



Sektorproject - Religion and sustainable Development

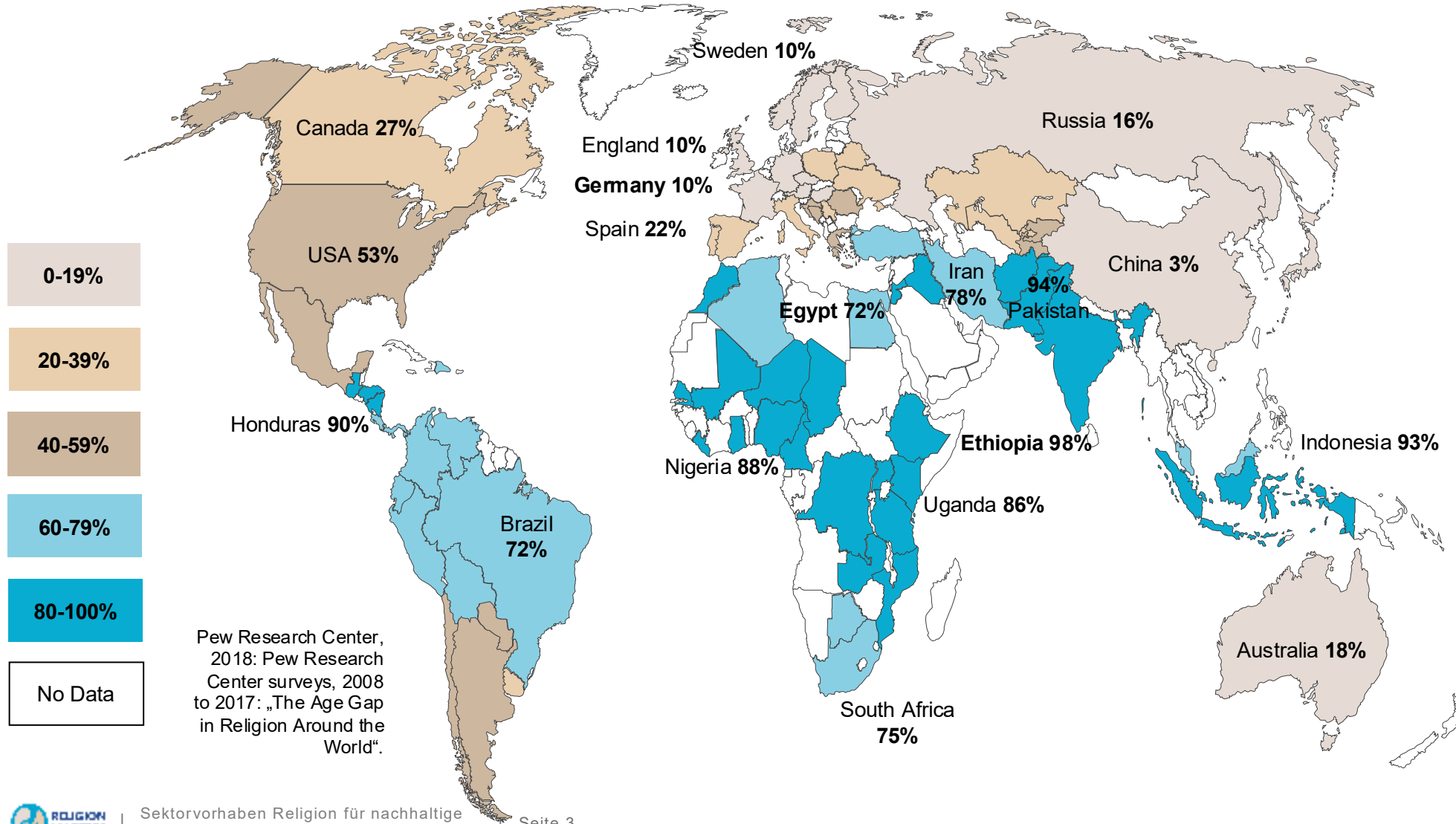
Religion Matters! in international Cooperation

University of Göttingen 25.06.2026

Why is religion important in DC?

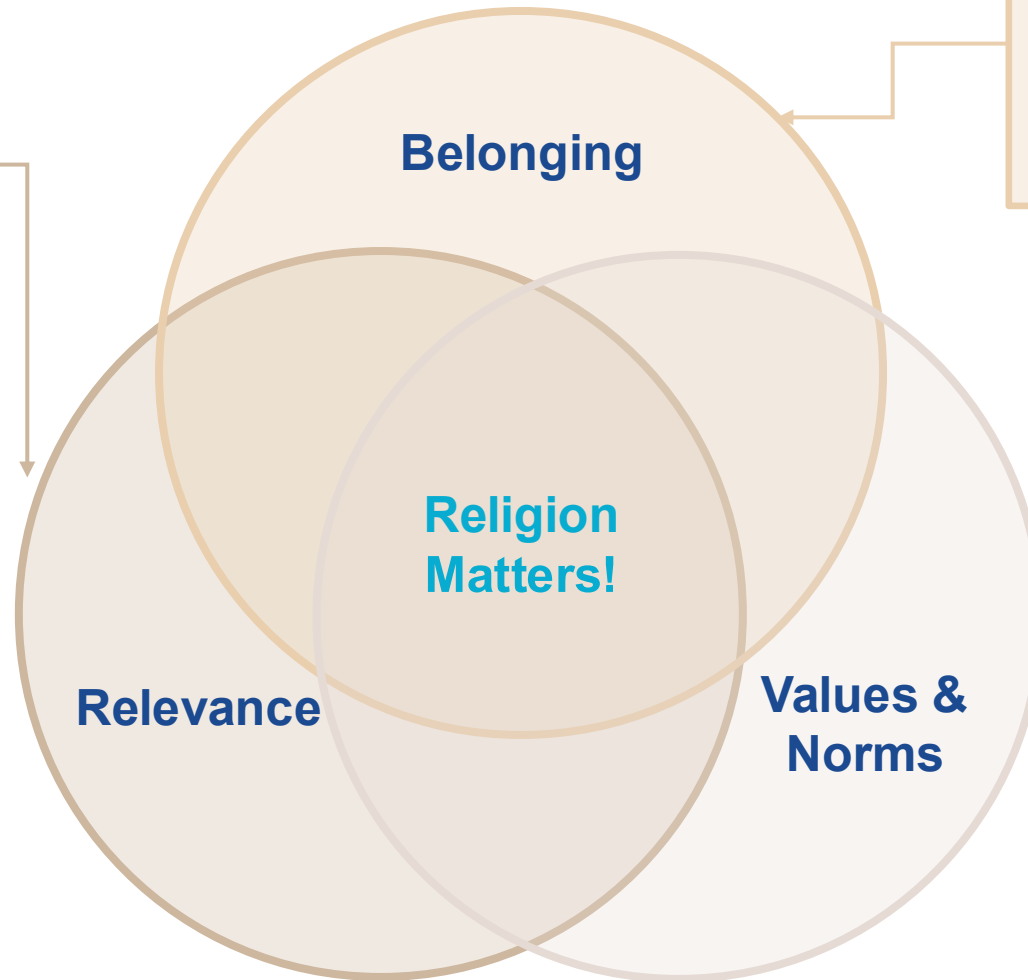
Religion Matters!

Percentage of people who say that religion is important in their life (2018):



Why religion matters!

Religion is very important to more than half of the world's population- this trend is on the rise.



Around four out of five people feel a belonging to a **religious, traditional** or **indigenous** tradition or community.



Religious values and norms influence **thoughts and actions** of a large part of world's population.



Definitions

Religious Actors:

individuals, initiatives/organizations, or institutions that ground the basis of their actions in a faith tradition. They include:

- active members of congregations/communities at the local level
- FBOs
- interreligious networks (from local to national),
- religious communities and their umbrella organizations,
- religious leaders and representatives of religious institutions or organizations (such as religious/theological universities/faculties, church councils, etc.)
- and traditional actors and authorities

Traditional Actors:

are actors that have legitimacy due to tradition. The most prominent are traditional leaders such as local chiefs or “kings”, councils of elders or community groups such as youth organisations. “Local traditional” actors combine elements of self-organisation, which we would link to the non-profit-sector with elements of a local level authority, which may be in lieu of some state functions on this level

Religion Matters! - Global Trends

6 billion people (85% of the world's population) affiliate with a faith/religion

Faith groups own and are responsible for more than 8% of the Earth's habitable land

Faith groups own and are responsible for more than 5% of all commercial forests on the planet

Half of schools worldwide (50%) are owned or operated by faith groups, rising to 64% of schools in sub-Saharan Africa

More than 4 in 10 health services (40%) in some countries are operated by faith groups

10% of the world's financial institutions are faith-related, making faith institutions the world's third largest investor

Faith-aligned impact investment capital is valued at \$3 trillion worldwide (Oxford Faith-Aligned Impact Finance).

Faith actors and organisations (FBOs) are to be found all over the globe. They are grounded in almost every local culture.

In the global South the significance of religion is very high (90%) (IPSOS Global Religion Survey 2023)

In sustainable Development, religious actors...

- ✓ ...provide services -> humanitarian, environmental, educational, social, etc.
- ✓ .. act as moral authorities -> have an impact on social norms
- ✓ ...are trusted -> provide credibility, acceptance and legitimation among the population
- ✓ ...have an institutional infrastructure often from national to local -> reach places where governments are not present
- ✓ ...shared values with local population -> can help in reaching common targets

Example of projects with religious actors



Ethiopia/Nigeria: Faith Actors Shaping the Future with People on the Move





Ethiopia/Nigeria: Faith Actors Shaping the Future with People on the Move

Country: Ethiopia and Nigeria

Duration: 10/2020 until 11/2022

Partner: Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Development and Social Services Commission (EECMY-DASSC), Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN), Faith to Action Network

Problem: More people than ever are being forced out of their homes due to populism and nationalism. The instrumentalization of religion in both the countries they flee from and those they flee to have often created a hostile environment for refugees, internally displaced persons, and returnees.

Goal: Positive influence on societal narratives on the topic of migration in Ethiopia and Nigeria.

The Role of Religious Actors: As trusted people in public life, religious actors prove especially important wherever there is distrust between refugees and the communities they arrive in.

Activities:

- Dialogue and experience sharing among religious leaders
- Public relations, interactive formats, media and tv work
- Economic support for migrants, refugees and returnees

Impacts:

- 447 (94 women) religious representatives were trained in MHPSS and social integration
- 1543 (1042 women) received psycho-social support
- 355 (266 women) received mini grants and started a business
- Interreligious dialogue was initiated

Challenges/Lessons Learnt

- A further important area of learning was the use of large networks of partner churches. With millions of churchgoing members in Ethiopia and Nigeria, the measures could be firmly anchored.
- Embedded in the “Symbols of Hope” initiative, the project’s sustainable security is assured. LWF plans to continue growing the programme and enhance it through new initiatives like “Living as Neighbours,” which places the focus on peace and coexistence.



FURTHER PROJECTS WITH RELIGIOUS ACTORS

Country	Topic	Thematic area
Ethiopia and Nigera	Migration	Refugees and migration
Ghana	Religious Actors and Public Finances	Public finances
Indonesia	Religious actors and SDGs	Support implementation of SDG
Indonesia	Religious actors supporting environmental protection	Environmental protection
Kenya	Religious actors and SRHR and children	Health/SRHR
Libanon	Religious actors and peace development among youth and children	Peacebuilding and social cohesion
Mali	Religious actors and FGM and GBV	Health/GBV/FGM
Mauretania	Religious actors and vocational education for young people	Vocational education and social cohesion
Zambia	Religion and family planning, HIV, GBV	Health/HIV/GBV
Southern Africa	SRHR	Health/SRHR
Chad	Interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding	Peacebuilding and social cohesion
Egypt	Premarital counselling	Gender



THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

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