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DECLARATION

I, Jacob Bulti Smørdal, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1980s there has been a search for alternative approaches to development that encompasses different variables of the social systems. The most recent evolution of development thought has been characterized by a multidimensional approach to development, also referred to as the human development approach. In this approach attention is drawn towards the significance of ethics and values in development. The recognition of development as a value-based process opens up to address the role of religion in development processes. In this thesis I have explored the role of religion within a value-based conception of development.

The geographical area of focus for this research is Ethiopia and the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) presence in this country. During my fieldwork I have, through interviews and observation, gained understanding of how NCA understands the role of religion in development in Ethiopia.

The thesis shows that in some areas of NCA's development practice collaboration with religious leaders and faith-based organizations (FBO) is especially emphasized and regarded as essential to achieve certain development objectives. NCA have involved religious leaders at both local and national level into their development practice. Religious leaders influential mandated position and credibility, in local communities and national institutions, is recognized as both potentially constructive and obstructive to the process of development.

Examined cases, conducted interviews and observations in this thesis reveal an instrumental approach to religion in NCA's development practice. However, this does not provide the full picture. NCA also appears to facilitate for a more informed understanding of development that takes place at a conceptual level. Religious leaders and FBO's are encouraged and challenged into conceptualising processes where religious norms and values are explored and examined in relation to development. The outcome of these processes seems to pave the way for the emergence of new values that better incorporates and acknowledges the existence and interest of both religion and development.

The role of religion in NCA's development practice appears as a dynamic dialogue between the sacred and the profane where religion is regarded as a natural and almost an inevitably part of development. NCA's objective seems to be focused on finding common ground between religion and development in fighting poverty. The analysis and discussion in this thesis shows that the role of religion in development is not merely about how religion can inform the concept of development, but also about how development can inform the concept of religion.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSO - Civil Society Organisation

EOTC - Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

EECMY - Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus

EMDA - Ethiopian Muslim Development Association

ECS - Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat

FBO - Faith Based Organisation

FGM - Female Genital Mutilation

GBV - Gender Based Violence

GSDRC - The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre

HTP - Harmful Traditional Practices

MDG - Millennium Development Goals

NCA - Norwegian Church Aid

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

OWDA - Ogaden Welfare Development Association

WFDD - World Faiths Development Dialogue

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND

After the World War II, the modern concept of development was established. Decolonialization and post-war reconstruction were on the agenda and the former colonial nations were dedicated to the task of helping the so-called Third World countries to develop. In order to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, modernization theories developed. Development was viewed with economic growth as central to achieve higher living standards. One of the perspective from this era was to regard development as series of successive stages of economic growth through which all countries must pass (Rostow, 1990, Todaro and Smith, 2009, p.110). However, theories that define development as economic growth have continuously been designated as being insufficient in recognising social difference and diversity in societies.

As a reaction to modernization theories, dependency theories arose, arguing that underdeveloped countries are not simply primitive versions of developed countries, but nations with distinctive features and structures of their own. Dependency theories viewed the world as divided into a core of wealthy nations which dominate a periphery of poor nations (Peet and Hartwick, 2009, p.166ff).

During the 1970s and early 1980s theories based upon neoliberal ideas developed. Neoliberalism explained the failure of development as the result of too much government intervention and regulation of the economy (Peet and Hartwick, 2009, p.84-87). Since the 1980s there has been a search for alternative approaches to development that encompasses different variables of the social systems. Individuals, institutions and organizations ranging from the World Bank to grassroots-based NGOs, have also begun to address the role of religion in development.

Until recently the subject of religion has received little attention in mainstream development thinking and practice. Religion has often been referred to as a blind spot or a danger zone that is to be avoided (Clarke, 2007, p.1, Haar, 2011, p.5). The debates about the relation between religion and development tend to produce polarized discourses. Sceptics have viewed religion as a source of conflict or obstacle to desirable social change. Religion has been referred to the private sphere, expected

to decline in importance as societies modernise (Rakodi, 2007, p.4). On the other hand, religious adherents insist that human destiny cannot be reduced to material dimensions alone and that religious beliefs can motivate believers to work for reduced poverty and material progress (Haar, 2011, p.6)

The most recent evolution of development thought has been characterized by a multidimensional approach to development, also referred to as the human development approach. In this approach the element of human freedom is central to the development process (Deneulin and Bano, 2009, p.45). The human development approach is rooted in the pioneering work of the Economics Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen and his capability approach. In his book *Development as freedom* (1999), Sen brings attention to ethics and values in the process of development. The perspective of Sen opens for the role of religion by recognizing development as a value-based process. Considering this background material it has led me to specify the following objectives for this thesis.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

This research will address the following objectives:

1. To gain a better understanding of the relationship between ‘development’ and ‘religion’, and the role of religion in development processes.
2. To gain an understanding of how the role of religion in development is understood by the Norwegian Church Aid in Ethiopia.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on my objectives I have come to the following research question:

What role can religion play within a value-based conception of development?

1.4 CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH

The geographical area of focus for this research is Ethiopia and the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) presence in this country. I have conducted my fieldwork in Ethiopia, with the intention to examine and explore a non-governmental organisation working with development in a highly religious context. I wanted to focus my research on the topic ‘religion and development’ and seek to understand how NCA is relating their development activities to the sphere of religion in Ethiopia. I was curious to know how NCA’s staff understood the relationship between ‘religion’ and

‘development’. Since NCA in Ethiopia is not mainly an implementing organisation, I have chosen to focus this thesis on both NCA staff at the head office in Addis Ababa and three key implementing partners. Of special interest have been programs and projects where the subject of religion has a special significance, such as capacity building projects that involve religious and traditional leaders in its program. I have looked towards concrete outcomes of this focus in my collection and analysis of findings and attempted to understand how religion is perceived and taken into account in the development field by development workers and development beneficiaries.

1.5 OUTLINE

The context of the thesis is given in chapter two where I find it necessary to include a brief historical and current presentation of Ethiopia and the Norwegian Church Aid’s development practice. In chapter three I have presented my choice of research methods that has been used and reflect on advantages and limitations of these choices. In chapter four I present concepts, theories, literature and individuals that I will draw upon in the interpretation of my findings. Chapter four is focused on the concept of religion and how this concept has been conceived and treated within development theory. In this regard Amartya Sen’s value-based conception of development is of special concern. In chapter five I have thematically presented my findings. These are based on observations and eleven semi-structured interviews conducted in Ethiopia during a period of one month from October to November 2011. The findings serves as a backdrop and point of reference for the following chapter six, where analytical concepts and theories are used to interpret and discuss the role of religion in NCA’s development practice. Chapter six is organized into three sections. The two first sections, the role of religious leaders and the role of faith-based organisations, will serve as basis for the last section where I will seek to understand NCA’s development practice in regard to a broader debate of religion and development. Finally, I will sum up the analysis by giving concluding reflections in chapter seven.

2 CONTEXT AND ACTORS

To form a context for this thesis I will in the following briefly present some relevant features about Ethiopia and the religious and socio-political history and context. I will also present the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), its history, visions and strategy in Ethiopia. In the latter part I will present three different partners of NCA of which this thesis is concerned. The final passage will describe a relevant development challenge for NCA in Ethiopia, namely female genital mutilation (FGM).

2.1 ETHIOPIA – THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is located at the Horn of Africa, bordered by Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea and Kenya. Total population is, according to 2007 census, 73 918 505. By July 2012 it is estimated a total population of 93 815 992 with average annual growth rate of 3.1%.

Ethiopia is a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multilingual country with over 89 languages. About 43.5% of the country's population is Orthodox Christian, 33.9% Muslim, 18.6% Protestant, and 4.6% traditional religions, 0.7% Catholic and 0.6% others (CIA, 2012).

Ethiopia is a conglomeration of different ethnic groups. Oromo is the largest ethnic group and constitute about 34% of the population in Ethiopia. This group lives scattered over a large geographic territory, but are mostly concentrated in the southern and western Ethiopia (Eide, 2000, p.42f). The Amhara ethnic group has long been dominant in the country. They have represented a land-owning upper class and have ruled Ethiopia, politically and ideologically. Amhara constitute about 26% of the population. Tigray is located north in Ethiopia counting 6% and the Somali ethnic group lives mainly in southeast-Ethiopia in the Somali region and constitute 6% of the total population. Including these ethnic groups, there are a total of more than 60 different ethnic groups in Ethiopia¹.

¹ Percentages are calculated from the total population of the third Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia conducted in May and November 2007. Available at: www.csa.gov.et/pdf/Cen2007_firstdraft.pdf

2.2 THE RELIGIOUS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

2.2.1 Religion and state

The role of religion in Ethiopia is also the key to understand the structure of the Ethiopian society. Historically and traditionally the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and the Ethiopian empire have had a close relation, making the religious and political context nearly inseparable. From 1889-1974, the two main institutions in Ethiopian society was identified as the ruling Amhara elite embodied in the Emperor and the EOTC embodied in the Patriarch (Grenstedt, 2000, p.18, Eide, 2000, p.15). In other words, the emperor and the patriarch of EOTC were in a mutual relationship, where the emperor was dependent on the patriarch and the patriarch was dependent on the emperor, both politically and ideologically. This relation created a theological legitimacy for an authoritarian position of the EOTC in the Ethiopian society and in the dominating Amhara culture. The authoritative position of this church and its adherents has been dominant in relation to other ethnic groups with less political and religious influence. According to Eide (2000, p.21), the Orthodox Christianity's traditional position in Ethiopia did therefore become a fundamental expression of the modern Ethiopian political and national identity. However, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church was disestablished as the state church with the fall of the Imperial regime in 1974.

2.2.2 History of FBO's and Civil Society in the Ethiopia

The 20th century in Ethiopia was marked by great changes and reforms and became the turn of a new chapter of the Ethiopian society. When Emperor Haile Selassie I became regent in Ethiopia in 1916, it was with a particular desire to lead Ethiopia into a modernization and centralization process. Attention was drawn towards internal development of the country. Education was a priority and it was attempted to educate the people of the Ethiopian periphery (Zewde, 2002a, p.109). As part of the modernization processes faith-based organisations (FBO)² played an active role to

²Faith-based organizations (FBO) refers to 'any organization that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within the faith.' (Clarke, G., Jennings, M. and Shaw, T. (2007) *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke)

implement these changes and were highly valued by the Imperial Regime for their work on education and health services. The mission or FBO's were the first groups that began to work as non-government bodies during the 1930s and their pioneering role is considered to be the roots of the first modern types of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in Ethiopia. Their effort led to an official decree issued in 1944, where the role of mission organisations was clarified and acknowledged (Arén, 1978, p.438f). The major structural changes during the Imperial Regime required a large amount of resources and manpower. For this reason a stronger relation with the international community was established. The emperor turned to the West for help. He ordered books from different European countries, which included models of modern bureaucracy and governance and several of his closest advisers in the government were recruited from abroad (Mosley, 1965, p.150). In the period between 1950-60 a number of NGOs appeared in Ethiopia, such as the Ethiopian Red Cross, Boy Scouts Association and Women Welfare Association. During the major famines of the 1960s and 70s the number of NGOs and FBO's continued to play an important role in the massive relief operations in the country.

In 1974, when the Dergue Marxist military regime replaced the imperial regime of Emperor Haile Selassie I, the political, economic and social environment changed dramatically. Instability, terror and violation of civil and political rights created a difficult environment for the civil society sector and it deteriorated rapidly (CRDA, 2006, p.11). Under the Dergue regime FBO's and religious institutions suffered from the oppression and persecution, including imprisonment and extra-judicial killing of religious leaders. According to Eide (2000) these events in the history of FBOs are essential to take into account when assessing their role and contributions in Ethiopia. In 1991 the Dergue regime was defeated and replaced by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) which came to power in 1994 (EPRDF has remained in power since) (Adejumobi, 2007, p. 135,136). The new government implemented political and economic liberalization and reform measures, which guaranteed the establishment of independent associations by the constitution. The overall operating environment for the civil society improved significantly and the number of NGOs and CSOs grew fast (CRDA, 2006, p.12). Currently there are officially registered 1119 NGOs in Ethiopia, of these, 141 are foreign-based NGOs while the rest, 978 are local-based NGOs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, 2012)

2.3 NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID

2.3.1 History

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) originates from a church-based fundraising initiative in 1947, focused on providing assistance and relief to post-World War II European nations. At the time there was only one full-time employee operating this initiative (Tønnessen, 2007, p.17f). During the following two decades NCA gradually expanded its professional basis and competence engaging into the field of long-term development in Abakaliki, Nigeria in 1962. This was an agricultural project and the first major development project established by NCA. This project was followed by a comprehensive project in Sudan in 1972 that continued the expansion of NCA in terms of financial capacity and geographical presence. In 1974 NCA settled in Ethiopia after a request from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) for assistance in the emergency drought that was causing humanitarian crises in the country. The organization was then heavily operational in the implementation of their program. During the 1980s NCA further expanded its engagement into relief and development work in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Since then NCA's work in Ethiopia changed gradually. What started as emergency and relief work steadily changed into rehabilitation and long-term development. Over the past decades, more focus has been directed towards collaboration with churches and religious leaders. In the 1990s work in Europe was resumed when the organization engaged into relief work with the dissolution of Yugoslavia (Tønnessen, 2007, Fretheim, 2008).

Today, 65 years after the start, NCA is one of the leading actors of voluntary humanitarian aid and development work in Norway. The organisation has a broad network of alliances throughout the world and is engaged in a variety of tasks of different political, cultural and religious contexts.

2.3.2 Vision and values

Norwegian Church Aid is an ecumenical, diaconal and humanitarian organization rooted in and guided by the Christian faith. NCA has its mandate from churches and Christian organizations in Norway to work for a just world, empowering the poor and challenging the wealthy and powerful. Five values are leading for NCA's work: Integrity of Creation, human dignity, global justice, inclusive communities and

compassion (NCA, 2008, p.5,9).

2.3.3 Strategy

Based upon the Christian faith and the set of values guiding the organization, NCA uses a rights-based approach as the main strategy for the work. This approach is divided into three working methods: long-term development aid, advocacy, and emergency preparedness and response. In addition NCA operates globally focusing of five strategic priorities: gender justice, climate justice, economic justice, the right to peace and security, and the right to water and health (NCA, 2011b, p.14f, NCA, 2010).

In Ethiopia NCA, together with its partners, promotes human dignity for poor and marginalized people by supporting partners and programs that contribute to their increased participation, equity and protection. In the Country Plan for Ethiopia 2011-2015 (NCA, 2010, p.11), NCA have selected three country strategic priorities: Economic Development, Water and Health and Peace and Security. To address the country strategic priorities there is a selection of six main program areas: 1) livelihood and trade, 2) climate change adaptation, 3) water and sanitation, 4) peace building, 5) HIV and AIDs mitigation and 6) women development. This thesis will direct particular interests towards the last three program areas. In the peace-building program NCA contribute to mobilise religious leaders and faith-based communities and to build structures and institutions that work for and promote peace building. In the HIV and AIDS mitigation program, NCA works with Ethiopian civil society and authorities to improve access to treatment and care, better welfare and quality of life for people living with HIV. Within NCAs women development program, focus is directed towards building capacity for women, engaging faith communities, and strengthening networks and advocacy in partnership with local government structures aimed at influencing policy both at national and local level (ibid).

Strategies selected to strengthen local civil society from a rights based approach is to mobilize communities through participatory planning, group formation, enhancement of solidarity mechanisms, awareness creation and skills building at household and community levels. In this regard NCA has especially emphasised the use of ‘Community Conversation’ as an approach for combating FGM and HIV and AIDS (NCA, 2010, p.12ff).

Another strategy is to build vertical and horizontal alliances through various

national networks and forums. This is to ensure a greater solidarity and collaboration with governmental and non-governmental development actors including grassroots community and their organizations, youth and women associations, local, regional and federal governments, civil society and faith based organizations.

In addition NCA has a focus on mutual capacity development where development is view as much a process where NCA will learn from their partners as their partners will learn from them. Thus NCA will strive to build the competence and skills of both staffs and partners. This will be done through trainings, exchange programs and experience sharing visits to build partners' staff competency and leadership (ibid).

2.3.4 Partners in Ethiopia

According to the 2009 Country Program Report on Ethiopia (NCA, 2009), NCA, together with 23 partners, had implemented a total of 33 projects. The partner network of NCA in Ethiopia is wide. A presence in Ethiopia for more than 35 years confirms a long time commitment and has given NCA a solid knowledge and understanding about the country, its people, culture and context.

Strong relations are established with the communities, the government at different levels, with partners and not least with the FBO's. In the Country Report of 2009 it is stated that NCA considers the partnership with the FBO's and other partners with a strong and wide grassroots connection enabling social mobilization for change, as an added value (NCA, 2009, p.9).

The Ethiopian population at large is a religious people, where the largest denominations are Christianity and Islam. Hence partnership with FBO's has high potential of reaching far out to their constituency with messages for improving livelihood and bringing development to the grassroots. This wide range of partnership with government, non-governmental organisations (NGO) and communities at grassroots level, has contributed to the sustainability of project interventions when NCA's projects has phased out. By NCA, this is considered both efficient and cost-effective.

In my research material I have focused NCA's partnership with two FBO's: the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus (EECMY), and one secular NGO, Ogaden Welfare Development Association (OWDA). I will in the following present them briefly.

2.3.4.1 Ogaden Welfare Development Association

OWDA is a secular non-governmental humanitarian organization that was nationally registered by a team of Ethiopian Somalis in 1999. The organization envisions contributing to the eradication of poverty of the most vulnerable and marginalized pastoralists. They are specialized on working with the Somali people in the Somali region in Ethiopia. In their work OWDA has four main priorities: to improve the living condition of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, to build the capacities of the poor communities to withstand the environmental challenges and seek meaningful grass root community participation, to empower women and to protect their rights and participation in decision-making processes and income generation activities, and to protect land from environmental degradation and conserve natural resources such as water, soil and vegetation (OWDA, 2012).

Today OWDA counts 140 employees, and partners with the Ethiopian government, UN agencies, various embassies and international NGOs. The partnership with NCA is centred on the area of women empowerment, fighting harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation. NCA supports the intervention on female genital mutilation (FGM) to be implemented in three districts of the Gode Zone: Denan, Bolehagere and Gode town (ibid).

On the intervention on FGM, OWDA uses religious and traditional leaders as agents of change, conduct community dialogues, and use local media, such as local FM radio and Somali regional TV, to mediate their message.

2.3.4.2 Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) has played a significant role in development efforts in Ethiopia. In the education sector it has been a major contributor, serving the Ethiopian Ministry of Education. In 1972 the church's development effort was systematically reorganized and the church established the Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (DICAC) as a development wing of the Church. This is oldest national registered FBO in the country (EOC-DICAC, 2005a, EOTC, 2011). Since the establishment, the commission has been engaged in various development programs and brought significant impact on the lives of the people of Ethiopia. Some of the major areas of intervention is rural water supply,

access road construction, education, prevention of HIV and AIDS, emergency relief and sanitation and health.

EOTC mission is to:

assist the disadvantaged communities in Ethiopia to attain self-reliance through tackling the root causes of poverty, drought, conflict, gender inequality and fighting HIV/AIDS pandemic by promoting sustainable development programs and community empowerment. (EOC-DICAC, 2005b, p.17)

EOTC partnership with NCA is for specific projects and agreements are signed only for one year. The thematic areas of collaboration are peace building and conflict transformation, fresh water and safe sanitation and gender based violence (NCA, 2009, p.1f).

2.3.4.3 Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) is a national church in Ethiopia, which grew out of the work of Lutheran missions and indigenous evangelists. Although the protestant movement had been active in Ethiopia since the nineteenth century, it was during the reign of Haile Selassie I the establishment of an independent protestant church was possible. 1959 is considered to be the year of the formal establishment. This was done in a congress where five foreign mission organisation and delegates from the church signed the constitution. The church was then divided into regional synods and counted nationally 18,000 members. Today the church has about 5 million members, which makes it the largest Lutheran church in Africa. It is also makes it one of the worlds fastest growing churches (Sæverås, 1974, p.105, EECMY, 2010).

Similar to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, EECMY established a development wing of the church in the year 2001 and formally obtained its registration from the Ministry of Justice. This wing was named Development and Social Services Commission (DASSC) (NCA et al., 2008, p.101f). The church is committed by its vision statement to what is described as a 'holistic ministry' under the slogan 'Serving the Whole Person'. This refers to the church deep-rooted concern where spiritual and physical services are seen together as integral parts for the wellbeing of the human being. According to EECMY's own understanding, holistic ministry is developed from the Gospel of Jesus Christ where Jesus himself is preaching the good news to the poor, healing the sick and feeding the hungry. In this

regard EECMYs vision is based upon the bible and the holistic nature shown in the ministry of Jesus Christ (EECMY, 2010).

The most striking feature of the countrywide development work of EECMY is the large number of integrated rural development projects and community development projects and their vast coverage throughout most of the country in terms of target population.

Today the church is involved in various development and social service projects ranging from engagement for peace, environmental protection, women empowerment, HIV and AIDS awareness creation, improvement of food security and livelihood, support for community self-help efforts, and policy advocacy and networking (NCA et al., 2008, p.102,146, WCC, 2012).

2.3.5 Present situation of civil society in Ethiopia

In 2009, the ruling government in Ethiopia introduced a new law named *Charities and Societies Proclamation*³. The new law has received critique from the international media and a wide range of organisations with regard to its regulation and restrictions on international NGO's operating in Ethiopia. According to Amnesty international (2009) the law is designed to 'strictly control and monitor civil society in an atmosphere of intolerance of the work of human rights defenders and civil society organisations.' The practical application of the legislation limits the space for the civil society in specific areas such as human and democratic rights, gender equality, rights of disabled and children, conflict resolution, and justice.

The legislation has put the engagement of organizations such as Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in a state of uncertainty to work on some thematic prohibited areas. As a consequence NCA will phase out the collaboration with some of its partners. However, NCA has managed to uphold most of its work by signing a special memorandum of understanding with the Ethiopian authorities (NCA, 2009, p.13).

2.3.6 A development challenge: female genital mutilation

The term 'female genital mutilation' (FGM) or 'female genital cutting' (FGC) will be used frequently in this thesis. I will in this thesis use the acronym FGM. The term refers to all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female

³ Charities and Societies Proclamation No. 621/2009, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ba7a0cb2.html> (accessed 24 May 2012)

genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is classified into four different types: Type 1, clitoridectomy - partial or total removal of the clitoris, type 2, excision - partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, type 3, infibulation - narrowing of the vaginal opening with creation of a covering seal, type 4 - other harmful procedures such as: pricking, piercing and incising, scraping. FGM is most prevalent in the western, eastern, and north-eastern regions of Africa, but it is also practiced in some countries in Asia and the Middle East and among certain immigrant communities in North America and Europe. Globally between 100 and 140 million girls and women are estimated to have undergone such procedures. Estimated prevalence rate of female genital mutilation on women and girls between 15 – 49 years in Ethiopia is 74% (WHO, 2008, p.1,29).

Communities that practice FGM report a variety of social and religious reasons for continuing the practice. According to a study on the Somali ethnic group by the Population Council, it is reported reasons including tradition, religious requirement, sexual control, cleanness, beautification of the genitalia, protections of virginity and better marriage prospects (Abdi and Askew, 2009, p.11).

3 RESEARCH METHODS AND FIELD WORK

In this chapter I will describe my approach and specific methods for data collection that has been used in the fieldwork. I will also present the reason for the choices I have made and reflect on advantages and limitations of these choices.

3.1 OVERALL APPROACH

My research question implies that I am seeking to gain a wider understanding of the relation between religion and development practice. Religion and development represent different knowledge system and languages. They are both two large world phenomenon, involving a wide range of areas that can be addressed from various perspectives. This challenges the conceptual frame of this research and requires special attention to the process of selecting an adequate research strategy. The topic is part of an intricate web of social, political and religious factors. The intention of this thesis is to try to understand something in geographical limited area, within the frames of one organization and a limited selection of people. This compels me to describe

carefully which methods, methodology that are being used and which theoretical perspective and epistemology this research is based upon.

In relation to the research questions in this thesis I have found it most suitable to utilize a qualitative research approach with methods such as interviews and observations to collect relevant data. My aim is to understand and generate knowledge from a limited selection of people and focus on their perception and experience towards the issue raised. The social actor's meaning and understanding of the world is emphasised.

I use grounded theory as a basis for the data analysis of this thesis. Grounded theory is a research method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). It may be defined as a qualitative research method that uses a 'systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.24). This is a research method working to discover and develop theories that are verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data relating to the studied phenomenon. In other words, this is a method especially focused to produce data-driven theory, or theory grounded in the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.8,12). By using this methodology I can use the collected data in a process of 'coding'. That is to discover, identify and integrate meaning from the collected data. The initial stage of this data analysis is 'open coding' where I will try to categorize, identify and label different phenomenon's found in my data. The second stage is referred to as 'axial coding' where the goal is to establish relationships between categories and to put the data together in new ways. Finally in the third stage named 'selective coding', the goal is to identify a core category and relating all other categories to this category. Then, on the basis of the detected concepts and categories, theories that are closely related to the empirical data, can be derived (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.101-163).

The advantages of using grounded theory lies in the possibility to perform a detailed study of a particular issue in a particular setting that are related to a larger reality. It also emphasizes the contextual setting where gaining detailed knowledge of the day-to-day events in a particular context are important in this type of study. In my case this will serve the overall intentions I have for this thesis, namely, to understand specific perceptions of staff and partners of Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in Addis Ababa and how these perceptions relates to a larger reality.

I have an interpretive theoretical perspective behind my methodology, where the subjective meaning of social action is focused. This requires a different logic of the research procedure. An interpretive theoretical perspective seeks to *understand* human behaviour, in contrast to a positivist perspective that seeks to *explain* human behaviour (Bryman, 2008, p.15).

In this research I am seeking to construct knowledge by looking for meaning and order in the interpretation of what is heard, read and experienced. This also implies that I will work within a constructivist epistemological paradigm, meaning that knowledge is something that is being constructed and is contingent upon human practices within a specific social context (Crotty, 1998, p.42).

I am aware that my choice of research strategy is not the only right approach to my research questions. There are a variety of approaches that could be used. I could have chosen a quantitative positivist approach and make use of a survey targeting a larger group of people. That might be better in producing a generalization of my sample. This method would also put me in a more distant position towards my informants. For quantitative researchers this distance is important in maintaining a preferred objectivity that doesn't interfere with the result. However, religion challenges the traditional natural science research approach, as it may be difficult to approach religion or religiosity with numbers or statistics. My aim is to study the role of religion in development and to interpret the meaning people bring into it. I want to highlight the very practical part of development work and the way religion is perceived and understood in development practice. The option of conducting qualitative in depth interview with a selection of people seems to be a better choice in regard to my research question. Thus I find the qualitative approach more suitable for this research, than a quantitative. The freedom and flexibility in a qualitative approach can be a more demanding than a quantitative. It requires the researcher to be creative, adaptable, disciplined and structured in the process of data collection and text analysis. I also have to be aware and reflect over the position and role I take in the context of data collection. It is within this frame I wish to analyse the collected data.

The choice among different research approaches is all a part of a larger epistemological discussion where the role and relation between the researcher, the research participants and research strategy is under discussion (Bryman, 2008, p.391ff). Due to the limitations and frames of this thesis I will not go further into this

discussion here. In the following I will try to further explain my choice of research strategy.

3.2 FOCUS AREA

The focus for my field research is the work and the employees of NCA in Ethiopia. Of special interest is the head office of NCA in the capital city Addis Ababa. This office represents a link between the ‘Western prosperity’ and recipients of aid, or between donors and beneficiaries. The local employees are Ethiopians by nationality and have one foot in each camp; they have knowledge of both the local and the western context. It is in this very interception it is interesting to look at what kind of religious values is expressed and emphasised in relation to their commitment to development work.

3.3 METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION

3.3.1 Qualitative method

Qualitative studies are generally more concerned with small-scale aspects of social reality than quantitative studies (Bryman, 2008, p.394). This is essential for my research, as I am more interested in the depth of the collected data rather than the range of it. My objective is to understand, and to look for stories and experiences that can provide greater understanding of development practice. This can be done in various ways such as active or passive observation, interviews and document analysis. Text analysis is essential in all qualitative work, because the data collected through qualitative studies usually comes in text that has to be interpreted, analysed and retold (Repstad, 1998, p.13f). In the following I will present my choice of methods for this research.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interview

As the main source in my data collection I have used semi-structured interviews. In the area of methodology this kind of interview is usually characterized for its middle position in relation to structure and formality (Kaarhus, 1999, p.55). Semi-structured interview is useful to provide insights in understanding the subject’s own world and perspectives (Bryman, 2008, p.438f).

I used an interview guide prepared in advance. This guide served as an element within the establishment of the interview context and gave me the possibility to switch between text and conversation. By using the semi-structured interview I was able to modify and adjust the interview guide as the interviews proceed (ibid). The flexibility in this kind of interview made me able to pursue other interesting informants that came up during the interview. This led many of the interviews to take more shape of a flexible conversation. I drew on the collected data from each interview in preparation for the next interview. By using this model, each interview will be significant for the on-going research process and in forming a series of successive interviews that can be viewed as a part of one exploratory process (Kaarhus, 1999, p.53,57). This is also a good way of balancing the interview context where I as a researcher can be more flexible in facilitating an interview context where my informants can feel comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives. This way of conducting the interviews proved to be very useful for me as it encouraged and made my informants more active in sharing experiences and insights that were important to them.

A qualitative researcher should pay attention not only to what the informant is saying, but also in the way it is said. Therefore it is recommended that the interviews are audio recorded to free the researcher from focusing on writing notes and let the researcher be more observant for following up interesting points made and to draw attention to inconsistencies in the informant's answers (Bryman, 2008, p.451). In my interviews I used my mobile phone for audio recording. This was very useful in taking attention away from the technical equipment and creating a more natural setting for my interviews. During my fieldwork I conducted 11 interviews.

3.3.3 Field notes and observation

During my fieldwork I was focused on taking notes of what I was experiencing and observing. This can hardly be referred to as participatory observation, although it contains some of the features for this type of observation. Time was limited and I did not have the chance to observe over a prolonged period of time. Still it allowed me to focus attention to specific areas of my interest by observing and taking notes of events as they occurred in their natural settings. It also provide me with a great deal of first-hand behavioural information and gave me valuable insight that otherwise would be

difficult to obtain. Thus, it enabled this research to study groups of people in interaction (Bryman, 2008, p.417-419).

My fieldwork at the head office of NCA in Ethiopia was over a period of one month. Within this time it was possible for me to attend and observe various settings of interactions from meetings where practical challenges were resolved and discussed, to the everyday conversations at the office. I made field notes using different techniques described by Bryman (2008, p.420) as mental notes, jotted notes and full field notes. During the interviews that were sound recorded I took additional jotted or scratch notes like small phrases, key word and like. This was to capture the social setting, the atmosphere and how my informants expressed themselves without losing the attention for the conversation. Immediately after my interviews I could amplify and add more detailed information based on these jotted notes. I made a full field notes summary at the end of each day. I wrote down impression, feelings, events and encounters that occurred throughout the day. When I examine this material it is evident that these notes captures my own role as a researcher as well as to provide a description of the social setting that is observed.

I also wrote observational field notes when I observed a female genital mutilation (FGM) awareness creation project in the Somali region in southern Ethiopia. Here I was in the hands of Ogaden Welfare Development Association (OWDA), one of the implementing partner organizations of NCA. I lived 5 days in a Muslim village community called Adadle. During this time I was attending the daily program, observing behaviour, listening to conversations between fieldworkers and beneficiaries, asking questions and experiencing how this project was carried out. I was also able to attend arranged public community dialogue meetings where the issue of FGM was raised.

3.4 Sampling

When I came to Ethiopia I met with my key contact in NCA in Addis Ababa. I was warmly welcomed to the head office and we started to talk about my stay, my ambitions and the purpose of my work in Ethiopia. I got the chance to present my intended research in detail. I explained that my intention was to base this research exclusively on the local staff working in the head office of NCA in Addis Ababa. I was assured that this was no problem at all and NCA was more than willing to give me access to all of their employees. My key contact provided me with a list of

relevant informants for this purpose. However, after some later discussions I was advised to adjust my sample to also count for staff at some of the key partners of NCA. The reason for this is the limited implementing work performed by NCA. Besides the department of water and sanitation, NCA mainly work through local partners that are operating in the field. An integration of key partners in my research would mean that I could follow and observe the development activities from the head office down to the field. This is essential to get a clearer picture on how NCA is operating in Ethiopia. I therefore decided to expand my sample to integrate three local key partners. When I met with one of the partners, I was invited to observe their work in the Somali region Southeast in Ethiopia. This way of sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling referred to as snowball sampling (Adler and Clark, 2010, p.125). My key contact in NCA identified other relevant contacts that in turn presented me for someone else. I also used purposive sampling (Adler and Clark, 2010, p.123) as I was also selecting my informants based on my own judgment on what was relevant for my research.

3.5 LIMITATIONS

3.5.1 Time scope

An obvious weakness was the time scope for this field research. Collecting empirical data is time consuming and demanding. Due to commitments and obligations in Norway, I had to narrow down my stay in Ethiopia to one month. It required me to work effectively and steadfast. Although I carried out the plans and work I had set forth in Ethiopia, I realize in a retro-perspective that it would be preferable to have more time for adjustments regarding my sample and to avoid having to deal with constricted timeframes in encounter with my informants.

3.5.2 Language

In my fieldwork I chose to use English language. All of my informants used English as their working language. They had a high level of English language proficiency and expressed themselves clearly without problems of understanding. However, I have noted that it still could be more informative for me and easier for my informants to express themselves in their mother tongue and avoid being restricted by their English vocabulary. This would however require a highly skilled interpreter and potentially

serve to dissociate me from my informant. In addition it could be viewed as an offense to the informants level of English proficiency.

3.5.3 Limited Sample

The field research of this thesis has a limited sample. The research is focused on a limited selection of people within the NCA and three partners. Although the study integrates representatives from FBO's with large constituencies, wide geographical coverage and many years of participation in the development sector, it is still limited to the vast number of religious institutions and FBO's operating in Ethiopia. Due to timeframes of this thesis, a wider selection would not be possible. Thus, the scope of this study is too narrow to make generalizations about the role of religion in development processes in Ethiopia. However, the study may provide specific new insights and perceptions within my limited selection.

3.5.4 Religion

In this thesis I have chosen to use the word 'religion' in reference to the dominating religions present in Ethiopia, namely Islam and protestant and orthodox Christianity. This indicates that I am more interested in approaching religion in general terms in Ethiopia, than going into specific theology or doctrines of a specific denomination. There is a potential limitation here. To include different denominations of faiths in one word may fail to bring forth the distinctiveness of particular interpretations, teachings and principles within the different denominations. However, I have in this thesis referred to the specific denomination whenever distinctiveness is important in order to comprehend.

3.5.5 My role performance

Although I felt well prepared before my fieldwork started, it turned out to be quite different than I had expected. I was aware that possible misgivings, assumptions and prejudice could interfere with the end result or even make the research invalid. In that respect I used time, before departure, to carefully prepare a questionnaire that was as unbiased as possible. Nevertheless, during my first interview I quickly experienced that it took the resemblance of a conversation were I also said things that was not planned or thought through. One example is when one informant started to ask questions about my opinion on the matter, of which I hesitantly tried to avoid. I

discovered that the flexibility of using a semi-structured approach was challenging when the interviews sometimes took the shape of a conversation.

I am aware that observational methods can be obtrusive and informants may revise their behaviour due to my presence. It is therefore important that there is a common understanding of what is taking place for everyone involved (McNeill and Chapman, 2005, p.93). During my observations in Gode in Somali region I strived not to bias the observation and to be as unobtrusive as possible. This went fairly well as I was traveling with local field workers that were known to the communities and able to explain my presence there.

3.5.6 Ethical considerations: sensitive data and confidentiality

The subject of my research raised some ethical considerations. As a researcher, one of the main ethical principles in social research is to avoid endangering or harming the participants (Bryman, 2008, p.118). The content of my interviews could potentially threaten or harm my informant if exposed openly. This relates to critique of government policy, claiming human rights violations or information about conflict situations. Another important ethical consideration is related to invasion of privacy. According to Bryman (2008, p.123f), when people agrees to be interviewed, they can refuse to answer certain questions that concerns private realms. Religious beliefs are mentioned as an example here.

Well aware of the sensitivity in my research, I expected to find reserved and distant attitudes towards the exploration of this subject from my informants. It was therefore important for me to highlight the informed consent before the interviews started and to explain thoroughly how the information would be used. I informed them of the voluntary participation of this research and that they could withdraw from this at any time without giving a reason. I also informed them that the collected material would be available for me only, and made anonymous at the end of the project period. To safeguard the anonymity of my informants I have chosen to exclude, age, name and sex of my informants, only revealing their organizational affiliation in the text.

4 ANALYTICAL CONCEPTS, THEORY AND LITERATURE

In the following I will introduce core texts and theories, individuals and concepts related to my research. This chapter is divided into three sections. First I will present two key concepts, ‘religion’ and ‘development’. They will be further explored in the subsequent section where I will present relevant development theories and literature on religion and development. In the last section I will concentrate on the concept of development derived from Amartya Sen with emphasis on his recognition of values in the process of development.

4.1 KEY CONCEPTS

The mainline of this research is constructed upon two key concepts, namely ‘religion’ and ‘development’. In the process of conceptualising these concepts, we will have to prepare for a rutted landscape of various definitions and contradictive perspectives.

The way religion is defined has important consequences for how it is perceived in development thinking and practice. Likewise the term ‘development’ carries a long history of different perspectives and definitions, where each perspective has contributed to define and affect the way we think about development today.

Before I seek to understand the role of religion in development process, it can be useful to pay attention to the essential meaning that is attached to these terms. We must pose the questions: ‘What is religion?’ and ‘what is development?’ In the following I will go into various definitions and aspects of religion and development.

4.1.1 Religion

The views on religion are very well typified by the definitions used for the concept. That is why we have to pay attention to how we use this term and what meaning we attach to it. The variety of approaches and attempts to define religion can be challenging. The word ‘religion’ emerged in seventeenth century Europe and described Christian life as a set of truths that people subscribed to. The European enlightenment thinkers also brought a dualistic way of thinking of the term, which created a dichotomy between spirit and matter (Deneulin and Bano, 2009, p.60). This separation is related to the way we experience the division between religion and

development today. The growing religious involvement into health, education and agriculture today is therefore not a new thing. We know that agriculture, for example, was a field closely connected to a religious paradigm with prayers for every season in medieval Christianity (Tyndale, 2006, p.xviii).

According to Deneulin and Bano (2009, p.60,61) the term 'religion' is essentially a western product, conceived and filled with content by western thinkers. Many non-European cultures do not have this term, or a comparable term, in their language. This Eurocentric appearance is important to have in mind when we make use of the term. We need to take into consideration a much wider perspective of different cultures and tradition if this term is to be used in an inter-cultural setting.

According to Furseth and Repstad (2006, p.15f) one can divide definitions of religion into two categories, functional and substantial definitions. Substantial definitions are concerned for what religion is. They will usually focus on certain elements of the religion, like extraordinary phenomena that cannot be experienced or grasped with our intellect. One example is this statement: 'religion is the belief in spiritual beings.' Functional definitions are concerned with what religion does, meaning that they often describe the utility or the effect religion have on individuals and/or the society. Definitions that describe religion as 'all human activity that gives meaning to life' are examples on this.

Furthermore, Furseth and Repstad claim that definitions of religion tend to be either too broad or too narrow. Thus they question attempts to develop definitions that have a universal validity. Ludwig Wittgenstein's analogy to sports in defining religion is characterizing the difficulties of finding an all-inclusive definition. There are many different forms of sport and it can be difficult to find shared characteristics common to all of them. It is more fair but to address a 'family likeness' that can recognize them as sports (Furseth and Repstad, 2006, p.23,24, Labron, 2006, p.59).

Many attempts have been made to define religion, and while every attempt has its limitations, each perspective contributes to our understanding of this complex phenomenon and to uphold the vitality to the subject matter. I will now go on to present some other important contributions and perspectives on religion, relevant for my further discussion.

4.1.1.1 Max Weber, interpretive sociology

The German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) is one of the most significant theorists in the sociology of religion. Weber's book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*⁴ (Weber, 2003), has been of great influence in the treatment of religion in modern social science. Weber begins this book by noting a correlation between protestant Christianity and business success (Weber, 2003, p.35). The empirical observation shows us how Protestants are more involved in trade, business and industrial activities than other Christian denominations or other religions. Weber then uses Protestantism to explain why the expansion of capitalism emerged in Western Europe and not in other parts of the world (Weber, 2003, p.35-46).

Weber then turns to describe the 'Spirit of capitalism' and cites several passages of Benjamin Franklin that illustrates capitalism's pure form. Franklin encourages people to be trustworthy, productive and pay their debts on time. He describes how money produces more money and further labels time and credit as money. For Weber this description is the very spirit of modern western capitalism. Weber identifies this as a work ethic for the individual, the duty of every individual is to prosper (2003, p.47ff). He claims that this ethic has a relation to the rational ethics of ascetic Protestantism. However, he is not arguing that Protestantism caused the capitalistic spirit, but that it was a contributing factor. The Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is essential in this regard. Here Weber sees a direct linkage to people's motivations to uphold and pursuit the spirit of capitalism (Weber, 2003, p.98ff). In short the predestination doctrine states that salvation is not earned, and that God has selected his people before their birth to be saved and that humans have no way of knowing who will be saved. Still, it was possible to see signs of being elected by God. If life was ascetic and regulated by religious life-conduct, it could represent a sign of being chosen. Other religious groups, such as the Pietists, Methodists, and the Baptist sects, had similar thoughts to a lesser degree. These religious convictions provided people the motivation to pursuit a life guided by protestant ideals and norms, to overcome their anxiety and convince themselves of being elected (Weber, 2003, p.128-144). For many Protestants that meant a life where wealth should not be spent on wasteful living and that they should work hard and perform good deeds. Surplus capital should be used to reinvest. Over time, this led to increasing accumulation of

⁴ *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was originally published in 1905.

capital, minimization of consumption, and ultimately the continuous economic growth and industrial energy of modern capitalism (Weber, 2003, p.45).

In contrast to Karl Marx who believed that the economic system determined and shaped religion, Weber shows in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 2001, p.19f) how the effects of religion plays an important part on social structures and the economic activities that developed in different societies and thus also promoting the western Capitalism. In this way Weber is opposing definitions of religion as merely reflections of material causes of change or as a static source of oppressive stability. Religion, according to Weber, can also be a source of social change and in this way we can observe that Weber's main focus was not to specify or define a theory of religion, but to examine and analyse the interaction between the religion and development.

4.1.1.2 Clifford Geertz, cultural system

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz has provided us with an attempt of a more general description of religion. Like Weber, Geertz follows the tradition of interpretive sociology and is concerned about describing religions as what he calls 'cultural systems' so that those who are not insiders to that cultural system can apprehend them. Unlike Weber who refused to give a specific definition of religion, Geertz defines religion in the essay *Religion as a cultural system* in *The interpretation of culture* (Geertz, 1973) as:

'(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic'(Geertz, 1973, p.90)

This definition describes how religion is important for the constitution of its adherent's world and worldview, and how it also provides them with guidance and motivation for their social action.

Geertz is best known for his examination of religion with special attention towards the meaning in religious symbols. He argued that the religious symbols are carriers of meaning and that the task of the social scientists and researchers is to analyse and 'make sense' of religion as a cultural system of meaning by examining these religious symbols. In a later stage one has to relate the cultural system to social

structures and physiological processes. His approach to religion has later been described as an interpretive approach, where the religious symbols play a double role. Firstly, they represented the *model of* the way things are, and secondly they served as a *model for* human activities (Geertz, 1973, p.93-94).

Geertz theory of religion as cultural systems has influenced and become a central focus in contemporary definitions of religion. Both Weber and Geertz understood that in order to understand social reality, it is not enough to just outline or describe religion, but also to interpret religion through its concepts and symbols. For my thesis Geertz definition of religion will be used as a working definition.

4.1.2 Development

‘Development seems to defy definition, although not for a want of definitions on offer. (...) it is little wonder that we are thoroughly confused by development studies texts as to what development means.’ (Cowen and Shenton, 1996, p.3)

This citation indicates the difficulties surrounding the meaning of the word ‘development’. Development is also understood and defined differently by a wide range of actors, stakeholders, researchers and practitioners and there are hundreds of definitions of development in the literature. It leads us into another complex discourse, with many different and sometimes contentious perspectives as to what development is, and what it means. There is no universally accepted definition for the word, and the meaning of development will depend on the person you are asking. Still, development has commonly been associated with positive meanings like growth, progress, change or improvement (Gasper, 2004, p.25, Shanmugaratnam, 2001, p.263). While such positive associations sometimes assign development as the remedy of all global problems, Gustavo Esteva reminds us that:

‘For two thirds of the people on earth, this positive meaning of the word ‘Development’ (...) is a reminder of what they are not. It is a reminder of an undesirable, undignified condition. To escape from it, they need to be enslaved to others’ experiences and dreams.’(Sachs, 1992, p.10).

This citation originates from the book by Wolfgang Sachs, *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge As Power*, where a group of unconventional thinkers are critically revisiting development and development practice. Their

statement is harsh:

'The idea of development stands like ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion, disappointments, failures and crimes have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work.'
(Sachs, 1992, p.1).

However, in the midst of the various definition and meanings ascribed to development, the understanding that development is the process for a better life might be a common ground of departure. Recognising the need to help people meet their ends, live in a secure and dignified environment and be free from want, is included in Peet and Hartwick's understanding of development. They identify development as a process of making a better life for everyone, where

(...) a better life for most people means, essentially, meeting basic needs: sufficient food to maintain good health; a safe, healthy place in which to live; affordable services available to everyone; and being treated with dignity and respect. (Peet and Hartwick, 2009, p.1)

In the following section I will present and highlight different theories significant for the on the role of religion in development.

4.2 PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION IN DEVELOPMENT THEORY

4.2.1 Religious freedom

The Universal Declaration of Human rights (UN, 1948) was published in 1948. In the declaration article 18, the right to religious freedom and the need to respect and not discriminate people because of their religion, is acknowledged. In many ways this text serve as a backdrop for the discussion on religion in development, as many authors refer to it as a pillar in this discourse.

4.2.2 Modernization and economic growth

In modernization theories after world war II, the concept of development from Walt W. Rostow in *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*⁵ (1990), serves as an indicator for how development was looked upon and treated as merely a matter of economic growth. According to Rostow, the transition from underdeveloped

⁵ *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* was originally published in 1960.

to developed societies can be achieved through certain universal stages. Every society is at any time within one of these stages. (Rostow, 1990, p.4) In this theory lies the assumption that economic growth is the only way to achieve development.

In the wake of modernization theories there followed a critique claiming them to be insufficient in recognising social difference and diversity in societies and thus failing to benefit all equally and to reduce poverty. The necessity of bringing development into a multidimensional arena, that also involved the different variables of the social systems, became evident.

In 1955 Arthur Lewis published the book *The Theory of Economic Growth* (1955) where he also presents the subject of religion in relation to development. Lewis is an economist well known for his instrumental treatment of religion in economic development. Lewis draws on Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 2003) from 1905, and is focused on religious values and how they affect economic growth. Religion, according to Lewis, could both promote and hinder development. He argues that puritan values such as in Protestantism and Calvinism could infuse positive attitudes towards economic growth. Likewise religions with negative attitudes towards wealth and economic opportunities could obstruct economic growth. Whether religion is an obstacle or not depends on how the religion fronts certain attitudes towards key components of economic growth (Lewis, 1955, in Deneulin and Bano, 2009, p.31). Lewis could be criticised for lacking perspective on different ways religion can influence development, but in regard to the contemporary discourse of religion in development, this text addresses important issues that need to be taken into account.

4.2.3 Secularization theories

Although there were sporadically attempts to address religion in relation to development, the subject of religion received little attention in mainstream practical development work during the second half of the twentieth century (Clarke, 2007, p.1, Haar, 2011, p.5). This may be explained by the way religion was perceived in the resilient ideas of secularization in the 1950s and 1960s. These theories were based upon the idea that as societies modernize it will necessarily lead to the decline of religion both in society and in the mind of individuals (Berger, 1999, p.2). This idea was not new, but derived from the works of nineteenth century thinkers like Emile Durkheim, Auguste Comte, Max Weber, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, who all

believed that religion would gradually lose its position in an industrial society (Norris and Inglehart, 2011, p.3). The decline of religion became conventional wisdom in the social science of the twentieth century where secularization was regarded as a key element in the transformation of medieval agricultural societies into modern industrial nations.

One of the main supporters of the secularization theory was the sociologist Peter L. Berger. His definition of secularization in *The Sacred Canopy* (Berger, 1969, p.107) is widely quoted where secularization is described as the ‘process by which sectors of the society and cultures are removed from dominations of religious institutions and symbols.’ According to Alan Aldridge (2007, p.80) this definition has to be viewed in regard to three aspects: the socio-structural aspect, meaning that the functions of churches in the west are increasingly performed by secular agencies; the cultural aspect, meaning the religious content in music and art has declined; and the individual consciousness, meaning that fewer people are religious minded.

However, in the beginning of the twenty-first century, different types of arguments against the secularization theory appeared. The former prediction of Berger, that religion in Europe would be reduced to small clusters of religiosity, seemed to be unlikely. Confronted with empirical material of the resurgence of religion, Berger himself revised his own theory:

In my own thinking about the sociology of contemporary religion, the major change-of-mind has been, precisely, the abandonment of the old secularization theory – not, I would like to emphasize, because of some philosophical or theological change, but because the theory seemed less and less capable of making sense of the empirical evidence from different parts of the world. (Berger, 2000, p.445)

By this statement Berger shows that the resilient theory of secularization does not necessarily correlate with the reality in the world. The picture is certainly more nuanced, showing that the decline of religion is not at all an isolated event.

The assumptions that modernization inevitably diminishes the influence of religion in society have been replaced by the acknowledgment of a variety of religious forms in the contemporary world. S.N. Eisenstadt (2003, ch.8) further addresses this in the concept of ‘multiple modernity’.

4.2.4 Neoliberalism

The economic crises of the 1970s and early 1980s started what was to become a neoliberal period where conventional international economic policy and development theory were based on neoliberal ideas. Economic liberalization, privatization, individualization and free market, were factors that could solve global problems and eradicate the world's poverty (Peet and Hartwick, 2009, p.84,100).

Governmental policies and strategies had failed to develop the world and had instead lead to undermine development goals. The cure of neoliberalism was to increase the role of non-state actors and to reduce state control in order to achieve desirable development outcomes. Private capitalists and entrepreneurs had to be 'freed' from the states weight on economic growth strategies. New strategies were implemented by 'structural adjustment programs' in many developing countries during the 1980s and 1990s (Haynes, 2007, p.8f). Structural adjustment and economic neoliberalism from the 1980s led to a growing interest and expansion of civil society organizations, including faith-based organizations (FBO). One example, inspired from this, may be the World Banks recognition⁶ of FBO's impact and contribution on health and education services provided in Sub-Saharan Africa in (Clarke and Jennings, 2008).

4.2.5 Multidimensional poverty - addressing non-material needs

Since the 1980s there has been a search for alternative conceptions to development as economic growth. Approaches that incorporate various factors like health, education, trade, children, food insecurity, water and refugees have been elaborated. Different institutions, individuals and organizations ranging from the World Bank to grassroots-based NGOs, begun to address the non-material needs in development.

In a special issue of the journal *World Development* from 1980, several authors examine the relationship between religion and development. In the article, *Religious Values and the Social Limits to Development*, Charles Wilber and Kenneth Jameson (1980), explores the importance of religious values and norms in relation to development. The article handles four widespread views of religion in relation to development. The first is the instrumental view on religion derived from Weber and further developed by Arthur Levis, second is religion defined as a social institution

⁶ see Wolfensohn J. 2004. *Millennium Challenges for Faith and Development: New Partnership to Reduce Poverty and Strengthen Conservation*. Speech to the interfaith Conference of Metropolitan. Washington, 30 March.

that restrains development because of its disharmony with rational thought, third is religion as irrelevant as long as it remains in the private sphere, fourth is the irrelevance of religion because of its diminishing role in modernizing processes. This text is helpful in order to map out the different perspectives and views on religion in development that has characterized the post-war era. But more interestingly is the authors' assessment of religious values and ethics in these points. The article poses a warning against ignoring the essential nature of religion: namely the role of religion as the moral basis of society that assesses the legitimacy of development processes. The tension between religion as the moral base and development has to be resolved in order to avoid a self-limiting process of development. Wilber and Jameson support that development should build upon, and account for indigenous religious values in development processes (Wilber and Jameson, 1980, p.475).

The World Bank has over the last two decades promoted a different understanding of religion in relation to development. In 1981 the World Bank published the book, *First Things First: Meeting Basic Human Needs in Developing countries* (Streeten, 1981), which outlines the basic-needs approach as an alternative development paradigm to economic growth. In this book non-material needs such as purpose in life and self-determination are addressed as essential parts of the provision of basic human needs. This book was later followed by a number of studies and analyses showing the influence and importance of including religion in development. The aim of these studies has been to seek a common understanding of poverty, to exchange knowledge and to look for practical solutions with development actors within the world faiths (Marshall, 2005). The mounting interest for religion within the World Bank has challenged its own conceptual frame for understanding religion in relation to development policy. It has led the World Bank to look closer into the role of religion and religious institutions in modernizing processes.

The World Bank has played and is still playing a significant role when it comes to the growing recognition of religion in development theory and practice. At the turn of the millennium the World Bank published the study *Voices of the poor* (Narayan et al., 2000, Narayan and Patel, 2000, Narayan and Petesch, 2002) which is an extensive project consisting of three books, seeking to understand poverty from the perspective of the poor themselves. The study has a vast collection of empirical material and collects experiences from over 60,000 poor women and men. Among the notable results from this study is the important position of religious beliefs in people's

conception of wellbeing. The study unmasks a different understanding of poverty, and argues that religious beliefs have significant consequences for how development is conceived and practiced. The presented results made the World Bank, Western governments and NGOs acknowledge that faith-based groups can play a significant role in development since their approach and presence are genuinely sustainable and culturally integrated (ibid).

During the 1990's the World Bank took the initiative to explore ways in which religion and development are connected with the formation of the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD). This was an organized attempt to bring the subject of religion into the development arena and promoted a dialog on poverty, development and religion.

In 2001 World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) published a pamphlet named *Cultures, Spirituality and Development* (Dialogue, 2001) which emphasized the cultural and spiritual aspects of development. This pamphlet uses examples from around the world arguing that 'progress' without the consideration of culture and spirituality are destined to fail. Further it suggests and demonstrates in different ways how an approach considering culture and spirituality can be used in policy practice (Tyndale, 2001). The contribution from the WFDD into this discourse is very important. The close link between WFDD and the World Bank puts weight behind the published material in the international development discourse.

In the book *Religion and Development: Conflict or Cooperation*, Jeffery Haynes (2007) focuses on the four world religions: Islam Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. Haynes then studies the constructive and destructive role of these religions in dominant development themes, such as economic growth, environmental sustainability and health and education. This book also provides analyses of the contribution from Faith Based Organizations (FBO) in acknowledging religion as a potential factor for the advancement of development, and the resistance of different development actors in this area. Haynes primary focus is to document contributing role of the major religions towards development. This is a quite different approach from Séverine Deneulin and Masooda Bano's book *Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script* (2009), where the authors choose not to focus the contribution of selected religions in specific development sectors, but rather provide a general approach to the role of religion in development processes and outcomes. Deneulin and Bano argues that development theory needs to be more dynamic

towards its treatment of religion, and needs to rewrite its script, which is inscribed in a secular tradition. Religion is here theoretical and empirical addressed in a much broader perspective than Haynes' book.

Closely committed to the World Bank's initiative WFDD, Kathrine Marshall has produced a number of books and articles of importance to the topic 'religion and development'. Marshall is well familiar with arguments that portray religion as an obstacle for development. In *Faith and Development: Rethinking Development Debates* (Marshall, 2005), she examines the possible conflicts, complexity and violence that may follow religion into the development arena. She also elaborates on another concern, that the faith institutions' primary motivation is the desire to gain converts or to serve only a selection of the community. Several authors echo these perspectives. Kurt Alan Ver Beek (Ver Beek, 2000) writes in *Spirituality: A development taboo* about the concern for manipulation by faith institutions, and refers to the conflicts in Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and the Balkans where manipulation of spiritual and religious themes have been used to promote distrust and hate. Further he discusses the problem of evangelization that in many examples has led to bitter conflicts.

4.3 A VALUE-BASED CONCEPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

4.3.1 Development as freedom

In recognizing non-material needs and multi-dimensional poverty in development, the concept derived from Amartya Sen is perhaps one of the most significant contributions so far. Sen's book *Development as Freedom*⁷ (1999) provides us with a value-based approach to development, where development is about expanding the freedom and capabilities that people have reason to choose and value and where people become active agents of their own lives. This human development approach moves human well-being from the domain of utility to the domain of the lives of human beings. This approach is frequently addressed as the 'Capability approach'.

'Capability' is one key term that is used in his book. His project is to highlight the plural elements in capability that produce life quality. He promotes this as the best framework in approaching development. Within the term 'capability' lays elements of distinct quality such as education, health, bodily integrity, political

⁷ This book was written on the basis of a series of lectures that was given to the World Bank staff

participation and others. Sen emphasizes that these aspects in individual lives cannot be reduced to a numeric scale without distortion. When ‘capability’ is addressed, the individual is at the center stage of the question; ‘What is each person free to do and to be?’ It is all about the choice of freedom which people may or may not exercise. The role of the society is to provide for a set of opportunities or substantial freedoms and acknowledge people’s power of self-definition. The attention is paid to the expansion of freedoms that people have reason to value (Sen, 1999, p.18). Thus freedom is also at the center stage of development. The people have to be regarded as active agents that are given the opportunity to choose the life they have reason to value, to create their own future, and to not be diminished to passive recipients of cunning development programs (Sen, 1999, p.53). This is the very essence of Sen's works.

4.3.2 Means and ends of development

In *Development as Freedom*, Sen explores the relationship between freedom and development and provides us with two distinct reasons for the importance of viewing freedom as a central aspect of development. First, he claims that the assessment of development has to be seen in relation to whether the freedoms of the people are increased. This is referred to as the ‘evaluative reason’. Second, the achievement of development is dependent on the free agency of people. This is referred to as the ‘effectiveness reason’ (Sen, 1999, p.18,19). Sen suggests that freedom is a basic constituent of development in itself and also an enabling key to other aspects. This leads us to his well-known statement posed in his book. That freedom has to be viewed both as ‘(1) the primary end of development and (2) the principal mean of development’ (1999, p.36). As we can understand from this, Sen upholds the development process as a reflexive exercise. A process where development is inconceivable without freedoms, and likewise, freedoms are inconceivable without development (See figure nr.1). From Sen’s statement we can derive a more simplified

imperative, 'let us be free to develop, and develop to be free'.

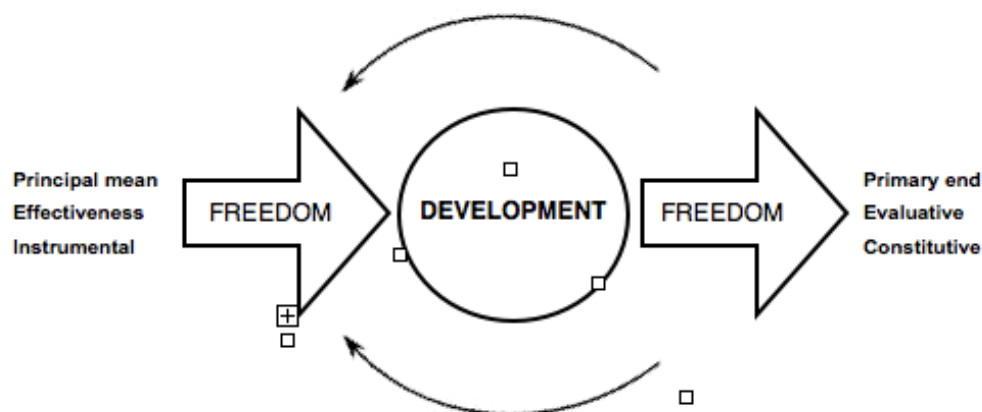


Figure 1 Development as a reflexive exercise

4.3.3 Roles of freedom

In Sen's analysis it is important to understand what he refers to as freedom. By 'ends' and 'means' he describes two 'roles of freedom', a constitutive role and an instrumental role of freedom in development. In the evaluative reason, which concerns the primary end of development, freedom has a constitutive role for development. This means that freedom is focused on what he calls capabilities or substantive human freedoms, which are enriching human life. This is where elementary capabilities such as being literate, enjoying political participation and to be able to avoid starvation, premature mortality, are found. In the effectiveness reason, which concerns the principal mean of development, freedom has an instrumental role. This means that freedom here refers to the way opportunities, rights and entitlements contribute to the expansion of human freedom and further contribute to development. He identifies five types of instrumental freedoms: political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security (1999, p.36-40).

4.3.4 Freedoms are interconnected

To achieve a fuller understanding Sen's approach to development it is of utter importance to see the interconnections between different kinds of freedom. He describes 'development as an integrated process of expanding substantive freedoms that connects with one another.' (1999, p.8). By this Sen means that freedoms are not only directly enhancing the capabilities of people, but they also mutually reinforce each other. These interconnections cause the emergence of free sustainable agency as

a great engine of development. Free agency is in itself a constitutive part of development, but it also serves to reinforce free agencies of other types. Sen explores thoroughly the empirical connections in linking individual that are linking these aspects together (1999, p.4). For instance, economic growth helps not only in raising private incomes, but is also making it possible for the state to finance social services and arrangements. The creation of social services like education and health care can in turn contribute to economic development and to reduction in mortality rates. A reduction of mortality rates can lead to reduced birth rates and enforce the influence of basic education (1999, p.40,41).

4.3.5 ‘Freedom to’ and ‘freedom from’

It is important to notice how Sen talks about freedom. Freedom is not just described as ‘freedom to’, but also as ‘freedom from’. For Sen, development consists of the removal of unfreedoms or hindrances that are making people unable to exercise their reasoned agency. This correlates to how Sen identifies poverty as ‘the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of income’ (1999, p.87). He further describes several forms of unfreedoms: the denial of political liberties and civil rights, the denial of basic freedom leading millions into famine and malnutrition, denial of basic healthcare, functional education, and economic and social security. Sen suggest viewing the objective of development from a different angle, focusing the assignment of development to expand the individual freedoms and to remove individual unfreedoms. This view certainly introduces a much broader spectrum of problems and is challenging a more narrow view of development in welfare economics and development analysis more generally.

4.3.6 Freedom and religion

Amartya Sen provides us with an important framework for conceptualizing the role of religion in relation to development. Although Sen, in *Development as Freedom*, mentions religion several times, he does not thorough address the matter of religion. In his book *Identity and Violence* (Sen, 2007) he uses some time to discuss the negative effects of sending children to faith-schools as it deprives them from having contact with people from other religious faiths. Sen himself states that he is a non-religious person and therefore in no position to address theological matters. Still he can acknowledge certain forces of impact ascribed to religion (Sen, 1999, p.282f).

Sen's theory has set the foundation for viewing religion as more than a wellbeing dimension alongside education, health and political participation. The reason for this is that the capability theory, rooted in the works of Sen, brings ethics and values to the center stage of development. Meaning that development is a value-laden enterprise where development is based on values. According to Sen, development should be seen in relation to what extent it expands and make use of various freedoms. Development is treated as process that integrates economic, political and social considerations. Sen identifies the important role of prevailing values and social mores of the society as something that affects social features such as childcare, family size, gender equity, corruption and political relationship (Sen, 1999, p.8f).

Individuals live and operate in a world of institutions. Our opportunities and prospects depend crucially on what institutions exist and how they function. Not only do institutions contribute to our freedoms, their roles can be sensibly evaluated in the light of their contributions to our freedom. (Sen, 1999, p.142)

In this statement it is possible to identify the role of religion and religious institutions as a social force that infuses people's values, social mores and norms and thus affects individual freedoms and capabilities. However there is a need to evaluate the influence of religious values and norms to whether it leads to an expansion or a reduction of individual capabilities. Some values are enabling and other constraining, and there is a need to evaluate and distinguish between them. Questions like whose capabilities should be given priority, and which priorities are valuable, are arising. The need for a proper evaluative tool has been a source of criticism of Sen's conception of development.

4.3.7 Universal capabilities

Sen provides a rather broad conception of freedom and capabilities in his theory, and it can be somewhat troublesome to conceive at a more practical level. Despite stressing the importance of people's capabilities and values for development and policy, the capability approach falls short of offering a detailed analysis of how values are formed, how they change and how they should be prioritized.

Scholars have questioned this matter in the wake of his works. Martha Nussbaum (2009) is one of them. She argues that there remain limits to the framework developed by Sen, considering which capabilities a society ought to

pursue. To the question of priority, Sen refers to democratic and self-determined decisions, where people are told to come to a democratic understanding through a process of reasoning that involves public discussion and acceptance (Sen, 1999, p.153). Nussbaum thinks that Sen's reluctance to make commitments about substance makes his work and guidance more of an ideal outline to social justice. Nussbaum has further emphasized to develop a specific conception of the core features of human experience that let us identify essential universal capabilities for each individual to have.

Although Sen's avoidance to define a list of universal of capabilities may be regarded as a weakness of his approach, it could also be regarded as an important strength. Instead of drawing up a universal list of capabilities, Sen emphasizes the importance of letting the people themselves prioritize and define which human and social capabilities are most valuable to their development (Sen, 1999, p.18). This notion will be further explored at a later stage where will attempt to show how shared ethics and values confined to specific religious and cultural contexts influence and form the conception of development.

5 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

When I came to the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in Addis Ababa to initiate my fieldwork, I expected to find a context well familiar to me. It did not take me much time to find that my expectations were not always in line with the reality. I will now go on to thematically present my findings. They will serve as a backdrop for the next chapter of further analyses and interpretation.

As described above, my fieldwork was concentrated on NCA employees and three key partners: Ogaden Welfare Development Association (OWDA), the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). The fieldwork was conducted in the period between 6th of October to 5th of November 2011. All in all I conducted 11 individual interviews. In addition to daily field notes I conducted a visit to Gode in the Somali region of southeast Ethiopia to observe a NCA supported FGM project operated by OWDA.

5.1 A RELIGIOUS FRAMEWORK

The first day I came to the gates at the NCA office, I spotted four men within the compound. From the clothes they were wearing I could see that they were leaders from different religious communities. There was an Orthodox priest, an Imam, and two protestant priests. My key contact in NCA immediately came over and welcomed me. He excused himself for being late and invited me to his office. We sat down in his office to discuss the purpose of my visit. They had arranged for an interreligious forum that was taking place and he invited me to join. This forum was called the Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA) and consists of various religious leaders and faith-based organisations (FBO) representing the major religions and denominations in Ethiopia. It surprised me to notice the presence of the different religious leaders in the corridors. I could sense a formal atmosphere filled with respect. Greetings, head bowing, and blessings was exchanged between staff and guests. For me this was something I did not expect at all. I walked into the room for the planned meeting. The chairs were arranged in lines towards a small stage. Because of my eagerness to follow this meeting I sat down on the side of the first row waiting for the meeting to start. The room was slowly filling up when I suddenly felt a hand on my back. It was my key informant who gently asked me to sit on the third row in respect for the religious leaders that soon would enter the room. When the religious leaders entered the room one by one, they were respectfully acknowledged by religious greetings. I too followed this. I noticed that the different religious leaders were greeted in a different manner. Prayer hands greeted the Imam and the orthodox priest was greeted by shaping of the cross. They found their seats on the first row and the meeting could start. A NCA employee came to the front and introduced the leaders. Then he asked if they accepted him to start with a short prayer. They all confirmed this by nodding their heads. It was a special moment. The leaders of different religious denominations were united in prayer. The speaker of the day was introduced, a PHD student presenting findings about peace and conflict and religious leaders impact on the grassroots. It was followed by a short session of questions and discussion. Just as the discussion was about to lead into conflicted material exposed in recent disturbance between Christians and Muslims, a prayer concluded the consultation. The NCA representative explained afterwards that due to the recent establishment of this group it was premature to go into disputed material and at this

stage it was more important to create strong bonds between the leaders.

This first introductory day at the NCA office took me by surprise. The environment of my fieldwork was certainly a very vivid and active arena.

5.1.1 Organizational identity

NCA is clear about the importance of having a defined organisational identity when working with partners and people of other faiths. This was confirmed by several of my NCA informants:

NCA is a church based organisation, but in its development activities whether in Muslim communities or Christian the people are the same before God. We treat everyone the same. There is no differentiation. Even in our organisation there are Muslims in the water and sanitation department, but we are all created by God. (Interview with NCA employee)

We should have an identity. We are supposed to, but we should be able to respect each other. We should respect and honour each other's faith and differences. That's why it is so important that we work with different faith communities. (Interview with NCA employee)

When I went to visit Ogaden Welfare Development Association (OWDA), one of the partners of NCA in implementing projects concerning female genital mutilation (FGM) and harmful traditional practices (HTP), I was introduced to an organization that identified itself as a secular non-religious organization.

We are Muslims, but we are not a religious organisation. In our activities, like FGM, religious aspects are highlighted. As long as the community are Muslim we put in front the religious aspects of FGM. (Interview with OWDA employee)

Later, during my visit to Gode, it interested me to observe their operational work and the level of attachment it had to the religious reality. Not only religion in fact, but also culture, language and tradition. This organization had a strong established local office. The field staffs were from the same area, with knowledge and heart for their own people. At their head office in Addis Ababa it struck me that to see that this strategy of a strong local presence was so important to this organization. This use of local staff was pointed out as one of the more significant factors for the success of their efforts towards FGM. My informants further claimed that the knowledge of their field workers

enables OWDA to advance faster towards reaching their objectives than other foreign-based organisations. I was explained that this approach was absolutely necessary in order to really have an impact on the people living there. OWDA is an organization initiated by the people themselves, specialized to serve the Somali people in the Somali region, within the frames of Somali religion, tradition and culture.

We have a tight relationship with different parts of the community. Our local staffs are from the area themselves. They are known. (Interview with OWDA employee)

The specialisation on Somali people and context seemed also to be highly valued by NCA. Here is a citation from an informant in NCA when reviewing the partnership with OWDA:

OWDA is an organisation working in a Muslim area, oriented towards Somali people. Somehow they will be influence by their background and context. Of course we believe that OWDA has an advantage because they have the knowledge of their community, culture, and their religion. Therefore it is important to take these elements into considerations when you choose and organisation. It would be very difficult and not right if we, in a Somali Muslim context, should choose to work through a Christian organisation. (Interview with NCA employee)

5.1.2 Personal motivation

Regarding the motivation of my informants to work with development it became clear that their religious convictions are one of the main factors. Informants in NCA told me:

I am a Christian protestant, and in Christian doctrine the main thing is peace and peace is from God. Jesus gave his life for peace purpose and for love, the love that he have for us. So as a Christian I follow this line. (Interview with NCA employee)

Providing water to them is one of the motivational factors I have, not because of the salary, but because I think it is what God wants me to do. I consider myself as a lucky person to stay in this profession and to be a part of this. (Interview with NCA employee)

At the same time many of my informants in NCA also found motivation in a concern for the wellbeing of the people in the Ethiopian society at large. The level of poverty and lack of opportunities made them feel obliged, as more fortunate people, to assist and try to help those in need.

Most of us are from rural areas and we are lucky to be here. Who else is going to help them? Are we expecting a miracle to come? I cannot do everything, but I can contribute and address some of the problems I see. At least you can do something for your country and for your people. (Interview with NCA employee)

When I interviewed the informant in OWDA, the first thing I noticed was the Quran lying on the desk. This led us into a conversation about the religious identity of the organization. To my questions about religious identity I was quickly made aware of their religious neutrality. But the informant continued to explain that all of the employees were Muslims, and that all of their projects were implemented in 100% Muslim areas. In the same interview I became aware that the main motivation for working with development was found in relation to personal experience and encounter with poverty. This motivation led to engagement for a specific task of development.

I always requested God for a daughter and in February 2010 I got a daughter. I wanted to have a healthy uncut daughter to be a role model for the community (...) this issue touches my heart because it concerns us all. We have invited and discussed this matter with the Islamic supreme counsel of Ethiopia, and it has been very successful. That is why I love my field. When I see the healthy girls, I see that they have not experienced what I have experienced. (Interview with OWDA employee)

5.2 WOMEN DEVELOPMENT

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) work to improve women and girls' wellbeing in Ethiopia. This is stated in the country plan for Ethiopia (NCA, 2010). They are committed to address and to provide a better understanding of the wide implications of harmful traditional practices and FGM to human security and protection for the individual and the community. This includes the principles of the right to protection and the right to participation.

NCA also highlights the potential roles of churches, faith-based organizations and their leaders as duty bearers to act, prevent, respond to and advocate for freedom from violence against girls and women (NCA, 2011b, p.48ff).

5.2.1 Female genital mutilation

The issue of Female genital mutilation (FGM) was the most frequently mentioned topic in the interviews. The issue kept reoccurring as illustrating examples in relation to several other subjects, such as behavioural change, community development and religious leaders. When prompted by questions of NCA's collaboration with FBOs, one of my informants in NCA stated:

Whenever a religious leader address these issues (FGM) it is highly respected, so it depends very much on how these leaders address these issues. This topic is so intertwined with norms, values, culture, and traditions...Everybody that is working in rural areas has religious leaders as one of the targets, whether it is government, schools, community-based organisations or religious organisations. (Interview with NCA employee)

When addressing NCA's partnerships with Ogaden Welfare Development Association (OWDA), FGM was used to demonstrate the strategic considerations of involving religious leaders in development processes.

In the issue of FGM there are different religious leaders. We have religious scholars, who have a formal education, and we have traditional religious leaders without formal education. Many traditional religious leaders support the practice of circumcision. (...) We always deal with the non-scholar leaders. (Interview with OWDA employee)

OWDA are striving to target a specific group of traditional leaders that serve to upheld the practice of circumcision. Furthermore it is also indicated that the educated religious leaders call for the abandonment of this practice. My informant revealed to me that OWDA strategic approach is to educate the traditional religious leaders and the community by facilitating contact with the educated religious leaders that oppose the practice. This process is taking place in community dialogue. When prompted by the question of religious leaders relevance related to their FGM projects, my informant answered clearly:

Our FGM project would not have been successful unless religious leaders had been involved. The community will not accept it. Most of them think that it is an issue related to religion, purity of women. So unless the religious leaders can tell them differently there would not have been any changes. (Interview with OWDA employee)

Another interesting discovery was NCA's promotion and encouragement for various national religious institutions to undergo a process of theological reasoning on topics like FGM, Harmful Traditional Practices and HIV and AIDS. During the time I was in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) released a declaration against FGM, which received a lot of attention by national media⁸. Proudly holding a copy of EOTC's declaration against FGM, one of my informants in NCA looks me in the eyes and says: 'This is how we work'. My timing to do research on this issue could not be better. The newly released declaration was the end result of an extensive work. Since 2010, selected scholars of the church had, in partnership with NCA, been engaged in theological reflection on FGM and gender based violence (GBV). This led to the production of two documents: one named *Theological reflection in the teachings of EOTC on FGM*, the other was a contextual bible study on GBV entitled, *TAMAR Campaign*. During this project, the scholars consulted relevant materials of the Church and held consecutive consultative meetings with clergies and the leadership. The documents are to be implemented in the church to address issues of social development and various setbacks. NCA had played a significant role in supporting and facilitating for this process, but had a withdrawn position in the final stage. The two documents formed the baseline for a 6-point declaration, stating the Church's commitment, and to clearly show the Church's position against the practice of FGM and other forms of GBV. The declaration was officially handed over to the Minister of Women, Children and Youth Affairs to illustrate the contribution of EOTC towards the governmental campaign 'Zero Tolerance to FGM'. The declaration was also handed over to the Royal Norwegian Embassy and the NCA. Due to the significance of this content I will cite the full wording in this declaration from the Norwegian embassy in Ethiopia. The declaration reads:

1. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church condemns Female genital mutilation as it contradicts with the religious principles of the Church.

⁸ The declaration was released October 13th 2012

2. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church will exert maximum effort to abandon Female genital mutilation as it is unjust to debilitate the female body created by God.
3. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church acknowledges the active participation of religious fathers as crucial to strengthen its campaign against Female genital mutilation and Gender Based Violence.
4. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church believes males as partners are decisive to stop GBV and protect girls and women from Harmful Traditional Practices.
5. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church will educate to eliminate Female genital mutilation and other forms of Gender Based Violence as they deprive the human and constitutional rights of women and girls.
6. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church expresses its readiness to collaborate with other stakeholders to eliminate Female genital mutilation and other forms of Gender Based Violence. (Norwegian.Royal.Emb, 2011)

I was explained that in rural Ethiopia the practice of FGM has for long been related to religious law. FGM is a deep-rooted tradition of the Ethiopian society, but it is not explicitly related to religious law whether Christian or Muslim. During one of the interviews I received a pamphlet produced by Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia where it is stated that this practice in many cases is reasoned and backed by religious interpretations of religious leaders. It is a common belief that uncut girls are bad omen that will bring the wrath of the Creator and their prayers will not be heard (ECFE, 2009, p.11).

The taboo surrounding FGM has served to silence the matter. My informants stated that religious institutions plays a major role in confronting these assumptions and declare against it. The process of the theological reasoning summarized in this six points declaration, express a strategic approach from EOTC to confront this matter. As expressed by NCA the declaration has the potential of reaching 35 – 40 million followers of EOTC, and is considered to be a major breakthrough in the fight against FGM (NCA, 2011a). My informant in EOTC confirmed this by stating:

FGM has never been accepted by EOTC doctrine. It is just a local custom. Together with NCA we made a group of collected scholars and made a book and published it in a ceremony. It was announced all over the country. It is a ground-breaking issue because now the clergies are aware that this is not a theological issue. People must advocate against it. (Interview with EOTC employee)

As mentioned I visited Gode in the Somali region and got the chance to observe an NCA supported FGM project operated by OWDA. I lived in a small village called

Adadle where I followed the daily work of two local field workers of OWDA over a period of 5 days. During my visit I joined the field workers to observe a community dialogue meeting on FGM.⁹ When I arrived the location of where the meeting was held the participants had already arrived.

Even children are coming with their parents and are listening to the discussions. Then they can also understand something from the negative impact of FGM. It is very successful. (Interview with OWDA employee)

It was in a simple yard to one of the huts. People were sitting in carpets waiting for the meeting to start counting about 50 persons.

At the meeting were placed according to their level of authority, women and children in the back, men in the front, and special places for the religious leaders and the facilitators. The meeting commenced with one of the elders reading a verse from the Quran followed by an introduction by one of the OWDA fieldworkers. He presented the intentions of the meeting and explained my presence there. He also encouraged people to express their opinions on this matter. Then the issue of FGM was addressed. Soon after the introduction the religious leader of the 'kebele'¹⁰ was given the word and started to speak to the small crowd. He expressed his gratitude for OWDA and the FGM project that was running in this area. After framing the meeting the crowd could speak freely. A middle-aged woman started to talk. She used to perform circumcision of girls in this village. She explained how she had received this responsibility from her mother and that it was expected of her to do the same. But after the FGM project started in her village and she had heard the 'sheik'¹¹ speak up against female circumcision, and she had abandoned this practice. Many more took the word and a somewhat loud discussion evolved. There was clearly some disagreement about the issue. Some of the elderly women spoke up to defend the practise. I was explained that this was a natural part of the community dialogue process. Another elder stated that it is a good thing to keep traditions, but the community should choose to keep the traditions that are good for people. After some time the sheik called for a show of

⁹ Community dialogue meeting is an arranged meeting initiated by OWDA and organised by the community and the appointed community dialogue facilitators. It is arranged twice each month where the main focus is to raise awareness about FGM.

¹⁰ A 'kebele' is in the Amharic language a 'neighbourhood'. It is the smallest administrative unit of Ethiopia. It is part of a 'woreda', or district, that is part of a Zone, which in turn are grouped into one of the Regions that comprise the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

¹¹ Sheik is a local Muslim religious leader.

hands to see who supported the abandonment of female circumcision. Almost everybody raised hands and it was followed by applause. The sheik spoke again and led the crowd in prayer. Everybody turned around facing Mecca and bowed down. It was a special moment. I left the meeting when the people were divided into groups for further discussions.

The observation in the Somali region gave me an impression on how FGM was approached in field, revealing how OWDA's incorporates religious considerations in the campaign against FGM. In the area of Gode religious leaders who are opposing FGM are increasing in number and gaining momentum. OWDA regards the involvement of religious leaders as a key factor to their success story.

5.3 HIV AND AIDS

NCA supports several projects on HIV and AIDS mitigation. They work with the Ethiopian authorities and civil society to improve access to treatment and care for people living with HIV and AIDS. This programme focuses particularly on young people and women in this work. This also includes children who have been orphaned because of HIV and AIDS.

During my interviews there was one special case that was referred to at several occasions by my informants. It was about a problem that occurred when the antiretroviral treatment (ART) of HIV and AIDS was introduced in Ethiopia in 2003. The ART treatment helps to keep the amount of HIV in the body at a low level. This new treatment was not fully accepted by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), because it denounced the power of the religious treatment of 'Holy water'. Many believers within the Orthodox faith practice the use of holy water as a way to receive healing from God. This is also regarded as the main treatment for HIV and AIDS. The simultaneous use of the new ARV treatment alongside holy water was by many clergies seen as distrust against the transcendent power in holy water and therefore rejected by many HIV positives. Instead of receiving the ART treatment people went to their priests who gave them holy water to drink and to pour over them.

For years this case was disputed within the church and EOTC's stance on HIV and AIDS medication remained unclear for years. Finally in 2007, after collaboration with different FBO's, including NCA, the patriarch of EOTC called for the simultaneous use of both ART treatment and holy water to reduce HIV and AIDS related deaths. Based on government estimates the total number of AIDS-related

deaths in Ethiopia by February 2010 was 28,100, down from 71,900 in 2007.¹²

According to several of my informants the resolution in these cases was found within close cooperation between FBO's, including NCA.

through a good cooperation with FBO's, including NCA, the patriarch of EOTC allowed for the drug to be used for HIV and AIDS alongside with the holy water. (Interview with NCA employee)

By engaging into the heart of the matter and facilitating a process of interreligious dialogue, NCA played a significant role in approaching this issue thoroughly within the context of the Bible and Orthodox theology. Most importantly, this was done in partnership with EOTC.

When asked about the result following this situation, one of my informants told me:

now people can take the medicine, without being ashamed or stigmatized in the church. This was a challenge for us. The stigmatization against the HIV positive in EOC was a big problem. (Interview with NCA employee)

This case served to pin point religious factors that impact efforts to mitigate HIV and Aids. I will examine these more thoroughly in the next chapter.

In 1999 NCA initiated together with several FBO's the start of what was to become the Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA). This forum is supported by NCA and is a local alliance of ten faith-based organizations (FBO's) that strives to address, train and support its members to enhance their ability to respond to the social, economic, and cultural needs of the Ethiopian society. It was the first initiative with the idea of interfaith collaboration. Among other issues, HIV and AIDS is one of their main focus areas. In a book printed by EIFDDA (EIFDDA, 2011) there is a series of real stories from various locations in Ethiopia on the role of religious leaders in relation to HIV and AIDS victims. The book is a presentation of the significant contribution religious leaders can do to prevent stigmatization of people living with HIV. In the same way as OWDA uses

¹² For more information:

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203806504577182932291514986.html>

community dialogue in their approach towards FGM, NCA emphasises community conversations as an effective mean to reach people living with HIV and AIDS.

We use community conversation actively in this work. We have what we call ‘edder’ where people come and discuss different matters. Social gatherings. We reach them through that. HIV and AIDS is much discussed and the facilitators are from the community. (Interview with NCA employee)

5.4 RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

5.4.1 Interreligious dialogue

During the last 10 years NCA has put more emphasis on targeting national religious leaders in their development agenda. As presented in chapter 2, NCA’s country strategies explicitly states their commitment towards building capacity and mobilize religious leaders and communities for Peace Building¹³. Different counsels, committees, working groups and dialogue forums have been facilitated and supported by NCA. From my interviews it seem like this strategy and focus is widely accepted within the staff of NCA. This type of engagement has several goals: to reduce the level of religious tensions and conflicts between groups, to use the authority of these leaders to promote development interests and to reach people on grassroots level.

Since the beginning of 2000 NCA have been working actively with their faith-based partners to build capacity in terms of religious tolerance, peace building, conflict resolution and reconciliation¹⁴. This has mainly been done through different trainings, workshops, dialogues and conferences. In this effort NCA has succeeded in bringing stakeholders together for a meaningful societal movement towards peace and reconciliation from a divided past into a shared future (NCA, 2009). The involved partners in this programme are the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus (EECMY), Ethiopian Muslim Development Association (EMDA) and the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat (ECS). Some of my informants seemed to be particular dedicated to the importance of working with religious leaders. I was explained that NCA was determined to bring the religious leaders together for dialogue and discussion. This effort was described by one of my informants:

¹³ See 2.3.3

¹⁴ See 2.3.4

My ambition is to bring together religious fathers at different level, starting at the top level, so that they can sit together at the same table and get to know each other as persons and religious leaders, and come to respect and acknowledge each other in spite of difference in faith. That relation creates a harmony that can reduce the level of tension whenever tension arises between different groups of faith. If that should happen, then it is much easier to come together and talk together and resolve the situation. (Interview with NCA employee)

The latter part of this citation refers to a preventative role of these meetings. That they can serve to reduce religious tensions between different groups of faith. This statement also insinuates that there is a potential danger of outbreaks of religious disturbance and conflict. The informant stresses the vital importance of a peaceful society and regard peace as a premise for their development work.

Therefore we should respect the differences because of faith. Faith in itself should not be the reason to fight, harm, and damage each other. Whenever conflict threat raises you get so many steps back on the road for development. The development stops. Peace in a society is essential for any development.’ (Interview with NCA employee)

5.5 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND PREFERENCES

5.5.1 Promoting behavioural change

It interested me to hear about the different cases and processes that illuminate various roles of the religion in development practice. During my interviews I noticed a recurring tendency relating to this. Several informants expressed a preference of working with religious institutions and organizations to implement projects aimed at behavioural change, such as the FGM, HIV and AIDs and capacity building projects. It made me curious to know more of this preference and I tried to pursue the reason behind this specific selection by asking follow up questions. The answers revealed some interesting features. One of the notable answers from an NCA employee was:

The thing is that if you want to make change in the community’s attitudes and values you have to relate to the local structure. You have to work with churches and FBO’s in order to make changes. That’s why we have them as partners. In Gode area the mosque are now setting aside 15 minutes every Friday to talk about FGM. The imams are very willing. (Interview with NCA employee)

I had to follow up this assertion and asked about the difference of working with a secular organization comparing to a FBO regarding FGM.

They (FBO's) are absolutely more strategic for us than the secular ones. We are working on behavioural change and the minds of people. The pastors and religious leader has a voice of influence on the people. They are the ideal partners for us. So if we want results on this issue we need to use them. For other programmatic issues, the secular might be better, but within female genital mutilation and harmful traditional practices it is better to work with the FBO's. (Interview with NCA employee)

An interesting feature about these statements is the informant's acknowledgment of the unique position of religious institutions and religious leaders in the communities. The churches and mosques are carriers of values and norms that the people identify with. The people trust them to operate, preserve and develop these values and norms in the society. This might indicate that these religious institutions, compared with a secular establishment, have a superior position and power in defining the prevailing norms and values of the communities.

Religious leaders are clearly regarded as key actors for NCA. In explaining religious leaders influence in communities, this was expressed by one informant:

Religion is not a topic in our department, but we have community training which includes religious leaders training. It is not related to religion, but we use the religion as a medium to pass out our message. We train religious leaders and train them so that they can pass it on to the communities. They are influential. We use this influence as a medium to reach out. Muslim or Christian, we train both. (Interview with NCA employee)

5.5.2 Reaching the people

There was a predominant understanding within my selection of informants that the collaboration with FBO's had several advantages. Some of them are mentioned above. Another was the ability of FBO's in reaching the people, as expressed by one informant: 'They know where the people are.' (*Interview with NCA employee*).

Through the network of the religious organizations NCA are able to effectively access and mobilize people at the grassroots with their development program. This was undoubtedly considered as a major strength when the informants were reviewing the partnership with FBO's.

The strength is that FBO's or our church based partners have got a great structure, from a national level and all the way to the grass root. It is very convenient to run our projects through their network. You have got national, regional, districts and village levels. (Interview with NCA employee)

Another reference was the capability of the churches to care for people at an individual level. Due to the high level of committed volunteers within their constituencies, these churches are able to consult and provide care for a large amount of people.

There are so many volunteers in EECMY who want to visit orphans from house to house. If you translate this into money, it is a lot, it is impossible. Then you would have to pay for each individual counsellor. The FBO's are really responsible, they bridge very well with the project officers and the community. (Interview with NCA employee)

In the opinion of one informant, FBO's have access to large crowds of people through their services and is therefore preferred as partners.

people here still value religion. And on every Sunday the churches are full of people. Young, old, every generation is there. So, it is a very good strategy to work through FBO's and I think this is very different from the western society where religion and the influence of the churches are decreasing. Even in our daily language, when we greet each other, we give Gods blessing. God knows. Religion is still so strong. Still people stick to their belief. (Interview with NCA employee)

This statement indicates that FBO's are strategic partners also for their central position in the society. Also noticeable is the dichotomy presented in this citation. The strong position of religion in the Ethiopian society is contrasted to western societies where religion is declining.

5.6 PERCEPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

When prompted with questions to define development, my informants came up with various notions of physical, economic, social and religious aspects. These were interesting, but tended to draw a more abstract picture of development. A quotation from an informant in EOTC led onto some interesting perspectives.

freedom promotes innovation and creativity, it promotes development... The development paradigm should make the individual independent in thinking, in his or her outlook, but with the understanding that the contributions made as a

result of this independent effort, should contribute to a holistic development of the society. (Interview with EOTC employee)

This quotation brings two interesting remarks. First, it promotes a relation between development and freedom, stating that freedom promotes development, and development should encourage individual thinking. Second, it refers to holistic development as something of an end result of freedom and individual thinking. References to a holistic approach reoccurred in other interviews.

If you look at the FBO's structure they are always divided into two. There is a spiritual aspect and a development aspect. There are development wings in different churches like EECMY and EOC. If this spiritual aspect and development aspect does not go together, the life will not be full. (Interview with NCA employee)

It was further claimed that a holistic approach to development includes three different aspects: Economic development, social development and cultural and spiritual development. Another informant in NCA stated this more clearly describing an approach from their partner EECMY:

The evangelicals have since 1970 developed a Christian development called 'Holistic ministry'. That means understanding what human being is all about. In the early documents it is stated that human being cannot be divided into two, body and soul. It is all integrated. If you are reaching people with the gospel then you will also have to touch the body part and encounter the need of the person. Therefore in EECMY following Jesus Christ means that it should go together. (Interview with NCA employee)

We (development wing of EECMY) work within the church structure and cooperate with other FBO's in line with our given mandate without hiding our identity and leaving our core values, but we do in practice, not in preaching because we are not allowed to do that, a church witness coming from the core teaching of the bible where physical and spiritual needs are related. (Interview with EECMY employee)

'Holistic ministry' will be brought up for further analyses at a later stage.

6 THE ROLE OF RELIGION

In the previous chapter I have presented findings from the conducted fieldwork in Ethiopia. In the following chapter I will turn to analyze and discuss these findings and seek to gain a better understanding of how the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) understand the role of religion in development processes in Ethiopia. I will do this by first briefly introduce a frame for the discussion. Here I will focus on the context by which NCA is operating in. Subsequently I will organize the discussion into three different sections. The first section will address the role of the religious leaders. Here I will focus on their function and impact on NCA development practice. The second section will address the role of faith-based organizations (FBO), where I will analyze and discuss NCA's approach and partnership with them. Based on the two first sections, the third will further analyze NCA's presence and practice in Ethiopia with regard to the relationship between 'religion' and 'development'. The addressed topics will be analyzed and discussed within a value-based conception of development.

6.1 RELIGION AND POLICY IN ETHIOPIA

When the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power in 1991 they introduced policies aimed at recognizing the country's long-standing religious diversity by providing a public arena for all religious groups. Article 27 of the Ethiopian national constitution¹⁵ allows for freedom of religion, belief and opinion and provides protection for freedom of conscience and religious affiliation. Article 11 requires the separation of church and state in Ethiopia and restricts the direct interference of the state in religious affairs and the interference of religious organizations in state affairs. The sharp division between religion and state has, according to Haustein and Østebø (2011), created a more fluid and competitive configuration among the religious communities where the traditionally dominant position of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has eroded and the position of Protestant Christian and Muslim communities has been strengthened. They also claim that EPRDF in order to maintain political power has made efforts to monitor and control the different religious communities. A report from the non-profit foundation

¹⁵ Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia [Ethiopia], 21 August 1995, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b5a84.html> [accessed 19 June 2012]

Bertelsmann Stiftung¹⁶ (2012) claims that the Ethiopian government is seeking support of the religious communities as a tool for political control. Religious leaders (Orthodox, Muslim, Protestants) are often pressured to issue broadcasted statements and messages of support for major EPRDF actions. The paradox between the government's efforts to accommodate for religious diversity and efforts to curtail the influence of the religious leaders and communities indicates how religion and religious leaders are regarded as a force for social mobilization and a point of reference in defining nationhood in Ethiopia.

In NCA's background and mandate, based upon Christian principles and values, it appears to be the interest of NCA to strengthen the religious institutions autonomy and underline their important role in the development arena of Ethiopia. On the basis of my findings and observations it also appears as NCA considers involvement and collaboration with religious leaders, institutions and networks as a natural approach to achieve their development objectives.

6.2 TRADITIONAL AND MODERN LEGITIMACY

According to Georg Lutz and Wolf Linder (2004), who has examined the interaction between local governments and existing traditional structures at a general level, there has been a growing interest and support for local development. Lutz and Linder report that many governments have in recent years recognized the importance of traditional and religious leaders in supporting policies and strategies. In many communities it is difficult or impossible to implement development policies without the support of traditional or religious leaders. The authors also claim that modern legitimacy is based on elections and embedded in constitutional and legal procedures and rules, while traditional leadership legitimacy is rooted in history and culture, often combined with religious/divine or sacred references. The divide between what exactly is 'modern' and what is 'traditional' can be difficult to determine. Lutz and Linder suggest that a general perception of traditional structures is societies whose norms, values and internal organization date back into pre-colonial roots.

¹⁶ The Bertelsmann Stiftung is a German foundation by Reinhard Mohn in 1977. The foundation is politically independent and dedicated to 'service the society through work based on the conviction that competition and civic engagement are essential for social progress'. www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de

In Jon Abbink (1999) assessment of chieftainship in Surma society in Ethiopia, he claims that in post-Communist Ethiopia traditional leaders have regained relevance through what he calls a ‘political co-optation’. The central government is increasingly recognizing the traditional leaders important role in local governance and has adapted new forms of legitimacy through to their position. In some cases they have been involved in the activities attributed to the modern state, such as modern education, basic service delivery, or infrastructure provision.

Bahru Zewde (2002b) has examined systems of local governance in Ethiopia in the book *Challenge of democracy from below*. He claims that an African revival of traditional system of government has brought a continental tendency to foster systems known as ‘mixed government’, where modern constitutional provisions and traditional customary authorities are combined. In Ethiopia, where values and governing systems have tended to be imposed from above, the view from below represents an important corrective. Zewde emphasizes the importance of a dialectical link between traditional and the modern structures to promote good governance and development.

The increasing significance of traditional legitimacy structure in Ethiopia seems to impact methods and strategies of NCA. Their extended efforts to mobilize and collaborate with religious leaders and faith-based organizations (FBO) may be seen as an intentional respond in this regard.

NCA’s presence in Ethiopia relates to a complex mix of traditional and governmental structures. On one hand, NCA operates in close relation to the Ethiopian government. Their development program is situated within a modern state system with elected representatives, bureaucracy, social services and legal system. They adjust their activities in accordance to the official rule of law¹⁷ and they seek collaboration with different ministries in the government. On the other hand, development activities are operated and implemented within traditional legitimacy structures interrelated with established historic values and norms. NCA’s work seems to be balanced towards the interaction between traditional and modern domains, leading them to seek partnership and relate to different kinds of legitimacy in their conceptualization of development in Ethiopia.

¹⁷ See 2.2.3

6.3 RELIGIOUS LEADERS

In 2005, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, made a statement addressing the key role of religious leaders in fulfilling the MDG:

Their advocacy can influence political leaders and ordinary citizens alike. Their teaching and guidance can inspire people to new levels of responsibility, commitment and public service. And by their example, they can promote interfaith dialogue and bridge the chasms of ignorance and misunderstanding. (Annan, 2005).

As the UN report, *Governance for the Millennium Development Goals*, from 2007 outlines, successful local development and civil society is essential to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (Ghaus-Pasha, 2007, p.32). This implies a meaningful inclusion of all relevant actors at the local level, including religious leaders. In addition a stronger focus on decentralization, community empowerment and local governance in development work is emphasised.

In my findings, emphasis on collaboration and dialogue with local and national religious leaders appear to be an acknowledged and established approach in plans and strategies of Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in Ethiopia. This is also confirmed in my conducted interviews and observations. At several occasions religious leaders are addressed as persons with the ability to promote positive change and they are frequently involved in projects that aim to endorse change in social practices and attitudes. In NCA's plan to strengthen local civil society and to address areas such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and HIV and AIDS, strategies like participatory planning, group formation, awareness creation and skills building at household and community levels are preferred. In this regard, local religious leaders have a significant role. NCA's peace-building program contributes to mobilise national religious leaders to build structures and institutions that work for and promote peace building. In this program national religious leaders appear to take on roles as messengers of peace representing a wide range of followers (NCA, 2011bs, 27,49).

I will in the following analyse and discuss different roles of religious leaders and their impact on development objectives in NCA.

6.3.1 Community Educators

Through Ogaden Welfare Development Association (OWDA), NCA have stressed the importance of relating their FGM project to the local structure of the community. An essential part of OWDA's approach to FGM is to bring together various segments of a particular community for discussion in an open forum. This was referred to as 'Community Dialogue'. The fact that it is an *open* community dialogue has the significant purpose of openly addressing a suppressed and silenced issue such as FGM.

The community dialogue approach is based on the traditional ways of collective conflict resolution and is clearly inspired by Pablo Freire and his book *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Freire, 1970). This approach has been used as a more structured and systematic method to involve the local community more widely in development processes. Within the community dialogue approach towards FGM lays the expectation that the community will be able to reach consensus on the harm being inflicted on girls and make a collective decision to abandon the practice. Although women play a central role in the practice of circumcision, OWDA involves different groups of the community¹⁸ including women and men, children and elders, and representatives of the local authorities¹⁹ and local religious leaders. It shows how OWDA understands the problem of FGM to concern the whole community and not only the women themselves. This approach also recognizes the community itself to be in the centre of the decision-making process that enables for social transformation, and it recognises the role of local religious leaders as key actors in the dialogue.

Maurice I. Middleberg (2003, p.65) has proposed a division of actors in regard to community dialogue concerning reproductive health. His approach is also quite useful to understand the function of religious leaders regarding the issue of FGM. He divides the partakers into three groups and distinguishes between what he calls primary, secondary and tertiary audience. The primary audience are those people of which the matter concerns and where behavioural change is expected to happen. In the issue of FGM this would be the inflicted women and the practitioners. The secondary audience consists of individuals whose social role or position enables them to influence the primary audience. Local religious leaders and village chiefs are

¹⁸ See 5.2.1

¹⁹ In this case it was the Kebele Chairperson, which is the leader of the smallest administrative governmental unit.

especially highlighted as good examples of secondary audiences. The tertiary audience consists of policy makers who are able to create a political climate for change.

Middleberg's division puts the local religious leaders in an influential position. In fact, according to this division, the religious leaders appears to have the potential to directly impact the inflicted women and practitioners of FGM and thus are key agents in the process of promoting change. In my findings, the local religious leaders were engaged to sensitize the community to abandon FGM. Although this proposed division might be a simple presentation of the partakers in a community dialogue, it nevertheless points out a positive potential of involving local religious leaders in community dialogue that concerns development issues such as FGM and other forms of reproductive health issues. It also serves as an example to enlighten intentions behind NCA's approach to involve local religious leaders in their development practice at local level.

The involvement of local religious leaders in the community dialogue is of special importance for OWDA. On OWDA's website (OWDA, 2012) it is expressed clearly that they intentionally involve Imams, Sheiks and other religious and traditional leaders as agents of change in their campaign to address the practice of FGM. In my findings this was explained as due to several reasons: 1) their access to the community, 2) their trusted and respected authority within the community, and 3) their knowledge of religious assumption that sustains the practice of circumcision²⁰.

OWDA mainly aims on changing perceptions and behaviour by information dissemination and community dialogue. In this process they also involve prominent religious leaders and intellectual who has knowledge about interpretations of the Quran with regard to FGM (OWDA, 2012). According to my informant, OWDA separates between formal and informal religious leaders. Employees in OWDA associate the problem of FGM with the informal religious leaders that have had little or no contact with religious formal institutions. It is expressed that many of the informal religious leaders do not know the authentic ideas of Islam and therefore sometimes contribute to sustain and justify the practice based on religious interpretation and assumptions. They are also the ones that frequently support

²⁰ See 5.2.1

infibulation²¹ circumcision. However, the type of supported procedures varies. In a report from NORAD it is noted that in areas where infibulation traditionally have been practiced, many religious leaders and others have substituted infibulation to something commonly known as ‘*sunna*’. Sunna is a small scale procedure, less harmful than other types of FGM (Berggrav, 2011). This is also the case in the Somali region. For OWDA, convincing the community and the religious leaders to accept ‘*sunna*’ is sometimes considered to be a first step towards abandonment.

According to OWDA, misinterpretations and misconceptions needs to be countered by religious scholars that are able to clarify and address the position of Islam towards FGM by looking at what the proponents use as evidence for the practice in the Islamic doctrine. Formal religious leaders play an important role in guiding and advising both communities and informal religious leaders²². Other development actors working on FGM among Somalis confirm this type of approach. According to a study carried out by the Population Council on the Somali ethnic community in North-eastern Kenya, it is a prevailing assumption that FGM is a religious requirement. The study has a religious oriented approach and has brought together local and national religious scholars to debate the correct position of the practice according to Islam doctrine and law (Sharia). Findings show that collective deeper analyses of Islamic teachings can be effective to counter the practice by showing that it is actually violating Islam. The purpose of involving religious leaders is apparent:

The religious scholars command much respect and influence opinions in the Somali community and are therefore instrumental in educating the community. To unearth and correct the misconceptions surrounding FGM and Islam, it is imperative that the religious leaders are involved. Once this is achieved, these scholars can become community educators in encouraging the abandonment of the practice. (Abdi and Askew, 2009, p.5)

In this statement there are three important features assigned to the religious leaders: their respected position within the community, their ability to address FGM in accordance with Islam and their instrumental function for promoting change. The

²¹ See 2.3.6, According to World Health Organization Infibulation circumcision is narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or outer, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris (<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/index.html>).

²² See 5.2.1

statement also indicates that these features are interconnected. The influential position of the leaders gives them access to address the community and by providing guidance and information they function as community educators that promote change from within the community. These features resounds my informants perception of the role of religious leaders in community dialogue.

6.3.2 Mobilizing capacity, social convention theory

According to Lutz and Linder (2004, p.19), the mobilizing capacity of traditional and religious leaders is often needed in implementing policies and strategies in the social, economic or political structure of a community. In this regard it is beneficial to look at Gerry Mackie's (1996, 2000, Mackie and LeJeune, 2009) version of social convention theory to approach FGM. His theory may be used to uncover a specific function of religious leaders, crucial to ignite a sequenced pattern of change. In a report published by UNICEF, Mackie is criticizing a one-sided emphasis on religious elements of FGM (Mackie and LeJeune, 2009). Isolation of religious elements might work to neglect other important elements, since religion is but one of several factors that sustain the practice. In addition, he claims, that strategies to revise religious norms and change attitudes, will have little effect on a behavioural change. Parents will still choose to continue the practice if it is a requisite for their daughter's marriageability, no matter how convincing the source of the abandonment may be (Mackie and LeJeune, 2009, p.24, Gruenbaum, 2001, p.192). Mackie assume that FGM is a social convention or norm, and argue that this makes it easier to understand the practice and to find appropriate strategies to abolish it. FGM is compared to the practice of foot binding in China. This practice ended much faster than anyone had expected. A part of the reason was a new understanding of the practice brought by the social convention theory. His hypothesis is that the same theory can be applied to understand and abolish FGM. FGM perceived as a social convention may contribute to find better methods and approaches to FGM and lead to a relatively rapid abandonment of the practice.

The social convention theory emphasises the social pressure in the community as a sustaining force. What people do, they do because everyone else is doing it. A decision of a family or an individual to continue the practice of FGM depends on the decision of others to do so. Regardless of origin, this keeps people stuck in the convention as long as no one breaks it. Breaking the convention as an individual is

difficult and may lead to stigmatization or social exclusion. The convention is self-sustained by social dynamics or social pressure, and in order to change the convention there have to take place specific a sequence of change. First, a certain number of people, or a 'critical mass' has to be recruited for abandonment. Then this group of first movers has an incentive to demonstrate that alternatives are possible. They recruit other members of the community to conditionally join in the effort. When a sufficient number of families or individuals resolve to abandon the practice, a 'tipping point' is reached (Mackie and LeJeune, 2009, p.11). This will change the social pressure and the situation will then most likely be reversed by the same social dynamics that originally upheld the practice. From now on, those who still continue the practice are at risk for being criticised and stigmatized.

The social convention theory does not necessarily counter NCA's understanding of FGM, but it emphasises a different approach. It challenges narrow strategies that isolate religious elements of FGM. An overestimation of religious reasoning and impact of religious leaders may prove to disregard important social dynamics of the community. However, when applying the social convention theory on my findings, it reveals an essential role of the religious leaders to reach the 'tipping point'. Understanding of FGM as a social convention means that change must come from within the community, with the involvement of those concerned. Intervention is completely dependent on people who knows the local language, the cultural context and are respected by community. Thus, the ideal individuals to mobilize a critical mass and to reach the tipping point within a community are, what Mackie calls, the 'early adopters' and are typically described as political or religious leaders with credibility in the community. Their credibility has in this context two aspects, good will and competence. Good will comes from the community's ascribed confidence to the leader and his care about the welfare of the people. Competence is achieved from past successes, professional authority, quality argument and effective response to contrary views (Mackie and LeJeune, 2009, p.18). This description resounds the perception of my informants when describing the position of religious leaders within the community. But instead of putting emphasis on their role as educators, the social convention theory underlines the religious leaders capability of mobilizing the community to reverse the social convention.

6.3.3 Messengers of peace

Lutz and Linder (2004, p.25) recognize the importance of building institutions in the society for peace and conflict resolution. However, the creation of such institutions should not be based on Western-style structures that may be seen arbitrary to many people living in traditional structures. They claim that the different communities have to be integrated in the process of institution building, at local and national level, in order to foster a sense of identification with the greater whole and a feeling of ownership. When traditional or religious leaders in certain societies are more legitimate than the government, the inclusion of these leaders in the process should not be seen as a risk, but rather a decisive factor for successful promotion of peace.

In the peace-building program, NCA has worked to mobilize national religious leaders and to create preventive structures and institutions that promote peace building²³. For decades groups of different denominations in Ethiopia have lived side by side in relative harmony. But since the year 2000 there have been an increase of reports concerning religious violence and tension between different Orthodox and Protestant Christians in the north (Zane, 2003) and between Muslims and different Christian denominations in the South (Bureau of Democracy and Labor, 2006). From these reports it is clear that the present Ethiopia faces challenges of increased religious instability.

According to Stein Villumstad (2002, p.21), conflict between Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia is affected by the instabilities in the neighbouring countries Sudan and Somalia. Since the year 2000 the traditional moderate expressions of religions have been complemented with more radical groups

In my findings there is a clear connection between NCA's country strategic priority of peace and security, interreligious dialogue and national religious leaders²⁴. Broadly speaking, my informants in NCA outlines the connection like this: peace is a prerequisite for development, religion can be a reason for conflict, NCA engage by facilitating for interreligious dialogue to reduce the level conflict and the national religious leaders are key actors to advocate for peace.

In 1999 NCA, together with several FBO's, initiated the start of what was to become the Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action

²³ See 2.3.3

²⁴ See 5.4.1

(EIFDDA). This forum has brought together FBO's with development experience from various locations in Ethiopia. Among others, the field of peace building and conflict resolution has been high on the agenda. In the same period NCA was engaged with the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea by inviting religious leaders of both nations for an interreligious dialogue meeting to encourage a joint appeal to their governments. The backdrop for this appeal was the on-going war between the two countries, which had killed thousands of people, displaced hundreds of thousands and caused serious humanitarian crises. The meeting took place in Norway the fall of 1999 and the attending leaders were the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Archbishop of the Catholic Church, the Secretary General of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) and Sheiks of the Muslim councils. This effort resulted in a letter to the two governments to end the hostilities and a request to meet with the heads of the governments to share their reflections (Villumstad, 2002, p.7f).

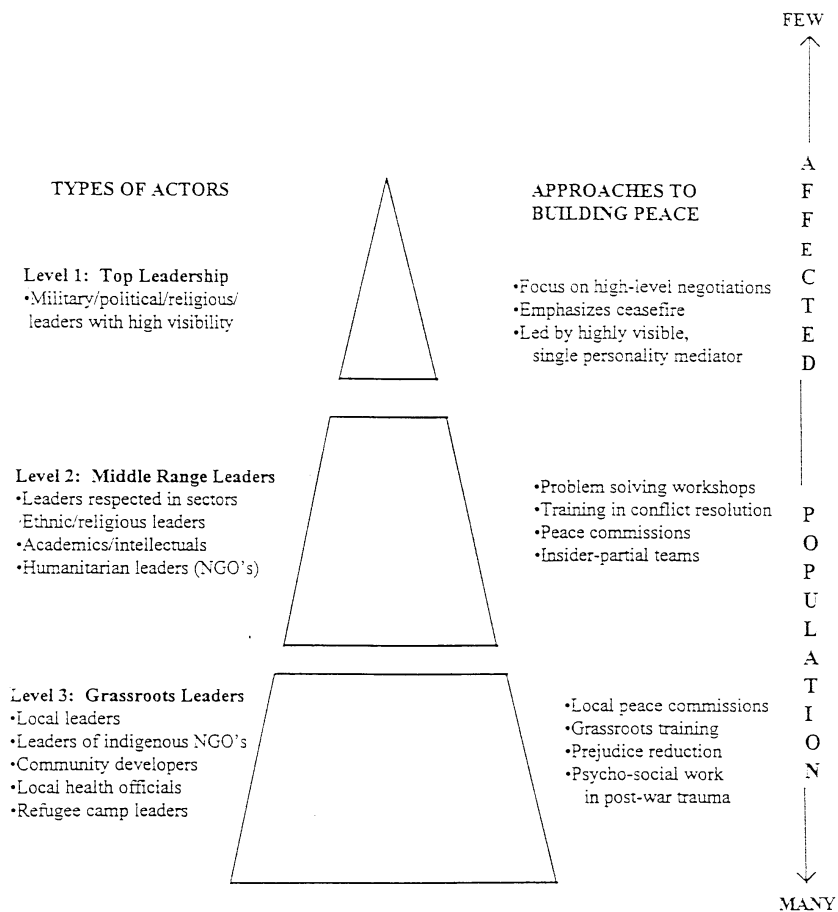
The role of national religious leaders in peace building processes in Ethiopia has clearly been heavily emphasised by NCA. An observation from my findings gives insights into a consultation between different religious leaders at the NCA head office in Addis Ababa²⁵. It was a meeting filled with a formality of respect and acknowledgment, yet there was also a sense of fragility. It seemed they were gathered as 'family' around the dinner table, but in reality as religious representatives for crossing theological opinions and convictions that occasionally have been a source of conflict and tension in Ethiopia. The topic for the consultation was the grassroots impact of their leadership. This topic challenged them to see their own power of leadership externally and how it affects the population in the grassroots.

The religious leaders role in these consultations is not only depended on their position as leaders, but also on how their position is regarded by other stakeholders in the conflict. Their voices represent large groups of people and the power they behold can be of great significance for promoting both peace and conflict.

John Paul Lederach (1997) has presented a quite useful diagram of roles and actors in peace building processes.

²⁵ See 5.1

Figure 2 Roles and actors in peace building processes



(Lederach, 1997, p.39)

In this diagram the actors are divided into three levels, where religious leaders falls into both level 1 and level 2. In addition I would argue, based on my findings above, that religious leaders (in Ethiopia) also should be represented in level 3. What is noticeable is the strategic potential of the religious leaders to make a difference in conflicts as they transcend different levels of the society. The structure of the large religious institutions of Ethiopia, for instance EOTC, has the resemblance of this diagram (EOC-DICAC, 2005a). Their access to the grassroots is through their own religious communities, or ‘constituencies’, their access the to the middle range sector is through their regional administrations and their access to the top level leadership is through their representative mandate in the patriarch. In this theory the national religious leaders are enabled to impact all three levels of the society. Whether the religious institutions are equipped to handle this potential must however be further examined.

NCA's strategy to mobilize national religious leaders for peace building is an acknowledgment of the potential constructive roles of religious institutions and religious leaders in creating a stable and peaceful society. They are frequently addressed as messengers of peace. This does not mean that religious leaders are seen only as a source of peace. On the contrary, as we have seen, NCA brings them together due to the level of conflict related to their leadership and grassroots impact²⁶.

6.3.4 Normative legislators

Other findings in the study by the Population Council reveal that the involved communities categorically listen to their religious leaders and their interpretations of Islam. They are also willing to abandon anything that is considered to be against Islam (Abdi and Askew, 2009). This shows that the religious leaders appear to hold a certain normative legitimacy prescribed to the mandated position. Meaning that their voice has significance in endorsing prevailing religious and social rules of behaviour in the society. In my findings several informants confirm this and state that it applies both to a local and national level²⁷.

Numbers presented in the empirical participatory exercise in *Voices of the poor* (Narayan et al., 2000) by the World Bank, also notes that 'poor' people tend to trust religious leaders more than politicians. In the process of involving religious leaders into development practice, this is important to understand. At the same time it is important to understand that their normative legitimacy may be questionable.

According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2008), the role of religious leaders in addressing FGM varies. Their assessment shows that there are a number of religious leaders that both support and oppose the practice. Thus religious leaders, further legitimized by other domestic and foreign actors, may also serve to sustain predicaments that can obstruct the progress development.

6.3.5 Sustaining or removing unfreedoms

The religious leaders' different roles and legitimacy and their potential to positively and negatively affect development practice might be related to what Amartya Sen describes as 'unfreedom'. An aspect of Sen's concept of development is his description of development as the removal of various 'unfreedoms' that deprive

²⁶ See 5.4.1

²⁷ See 5.4.1

people from their right to exercise their reasoned agency (Sen, 1999, p.xii). He further describes unfreedom as: ‘(...) the absence of elementary opportunities as the capability to escape premature mortality or preventable morbidity or involuntary starvation’ (Sen, 1999s p.17). Sen also questions the role of authoritarian leaders and their lack of incentives of timely preventive measures faced with catastrophes (Sen, 1999, p.16). Although the latter notion is directed towards authoritarian political leaders, it leads me to reflect more on the role of powerful religious leaders in the process of development in Ethiopia.

The religious leaders normative legitimacy and credibility that in many areas replace the authority of government officials and law, certainly puts them in an influential position. This position enables the religious leaders to both sustain and to remove unfreedoms in the process of development. Regarding the issue of FGM, it shows how their mandated position gives them power to influence and create prevailing values and norms leading for people’s life. This relates to Sen’s recognition of the crucial impact of social institutions as a source of values that affect opportunities and prospects of individuals (Sen, 1999, p.142).

EOTC’s hesitation in approving the antiretroviral treatment (ART) of HIV and AIDS²⁸ might be seen as a form of unfreedom sustained by the religious leaders in indirectly preventing access to health care. This gives reason to inquiry the normative legitimacy of the religious leaders and the values they promote that led to this problem. The treatment was there, heavily subsidized by foreign donors to ensure that all people in need had access to it, but the conflict was not the lack of access (as so often is the case²⁹), it was related to whether or not it could be legitimated religiously. The problem leads onto orthodox theology and complex interpretations of the practice of ‘holy water’. I shall not go more into this here. However, the point is that development practice sometimes encounters religious convictions and legislators that are conflicting development objectives. This particular case could be an example of religious legislatives that counter the ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ (UN, 1948), article 25, where the right to medical care and necessary social services is stated. Faced with ‘unfreedoms’ that may hinder the path of development, NCA chooses in this case, as with FGM in the Somali region, to cooperate even more

²⁸ See 5.3

²⁹ Statistic presented by AVERT shows that 10,4 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa are in need of ARV treatment. <http://www.avert.org/universal-access.htm#contentTable2>

closely with the religious leaders in search of reducing the prevalence of both FGM and HIV and AIDS. In an evaluative country report on Norwegian HIV and AIDS responses in Ethiopia published by NORAD (NORAD, 2008), NCA's effort in raising awareness among the religious leaders of EOTC is recognized as an effective way to promote development.

Sen's theory of removing 'unfreedoms' in order to achieve development seems fairly easy to grasp by thought, but when using his concept to analyse the field-context situation, it suddenly becomes a bit unclear. This is exemplified in the cases above. For instance, when working within a traditional context, with religious leaders and at the same time accepting the local patriarchal structure as the framework for the project. Which 'unfreedoms' are being sustained and which are removed? And whose values should be promoted? Nevertheless, Sen points out important considerations that needs to be addressed and examined in this regard. His notion is helpful to uncover potential pitfalls and downsides in involving religious leaders into development practice. Furthermore, it also reveals another interesting perspective. In these cases above, values and norms that were considered to hinder the process of development were gradually changed. Not by NCA's rejection or imposed transformation, but through a collective process of dialogue, reasoning and consensus. This perspective will be brought up for further analysis below.

6.4 THE ROLE OF FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS

6.4.1 An instrumental approach

In my findings there are several instances where my informants from NCA indirectly or directly describe how NCA uses FBOs to promote their development objectives in field. As we have already seen this especially relates to the different roles of the religious leaders. However, when the informants were asked about the partnership with FBOs, other perspectives appear.

The FBO's are highly valued for their wide structured networks and the advantage of using these networks to communicate the message of development. Both the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) are large institutions covering most parts of Ethiopia. Their structure of constituencies roots them in the local communities and enables them to reach the people at the grassroots (WCC, 2012). This gives reason to discuss NCA's

relation to religion in development practice as instrumental. It evokes interesting perspectives when the word 'instrumental' is used alongside with 'religion'. In NCA's strategy plan the word 'instrumental' is not directly addressed, but implicitly stated in the Country Plan for Ethiopia:

Different evaluation reports have stated that NCA's added value is its partnership with FBO's and other partners with a strong and wide grassroots connection enabling social mobilization for change. (...) FBO's have high potential of reaching far out to their constituency on messages for improving livelihood and bringing development to the grassroots. (NCA, 2010, p.9)

NCA in Ethiopia is not mainly an implementing organization and most activities are channelled through 'instrumental' partners. When reviewing this statement from NCA's Country Plan it expresses features that NCA values in the partnership with FBOs. It underlines the added value of partnership with FBOs, referring to their wide networks. Furthermore, the statement addresses the potential of these religious networks in bringing development to the grassroots. There is this nothing controversial about this this statement, except that it leads the attention to an interesting notion. It might seem to limit the role of FBOs to merely a question of efficiency or added value: 'How can FBOs or religious institutions make development practice more effective?' This question reveals an instrumental approach to religion in development, which has a resemblance to Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 2003), where religion was identified as a source of social change. This was further developed by Arthur Lewis in the published book *The Theory of Economic Growth* (Lewis, 1955)³⁰, where the puritan forms of Protestantism was presented as instrumental to the capitalist expansion. A capitalist expansion is obviously not the case in this statement from NCA, but there is a resemblance in the search for religious features that can positively affect development. Viewed this way, NCA seems to be promoting development goals on the wings of religion and FBO's. In the previously mentioned community dialogue process in the Somali region and in the work for HIV and AIDS mitigation, religious leaders seems to have an instrumental role in communicating a development message on behalf of NCA and becomes an added value to their work. However, although an instrumental approach is clearly an important aspect of NCA's treatment of religion, it

³⁰ See 4.2.2

cannot be solely enclosed to this. Addressing FBO's as an instrument or an added value for the sake of development leaves a bittersweet taste of having reduced or neglected important qualities of their existence and function. In addition it leaves religion to be nothing more than a 'missing link' to development to be placed alongside civil society, social capital or rights based approaches.

The instrumental approach to religion was criticized in the article by Wilber and Jameson (1980, p.475) in the journal *World Development* concerning the relationship between religion and development. They expressed concerns over a Weberian approach to religion in development and claimed that this approach might neglect an essential aspect of religion, – religion as the moral fabric of the society that provide sets of norms and values vital to legitimate the process of development. Wilber and Jameson's concern is especially interesting when linked to the desk research report from The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre³¹ (Rao, 2010) that has examined various large donor agencies and their experience in working with traditional and religious institutions. One of the interesting findings in this research shows how these donor agencies value the religious leaders' role as change agents in increasing communities' acceptance and commitment to reproductive health and family planning. From the basis of this report it looks like an instrumental treatment of religion in development is a prevailing trend.

Turning back to Sen's emphasis on the importance of prevailing values and social mores in the society, and Wilber and Jameson's inquiry of religion as the moral base of society, makes it reasonable to ask whether or not an instrumental approach is in fact neglecting essential aspect of religion and FBO's in this regard? Are there any other prominent aspects of NCA's involvement with FBO's worth examining?

6.4.2 A facilitating approach

In NCAs efforts to reach the people, local initiatives such as community participation and dialogue is emphasized. As illustrated in my findings, the involvement of religious leaders in community dialogue can have effective outcomes. In this regard Amartya Sen take notion of the important contribution of open discussion, where

³¹ The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre was established by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in 2005 to provide high information to international development project and programme planning, policy-making, and other activities in the field.

debate, criticism and dissent are central to the process of generating informed and reflected choices to enhance political and civil rights. He further states that these processes are also crucial to the formation of values and priorities in a society (Sen, 1999, p.153). This description has a resemblance of what is taking place in the NCA supported project in the Somali region. The bad effects of FGM on the lives of young women and on the community at large, was openly addressed and followed by discussion and debate in the arranged community dialogues. The success of the project, an increased abandonment of FGM, has been achieved with no coercion or shady schemes, but through an arena based on unrestrained participation, free speech and substantive input. In this process, over time, the community has examined prevailing values and norms, addressed their own and others perceptions on the matter and paved the way for the emergence of new values. This resemble the process of reasoning that Sen (ibid) holds as the core of democratic practice and crucial in constructing people's values and determining policy decisions.

From this perspective the development process take form at a more conceptual level where emphasis is put on exploring religious and traditional norms and values that are sustaining harmful ceremonies and practices within the community. In addition to their instrumental value, the religious leaders are partakers in this process. On the surface, this is different from the instrumental approach as described earlier and reveals an alternative vision of development. NCA, through its partner OWDA, are building the framework for community dialogue and thus creates conditions for a more informed understanding. They have a withdrawn position in the community dialogue, helping the people themselves to assess and identify the problem related to circumcision and further assists them in achieving a consensus and basis for future action. NCA take the role as a facilitator.

This facilitating approach seems generally observable also in other cases where NCA collaborates with FBO's on a local and national level. In the peace-building efforts where religious leaders are summoned in mutual respect to find solutions; in the process within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), which lead to the declaration against FGM and in the process to encourage religious leaders fully approval of antiretroviral treatment (ART) of HIV and AIDS³².

³² See 5.2.1

The common denominator of these events seems to be NCA's willingness to understand, respect and deal with underlying religious and traditional values and norms that are vital for the success of their development objectives. If this is the case, it responds to the request by Wilber and Jameson (1980), for an approach that acknowledges and accounts for religious values and norms of the society in the process of development.

6.4.3 Serving the whole person

As previously noted, the study *Voices of the poor* reports that in many parts of the world, the human desire of a better life relates to a spiritual reality. As Agne Nordlander writes, it is natural for an Ethiopian to turn to God for help when the crop fails, when the livestock is struck by disease, when political regimes causes suffering and when there is lack of rain (Nordlander et al., 1998, p.77). Viewing human life as an integrated entity seem also to be the case in statements from informants in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus (EECMY). It is argued that the understanding of human beings cannot be divided into two separate units, body and soul³³. It has to be regarded as integrated. This reflects the church's deep concern not only for the spiritual needs of a person, but also for his/her physical needs. Leading for this concern is the imperative example in the ministry of Jesus Christ derived from the Christian bible. The development practice of EECMY is based on this principle and the church claim to have developed a Christian type of development referred to as 'holistic ministry' under the slogan 'Serving the Whole Person'. From the start this has led the church to placed great emphasis on social action and service, without excluding the spiritual aspect. The holistic ministry has especially led EECMY to emphasize provision of health-services and education to the poor (EECMY, 2010).

EECMY counts development into a holistic understanding of human being, where human welfare is perceived and related to a multidimensional reality. This understanding of development finds resonance in the capability approach where Sen criticizes one-sided development theories that overemphasize material aspects of well-being, such as income, wealth and resources. Instead the capability approach opens up for multiple dimensions of development where a non-material concept of development provides a broader acknowledgment of various ways in which people's

³³ See 5.6

lives can be enriched or impoverished. This may include an expansion of capabilities of social, cultural and spiritual character. In Sen's notion of the 'evaluative reason', which concerns the primary end of development, substantive human freedoms have a constitutive role for development. He underlines the importance of recognizing freedoms that people value and that are leading for and enriching people's life³⁴. EECMY's holistic ministry and integration of the spiritual dimensions of human welfare, links up with the theoretical insights of substantive freedoms in the capability approach. The spiritual aspect of people's life is regarded as a source of meaning and motivation from where people choose how to best lead their lives. These substantive freedoms may be essential for a better understanding of people's own vision of development based on their cultural identity, religious adherence and worldview.

The fact that NCA, in its partnership with EECMY, acknowledges this understanding of development may indicate that there is a shared understanding of viewing spiritual and religious expressions as important components of achieving development gains. It also indicates a commonality in how development issues are approached. I will no go on to describe what may be regarded as a common religious language.

6.4.4 A religious idiom

NCA's preference of working with FBO's within specific areas, such as FGM and HIV and AIDS was a prevailing aspiration of the NCA employees. When choosing a new partnership, NCA reviews a potential partner-organisation with eyes towards their religious adherence and capability. When informants in NCA where asked to review the partnership with OWDA, it is implied that their Muslim culture and religion provides them the right keys to gain approval and acceptance for their work in the local communities. Noticeable in this regard is the fact that OWDA is a non-religious development organisation. That seems not to be the case when informants from NCA address employees in OWDA as Muslims. From my observation and understanding it is clear that all of the employees in OWDA are Muslims by confession. Nevertheless, it points to the fact that employer's religious adherence may be of significance in this particular partnership.

³⁴ See 4.3.1

To this Clarke and Jennings (2008) notes that actors that utilize the language of faith or ‘the religious idiom’, are often better equipped to reflect the cultural norms in which the poor and marginalized people operate. In this regard ‘idiom’ refers to the language peculiar to a group of people or to a district, community, or class³⁵. Clarke and Jennings further claims that development actors who know and use this language have the potential to better include religious communities and individuals into the global discourse of development, than actors using the ‘language’ associated with the secular development discourse. This may not be applicable for all societies and cultures, but it strikingly reflects the understanding within NCA and their partners.

The interreligious meeting I observed at the NCA head office³⁶ illustrates this in a good way. In a retro-perspective it is noticeable how a religious idiom was utilized to exchange signs of respect and acknowledgment. The different religious leaders were respectfully greeted in different manners. Prayer hands greeted the Imam and the orthodox priest was greeted by shaping of the cross, there was head bowing, and blessings exchanged between staff and guests. It was a religious idiom concealing a range of symbols and meanings and in order to understand and uncover these meanings this idiom has to be known.

Another example is how NCA relates to their partner OWDA. The informants in NCA expressed that the advantage of OWDA is that they know and relate to the local culture and religion of the specific area. This indicates the essentiality of a development worker to have knowledge about the context in order to understand and to be accepted by the community. To put this in another way might be to say that OWDA benefits from knowing the ‘religious idiom’ of the specific area. And that it enables them to understand and interpret the religious symbols and the meaning they carry into the area of development. This also explains why NCA chooses to work with different religious organizations at different locations and why they did not consider working with a Christian organization in the Somali region due to the predominately Muslim adherence³⁷.

Findings in the empirical study by the World Bank named *Voices of the poor, Crying Out for Change* (Narayan et al., 2000) addresses the same issue. This study

³⁵See BRITANNICA, E., INC 2012. Idiom. *Encyclopedia Britannica*

³⁶ See 5.1

³⁷ According to a country study guide published by ‘USA International Business Publications’ USAIB 2009. *Ethiopia Country Study Guide*, USA, International Business Publications, ., 98,7% of the population in the Somali region are Muslims.

shows that religion seems to permeate people's conception of well-being. An excerpt from the study captures and exemplifies how important meanings, symbols and values related to human wellbeing are expressed in a religious language. The excerpt is from a community in the Amhara region in Ethiopia:

There is a huge tree at the bank of one of the seven crater lakes in the area. People go to the tree on a Sunday after Meskal (a church festival) with wet straw in their hands. The wet straw symbolizes the desire to have 'wet land,' 'wet hands,' etc. Wet things are supposed to stand for prosperity and wet land allows growth. The main purpose therefore is to pray to God to make the land wet with rain. People said, 'We believe in it and it works; we get together and pray when we need something desperately; we go and pray for our children's health'. (Narayan et al., 2000, p.222,223).

This excerpt might be interpreted as a part of a 'religious idiom' of meaning, that is part of what constitute the community's world and worldview. The sacred and the profane seem here inevitably connected as an integral part of life.

'The religious idiom' also relates to Clifford Geertz's (1973) 'cultural system'. Geertz has an interpretive approach to religion and follows the tradition of interpretive sociology derived from Weber. He is known for identifying religion as a cultural system with special attention towards meaning in religious symbols. With the interpretative heritage of Weber and Geertz 'cultural system' in mind, it makes sense to say that insights of the religious idiom may uncover alternative visions of the relation between religion and development.

6.5 RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT

Bringing together the addressed observations, analysed cases and strategic priorities of NCA in this chapter, it uncovers interesting perspectives on how religion is regarded in relation to development. As we have seen, the involvement of religious leaders in development practices is important for NCA. The religious leaders mandated position, mobilising capacity, normative legitimacy and role as educators and messengers for the grassroots, is acknowledged and emphasized for their potential influence on certain development issues. Furthermore, the partnership with FBO's is valued for their structured network and their ability of reaching the people and address development concerns within religious frames. To this it seems that NCA carries out their development objectives by communicating a development message

within a common religious language. Based on this, I will further examine other perspectives that may open for other aspects of the role of religion in development processes.

6.5.1 Creating a conceptual arena

As previously mentioned, Amartya Sen has in his work provided an important framework for conceptualizing the role of religion in development. As presented in chapter four, one of the contributions of Sen and the capability approach is to bring ethics and the question of values to the heart of development economics and development policies. This is especially emphasised when Sen is promoting freedoms that people have reason to choose and value (Sen, 1999, p.18). If in fact religion is part of what constructs the moral basis of the society (Wilber and Jameson, 1980) and a source through which people are making value judgments and decisions on how to best lead their lives, religion is central to the conception of development.

The observed interplay between religion and development in NCA indicates that there is an understanding of development that incorporates and explores religion and religious assets. NCA appears to recognize the existence of social values, shared norms and mores within religion as something that influences and affect the process of development. However, the discussion above also reveals that there is something more that can be derived from this. It is not only a matter of showing how religion can positively or negatively affect development outcomes, but also a recognition of how religion influences the conceptualization of development. When NCA chooses to engage in and facilitate for theological reflections and religious reasoning for the purpose of development, the process of development is being conceived at a more conceptual level. This moves focus away from perceptions that tend to put religion and development into a state of static pre-determination, where development goals are narrowed down to simply find and encourage the ‘good’ elements of religion and to keep the ‘bad’ elements under control.

Both development and religion carries certain values that sometimes may seem incompatible. At its best NCA appear to make efforts to use their experience and knowledge of both the religious idiom and the secular development language to bridge this gap. They are facilitating and supporting the creation of a common conceptual arena, where values from both domains are brought together in terms of respect and acknowledgment. At this level the interplay and the constant

dynamic relation between religion and development is especially underlined. It takes the form of a secular-religious dialogue and paves the way for a mutual enrichment and engagement between religion and development. Consequently it may interfere and form the way development is perceived and practiced. Further, I will attempt to address what is actually taking place in this conceptual arena.

6.5.1.1 A reframing process

The capability approach emphasizes the need of democratic processes of reasoning to find which capabilities are the most valuable within a specific local context (Sen, 1999, p.153). This implies an effective participation of people in shaping their own development and development is thus depended on the local people's own priorities. The conceptual process that NCA appears to initiate by collaboration and dialogue with religious leaders and FBO's might be addressed as some sort of reasoning process. But more precisely it can be referred to as a *reframing process*. By using this word I would especially suggest two meanings that provides additional purpose in this regard. The first is related to its *practical* nature, where a new frame is applied to support a photograph or a painting and to bring forth nuances and distinctiveness of the motives. The second refers to an *abstract* meaning, where ideas, concepts, beliefs, etc., are perceived or expressed differently.

NCA's support of theological discussions, participatory dialogue and awareness creation, is situating an interdisciplinary reasoning process where 'religion' and 'development' are dealt with in both practical and abstract manners. 'Religion' is materialized into local customs, symbols, holy scriptures, priest and imams, churches and mosques. 'Development' is materialized in relation to specific development concerns, such as FGM or HIV and AIDS. In this way the reasoning process is not only based on theoretical terms, but also closely related to issues of particular concrete quality. This allows for a better examination of religion as a cultural system of meaning where understanding is related to norms and symbols. As previously stated this resembles the tradition of interpretive sociology derived from Weber and Geertz where examinations of religious symbols are important in order for those who are not insiders to apprehend³⁸.

At this conceptual level where values and norms are questioned, exchanged and subjected to reasoning, there may emerge new values that influence both

³⁸ See 4.1.1

development and religion. Even to the point where religious beliefs and development practice are mutually being revised and reformed. As shown above, the outcomes can be effective in regard to certain areas such as reproductive health issues and promotion of peace and security. As observed in the community dialogues in Gode, it may lead to a deconstruction or reform of certain values and norms that sustain FGM and to the emergence of new ones³⁹. In this way, the community dialogue can be seen as an attempt to create new frames more suitable to resolve occurring tensions between religion and development, which may threaten the development process itself. If the process of reframing succeeds, it may also provide the foundation for a better understanding that leads the focus away from not only asking how religion informs the concept of development, but also how development informs the concept of religion.

6.5.2 Means and ends of development

Amartya Sen's well-known statement of freedom as: '(1) the primary end of development and (2) the principal mean of development' (Sen, 1999, p.36) offers a summary of his conception of development. As previously mentioned, what is perhaps more difficult to comprehend is the substance of Sen's various freedoms⁴⁰. In this regard it is interesting to look into reasons why local communities unite for the abandonment of FGM. FGM as a practice is sustained and rooted by several layers and reasons. As stated by informants, one reason is that it is an assumed religious requirement⁴¹. By letting religious scholars refute this assumption with theological interpretations showing how this practice is a violation of religious law, abandonment is increasingly agreed. Thus, it could be reasonable to regard the communities' reasons for abandonment as legitimated or even mandatory by religion, rather than a choice to promote the free agency of women. Sen's (1999, p.18,19) *effectiveness reason* is in this case not only freedom, but also religion. In other words, the achievement of development is also dependent on religion interpretations. Although the *effectiveness reason* is related to religion, the 'end of development' is the same: women's capabilities or freedoms *are* expanded, whether or not it is the direct intention of the community. By abandoning FGM, unfreedoms are removed and

³⁹ See 5.2.1

⁴⁰ See 4.3.7

⁴¹ See 5.2.1

freedoms and capabilities enhanced. This refers to Sen's *evaluative reason* where development has to be seen in relation to whether the freedoms of the people are increased. But interestingly enough there is also something more happening in a religious motivated abandonment of FGM. Besides enhancing freedoms of women, it also changes the understanding of religion and religious practices. As shown above religious practice is being reframed and gradually redefined when faced with development and secular values. It is not an outsider's rejection or reduction of essential religious doctrines or core principles, on the contrary, it is an integrated process where secular values are examined within a religious domain and expressed and incorporate into a religious language. This process may be both challenging and time consuming, however, it may be necessary to hinder what Deneulin and Bano (2009, p.38,39) describes as an alienation of religious individuals and communities to the process of development. This can happen when religion is utilized only as means for promoting objectives and values of a secular development agenda that may jeopardize the development process itself. This integrated processes of solving development challenges in Ethiopia, give reasons to address religion in the process of development as both *the primary end* of and *the principal* mean of development.

6.5.3 Modernization without secularization

As presented in the beginning of this chapter, NCA's position in Ethiopia is closely related to the secular modern state structure and to the traditional religious reality of the society. While firmly promoting secular development values and principles such as human rights, social justice and gender equity, NCA are at the same time making efforts to relate to and understand the traditional religious context of the Ethiopian society. In doing so, they have established partnership with a range of grassroots orientated FBO's in Ethiopia. In a broader perspective this can be seen as an attempt to overcome what has been described as a Western fixation of secularism, that has overlooked the religious vitality across Africa (Goldewijk, 2007, p.23). It also seems that the refuted secularization theories and the empirical evidence from different parts of the world, showing a 'resurgent religion' (Berger, 2000, p.445, Berger, 1999), helps NCA to acknowledge the relevance of religion as an intertwined part of their development practice in Ethiopia. In this regard I want to bring forth one noticeable comment from an informant when asked about determining elements of NCAs development practice in Ethiopia:

people here still value religion. And on every Sunday the churches are full of people. Young, old, every generation is there. (...) I think this is very different from the western society where religion and the influence of the churches are decreasing. Even in our daily language, when we greet each other, we give Gods blessing. God knows. Religion is still so strong. Still people stick to their belief. (Interview with NCA employee)

This comment could be read as an implicit critique of development programs being based on Western values and thus undermining local communities own cultural identities and worldviews. Although the dichotomy between the ‘western society’ and the Ethiopian society in the comment may be too simple, it nevertheless serves as an indicator for how NCA perceive the role of religion in the Ethiopian society. It also indicates an understanding of the vital role of and influence of religious institutions that affect and permeates the Ethiopian populations behaviour and perception of reality. NCA works to develop and modernize the Ethiopian society by engaging into the traditional religious reality of the society. In other words, a modernizing message without secularization. This is not a neo-Weberian approach, where certain religious ethics works to promote development⁴². It appears as more a dialogue between the sacred and the profane, finding ways for coexistence and common ground between religion and development in fighting poverty.

6.5.4 Religion ‘in’ or ‘and’ Development

When seeing religion as cultural system (Geertz, 1973) the task of the social scientists is to examine how the essential teachings of religion are embodied into social practices and symbols. Geertz persistence in the primacy of meaning might undermine, what Deneulin and Bano describe as ‘the process by which meanings are being constructed.’ (2009, p.59). The examination of religious symbols has to include the recognition of religious social practices and the understanding of what it means to live well, as part of a constantly evolving process. The problem of the introduction of antiretroviral treatment (ART) in the Orthodox Church is illustrating in this regard. In the beginning the treatment was seen as incompatible with the use of ‘Holy water’. However, by being exposed to the dangers it maintained concerning human wellbeing and different theological interpretations from forces outside and inside the orthodox tradition, it made the church leaders to realize that the practice of ‘Holy water’ needed to be revised. It resulted in allowing for the simultaneous use of ART

⁴² See 4.1.1.1

treatment and 'Holy water'⁴³. It shows how the church itself redefines its practices in the encounter of a new social context. Religion appears to part of dynamic process that is inevitably related to its social contexts and as something that never ceases to evolve by it. It also shows how religion is affected by development and vice versa. Thus in development practice it may be more suitable to use the phrase 'religion in development' instead of 'religion and development'. This very distinction insinuates that religion is not an attachment to development that has to be kept separately, on the contrary, religion is something that must be seen in relation to development.

⁴³ See 5.3

7 CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction, the objectives for this thesis have been to explore the role of religion in development processes. I have attempted to gain a better understanding of the role of religion in the Norwegian Church Aid's (NCA) development practice in Ethiopia. My findings have been based on conducted interviews of staff and observational notes of NCA and three partnering organizations. The thesis has mainly focused on program areas and projects dealing with peace building, HIV and AIDs mitigation and female genital mutilation where the subject of religion has had a special significance.

It has not been the intention of this thesis to make generalizations about the role of religion in development processes in Ethiopia. For this purpose the scope of the research is to narrow and the findings are not representative for all development actors and activities in Ethiopia. However, I have wanted to carry out this research within the frames of one organization and a limited selection of people that may provide specific new insights to the role of religion in development.

In the analysis I have looked towards concrete outcomes of how religion is perceived and taken into account in development practice by development workers in NCA. I have attempted to interpret the findings within a value-based conception of development, meaning that I have used analytical concepts and theories that emphasize the importance of values in the defining development. Amartya Sen's capability approach has been of special importance here.

The thesis shows that religion is a characterizing factor of some areas in NCA's development practice. Collaboration with religious leaders and faith-based organizations (FBO) is explicitly addressed in NCA's development strategies and activities and is also regarded as important to achieve certain development objectives. By analyzing how and in what way the religious leaders are addressed, it has made me able to present different roles assigned to them.

In female genital mutilation (FGM) projects with Ogaden Welfare Development Association (OWDA), NCA have involved religious leaders as community educators. In this regard their influential position as leaders is especially emphasized and valued. Their position enables them to access the community and provide religious guidance that address and clarifies the position of Islam and Islamic doctrine on FGM.

By using a social convention theory on FGM it uncovers another role of the religious leaders that underlines their potential capability of mobilizing the community. Their credibility of good will and competence within the community makes them the ideal individuals to mobilize a ‘critical mass’ to reach a ‘tipping point’. This may change the social pressure that upholds the convention and possibly lead to reverse the social convention of FGM.

The role of national religious leaders in peace building processes has clearly been heavily emphasized by NCA. The mandated position of the religious leaders represents large groups of people that potentially transcends local, midrange and national levels of the society. Thus their voice has a constructive strategic potential to impact tension and conflict situations as messengers of peace.

Through a value-based conception of development it is possibly to recognize how religious leaders affect the process of development. The religious leaders’ different roles appear to provide them a certain normative legitimacy significant for endorsing prevailing religious values and social norms of behaviour in the society. NCA seems to recognize both a constructive and a destructive potential of this legitimacy. The religious leaders’ mobilizing capability and role as educators and messenger is essential in NCA’s effort to achieve their development objectives. But within this recognition there is also an acknowledgment of a potentially destructive legitimacy that may serve to sustain predicaments and obstruct the progress development. As shown in the case of religious leaders and the introduction of antiretroviral treatment of HIV and AIDS, the role of the religious leaders, further legitimized by other domestic and foreign actors, may deprive people from elementary capabilities and their right to exercise their reasoned agency.

NCA emphasizes the added value in the partnership with FBO’s. As shown in the community dialogue processes and in the work for HIV and AIDS mitigation, NCA seems to be promoting development goals on the wings of religion and religious organization. It reveals an instrumental approach to religion in development that resembles Max Weber and Arthur Lewis’ identification of religion as a source for social change. Although some aspects of NCA’s treatment of religion appear as instrumental, this thesis shows that it is not the only characterizing factor.

Looking at NCA’s development practice from a value-based conception of development helps to identify and explore other factors and processes of NCA’s work. NCA’s willingness to understand, respect and deal with underlying religious

and traditional values and norms in the partnership with FBOs, uncovers a different approach to development. Analysis of the findings shows that NCA are attempting to create conditions for a more informed understanding by facilitating for various processes of reasoning where emphasis is put on exploring religious and traditional norms and values in relation to development. This facilitating approach deals with development processes at a conceptual level where religious leaders and FBO's are key actors in the process.

NCA's effort to engage into conceptualising processes with partners and beneficiaries seems possible because of a common 'religious idiom'. By knowing and utilizing both the religious idiom and a secular development language, NCA appear to manage to include communities and individuals into a conceptualising secular-religious arena. In this arena there is interplay between the language of religion and the language of development that recognize both the global discourse of development alongside with the existence of prevailing social values and shared norms within the religion.

Through the insights of Amartya Sen this thesis shows that there seems to take place a reframing process where religious values and norms and development practice are mutually being revised and reformed. This process acknowledges the importance of a genuine participatory process as the base for a discovery of new values and capabilities. A successful development process, such as the declaration against FGM and the accepted simultaneous use of antiretroviral treatment and holy water, paves the way for the emergence of new values that may positively influence both development and religion. In this way, interpreted cases and examples in this thesis have shown that, the role of religion in development is not merely about how religion informs the concept of development, but also how development informs the concept of religion. This also leads on to address religion, in certain cases, as both *the primary end of* and *the principal* mean of development.

NCA's development practice appears to be characterized by an interaction between a modern and a traditional domain. Their development program is situated within a modern state structure of bureaucracy, social services and legal system. At the same time a substantial part of the development activities runs through traditional religious legitimacy structures where established traditional and religious values and norms are dominating. Consequently, NCA's understanding of the role of religion appears as a dynamic dialogue between the sacred and the profane where religion is

regarded as a natural and almost an inevitably part of NCA's development practice. This can also be described as a modernizing message without secularization. In this way NCA's objective seems to be focused on finding common ground between religion and development in fighting poverty. This also shows how NCA understands religion as inevitably affected by development and vice versa. Taking this into account and to indicate the potential vital role of religion in development, it may be more appropriate to use the phrase 'religion in development' instead of 'religion and development'.

7.1 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the book by Séverine Deneulin and Masooda Bano', *Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script* (2009), it is argued that development theory and practice needs to rewrite its dominant 'secular script' regarding its treatment of religion. That might be true and relates to what this thesis supports. But in addition, this thesis suggests that to gain a better understanding of religion in development theory and practice may also require a process where religious 'scripts' are rewritten or 'reframed'. In order to do so it is necessary to examine both development and religion in regard to its footprints of experience, perceptions and different visions of development, and bring them together in a conceptualizing arena. In other words, there is a need for a continuous multidisciplinary research on religion in development.

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