example, be more fluid than those felt on account of one's ethnicity.

The United Nations (UN) and World Bank's *Pathways to Peace* (2018: 122) acknowledges that 'having a greater sense of purpose and sacrifice for a transcendental cause' can be a driver of conflict but goes on to say that this FoRB-related driver arises from a 'lack of religious literacy'; that is, a corrupted version of religion. The advocation of religion as 'inherently peaceful' and religious-driven violence as stemming from a 'corruption of religion' is further echoed in the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee (2014) and other counter-terrorism circles (Mandaville and Nozell 2017).

Our thoughts, conscience, religion, or beliefs (which FoRB engages with) shape our experiences and needs and inform whether we partake in violent action in the world. An exclusive socioeconomic focus misses these less-seen religious or belief elements that play an important role in a conflict. When a FoRB lens is side-lined, the analysis and subsequent solutions are built with blind spots in attempts to comprehensively understand and respond to the conflict in question.

5.2 Working with faith or belief-based actors for peace (positive and Justpeace)

Working with faith-based actors, leaders, and laity alike (Hayward and Marshall 2015), as **conduits of peace**, has been increasingly discussed and advocated for in peace-building and FoRB literature and approaches (see, for example, USIP 2018; Religions for Peace (RfP) n.d.; USAID 2009; PaRD 2019b; Nicholas 2014). Religious actors' public platforms and subsequent influence to promote messages of peace towards others and 'raise the alarm as peace deteriorates' (Payne 2020: 8) means that they are evermore regarded as a useful resource and partners for disseminating peace. USIP (n.d.a.), for example, highlights that the absence of religious actors in official peace processes can disrupt them and UNHCR (2020b) has established a 'Multi-Religious Council of Leaders' to 'support peace-building, inclusion and reconciliation efforts'.

Positive and Justpeace approaches seek to move beyond the 'hot' violence to the structural level or deeper cultural and related triggers for the violence (Galtung 2011; Lederach 2017). For many within the peace-building world, using these approaches towards conflict with religious or belief elements means working with the religious or belief institutions that are perceived as perpetuating the structural and 'cultural' conditions for violence. Because peace-building work has tended to engage with religion and related issues at the collective or institutional level, a FoRB lens which focuses more on humans' identity and subsequent experiences is overlooked.

Faith-based actors themselves have been vocal in their ability to fill gaps in hard-to-reach communities through their networks (Watson *et al.* 2020), and 'to build resilient relationships at the local levels, model forms of prevention embedded within local culture and work with the emotional and spiritual dimensions of transformative change through their "spiritual capital"' (Payne 2020: 1). Search for Common Ground's (2016) 'Plateau Will Arise!' (phase II) programme sought, for example, to work closely with

religious leaders in Nigeria to reduce tension after identifying the conflict as 'ethno-religious'. The EU Global Exchange Platform for Religion in Society (2019) seeks to facilitate peer-to-peer knowledge and skill-sharing exchanges between faith and non-faith actors to address conflict and related socioeconomic and political inequalities.

The UN Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights' 'Faith for Rights' framework and Beirut Declaration (OHCHR n.d.) also seeks to encourage the development of peaceful societies across the globe through faith-based actors, including with specific mention to the framework of FoRB. Faith-based actors' ability to act as partners in peace-building is now often framed within the context of SDG 16, as also acknowledged by actors working at the UN level (see TAP Network 2016). Despite these initiatives, in practice, faith-based actors' work to prevent violent conflict remains 'largely unexplored' (Payne 2020: 1).

The primary paradigm that peace-building literature and approaches have focused on is faith-based actors' **interfaith work**, which has the ability to increase understanding between individuals of different religions or beliefs through encounter which can help to reduce future FoRB violations. Interfaith work also has the ability to confront root causes of tensions, especially those touching on religious beliefs or practice (Marshall 2017). Coexister France (n.d.) helpfully approach interfaith actions as a 'means' to other goals, 'rather than an end' in itself. Marshall (2017) maps the dynamism of interfaith work from the 1983 Parliament of the World's Religions and analyses the interfaith space before each Global G7, G8, and G20 summit.

The World Council of Churches (2018) raises churches' positive role in acting as a unifying force between churches during the Colombian peace process. In Nigeria, Muslim–Christian dialogue initiatives, including 'the Imam and the Pastor' (United Religions Initiative 2019), and the promotion of reconciliation through media (USAID Nigeria 2015; USIP 2006) has been positively recognised internationally. In Iraq, the 'importance of interfaith initiatives' for the conflict (see Kareem 2016, UN Assistance Mission for Iraq) led to an interfaith leaders' statement on ISIL perpetrator accountability (Security Council Report 2020). Kaiciid (Kaiciid Dialogue Centre n.d.) presents inter-religious dialogue as 'at the heart of positive peace-building' and the Adyan Foundation (n.d.) promotes their facilitation of interfaith citizenship education. All such work has the potential to contribute to the reduction of FoRB violations – sometimes naming this – but is not framed in this context.

The strengths and limitations of interfaith work are ever-present in peace-building literature. As well as advocating for peace, religious leaders have equally used their platforms to incite violence against others. Kmec and Ganiel (2019) discuss the strengths in including religious actors at grass-roots level, while noting the limitations when they were included in 'track one' negotiations during peace-building processes in Northern Ireland, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sterland and Beauclerk (2008: iii) highlight the 'remarkably few faith-based or faith-led peace-building initiatives being carried out in the Balkans' and that the most prominent attempts to stimulate interfaith peace concentrated only on establishing

formal leadership-level Inter-Religious Councils in former Yugoslavian Republic countries, with an unknown impact on the wider communities.

Christian churches were also deeply implicated in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, and due to the Church's support for the state regime, churches became massacre sites rather than interfaith dialogue spaces (Longman 2001). In Sierra Leone, interfaith cooperation helped broker peace between the government and the rebels, but religion was also used as an instigator and justifier of violence (Conteh 2011). Due to their unknown quantity for promoting peace or violence in many conflict settings, therefore, many in secular peace-building spheres remain cautious about working with faith-based actors.

While interfaith dialogue and other initiatives with religious actors are important for peace-building in-country, they are often undertaken detached from considerations of FoRB violations and their impact on religious and intersecting inequalities in that context. This work – pluralising a peace-building space with different religious actors – does not inherently or by proxy mean that FoRB is being pursued or achieved: one does not inherently lead to the other. One must also be wary of symbolic interfaith gestures that are made without real personal and local ownership and purpose.

These actions may deflect from engaging with the real beliefs around an issue or incident and are consequently counter-productive in the short term. Interfaith initiatives involve a focus on understanding, deep listening to, and working with individuals who hold differing religions or beliefs. These initiatives can help significantly reduce tensions and the likelihood of violence based on religion or beliefs. Interfaith work does not, however, inherently facilitate internal nurturing of peace in which individuals' insecurities and needs that drive conflict are addressed, nor guarantee that the violent targeting of people based on their religion or belief will not occur when certain socioeconomic and political inequalities give rise to grievances.

There are also limitations to the extent of the work that can be done to redress inequalities and subsequent grievances through interfaith work. Interfaith initiatives that only work with (self-nominated) religious leaders support those more used to access to power and voicing their needs. It does not guarantee that the message of peace communicated to members of the religious leader's community be received by all within the community, especially by those with minority intersecting identities.

Interfaith work has typically expected participants to declare a religion as 'a condition for entry' which often implies 'working through established channels of religious leadership in ways that may exclude' diverse members of that community (Griffith-Dickson *et al.* 2019: 9). It is impeded by the 'interfaith identity paradigm' which 'focuses on concretised religious identities through a confessional model' which ignores intersecting identities and encourages each person to 'represent' their religious or belief institutions (Shoemaker and Edmonds 2016: 200). FoRB reminds us to step beyond binary religious categorisations of people in interfaith work, and to bring everyone within a perceived religious community to the table in peace-building processes such as sustained dialogue. FoRB also reminds us in such processes to keep people's religious or belief identities in mind,

but in the context of people's intersecting identities. FoRB also more easily accommodates non-religious subject positions and diverse members of a nominally homogenous religious community, which helps prevent interfaith work from being relegated to the 'religion corner' (Tomalin *et al.* 2019: 13) in peace-building processes.

Because no religious or belief community is homogenous, a FoRB lens in peace-building, which inherently helps recognises the diversity of thought, conscience, religion, or belief between individuals, reminds us to try to bring everyone (perpetrator and victim) to the table to voice their grievances and needs. This includes those with different thoughts, conscience, religion, or beliefs within the religious communities who are often less heard due to their intersecting identities. This allows common understanding and practical solutions to be better identified from a more holistic perspective. When conflict mapping, FoRB 'right-sizes' the role of religion or belief in a conflict, neither exaggerating not ignoring the role of thought, conscience, religion, or belief identities, in conflict or building peace. Integration of FoRB considerations does not inherently expect 'harmony' as an outcome. FoRB inherently permits disagreement to remain in regard to what 'truth' is, necessitating effort and practical steps by all to live respectfully of each of our (human) rights.

5.3 Peace-building through the *forum internum*

Guidance on and support for a person's own spiritual work and development, to build peace from the inside out (Hoffman 2019), plays a significant role in reducing the drivers for conflict within people after they experience or perceive (intersecting) inequalities that give rise to a sense of injustice or desire to maintain their *status quo*. Lederach (2015: 541), the father of the Justpeace approach, recognises the usefulness of 'spiritual resources that facilitate peace-building in protracted conflict' and the need to 'explore inner and outer worlds to forge the moral imagination necessary to […] remain open with others amid conflict'. Transformative change in the internal dimension (*forum internum*) of a person is less about faith or belief-based actors instilling institutional religious positions or beliefs and is more about facilitating personal and inner conflict transformation related to insecurities and needs (Guest 2007; Heelas 2002; Redekop 2014). Three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee Elworthy's *Business Plan for Peace* (2018) outlines that inner development is essential for people to be effective conduits of peace in conflict settings, an approach supported by many analysing the cognitive dimension of peace-building, including Plus Peace (n.d.), Feet-on-the-Ground (n.d.), and Beyond Conflict (n.d.).

Faith leaders and their communities have been active for centuries, alongside reconciliation and peace-building practitioners today, in building inner peace within people through what is conceptualised as 'spiritual capital', just as much as they have been in inciting violence against others. The latter is often focused on, in part reflecting on the scarcity of initiatives or literature advocating this work with faith leaders. There is indeed an important positive role for faith actors in this work, especially at the grass-roots level (Kmec and Ganiel 2019), but this is only exceptionally recognised. Taliep *et al.* (2016: 331), for example, examine how religious leaders in Apartheid South Africa

mobilised their 'spiritual capacity and resources to resist and fight against state and structural violence during the 1970s and 1980s'.

FoRB protects our *forum internum* – i.e. our thoughts, conscience, religion, or beliefs – which heavily influences whether one participates in violence, but also justifies limits to this right when it violates the fundamental rights of others.[7] Peace-building must, however, also deal with our *forum internum* which is where our inner conflict that drives our actions and is a natural part of the human experience, takes place (Redekop 2014). FoRB engages with our *forum internum*. Because this *forum* shapes our egoic sense of self in comparison to others, and with conscious guidance, this is also where personal inner transformation occurs. This transformation is both critical for bringing the peace that peace-builders seek (*ibid.*: x), which subsequently helps realise FoRB. While interfaith work can influence inner change, it typically focuses on understanding 'the other', rather than strengthening one's capacity to understand one's own needs and reacting peacefully to subsequent emotions. The latter frees us up in crises to see the humanity in the other and move into a space between 'right and wrong', beyond the need for violence.[8] The principle of FoRB for all, not just those we agree with, supports this. Former Commonwealth Chief Rabbi, Lord Jonathan Sacks' *Not in God's Name* (2015) sets out a roadmap for the personal transformation needed from inner to external peace in the context of religious violence.

USAID (2009: 6) advocates that values learnt from religious or spiritual texts and teachings, including forgiveness and reconciliation, can 'inspire communities to change attitudes and actions at a basic level and transform worldviews at a deeper level to understand "others" in the conflict positively'. The Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation (2011) in Sri Lanka, for example, works through religious and non-religious facilitators alike to facilitate extensive intra-faith groups' exploration of their own inner drivers of conflict through their thoughts, conscience, religion, or belief through texts, teachings, and discussion, before interacting with different religious or belief parties in the conflict. Action plans are built through intra-faith reflection which consolidates learning to sustain inner peace and resist temptations to react violently. Development Initiative in West Africa's work in Nigeria (DIWA n.d.) reflects this 'inner' to 'outer' bridge-building model also. Mensen met een Missie (2019a), Search for Common Ground (n.d.), and other partners in the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (Tearfund 2020) recognise that going 'one layer deeper' than knowledge exchange to behavioural patterns and change is necessary for peace-building between religious or belief communities.

Aware Girls (n.d.) in Pakistan also approaches its peace-building through trained youth networks which facilitate inner reflection and exchange for those contemplating militancy. The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies in Cambodia and related practitioners, Fitzduff and Williams (2018), purposefully facilitate space for nominally intra-faith groups to explore their identities and needs before exploring those of 'the other' in interfaith spaces. For those in conflict settings globally, Bramsen and Poder (2018) and others advance that this 'deeper' inner engagement is important for conflict transformation and peace-building processes to be perceived as beyond 'government agendas' (Payne 2020: 10). Peace Direct

(Vernon 2019) also importantly recognise the importance of communities reflecting on and developing their own processes, which is an important part of this facilitation and ensures it remains culturally relevant and legitimate.

These examples of peace-building practice, primarily outside 'the secular West', exemplify this helpful approach of developing peace within our own thoughts, conscience, religion, or beliefs, which helps prevent harm done to those whose *forum internum* may differ. This work has not as yet specifically been linked to FoRB or relayed back into peace-building policy and practice by peace-building practitioners or FoRB advocates. Different peace-builders have approached religion, and consequently, FoRB, within peace-building differently – with ambivalence, wariness, and on rare occasions, with constructive engagement. A more comprehensive analysis of intersecting inequalities and subsequent conflict through the prism of FoRB, and integration of the findings into peace-building theory and practice (allowing space for thoughts, and so forth, across the community to be heard) would be useful for peace-building in different country contexts.

5.4 FoRB in peace-building approaches and practice

Peace-building literature and approaches have engaged much more frequently with religious inequality issues (and subsequent conflict) than their counterparts in the field of development. Religious conflict and inequalities are common dynamics within the country contexts that peace-builders analyse and engage with. While there is some increasing attention on FoRB specifically within peace-building theory, it remains conspicuously absent from much peace-building literature and theory, and falls through the cracks in practice.

Philpott's seminal work in 2013 highlighted that 'peace-building and religious freedom hardly seem to know each other' (2013: 31). Gaps in integrating FoRB in peace-building and vice versa exist in both fields. Few FoRB scholars, practitioners, or officials have themselves made connections between FoRB and building peace. Some of the exceptions include Grim and Finke (2010), and Durham and Clark (2015: 282) who emphasise that 'without FoRB, no society can be fully just, meaning processes aimed at building lasting and stable peace are necessarily incomplete'. Saiya (2015: 369), for example, applies a FoRB lens to conflict databases and case studies and identifies that 'a current increase in State and communal religious or belief restrictions and hostility' is 'intertwined' with an increase in 'resistance on the part of believers'. In other words, increased FoRB violations in the countries he analyses have led to greater conflict.

Counterintuitively, Henne, Saiya and Hand (2020), find that state-favoured religious or belief communities are emboldened to commit violence or suppression, reinforcing the importance of dismantling such favouritism through FoRB. Through data analysis of religious terrorism, Saiya's (2018) *Weapon of Peace*, advocates that peace requires moving beyond a focus on the voices in every religion or belief who justify violence using their beliefs, to counterintuitively reduce control and suppression of religion by protecting greater FoRB.

From a historical perspective, Chua's *Day of Empire* (2007: XXI) highlights that the principles that FoRB enshrines have been critical for

the world's historic 'hyperpowers' and that their 'decline' correlated with calls for religious 'purity'. This is in part because more tolerant nations attract the best and brightest from other regions (*ibid*.). With reference to several contemporary conflicts, Philpott (2013: 31) advances that because 'religious freedom is a critical enabler of peace' and lack of religious freedom 'a demonstrable cause of violence', FoRB and peace-building are an unmade 'match waiting to be made'. FoRB has also more recently been linked to SDG 16's goal to build peace through reports including that of the UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB (UNGA 2020) and Petito (2020). These advocations, however, have been made primarily in foreign policy circles and not with peace-builders in-country, meaning insufficient engagement has taken place for understanding of the usefulness of FoRB for peace-building work.

Some peace-building theory and approaches have analysed FoRB, including as a conflict driver. Appleby (2000) and Powers (2010) consider the role of FoRB in peace-building. Appleby (2000: 226, 286) outlines some of the analytical questions that should be considered when applying a FoRB lens to a context including the context-specific balancing of different people's right to FoRB and also states that the 'internal pluralism' of religious traditions 'can enhance building cultures of peace'. Powers (2010: 339–41) outlines that for peace-building in religious conflicts, it is less about 'finding common ground on religious issues' and more about identifying the appropriate relationship between religion, politics and identity, including in a way that 'upholds religious freedom'. Other exceptions within peace-building theory include the Institute for Economics and Peace whose 'positive peace' framework (IEP 2019: 2) echoes that plurality of religious group membership can form an essential part of the 'good relations with neighbours' pillar, which is, in turn, one of the eight crucial pillars for peace (IEP 2020).

Despite this (high-level) analysis, little has collectively been done to outline how analysis of FoRB can systematically be integrated into practice across the peace-building field. In Bouta *et al.*'s 2005 study of 27 faith-based organisations working on conflict, only two working on peace-building explicitly encompass consideration of FoRB specifically. This engagement with the topic of FoRB remains at a theoretical level where FoRB is a goal to achieve. This is also the case for Search for Common Ground's approach to FoRB (2020b). There is no analysis of how FoRB is assessed, and such a FoRB-lens applied to in-country practice.

Some (non-faith-based) peace-building organisations have also engaged with FoRB and resulting religious inequality dynamics. International Alert (2020) and Search for Common Ground (2020b), for example, recognise the importance of FoRB and create space to explore this in Kyrgyzstan. The International Crisis Group's work on Myanmar (ICG 2017) and Burkina Faso (ICG 2016) explores the contexts in which FoRB violations occur in these countries and contribute to the conflict and raises the need for legislation supporting religious equality. The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State's (2017) report also highlights the need to respond to hate speech and political and socioeconomic inequalities, but like the work of the non-faith-based peace-building organisations mentioned above, does not outline solutions for integrating FoRB into peace-building practice.

Peace Direct's (Vernon 2019) conflict analysis incorporates religious dynamics but its solutions to this are also framed through interfaith work and are not linked to FoRB specifically.

USIP has long directly supported initiatives to analyse religion and belief dynamics in conflict, including through a FoRB lens (Hayward 2012), and has highlighted the usefulness of peace-building strategies for implementing FoRB (Nozell 2019). USIP helps highlight that neglecting or simplifying the role of religious discrimination and violence between different groups runs the risk of being incomplete and missing vital considerations through three case studies on Israel–Palestine, Sudan–South Sudan, and Sri Lanka (USIP 2018). USIP's primary focus in practice, however, has been to work through religious actors as influencers of peace, which does not inherently involve considerations of FoRB.

Search for Common Ground (2020a) also supports an 'Advancing Religious Tolerance (Art.38)' project in Nigeria which unpacks the FoRB dynamics, including their legal and political context in the country and seeks to trigger multilevel responses to weak mechanisms for addressing FoRB violations which underpin inter-religious violence. Mensen met een Missie's FoRB programme in Indonesia, Kenya, and Pakistan (2019b) similarly intervened at multiple levels to redress tension along religious or belief lines.

In ongoing work, USIP (n.d.b.) states that its research will analyse the link between religious freedom, peace, and development, but its immediate integration of findings into practice through the prism of FoRB, as with their *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding* report (2018), is not clear or outlined. The Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) (Tearfund 2020) coalition also brings in peace-building expertise, including on approaches to discussing FoRB in a way that finds common ground in a locally legitimate and relevant way and that is needed to change behaviour that undermines FoRB violations.

While some theoretical and even practical progress has been made in integrating a FoRB lens into peace-building work, and all the dimensions this brings, there is no systematic discussion and integration in practice of this important aspect of people's identities and the influence of this on violent conflict. There remains no consensus or common conscious application of FoRB in peace-building literature, approaches, (and practice), and due to its inherent consideration of religion which many see primarily as a driver of conflict, it is often intentionally side-lined. Reluctance/concern by funders to work with religion or belief dimensions in peace-building work also means that funding has been severely restricted for integrating FoRB into peace-building research, theory, and practice – exacerbating the gaps that exist. Educational initiatives such as FoRB literacy, which could include communication of all the angles and considerations a FoRB lens provides for peace-building – over and above religious literacy which focuses on teaching about others' beliefs – may be helpful here also. Any such process would also, however, need to be tailored after facilitating space to understand the concerns and practical difficulties that are perceived to exist by peace-builder practitioners.

6 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the connections and gaps between the human right to FoRB and the major development and peace-building literature, approaches, and practice. Based on this analysis, it is evident that the intersection of these disciplines remains largely underexplored and FoRB overwhelmingly continues to fall between the cracks. The examples elucidated in this chapter indicate a general ambivalence towards, or even avoidance within development and peace-building circles of FoRB. There are several reasons explored in this chapter for this, which include the misperception that FoRB protects religious institutions' or people's harmful practices or even the use of religion to 'other' and incite violence towards people.

Despite the default position within the two largely secular development and peace-building spheres being one of innocence to the utility of applying a FoRB lens to their work, there are notable exceptions. A few academics and practitioners have begun to explore the intersection between development and FoRB. These include a focus on positioning FoRB within the context of the broader SDG framework, through which religion, belief, thought, or conscience (Article 18) becomes an important lens for identifying and addressing intersecting inequalities that lead to certain people being 'left behind' from a development perspective. There are also notable government or coalition initiatives that are starting to explore development approaches with a FoRB lens specifically applied (for example, CREID and JISRA).

In the peace-building world, although there is more broad engagement with religion on account of the global attention to conflicts with a religious element to them, this has not equated to an application of a FoRB lens or integration within peace-building work in this sphere. The lack of consensus or common application in work at the intersection of religion, religious identity, and peace-building in theory and practice has exacerbated integration of FoRB considerations being overlooked. Evidence explored in this chapter suggests that even though FoRB is occasionally named as a valuable goal, the frameworks from which peace-building theory has emerged, have not given rise to analysis or exploration of religious identities and related inequalities beyond a superficial level, which means that gaps remain in practice.

Even where peace-building or development academics and practitioners do engage with religious or belief identities, this tends to fall short of truly applying a FoRB lens. Evidence from sources analysed in this chapter highlights that peace-building and development academics and practitioners tend to focus on practical partnerships with religious bodies or engagement through interfaith dialogue and other forms at the collective identity level. This work does not equate to FoRB. While these approaches have value, depending on the specific context, it can risk assuming homogeneity where it may not exist and reinforcing specific religious hierarchies or structures. Crucially, however, the focus on the collective identity level fails to engage with, or account for, individuals' intersecting (religious or belief and related) identities that underpin the real lived experiences and motivations that often manifest themselves in conflict or inequalities. Application of a FoRB lens is therefore a crucial part of ensuring no 'blind spots' in the pursuit of development and peace-building goals.

While ever more organisations in development and peace-building spheres are expanding their scope and focus to consider FoRB, further work at the intersections of FoRB, development, and peace-building is much needed. For the realisation of human rights, peace, and better development, practitioners in FoRB and other human rights, development, and peace-building spheres need one another. Each one of these spheres of work holds a different and uniquely useful perspective that forms a crucial part of the puzzle for building solutions to discrimination, inequalities, and conflict. There are many unheard voices and much to listen to from which to collect information and grow disaggregated data. There is also much to learn from each other in the different human rights, development, and peace-building spheres. It is crucial that this conversation is a truly global one, rooted in listening to those often overlooked in diverse contexts and then shared to build up understanding and good practice across the fields.

Notes

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1 Katharine Thane, Senior Advocacy Officer, Migrants' Rights Network, UK.

2 See also this **Statement**.

3 'Discrimination constitutes any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference or other differential treatment that is directly or indirectly based on the prohibited grounds of discrimination and which has the intention or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of Covenant rights' (UN CESCR 2009).

4 See, for example, SDG Tracker (2018) for official and unofficial indicators employed.

5 See, for example, Rogers and Dionne's *A Time to Heal, A Time to Build* (2020) paper.

6 See UK government press release (2018) and the USAID website (USAID 2021a).

7 Article 18(3), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

8 See *Building Bridges for Peace* (Grenville 2019).

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