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4 The spiritual is political

Reflecting on gender, religion and secularism in international development

Brenda E. Bartelink and Erin K. Wilson

Introduction

Across academia, policy and practice, there is growing recognition of the importance of religion in development. Dimensions of this increasing interest include the influence of religious leaders on politics and public life; the role of churches, mosques and temples as meeting places in communities, providing safe spaces for learning and sharing ideas; and religious networks of volunteers that provide support for development initiatives on healthcare, education, child protection and microfinance, to name a few (Karam 2012).

Much of this interest in religion, however, is highly 'secularised'. It focusses on the material and instrumental influence and relevance of religious actors and perspectives (Bartelink 2016; Jones & Petersen 2011). There is little consideration of the impact of spirituality, belief, religious experience and practice on community transformation (Ager & Ager 2011). Hence, some scholars argue that the secular script of development needs to be re-written.

One of the biggest challenges to 're-writing the script', however, is the issue of gender. A pronounced and entrenched perception of religion as oppressive, regressive and patriarchal contributes to a widespread assumption that secularism is 'good', and religion is 'bad' when it comes to gender equality. Secularism liberates women, religion oppresses them. Yet this debate ignores the multifarious movements and initiatives to promote gender equality that cut across secular and religious philosophies. It overlooks religious teachings, interpretations, organisations and institutions that promote gender equality, and it leaves out dynamics within secular governments, organisations, corporations and societies that continue to marginalise women. In short, the debate misses what is arguably the crucial point in the pursuit of gender equality – the problem is not religion, nor is it secularism. The problem is patriarchy, an ontological structure that is separate from yet entangled with dimensions of both religion and the secular.

We explore these dynamics through a discussion of recent contributions to the sub-field of religion and development in theory and practice. Our main argument is that binary models of religion and gender – religion as 'good/bad', gender as 'male (perpetrators)/female (victims)' – hinder transformation of social and political relationships. In light of this, we suggest that faith-based organisations (FBOs)

could realise greater transformation in gender relationships, but also in religious and secular interactions, through the adoption of more intersectional approaches to religion and development.

We first unpack prevailing assumptions about 'religion', 'secularism' and 'development' that dominate development theory and practice. Specifically, we argue that these assumptions reflect the influence of problematic hierarchical dichotomies that shape interactions with the 'religious' and the 'spiritual', and their entanglement with gender in development. These problematic hierarchies contribute to marginalising and devaluing women's views and experiences. As an alternative, we develop a model combining transformative approaches to gender (Bartelink & Le Roux 2018) and multiple ontologies (Wilson 2017).

We then explore how this alternative model allows for more nuanced analysis of religion, secularism and gender in developing contexts by applying it to World Vision International (WVI)'s Channels of Hope (CoH) programme. We draw on CoH as an example of faith-based development programmes that aim to challenge gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV) in religious contexts. Whereas many aspects of CoH – and other faith-based gender programming for that matter – challenge the dominant hierarchies common in development when it comes to religion and gender, there are still aspects of such programmes that reinforce these binary oppositions. Our conclusion offers some suggestions for how faith-based development organisations could enhance their transformative and emancipatory potential.

Development dichotomies

Explicit engagement with questions of 'religion' and 'secularism' in International Relations and Development Studies is a relatively recent phenomenon. These fields are dominated by secular frameworks that separate 'religion' from other human activities, which are classified as 'secular'. This distinction rests on an understanding of the world arranged through a series of binary oppositions. These oppositions categorise actors, projects and issues as either 'secular' or 'religious', 'public' or 'private', 'top-down' or 'bottom-up', 'individual' or 'communal', 'male' or 'female', 'mind' or 'body', 'reason' or 'emotion', 'immanent' or 'transcendent', 'state' or 'civil society', 'Global North' or 'Global South', or 'developed' or 'developing' (or 'underdeveloped') (Wilson 2012). Moreover, these binary oppositions are unequal, with secular superior to religion, public privileged over private, individual rights over community rights, reason over emotion, men over women and developed over developing. Further, each binary intersects with the others. Each subordinated category is allocated negative characteristics, justifying its unequal position. Religion, e.g., is considered irrational, violent, patriarchal, chaotic, divisive, conservative and individual, personal (assumptions largely formed through the history of the Christian experience in Europe) (Ager & Ager 2011; Casanova 2011; Eberle 2003; Hurd 2008, 2012). This narrow understanding of religion in turn promotes a limited conception of what role religious actors, institutions, ideas, narratives and identities in politics and public life should play, if indeed

religion should have any public role at all (Barnet & Stein 2012; Jones & Petersen 2011; Lynch 2011).

Gender was similarly inscribed in these binary oppositions, connecting men (deemed to be rational, secular and reasonable) to the public sphere, whereas women (deemed to be irrational, religious and emotional) were relegated to the private sphere (Mahmood 2015; Scott 2017). This means that the common assumption that secularism has historically promoted gender equality is misleading. Secular modernity may have altered the shape of patriarchal structures, but the underlying assumptions and power relationships remain very much in tact (Scott 2011, 2017).

Since the United Nations' 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, however, gender binaries have become increasingly challenged in the development sector (Buss & Herman 2003). The entanglements between gender and religion have continued to be a contested subject (Karam 2017). The focus of efforts to include religion in development has primarily been on religious actors, such as religious non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and religious leaders (Jones & Petersen 2011). This means that religious beliefs, narratives, experiences and practices are still often considered to be private and rarely seen as relevant to development processes. Hence, the secular script is still at play (Wilson 2012). Furthermore, religious leaders are often male and have historically exercised a large influence on scriptural interpretation and theology. As a consequence, women's understandings and approaches to the Bible and theology, as well as their religious beliefs, narratives, experiences and practices, are overlooked or considered irrelevant within religious contexts (Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit 2017). In addition, the international development sector itself continues to struggle with gender inclusivity (Bartelink & Le Roux 2018).

In contrast to the increasing recognition of women's significance for social and political change, development actors and institutions often only consider religion as oppressive for women (Abu-Lughod 2013; Le Roux & Bartelink 2017; Van Raemdonck 2017). Religious women are visible in international development primarily as victims of patriarchal religions, needing to be rescued in the name of progress and civilisation (Abu-Lughod 2013; Longman & Bradley 2015). Whereas religious patriarchal structures are a challenge (as are secular patriarchal ones), the continued and increasing polarisation around religion and gender has particular consequences for women who are part of conservative, pietist religious communities (Mahmood 2006). Their perspectives remain marginalised and their agency denied. Therefore, despite the central focus on gender and despite the engagement with religion, international development actors frequently overlook important intersections between religion, secularism and gender, leading to the marginalisation and exclusion of religious women's voices.

Christianity, gender and transformation

Christianity has traditionally been characterised by a strong gender disparity, with church congregations predominantly female, whereas church leadership

positions are primarily held by men (Woodhead 2007). Christian theology and Biblical interpretation have often been used to support or legitimise the oppression of women and GBV (Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit 2017; Le Roux & Loots 2017; Mombo & Joziasse 2012). Debate abounds as to whether the marginalisation of women is the result of Christianity being inherently patriarchal or whether Christianity is in fact liberating for women, and it is, rather, the influence of surrounding patriarchal culture that has contributed to the oppression of women within the religion.[1] The struggles over who has authority to interpret the Bible have historically been solved through privileging white Western European male voices over others (Fiorenza 1997; Njoroge 2013).

Feminist theology is a movement that is visible in various religions and across different contexts and continents. It has emerged in connection to the second feminist wave and has, since the 1960s, focussed on questioning patriarchal systems while rethinking religious traditions from a female and gender equal perspective, including a feminist reading of scripture (Llewellyn & Trzebiatowska 2013). Feminist theology centralises justice and dignity for all, and aims to critique and transform the oppressive structures by which both religion and society are shaped (Fiorenza 1997). These structures are visible in how the roles for men and women are shaped in the church and the household. Women often assume caretaking in both settings, whereas men teach and preach about the sacred scriptures to the congregation and act as head of the household (Parsitau 2011).

Although Christian patriarchal constructions of gender are deeply rooted, they are not static, as often assumed from a secular perspective. Pentecostalism in particular is known for its transformation of gender relations (Martin 2001). Because in Pentecostalism, the 'spiritual equality' of believers is a cornerstone, it is common for women to grow into leadership positions and even establish their own churches (Parsitau 2011; Soothill 2007). At the same time, an emphasis on male leadership and authority is also affirmed, as men continue to be considered the 'priests of the family' and the dominant patriarchal, heteronormative construction of male/female relations remains intact (Martin 2001). As feminist theologian Schuzler-Fiorenza argues (1997), this cannot be considered *feminist* because it does not centralise women's subject positions in struggles for their religious and social liberation. However, there are several cases within Pentecostal Christianity which suggest that women have shaped their own agendas for gender liberation and a critique of the prevailing patriarchal order (Parsitau 2011). Parsitau's (2012) research on women-led ministries and churches in Kenya demonstrates that women recast themselves as 'Women of Excellence', 'Daughters of Faith', 'Daughters of Zion', 'Women of Honour' and 'Women without Limits', drawing on powerful female images from the Bible.

There is no single story about the transformation of gender binaries in religious contexts. Nor is there a single story about Christianity itself. The examples from Pentecostalism and Christian feminist theology already sensitise us to the different understandings and approaches to gender and transformation within Christian communities. Anthropological and feminist theological work suggests that assessing what transformation is and what it means for the structural inequalities

women face requires a deep and detailed understanding of how religious women shift to more empowered positions in their everyday lives. However, within the secular discourse of international development, religious women are often locked up in narratives of victimhood (Abu-Lughod 2013; Parsitau 2011). Understanding how these paradoxes and complexities play out within specific Christian social contexts creates space to acknowledge women's agency and leadership and expose the blind spots in the patriarchal secular and religious perspective (Mahmood 2006).

The question is how Christian development organisations and their understandings and approaches of development and social transformation can be understood in the context of these dynamics. How do they respond to both the patriarchal and secular deadlocks? Do they offer alternative frameworks of interpretation and strategies for these impasses? If so, what do these alternatives look like? Do these programmes go beyond introducing new 'vocabularies' (Burchardt 2013) to address gender in religious contexts, to transform binary and unequal structures?

Recent decolonial critiques of global justice theory and movements has highlighted the ongoing subconscious privileging of Euro-centric logics and the exclusion of local epistemologies and ontologies (De Sousa Santos 2014; Wilson 2017). These critiques maintain that transformation of gender, economic, social and political power relationships will remain impossible unless and until the alternative knowledges and approaches of marginalised and oppressed peoples are taken seriously on their own terms. WV is an organisation whose mission is the transformation of these unjust relationships. As such, addressing the inequalities that exist in gender and religious/secular binaries informing contemporary development practice, including their own internal approaches, is an important part of their own practice.

Consequently, we propose an intersectional model for understanding transformation of gender and religious/secular relationships. The model understands transformation of the religion/secular binary as moving through what Mandaville and Nozell (2017) refer to as 'right-sizing religion' (neither over-emphasising nor under-emphasising its significance) to a multiple ontologies approach, where 'religious' and 'secular' frameworks are seen as equal possibilities amongst many co-existing ways of worlding (Wilson 2017).

The model understands gender transformation as those approaches that go beyond a response to instances of gender inequality and GBV to transforming the systems and structures that cause gender inequality through a critical engagement with society (Bartelink & Le Roux 2018). Building on the work of Bartelink and Le Roux (2018), we understand gender transformation as '[m]oving away from a simplistic understanding of women as victims and men as perpetrators', and instead seeking 'to understand, deconstruct and transform our understanding of what it is to be a man and a woman', also making space for what it is to be non-gender binary (Figure 4.1).

This intersectional model brings together a holistic understanding of religion with a feminist approach to realising gender equality to understand and assess

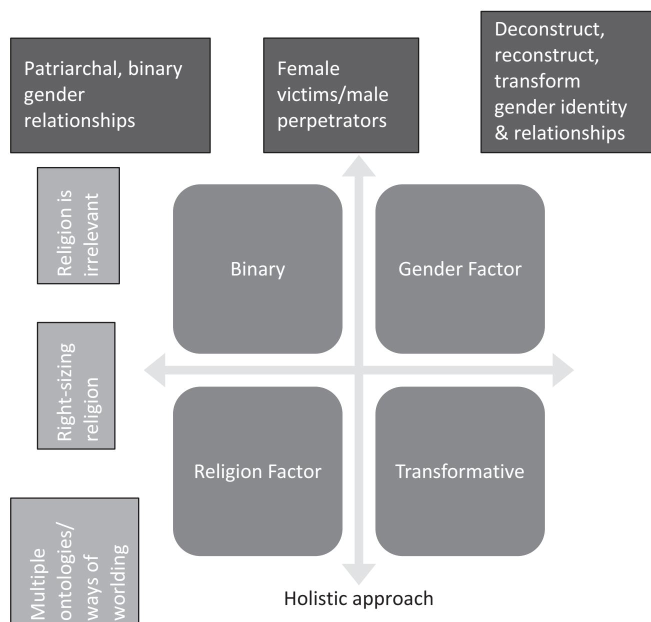

Figure 4.1 An intersectional model of religion and gender in development.

transformation to realise gender equality. Given the overlap between religion and gender, transformation is only possible if both aspects are addressed and transformed.

Researching Channels of Hope

The concrete data referred to in this chapter emerged from two research and evaluation projects carried out for WVI on the CoH programme in 2014 and 2015, which was presented in workshops in The Hague and London in 2015 (Bartelink, Wilson & Haze 2015; Wilson & Bartelink 2014, Bartelink, Wilson & Haze 2015).[2] In these studies, we interviewed local community members who had participated in CoH for gender, maternal and child health (MNCH) or HIV and AIDS concerning their perspectives and experiences on how change occurred around gender equality and MNCH in their lives and communities. We conducted research in ten communities across five countries: Malawi, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Qualitative data was gathered, including a minimum of three focus group discussions (FGDs), one with faith leaders and two gender-segregated FGDs with congregants exposed to the programme in all field locations. In each location, we also conducted two gender-segregated FGDs with people who had not undertaken CoH training. The FGDs included 8–15 participants. Further, in each location we interviewed approximately five key informants

such as community workers, village heads, police and health professionals. We also gleaned supplemental background data through formal interviews and informal conversations with WV staff in these five countries and the Netherlands, the U.K. and Ghana between 2014 and 2017. These qualitative research findings were further complemented with reviewing documents, such as the manuals for the different versions of CoH researched and project documentation such as evaluation reports in the various field locations.

Religious/secular transformation

CoH is an example of a programme that endeavours to move away from dominant religious/secular binaries towards a more holistic approach in which the lines between religious and secular are blurred. A key element in all variations of the CoH programme is the connection made between theology and scientific knowledge regarding the consequences of gender inequality and violence. As the CoH HIV and AIDS manual explains CoH aims to connect what is intrinsically important to people of faith: how 'to serve as Christians in the midst of HIV and AIDS' (Facilitators Manual 2011). Our interlocutors frequently mentioned this as the most important aspect of CoH, alongside the scientific knowledge (see also Olivier and Le Roux, this volume). A male pastor in Riruta, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya, spoke of the impact that reading Genesis 1–3 in the CoH Gender workshop had on him: 'Ordered creation, disharmony and harmony made possible (in Gen 1-3), showed people God's original plans (…) God intended us to live in an ideal world'. A female pastor in Nakombo, Kenya, stressed that the realisation that Adam and Eve were made of one flesh made it possible for them to think about men and women 'as equal, the difference is only the gender' (interview female pastor, Nakombo, September 2014). Referring to the CoH MNCH training, a male interlocutor in Lupane, Zimbabwe, emphasised that 'it really touched me… the pregnancy of Mary, the birth of Jesus, the situation in which the Saviour was born (…) it's really something that touched my heart'. He and other leaders in the community explained how it opened up their perspective for female experiences and struggles around pregnancy and child birth and the importance of male support.

CoH engages with religious leaders in a 'language' or 'narrative' that is meaningful and has authority for them. Through these conversations about sacred scriptures, they begin rethinking certain habits and structures in their lives, families and communities. The change experienced and valued would often go beyond the kind of communal change that most development programmes focus on. For example, a woman from Lupane, Zimbabwe, told us that CoH had brought 'spiritual growth and change of behaviour in the community'. This indicates that she considered the elements of spiritual growth and behavioural change to be equally significant, indicating that religion is not merely instrumental but indeed central in the change this woman experienced.

CoH also encourages building relationships between religious leaders and other public figures, collaborations that are viewed with caution if not suspicion

through the dominant Euro-American secular frame. We found that transgressing the strong boundaries between the social and the spiritual seemed for most of our interlocutors to reflect how they understood the entanglement of the spiritual and the social. Religious leaders became aware of the role they could play in social life, and (in some cases more than others) CoH realised better connections between societal actors, such as police officers, chiefs, local politicians, health professionals, social workers and religious leaders and communities.

Although CoH pushes traditional development boundaries regarding notions of religious/secular and public/private, we also note that these elements are often downplayed in formal communication about the programme. WV staff frequently stressed that the programme does not aim to change a participant's faith or introduce new theologies or faith perspectives. The facilitators' manual for CoH HIV and AIDS furthermore states that 'This is not an HIV theology or an authoritative system (…) the principles are practical pointers, "signposts", direction indicators to assist us in an honest search for obedience to God's calling in the context of HIV and AIDS' (Facilitators' Manual 2011). The emphasis is on 'rediscovering old truths' (Facilitators Manual 2011). This observation is relevant in view of the dynamics within Christianity that we outlined above, which includes movements such as feminist theology that actually do focus on new interpretations of scripture and alternative theologies. Reasons for FBOs to downplay the religious and spiritual dimensions can be found within the broader context of the overtly secular development sector in which FBOs navigate secular suspicions of a religious agenda underlying their development work (Fountain 2015). Although understandable in this overarching context, it is problematic for several reasons. First, downplaying CoH's theological components arguably obscures how significant the participants themselves consider CoH in their spiritual and theological development. Second, this downplaying of religion and spirituality has consequences for FBOs own programming, as there appears to be limited follow-up on these aspects. Our research also suggests that religious leaders and congregations can take the learnings in whatever way they want – whether they want to focus on sustainable development, increased evangelisation or a more critical and reflexive approach to gender. Third, by downplaying the religious and spiritual dimensions, FBOs (unintentionally) contribute to the continuing dominance of the religious/secular binary.

Gender transformation

All our interlocutors reported significant gender-related problems in their communities. These problems often arose from the gendered division of labour, which heavily burdens women as primary care takers, doing household chores (including growing food) as well as generating income to ensure proper education for their children. Interlocutors, male and female, frequently had little understanding of how pregnancy, childbirth and early infancy (including breast feeding) affected women's health, especially as they are expected to continue working during this time. Girls and women had little awareness of their human rights, frequently

experiencing direct and structural violence throughout their lives, including rape and sexual violence, early and forced marriage, female circumcision and particular forms of disciplining girls in cases of teenage pregnancy. Second, all interlocutors reported higher awareness and recognition of women's bodies, health and well-being, and their needs after CoH.

Whether introduced to CoH Gender or MNCH, our male and female interlocutors reported being more focussed on harmonious relations and mutual support between spouses and in the (nuclear) family, rather than adherence to traditional roles. As CoH also includes the religious leaders' spouses in the training, a male church leader in Mposa, Malawi (interview August 2014), explained, 'We have seen the change in the family of the pastor, we went to the training in couples and the transformation started from the family of the pastor'. Concrete examples of such changes were that of husbands now accompany their wives to the health clinic to give birth there instead of at home, taking care of the children and the household so their spouse could focus on the newborn, and generally participating more in household chores and tasks. A youth leader in Kwazulu Natal, South Africa, told us, 'The day I came home from the workshop I washed the dishes, it was something I had never done. My younger sister has a baby. I change a nappy, because I want to lead by example'.

According to our interlocutors, CoH contributes to more harmonious family relations, by raising awareness of women's burdens and vulnerabilities among men. For most of our male interlocutors it appeared crucial that this was strongly vested in a theological and Biblical frame. A male interlocutor in a group interview in Lupane referred to Joseph, the fiancée of Mary, as his example. The story of Joseph, according to Luke 2:1-7, is discussed in the CoH manual. It emphasises that Joseph initially refused to accept the pregnancy of Mary because he was not the father. Yet, our interlocutor explained, 'the Holy Spirit touched him, he was able to support Mary. (…) Joseph was there, he was there through the birth process and even accompanied them to Egypt (…) If Joseph can do it, why can't we?' This demonstrates that CoH offers strategies to change local constructions of masculinity legitimised by Biblical scriptures and theology. In doing so, CoH's approach coincides with a broader trend in African Christianity and Pentecostalism in particular, in which the transformation of masculine roles in support of creating stable marriages and families opens up space for women's empowerment (Burchardt 2018). Yet similar paradoxes are visible as well, one of which is that both CoH participants and WV staff perceive leadership as a predominantly masculine role.

The focus on harmonious families may influence some religious leaders to challenge GBV, whereas others might choose to ignore it. GBV disrupts family relations while addressing that GBV and underlying systemic issues may also be experienced as disruptive. The research made clear that an analysis of gender and power relations should be included when encouraging religious leaders to challenge and address GBV in local communities. Our interlocutors in Zimbabwe, e.g., who had (only) been introduced to CoH for MNCH, did not engage with the more challenging questions around GBV. In addition, only some of those who

went through CoH Gender in the other countries of study reported a stronger awareness of the consequences of GBV. Some of them participated more than once in a CoH Gender workshop, before they were motivated and confident to challenge GBV.

Religious leaders actively challenging GBV in their communities often did so through supporting survivors to report it to the police and seek professional care. Some of them explained that CoH had provided them with the language to address GBV in the community. In Malawi, local religious leaders would work together to support a survivor in the process of reporting it to the police. In Wema, Kenya, e.g., women leaders would come together for a protest walk if elders of the community tried to halt reporting cases of GBV. Those religious leaders that started to challenge GBV in their communities often shared examples of how difficult this was. Families, other religious and community leaders and the police would hinder reporting. Survivors were treated in a traumatising and stigmatising manner. This again highlights the systemic context of gender inequality in which GBV occurs.

Addressing these systemic dimensions is crucial. In contexts where broader patriarchal structures and the gendered constructions of women's and girls' behaviour and bodies are not adequately addressed, efforts to challenge GBV may quickly turn against women and girls. For example, in both locations in Kwazulu Natal where GBV was reported as a huge problem, we found that approaches to addressing GBV were informed by gendered constructions of girls having to behave appropriately and safeguard their virginity. We found this most notably among older adult women, who would talk about girls' behaviour and dress in a judgmental way, suggesting girls are partially responsible for their own sexual assault.

These examples indicate that a feminist analysis of faith-based development approaches to gender is an important aspect of the broader intersectional analysis that is required to understand how binaries are constructed and can be overcome. Gender transformation should ultimately focus on the religious and social liberation of women, by placing women's subject positions and struggles at the heart of this endeavour. Raising awareness of gender relations in local communities is an important step in this process, however it is not enough. The process should include raising awareness of systemic injustices and how this produces and legitimises violence. The case of Kwazulu Natal demonstrates that gender transformative approaches are not necessarily owned by women, as they themselves have been raised in a context in which the burden to deal with male sexual desire is placed primarily on women. Strong norms around chastity and marriage, combined with hierarchical relations between older and younger generations, means women themselves may contribute to further victimisation of other women. The examples make clear that an analysis of power relations in local development contexts is necessary. Intersectional gender analysis allows for precisely that, to understand how gender, religion and generation intersect in shaping the multiple vulnerabilities of young women in this context face.

Structural transformation: challenges and possibilities

This chapter has argued that if faith-based gender programming is to contribute to transformation in local contexts, it needs to adopt an intersectional approach integrating holistic understandings of religion, secularism and gender. This framework enables faith-based actors to address and overcome the binary oppositions that continue to affect the international development sector. Further, it facilitates taking seriously knowledges and approaches of marginalised people. FBOs have endeavoured to right-size religion and contribute to more equal gender relations. Methodologies such as CoH have been created as part of this endeavour. Yet we suggest that faith-based gender programmes have the capacity to do even more to break down religious/secular and gender binaries, and truly transform these relationships in international development.

To begin with, our research demonstrates that for interlocutors the links made between scientific knowledge and theology and spirituality were crucial for the transformation of their attitudes and behaviours. Rather than religion simply being a tool for development agencies to deploy, this suggests that religious ways of worlding should be taken seriously on their own terms in order to promote effective, real, lasting changes for gender transformation.

Second, however, rather than challenging and disrupting religious/secular and gender binaries, faith-based programmes may actually also reinforce them. Downplaying more intrinsic religious and spiritual aspects of the programme, while highlighting its effectiveness in secular development terms in external communication, reaffirms the inferiority of religion to the secular framework. Furthermore, as FBOs focus on promoting equality and harmony in gender relationships in local communities, they are not always willing to challenge institutional structures that keep women subordinated to men. This unwillingness is usually voiced as a reluctance to interfere in the internal theology of religious traditions. However, among FBO staff, there also appears to be a widespread, if subconscious, assumption that 'leadership' is predominantly masculine. These structural inequalities need to be addressed alongside the focus on local, communal efforts to realise gender equality.

Based on our research, we suggest there are a number of practical innovations that FBOs can implement in order to more robustly challenge religious/secular and gender binaries in international development as part of their transformative approaches. First, we propose a broader definition and understanding of 'leader' and 'leadership'. 'Religious leaders' invited to participate in development programmes such as CoH are often pastors, ministers, the formally institutionally recognised leaders of congregations. For various reasons, these formal institutional positions are usually held by men. Yet there are other forms of leadership that exist within religious communities as well, such as social outreach and support, leading Bible studies and Sunday school, as well as heading up religious community organisations. Often, such informal leadership roles are held by women. Engaging women in non-traditional religious leadership roles from the start – e.g. the preparation phase of programming, rather than when their leadership is noticed during

community engagement – will further contribute to breaking down gender and religious/secular binaries in development. The work of female theologians should also be incorporated and explicitly referred to in faith-based gender programming to further breakdown these problematic binaries.

Second, FBOs should consider incorporating specific attention for patriarchy as a structure separate from both religious and secular institutions. By identifying patriarchy as a specific separate problematic structure in its own right, creative space is created by FBOs to challenge patriarchal structures within religious traditions and institutions, without necessarily challenging theology.

Third, in communication with the broader predominantly secular development sector about its faith-based gender programming, it is important to stress the significance of spirituality and theology, because these elements are of equal if not greater significance to the communities themselves as the secular development outcomes regarding the transformation of gender relationships and improvements in MNCH. By excluding or downplaying these elements, FBOs reinforce the dominant secular paradigm. More significantly, however, they also inadvertently contribute to marginalising the perspectives of the people on the ground in the communities they work with. It is important in the pursuit of more just global relationships that space is given to these voices and perspectives, despite (or rather because of) how uncomfortable or challenging they may be to existing power configurations.

Notes

1. An example from Christianity that supports the latter argument is the case of Junia, a female apostle named in Paul's letter to the Romans (16:7), whose name was subsequently changed in the tenth century to the male version Junias, because male theologians deemed it impossible that a woman could be an apostle (Cohick 2009; Epp 2005).
2. For further information on the CoH programme itself see Greyling (2016) and Le Roux (2017).

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