

## Consideration for Integration of Religion in Advancing Human Development Initiatives and Policies

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### Abstract

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*Scholarly works on human development have often borrowed secular orientations thereby causing religion to be viewed with much speculations and doubts in development discourse. However, Clarke and Jennings (2008) have argued that having any reservation towards the inclusion of religion in development policies and agenda affecting nations is more like secluding a viable proportion of the world population from engaging appropriately in development issues facing the world today. The theses supporting inclusion of religion in development scholarship demonstrates the challenges of secularism and modernization, which relegated religion to the background in the historical formation of civil society engagement in socio-economic development in world nations. The paper specifically argues against the secularization theory, which encouraged seclusion of religion from global civil society scholarship. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to project the relevance of religion in development scholarship, by firstly identifying the factors that encouraged its exclusion and emergence in development theses, and secondly, discussing the theoretical framework for establishing a relationship between religion and development. This paper will further argue for the importance of engaging religion in development agenda, especially where religion could be utilized as a form of social capital in facilitating much needed engagement of the civil society in development.*

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**Key Word:** Religion Integration, Development, Secularism, Neoliberalism, Social Capital, Initiatives, Policies

### Introduction

Human development as a topic grew out of global discussions on the links between economic growth and development during the second half of the 20th Century (UNDP 2016). With the increasing poverty and economic set back affecting majority of world nations, especially in the south, there was increasing call for the dethronement of GDP economic growth as a measure of wellbeing. In the 1980s development debate considered using alternative focuses to go beyond GDP and emphasis was on measuring the redistribution of wellbeing, whereby more emphases were placed on welfare issues such as employment, income/household poverty followed by redistribution with growth, and then whether people had their basic needs met (ibid:1). Human development became the new paradigm for measurement of wellbeing and emerged as both a leading objective, and indicator of national progress in many countries. The popularity of the concept of human development attracted attention of world development organizations and within the same period there was growing interest on working with civil society organizations to expand the doctrine, especially in the south where there was extreme poverty. Because of its emergence replacing GDP in the measurement of wellbeing, human development as a topic came to subsume the same secular doctrine that propagated its predecessor - the GDP.

Within the secular conception of wellbeing – religion and its likes were disregarded and largely viewed as anti-developmental (Clarke and Jennings 2008). The belief in supernatural forces rendered any promise of finding the relevance of religion in social thinking. This is because it was considered the confine of the divine and thus received less attention in the development sphere (Ver Beek 2000). However, in the recent years, researches have increased and taking a new dimension in fashioning religion beyond the realm of the divine to development discourses, both in the national and international levels. This new development has since motivated new studies that would project the engagement of religion in broad discussion of development in the world. International communities have convened conferences and funded researches to facilitate better understanding of the relationship that exists between religion and development. Moreover, with the lapses in secularization theory of the demise of religion, secular theorists have shifted their view from the crisis of religion to the crisis of secularism with the understanding that the neglect of religion in the analysis of contemporary affairs is a great risk policy maker should necessarily avoid. For instance, Selinger (2004) stressed that the disregard of religion and other cultural factors in development theory and strategy explains the failure of development.

Notwithstanding, the attempt to incorporate cultural factors in development discourse is not necessarily a recent development, for in the late 1970s, there had been the recognition that theories of economic development have not been able to yield the expected results (Selinger 2004). Since then there has been a search for other factors that could bring the desired goal. Religion has been construed to be a definitive element for addressing successfulness and sustainability of development, especially in very cultural and religious societies (ibid).

This paper being opinionated went ahead to explore how religion came to be marginalized in development discourse due to the dominance of modernization/secularization theory. It also looked at some conundrums about the neoliberal agenda of international multilateral in facilitating secularized dimension of NGOization of the civil society for their own self-infused gains, thereby overshadowing the impact of religion and its groups in the third sector. From these perspectives, the paper will move forward to discuss how religion may offer a social construct for understanding non-secular dimension of development. More specifically in this discussion is the input of religion as a distinct form of social capital. Here, the paper argued that it is the dimension of religion as social capital that makes religion more relevant in development accounts.

Before proceeding to deal with the above issues, it is pertinent to define religion, especially with regards to its functional role in the society. This presents a holistic version of religion that would be relevant for this discourse.

### **Operational Definition of Religion**

There have been many attempts to define the phenomenon of religion and these attempts have taken different perspective to include the field of psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy and theology (Momen 1999:52-73) and most recently they come from biological sciences. Sundermeier (1999:11) argues that defining religion depends on the perspective from which it is defined. In the sociology of religion, the definitions of religion are categorized under two major schools of thought – the substantive and functional. The substantive definition of religion refers to the distinguished characteristics usually associated with the belief and practice of religion. The substantive definition attempts to describe religion in terms of the supernatural power and *being* controlling the universe. A substantive definition of this kind was given by Kilani (1998:16) who defined religion as “the elation of man to that which man regards as holy; the system by which man recognizes the existence of super-human controller of the universe, the recognition of God as the object of worship, love and obedience which ultimately leads to practical piety and morality”

However, the substantive definition has been criticized because of its narrowed view on the concept of religion attributing only the belief and practices – worshipping, ritualistic activities and prayers – in the conceptualization of religion. In as much as the religious organizations are equally part of congregation of worshippers, it is however, their functional role in the society that are appreciated when discussing issues of development. Therefore, from this perspective, the functional dimension of conception of role of religion in development is better understood. The functional school of thought perceives religion as more than just belief and practice but concentrates on what these beliefs and practice can offer to the individual or group adherents – hence, the objective or role it plays in the continuity of human existence, such as found in its contribution to bonding, identity, comfort and security of the individual or group. Yinger (1970:7) thus defined religion within this context as “a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggle with the ultimate problems of human life.” In this definition religion means more than just a ritualistic performance but goes beyond this to acknowledge it as beneficial in other ways more than just morality.

This dimension highlights the contribution of sociology to the understanding of the subject matter of religion and how it affects social life; hence seeks to define the relations between organized religions and the society at large.

### **Religion and the Secular Theory of Development**

Modernization theory and secular theory greatly influenced the western attitude about development and inclusion of religion in discussions related to human development. The theory suggests that the processes of industrialization and urbanization will break down traditional values which include religion, culture and ethnic affiliations which are considered backward and anti-developmental (Berger 2003). The foremost proponents (>>>>) of this theory argue that science will result to the rationality of traditional people and replace traditional values and superstitions associated with backward culture and religious beliefs. From this perspective secularism as a new social order was borne. Secularism is said to work hand in hand with modernization (Casanova 1998). Casanova (1998) noted that the ideology of secularism suggests that the separation of religion from the state (in the western history) will bring about the privatization of religion and decline of religious beliefs and practices in the world. These views preoccupied the perception of development in the past decades and thus excluded any idea of religion in development theses. However, in the recent times with the lapses in secularization theory and the understanding that the neglect of religion in the analysis of contemporary affairs is a great risk policy makers should necessarily avoid, religion has come to become a notable pillar of discussion in development.

Religion had played a distinct role in the early years of the world history. Adam Smith (1776), in his book '*An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*' observed that one of the ways religion contributed to the economic development process was its value as a moral enforcement mechanism. He argued that, in societies where there is a staunch belief in God, the moral values of honesty and integrity were common attributes, and fewer resources would be dedicated to determining the genuineness of an individual's or firm's business integrity or ethics— what economists term the credit threats linked with loaning money to an anonymous personality. Hence, affiliation to a religious sect becomes credibility for accessing loans or credit facilities in such societies. What this perspective suggests is that membership to a religious group in the society provides additional source for establishing a network of civil people who having internalized moral values and trustworthy qualities from their religious affiliations, reduces any opportunity for miscreants in business dealings. This in turn decreased uncertainties and ensures improvement of efficiency. However, this view could be limited with the understanding that religion does not always engender moral values in members necessary for accessing credit worthiness of members in the contemporary world where poverty and extreme cases of want could downgrade the moral effects of religion on the consciences of the adherents. Notwithstanding the above comments, in academia, Smiths view illustrates the early contributions of religion in generating a course for good in the society.

Max Weber in his book *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1920, 2002) also contributed in this idea by arguing that the work ethics that was enthused by the Protestant Reformation helped to explain the rise of capitalism in Western Europe and America while it did not occur in other part of the globe. Weber noted that it was the Calvinist doctrine which preached the importance of diligence, austerity, thrift, punctuality, fulfilment of promise and fidelity to group interest that established the milestone for the development of modern capitalism in the west.

However, in the late 1900s with the growing specialization on capitalism and the campaign for the separation of state from the church, the connection between religion and development became viewed with scepticism. Since then, any relationship that may have existed became fragile and intermittent, at best critical or confrontational (James, 2009). In many ways religion was viewed as a negative force that encourages proselytization, division, regression; hence, irrelevant and insensitive to development issues. Even in modern scholarship, studies on global civil society and development such as Arato and Cohen (1992), Kumar (1993), Kaldor et al (2001), Howell and Pearce (2001), and Keane (2001) rarely mentioned the contribution of religion in the so-called third sector debate. Most reference were made to the secular civil society organizations or what the international donors referred to as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and how they have contributed to recent democratization and development in the developing world. In the development arena, service delivery functions of civil society are commonly reflected as espoused by the secular NGOs.

These texts argued that the formation of the civil society as a third sector was due to the global recognition of gross inefficiency and disintegration that characterize the governments of the developing countries and to effectively utilize this sector, Howell and Pearce (2001) remarked that donors successfully shifted their resources to encourage nongovernmental organizations to serve as alternatives to the state in service delivery areas such as health, education, community services, and poverty reduction – hence, the versed proliferation of Non-Governmental Organizations in most developing countries and its materialization in modern sociological thoughts.

Therefore, some literature came to argue that international and multilateral organizations may have instituted the seclusion of religion by systematically internalizing their secular ideology in practice and in collaboration with civil society in the developing world. For instance, Przeworski (1991) in his description of donors' ideology of development noted that development was conceived to ensure transformation or change in attitudes, behaviours and values that hindered growth of society – religious values inclusive. Burnell (2008) argued that the ideology principal in international donors' activities in the south was mostly engendered by their neo-imperialist agenda. To ensure the success of their secular agenda abroad, Howell and Pearce (2001) argued that donor agencies in the south operationalized secular NGOs within their ideological scope by turning them into instruments for forging their imperialist agenda mostly in the developing world. In order to achieve this purpose, the donor agencies burdened themselves with the task of building capacity of these NGOs by provision of needed assistance in form of training, office buildings, technology, finances, materials, symbolic supports of development projects and programmes in these countries. They set up projects and programmes that suit this agenda and which further consolidates their missions in these countries. Careful observation of this fact shows that donors only expend more of their resources on countries of interest to them. Ferguson and Lavalette (2006) noted that the proliferation of NGOs across the globe is as a result of neo-liberal agenda of enhancing control and precedence on global matters. They stressed that neo-liberal politics of selection and operation in the developing world reveals the underlying suspicion that global civil society is a neo-imperialist ideology initiated by the western world to consolidate their hegemonic hold on global economic and political institutions.

Moreover, to further depreciate the chances of engaging religious groups in the civil society, donors considered association with them as potentially difficult and challenging because of the ideological imbalance in accepting their religious tenets and practices which guide operations of these groups in the civil society (Tyndale, 2006). For them associating with religious groups posed problems in the acceptance of some religious practices, values and teachings which in effect contradicted the secular ideologies principal in donors' development initiatives. McCleary (2008) argued that in engaging civil society groups in development services, donors explicitly excluded religion because it was considered anti-developmental. Closer investigation into this speculation exposes the fact that religion counteracts capital economic values and subdues the domination of the market sector in the economy – which is a capitalist agenda for prospering the elite class in the society. He observed the possible noted negative effects of religion on economic growth which include “religious restrictions on capital accumulation, profit-making, credit markets and interest. Religion may also increase resource allocation towards church activities, such as cathedral building, and thereby removing resources from free market activities” (ibid:5).

Manji and O'Coil (2002:508) asserted that “neo-liberalists saw the possibility of enforcing the unjust social order they desired by consensual rather than coercive means”. The use of coercive means as strategies for their neo-imperialist agenda abroad were done through the imposition of economic sanctions on governments who refuse to comply with their mission. Burnell and Randall (2008) noted that Global institutions like WTO shrunk the level of economic independence of the developing countries. They stressed that these institutions are themselves not democratically accountable and possess complex technical knowledge of global economic affairs which the poor and less knowledgeable countries of developing world do not possess. Thomas (2004) argued that the significant increase in the presence of religious figures and groups in economic and development sphere is as a result of public disillusionment with the neo-liberalists' agenda of modernity and the so-called democratization doctrine.

Following this perspective, an argument was raised that globalization reduced the ability of the nation state to make economic and political decisions without facing dictates from international institutions like the World Bank, IMF and UN, etc. On this note, Evans (1997) argues that the global spread of the doctrine of neo-liberalism has everywhere reduced government ability to shape or protect their economies from the harsh forces of globalization. This has been noticed in the various deregulations that have restricted developing countries' governments from having political and economic autonomy over the last two decades.

Howell and Pearce (2001) argued that these international institutions utilizing the services of donors encouraged the formation of secular NGOs to fight against uncompliant governments in a divide and rule process – thereby shaping the civil society sector to suit their neo-imperialists' agenda, which incurred much suspicion and agitation later on with the evolution of the postmodernists' perspective and the restructuring of the civil society idea in academia and practice. The suspicion focused on such questions like – what is the beneficial content of the neo-liberalists' ideology when poverty and misery is ravishing half of the population of the developing world? What are the moral implications in their agenda? What has modernity done so far for the south? (Ferguson and Lavallette 2006).

These questions engaged a different line of thought and speculations about the genuine content of NGOs proliferation their impacts in the civil society; as well as the essence of secularism in ensuring modernity that was expected to yield the so-called development in the global south. With this line of thought began the recognition of the relevance of other groups such as the Faith Based Organizations in the civil society especially in addressing development issues which secular NGOs failed to address; and the funding of researches to fully engage these groups in the society. One of these researches was directed to verify the relationship that could exist between religion and development, to sort a way of engaging much of the services of religious civil society organizations in their countries of domain.

Indeed, there are now several researches involved in bringing religion into academic community and international development debates. One of the most acknowledged policy shift towards engagement of religion in development debates was the United States establishment of the White House Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives which was established in 2001 by the then President - George Bush. The project was aimed at establishing a platform for partnership with religious and community based groups in development issues and this assisted much in projecting the image of religious groups in the international community (Carlson-Thies 2004). The initiative set rules which embodied four principles that facilitated much engagement of Faith Based Organizations in service provision. The first principle was to ensure that faith based service providers are not excluded from government funding and aids because they are religious or too religious. Secondly, the respect for the religious character of faith based providers was enforced. They were allowed to display their religious symbols and offer voluntary religious activities as well as selecting staff from their religious congregations. Thirdly, respect of religious liberty of clients was enforced and discrimination in service provision extremely prohibited. Fourthly, it was stipulated that government funding must only be utilized in service delivery functions and not for any form of worship, ritualistic demonstrations or activities, proselytization or religious practice (Carlson-Theis 2004:61). These principles guided the overall objectives of the initiative which is to better utilize, empower and partner with grass-root and non-profit groups (ibid: 62). More importantly, the initiative paved way for more partnership with faith based groups and the return of religion in development arena in the turn of the twenty-first century.

However, before this, in 1998, the World Bank had established a dialogue between faith leaders and development agencies under the chairmanship of the then World Bank President – James D. Wolfensohn and the then Archbishop of Canterbury – George Carey and launched the World Faiths Development Dialogue, which aimed to establish a dialoguing forum for engaging more of religion in topical issue in development. The dialogue published a famous book termed – *Voices of the Poor* which described the role of religion could play in development especially in projecting the services of Faith Based Organizations in the developing world. Specifically, the spiritual and material contents in Faith Based Organizations' services were acknowledged as viable conditions for achieving grass-root development and poverty reduction in communities underserved by either secular NGOs or governments. The argument the book established was that "Faith Based Organizations are valued by the poor for their spiritual and 'welfarist' roles such as in feeding of and caring for the very poor, provision of funds for personal expenses, conducting befitting funerals for dead members and offering compassion in addition to serving as a medium of communication with God."(Narayan-Parker 2000:191).

The Department for International Development (DFID) has also funded major researches at the University of Birmingham termed the Religion and Development Research Programme Consortium ([www.religionanddevelopment.org](http://www.religionanddevelopment.org)) with the aim of identifying the relationship between religions, development and poverty reduction in selected locations in the developing world. Moreover, it was initiated to enable dialogue between development partners – government, donors and Faith Based Organizations (in this case), in order to achieve developmental goals in the selected societies.

The research focused on four low-income countries – India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania, which enabled studies of most of the world renowned religions such as – Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African Traditional Religion (ATR). Most specifically, the research aimed to answer questions related to the influence of religious values and beliefs on the action and interaction between Faith Based Organizations and service users in societies; the influence of religious values and beliefs on the relationship between the state and religious civil organizations; and finally to identify the outcomes of the interactions between development actors and faith communities with respect to achievement of the developmental goals in the selected societies. Most of the reports from these researches illustrated a distinct relationship between religion and development and advocated for inclusion of religion and the groups it builds in broad development policies and agenda of nations.

### **Religion and Development: The Possible Links**

There are studies that have tried to establish link between religion and development. For instance Barro and McCleary (2003) after studying fifty nine (59) countries of the world in the 1980s and 1990s found that development responded positively to religious belief which induced productive behaviours in adherents. However, their conclusion had some shortcomings in that only religious belief induced members to engage in development activities in their studies. The question such shortcoming raises is what is the relevance of other aspects of religion such as religious practice and values to development? It is important to note that Barro and McCleary conducted a narrow survey and this limited their studies and findings.

Guiso et al (2001) in their study of the effects of religion on peoples' response to cooperative associations, government, legal rules and market economy, discovered that religion was necessary for developing these institutions. However, they also indicated that in many cases religion stands as a dividing force in religious heterogeneous communities. Their thesis explains many ways religion creates intolerance amongst people and result to conflicts in societies. They offered a resolution which includes shifting of religious ideologies from development principles by secularizing religion in civil society functioning to reduce such effects.

Ruffle and Sosis (2003) studied the role of religion in promoting group trust and cooperation that help to overcome collective-action problems. They hypothesized that collective religious practices promotes economic cooperation among adherents. The authors drew a sample from secular Kibbutzim to compare the cooperative behavior of their members. They observed that those who engage in collective religious practices are the most cooperative groups, resulting in higher productivity. The study explicitly suggested that religion played a significant role in dealing with routine economic problems, particularly for people in the developing countries where there is economic set-back, and where religious practice is commonly accepted.

From these empirical data it could be argued that religion is in-separable from development, both exist *pari-passu*. Most empirical studies point at positive relationship existing between religion and development. However, there is still a gap in finding the causal relationship between the two and establishing which one is the cause or effect variable in these theses. This shortcoming result from insufficient empirical evidence as Cohen (2002) affirmed. This has since caused skepticism in accepting the existence of a linkage between religion and development. However, Cohen (2002) suggested that if there is any linkage it would be developed from social capital theory on religion.

### **The Relevance of Religion in Development: Religion as *Social Capital* Thesis**

The recognition of the importance of religion in the civil society in the recent time was conceived with the growing literature on its contribution in the subject area of Social Capital in the social sciences. The notion of social capital has been around since the past decades. It is with the work of Jane Jacobs (1961), Pierre Bourdieu (1983), James S. Coleman (1988) and Robert D. Putnam (1993; 2000) that it has come into reputation in the social sciences. It was probably used first in the work of Jane Jacob (1961:138) when she studied the crisis in American neighbourhoods and the perceived loss of self-organized capacity of individuals in these neighbourhoods to participate in economic actions. The subsequent discovery in this literature was that informal relationships and networks developed by people living in the neighbourhood were the only way they could engage in social actions – these networks were perceived as latent components for the functioning of the society. These networks though not mentioned literally, reflect social capital formations.

Collier (1998) argued that following the successive emphasis on physical, knowledge, human and financial capital on economic growth, religion was very much utilized to explain the presence of a new capital lodging - social capital - in development theses.

McTernan (2003) opined that religion is a natural source (undiluted) of social capital because faith builds mutual and spiritual connections between individuals and helps people internalize an orientation for common good. For McTernan (2003), religion gives a sense of belonging, directs actions and motivates people to respond to social issues (ibid). James (2009) in exploring the importance of faith in development thesis suggested that there are three ways faith encourages civic engagement, this is through religious teaching, development of hope, meaning and purpose, and through transcendental power. Religious leaders utilize transcendental power because of their divine call or vocation – which is accepted with reverence (Inglehart 1990). It is stressed that religious groups constitute a position that can sustain civic engagement in social work because religious leaders are successful bridge-builders and have the relevant resources, for they can mobilize people, command community respect and speak with moral authority (Ibid) which encourage fellowship.

Religion principally emphasizes the relevance of peace, fellowship and altruism, which are the language of social capital. In many ways, religion inculcates in members civic values such as communal living, compassion, justice and fairness, loyalty to civic authorities and adherence to civic responsibilities. In such ways, religion stands as a great source for building networks of followers who having being prepared through their religious teachings on moral, political and civic education, can effectively engage in social services. Moreover, as a vital source for social capital, religion plays a unique role in healing broken communities and souls. In this light, religion goes beyond worship, to serves as a basis for community identity and provides succour to the underprivileged in the society. Religion basically can afford this because it has a repertoire of financial and human resources. Khan and Bashar (2008) argued that religion could encourage civic engagement by developing certain moral traits which encourages hard-work; by promoting a positive attitude towards honesty which is essential for building trust and encouragement of productivity; and by opening opportunity for accessing required education and awareness on socio-political affairs. Religion arguably is essential for lifelong connectivity of people and prompts people to the service of humanity which is indoctrinated in its values and practice.

Religion as a social capital reflects the many ways capital developed in a social form could be utilized in aspiring for common good in the society. It is essential for community building and action. Implicit in this community building and action is the notion that a community without social capital could be seen as one where people become isolated, suspicious of others and reluctant to participate in social, economic and political life” (Hepworth and Stitt 2007: 900). In the religious context, social capital is a considered a goodwill developed by social relations engendered through religious associations that can be mobilized to facilitate social action. McDonnell (2004) cited in Hepworth and Stitt (2007:901) suggested five ways in which social capital could be utilized in engaging religious groups in civic activities:

- 1) Religion as social capital facilitates collective action to resolve social problems easily and ensures people respond to the civic engagement
- 2) Religion as source for building social capital encourage people to be more trusting and trustworthy through collective worship and brotherhood which religion builds
- 3) Religion could encourage peoples’ concern for each other through religious teachings, doctrines and values which generate empathy towards others.
- 4) Religious congregations as a place of worship could as well serve as a channel for the dissemination of information and sensitization of people on socio-economic and political issues facing the country
- 5) Religion provides a psychological buffer that allows members to withstand and cope with social traumas and decay. Religious houses are places of succor and contribute to psychological capital.

In addition, much of the literature on Religious Non-Governmental Organizations (RNGOs) or Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) such as Berger (2003, Smidt (2003), Tyndale (2006), James (2009) have viewed FBOs as agents promoting a more holistic perspective of development that acknowledges the spiritual and material input in human development thesis. These literature strongly point at the repertoire of social and human capital common in FBOs social work. For instance, Berger (2003:37) notes that “through their connections to extensive networks of believers representing a wealth of social, financial and cultural capital Religious Civil Society Organizations embody the means through which to reach and mobilize significant portions of the world’s population. Religious nongovernmental organizations represent a unique concern with the spiritual and moral capacities of those they seek to serve capacities at the root of people’s ability to transform their own condition and that of those around them”. This entails that religion builds a strong network of associations which Putnam (2000) remarked as a pre-requisite for building social capital that could encourage civic engagement in societies.

In his book *Bowling Alone* (2000), Putnam acknowledged that religious organizations particularly Protestant groups, have contributed greatly in American civic life. He noted that “*Faith Communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital in America*” (Putnam 2000:12). He perceived religion as a strong driving force for social capital that enhances participation of members in salient social issues affecting the society at large.

Smith and Sossin (1997) observed that Faith Based Organizations have turned out to be relevant in the study of social networks and structured community dynamics as they are more dedicated to integral community development programmes more than state agencies. They argued that religious groups have the capacity to generate robust social capital connections because they possess the scope and resources required to build strong civil society. Hence, policy makers, international organizations and governments are now channeling their attention to understanding the ways they could be utilized effectively as instruments and vehicles for policy delivery in the provision of welfare services and enhancing social capital necessary for this activity. Similarly, Olarinmoye (2012:3) noted that the international community now agrees that the best way to acknowledge the strategies and dynamics of civil society anywhere in the developing world requires the inclusion of religion in development policy and practice – leading to the reassessment of the relevance of FBOs in development – thus a move from exclusion to inclusion of the religion in the broad discussions on development. Moreover there is the understanding that religion, spirituality and belief system played a central and distinct role in the lives of the majority of the population in the developing world – especially Africa (ibid).

Coleman (2000) argued that in the U.S, religious groups are compelled by religious teachings and spirituality to be their brothers’ keeper. In this way religious congregations generate collection of people having resolved to follow the teachings of their religion. The advocacy for a role for Faith Based Organizations in engaging civil society is perceived from their capacity to mobilize resources through their links and connections to their localities and affiliated congregations; their engagement and support for marginalized people and communities and their considerable contribution to integral community building through developing cohesiveness and identity of local communities with the larger community. This highlight the many ways religious organizations could engage in development services because of the faith factor that inform their functioning. It also reflects the relevance of faith in facilitating FBOs development services and how it assists them in connecting with beneficiaries because of the groups’ tendency to affiliate with local congregations and communities. This suggests that the advantages of faith often correlate closely with the positives associated with social capital (Berger 2003).

## **Conclusion**

In the past decades, the contribution of religion in development contexts have often been disregarded by scholars and donors and largely viewed as anti-development. This is because it was considered to consist of personal cultural choices – in other words, it was seen to belong to the confine of the divine and thus received less attention in the development sphere. However, in recent years, the study of influence of religion in civic engagement is taking a new dimension in fashioning religion beyond the realm of the divine to development discourses, both at the national and international levels. This new development has since motivated increasing researches and studies that would project the engagement of religion in broad discussions of politics, socio-economic and human development in the world. This new development was fostered by the recent observation of the relevance of religion as a source of social capital in fostering civic engagement in development and humanitarian services.

The paper argued that having any reservation towards the inclusion of religion in development policies and agenda affecting nations is more like secluding an important area for engaging much of civil society in development issues facing the world today. The theses supporting religious inclusion in development scholarship demonstrates the challenges of secularism and modernization towards this effect, especially in relegating religion to the background in the historical formation of civil society engagement in socio-economic development in world nations. This paper specifically argues against the neo-liberal ideology of NGOization of civil societies, which encouraged seclusion of religion and FBOs from global civil society scholarship and promoted the proliferation and popularity of secular NGOs over their counterpart Faith Based Organizations in international and academic discourses, thereby underrating the impacts FBOs make in the development sectors of their various countries.

The paper equally tried to establish the link between religion and development by scanning through various studies carried out in the area of religion and development and eventually ended up in suggesting that the most likely linkage is established in the religious social capital thesis. This was viewed in the contributions of social capital theory in engendering a recent perception on the value of religion in engaging much of civil society in development services.

The paper went ahead to argue for the relevance of religion in building required social capital for development course. This is because essentially, religion produces instances for evaluating social ties formation in societies. Religion basically can afford this because it has a repertoire of financial and human resources. The paper suggested that religion could encourage civic engagement by developing certain moral traits which encourages hard-work; by promoting positive attitudes which are essential for building trust and encouragement of productivity; and by opening opportunity for accessing required resources and engaging civil society awareness on socio-economic and political issues that affect humanity.

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