Workshop on Global Development and Religion in Kenya

On October 21-22, 2014 World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) and the Berkley Center for Religion Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University convened a workshop in Washington, DC to discuss objectives, outputs, and potential entry points for their planned research program in Kenya (supported by the Henry R. Luce Foundation). The consultation brought together a group of about 20 leading scholars and development practitioners who have experience or interests in issues at the intersection of religion and international development in Kenya (see Annex 1). All participated actively in the discussions (there were no advance papers or formal presentations). The diverse perspectives and expertise encouraged a broad exploration of issues facing contemporary Kenya and situated the future research focus on religious dimensions of development within the context of those challenges. Discussions also served to sharpen the definition of priority areas for research and to explore the important but often obscured religious dimensions of central development topics.

The workshop discussions built on and added important context and content to WFDD’s prior desk research that was summarized in a background document and it affirmed the core project scope and objectives. Kenya’s diverse contemporary religious landscape, the direct and often changing role of religious institutions in many development sectors, and mounting concerns about conflict that have ethnic, geopolitical, and religious dimensions are not well studied and rarely are integrated in policy discussions. Among the broad counsel that participants offered was to assure that Kenyan actors and institutions are fully engaged at an early stage and that, notwithstanding the significant challenges that Kenya faces, achievements and Kenya’s significant potential merit equal weight. A central challenge is to situate the roles of religious institutions and leaders in Kenya’s dynamic political landscape, a challenge complicated by contemporary tensions around governance issues, the International Criminal Court proceedings, and regional security issues. The participants were open to continuing participation as an informal advisory group that can offer feedback and direction to Berkley Center/WFDD’s forthcoming work on Kenya.

This note provides a short summary of the discussion, organized following issues that are the proposed focus of Berkley Center/WFDD research.

OVERVIEW OF DISCUSSIONS
Understanding Religious Institutions and Communities
WFDD’s country mapping can provide an updated and comprehensive overview of religious institutions, leaders, and other actors that would shed useful light on their development roles. The fragmentary nature of current knowledge was underscored as well as the lack of an established and
coherent framework (for example definitions and approaches to religion-ethnicity links) for approaching religious dimensions of issues. The discussion highlighted the diversity within traditions and uncertainties about trends and internal dynamics, for example in the AICs and evangelical churches (which are growing fast), the different Muslim communities, and even among Catholics (whose work tends to be better documented). Both transnational links and the socio-economic status of adherents and communities were recommended as topics to explore as are many dimensions of gender within faith communities and institutions (see below).

An important topic to research is the roles played by national and transnational religious institutions, as well as how the much discussed respect for religious leadership affects policy and program design and implementation on topics like land rights and conflict prevention. National organizations such as SUPKEM, AACC, and NCCK have played important roles in society and have influenced policy at important junctures. Do faith leaders or FIOs today engage actively on particular issues and if so, which ones? What issues do they avoid? The discussion suggested that religious leaders and institutions may have lost influence following the 2007-8 events though the situation is fluid. A portrait of religious leadership, institutions, and trends would be a useful contribution.

**Corruption and Distrust**

The well-known endemic corruption issues facing Kenya cut across all levels of society and there was a consensus that, without allowing corruption to dominate this Kenya project, links to religious institutions and leadership, positive and negative, need to be well taken into account. Faith institutions and leaders are not immune to corruption, and in fact many have lost credibility due to direct engagement or through complicit silence. The pervasive nature of corruption was lamented even as the need to clarify definitions was stressed. It is important to explore with various Kenyan FIOs how they understand the term. A practical suggestion was to give priority to asking various faith-inspired organizations about their approaches and policies when they encounter corruption in their work (for example their own codes of conduct), as well as their views as to policies and programs that might combat it. The understanding was that many organizations remain silent or claim ignorance about corruption in part because alternative avenues are not clearly defined. There was a suggestion to seek views on how faith leaders could regain public trust.

The discussion explored broadly the current government, civil society, and international partner approaches to anti-corruption strategies because an important challenge for the Berkley/WFDD work is to explore how religious leaders and FIOs could be more actively engaged. External development actors play important roles but clearly solutions must come from local initiatives. A challenge is to link faith institution focus on issues of public ethics and values with tangible anti-corruption measures. In a context where decentralization and devolution are taking place, local views and responses to accountability and transparency and possible faith roles are worth exploring. National level leaders including faith leaders, can press for accountability but local leaders may be better grounded in daily realities and can play practical roles in monitoring transparency and accountability. Sharper public understanding among Kenyan citizens that corruption comes from their own tax dollars, not some mysterious foreign pot of funds, is needed.
Peacebuilding and Violence Prevention

Security is a growing concern in Kenya with the rise of various forms of violence. The threat of attacks from Al-Shabbab influences the mood across Kenya. A special concern is the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment and specific forms of discrimination. A research priority is to understand better Kenya’s Muslim communities and the impact of recent developments, including the approaches of community leaders and of interfaith organizations of various types.

The 2007-8 post-election violence and the relatively peaceful 2012 elections can offer insights into the diverse drivers of tension and violence in Kenya. Religious leaders played significant roles on both occasions. A practical suggestion was that Berkley/WFDD focus on this comparative experience (“a tale of two elections”) as a case study, focusing on how faith actors engaged either to provoke or condone violence or to prevent it. Two contentious topics emerged during the constitutional reform process, the Kadhi courts and abortion rights, both of which engaged religious communities and which merit further analysis. Though some have called 2012 a “peace lobotomy” the roles of faith communities in longer term social cohesion is a core issue for the research team. The agenda needs to address various “third rail” issues including land rights, family law, ethnic identity, and the growing problem of drugs and alcohol. At the same time, it will be important to understand how space for civil society and FIOs to engage on peace and violence prevention may be shrinking or shifting.

Women and Gender

Gender roles affect all development sectors and will be reflected across all research components. Mapping women’s roles (especially where they do not have formal authority) may yield important insights. The group was reminded that women have differing perspective and strategies in the face of development challenges, for example approaches to peace or promoting education, so a nuanced approach is essential.

Several development topics deserve targeted attention, notably domestic violence, sexual violence, and the persistence of child marriage in some regions of the country. How are faith communities engaged on these issues? Changes in girls’ attendance and performance in schools at different levels was discussed, including the impact of both policy leadership and practical measures like assuring adequate girls’ toilets at school. A disconnect was identified between Kenya’s noted progress in increasing girls’ school attendance (cited as one of the strongest worldwide) and numerous reported obstacles to their access and success. The question is how faith leaders and communities are engaging on this important issue. The continuing role of customary or religious inheritance laws on women also deserves a focus.

Youth

Kenya is among various African countries that are experiencing a youth bulge, a much discussed phenomenon that can have both positive and negative effects. There was discussion about the interests of youth, including their perceptions of the constitution and how it may give hope for the future. Topics discussed include how youth fill their time, especially in light of rapid changes in technology. While some youth may aspire to careers in the ITC industry in Kenya, there is also a
growing use of internet pornography. What is the role of religion? It would be valuable to know more about the involvement of youth in faith communities, as well as their religiosity and how it compares to prior generations.

There are knowledge gaps about roles of faith leaders or communities in helping youth find jobs or income. This is a special concern given the appeals of extremist and violent trends, some tied to religious affiliation. The discussion centered on vulnerability including resilience; what are sources of resilience for youth? Where do they turn for guidance? Youth concerns also differ by region across Kenya. For example, pastoralists in the north were previously engaged in conflict.

**Orphans and vulnerable children**

Berkley/WFDD reported on ongoing field work at three orphanages in Kenya which sparked a discussion of how to frame and focus planned work on orphans and vulnerable children. This is an issue of special concern to many faith communities and is also a focus of government policy. A conclusion of the discussion was that the issue of changing approaches to orphan care (a shift from a focus on orphanages to community care) must be set in a broader policy and programmatic context. The initial research focused on how a small sample of faith-run orphanages are adapting to changing global and national norms that push towards deinstitutionalization. Specific ideas on continuing this research centered on setting the work in the context of national and NGO approaches to care of vulnerable children. The research needs to situate faith-inspired responses and care models alongside state care and policies.

**Health**

Faith institutions have a long history of providing healthcare services in Kenya. Estimates of their share of facilities and service vary but are as high as 40 percent. Kenya stands out among African countries for the Memorandum of Understanding between FIO health actors and the government, which formalizes the relationships, financing, and mutual obligations. FIO health services have been examined in considerable detail and will thus not be a Berkley Center/WFDD research focus but a constructive suggestion was research focused specifically on instances where faith providers operate where the state has failed. Differences in health service delivery programs between FIO and secular organizations may not differ substantially but it will be useful to highlight ethical issues that do arise (for example around women’s reproductive health, mental health care).

A suggestion for further study centered on Kenya’s population growth and its implications for the scarcity of resources, conflict, land rights, and urbanization. These issues are interconnected in complex ways. The stance of Kenyan leaders on these issues is worth exploring. Berkley Center/WFDD might seek the views of a sample of faith leaders and FIOs on population growth or family planning. Workshop participants agreed it would be useful to understand better the perceptions of religious leaders about various family planning methods.

**Education**

The discussion on education revolved around quality issues confronting especially the state education system and the roles faith actors play both in direct provision of education (schools and
universities) and their influence on public policy discussions about leading education issues, for example civic values, teaching about tolerance, and gender equality. The practical roles are complex; religiously founded schools make up roughly 30 percent of the education institutions in Kenya, but exercise varying influence today on school administration and approach. Participants highlighted a range of issues including a continuing style of teaching that relies on rote memorization more than critical thinking.

A suggested research focus was how religiously run schools address the identified larger issues facing Kenyan education, including low retention, continuing irregular payments, and approaches that emphasize “the whole child”. Careful review of Muslim schools of all levels including an updating of the Aga Khan madrassa pre-school program would be useful. A participant observed that many Muslim schools are run by women and have the express goal of getting the children through high-school.

Services for vulnerable populations were a theme running through this (and other) discussions. FIOs may have valuable insights into vulnerability issues, especially those linked to cultural practices. These include pressures for early marriage, sexual exploitation by teachers, corporal punishment, and dealing with trauma and mental illness. The issues and thus potential roles and insights from the faith lens are relevant for urban slums (where faith services play complex and vital roles) as well as in more remote rural communities.

**Refugees**
The workshop did not focus explicitly on the proposed research on refugees but issues were touched on in the context of the discussions on OVC, conflict, gender, and youth. Religious roles are significant because FIOs provide direct services to refugees and insofar as religious tensions arise between Kenya’s mostly Christian population and its heavily Muslim refugee community. Various driving factors have pushed refugees from neighboring countries to Kenya; most come from Somalia. The development implications are twofold: competition for resources surrounding the refugee camps and ethnic-religious tensions which can lead to conflict. The complexities of the ethnic-religious tensions are a particular subject of interest. Some key questions were: how are faith leaders and their communities working to minimize tensions, how do Kenyan Muslims and Somali Muslims view the threat of Al-Shabaab and extremism in Kenya, and how are faith communities serving refugee communities.

**NEXT STEPS AND RESEARCH PLAN**
The Berkley Center and WFDD currently has a limited research budget (financed by the Henry R. Luce Foundation and the GHR Foundation) and roughly a twelve months timeline. The plan is to deepen our research from secondary sources and focus on several research visits to Kenya (the first in November 2014). A country report, targeted issues briefs, and teaching materials are the expected research products.
ANNEX: WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Ousseina D. Alidou
Dr. Ousseina D. Alidou is the director of the Center for African Studies at Rutgers University. She is an associate professor in the Department of African, Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Literatures. She is a faculty affiliate in the Department of Anthropology and Women’s and Gender Studies. Her research focuses on African Muslim women’s agency and leadership. Her new book is *Muslim Women in Postcolonial Kenya: Leadership, Representation and Social Change* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2013). She also authored *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency in Postcolonial Niger* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2005, a runner-up for Ama Ata Aidoo-Margaret Schneider Book Prize of Women Caucus’ of the African Studies Association, 2007), co-edited *Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa, with Ahmed Sikainga* (Africa World Press, 2006) and *A Thousand Flowers: Social Struggles Against Structural Adjustment in African Universities* (with Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis).

Charles DeSantis
Charles DeSantis serves as Associate Vice President for Benefits, Payroll and Wellness and Chief Benefits Officer for Georgetown University. His connection to Kenya is through his distinguished history of service to charitable organizations. He developed an arts education program for high school-age AIDS orphans in Nairobi’s Kibera slum; serves on the board of Nyumbani, a Kenyan orphanage for children with HIV/AIDS; and also served as an advisory board member for the Children of Kibera Foundation. His passion for art and the beautiful children of Kibera was the inspiration to start the Kibera Art Institute that has just entered its second year promoting visual arts creation in the community. Charles is also the Chairman of the Board of the United States Association for UNHCR that serves refugees world-wide. In 2010 he published the book, *Smart, Beautiful and Important: Teaching art to AIDS-affected orphans in Africa’s largest slum*.

Samuel K. Elolia
Samuel K. Elolia holds the Ph.D. from Trinity College, University of Toronto. Until his appointment to Emmanuel in 1998, Dr. Elolia taught for five years at St. Norbert College. Since joining Emmanuel he has been teaching wide ranging courses in Theology and World Christianity. Dr. Elolia’s broad research interests for which he has also published include African pneumatology, postcolonial theology, religion and civil society, religion and poverty. He received the ATS Lilly grant in 2005 to conduct research on African pneumatology. His edited volume *Religion and Politics* (2013) was selected for panel discussion at the 2013 AAR/SBL annual meeting. Dr. Elolia has also served on professional boards including American Academy of Religion where he served for two terms as the co-chair of African Religions Group.

Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton
Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton is an associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, where she teaches courses on African religions. From 2007 to 2011, she served as associate director of the Carter G. Woodson Institute for African American and African
Studies (UVa), and directed the Institute’s undergraduate program. She is the author of *Women of Fire and Spirit: History, Faith and Gender in Roho Religion in Western Kenya*, and is currently completing a study of Islam in Western Kenya during the colonial period. In addition to her academic work, she coordinates the Ojola Children’s Project, a small sponsorship program that assists children in rural Western Kenya by providing money for school fees and other necessities.

**Callisto Madavo**

Callisto Madavo is a visiting professor in the African Studies Program at Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service. Before joining Georgetown in 2005, he held several high level positions at the World Bank including special adviser to the president of the World Bank on African issues and initiatives. He also served as the country director for East Africa, vice president for Africa region, and country director for East Asia. In these positions he developed extensive experience in international development work covering a wide range of country program issues as well as sectoral matters including urbanization (housing and transport) in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. In addition, he championed a number of initiatives on Africa including the HIV/AIDS, capacity development and infrastructure initiatives.

**Ray Martin**

Ray Martin serves as senior advisor for Christian Connections for International Health. He served as executive director from 2000 to 2014. He has 45 years of experience as an international development and public health specialist managing the design, implementation and evaluation of large health and population programs. In a 25-year career with USAID, he was chief of the Health, Population, and Nutrition offices in Zaire, Pakistan, and Cameroon. He also served in Ghana and Morocco with USAID. From 1992 he worked several years on African programs as a public health specialist at the World Bank. He has a B.A. in economics from Goshen College, Indiana, an M.P.H. degree from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. In October 2012, Ray Martin received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Health Section of the American Public Health Association.

**Pauline Muchina**

Pauline Muchina comes from the Rift Valley Province in Kenya, where her family still resides. She is the founder of the Future African leaders Project and a fellow with Center for Health and Social Policy. Previously, she served as the senior partnership advisor for UNAIDS for seven and a half years. Pauline serves in several boards and advisory groups including, Foundation for Sustainable Development and the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. Additionally, Pauline supports African Women & Youth, a handmade creative design company that crafts authentic handmade African products for the global market. In 2011, Pauline received the United Methodist Church Global Leadership Award. On March 8, 2014, the Huffington Post honored Pauline as one of 50 women powerful international religious leaders. She holds a master’s degree from Yale University Divinity School and a Ph.D. from the Union Theological Seminary.
Mary Nyangweso
Professor Mary Nyangweso is associate professor and J. Woolard and Helen Peel distinguished chair in Religious Studies at East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina. Her area of specialization is religion, human rights and gender. She earned her Ph.D. in the Sociology of Religion at Drew University. She has published extensively on matters related to domestic violence, female genital cutting and HIV/AIDS. She has authored two books; Female Genital Cutting: Mutilation or Cultural Right? (Praeger, 2014) and Female Circumcision: the Interplay between Religion, Gender and Culture in Kenya (Orbis, 2007). She has also authored several peer review journal articles and book chapters on religion and on women in Africa. Nyangweso also directs a non-profit organization -Women’s Interfaith Support organization (WISO) - which advocates against the abuse of children’s and women’s rights and helps fundraise for scholarship of needy children from abusive families.

Beverly Smith
Beverly Smith was born in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in 1952. After multiple moves in the US, she settled in West Virginia. She went to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY for undergraduate, getting a B.S. in Biology, and then to Albany Medical College in Albany, N.Y., graduating in 1974. On completing her surgical residency, she went to practice in Guam, and then to Kenya. She returned to Kenya in 1987 to do her field work for a Ph.D. in medical anthropology at Southern Methodist University. She has been teaching anthropology at West Virginia University for the past ten years.

Travis Rejman
Travis Rejman is the founding executive director of the Goldin Institute, a global forum dedicated to supporting grassroots partnerships for global change in the areas of poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability, women’s leadership and conflict resolution. Prior to working with Diane Goldin to create and launch the Goldin Institute in 2002, Travis served as director for the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, leading the development of the international program for the 2004 Parliament of the World’s Religions and launching the Partner Cities Network. Subsequent to working in the interreligious field, Travis worked in the environmental movement, focusing on coalition building, grassroots education and civic engagement. Travis has conducted consultative site visits and worked on location in Asia, Europe, Africa, the Middle-East and, South and North America.

Daniel Ritchie
Daniel Ritchie has had a life-long interest in Kenya. He was in the first group of Peace Corps volunteers to serve in Kenya (1964-1966), where he worked as a land settlement officer in the Western Province, helping 1500 small farmers establish 15 acre farms on former European-owned farmland. He joined the World Bank in 1968 and spent thirty years as a development specialist working on agricultural research, environment, and country assistance programs. After retirement, he established the Secretariat for Champions for an HIV-free Generation in Africa, where respected senior African ex-presidents and distinguished citizens visited southern Africa heads-of-state to
encourage public support for the battle against AIDS. In 2000, Mr. Ritchie helped create the Partnership for Transparency Fund, an international NGO promoting citizen engagement in fighting corruption and promoting transparency and accountability in government. Also in 2000, he created a scholarship fund for secondary school and university-level students in Kenya.

**Robert Rotberg**
Robert I. Rotberg is a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center; founding director, Harvard Kennedy School’s Program on Intrastate Conflict; president emeritus of the World Peace Foundation; fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; senior fellow of the Centre for International Governance Innovation; and the author of several books including *Africa Emerges: Consummate Challenges, Abundant Opportunities* (2013).

**Lahra Smith**

**Lauren Van Enk**
Lauren Van Enk has over six years working in global reproductive and maternal child health. In her role as program officer at the Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) at Georgetown University, Lauren manages several family planning and reproductive health programs in Africa. She also manages the Institute’s communications initiatives with a focus on disseminating research and program results and backstops IRH’s faith-based partnerships. Lauren holds a master’s degree in Global Public Health from George Washington University and a B.A. from Calvin College. Her past experiences involve research in reproductive health and HIV/AIDS with BRAC University in Bangladesh, advocacy in global maternal health, and nutrition education.