

## **Religion and development: what are the links? Why should we care?**

Conveners:

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What role can religion play in enhancing some of this century's most pressing development issues and how are faith agents meeting these global challenges? Engaging with religion needs to be handled with care; donors and international agencies need to clarify non-negotiable, bottom-line criteria before partnering with FBOs and other faith-groups. Effective engagement requires a certain level of commitment. Aid agencies need to view religious groups as equal partners, rather than use them for their own instrumental ends. This also requires a level of understanding or faith literacy. In working with religions in development it is important to find shared priorities and to establish shared language and values – but this does not mean agreeing with faith communities on every point. There may be considerable areas of perceived and actual difference and conflict, such as the place of spiritual development; the link between religion and politics; attitudes towards LGBT rights; approaches to reproductive health issues, condoms/HIV, and gender. Rather than sweep these under the carpet or treat them as undefeatable obstacles, effective engagement between religion and development requires open, constructive research and discussion of these differences.

In the panel “Religion and Development: what are the links? Why should we care?” the latest research in the field of religion and development nexus will be presented. The panel will also discuss its relevance specifically for the Swedish Development Co-operation. We welcome papers open to all approaches highlighting religion and development.