



DESK REVIEW OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION & BELIEF AND THE PROTECTION OF FAITH-BASED MINORITIES

Acknowledgements

This desk study was commissioned by the FoRB office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

The authors would in particular like to thank Michael Suhr and Nis Gellert of the MFA FoRB office for discussions and support during the process. In addition, the authors would like to thank the reference group for the study for their expertise and inputs, consisting of Marie Juul-Petersen, The Danish Institute for Human Rights; Filip Buff Petersen, Center for Church-Based Development; Kirsten Auken, Danmission and Birger Riis-Jørgensen, The Danish Think tank regarding prosecuted Christians.

Thanks also goes to those who gave freely of their time for interviews and supported the team with documentation.

The information and views expressed in the report are those of the authors, and do not represent official views of the MFA.

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June 2022

Photo credit: Center for Church-Based Development (CKU)

Abbreviations

| | |
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| APD | Africa, Policy and Development Department of the MFA |
| CKU | Danish Center for Church-based Development |
| CREID | Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development |
| DAPP | Danish Arab Partnership Programme |
| DFID | Department of International Development (UK) |
| DKK | Danish Kroner |
| EU | European Union |
| FAMOC | Fonds d'appui aux Moteurs du Changement (Mali) |
| FBO | Faith-based organisation |
| FCDO | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK) |
| FoRB | Freedom of Religion and Belief |
| HCE | Humanitarian, civil society, and engagement department, MFA |
| HQ | Headquarters |
| HRBA | Human Rights Based Approach |
| ICCPR | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights |
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |
| ISIS/ISIL | Islamic State of Iraq and Syria / Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant |
| LGBT+ | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender + |
| LNOB | Leave No One Behind |
| MENA | Middle East and Northern Africa |
| MFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| NCEASL | National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka |
| NCG | Nordic Consulting Group |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NOK | Norwegian Kroner |
| NORAD | Norwegian Directorate for Development Cooperation |
| NORFORB | Nordic Ecumenical Network on Freedom of Religion or Belief |
| OHCHR | Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| PaRD | International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development |
| R2P | Responsibility to Protect |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SOGI | Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity |
| SPA | Strategic Partnership Agreement |
| SRHR | Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| US | United States of America |

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Executive Summary

From being a relatively overlooked human right, Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion (abbreviated to FoRB), guaranteed in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has in recent years gained attention and priority from international organisations, national governments and civil society. While this human right is given more consideration at political / policy levels and in foreign policy documents in a number of countries, it is not currently prominent in development programming.

In the Danish context, promotion of FoRB has been a foreign policy priority since January 2018. Strides have been taken to incorporate FoRB into development policies and practice, starting in 2019, when the Danish Government allocated DKK 5 million annually to concrete civil society projects through a new pooled fund funding window. Subsequently, in 2021, when Denmark launched a new strategy for development cooperation (*"The World We Share"*), FoRB was included as part of Denmark's human rights-based approach (HRBA) and focus on the rights and dignity of marginalised groups.

The political attention to FoRB has given rise to questions in Danish parliamentary debates on how Denmark is supporting persecuted religious minorities in the contexts where Denmark is engaged in development cooperation. It is against this backdrop that the current study set out to review, map and analyse the Danish efforts to promote FoRB in the countries where Denmark currently is engaged in development cooperation. The study draws on a combination of desk review, and interviews with key stakeholders.

In the landscape that emerged from the mapping, it is primarily the **faith-based organisations** that engage in FoRB projects. The study found 49 projects (of the 275 projects/programmes reviewed) which have worked or work directly or indirectly with FoRB, with only a small group of these being secular/non-faith-based organisations.

FoRB, being a new priority, is given limited attention in the current **bilateral country programmes**. One notable exception is the Danish bilateral engagement in Indonesia, where Denmark has had a long-term partnership with civil society and the Indonesian government. The **civil society strategic partners (SPA organisations)** engage considerably with civic space and related human rights issues, but few organisations pay explicit attention to FoRB as an element of civic space and a human rights engagement. Instead, organisations take interest in freedom of expression, association, and assembly, as well as free media, noting these as critical freedoms for civil society organisations, and more broadly as a bedrock of a democratic society.

Projects engaging with FoRB worked across the individual, community, institutional and policy levels. The entry points for most projects working on FoRB were at the community level and were designed to address social hostilities. Policy level changes (e.g., working toward policy reform to reduce government restrictions) were less common than other levels of engagement. One such example is a project in Lebanon, which aims to enhance women's rights in the Lebanese personal status law by engaging in a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue, bringing together civil society, political and religious authorities, to produce a white paper with policy recommendations as an appeal to national decision-makers.

A significant proportion of the interventions centred on building knowledge, understanding and awareness of FoRB from the individual and community, to institutional and policy levels. This emphasis seeks to address a long-term disregard for FoRB by development practitioners, in part due to misconceptions and lack of awareness of the right and what it entails. Knowledge and awareness of FoRB (so-called 'FoRB literacy'), as well as a sound contextual understanding of the challenges to the freedom in a given context, are therefore seen as

important prerequisites for developing interventions that seek to address FoRB. In this regard, The Freedom of Religion or Belief Learning Platform, (at the Nordic Ecumenical Network on Freedom of Religion or Belief (NORFORB)), which has a broad membership of organisations across the world provide a depth of knowledge and useful resource base.

A small number of projects in the sample included a focus on first-hand monitoring and documentation of FoRB violations, linking this to strategic, evidence-based advocacy efforts to hold duty bearers to account to religious and belief minorities. One such project set out to establish an Early Warning and Response system in at-risk communities in Sri Lanka, to detect and mitigate intercommunal tensions before they escalate to violence. Interreligious dialogue projects in the sample also serve to link these activities to broader peacebuilding efforts.

There is a high degree of innovation across project design, applying creative methods and digital technologies to increase the outreach and resonance of advocacy and awareness raising. Key examples of this include the use of television programmes, both talk shows for adults, and game shows for children, to sensitize the audience to FoRB issues and build tolerance across religion and belief groups. Likewise, social media and digital platforms were harnessed, noting that many FoRB violations occur online.

Human rights and good governance have historically been, and continue to be, main pillars of Danish development cooperation. Given that FoRB and the protection of religious and belief minorities is a human rights issue, it should come as no surprise that there are clear synergies with Denmark's human rights, good governance, and democracy interventions. At this point in time FoRB is not given similar attention as other rights in analysis and bilateral programming.

Programming of FoRB is currently concentrated in faith-based organisations' projects, primarily financed by a small pooled fund for this specific purpose. The current organisation of FoRB both promotes FoRB, but potentially it also limits the wider application of FoRB. The reason is that projects at this point are financed by the CKU FoRB funding window, which has an annual budget of DKK 5 million. Although the window is open to all civil society, it is mainly used by faith based organisations, and FoRB may therefore not be picked up by secular or human rights actors. In addition, the limited financial volume and relatively short timeframe for projects is likely to be a barrier to institutional and policy level engagements.

Adopting a FoRB perspective when addressing other areas, such as gender equality, peacebuilding, and environmental conservation, is a fruitful way of working with FoRB where value addition can be seen. Focusing on the intersectionality between forms of discrimination is a way to strengthen a rights-based approach to FoRB, an area which could be further developed. For example, there are good project examples of promoting gender equality, however sexual orientation and gender identities were largely neglected in the interventions despite the intersectional discriminations that exist. Likewise, FoRB may be a relevant angle when working with indigenous groups' broader rights related to land, environment and natural resources.

In relation to peace and security there are emerging learnings and practices that could link FoRB to these efforts. There are few examples in Danish development cooperation linking FoRB to peace and security, although there are many examples of interreligious dialogue projects for peaceful coexistence. While religious actors may have a role to play (both positive and negative) in relation to peace and security, stronger analyses are required to understand their role in specific contexts, as well as how peace and security (and interreligious dialogue) efforts relate specifically to FoRB outcomes.

As with all other development programming, interventions must be context-driven, and there may be situations where FoRB is not the most relevant lens to apply. On the one hand, analyses underpinning programming should be broad, and not exclusively focused on religion

and belief, as inequalities and discrimination often are multifaceted; on the other hand, violations on FoRB and discriminations faced by religious/belief minorities should be considered in context analyses of Danish programmes in order not to be overseen or neglected.

Evidence across the portfolio of projects indicates that there are often unexploited opportunities to work across the intersection between FoRB and other human rights. Including FoRB more systematically in analysis would bring such opportunities to light.

Recommendations

- 1.** In Danish bilateral development programmes, FoRB should be considered alongside and in relation to other human rights. The context analysis should determine the relevance of FoRB in a given programme – noting that to do so, the context analysis must include FoRB.
- 2.** FoRB literacy should continue to be developed among Danish development stakeholders and partners, given the many misconceptions that exist.
- 3.** Broader alliances and coalitions of partners should be built to work on FoRB – including across different faith-based actors, non-faith-based actors, human rights actors, research/knowledge partners.
- 4.** Continue to engage in knowledge building on intersections that exist between FoRB and other subject matters in contexts where rights are restricted, or where peace and security issues intersect with FoRB.
- 5.** Explore options for long-term, comprehensive approaches, building on the experience in Indonesia, which show tangible results.
- 6.** Continue to work for a clear conceptual separation between FoRB and religion and development.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Box 1: Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

From being a relatively overlooked human right, Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion (from here on abbreviated to a shorter form: Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB)), guaranteed in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has in recent years gained attention and priority from international organisations, national governments and civil society. The newfound traction of FoRB as a priority area has in part been justified as a response to evidence that religious or belief minorities face increasing discrimination globally. However, it also stems from a growing recognition and awareness of the major role that religion and belief play across the political, economic, and social spheres globally, and the importance of a contextual understanding of such dynamics.¹

While attention to FoRB has grown at the political / policy levels, with this human right increasingly featuring across foreign policy documents and development strategies, it is less prominent in development programming. In 2016, the EU established a special envoy position on FoRB, an action which several European countries followed, including Denmark, Norway, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and others.² Since, FoRB has been raised in political forums in these countries, and across multilateral and religious platforms and networks, with less evidence of the policy priority being included among these actors’ development cooperation activities. In fact, the Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (CREID), which is funded by UK Aid among others to deliver research evidence to support development practitioners on the topic, notes that to date, multilateral and bilateral activities on FoRB have mostly focused on documenting and monitoring violations and engaging in policy dialogues with the governments in question.³

In the Danish context, FoRB has been a foreign policy priority since January 2018. However, mirroring trends in the international community, its role as a priority area in Danish development cooperation is more nascent. Strides have been taken to incorporate FoRB into development policies and practice, starting in 2019, when the Danish Government allocated a small amount, DKK 5 million annually⁴, to civil society projects through a new pooled fund funding window (from 2020 onwards managed by the Danish Center for Church-Based Development (CKU))⁵. In November 2020, the Danida Aid Management Guidelines were revised to ensure that seven human rights priorities, one of which is FoRB, are explicitly outlined in the context analyses that underpin Danish country strategic frameworks, programmes and projects.⁶ In June 2021, when Denmark launched a new strategy for

¹ Petersen, Marie Juul and Katherine Marshall (2019). *The International Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief: Sketching the Contours of a Common Framework*. Danish Institute for Human Rights.

² Tadros, M. and Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2020) *Inclusive Development: Beyond Need, Not Creed*. CREID Working Paper 1, Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development, Brighton: IDS.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Under § 70 (Democracy, Human Rights and Good Governance) Danish Finance Acts from 2019 – 2021.

⁵ The funding window was supplemented with an additional DKK 1 million in 2021. More details on funding window can be found on CKU’s website: <https://cku.dk/en/project-support/FoRB-window/>

⁶ See Section 4 of Annex 1 of the *Guidelines for Country Strategic Frameworks, Programmes and Projects* which covers the structure and content of context analyses.

development cooperation (*"The World We Share"*), FoRB was included as a part of Denmark's human rights based approach (HRBA) and focus on the rights and dignity of marginalised groups, stating that Denmark *"will expand the role of faith-based actors in promoting respect for human rights and democracy, including continued efforts to promote freedom of thought, conscience and religion for all religious communities, non-believers and minorities."*⁷ Following the strategy launch, FoRB was also included in the guidelines for Danish civil society organisations applying for Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) funding.⁸

The political attention to FoRB has given rise to questions in Danish parliamentary debates on how Denmark is supporting persecuted religious minorities in the contexts where Denmark is engaged in development cooperation. In October 2020, a political party submitted a proposal for a resolution to undertake a study on the persecution of Christians in these countries (mirroring a UK study undertaken by Bishop Truro). Following deliberations by the Foreign Policy Committee, it was agreed (in May 2021) that such a study would look more broadly at Denmark's contribution to FoRB for all religious and belief minorities, recognising FoRB as a universal, inclusive and indivisible human right.⁹

1.2 Objective and methodology

The objective of the study is to review, map and analyse the Danish efforts to promote freedom of religion and belief and protection of religious/belief minorities in the countries where Denmark is currently engaged in bilateral development projects and other modalities of support and provide recommendations for the way forward. More specifically, the study aims to:

- Sketch the landscape of FoRB implementation and identify types of interventions to successfully promote FoRB,
- Provide an overview of key drivers and reasons for the choice of priority areas in the promotion of FoRB, and identify the value addition of the Danish effort to promote FoRB, and
- Formulate recommendations on how Denmark can strengthen its efforts to promote FoRB and address the persecution of religious or belief minorities in its development policy and engagements.

▪ Scope

The desk study covers Danish development cooperation from 2018 to date, including a review of a) bilateral country programmes; b) regional programmes; c) civil society support in the form of SPA and pooled funds¹⁰; d) the peace and stabilisation fund programmes; and e) earmarked multilateral support.

▪ Methodology

The report is based on a combination of a document/desk study and key informant interviews.

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. (2021). *The World We Share: Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation*. p. 14.

⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. (2021) *Strategic Partnerships with Danish Civil Society Organisations: Information Note Full Application 2022-2025*. p. 23.

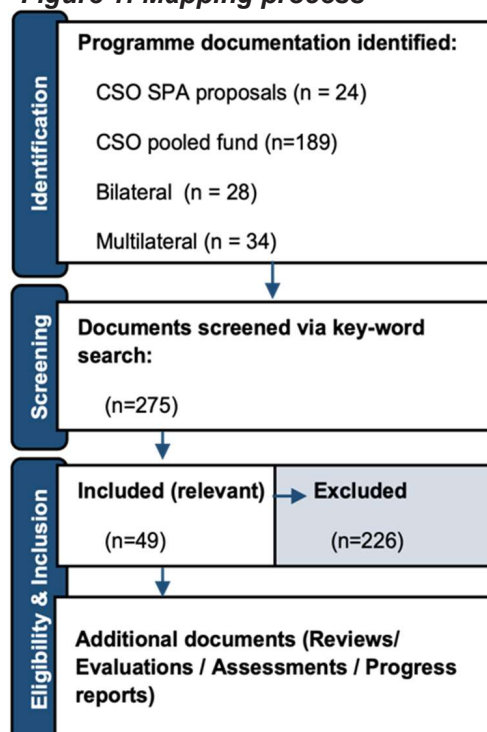
⁹ Udenrigsudvalget 2020-21 Beslutningsforslag B 60 (Danish) Read the conclusions here: <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20201/beslutningsforslag/B60/bilag/2/2394973.pdf>

¹⁰ The desk review only covers the pooled fund managed by the Danish Center for Church-Based Development (CKU). The team initially also reached out to Civil Society in Development (CISU), who manage the largest of the pooled funds available to Danish civil society organisations (DKK 162.5 million annually). CISU responded that there was no FoRB engagement in the projects that they fund, and as such these have not been included in the review. Due to time restraints and the scope of the desk review, other pooled funds have not been included.

Desk study.

The desk study and mapping covered a) programme and project documents for engagements funded by Danish development cooperation which directly or indirectly promote FoRB and/or the protection of religious/belief minorities; b) assessments – in the form of reviews or evaluations – of such engagements, and c) strategic policy and guidance documents which inform Danish development cooperation.

Figure 1: Mapping process



Mapping.

The specific methodology and steps used in the mapping (illustrated in Figure 1) are described in further detail in [Annex A](#).

The desk review identified **275** project and programme documents, which were subject to a key word search, looking for consideration of FoRB and the protection of religious or belief minorities.

The screening narrowed the pool down to **49** programme / project documents which were included for further analysis, while 226 were found not relevant (i.e., no consideration for FoRB or the protection of religious or belief minorities).

For the projects/programmes which were included in the review, the team looked at assessments in the form of evaluations, reviews, and progress reports, where these were available. However, given that the timeframe of the study covers recent programming, one of the limitations was the availability data regarding results of FoRB programming.

Interviews, process support and verification.

Interviews were carried out to qualify the mapping and findings from the desk review. Interviews with key stakeholders included a) the FoRB office in MFA, b) other MFA HQ staff, b) Danish embassy staff in Indonesia; c) Danish civil society organisations & pooled fund managers working with FoRB and the protection of religious minorities, and e) other experts / FoRB representatives from like-minded donors. Process support and subject matter expertise was provided by a reference group of four national experts on FoRB. The embassies in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso were consulted on country programming and FoRB. The Afghanistan desk in MFA HQ was consulted on FoRB in the country programme ending in 2021, when all development activities were closed.

1.3 Structure of the report

The remainder of the report is structured in five chapters. Chapter 2 gives an overview of ‘the landscape’ of FoRB in Danish development programming based on the mapping described above. Chapter 3 covers the ways in which Danish actors are working, looking at the methodologies and practices at play. Chapter 4 considers different entry points for working on FoRB, and intersections between FoRB and other priority areas. Chapter 5 looks outward at like-minded donors to synthesise learnings from their FoRB engagement. Chapter 6 provides overall conclusions and recommendations for how Denmark can strengthen its efforts to promote FoRB in development policy and engagements.

2 The Landscape

This chapter gives a brief snapshot of the Danish landscape of work on FoRB which emerged from the mapping of the promotion of FoRB and the protection of religious and belief minorities at policy level, and across Danish development cooperation modalities and interventions.

2.1 FoRB at the policy level

At policy level, the Danish approach to FoRB is based upon four fundamental principles of the right as *Universal*, *Inclusive*, *Preventive* and *Indivisible*.¹¹ The Danish strategy to promote FoRB and protection of religious/belief minorities contains five tracks (See Box 2 below).

Box 2: Tracks in the Danish Government's strategy to promote FoRB

The Government's strategy to promote freedom of religion or belief and protection of belief minorities contains five tracks:

- **Track 1:** Mobilization of the international community for the promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- **Track 2:** A thematic focus on the two intersections between Freedom of Religion or Belief and Gender Equality, and Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).
- **Track 3:** A geographical focus on the immediate neighbourhood of the EU, including the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).
- **Track 4:** Dialogue and cooperation with countries on freedom of religion or belief.
- **Track 5:** The tracking of a number of cases of individuals persecuted for belief or religious reasons.

Denmark established an Office for FoRB led by a Special Representative in 2018 with the mandate to strengthen international cooperation on FoRB is based on Article 18 in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as Article 18 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Through this organisational set-up, Denmark promotes FoRB internationally as a fundamental human right. The focus on intersectionality in Track 2 of the Danish approach is quite unique, and Denmark is seen as a leading actor in intersectionality between FoRB and gender equality/transformation and the intersection between FoRB and issues such as atrocity prevention / Responsibility to Protect (R2P). With the strategic attention in the *The World We Share* strategy; FoRB has recently been positioned on a broader platform for engagement than envisaged in the five tracks approach.

Denmark also promotes FoRB in the *International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development* (PaRD). This Partnership was set up in 2016 to convene governments, multilateral entities, civil society, and academia in a forum for dialogue, learning, and collaboration to inform policy and practices in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

¹¹ **Universal:** Denmark's approach is firmly based on the freedom of religion or belief as enshrined in art. 18 of the ICCPR and the international conventions as described above. Freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right equal to all other human rights. It is not a divine right, but a universal right for all, and should be defended by all. **Inclusive:** The protection of freedom of religion or belief is broad, including both non-theistic and atheistic beliefs. Thus, it is important to emphasize the "B" for Belief in FoRB to ensure freedom of religion or belief for everyone. **Preventive:** Freedom of religion or belief is the litmus test of the fundamental human rights in a society or as the canary in the coalmine. Restrictions and limitations on the individual's right to freedom of religion or belief warns us that other human rights may be at risk, so we must act to protect this freedom and all other human rights. **Indivisible:** Freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right no more important than other human rights, but equal and indivisible to all other human rights. Source: *Danish Office of the Special Representative on FoRB*.

(SDGs). Denmark has been instrumental in including FoRB in PaRD's recent five-year Strategic Plan (2022-2026), as a cross cutting priority/ work stream.¹²

2.2 FoRB in Danish development cooperation

- Who is working on FoRB in the context of Danish development cooperation?

Given that policy and strategy level attention to FoRB is recent, it is still in the process of being situated and operationalised with the framework of Danish development cooperation. As such, the mapping found little evidence of the priority area being integrated into the Danish bilateral development cooperation. FoRB is concentrated in projects of faith-based organisations, some of which have had a FoRB focus for several years.

Up to now the *bilateral country programmes*, a main modality of Danish development cooperation, have paid limited attention to FoRB¹³. The context analyses in the programme documents for programmes in Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Uganda - and Myanmar and Afghanistan (up to 2021) - refer to religion and religious actors, without specific or explicit mention of the particular right, or discrimination faced by religious and/or belief minorities. This is not necessarily an oversight, as the analyses are context specific and provide broad descriptions of the human rights and governance situations, building the justification and value proposition for Denmark's engagements. The programmes cover a broad range of objectives and activities related to human rights, i.e., women and children's rights, democratic freedoms and rights, such as media freedom, rights of association, rights of minorities, and access to legal services for all. Formal institutional strengthening is extended to human rights commissions and other human rights infrastructure, as well as the justice sector. While many of these areas overlap with, or mutually reinforce freedom of religion or belief, this connection is not explicit, thus contributions to FoRB remain implicit.

The projects that directly work toward the promotion of FoRB and the protection of religious or belief minority groups are those of Danish *civil society organisations*¹⁴ (and in particular the *faith-based organisations*). Out of 49 projects which to some degree include a focus on FoRB, 76 percent (i.e., 37 projects) were planned and implemented by civil society organisations through Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) funding or the pooled fund managed by Center for Church-Based Development (CKU). In fact, all but 10 of these projects were implemented by CSO recipients of pooled funding managed the CKU. In addition, civil society organisations were also the implementing partner on some of FoRB-related projects seen in Danish bilateral country / regional programmes, such as Danmission's sub-component of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (ending in 2022).

CKU has since 2020 managed the new funding window under their pooled fund, dedicated to "*projects which increase respect, protection and promotion of FoRB*"¹⁵ open to all Danish civil society organisations, faith-based or not. However, given that it is a relatively new opportunity, and the funding is quite limited, only 11 grants were approved in the time period covered by the review. This illustrates that CKU's member organisations have used the general pooled funding as an opportunity to work on FoRB both prior to, and after the new funding window

¹² PaRD. (2020). *Becoming More Together*, PaRD's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 (final draft), p 3

¹³ The exception is the Good Governance Programme in Indonesia, where the governance programme has been implemented since 2003/2004 with a focus on Interfaith Dialogue and human rights, and institution building.

¹⁴ Support to civil society is a cornerstone of Danish development cooperation. According to the *2022 Evaluation of Danish Support to Civil Society*, approximately one fourth of Denmark's total official development cooperation (ODA) in 2019 was channelled to Danish CSOs – with 16 main Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) partners as the largest recipients – making them key agents in operationalising the Danish development priorities articulated in strategy documents such as *The World 2030* and *The World We Share*. Source: INTRAC/ Nordic Consulting Group. (2022). *Evaluation of the Danish Support to Civil Society*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark / Danida.

¹⁵ CKU. (2021). *Guidelines to the CKU fund's open window for Freedom of Religion or Belief*. p. 4.

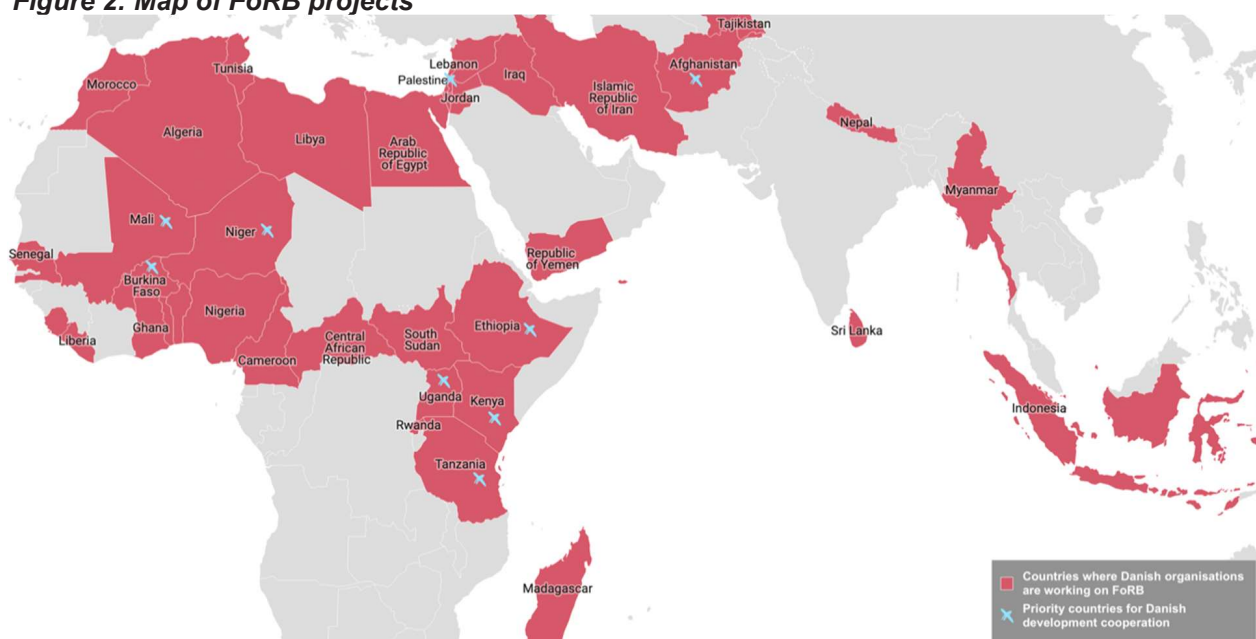
was introduced. In general, there is a large knowledge and resource base in CKU on FoRB and several of its member organisations are active in advocating for and building literacy on FoRB across various networks and fora.

While CKU's FoRB window is open to all Danish civil society organisations, only two of the projects were implemented by secular / non-faith-based organisations (KVINFO and DOONI DOONI). This highlights that FoRB as an overall priority area is not very prominent among secular / non-faith-based organisations and more traditional human rights actors¹⁶. These organisations do not work specifically on FoRB across their international work.¹⁷ It is in line with the strategy level framing (in *'The World We Share'*), which emphasises faith-based actors' role, rather than civil society organisations at large.

▪ Geographic distribution

The map below indicates the geographic spread of the projects that were found to include FoRB and the protection of religious/ belief minorities. It illustrates a certain degree of overlap between Danish priority countries, and where organisations are engaging on FoRB, such as Myanmar, Tanzania, Kenya, the Sahel countries and Afghanistan. There are a host of projects concentrated on the MENA region, although this does not reflect an operative link to Track 3 of the Danish strategy on FoRB (described in Box 2).

Figure 2: Map of FoRB projects



▪ Budget size and duration

As noted above, the majority of the projects found relevant to include in the mapping are funded through the CKU pooled fund. On average, the budget size of these projects amounts to approximately half a million DKK, over a relatively short time span – ranging from under a year to up to two years.¹⁸ One key exception is Indonesia and the long-term bilateral partnership between the two countries, which has lasted more than 15 years (this partnership is described further in Section 3.6.).

¹⁶ Some organisations may have started planning and implementing FoRB, because of the focus on FoRB at strategic level. Such emerging priorities could not be captured systematically in this review.

¹⁷ The Danish chapter of Amnesty International informed the study team that the organisation did not see the FoRB angle included in their work.

¹⁸ While CKU's pooled fund (not the FoRB window) does allow for phased projects with two phases of a 3-year duration, these were not represented in the sample. Source: CKU Guidelines for the Fund.

3 Ways of working with FoRB

The previous chapter provided a snapshot of the actors, geographies, and scope of FoRB projects in Danish development cooperation. This chapter offers an analysis of the trends that have emerged from the mapping, in terms of how organisations approach FoRB and the protection of religious/ belief minorities in their programming. The final section takes a closer look at the more comprehensive Danish bilateral engagement in Indonesia.

3.1 Degrees of engagement on FoRB

The projects in the analysis include FoRB and protection of religious and belief minorities to varying degrees. The team applied a typology giving projects a score between 1 and 5 (as presented below in Figure 3) to categorise the degree (or complete lack) of engagement on FoRB and protection of religious and belief minorities across projects.

Figure 32: Typology of degree of engaging on FoRB across projects



As noted in the methodology section, a total of 275 projects were screened, and of these 49 projects were found to include FoRB to some degree. The remaining 226 do not consider FoRB in context analysis, nor include specific objectives or activities that directly or indirectly contribute to the promotion of FoRB (score 5).

Of the 49 projects that are included for analysis, approximately half (24) were given a score of 1, meaning that they include FoRB and the protection of religious/belief minorities as a principal objective.

Seven projects were found to include FoRB and the protection of religious/belief minorities at the activity level, without it being the objective of the project (i.e., a score of 2). Scores 1 and 2 together constitute projects that directly work on FoRB (n=30).

Twelve projects included issues related to FoRB and/or the protection of religious and belief minorities in the context or problem analysis (score 3), without taking these issues up in the project (see Box 3 on the following page, which looks at bilateral country programmes, illustrating that while FoRB is not mentioned, religious factors or actors are mentioned).

The final group, given a score of 4, were projects that indirectly contribute to the promotion of FoRB and the protection of religious/belief minorities, by contributing to co-existence and peace across religious and belief communities. Six of the projects fell into this category.

Box 3: Context analyses and FoRB

In the current bilateral country programmes FoRB is not addressed at objective or activity level. Religion and faith-based actors are only sporadically included in the analysis of specific contexts to provide the basis for inclusion of religious leaders as stakeholders and “influencers” in multistakeholder dialogues. There are different explanations for the absence of FoRB, including that: a) Bilateral country programmes run for a five-year period, and few have been formulated since FoRB became a strategic priority. b) Programmes often continue objectives and activities from one phase to the next, and both context analyses, objectives and partnerships continue, without major changes. c) Decisions on programme contents at times precede the context analysis, leading to specific lines of analysis being a justification for programme contents. d) Development cooperation has historically been secular and conducting an analysis where religion and faith are central elements would break with “tradition” and prevailing institutional logic. e) Lastly religion and faith can be very sensitive and could pose risks to analysis and programming.

Although no direct analysis of FoRB some programmes note religion or religious actors:

The context analyses of the country programmes in **Burkina Faso** (2016-2020) and the latest programme, 2021-2021, note religious and ethnic co-existence as an important factor of resilience and a buffer against the deteriorated security situation. The analysis in the earlier programme includes reference to the role of faith-based actors. In the 2016-2020 programme document it is stated that although Burkina Faso is affected by radical Islamic tendencies *“the religious and political establishment has been fairly successful so far in limiting the influence of radical groups”*. In the country programme 2021-2025, the instability in Burkina Faso is similar to other countries in the Sahel region: *“Regional groups affiliated with Al-Qaida and ISIS have found new, fertile ground in Burkina Faso that has allowed them to extend their operations to this country, using political and economic marginalization, local, ethnic, religious as well as political conflicts and grievances to further their agendas”*. As a response to the deterioration of the environment, it is noted that the country’s resilience, rooted in the unique history of peaceful co-existence between faiths and ethnic groups, local and community mechanisms of mediation involving faith-based actors provides potential as a positive example to others in the region.

In the Mali and Niger programmes, faith-based actors play a role in dialogues to prevent and resolve conflicts, but they are not specifically included in the context analysis. The context analysis in the **Mali** country programme (2017-2022) notes serious violations of the human rights of the civilian population by armed and extremist groups, in particular towards women and children and against marginalized groups. The situation is worsened by an increasing number of intercommunal and intra-communal conflicts and human rights violations rooted in escalating tensions between ethnic groups, further compounded by the negative consequences of the security operations conducted by state security forces and of illegal human and drug trafficking. The analysis neither mentions FoRB nor the potential role of faith-based actors in addressing the conflict or in promoting peaceful coexistence. However, as part of the regional Peace and Stabilisation Programme for Sahel, faith-based actors and traditional authority actors in Mali are part of the efforts to forge local peace agreements and peaceful coexistence. At the same time, peaceful coexistence between ethnic and religious groups is also promoted through the country programme’s civil society support mechanism, FAMOC.

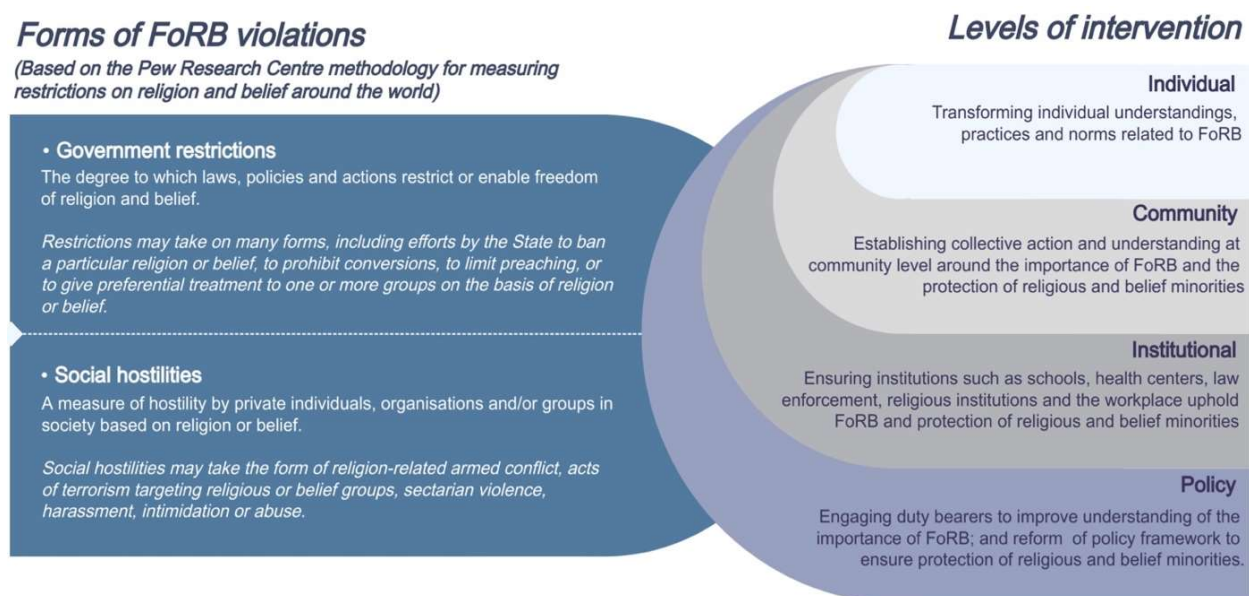
The **Niger** country programme (2017-2022) focuses on human rights, promoting a *“better understanding of international and national standards in their respective fields including advancing recommendations for reforms and sensitizing authorities and citizens on human rights”*. Religious actors are seen to *“promoting religious dialogue and/or stemming the spread of radical interpretation of religion”* and *“enhancing the role of women and youth in conflict prevention and resolution”*.

Although there is no longer a country programme in Afghanistan, the context analysis in the **Afghanistan** country programme (2018-2021) emphasised that protection of human rights continued to be a serious challenge, but the restrictions on FoRB were not mentioned while other rights are specifically mentioned. FoRB is severely restricted by the Constitution, which was discussed in the context analysis of the PSF programme. The constitution is clear that *“No law shall contravene the tenets and provisions of the holy religion of Islam in Afghanistan” (Article 3)*.

3.2 Levels and entry points for working on FoRB

Four levels of FoRB engagement were found across the projects, including individual, community, institutional and policy levels (see right hand side of Figure 5 below). Several projects worked across levels, in particular concentrated on the individual, community, and institutional levels. Projects working to promote policy level changes (e.g., working toward policy reform to reduce government restrictions on FoRB) were scarce, with only few examples of advocacy efforts. One such example is Danmission's project in Lebanon, which aims to enhance women's rights in the Lebanese personal status law by engaging in a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue, bringing together civil society, political and religious authorities, to produce a white paper with policy recommendations as an appeal to national decision-makers (See Box 8). Another example is the Danish bilateral engagement in Indonesia, where Denmark has supported FoRB both at individual, community, institutional and policy levels (discussed further in section 3.6.).

Figure 53: Forms of FoRB violations (left) and Levels of intervention (right)



Personal status laws, official state religions, and other government restrictions were raised in project descriptions and their context analyses (see left hand side of Figure 5) as a way that the State can be a perpetrator of FoRB violations. It is important to note here, however, that not all restrictions on religion or belief constitute FoRB violations, as there are limitations on FoRB in certain contexts (see footnote)¹⁹.

However, most of Denmark's projects were implemented by NGOs whose leverage or entry points to working on FoRB were at the community level. As such, the projects covered in the mapping are most frequently designed to address social hostilities – i.e., working with individuals, communities, groups, and institutions, rather than policy frameworks. According to a study Pew Research Centre, social hostilities towards religious and belief groups has declined globally, particularly due to a decline in religion-related terrorism (in particular, after military defeat and loss of territory of Islamic State in Iraq/Syria), but also with fewer incidents

¹⁹ Government restrictions do not necessarily constitute FoRB violation, as is noted in the discussion of the typologies used to measure government restrictions by the Pew Research Center and others that publish annual reports on FoRB violation. In the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (Article 18(3)) "freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others".

of mob violence, coercion, and other threats to FoRB. Nonetheless, many of the countries where Danish organisations are engaging (e.g., Sri Lanka, Israel/Palestine, Indonesia, Egypt, Iraq, Mali, etc.) score high or very high in terms of social hostilities involving religion.²⁰

Adding to this, the point raised by the Pew Research Centre report related to the loss of territory by ISIS/ISIL as a source of reduced social hostilities points to an indirect impact that non-FoRB related interventions may have in creating a conducive environment for FoRB, i.e., the Danish and international stabilisation intervention through the Global Coalition Against Da'esh which has been funded through the Danish Peace and Stabilisation Fund. A discussion of such 'implicit' or 'indirect' engagement on FoRB will be covered further in Chapter 4, which analyses how Danish organisations have used other thematic priorities as entry points to 'indirectly' or 'implicitly' work on FoRB and the protection of religious and belief minorities.

3.3 Knowledge and awareness – building FoRB literacy

Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion has long been disregarded by development practitioners, in part due to misconceptions and a low awareness of this right and how to work with it.²¹ Knowledge and awareness as well as a sound contextual understanding of the particular challenges of working with FoRB a given context, are therefore important prerequisites for interventions that seek to address FoRB – i.e. having a so-called 'FoRB literacy'. A significant proportion of the interventions in the mapping centred on building knowledge, understanding and awareness of FoRB from the individual and community, to institutional and policy levels.

The importance of creating FoRB awareness at different levels, and distinguishing FoRB from broader religion and development approaches (placing FoRB squarely within a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)) was emphasised as a key prerequisite for working with FoRB in development cooperation by all stakeholders interviewed (see Chapter 4).

Box 4: The NORFORB Learning Platform

The NORFORB Freedom of Religion or Belief Learning Platform provides resources to build awareness and capacities of individuals, communities, institutions, and decision-makings on how to address FoRB.¹ It can be accessed at <https://www.forb-learning.org/>.

The platform, which is funded by Nordic donors (Norway, Sweden, and Denmark), is supported by over fifty secular and faith-based partner organisations from the Global North and South and provides resources in 18 languages. Developed in dialogue with specialists and representatives from a range of religious and belief backgrounds, the learning platform not only provides resources for personal study, but also for educators and trainers.

This also underlines the importance of building awareness with partner organisations at *institutional* level. There are several projects with outcomes focused on building the capacity of local partner organisations to work on FoRB issues in their context, often drawing on the existing resource base (e.g., the FoRB Learning platform established by the Nordic Ecumenical Network on Freedom of Religion or Belief (NORFORB) which is described in Box 4). Several *institutional* capacity-building and training activities were also directed at local faith

²⁰ Pew Research Center. (2021). *Globally, Social Hostilities Related to Religion Decline in 2019, While Government Restrictions Remain at Highest Levels*. p. 64.

²¹ Petersen, Marie Juul and Katherine Marshall (2019). *The International Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief: Sketching the Contours of a Common Framework*. Danish Institute for Human Rights.

leaders who then are expected to use their platforms and outreach to advocate for FoRB among their constituents.

Other projects aim more specifically at improving the awareness and knowledge of *individuals*, harnessing social media, television, and digital platforms to do so (see Box 5 and Box 6 below for interesting examples). Two divergent points of departure are noted – the first which frames FoRB as a fundamental, universal, and inalienable human right, and the second which draws on theological underpinnings for FoRB – however, in practice projects often employ a mix of the two. Interviewees highlighted that in most of the partner countries, religion or faith is a considerable part of peoples' identities and daily lives, shaping how they see the world; therefore, a theological framing of FoRB may have more resonance for individuals than anchoring it within the broader framework of human rights, but can also contribute to understanding of - and lend legitimacy to the human rights perspective.

Box 5: Broadcasting FoRB into homes in the MENA region

One Danish CSO has had a long-term partnership with SAT-7, a MENA-based satellite TV broadcasting company with an outreach to 500 million people and have collaborated on several CKU-funded projects to produce television programming which takes up FoRB issues targeting different audiences. Notable examples include a talk-show (called *A Needle and New Thread*) directed toward women, which hosted discussions on the intersection between women's rights and religious or belief freedom; another example was a game show directed at children (called *Puzzle*), in which children from different religious backgrounds participated, and broke down misconceptions, and learned about FoRB. The projects have created programming in both Arabic and Persian, targeting viewers from Afghanistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Egypt, and many more countries in the MENA region. While the local partner, SAT-7, was able to carry out monitoring of the effect that the programming had on audience perceptions on religious tolerance and protection of religious minorities, it is difficult to gauge what the actual impact has been in the long-term, not just in changing attitudes, but also behaviour.

Box 6: Virtual Museum and E-Learning Platform

In Sri Lanka, there has in recent years been a growth in online communities and disinformation campaigns on social media which lead to incitement of hatred and violence against religious minorities in the country. One of CKU's partner organisations therefore developed a project with their long-time local partner, the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL), to address what they found to be underlying causes of the issue, namely: i) lack of knowledge of the historical progression of FoRB violations in the country; ii) lack of basic FoRB literacy; and iii) a general alack of knowledge about issues faced by religious minorities.

Building on NCEASL's MinorMatters platform (<http://www.minormatters.org>) and campaign that maps incidents of FoRB violations and provides resources to inform- and a platform for discussions on FoRB, the new project was designed as a virtual museum with an integrated e-learning platform. The underlying idea of the initiative is to create a comprehensive knowledge base on FoRB in the Sri Lankan context, countering disinformation and building knowledge and skills of youth in particular, to understand the historical progression and landscape of FoRB violations in their context, and be equipped with tools and knowledge to address these issues.

The virtual museum, which is co-funded by the UN and EU, has been launched and can be accessed at www.museumofreligiousfreedom.lk.

3.4 Monitoring and documenting FoRB Violations

A small number of projects in the sample included a focus on first-hand monitoring and documentation of FoRB violations, linking this to strategic, evidence-based advocacy efforts to hold duty bearers to account to religious and belief minorities. One such project, by the same partners described in Box 6, set out to establish an Early Warning and Response system in at-risk communities in Sri Lanka, to detect and mitigate intercommunal tensions before they escalate to violence. The project trained 27 rapporteurs to monitor and analyse FoRB violations across 9 districts, with particular focus on social media, explaining that *“FoRB incident documentation helps with understanding perpetrator dynamics, duty-bearer responses and types of violence directed at victims”*, which enables civil society organisations and other stakeholders to design interventions that target the root causes.²²

Another project focused on documenting the situation of Christians across five countries in the Middle East with severe government restrictions on FoRB, linking this to advocacy for Christians' rights. While it is well-documented by PEW Research Center²³ and others, that the MENA region has the highest levels of government restrictions, paired with high levels of social hostilities related to religion, which affect the Christian minority in the region, the project's narrow focus on one specific minority can come at a risk. As Juul Petersen and Marshall (2019) point out in their efforts to create a common framework for international promotion of FoRB, *“a narrow focus on specific minorities – whether Christians in the Middle East or Muslims in Europe – is difficult to align with human rights principles of universality and non-discrimination.(...) Furthermore, it is questionable whether such an approach is pragmatically wise, insofar as it arguably leads to accusations of sectarianism at local levels, potentially damaging the work of religious minorities and FoRB advocates.”*²⁴ Similar considerations have been raised by other actors, such as the EU²⁵.

It should be noted that most Danish NGOs in the sample advocate for universality in other project descriptions, where emphasis is given to working across several religious and belief groups, and equally to engaging with partners from a broad range of religious backgrounds. Beyond value-based arguments for universality, there are more pragmatic reasons for an inclusive and universal approach to FoRB. The first relates to legitimacy, where partners point out that working across religious or belief groups and factions is key. The second has to do with the commitment to 'Do No Harm' across development and humanitarian interventions, where these principles mitigate potential exclusion and marginalisation, ensuring non-partisan, conflict sensitive programming in line with the basic principles for Danish policies and strategies for development cooperation.

3.5 Dialogue

Dialogue was the main methodology applied by projects in the sample, and in particular taking the form of interreligious dialogue (i.e., dialogue activities that brought together individuals or

²² Kirkernes Integrations Tjeneste and National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka. (2021). *Project Prevent: Mitigating religious tensions and attacks*. p. 7.

²³ Pew Research Center. (2021). *Globally, Social Hostilities Related to Religion Decline in 2019, While Government Restrictions Remain at Highest Levels*. p. 36.

²⁴ Petersen, Marie Juul. and Katherine Marshall. (2019). *The International Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief: Sketching the Contours of a Common Framework*. Danish Institute for Human Rights. p. 14-15.

²⁵ See for example the EU and its Members States' Statement at the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly Resolution on the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, where the EU highlights its concern with an approach that addresses only one religion, noting that the EU's approach to FoRB is comprehensive and universal, seeking to eliminate all forms of incitement to discrimination, hostility, violence, and intolerance against persons on the grounds of their religion or belief, including non-believers. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-statement-un-general-assembly-resolution-international-day-combat_en

leaders from different religious backgrounds). The interreligious dialogue in projects often focused on building relations and accountability between religious leaders, sometimes with consideration for youth and women as well; however, dialogue between religious leaders and local or national government was largely missing.

In the projects, dialogue was seen as a means to contribute to FoRB and the protection of religious/belief minorities *directly* and *indirectly*. A *direct* contribution is when dialogue activities are centred on the topic of FoRB and the protection of religious and belief minorities. However, interreligious dialogue may also *indirectly* contribute to FoRB and the protection of religious and belief minorities by sensitising religious communities to one another and bringing about a culture of mutual understanding and tolerance, even if discussions are not centred specifically on FoRB. It bears mentioning that dialogue activities do not by definition contribute to FoRB, as FoRB requires a culture of pluralism, which allows for critical voices, rather than “perfect harmony” between religious/belief minorities. Hence, it is important to ensure, that dialogue does not become a substitute for addressing real challenges at stake in specific contexts.

Interreligious dialogue projects in the sample may link these activities to broader peacebuilding efforts (discussed further in Section 4.3). For example, one project working in the Israel/Palestine context sought to instil values of coexistence, unity, acceptance, and trust in the Israeli and Palestinian society by bringing individuals from different backgrounds (Jewish, Messianic Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths) together in dialogue, and to train them to function as conflict mediators in their society. Feedback from the training and dialogue sessions was positive, noting that the content was both thought-provoking and inspirational, however participants also noted that “*implementing solutions is neither easy nor immediate*”. As was discussed with regard to measuring the impact of SAT-7 television programmes on FoRB (see Box 5), similar challenges arise in the monitoring of results of dialogue programming: while projects tend to be able to document post-intervention changes in attitudes or perceptions, changes to behaviour (particularly in the long-term) are difficult to ascertain.

One organisation, working in the Sudan context, noted that dialogue on interfaith relations and tolerance at times can be a sensitive subject, pointing to the importance of a conflict sensitive approach which mitigates conflict drivers, and accounts for these dynamics in the design, planning and implementation of programmes. Similar issues were raised in the design of a project in Sri Lanka, where it was decided that directly defending or speaking out on behalf of religious minorities came at a risk of persecution, and therefore the project spoke not of FoRB, but of ‘social integration’.

While dialogue across the interventions established much-needed entry points for discussion and interaction across religious or belief groups, leaders and individuals, stakeholders interviewed for the study point to limitations on what dialogue can achieve in certain contexts. One organisation elaborated on a specific case, where their partner organisation was leading interreligious dialogue over a longer period in Egypt but found this to have little to no impact on the attacks on Coptic churches in the area. Upon more analysis of the drivers of these violent attacks, the partner adapted their strategy. The organisation developed a livelihoods project with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which addressed youth idleness in the region. The engagement of youth with the project resulted in a marked decrease in arson cases of churches. This example raises the point that analyses underpinning programming should be broad, rather than focusing exclusively on religion and belief, as inequalities and discrimination often are multifaceted.

Diapraxis – dialogue through practice – constitutes another methodology applied by faith-based actors across several FoRB projects. The approach goes beyond talking (dialogue) and includes joint action, i.e. engaging actors in collaborative work on concrete activities. Instead of “talking for the sake of talking”, diapraxis brings about dialogue centred around the

collaborative process of working together. Thus, while diapraxis encompasses some of same outcomes as dialogue – i.e. meeting and attempting to understand and humanise ‘the other’ – it also brings about action-oriented and tangible outcomes.

One of the ways several projects approach diapraxis is through the establishment of peace committees at community level, which bring together leaders from different religious or belief backgrounds, ages, and gender, to carry out peacebuilding initiatives or activities. The peace committee representatives share a common goal of upholding peace in their communities, and to mitigate or resolve conflicts that arise related to religion or belief, and they engage conflicting groups in discussion and dialogue in order to find non-violent ways of settling conflicts.

A different approach was taken by a project in Northern Cameroon, which built diapraxis activities around a revolving loan fund for young people with different religious/belief backgrounds (at risk of recruitment and radicalisation) to start small scale income generating activities to their mutual benefit. The depth of dialogue that arose around FoRB and anti-radicalisation, and its impact, is not available in the documentation.

3.6 A comprehensive approach – Danish engagement in Indonesia

As noted above (in Section 3.1), the projects covered in the mapping are mainly short-term and most frequently designed to address social hostilities, rather than Government restrictions and policy frameworks.

The engagement in Indonesia is different. The human rights programme has promoted FoRB, both at policy, institutional, community and individual levels in the last 15 years, applying an approach which simultaneously addressed government restrictions and social hostilities. The programme is the only comprehensive and long-term engagement on FoRB that Denmark has in its bilateral country programme portfolio. It was conceptualised following the Mohammed cartoon controversy (2006/07), although historically elements of the programme emerged in efforts by Denmark to promote pluralism and faith tolerance following 9/11 in 2001.

In the different phases, the programme has taken a comprehensive view of FoRB and aimed at a) influence policies through the parliamentarians’ network in the House of Representatives, and dialogue with religious leaders; b) support institutional behaviour change by strengthening institutions (independent commissions); c) empower communities to exercise their rights and d) establish channels for communities and individuals to report FoRB violations anonymously.

A closer look at the most recent programme phases show that over time results have been achieved and that religious “tolerance”, has been improved at different levels in the fora, institutions, and locations where the programme is active. At policy level, The Pancasila Caucus in the House of Representatives have been revived and started to actively promote FoRB. The caucus is a cross-party forum that promotes the Pancasila values, i.e., maintaining and strengthening Indonesia as a secular state in accordance with its constitution. Advocacy has been conducted by supporting the publication and dissemination of an Annual Report on Freedom of Religion and Beliefs and support to media and civil society to voice cases of intolerance, discrimination, and harassments. A very visible achievement has been the collaboration with the grand mosque in Jakarta (Istiqlal Mosque) to preach pluralism and peace.

At institutional level, support has been provided to the Coordinating Body for the Monitoring of Mystical Beliefs in society (Bakorpakem) to conduct their mandate. FoRB principles fall under the central government, but with decentralisation, many districts have instituted local by-laws, which limit the rights of minorities to practice their religion and belief. Bakorpakem monitors

that those rights are respected. The programme has also trained police, whom, according to documentation often hold the view only majority religion (i.e. Islam) has the right to show their faith in public spaces. Harassment by law enforcement agents of minorities (such as Shiahs, Ahmediayah, and Christians) is common. Another institutional level activity engagement has been to develop teaching materials that promote religious freedom and tolerance in schools (11 schools have been included) and not least to protect girls who are not wearing an Islamic headcover to be discriminated against, which is a common violation of rights.

At community level, the programme has supported a website function where individuals and communities can report harassment ([KABARKAN](#)).

In recent years, Denmark has reduced its bilateral programming in Indonesia, closing the country programme, but in its Plan of Action (2021-2024), the human rights partnership continues. This includes bilateral human rights dialogues, seeking common initiatives under the Istanbul process, workshops and trainings that enhance community resilience to combat intolerance as well as expert dialogues. In this way some of the results of the comprehensive approach are expected to be preserved. Nevertheless, the scale down of activities could result in Denmark losing valuable experiences in working on FoRB, particularly related to bilateral dialogue and policy level changes. In order to continue to build on the long-term engagement CKU has been engaged in the implementation of the Plan of Action, and work with the local partners to build institutional and community level capacities to advocate for FoRB, and grant access to justice for victims of FoRB violations.

4 Development programming and FoRB

As was touched upon briefly in Chapter 2, the mapping unveiled a significant portion of projects that either use FoRB as an entry point to work on other rights or issues, or alternatively use other thematic priorities as an entry point to work on FoRB. One major cross-field that emerges is the intersection between FoRB and Denmark's broader engagement on human rights, good governance, and democracy. Another area where there are good examples (in line with Track 2 of Denmark's Strategy for FoRB), is gender equality. Other thematic entry points that are discussed in this chapter are peacebuilding and conflict prevention (also part of Track 2), efforts to prevent or address radicalisation, and finally issues of environmental stewardship, particularly related to Indigenous Peoples, and how this intersects with FoRB.

4.1 Human rights and good governance – and FoRB

Human rights and good governance have historically been and continue to be main pillars of Danish development cooperation. Given that FoRB and the protection of religious and belief minorities is a human rights issue, it should come as no surprise that there are clear synergies and overlaps with Denmark's human rights, good governance, and democracy interventions.

However, FoRB's position within the broader framework of human rights – while clearly established in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief – has nonetheless been contested, with parties and legislation inter alia in opposition to the right to convert, and the right to criticise religion²⁶. The FoRB agenda has also been seen as closely affiliated or co-opted by conservative religious actors, advocating too narrowly for specific religious minorities' rights, 'orthodox' or 'true' religious standpoints, or aligned with patriarchal values and practices at odds with other rights e.g., related to sexual orientation and gender identities (SOGI).²⁷ Misconceptions and political tensions around the right have fuelled a hesitancy among many development and human rights actors to work on FoRB in isolation or explicitly.

All human rights are indivisible, interrelated, and interdependent, and therefore anchoring FoRB solidly within the broader framework of human rights – and not least contributing to a human rights-based FoRB literacy – is critical to seeing how FoRB can contribute to other rights, as well as how other human rights contribute to, and underpin FoRB.²⁸ The Stefanus Alliance captures this dynamic well, explaining:

“Violations of FoRB are closely connected with and threaten other civil and political rights, such as the right to life, privacy, assembly and expression, as well as social, economic and cultural rights. The status of FoRB can often be an indicator of the general human rights situation in a country. When the space for religious expression is restricted, so is freedom of speech. Prisoners of faith often find their right to a fair trial violated - Women, children, migrant workers and refugees are especially vulnerable to FoRB violations. Discrimination based on religion affects minorities' access to social and economic goods and can contribute to grievance that destabilize a society. Thus, working for religious

²⁶ Petersen, M.J and Marshall, K. (2019). pp. 11-12.

²⁷ Ibid. pp. 14- 15.

²⁸ Note: The Danish approach to FoRB is in line with the human rights framing described here, and makes explicit mention that FoRB is understood to be *universal, inclusive, preventive, and indivisible*, as is discussed in Chapter 5.

freedom promotes human rights in general, something which everyone benefits from. ²⁹

Danish development cooperation directed toward governance, human rights and democracy has largely focused on three key areas: 1) civic space, hereunder democratic rights and freedoms, 2) gender equality and women's rights, with focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and 3) institutional reforms related to accountability, transparency and democratic institutions.³⁰ The first two areas, civic space and gender equality (discussed in the subsequent section), in particular intersect with FoRB, although these overlays rarely are explicitly articulated in the Danish programming.

The civil society strategic partners (**SPA organisations**) work considerably with civic space and related human rights issues³¹. However, the mapping indicates that few organisations pay explicit attention to FoRB as an element of civic space and their human rights engagement. Instead, organisations make mention of freedom of expression, association, and assembly, as well as free media, as critical freedoms for civil society organisations to operate, and more broadly as a bedrock of a democratic society (i.e. rights and freedoms guaranteed under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as described in Box 7 below). Danish CSOs are not alone in this regard; CKU's recent report on FoRB and civic space points to a general lack of attention to FoRB across actors working on expanding civic space, where freedom of thought, conscience, and religion rarely is part of the analysis or definition of what this constitutes³².

Box 7: Article 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

All human rights are interdependent and interrelated, not least Article 18 and Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which secure freedoms that in many ways are two sides of the same coin. For example, freedom of opinion and expression, democratic freedoms raised in Article 19, are a natural extension of freedom of thought, which is covered in Article 18.

Everyone has the right to **freedom of thought, conscience and religion**;

This right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, **to manifest his religion or belief** in teaching, practice, worship and observance.



Everyone has the **right to freedom of opinion and expression**;

This right includes **freedom to hold opinions** without interference and to seek, **receive and impart information and ideas** through any media and regardless of frontiers.

²⁹ Brown, E., Storaker, K. and L. Winther. (2020). *Freedom of religion or belief for everyone*. (5th Edition). Stefanus Alliance International. p. 7.

³⁰ Nordic Consulting Group. (2020). *Democracy and Good Governance Assessment*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. (internal document)

³¹ This is aligned with the MFA guidance note for the new round of strategic partnerships (2022-2025), which mentions contributing to "a strong, diversified and free civil society" as the first priority area that organisations should work toward, emphasising democratic freedoms and rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups (including religious minorities). (MFA Information Note, p.13.)

³² Center for Kirkeligt Udviklingssamarbejde. (2022). *It's The Thought That Counts: Defining Freedom of Religion or Belief as Part of Civic Space*.

While some FoRB advocates would say that the lack of consideration for and inclusion of FoRB is an oversight by the Danish CSOs, a discussion with the organisations points to a deliberate choice to approach FoRB more indirectly. Two justifications were given: first, that focusing on and framing an engagement as a FoRB project can divert focus from the root causes of such violations, which may be economic, social, or political factors that have little to do with religion or belief; and second, that focusing on religious or belief minorities in programming may bring unsolicited attention on these groups, putting them at further risk. These organisations therefore advocate for a broader Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and a commitment to Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), which ensures that all marginalised groups are in focus, and that approaches are founded on equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion.

As was discussed in Box 3 in Section 3.1, the **bilateral country programmes**, include a significant focus on human rights and good governance. FoRB elements are mentioned in a cursory way in context analyses, but not lifted to the activity or objective level. Lack of attention to FoRB across the analysis of the human rights situation in the bilateral country programmes could point to FoRB being a new priority. Other reasons are that FoRB is not seen as a pressing issue, or possibly that it is a very sensitive issue and therefore to be avoided, or finally that priority setting in new programmes simply follow previous phases and therefore does not have an eye for including FoRB. In relation to the relevance of FoRB there could also be a concern that the high-level political interest and attention to FoRB in the Danish policy context could translate into the priority being included in programmes “automatically”, even when it is less pertinent. A counter argument is that similar concerns have been raised in the past when e.g. gender equality and women’s rights were mainstreamed into development cooperation, which now largely is accepted as an important priority.

In contrast to the bilateral country programmes, the **Danish Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP)** in the MENA region has developed an approach in the new phase (2023-2027), where FoRB is situated among minority rights. The previous phase of the programme, which will end in 2022, included Danmission as a partner with a specific focus on freedom of faith and religion. In the context analysis Christians and other religious minorities were noted to be under stress and experience persecution, and FoRB violations were also linked to the pressure on women’s rights and gender equality and rights of women under family law. In the upcoming phase FoRB has been further mainstreamed in the analysis of human rights and is indirectly part of the objectives and activities of the programme’s focus on minorities. In the strategic framework for the programme, it is said that interreligious dialogue will not be a focus area *“because in the previous programme it was not good fit under the human rights agenda and will not be an outcome area in the new DAPP. According to the rights-based approach, religious minorities will instead be included, as will other minorities, under the human rights and inclusion of minorities agenda”*³³. In this manner, the new DAPP phase mirrors the approach that many CSOs take, working broadly with minorities and inclusion, rather than specifically targeting religious groups.

4.2 Gender equality, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities (SOGI) and FoRB

Violations on FoRB often affect women, girls and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) minorities in different, and often worse ways, due to the intersectional or overlapping discriminations they face.³⁴ Despite the intersecting inequalities and discrimination, actors that

³³ DAPP: Strategic Framework Document, 2022-2027

³⁴ Petersen, M.J. (2020). *Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief and Gender Equality in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals: A Focus on Access to Justice, Education and Health*. Danish Institute for Human Rights. p. 15.

focus on issues of gender equality and SOGI tend to approach FoRB with hesitancy (reasons for which are discussed further below). The following analysis is largely focused on gender equality and women's rights, because a focus on SOGI as it intersects with FoRB notably is missing from the Danish portfolio of projects.

In March 2019, Denmark launched a one-year International Expert Consultation Process to identify synergies, and to identify and point to concrete actions to promote FoRB and gender equality. The process culminated in a report which identifies entry points for working in the intersection of FoRB and gender equality, considering access to justice, education, and health.³⁵ In the mapping of projects it was found that sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and access to justice emerged as two areas where organisations are engaging on the intersection between FoRB and gender equality.

The connection between FoRB and SRHR (and more broadly gender equality) is complex, and the two are sometimes (mis)interpreted to be in contradiction, given the role that religious actor may have in restricting access to SRHR. The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief notes, *"Of particular concern is the considerable evidence that, in all regions of the world, actors citing religious justifications for their actions have advocated to Governments and to the broader public for the preservation or imposition of laws and policies that directly or indirectly discriminate against women, girls and LGBT+ persons."*³⁶ This pertains to gendered discriminatory practices such as female genital mutilation, marital rape, early and forced marriage, widow burning and the like, as well as the misuse of religion and belief to justify denying access to reproductive health and sexual rights. However, FoRB cannot be used to protect or justify such practices, as it pertains to right of individuals, not of religions nor conservative religious actors restricting the rights of others.³⁷

SRHR (and family planning) is a priority area for Denmark, with total funding to the area amounting to over DKK 800 million in 2020,³⁸ and the mapping illustrates that programming recognises the critical role religious/ faith leaders and authorities may have – be it as role models, positive agents for change, or as gatekeepers – when it comes to norms around SRHR and harmful practices. For example, the Danish Family Planning Association plans to work with religious actors in its SPA programme, seeing them as important stakeholders when working to affect norms on health services.

One of CKU's member organisations has a project that aims to prevent FGM and early marriage practices in Kenya. The project works with religious leaders not only to advocate for the elimination of these practices, but also to develop 'alternative rites of passage' to reduce FGM. This illustrates a point raised by several stakeholders interviewed for the study: namely that faith-based organisations hold a wealth of knowledge and understanding of religion/faith and how it affects behaviour and motivations. Therefore, faith-based organisations are well-placed both to identify intersections between FoRB and other rights, and to find ways to address them from within.

On the other hand, one of the secular/ non-faith based organisations designed a project which was able to bridge the secular – religious divide that exists in debates and activism on gender equality and family law in Morocco. While CKU to date only has funded the feasibility study for the project, the partners were able to bring together Islamic feminists and secular feminists in a broad coalition to discuss women's rights in their context, trying to reconcile their different

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ UN Human Rights Council (2020). *Gender-based violence and discrimination in the name of religion or belief: Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief*. A/HRC/43/48 (24 August 2020). p. 3.

³⁷ The intersections between FoRB and gender equality, and misconceptions are covered in far greater detail in the aforementioned report by Marie Juul Petersen (2020) which can be accessed [here](#) for further reading.

³⁸ Countdown 2030 Europe, Denmark Country Profile. (Updated in January 2022). <https://www.countdown2030europe.org/country-profiles/denmark>

perspectives. This is one of the few projects in the sample which deals more holistically with 'belief', i.e., including non-believers and their perspectives explicitly in the project.

In many countries personal status laws and/or family law enable discriminatory practices toward religious and belief groups which disproportionately negatively impact women. One project, described further in Box 8 below, set out to enhance women's rights under personal status law in Lebanon, engaging in a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue (including civil society, political leaders and religious leaders), to advocate for, and ultimately produce a white paper with policy recommendations.

Box 8: The Women, Religions, and Human Rights project in Lebanon

The Lebanese legislation in its current form upholds the protection of free exercise of all religious rights, yet it delegates legislative and juridical power over family affairs to religious communities and their judges through the Personal Status Laws. This is a paradox with two realities: the guarantee of individual's right to freedom of conscience and rights free from discrimination on the one hand; and on the other hand, the authority of the religious communities to manage personal status based on their different theological and jurisprudence interpretations. This results in 1) **Absence of equality** between men and women, within a pluralistic legal framework, based on sectarian affiliation and that 2) **The patriarchal interpretation** of theology and jurisprudence by male religious leaders defines the grade of legal protection of women's rights and 3) **A polarised environment** between religious leaders on the one side and civil society and political authorities on the other, related to questions of women's rights in the Personal Status Laws. The project supported by the Office of the Special Representative for FoRB at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports the Women, Religions and Human Rights in Lebanon project implemented by Danmission and Adyan Foundation.

4.3 Peace, security and FoRB

FoRB and peace and security is closely related because working on FoRB implies addressing government restrictions on human rights and the freedom of religion and belief, as well as reducing social hostilities. Actions to promote peace, both at the level of engagement in formal peace processes and community level peace efforts, involve religious actors as stakeholders and "influencers" in many programme contexts, including in Denmark's programmes in fragile and conflict affected contexts.

Legal provisions restricting FoRB is a structural constraint for conflicts to be resolved by legal means. The Peace and Stabilisation Programme in Afghanistan-Pakistan (2018-2020), for example, explicitly notes restrictions in the Afghan Constitution. The President and Vice-President must be Muslim and "*no law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam*" (see also Box 3). The legal framework protects most key human rights, but with conflicting provisions regarding religious principles, and the Supreme Court can reject any law or treaty arguing that it violates Islamic principles. In this way there is discrimination by law and the justice sector institutions also have a very limited role to play. Such limitations are a binding constraint for programmes to address and solve conflicts through legal means.

Social hostilities related to extremist groups relates directly to FoRB in a given context, thus stabilisation efforts that address radical extremism indirectly also contribute to FoRB e.g., International Coalition Against Da'esh in Iraq, which has been a key intervention area in the Peace and Stabilisation Programme in Syria/Iraq (see also section 3.2).

A CKU supported project in Northern Cameroon set out to address rising interreligious stigmatisation and mistrust, related to growing extremism in the region following the insurrection of Boko Haram, which also brought challenges related to recruitment and radicalisation of young people. While learning from previous projects in the same community allowed the partner organisations to have a clear understanding of the challenges to overcome (i.e., poor knowledge/misconceptions of religion, instrumentalization of believers, poor communication between religious leaders), the project recognized that another key driver of radicalisation of youth is idleness and the lack of livelihoods available to young people. Therefore, the project applied a holistic approach, targeting drivers of religious intolerance at the community level through a mix of sensitisation, dialogue, diapraxis and livelihoods generation, with the latter specifically targeting young people.

In programmes it is important to assess the role and identity of religious actors along with other stakeholders, and their potential contribution to peace and security. Religious actors may be party to a conflict, or religion may be instrumentalised and politicised, which creates a murky picture of root causes and the role of religious actors as peace makers. The context analysis and the stakeholder analysis in programmes can therefore help unpack the degree of FoRB (as part of analysis of human rights restrictions and violations), and assessment of religious actors, and link such analysis to minority rights, potential exclusion, and marginalisation. The former UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, calls FoRB a non-harmonious peace project, *“making the point that FoRB protects minorities, minorities within minorities, converts and re-converts, reformers and dissidents. FoRB makes religious pluralism and diversity possible and enables different religious groups and interpretations to co-exist peacefully”*³⁹. There does not seem to be examples in the literature or in Danish development cooperation of linking FoRB to peace and security, but a recent effort of bringing together the experience of the Mali country programme (represented by the Ambassador), and DIIS researchers, and FoRB expertise (CKU and the MFA FORB office) in a dialogue which was headed by the Minister for Development Cooperation provided insights on potential synergies. This learning approach could be valuable in other contexts.⁴⁰

4.4 Environmental stewardship and FoRB

An area that receives comparably less attention in the project sample, with a few emergent examples, is the link between FoRB and the protection of Indigenous Peoples' right to land, territories and natural resources, and environmental stewardship not least in relation to climate change.

One such project noted that very little research exists on the spiritual and belief practices of Indigenous Peoples, (in this case focusing on the Kuy indigenous ethnic minority in Southeast Asia), and how these relate to natural resources, their availability and having access. In most cases, the relation or potential connection to FoRB is overseen, and projects focus purely on the environmental issue (i.e., deforestation as a broader climate issue). However, including a FoRB perspective may enable new ways or entry points for working on the issue.

³⁹ Quoted in Brown, E., Storaker, K. and L. Winther. (2020). *Freedom of religion or belief for everyone*. (5th Edition). Stefanus Alliance International. <https://d3lwycy8zkqgea.cloudfront.net/1615794491/FoRB-english-2020.pdf> p. 14.

⁴⁰ The seminar took place in 13th January 2022. <https://um.dk/en/foreign-policy/office-of-the-special-representative-for-freedom-of-religions-or-belief/danish-forum-for-freedom-of-religion-or-belief>

5 Lessons from like-minded donors

The desk review has conducted a light assessment of FoRB approaches in like-minded countries, such as Norway, the United Kingdom (UK), and the Netherlands, to see the extent to which they have taken up FoRB in their development cooperation, and which lessons emerge⁴¹. Like Denmark, these like-minded donors have a clear message that FoRB is about human rights, and not related to situation of specific religious groups i.e., the situation of Christians in the Middle East, and also extending to non-believers and other belief groups.

The like-minded countries generally take the stance that working on FoRB does not equal religion and development, nor does it necessarily need to be associated with religious actors, although in all cases the focus on FoRB has been promoted and advocated for by Christian religious organisations. At the overall policy level, the Danish approach follows the same distinction, although the development strategy, *The World We Share*, mentions specifically that Denmark will support faith-based actors as those driving this agenda forward, implicitly placing FoRB as a sub-set of religion and development.

The fact that FoRB and the protection of religious and belief minorities by some development practitioners has been framed as a part of the larger religion and development agenda, has curtailed FoRB. As noted by CREID: *“While there certainly are overlaps between the two agendas, not least in highlighting the importance of religion and belief vis-à-vis development and advocating for religion/belief-sensitive development interventions, the two agendas diverge in other areas”*.⁴² Most notably, FoRB spans across- and is concerned with secular, non-faith, no belief and religious actors, where religion and development primarily seeks to incorporate religious actors, norms and practices into understandings of development pathways.

In the Norwegian context, religion and development and FoRB (human right) have been clearly separated organisationally, with the former area reporting to the Minister for Development and projects falling under the Norwegian Directorate for Development Cooperation (Norad) and FoRB being a policy agenda of the MFA. In the UK there appears to be a similar distinction, where a large project portfolio aims to reduce poverty and were managed by the Department of International Development (DFID) before this was merged with the UK Foreign Office and became FCDO in 2020. The programmes under DFID were clearly stated as FoRB initiatives, and not as religion and development. The Netherlands has all FoRB activities under a Human Rights Ambassador and a fund that more generally supports human rights activities. In many ways this is parallel to Denmark’s FoRB office, which also emphasises FoRB as a universal human right and exists solely because FoRB has been seen as a neglected right.

The UK, Norway and Denmark have all established funding modalities that specifically cater to FoRB projects. In Norway, the Norwegian MFA manages a Fund (amounting to NOK 50 million), which finances a number of partners, such as the Stefanus Alliance, University of Oslo Institute for Human Rights, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Minority Rights Group, and the Holocaust Centre in Oslo, in addition to the financial support that they give to OHCHR, the Norwegian Human Rights Network, and the US State Department Rapid Response Fund for FoRB. The Danish funding window, managed by CKU, has a significantly smaller budget (DKK 5 million annually), and only civil society organisations are funded through this window. The UK has since 2016 worked through the Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy,

⁴¹ This section draws primarily on a meta-analysis by the Religious Freedom Institute called *“Surveying the Landscape of International Religious Freedom Policy (2019)”*, as well as an interview with the FoRB Ambassador in Norway.

⁴² Tadros, M. and Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2020) *Inclusive Development: Beyond Need, Not Creed*. CREID Working Paper 1, Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development, Brighton: IDS.

CREID and FoRB Leadership Network, which works on human rights, including FoRB in several contexts.

In addition to specific funding modalities for FoRB, like-minded countries incorporate or mainstream FoRB into development programmes to varying degrees. The desk review has shown that in the Danish context, FoRB is rarely considered or included in country programmes. While it has been difficult through a desk review to ascertain the situation in the UK, the Netherlands and Norway, it appears that all three countries have taken strides to decentralise FoRB to the embassies, particularly by building FoRB awareness and literacy at this level through *How-To Notes*, and *FoRB Guidelines*.⁴³

FoRB literacy as key for the inclusion in development cooperation is noted by all in the like-minded group of countries, and considerable resources are dedicated to this purpose. At this point it is not clear to what extent there is a direct link between FoRB literacy and subsequent programming of development cooperation projects.

⁴³ See for example the Guidelines for the Norwegian Foreign Service on the Protection and Promotion of Rights and Freedoms of Persons belonging to Religious Minorities; or the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office's Freedom of Religion or Belief Toolkit.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

At the policy level, FoRB is rightly placed within a broader human rights framework, with Denmark taking a leading role promoting an approach to FoRB based on four fundamental principles (universality, inclusivity, prevention and indivisibility) that includes non-believers alongside other religious and belief minorities. The strategy for development cooperation *The World We Share* (2021), for the first time draws specific attention to FoRB and the protection of minorities as a strategic priority for Danish development cooperation. While at the strategy level, human rights and democracy continuously have been foundational elements of Danish development cooperation, FoRB has to date been given limited attention. Misconceptions and political tensions around the right have fuelled a hesitancy among many development and human rights actors to work on FoRB in isolation or explicitly. By including FoRB in *The World We Share*, the right needs to find its place and justification among other human rights in programmes and in advocacy. The strategy primarily emphasizes faith-based organisations as those that will carry forward work on FoRB, which in practice could anchor FoRB within the *Religion and Development* agenda, rather than within the broader human rights framework.

The newfound policy and the strategy level attention has not yet translated into FoRB being integrated into the Danish bilateral development cooperation, although bilateral country programmes include a significant focus on human rights and good governance. FoRB elements are mentioned in a cursory way in context analyses, but have so far not been lifted to the activity or objective level. While some of the areas of engagement overlap with, or mutually reinforce freedom of religion or belief, this connection is not explicit, thus contributions to FoRB remain indirect and therefore not clearly documented. One key exception is the long-term bilateral partnership with Indonesia where Denmark has engaged at policy level, promoted institutional reforms, built capacities of law enforcement agents, and provided a channel for citizens to report violations.

Programming of FoRB is currently concentrated in faith-based organisations' projects, primarily financed by a small pooled fund for this specific purpose. The current organisation of FoRB both promotes FoRB, but potentially it also limits the wider application of FoRB. The reason is that projects at this point are financed by the CKU FoRB funding window, which has an annual budget of DKK 5 million. Although the window is open to all civil society, it is mainly used by faith based organisations, and FoRB may therefore not be picked up by secular or human rights actors. In addition, the limited financial volume and relatively short timeframe for projects is likely to be a barrier to institutional and policy level engagements.

Approaches to programming that promote FoRB and the protection of religious and belief minorities vary significantly, both in terms of depth/focus on engagement, and the level or entry points used. The mapping illustrated that relatively few organisations work directly with the promotion of FoRB as a principal objective of interventions, but that some organisations instead apply an indirect approach, where FoRB is supported implicitly by e.g., engaging in peaceful coexistence activities at a community level. Likewise, the entry point, or level of engagement varies, although most projects in the sample were working across individual, community and institutional levels to address social hostilities. Fewer projects were found to address the policy level to address government restrictions on FoRB.

Some civil society organisations make a deliberate choice to approach FoRB indirectly, rather than explicitly working on FoRB at the objective level. Reasons for this are first, that focusing on- and framing an engagement as a FoRB project can divert focus from the root

causes of such violations, which may be economic, social, or political factors with little to do with religion or belief; and second, that focusing on religious or belief minorities in programming may bring unsolicited attention on these groups, putting them at further risk. These organisations therefore advocate for a broader Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and a commitment to Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), which ensures that all marginalised groups are in focus, and that approaches are founded on equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion. In the same vein, applying a minority focus ensures that FoRB is addressed where it is relevant, which is done in the new phase of the Danish Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP) 2022-2027. It should be noted that DAPP has included a special fund that allows the programme to draw on relevant external expertise to address rights of minorities, including religious and belief minorities.

Many misconceptions and a general lack of awareness exists on what exactly the FoRB constitutes, and how to work on it. Several Danish organisations are aware of this challenge, and their work on FoRB prioritises building FoRB literacy among a range of stakeholders and organisations. In this regard, NORFORB (and CKU) provide a depth of knowledge and useful resource base for organisations to draw on. When looking to likeminded countries, FoRB literacy is also a key priority, including focusing on building knowledge and awareness of entry points at the local level, in their embassies and among partners.

There is a high degree of innovation across project design, applying creative methods and digital technologies to increase the outreach and resonance of advocacy and awareness raising. Key examples of this include the use of television programmes, both talk shows for adults, and game shows for children, to sensitize the audience to FoRB issues and build tolerance across religion and belief groups. Likewise, social media and digital platforms were harnessed, noting that many FoRB violations occur online.

Few projects focused on monitoring and documenting FoRB violations, but those that did tied these activities to evidence-based advocacy and prevention activities. In this regard, the review illustrates that it is imperative to draw on or carry out holistic analyses, not focused on one particular religious minority or group, nor only looking at religious or belief-related factors for discrimination and persecution.

Adopting a FoRB perspective when addressing other areas, such as gender equality, peacebuilding, and environmental conservation, is a fruitful way of working with FoRB where value addition can be seen. Focusing on the intersectionality between forms of discrimination is a way to strengthen a rights-based approach to FoRB, an area which could be further developed. For example, there are good project examples of promoting gender equality, however sexual orientation and gender identities were largely neglected in the interventions despite the intersectional discriminations that exist. Likewise, FoRB may be a relevant angle when working with indigenous groups' broader rights related to land, environment, and natural resources.

In relation to peace and security there are emerging learnings and practices that could link FoRB to these efforts. There are few examples in Danish development cooperation linking FoRB to peace and security, although there are many examples of interreligious dialogue projects for peaceful coexistence. While religious actors may have a role to play (both positive and negative) in relation to peace and security, stronger analyses are required to understand their role in specific contexts, as well as how peace and security (and interreligious dialogue) efforts relate specifically to FoRB outcomes.

As with all other development programming, interventions must be context-driven, and there may be situations where FoRB is not the most relevant lens to apply. On the one hand, analyses underpinning programming should be broad, and not exclusively focused on religion and belief, as inequalities and discrimination often are multifaceted; on the other hand,

violations on FoRB and discriminations faced by religious/belief minorities should be considered in context analyses of Danish programmes in order not to be overseen or neglected. Evidence across the portfolio of projects indicates that there are often unexploited opportunities to work across the intersection between FoRB and other human rights. Including FoRB more systematically in analyses would bring such opportunities to light.

6.2 Recommendations

- 1.** In Danish bilateral development programmes, FoRB should be considered alongside and in relation to other human rights. The context analysis should determine the relevance of FoRB in a given programme – noting that to do so, the context analysis must include FoRB.
- 2.** FoRB literacy should continue to be developed among Danish development stakeholders and partners, given the many misconceptions that exist.
- 3.** Broader alliances and coalitions of partners should be built to work on FoRB – including across different faith-based actors, non-faith-based actors, human rights actors, research/knowledge partners.
- 4.** Continue to engage in knowledge building and programming on intersections that exist between FoRB and other subject matters in contexts where rights are restricted, or where peace and security issues intersect with FoRB.
- 5.** Explore options for long-term, comprehensive approaches, building on the experience in Indonesia, which show tangible results.
- 6.** Continue to work for a clear conceptual separation between FoRB and religion and development.

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- Kirkernes Integrationstjeneste - DMCDD-20-TA-05 - Building A Virtual Museum and E-learning Platform to Advance the Freedom of Religion or Belief in Sri Lanka"
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- KVINFO - DMCDD-20-TC-02 - Who needs Islamic feminism? - crossing division of the women's movement in Morocco"
- Danmission - CKU-22-TC-01 - Feasibility Study concerning “Towards more freedom of religion and belief in Cambodia (TFC)”"
- Danmission - DMCDD-20-TA-01 -Women, religions and human rights in Lebanon (WRL)"
- Danmission -(no project # specified) Towards more freedom of religion and belief in Cambodia

Annex A: Mapping methodology

The mapping portion of the study entailed four concrete steps: 1) Identification, 2) Screening, 3) Eligibility, and 4) Inclusion.

- **Identification.** The first step focused on identifying relevant and recent documents related to FoRB and the protection of faith-based minorities in Danish development programme, assessment, and policy documents.
- **Screening & Eligibility.** Once relevant documents were identified and located, the next step involved defining eligibility criteria, or a set of key words, which could be used as a starting point to discern whether the Danish programme, assessment or policy documents include FoRB and the protection of faith-based minorities. The list of key words used is presented in the box below.

Box: Key words for document review

To find specific mentions of Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) (also sometimes referred to in full as Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion and Belief) and/or Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the following key words have been identified:

- FoRB/TORF (search setting NOT case sensitive in case of alternative acronym, FoRB)
- Freedom
- Religion
- Belief
- Thought
- Conscience
- Article 18
- Religious (*freedom, *inequalit(ies/y), *minorit(ies/y))

Other key word searches that may point to a focus on FoRB in the policy, assessment and development engagement documents include:

- Human Rights
- Faith
- Persecution
- Discrimination
- Inter-faith / Intra-faith
- Dialogue / Diapraxis
- Coexistence / Co-existence
- Extremism
- Radicali*/zation/sation

- **Inclusion.** Once documents had been screened using thematic key words, the team arrived at a list of documents which included some mention of FoRB and/or the protection of faith-based minorities. These were then included in a more in-depth document review.

Annex B: List of interviews

| Name / Position / Organisation |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| External reference persons |
| Filip Buff Pedersen, Center for Church-Based Development |
| Marie Juul Petersen, Institute for Human Rights |
| Birger Riis-Jørgensen, Tænketanken for forfulgte kristne, A Danish Think tank regarding prosecuted Christians |
| Kirsten Auken, Danmission |
| MFA Staff |
| Michael Suhr, Ambassador, FORB |
| Nis Lauge Gellert, FORB |
| Gunvor Bjerglund Thomsen, HCE |
| Kristian W Bertelsen, HCE |
| Katrine From Høyer, APD |
| Kurt Mørck Jensen, MENA, DAPP |
| Søren Bindebøll, Embassy Jakarta |
| Danish civil society |
| Agnete Holm, Danmission |
| Jørgen Skrubbeltrang, Danmission |
| Daniel Nygård Madsen, Center for Church-Based Development |
| Jørgen Thomsen, DanChurchAid, |
| Marie Krabbe Hammershøj, Caritas |
| Lone Ree Milkær, Danish Humanist Society, |
| Connie C. Christiansen, Kvinfo |
| Norwegian MFA |
| Øystein Lyngroth, Ambassador, Special envoy FORB |
| Think tank |
| Ed Brown, Director, Stefanus Alliance |

The team also contacted CISU, Danish Muslim Aid, Amnesty International Denmark, Special Representatives in the UK, and in the Netherlands.

