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Introduction

Evaluating Religious and Interreligious Peacebuilding: Meeting the Challenge

1 Introduction

Religious and interreligious peacebuilding are emerging fields of practice and studies. A core component of interreligious peacebuilding is intra- and interreligious dialogue. As emerging fields of practice, religious peacebuilding, interreligious peacebuilding in general, and interreligious dialogue, have been slowly shifting from fields in which practitioners mainly relied on their faith and beliefs in the usefulness of dialogue and peace into fields with more professional communities that seek to systematically illustrate effectiveness[1]. Although these fields have come a long way in the last several years, they are still far from reaching maturity, namely the stage of professional and reflective culture of practice that entails detailed processes of programme development and integrated monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

The development of ethical and theoretical evaluation frameworks and procedures for religious and interreligious peacebuilding is not only an important step towards strengthening programmes and projects in the field, but also necessary for scholarly and professional recognition, as well as, communicating and engaging with policy-making circles and other agencies who influence the process of social change. Why evaluate interreligious peacebuilding? In general, monitoring and evaluation processes are typically invoked for two reasons: accountability and learning how to be more effective in achieving change. While often the focus on evaluation stems from the 'pressure' from donors, accountability is not limited to ensuring that the donors' financial contributions are well utilized. Rather accountability also refers to the accountability – or responsibility – to the stakeholders and actors directly affected by peacebuilding processes (Abu-Nimer, Section 1, 25 – 52). It is important to both monitor and evaluate proj-

1 The term interreligious peacebuilding is used as an umbrella term that includes other forms of intervention aiming to build closer relationships among different sides within and between faith communities, such as dialogue, nonviolent communication, peace education, conflict resolution processes, etc. (Gerrard & Abu-Nimer 2018, 6 – 7).

 https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110624625-001

ects and programmes to ensure that needs are met, projects are adjusted to address alterations in needs in the rapidly changing conditions in fragile contexts, and that peacebuilders adhere to the 'do no harm' principle. The second aim of evaluations is learning. Learning should, ideally, take place throughout the duration of any given project cycle – 'monitoring' – requiring indicators to be developed for different stages in a project and data collection to take place more frequently than at the culmination of the project (Rothman 2007). By monitoring, peacebuilders and beneficiaries (stakeholders) can learn from their efforts as they work and analyse the situation at different points in the project, allowing for managing risks and making adjustments. The final evaluation is not only valuable for the peacebuilders involved in measuring their success and learning how to improve future projects, but also for others in the field. It is important to also share failures and limitations, not just successes with others in these fields. Although it might be challenging to share limitations and obstacles that are faced both by programmers and evaluators of interreligious peacebuilding, this step is critical for the future development of this field.

There are a number of recent studies and reports that have focused on capturing the major developments of interreligious peacebuilding field.[2] It is important to recognize that the foundation for the growing interest in this area is unfortunately based on a wider attention to the role of religion in violent conflicts. The increasing manipulation of religious identity by both certain politicians and religious agencies since the end of the Cold War, has brought faith and its followers to open public debates and ideological conflicts on the role of religion in peace and violence.

The policies related to the events of 9/11 in USA, invasion of Iraq, civil wars in Middle East region, and massive refugee and immigrant waves into European countries, have led to a clear recognition among governments, donors, and secular peacemakers that religious and faith agencies have to be engaged in the processes of resolving these violent conflicts and their consequences.

However, the extent, scope, and level of such recognition varies based on region, nature of governmental agencies, and type of religious agencies involved. Some policy makers are less hesitant to engage with religious actors while others remain cautious observers. Nevertheless, today it is not strange to see policy makers calling for further engagement with religious leaders to confront and solve social and political problems.

2 For examples of these see Garred and Abu-Nimer (2018), whose introductory chapter briefly outlines four key areas in which these advancements have taken place: Engaging one's own faith, engaging with the 'other', engaging policy, and confronting injustice and trauma.

It is in this context that evaluation of religious and interreligious peacebuilding is highly relevant. Policy makers and religious agencies often speak different languages and have in some ways opposing operational frameworks to assess their contribution to solving problems.

Policy makers tend to rely on written results that are evidence-driven and action-oriented while the subculture of religious and interreligious peacebuilding tends to be oral, anecdotal, and relationship-oriented. Thus, religious communities and institutions, as well as faith-based organizations (FBOs) and interreligious peacebuilding organizations face a serious challenge in communicating their message and importance of their work to policy makers. Additionally, with the lack of monitoring and evaluation culture in these different religious environments, the policy makers' language of evidence and tangible results is often misunderstood and dismissed as an obstruction to their work and a refusal to cooperate.

The importance of measuring the outcomes and impact of religious and interreligious peacebuilding goes even beyond influencing policy makers or donors, but it is an effective way to persuade the public that religious identity is not a source of violence and exclusion. Furthermore, evaluation can provide clear proof that religious identity and actors can be influential keys in unlocking societal stalemates and in promoting social cohesion in divided societies.

In this global context in which religious institutions are under attack and major questioning of their role, evaluation of interreligious peacebuilding is no longer a secondary priority in the process of intervention, but it is an essential step in the process of effectively communicating the message of the religious agencies to the public.

Nevertheless, there are many questions that the interreligious field has to address in order to be able to present a coherent evaluation framework to be utilized by practitioners and donors too, some of these questions include:

1. What are the current methods of evaluation being utilized by the practitioners?
2. What are the challenges that face an evaluator in this field of religious and interreligious peacebuilding? Are they different from other fields?
3. What are the most effective tools and criteria that can be used by evaluators and practitioners to both monitor and evaluate interreligious interventions?
4. Do evaluators need new – unique – methodologies and frameworks in carrying out their design in the context of religious and interreligious peacebuilding?
5. What are the main research themes and gaps in the field that need to be addressed in order to further advance the monitoring and evaluation in this area?

In the overall spirit of sharing evaluative practices and their challenges, this volume is an attempt to respond to the above questions and it aims to contribute to the on-going learning for practitioners in the fields of religious and interreligious peacebuilding and interreligious dialogue.

2 Engaging with Religion: Not *if* but *how*

As mentioned above, it is no longer news that it is necessary to engage with religion and religious actors in programmes and projects across a variety of sectors – from development and environment to peacebuilding[3]. In the last couple of decades, the recognition of the importance of religion and the value of considering the views and advice of religious actors, as well as direct engagement with religious actors when working with local communities is increasingly prevalent in programmatic approaches of states, multilaterals and non-governmental organizations (Garred and Abu-Nimer 2018). With a significant percentage – more than 80% (Pew 2017) – of the world's population adhering to a faith and the fact that concepts of diversity, peace, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation are aspects of all religions, engaging religion is no longer a topic relegated to religious communities, institutions and faith-based organizations (FBOs). As members in networks or through other partnerships, national and international peacebuilding and development agencies have found benefits to working with religious agencies whether they be FBOs, religious leaders, institutions or communities to improve their work.

> There is now indisputable and solid evidence that religions and religious actors can successfully be invited into, and contribute to global development, which is also a trend that emanated from most of the literature surveyed (see among others Dan mission 2016b; Karam, 2017; Mandaville, P. & Nozell, M. 2017; Orton, A., 2016; UK Aid 2012; Swedish Mission Council 2016; Tomalin, E. et al. 2018). Thus, there is a clear consensus that religious actors should be recognized and legitimized as important players in achieving the SDGs and other sustainability objectives (Udenrigsministeriet 2019, 6).

The growing partner work with a variety of religious institutions and FBOs is amply evident with the creation and rapid growth of joint networks of FBOs, governments and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) working on different aspects of common themes in development and peacebuilding. Examples of

3 For a list of organizations working on Religion and Conflict internationally see Frazer and Owen 2018, 125.

such networks include: the Joint Learning Initiative (JLI)[4] founded in 2012 for increased knowledge exchange and evidence building; the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers[5] initiated in 2013 was founded based upon a report by former UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon, which revealed that religious actors play a key role in conflict mediation processes; the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD)[6] was launched in 2016 by the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit towards the achievement of the 2030 SDGs and focuses on SDG 3 (health), 5 (gender), 16 (peacebuilding) and 6, 13, 14 and 15 (water, environment and climate action); and the United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development chaired by UNFPA launched the UN Faith-Based Advisory Council[7] with the heads of the top common UN faith-based and faith-inspired partner organizations – 28 organizations at the launch and more than 45 at the time of writing. Collaboration also is occurring among religious organizations, institutions, and FBOs, intergovernmental organizations, and governments through less formal partnerships on consortia and steering committees, such as the Steering Committee for the Implementation of the Plan of Action[8] led by the UN Office for the Prevention of Genocide or the Moral Imperative Steering Committee led by the World Bank; and movements, such as "Faith Action for Children on the Move"[9]. In addition, KAICIID, the International Dialogue Centre, as an intergovernmental entity[10] has established five major interreligious networks in Nigeria, CAR, Myanmar, Arab Region, and Europe. These platforms are all engaged in different partnerships with local, national, or regional religious institutions and FBOs, too.

This rapid growth in partnerships, collaboration on platforms and networks linking faith-based organizations and secular entities has been advancing a systematic linking of religion and religious actors to peacebuilding and development processes, thus pushing interreligious dialogue, religious and interreli-

4 See Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (ND)

5 See The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers (ND)

6 See PaRD International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (ND)

7 Although there is no official website for the Advisory Council, its launch is mentioned in Annex 4 of the 2019 annual report of the Executive Director of UNFPA (UNFPA 2019)

8 The Plan of Action was developed by the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect in partnership with KAICIID, The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, and the World Council of Churches (UNOGPRtP et. al. ND)

9 More information can be found about Faith Action for Children on the Move in World Vision's Global Partner's Forum Report (2019).

10 The four founding governments include Austria, Saudi Arabia and Spain the Holy See as founding observer.

gious peacebuilding more front and centre on the policy makers' and public agenda than ever before. This gradual shift also comes with a greater understanding of the need to address challenges of interreligious peacebuilding. One of the key challenges is how to monitor, measure and evaluate interreligious peacebuilding projects and programmes. As highlighted in 2016 when discussing interreligious peacebuilding as an emerging field, "[t]here are few studies on the mechanism and tools (design, processes, and evaluation of success) of interreligious peacebuilding, which will allow policy makers to engage religious leaders and their institutions in a systematic process of mediation, negotiation, or problem solving to respond to a concrete social or political problem" (Abu-Nimer 2016). Although a few years have passed since this observation was published on Oxford Group's website, monitoring and evaluation of the field remains in its initial phase of professionalization and unfortunately with few frameworks or tools to offer. Those tools that do exist or are being developed are not necessarily widely recognized or disseminated. The need to advance this area is only exacerbated by the rapidity with which increasingly more actors are engaging in interreligious peacebuilding.

This volume aims to 1) examine and address several challenges associated with developing monitoring and evaluation tools and practices for interreligious peacebuilding, and 2) provide an assemblage of examples of tools and practices that have developed and are being used on the field. The hope of the authors and editors of this volume is that this collection may serve a first step towards a collection of existing approaches, wider dissemination and thereby greater application of monitoring and evaluation practices in interreligious peacebuilding.

3 Interreligious and Religious Peacebuilding

What do we mean by interreligious or religious peacebuilding and how is it different from standard peacebuilding processes? It is firstly valuable to outline peacebuilding itself before looking at religious or interreligious peacebuilding. Peacebuilding "refers to activities intended to bring people together and address a conflict's underlying structural causes, regardless of the stage or dynamics of such conflict" (Garred and Abu-Nimer 2018, 6) Why do we do peacebuilding? "Peacebuilding aims to create conditions for lasting peace and the prevention of future conflicts through the positive transformation of the cultures, structures, systems, and other root causes that generate and sustain the conflicts into ones that promote peaceful coexistence among feuding groups" (Abu-Nimer, Section 1, 25 – 52).

While there is not one stand-alone definition of interreligious peacebuilding or religious peacebuilding, there are some key components that are inherent to both religious and interreligious peacebuilding. Firstly, both interreligious and religious peacebuilding draw on the spiritual values of the participants to work towards "individual transformation and healing, as well as to build greater social cohesion within groups" (Catholic Relief Services 2019). Religious and interreligious peacebuilding engage religious actors and communities in peacebuilding processes and often utilize religious scriptures and traditions in their peacebuilding work. These similarities are clearly illustrated by the definitions of religious and interreligious peacebuilding put forth in this volume. Neufeldt defines religious peacebuilding as "actions taken by individuals motivated by their religion or representing religious institutions to constructively and non-violently prevent, reduce or transform inter-group conflict"; and interreligious peacebuilding as "peacebuilding undertaken by people motivated by religion or representing a religious institution or confessional community and working between and across faith traditions to prevent, reduce or transform inter-group conflict" (Section 1, 55). Abu-Nimer describes religious and interreligious peacebuilding as drawing "its inspiration and motivation from the beliefs, values, practices, and rituals derived from the scriptures of one or more faith traditions; uses the institutional platforms, networks, and resources; or leverages the moral voice and authority of religious actors (including the clergy and lay persons and organizations working in the name of the faith) to facilitate the creation of the conditions for peace and the prevention of violent conflicts in divided societies" (Section 1, 28).

Steele and Wilson-Grau (Section 2, 137) break down two different roles in which religion can play in faith-based peacebuilding: interveners motivated by religion or faith; and "local actors whom the interveners wish to influence can be religiously motivated".

The processes used to achieve the transformation of participant and community attitudes and behaviours include but are not limited to interreligious, intra-religious and intercultural dialogue (horizontal engagement), mutual problem solving, joint community projects, mediation, and dialogue with policymakers (vertical engagement) (Catholic Relief Services 2019). At first glance many of the processes used in interreligious peacebuilding do not differ from standard peacebuilding practices. The critical differences lie in the fact that religious and interreligious peacebuilding draw on spiritual values and place a greater emphasis on dialogue processes and the role of religion in transformative change

It is also important to highlight that it is not sufficient to have religious diversity among the participants to classify or distinguish the programme as inter-faith or interreligious. Unfortunately, there are many organizations who design

intervention programmes (capacity building and crisis intervention initiatives) and classify or label such activities as interreligious or interfaith, despite the fact that such designs avoid any intentional spiritual or faith-based processes or content.

4 The Linkage of Dialogue to Religious and Interreligious Peacebuilding

While one may at first envision the relevance of dialogue tied to conflicts – whether violent or otherwise – with a division along faith lines. Yet interfaith and intra-faith dialogue in religious and interreligious peacebuilding is neither limited to, nor only useful in such conflicts; "Interfaith dialogue can be of great value in promoting peacebuilding and advancing reconciliation even when religion is not the central cause of a conflict" (Uysal 2016, 265). Beyond active violent conflict and post violent conflict settings dialogue and interreligious and religious peacebuilding play a key role within the broader peacebuilding spectrum – including conflict prevention, education, dealing with root causes of conflict, ongoing tensions or latent conflict due to environment, lack of resources, etc. (Abu-Nimer 2007. Interfaith Dialogue in Middle East- USIP) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark lists among several reasons for engaging in interreligious dialogue: 1) "many people in the Global South have more trust in religious institutions than in governmental institutions"; 2) "religious actors can contribute to reducing tensions in communities, which enables more trust, safe zones for addressing other development challenges"; and 3) the challenges of sustainability, as outlined in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, will make religious actors increasingly interdependent and entwined, thus making the need for enhanced dialogue necessary" (Udenrigsministeriet 2019, 5–6). Intra-faith and interfaith dialogue are also typically tied together with mutual problem solving and joint community projects. This link between dialogue and action follow in line with concepts such as the 3H or head, hand, heart approach used in training interreligious peacebuilders (Abu-Nimer 1999) or the 3Bs – Binding, Bonding and Bridging featured by the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies' Contending Modernities' education and research initiative[11]. Both approaches aim to achieve attitudinal then behavioural change and are described in brief as follows:

11 See Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies (2021); and University of Notre Dame and Keough School of Global Affairs (2021).

> [This approach engages] all three dimensions of the attitudinal-change triangle: head, heart and hand (3H), which correspond to cognition, emotion and behaviour. Interveners are successful when they can influence the parties' thinking, engage them in a positive emotional experience, and show them ways to apply their new learning through hands on experience or chances for action (Abu-Nimer 2001, 689).
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> The 3B method, comprised of Binding, Bonding, and Bridging activities, sets the stage for reconciliation by addressing personal barriers to peace, fostering communal understanding and voice, and generating pathways to constructively encounter the "other." This method pays heed to deeply held divisive narratives kept alive in hearts and practice, and better equips communities to develop local, pragmatic, and mutually agreed-upon conflict resolution mechanisms (Fitzgerald 2016).

As illustrated by several chapters in this volume, there is a critical linkage between the use of dialogue – interfaith or intra-faith – and achieving transformative change within interreligious or religious peacebuilding processes. Capturing these processes via evaluation is a common challenge that faces religious and interreligious peacebuilding, and peacebuilding in general.

5 Challenges

5.1 Speed of the Process

Dialogue and interreligious peacebuilding are not rapid processes. Since interreligious peacebuilding primarily relies on attitudinal and behavioural changes, its contribution to changes at the macro level – societal change – will take years to achieve or be observed. The nebulousness of success might best be exemplified in the following statement: "'[...] the quality of the dialogue [is] enhanced so that it improves mutual understanding and learning from difference, whilst also decreasing prejudice, promoting social cohesion and developing a common sense of belonging between those involved [...]'" (Orton et al. 2016). While there are indeed ways to measure various factors outlined, certainly no project owner applying standard indicators would have the realistic expectation of decreasing societal prejudice, increasing social cohesion and a common sense of belonging within the typical 3 – 5-year project cycle. The long term nature of the desired outcomes are demonstrated in a report by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs "Relying on the methodological framework of "Outcome harvesting", which assesses dimensions such as "output", "outcome" and "impact", a successful ID (Interreligious Dialogue) has achieved measurable results on an "outcome" and "impact" level, which would entail measurable *long-term* changes in behaviours, relationships and policies among involved drivers of change" (Udenrigsmi-

nisteriet 2019, 8).[12] Yet, most donors – and therefore most faith-based organizations as recipients of donor funds – have high expectations but seek visible or tangible results – as aspects that would make anyone aiming for SMART and FRU indicators shutter.[13]

This poses multiple obstacles, for example 1) being able to show results to donors in often short-term project or grant cycles; 2) managing donor expectations; 3) developing an evaluation process that not only maps change but also had clear enough indicators that provide enough information for the implementers themselves to learn from their work and make adjustments when necessary; and 4) not overlooking the need for data collection over the duration to also aim to evaluate the long-term change. Developing monitoring and evaluation processes need to take into account micro – individual or community level (micro) and macro level changes, but also how the changes link to one another in the short and long term. The delineation of what can be achieved in the short versus long term need to be made clear to donors as well to prevent the expectation of miracles.

5.2 Scepticism on Evaluation Need

Scepticism on the need of evaluations, as well as the evaluators involved may hinder the development of monitoring and evaluation processes and limit data collection. There is at times a scepticism or even lack of interest by religious or interreligious peacebuilders in applying monitoring and evaluation techniques. There are several reasons for this. In some instances, religious or interreligious peacebuilders see peacebuilding as a good in and of itself (Neufeldt, Section 1, 53–76). While there may be an acknowledgement of the need for accountability and to evaluate success, success in religious peacebuilding may not be tied to predefined results (Steele and Wilson-Grau, Section 2, 137–168). Even when there is an acknowledgment of the need for standard evaluation there might be a hesitancy to exclusively involve secular evaluators unfamiliar with interreligious peacebuilding in evaluation processes. Peacebuilding itself is already complex enough particularly given the existing challenges when work-

12 See also Abu-Nimer 2019, and Neufeldt & Lederach 2007

13 Indicators should both be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound) and FRU (Feasible: the data can be collected at a reasonable cost with a reasonable level of training, Reliable: No matter who collects the data, the same findings will be collected, and Useful: The information should help you make informed choices about your programme and contribute to learning) (Roberts and Khattri 2012, 33).

ing in conflict or post-conflict areas, but as expressed by understanding the nuances necessary to develop a useful yet respectful evaluative approach that takes into consideration the principles and values based upon the religious tradition(s) involved adds to this complexity (Garred, Herrington, and Hume, Section 2, 169–196; Steele and Wilson-Grau, Section 2, 137–168). Furthermore, the realization for the need of the evaluation may be seen as something more aimed at pleasing the donor. This can result in monitoring and evaluation being applied post-facto, hindering proper planning and data collection that would benefit improvement during the duration on the project, as well as overall learning for the peacebuilders themselves – let alone allowing for future learning by others.

5.3 Squaring the Circle

Evaluation practices used for traditional peacebuilding projects and programmes are not always a good fit for interreligious peacebuilding projects. This does not mean it is necessary to reinvent the wheel, yet it is also neither advisable nor seemingly effective to "cut and paste" standard evaluation criteria such as "outcome harvesting", "logical frameworks" or simple application of the OECD criteria onto interreligious or religious peacebuilding projects without modifications. This would ignore the transcendental or faith aspect of religious and interreligious peacebuilding and dialogue. "The evaluation methodology for ID (Interreligious Dialogue) seems to be in need of a boost, perhaps by innovating evaluation designs and developing new approaches" (Udenrigsministeriet 2019, 9). This is true of overall religious and interreligious peacebuilding processes.

5.4 Instrumentalizing or Downplaying Religion

There is a risk of instrumentalization religion as well as downplaying the importance of religion. The pattern of instrumentalization of religion to justify both war and peace by policy makers and religious agencies has been an integral part of the human civilization. This is not a new phenomenon, nevertheless in recent decades religious peacebuilding has been introduced as a means for countering violent extremism, too (Abu-Nimer 2018). Thus, there are "concerns about instrumentalizing religion, taking a reductionist approach and using religion as the means to a peacebuilder's end" (Neufeldt, Section 1, 54), as well as the risk of wrongly attributing successes or failures when the monitoring and evaluation processes are not well-developed. Recognizing the need to engage with religion should also influence the need to adhere to a nuances and respect-

ful approaches in engaging with religion. There is a risk of token engagement, compartmentalizing religious peacebuilding to a certain sphere of peacebuilding separate from greater peacebuilding processes, or engaging well-known yet not necessarily legitimate and relevant religious actors (Abu-Nimer, Section 1, 25 – 52; Garred & Abu-Nimer 2018, 15). Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governmental agencies organize activities under the labelling of interreligious dialogue or interreligious peacebuilding, however often these programmes have no relation to interreligious peacebuilding or to religion and religious traditions. Indeed, the participants might be from different religious backgrounds, yet the programmes, the design and processes tend to completely be devoid from faith or spirituality. Alternatively, there is the possibility of involving interreligious peacebuilders for only a specific aspect of peacebuilding processes for example engagement on limited interreligious dialogue rather than a holistic approach that requires action (the 3B or 3H methods as mentioned above).

5.5 Too Much Emphasis on Religion: Losing Sight on Root Causes

There is the risk of overemphasizing religion and losing focus on addressing the root causes of conflict. This challenge stands in stark contrast with the last one and strongly shows the difficulty in achieving a balance in clearly understanding the role of religion in peacebuilding in order to be able to effectively evaluate the peacebuilding processes. As illustrated by Hippolyt Pul in Section 1, 77 – 100 the religious identities of conflict actors and peacebuilders can mask the real issues of the conflict. If there is too much emphasis on the role of religion in any or all of the parties, there is a risk of not only derailing the peacebuilding processes from looking at conflict drivers such as power, politics, environment, ethnic and socio-economic dynamics, resources, etc. (Abu-Nimer 2018), but also overemphasizing the importance or misattributing/simplifying the role of religion in evaluations of conflicts and peacebuilding processes hinders the understanding of successes/failure and prevents learning from the evaluative process. In essence, it not only reinforces the media portrayal and overwhelming public perception that religion is typically the cause for most violent conflicts, when in fact the opposite is true. Most violent conflicts have a number of non-religious based root causes, yet due to the manipulation of religious identity many are exacerbated and deepened along religious divides. (Appleby 2000)

5.6 Gaps in the Literature

There is a significant lack of literature regarding monitoring and evaluation practices of religious and interreligious peacebuilding and dialogue (Neufeldt 2011; Abu-Nimer 2016, Orton 2016, Udenrigsministeriet 2019). In response to this lack of literature, in 2015 KAICIID initiated a special seminar for evaluators to examine the state of the field of interreligious peacebuilding evaluation conference.[14] The proceedings of this seminar pointed out very clearly for the need to hold further discussions and explore the challenges and possibilities for professionalizing this area of practice. The need for such an initiative emerged from five years of intensive work with religious institutions and leaders from the five major religion of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Throughout these activities, participants voiced their frustration and expressed their deep wish to gain skills and methods to help them articulate their success and effective work (KAICIID 2015. Project Report).

The lack of research does not necessarily mean that practitioners of interreligious peacebuilding are not evaluating their own work. However, it poses a challenge for information sharing of what is being done and as a result leaves out one of the critical aspects of monitoring and evaluation for a wider audience – learning. It is not only important to learn lessons from one's own work, but also from each other. With an extremely limited amount of literature dealing with the topic of evaluation and religious/interreligious peacebuilding and dialogue, it is near impossible to learn about existing methods, challenges, and how others deal with obstacles and risks. One such example of a means to fill this gap has been an ongoing process in the development of the Evaluating Interreligious Peacebuilding and Dialogue (EIAP) framework and its revised version (EIAP II), discussed by Garred, Hume and Herrington in this volume.

5.7 Recognition within the Field of Evaluation

The general field of evaluation is expansive in its diversity and coverage. The professional development and training of evaluators in social science methods and thematic specialization such as development, health, education, etc. are crucial for recognition by policy makers, donors and the public in general. In this context, the wider field of peacebuilding is still struggling in gaining such recognition and credibility within the field of evaluation. Evaluators have only

14 Section 2, 197–220, by Cohen, is built upon her initial presentation at this seminar.

in the past two decades begun paying greater attention to the evaluation of peacebuilding (see the various national, regional, and international associations of evaluation and the trend of neglecting peacebuilding in their conferences and memberships).[15] This difficulty is reflected even more in the subfield of religious and interreligious peacebuilding evaluation. In fact, it is hard to find any academic or professional development programme that offers any capacity building or certification of evaluators in this field.

6 Opportunities

While the current amount of available literature is limited to date, there are attempts to systematize analysis and monitoring and evaluation of religious and interreligious peacebuilding, and there are tools being developed. For example in 2018, the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) published an analysis for religion and conflict and peacebuilding. The guide is part of a four-part series of analysis and action guides developed by USIP in collaboration with the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers and the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice. They "are intended to have practical value, providing theory only to the extent that it helps with the assessment, design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of concrete interventions" (Frazer and Owen 2018, 6). The guide is particularly useful for practitioners in analysing what role religion plays in the society, the state and the conflict.

Some international entities such as the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers and the KAICIID Dialogue Centre have been working with religious actors for the last several years in conflict afflicted societies and have been developing monitoring and evaluation systems for their own work. In the case of KAICIID, the systems have been adopted from the development setting and modified to take into account the far less tangible nature of peacebuilding and dialogue. Furthermore, as pointed out by Garred, Herrington and Hume (Section 2, 169 – 196), even when not directly following monitoring and evaluation practices, interreligious peacebuilders have often looked at ways to learn from their projects to improve their work, which allows for the possibility of collecting case studies to be used as best practices. For example, KAICIID has begun

15 Major organizations working in development such as UNDP and EU have focused more exclusively on the evaluation of develop and paid limited attention to peacebuilding evaluation.

such a process of best practices harvesting through its "Promising Practices" project as part of the Dialogue Knowledge Hub[16].

7 Lessons Learned

In addition to the above common thematic areas, this compilation, while only representing a small contribution towards addressing the overall need for the professionalization of monitoring and evaluation in interreligious and religious peacebuilding, still provides us with a number of lessons.

1. Despite the progress made in recent years, we have a long way to go towards the institutionalization of monitoring and evaluation in interreligious peacebuilding. The greater interest in engaging with religion has rapidly expanded the field, yet there is still the need to tackle even basic challenges such as developing base line studies, increasing investment on long-term programme designs and thereby evaluations, the need to incorporate evaluation from the beginning stages – during the development of the programme design – rather than simply to placate donors.
2. The literature that examines religious and interreligious peacebuilding work, particularly that of inter and intra-religious dialogue, remains extremely limited. More analytical studies are needed and therefore more "case study harvesting" will also be necessary. There has also been the experience of some advocates of monitoring and evaluation of religious peacebuilding[17] that some faith-based peacebuilders express a lack of willingness to share reports with negative results. Negative results shouldn't be seen as a failure of the peacebuilders, but rather as an opportunity for learning. The need for a shared resource repository for religious and interreligious peacebuilding evaluation is essential for the professional development of this field. Practitioners and evaluators can have access to hundreds of evaluations and can produce macro evaluation studies that help in advancing the tools and frameworks of evaluation[18].
3. The role and inclusion of women and gender analysis in the interreligious peacebuilding field is not addressed in the evaluation frameworks provided

16 See Promising Practices on the KAICIID Dialogue Knowledge Hub Website (KAICIID ND)
17 As expressed in courses teaching the data collection, surveying and monitoring and evaluation design methods proposed by the EIAP II guide.
18 Mohammed Abu-Nimer conducted in 2012 a mega evaluation study that examined 16 peacebuilding evaluations reports (Sponsored by Center for Peacebuilding and Development, American University Washington DC).

in this volume. However, access to women in many faith groups is more challenging and thus needs to not only be recognized in programme design, but also in evaluation procedures. The lack of gender lenses in religious and interreligious peacebuilding is often explained by the nature of the formal religious institutions and their dominant male representation. While this is indeed an institutional and structural limitation, nevertheless there are alternative ways to compensate and provide limited remedies while engaging such formal institutions in religious and interreligious peacebuilding.

4. While developmental and secular peacebuilding frameworks have some relevance in capturing the spirit of interreligious peacebuilding work, there remains the difficulty of capturing the faith motivation behind religious peacebuilding and nuances associated with its application[19]. While this volume both presents some new models, it also emphasizes the need for the development of a greater number of innovative models and frameworks.

The current international, regional, and national interreligious platforms have the duty to advocate for the further development of their evaluation practices and agenda. Building their internal capacities is an essential step towards the advancement of their field. Through partnerships with academic institutes and graduate programmes in peacebuilding and conflict resolution that train the next generation of professionals, the field of religious and interreligious peacebuilding and its evaluation can greatly be enhanced. Such partnerships will support the processes of professionalization of both the field of peacebuilding and the subfield of interreligious peacebuilding.

8 In this Volume

This volume aims to contribute to this small and emerging body of literature by collecting a series of essays that look into the challenges and possibilities of monitoring and evaluating religious and interreligious peacebuilding and dialogue. The book's chapters comprise two sections. Section 1 looks at the complexities of religious and interreligious peacebuilding and emphasizes the linkage of interreligious dialogue to these peacebuilding processes. This section further identifies several current challenges and implications in monitoring

19 As aptly pointed out in Neufeldt's chapter (Section 1, 53 – 76). A similar conclusion was also drawn by Garred and Abu-Nimer (2018).

and evaluating religious and interreligious peacebuilding. Section 2 offers a practical set of examples of unique tools that have been developed specifically for monitoring and evaluating religious and interreligious peacebuilding; and highlights the application of specific monitoring and evaluation models in different contexts in the broader field of peacebuilding.

8.1 Section 1: Evaluating Religious and Interreligious Peacebuilding and Dialogue: Challenges, and Implications

Abu-Nimer opens the section in Challenges in "Peacebuilding Evaluation: Voices from the Field" with an overview of the challenges faced in peacebuilding evaluation in general. He looks at examples from the field, taking into account issues that arise both from peacebuilders themselves and from the side of donors. The issues range from the amount of evaluator experience, to practical dilemmas faced in conflict zone realities.

In "Vying for Good: Ethical Challenges in Evaluating Interreligious Peacebuilding", Reina Neufeldt delves into the nuanced yet complex nature of religious and interreligious peacebuilding. Focusing on different models of interreligious dialogue, she examines why the criteria monitoring and evaluating religious and interreligious peacebuilding needs to be and how they can be different from traditional secular peace building monitoring and evaluation criteria and the implications monitoring and evaluation have on the role of "awesome agency".

Using examples from his experience of interreligious peacebuilding in Africa, Hippolyt Pul illustrates the disconnect between actual evaluations and their intentions – accountability and learning. In his chapter, "My Peace is not your Peace – Role of Culture and Religion in What Counts for Peace", he details several of the numerous challenges that are faced in evaluating interreligious peacebuilding.

In "Values, Principles and Assumptions: Recognizing Power Dynamics of Religious Leaders", Khaled Ehsan picks up on recent focus of international NGOs on the role of power as an analytical tool in monitoring and evaluation and applies this lens to the power held by religious leaders and its implications on interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding processes. His theoretical framework provides practical questions and indicators that could be incorporated in monitoring and evaluation processes.

8.2 Section 2: New Models and Tools in Evaluating Religious and Interreligious Peacebuilding

After examining the implications of the spiritual motivations – being faithful, religious traditions and their values – have on designing evaluation tools, selecting approaches and defining success in their chapter on "Transcendence and the Evaluation of Faith-based Peacebuilding", David Steele and Ricardo Wilson-Grau introduce a possible methodology for developing an evaluation of faith-based peacebuilding.

Michelle Garred, Elizabeth Hume and Rebecca Herrington present the Effective Interreligious Action in Peacebuilding framework as a collaborative effort to provide an evaluative design framework for both practitioners and evaluators. Their chapter, "Evaluating Interreligious Peacebuilding and Dialogue: Methods and Frameworks", presents the project and the learning processes that have ensued since its inception.

In her chapter, "Assessing the Impact of Interfaith Initiatives", Shana Cohen delves into the field of interfaith dialogue and interfaith relations. Citing the lack of innovation in dialogical methods and project designs, she presents a model for evaluating interreligious dialogue and applies the model to analyse current state of the field and the challenges it faces in the United Kingdom.

9 The Way Forward

As an attempt to contribute to the evolutionarily process of professionalizing the field of interreligious peacebuilding, this volume remains a modest attempt, only just barely scratching the surface. However, the editors of this volume hope that this attempt serves as an inspiration and opens a number of questions for others to build on these contributions, as well as to address a number of areas not touched upon in this volume. In closing, we would like to outline some future possibly areas of research.

A number of challenges to evaluating religious and interreligious peacebuilding are discussed, and examples of a few unique methods and frameworks are presented in this volume. However, not much is presented regarding what faith-based organizations themselves are doing or could be doing. More research is needed to examine what evaluative practices are being used by faith-based organizations, their merits and lessons learned. Furthermore, more could be explored regarding opportunities and ways for faith-based organizations and religious institutions involved in religious and interreligious peacebuilding to build and improve evaluation processes.

This volume is more geared towards religious and interreligious peacebuilders, or other practitioners using aspects of interreligious peacebuilding, such as interreligious dialogue. This is evident in the way several chapters in this volume examine the need and compatibility of monitoring and evaluation with religious and interreligious peacebuilding. However, the peacebuilders themselves are only one building block in the structure. Pul's chapter brings to light the disconnection between interreligious peacebuilding itself and the expectation of evaluators. Thus, future endeavours might look to examine how policy makers and donors can be more sensitive or be sensitized regarding the nature of evaluation in interreligious peacebuilding and the challenges facing the practitioners working in this area.

The roles of other members of society are only touched upon in this volume. For example, Ehsan details the implications of the power or religious leaders and how this could be taken into account in the development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks. The opens the reader's imagination to question the roles and implications of other members of society involved in peacebuilding processes. Yet, the volume does not address the roles of gender, youth and children and how evaluative processes could be adapted to take into account these voices, which tend less visible in religious and interreligious peacebuilding.

Lastly, there is greater attention, interest and recognition of religious and interreligious peacebuilding and dialogue. The sector is overlapping and being integrated more and more with the programmes of secular organizations and donors. This has implications for these programmes themselves as the interests of these donors are incorporated in religious and interreligious peacebuilding processes. This includes the often-strong focus of states and intergovernmental organizations in countering and preventing violent extremism (CVE & PVE), as well as freedom of religion and belief (FORB). It will therefore be necessary to examine the implications for evaluating religious and interreligious peacebuilding in the context of CVE, PVE and FORB.

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