Research Programme on Religious Communities and Sustainable Development

POTENTIALS OF COOPERATION WITH AFRICAN INITIATED CHURCHES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Summary of Research Results and Policy Recommendations for German Development Policy

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Summary

This report summarises the results of the research project "Potentials of Cooperation with African Initiated Churches for Sustainable Development", which was conducted by the Research Programme on Religious Communities and Sustainable Development at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin from 2017 to 2019 under the leadership of Wilhelm Gräb and Philipp Öhlmann. The project followed a potentials-oriented approach, highlighting the contributions of African Initiated Churches to the promotion of sustainable development. It also outlined new possibilities for German development cooperation.

African Initiated Churches are here defined as those Christian religious communities that have their origins in 19th and 20th century Africa – including African Pentecostal Churches. They do not form a confessional family that can be clearly delimited on the basis of theological criteria. They rather constitute a heterogeneous movement of churches marked by the following three core criteria: (1) Institutional and financial independence from European and North American churches. (2) Contextuality, a rootedness in colonial and postcolonial Africa. (3) A spiritual world view.

1. Potentials of Cooperation with African Initiated Churches for Sustainable Development

The following six central themes illustrate the potentials of African Initiated Churches for sustainable development and hence also for development cooperation that is oriented towards multidimensional sustainability:

(1) Demographic Significance | African Initiated Churches are among the largest and fastest-growing religious communities. They represent about one third of African Christianity (thus nearly one sixth of the African population).

(2) Development Activities | African Initiated Churches are development actors. They are actively engaged in improving conditions of life in their local contexts and societies – largely without outside funding.

(3) African Solutions | African Initiated Churches are embedded in the local context. They constitute durable autochthonous social and institutional structures and are well positioned to contribute to the aim of the African Union Agenda 2063 of achieving "development [that] is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people" (AU Agenda 2063).

(4) Empowerment and Agency | African Initiated Churches are conducive to economic initiative in the market economy. Their theology is often directed towards the liberation of the person from poverty. This sets free motivational forces, shapes new subjectivities, and fundamentally affirms individual and communal agency.

(5) Transformation | Due to their cultural embeddedness and their interwovenness with African spiritual world views, African Initiated Churches have a high transformative potential, i.e. "the capacity to legitimize [...] the development of new motivations, activities, and institutions" (Eisenstadt 1968).

(6) Decolonising Development | African Initiated Churches have the potential of making key contributions to a decolonisation of development. As independent actors, they can thus promote development based on local agendas, agency and ownership as well as contextual notions of development.

2. Policy Recommendations

2.1 Guiding Principles

2.1.1 Utilising the Added Value of Religion | An important added value for development policy of cooperating with African Initiated Churches lies in the fundamental importance of religion in Africa. Cooperation should hence include those areas in which religious aspects are relevant.

2.1.2 Agenda-Setting by the Churches | Cooperation should be aligned with the priorities of the churches. This ensures that development projects and programmes are relevant in the local context and that there is a high level of local ownership.

2.1.3 Using Existing Potential | African Initiated Churches already are development actors in manifold ways. Primary points of engagement for German development cooperation should be those areas and activities in which the churches are already active.

2.1.4 Transparency and Partnership on Equal Footing | African Initiated Churches do not want development cooperation at any cost. Their conditions for fruitful cooperation are the mutual clarification of expectations, equal partnership, respect for their religious identity as well as transparency and accountability – on both sides.

2.1.5 Religious Literacy | The initiatives for increasing religious literacy in German development policy should be continued and expanded, particularly relating to African Initiated Churches.

2.1.6 Context Analysis | The role of African Initiated Churches regarding sustainable development is influenced by social, political, economic, cultural and geographic factors. Knowing these factors is essential for realising the potentials in development cooperation.

2.2 Challenges and Risks

2.2.1 Religious Neutrality | The added value of development cooperation with African Initiated Churches is particularly high if a dialogue at the level of values can be established. How official development cooperation can fruitfully engage with the potentials of religious communities at the level of values for the implementation and promotions of the Sustainable Development Goals requires further empirical research.

2.2.2 Structural Incompatibility | African Initiated Churches and German development policy are structurally and institutionally different. By choosing the right instruments (see below), the risk of structural incompatibility can be mitigated.

2.2.3 Values Divergences | Most African Initiated Churches and German development cooperation largely share the same values. However, there are specific areas in which divergences can appear. Examples can be interpretations of gender equality and the acceptance of homosexuality.

2.3 Approaches for Engagement and Cooperation

We recommend to German development cooperation three approaches for cooperation with African Initiated Churches: project cooperation, knowledge transfer and development-related as well as sociopolitical dialogue. These complementary approaches provide for different intensities of collaboration and cater for the different requirements and the heterogeneity of this movement of churches.

2.3.1 Project Cooperation | One approach is co-funding of activities and projects. We recommend the establishment of project funds to co-finance development activities of religious communities. In parallel, we recommend financial support for development activities of African Initiated Churches (e.g. hospitals, schools, universities, skills training centres, programmes to support entrepre-

neurship, capacity-building, agricultural training). A specific area suitable for collaboration is the co-funding of university scholarship programmes by African Initiated Churches.

2.3.2 Knowledge Transfer and Capacity-Building | A second approach is the inclusion of African Initiated Churches in existing development programmes as well as establishing specific programmes for and with the churches. In contrast to financial support, this would focus on aspects of knowledge transfer and the provision of expertise. Possible sectors are: entrepreneurship and business promotion, democracy promotion and political participation, ecological sustainability, health, education and agriculture.

2.3.3 Development-related and Sociopolitical Dialogue | A third approach should focus on development-related exchange with African Initiated Churches. Moreover, a sociopolitical dialogue on equal terms not influenced by instrumentalising politicisation and conditionality can contribute to long-term changes of mindsets in areas of values divergence.

2.4 Possible Partners

To support the development work of African Initiated Churches in specific areas, large churches or umbrella organisations are potential partners. However, also the vast number of small churches should be included in the cooperation. To establish structural points of engagement, intermediary structures could be involved. Possible actors are the German churches' development organisations as well as councils of churches (if they also represent African Initiated Churches). At the same time, specific project offices could be established for the cooperation with African Initiated Churches (or even wider, for the cooperation with religious communities).

When considering which African Initiated Churches are suitable for what specific form of cooperation, primary attention should be given to their development-related potential. The core criterion should be what development outcomes they already achieved and what development outcomes can be expected in a collaboration with German development policy.

2.5 Desiderata for Future Research

Based on the results of this project, the following desiderata emerge for further context-related empirical research in the area of religion and development. The research should be expanded to other churches and religious communities, as well as further countries and regions. The added value of religious communities for development cooperation as well as the potential of religious communities to decolonise development policy should receive further attention. Regarding methodology, approaches should also include quantitative impact analysis. With respect to specific thematic areas, especially ecological sustainability is an important focus.

1 Potentials of Cooperation with African Initiated Churches for Sustainable Development

1.1 The Religion and Development Research Field

The past 20 years have witnessed a "religious turn" (Kaag and Saint-Lary 2011, 1) in international development theory, policy and practice. A growing corpus of literature has begun to explore the manifold relationships and interactions of religion and development (Jones and Petersen 2011; Swart and Nell 2016) – each themselves two vast fields of research. Religion and development is of cross-disciplinary interest, with research spanning from religious studies and theology (e.g. Heuser 2013, 2015; Gifford 2015) to anthropology (e.g. Freeman 2012b; Bornstein 2005), sociology (e.g. Berger 2010), politics (e.g. Bompani 2010; Clarke and Jennings 2008), development studies (e.g. Deneulin and Bano 2009) and economics (e.g. Barro and McCleary 2003; Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales 2003; Beck and Gundersen 2016). A new interdisciplinary and dynamic research field on religion and development has emerged (Ter Haar 2011; Tomalin 2015; Bompani 2019).

At the same time, development policy makers and practitioners have recognised religion as a relevant factor (Tomalin 2015). Leading examples are the initiatives by the World Bank, the British Department for International Development and, more recently, the initiative by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, inter alia leading to the foundation of the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (Belshaw, Calderisi, and Sugden 2001; Deneulin and Rakodi 2011; Ter Haar 2011; BMZ 2016). The recent interest in the relationship of development and religion is not limited to governmental and multilateral institutions, but extends to religious communities and institutions, as illustrated by a volume published by the Lutheran World Federation in 2013 (Mtata 2013) and the special issue on religion and development of the *Ecumenical Review* published by the World Council of Churches in 2016.

However, the current religion and development discourse has largely been taking place within the secular frameworks of the Western-dominated development discourses. The perspective on religion is mainly functional: it asks whether religion is conducive to development or hinders it (e.g. Basedau, Gobien, and Prediger 2018). The focus is on the contribution of religious communities to secular development agendas (Jones and Petersen 2011; Deneulin and Bano 2009).

This secular framework of the development discourse is not only challenged by the de-colonial and postcolonial debate (e.g. Mawere 2014; Bowers-Du Toit 2020), but also by the perspective of religious actors themselves. For many religious communities, development is part of religion. Thus, even when reflecting on the contribution of religious actors, development discourses and concepts used by experts from academia and practice only partially reflect the practical and political importance of religious actors for sustainable development. They mainly inquire if religious actors contribute to reaching development goals predetermined by others (most often by Western-dominated international development programmes like the SDGs), or if they are hindering reaching these goals. However, this functional-operative perspective on religion does not fully do justice to the self-conception of religious actors. Moreover it does not fully capture the fundamental significance religion plays in African societies with regard to people's everyday life practice as well as in the organisation of their sociocultural or political conditions. Religion is a natural part of culture. Even where religious knowledge is still codetermined by missionary influences, it also actively passes on indigenous cultural knowledge. Religious communities are the central carriers of social

and cultural transformation (Öhlmann et al. 2016a), since religion is a formative force in shaping people's attitudes and visions for life. It thus also determines what development means to people, i.e. where they direct their energy, their motivation, their effort regarding their family or job, culture, economy or society, what they want to achieve for themselves and the society they live in, and what they consider to be a good, fulfilled and successful life. Gerrie Ter Haar (2011) rightfully stresses: "[f]or most people in the developing world, religion is part of a vision of the 'good life'. [...] [R]eligion is part of the social fabric, integrated with other dimensions of life."

This notion of religion as a sociocultural force that does not just support or hinder development but that determines the understanding of development can be found in a typology introduced by van Wensveen (2011). She distinguishes between an "additive pattern" and an "integral pattern" regarding the relationship between religion and development. Development concepts and practices that follow secular Western development policies can be characterised as making an "instrumental addition of religion to the pre-set, mechanistic sustainable development production process" (van Wensveen 2011). In difference to this "additive pattern", she identifies an opposite model in which religion does not function as an instrument for secular development goals, but in which religious communities set the agenda by bringing their own religious-inspired concepts and practices of sustainable development to the table. "[D]evelopment as part of religion" (Öhlmann, Frost, and Gräb 2016a) encapsulates precisely this "integral pattern" brought forward by van Wensveen (2011).

While in the functional approach religious communities are viewed as actors of "mainstream development policies and programmes" (van Wensveen 2011, 82), the integrative approach assumes that religious communities contribute to a concept development mediated by indigenous cultural contexts; that they foster a culturally contextualised form of development and therefore also indigenisation of sustainable development outlined for example in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2015). This can imply a fundamental critique of dominant concepts of (sustainable) development. They (re)shape the very notions of development based on their religious world views and their situated knowledge through their embeddedness in local contexts and cultures (cf. Bowers-Du Toit 2020).

Hence, one desideratum in the research field is to juxtapose the notions of development dominant in (Western and international) development policy with those of religious communities and to illuminate their respective ideological presuppositions. Alternative notions of development informed by contextual religious and cultural world views, such as *holistic development* (Speckman 2016; Owuso-Ansah and Adjei-Acquah 2020), *integral development* (Cochrane 2011), *transformation* or *transformational development* (Masondo 2013; Myers 2011; Dah 2020); *human flourishing* (Marais 2015; Asamoah-Gyadu 2020), *Ubuntu* (Metz 2011; Padwick and Lubaale 2011; Gichimu 2020; Bowers-Du Toit 2020); *good life* (Acosta 2016, Taru 2020) and *prosperity* (Togarasei 2016; Asamoah-Gyadu 2020; Ajibade 2020; Gukurume 2020; Taru 2020), need to be taken into account and their relationship to dominant secular notions of development and modernity needs to be investigated.

1.2 The Research Project "Potentials of Cooperation with African Initiated Churches for Sustainable Development"

The research project "Potentials of Cooperation with African Initiated Churches for Sustainable Development" is situated within the dynamic research field of religion and development by elucidating the role of African Initiated Christianity for sustainable development. While the Catholic and

historic Protestant churches of European and North American provenience have long been recognised as development actors both in the academic literature and in the international development policy discourse (see e.g. Belshaw, Calderisi, and Sugden 2001; Ilo 2014; Gifford 2015; BMZ 2016), African Initiated Christianity lacks such recognition. Thus far, there is only a limited number of studies investigating African Initiated Churches' contribution to development – as concept and practice. Notable works in this area include the comprehensive overview by Turner (1980), the contributions by Oosthuizen and his collaborators (Cross, Oosthuizen, and Clark; Oosthuizen 1997; 2002) or more recent contributions by Garner (2004), Bompani (2008, 2010), Freeman (2012a) and Öhlmann, Frost, and Gräb (2016a). These studies indicate that there is a substantial and growing dynamic in the contribution made by African Initiated Churches to sustainable development in its manifold forms. Acknowledging the role of these religious movements as actors of sustainable development requires acknowledging their understanding of sustainable development as well as the wider notions and ideas that undergird and guide their actions. Moving beyond a functional approach assessing contributions of religious communities to a secular development agenda, the research project furthermore sought to elucidate how African Initiated Churches contribute to re-shaping and contextualising notions of sustainable development.

During this research project we conducted three extensive empirical studies: two regional field studies in West Africa (2017) and East Africa (2018) and one long-term in-depth study in South Africa. Over the course of this project, 134 partly structured qualitative interviews and 15 focus group discussions were conducted in South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania between 2017 and 2019. The majority (94) of the interviews were interlocutions with church leaders. Additionally, 19 expert interviews were conducted as well as 18 interviews with representatives of social agencies operated by one or several African Initiated Churches, such as the rehabilitation centre Christ Against Drug Abuse Ministry of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria. Among the experts interviewed were scholars as well as heads of umbrella organisations like the Christian Association of Nigeria or the Organisation of African Instituted Churches. The focus groups served to jointly interview together leaders, especially of smaller African Initiated Churches, in a given region. On average 15 church leaders participated in the focus groups. Thus, overall the results presented here are based on interviews with representatives of over 250 churches. During the in-depth study in South Africa eight different African Initiated Churches were accompanied over the period of the research project. In part, we also draw on interviews and focus group discussions conducted in South Africa during the previous project in 2016. Figure 1 shows the countries in which research was conducted as well as the respective numbers of interviews and focus group discussions.

With regard to the selection of churches close attention was paid to do justice to the diversity of the field of African Initiated Churches. The aim was to ensure that the investigation was as comprehensive and as representative of the majority of African Initiated Churches as possible. We therefore ensured that churches were selected from different categories (small, medium-size, large churches / churches of all three waves of origin and denominational orientations described in section 1.3 / churches in urban and rural areas).

Methodologically, the field studies followed a grounded-theory-oriented approach (Corbin and Strauss 1990). In the implementation of our research we intensively cooperated with local partners and advisors, especially from the Faculty of Theology and Religion of the University of Pretoria (South Africa), Stellenbosch University (South Africa), Redeemed Christian Bible College (Nigeria), the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, the Pentecost Theological Seminary (Ghana), the Association

Evangélique d'Appui au Développement (Burkina Faso) as well as the Organization of African Instituted Churches, the umbrella organisation of African Initiated Churches. Individual people who deserve mention are Anthony Adebayo and Evans Adu-Gyamfi. Moreover, young researchers of our partner institutions not only participated in the research process but also used, or are still using, the data collected for their own research work.
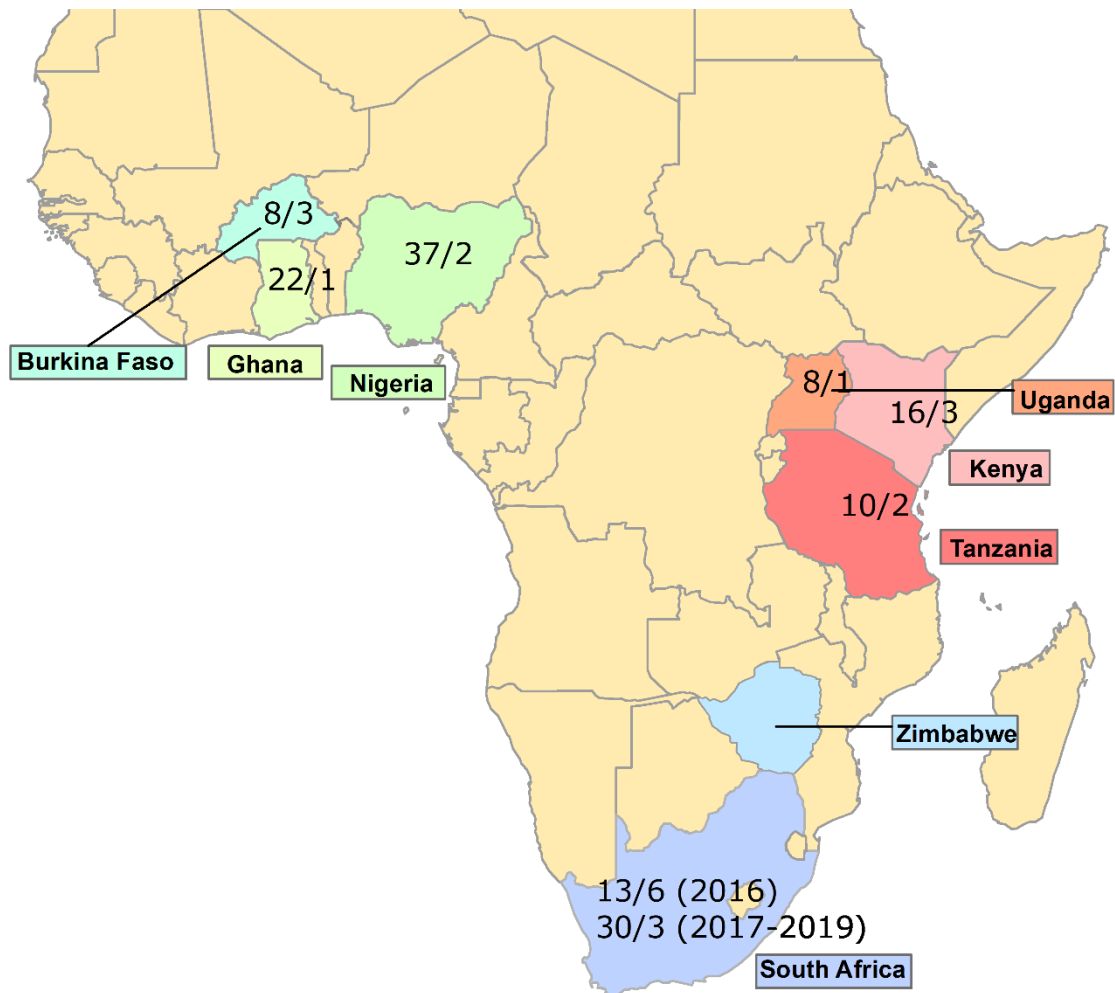
Figure 1: Overview of the countries where research for the project "Potentials of Cooperation with African Initiated Churches for Sustainable Development" was conducted. The signs display the number of individual interviews (left) and the focus group discussions (right) in each country. In Zimbabwe no field studies were conducted by the research team of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. We draw on existing research material of our Zimbabwean colleagues Simbarashe Gukurume and Josiah Taru. The figures for South Africa include the interviews conducted during the previous project in 2016.

The data analysis was mainly based on methods of qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2010). The qualitative material was analysed, coded and transferred into a multitude of qualitative and quantitative analyses. During the whole process of the research project, the existing literature on African Initiated Churches and sustainable development was included. We additionally closely cooperated with scholars from the countries we conducted our research in as well as with academic experts on the respective countries. During several workshops and conferences, colleagues doing research in the thematic field of this project gave presentations and commented on the preliminary results and interpretations of the research conducted. In this way it was possible to include extensive expertise from a large number of scholars in this project and to discuss and triangulate the results within the academic community already during the research process. This becomes particularly tangible in the

volume "African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonisation of Development. Sustainable Development in Pentecostal and Independent Churches" (Öhlmann et al. 2020a), which was edited within the framework of this project. We are extremely privileged that 19 out of the 20 chapters were written either by colleagues from African universities, outstanding leaders of African Initiated Churches or key experts and the research project thereby enriched by their knowledge and expertise. In the following we repeatedly draw on chapters of that volume.

Finally, in the course of this project it has been important to us to not only do research *on* African Initiated Churches but jointly *with* them. Therefore representatives of the churches were invited as speakers at our conferences and workshops. In order to create a platform for African Initiated Churches to share their own perspectives, we established the lecture series "African Independent and Pentecostal Approaches to Theology and Development", which takes place every summer semester at the Faculty of Theology at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Lectures were held by highly distinguished leaders of African Initiated Churches from South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Uganda.

1.3   African Initiated Churches

African Christianity has undergone fundamental change in the past 100 years. In what Allan Anderson called "African Reformation" (Anderson 2001), new, African expressions of Christianity emerged: African Initiated Churches. While at the beginning of the 20th century African Christianity was predominantly marked by the historic Protestant, Catholic mission churches (and, in the North East of the continent, also Orthodox Churches), today about one third of Africa's Christians can be estimated to be members of African Initiated Churches.

Within the framework of the research project "Potentials of Cooperation with African Initiated Churches for Sustainable Development", we define African Initiated Churches as all those Christian religious communities that have their origins in 19th and 20th century Africa (cf. Anderson 2000; 2001). We draw on the original typology by Turner (1967, 17) to refer to churches that are "founded in Africa, by Africans, and primarily for Africans" without "missionary 'Godfathers'", as Pobee and Ositelu (1998, 55) pointedly added. Their key feature is that they were founded by Africans and did not directly emerge from the European and North American mission initiatives of the 19th and 20th centuries.[1] This closely relates to the definition used by the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), which

> understands an AIC to be a church that acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord, and which has separated by seceding from a mission church or an existing African independent church, or has been founded as an independent entity under African initiative and leadership. (Gichimu 2016)

To emphasise this overarching common characteristic of being *initiated* in Africa by Africans, we deliberately use the term African *Initiated* Churches instead of other commonly used interpretations of the "I" in the acronym AIC such as Independent, Indigenous and International (see Venter 2004 for an overview). We argue that there are enough common characteristics to necessitate the use of

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[1] Also Orthodox Churches, e.g. in Egypt and Ethiopia, are churches founded in Africa independently of modern missionary movements. However, with respect to their history and theology they are fundamentally different from the churches initiated in Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries. Hence, they are not included in the definition of African Initiated Churches here. Similarly, the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and its split-offs such as the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika are not considered part of African Initiated Christianity here due to their European provenance.

this umbrella term. In the literature, the acronym AIC is often used to refer exclusively to churches originating in the first and second waves of African Initiated Christianity (cf. below). In this research project, we adopt the following systematic to accommodate for the different approaches in the literature: the term African *Initiated* Churches denotes all churches originating in 19th and 20th century Africa, including African Pentecostal and Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches. The term African *Independent* Churches will be used to denote all churches that can be counted as part of the first and second waves of African Initiated Christianity, i.e. Independent/African/Separatist/Nationalist/ Apostolic/Zionist/Roho/Aladura/Spiritual/Indigenous Churches. The terms African Pentecostal and Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches will be used to describe the Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal strands of African Initiated Christianity.

African Initiated Churches do not form a clearly delimited denominational family (Hollenweger 1998). Rather, they are a heterogeneous movement (Pauw 1995) of probably more than ten thousand churches of different expressions, whose primary commonality is their formation in colonial and postcolonial Africa of the 19th and the 20th century. The smallest of them have just a handful of members, while the largest, such as the Zion Christian Church in South Africa or the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria, claim membership in the millions. With regard to the heterogeneity and the large numbers of African Initiated Churches, various different subcategorisations can be important analytical tools dependent on the questions of interest. To understand the movement of African Initiated Churches and the categorisation employed here, it is helpful to look at the history and development of these churches. The following categorisation and terminology follows Gichimu (2016) and Padwick and Lubaale (2011). Three waves of African Initiated Christianity can be highlighted, which produced different subcategories of African Initiated Churches.

The first churches falling under the categorisation of African Initiated Churches employed here emerged as secessions from mission churches (Sundkler 1961). In an anti-colonial move, African Christians split from the churches founded and supervised by European and North American missionaries and founded churches under their own leadership. In many cases, notably in late 19th and early 20th century Southern Africa as well as 20th century pre-independence East Africa, cross-fertilisation existed between political independence movements and independence movements in the churches. In their theology and structure, the newly independent churches were often similar to the churches from which they seceded (Sundkler 1961; Venter 2004). Because of the focus on independence from foreign leadership, these churches were termed Independent, Separatist or Nationalist Churches. In the different African regions, different self-designations exist: African Churches in West Africa, Ethiopian Churches[2] in Southern Africa, Independent Churches or Nationalist Churches in East Africa (Sundkler 1961; Gichimu 2016). Some of these first-generation African Independent Churches still exist, such as the Lutheran Bapedi Church in South Africa, which seceded from the Berlin Mission Church in the late 19th century. Nonetheless, nowadays the first-generation African Independent Churches in their original form play a marginal role (with the exception of East Africa, particularly Kenya). Many of them have either since disappeared or have incorporated elements of African traditional religions or Pentecostal elements of belief, so that they can be considered as African Initiated Churches of the second or third generation.

The second generation of African Initiated Churches emerged principally since the beginning of the 20th century. While the focus in the first generation was on autonomy, the second generation is

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[2] The term "Ethiopian" refers to the biblical Psalm 68, verse 31 (KJV): "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" (Sundkler 1961, 39).

characterised by indigenisation and hybridisation. Elements of African traditional religions and local cultures were incorporated into Christian practices and beliefs. These churches are characterised by a world view that assumes spiritual forces to be intertwined with the social and material world. Thus, elements of traditional African religions were combined with motives from Christian theology and pneumatology. Spiritual forces, whether good or evil, are considered to have an influence on people's lives, well-being and social relations. The Holy Spirit plays a fundamental role in the theology of many of these churches. The origins of this development were strongly influenced by the Pentecostal revival in North America at the beginning of the 20th century (Anderson 2000). The African Initiated Churches of the second wave are often called S*piritual* or *Indigenous Churches*. Self-designations are *Aladura Churches* in West Africa (Ositelu 2016), *Roho/Akurinu* in East Africa (Gichimu 2016) and *Zionist/Apostolic Churches* in Southern Africa (Anderson 2000). Frequent characteristics are adult baptism by full immersion, strict moral codes, strict normative behavioural ethics based on literal bible hermeneutics, the importance of sanctified objects and (often white) liturgical gowns worn by believers. Until today, the *Spiritual Churches* particularly attract the socially marginalised, but have long established themselves in all strata of society, particularly in Southern Africa. In West Africa they have increasingly faded in a general move towards African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (Meyer 2004).

African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches are the third wave of African Initiated Christianity. They are closely related to the global Pentecostal movement, but are nonetheless considered an indigenous religious movement (Padwick and Lubaale 2011; Asamoah-Gyadu 2020). More so than the African Initiated Churches of the second wave, Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches generally distance themselves from African traditional belief systems and culture. Nonetheless, like the churches of the second wave, they accommodate for a spiritual world view in acknowledging that spiritual forces influence the material world and social relations (Freeman 2012b; Gifford 2015). The role of the Holy Spirit is of central importance in these churches' theology. "Being born again" in the Holy Spirit, affirmed by full immersion baptism, is often constitutive for the believers' identity. A visible characteristic of the third wave of African Initiated Churches are lively, "exuberant worship services" (Anderson 2000, 48) led by charismatic preachers, in which emotions and individual religious encounters play an important role. The theology of these churches is often marked by a Prosperity Gospel, the idea "that God wants believers to prosper physically, materially and spiritually" (Togarasei 2016, 1006). While classical Pentecostal Churches emerged in Africa already in the first half of the 20th century, the African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches are a post-independence phenomenon, emerging from the 1970s onward. Moreover, these churches geared towards success and prosperity gather particularly upwardly mobile urban middle classes (Dickow 2012). However, they can increasingly be found in rural areas as well and among parts of the population with lower income.

The following three overarching characteristics apply to the majority of these churches. First, a history of institutional and financial *independence* from the historic European and North American Christian confessions (Gichimu 2016; Thiani 2016; Onyinah 2020). Second, *contextuality,* a common origin and rootedness in colonial and postcolonial Africa (Padwick and Lubaale 2011; Asamoah-Gyadu 2020; Gichimu 2020). Third, a *spiritual world view*, the "significance of the spiritual in their cosmology, be it the Holy Spirit, spiritual forces or healing" (Öhlmann, Frost, and Gräb 2016, 2; cf. Pobee and Ositelu 1998; Anderson 2000; Padwick and Lubaale 2011; Asamoah-Gyadu 2015, 2020), even though marked differences in the churches' positioning towards African traditional religions exist.

from 1880s	from 1900s	from 1970s
Independent / Nationalist Churches	**Independent / Spiritual Churches**	**African Pentecostal / Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches**
Secessions from mission churches, ecclesiastic independence movement	**Indigenous form of Christianity; incorporation of African traditional belief systems, proximity to early Pentecostal movement**	**Closely related to global Pentecostal movement; emphasis of the power of the Holy Spirit; Prosperity Gospel**
Terminologies: *African Churches* (West Africa), *Ethiopian Churches* (Southern Africa), *Independent Churches, Nationalist Churches* (East Africa)	Terminologies: *Aladura Churches* (West Africa), *Roho/Akurinu* (East Africa), *Zionist/Apostolic Churches* (Southern Africa)	Terminologies: *African International Churches, Bazalwane* (Southern Africa)

Figure 2: Three waves of African Initiated Christianity

The utility of any categorisation and conceptual framework depends on the object of investigation. With respect to the study of African Initiated Churches and sustainable development, the definition outlined above proves particularly fertile for the following four reasons:

(1) Because of their historical, institutional and cosmological rootedness in Africa, the churches subsumed here as African Initiated Churches are not yet partners of development cooperation on a wider scale.[3] Here there is a marked difference to mission-initiated churches, which have implemented development projects with international funding for decades. African Initiated Churches implement manifold development-related activities as well, but the vast majority have no partnerships with international religious or official development agencies (Öhlmann, Frost, and Gräb 2016).

(2) From an institutional point of view, which is highly relevant in the study of religious communities' contributions and sustainable development, categorisations based on theological considerations might prove less useful. As we pointed out elsewhere, small Spiritual Churches, for example, might have more in common with small Pentecostal Churches than with a large Spiritual Church with millions of members like the Zion Christian Church (Öhlmann, Frost, and Gräb 2016). In terms of its structure, the Zion Christian Church might be more comparable with other transnational churches of similar size, like the Redeemed Christian Church of God, which is Pentecostal-Charismatic. An a priori differentiation between Spiritual Churches and Pentecostal Churches would obscure these similarities.

(3) Third, the distinction between the Spiritual Churches and the Pentecostal Churches is not always clear-cut (Meyer 2004). Some churches consider themselves both a Spiritual Church and Pentecostal. Examples are The Church of the Lord (Aladura) Worldwide with its headquarters in Nigeria (Ositelu 2016, 2020), Gilgal Bible Church in South Africa or the National Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa in Kenya. Other churches have crossed classi-

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[3] There are few exceptions, such as in the case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (Adeboye 2020; Adedibu 2020), whose social programmes are supported by international development cooperation funds. The OAIC development programme is also supported by international funding, particularly from religious development organisations in Europe and North America.

fictional boundaries: the Redeemed Christian Church of God, one of the largest Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in Nigeria, started out as a Spiritual Church and only later developed its Pentecostal-Charismatic profile (Adeboye 2020; Adedibu 2020).

(4) Fourth, the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), the largest umbrella body of African Initiated Churches, includes both African Independent as well as African Pentecostal Churches (Padwick and Lubaale 2011; Gichimu 2016).

1.4 Sustainable Development: Potentials and Perspectives of African Initiated Churches

The central frame of reference of the research project are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as outlined in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2015). Their 17 goals and 169 targets are internationally agreed-on objectives for development policy and cooperation. The move from the preceding Millennium Development Goals to the SDGs marked a paradigm shift in international development policy. The SDGs brought together ecological objectives with economic, social and political objectives and consolidated them in one multidimensional framework. Consequently, SDGs do not only apply to countries classified as "developing countries" based on social or economic indicators. The milestone move from *development* to a framework of *sustainable development* implies that all countries are "developing countries" in at least part of the dimensions encompassed by the SDGs.

The notion of sustainable development was most prominently brought forward by the World Commission on Environment and Development in its 1987 report *Our Common Future*. It was defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987, 43). As we have highlighted elsewhere,

> [t]he quintessence of the report was that economic and social development needs to take into account the ecological framework they operate in—and its limitations. In the original concept, sustainable development primarily referred to ecological sustainability. Consequently, in current development discourses, sustainable development is often used to describe a mode of development that takes into account ecological considerations and limitations of natural resources. (Öhlmann, Frost, and Gräb 2020)

While the ecological dimension remains central in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well, the Agenda broadened the notion of sustainable development by including economic, social and political dimensions. When investigating the nexus of religion and sustainable development it is helpful to look at the basic meaning of sustainability:

> In more general terms, sustainability refers to 'the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level' (Oxford Dictionary 2017). Sustainable development interventions, hence, are such development programs or projects that produce sustained—i.e. lasting—changes beyond any given project lifetime. Ecological sustainability is a special case of sustainability: lasting change can only be generated if long-term ecological limitations are respected. Both notions have in common that they require a transformation of mind sets, values and knowledge. Ecological sustainability depends on a culture of sustainable use of natural resources. Similarly, the broader notion of sustainability depends on changes in people's consciousness, which result in different actions. (Öhlmann, Frost, and Gräb 2020)

Hence, the notion of development undergirding the research project is deliberately wide and multi-dimensional, covering economic (e.g. Taru 2020), social (e.g. Akindolie 2020; Ouedraogo 2020), ecological (e.g. Werner 2020) and political (e.g. Asamoah-Gyadu 2020; Swart 2020) dimensions of sustainable development and accommodating for multiple and contextual notions and ideas of developments, as processes of sustained change.

With respect to African Initiated Churches and sustainable development, the research project "Potentials of Cooperation with African Initiated Churches for Sustainable Development" follows a potentials-oriented approach. Accordingly, it highlights the contributions of African Initiated Churches to the promotion of sustainable development in different areas. This is not to idealise African Initiated Churches in any way, or to imply that many of the potentials identified do not also exist in other churches and other religious communities. We acknowledge that there are problematic aspects in African Initiated Churches as there are in other churches and religious communities. Moreover, in light of the enormous size and the heterogeneity of the movement the possibility that cases of lack of transparency and accountability, personal enrichment or abuse of power can be found cannot be excluded. That cases exist is shown by the drastic individual examples documented in the South African context of pastors asking their members to drink petrol or to eat grass (Kgatle 2017; CRL Rights Commission 2017). Neither do all African Initiated Churches contribute to sustainable development (conceptually and practically), nor do these churches relate to all dimensions of sustainable development in the same way. Nevertheless African Initiated Churches do mobilise great potential relating to sustainable development in a highly productive way. This applies both to the conceptual level, with regard to the *understanding* of development, as well as the practical level regarding social, ecological, cultural and economic development *work*. Highlighting this potential is the aim of this research project. It also seeks to point to new opportunities for German development cooperation. In the following, we identify six central themes that highlight the potential of African Initiated Churches for sustainable development and thus also for German development cooperation that is oriented towards multidimensional sustainability. In addition to the existing literature, we predominantly draw on our own field research as described in section 1.2.**Demographic Significance**

First, African Initiated Churches are marked by a highly dynamic development. They are among the largest and fastest-growing religious communities in many African contexts. In many countries on the continent, they represent substantial parts of the population and their networks reach even remote areas. To promote sustainable development among socially and economically marginalised parts of the population in rural and socially deprived areas, these networks constitute a pivotal resource. Moreover, their demographic significance relates to their *contextuality*. With respect to a "'re-centring' of development" (Bowers-Du Toit 2020) this positions them ideally to include the views on desirable developments held by the local populations. Figure 2 provides an overview of the relevance of African Initiated Churches in selected African countries.

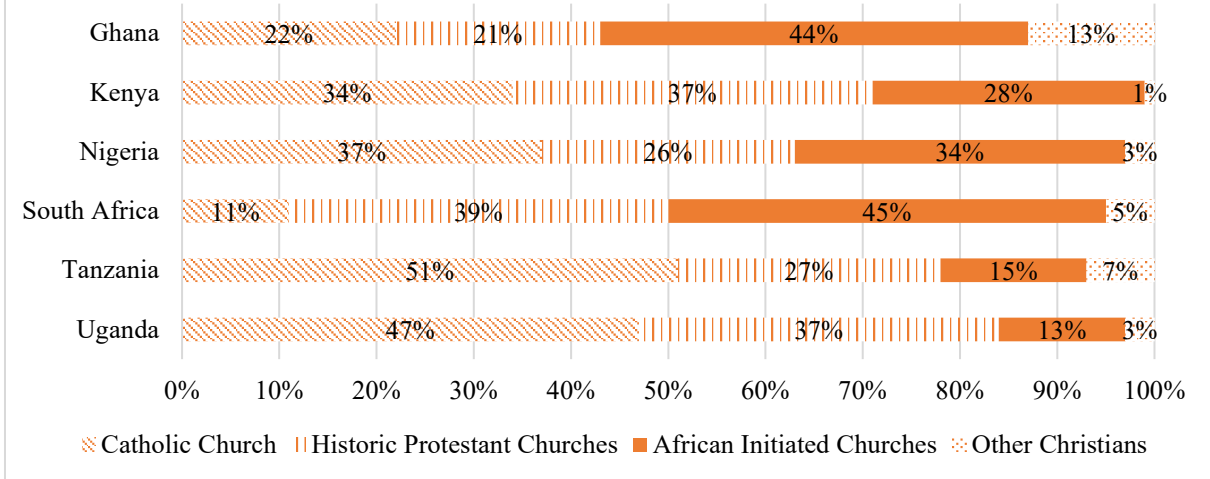# Members of *African Initiated Churches* as percentage of total Christian population in selected countries

Figure 3: Membership of African Initiated Churches

Ghana: Population: 26 million (2012), 69% Christians, Source: Ghana Living Standards Survey (Round 6), 2012; Kenya: Population: 41 million (2010), 88% Christians, Source: Pew Forum, 2010; Nigeria: Population: 159 million (2010), 46% Christians, Source: Pew Forum, 2010; South Africa: Population: 51 million (2010), 87% Christians, Source: Pew Forum, 2010; Tanzania: Population: 45 million (2010), 61% Christians, Source: Pew Forum, 2010; Uganda: Population: 39 million (2014), 85% Christians, Source: National Population and Housing Census, 2014. Exact membership figures of African Initiated Churches are not available. In some African countries, official censuses do not include religious affiliation (such as Nigeria and Tanzania) or do not differentiate between different Christian confessions. Hence, we draw on the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life's 2010 representative survey "Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa", which covered 19 African countries. The figures presented cannot be taken at face value. African Christianity is highly dynamic and substantial shifts can occur within relatively short periods of time. Moreover, in many cases members of the Catholic or historic Protestant churches are at the same time affiliated with African Initiated Churches, but do not appear as such in official statistics. Because of a lower degree of institutionalisation, particularly among the thousands of smaller African Initiated Churches, official figures have a tendency to underestimate the relevance of these churches.

1.4.2 Development Activities

Second, African Initiated Churches are actively engaged in improving conditions of life in their local contexts and societies, as the existing literature as well as our own research highlight (Padwick and Lubaale 2011; Öhlmann, Frost, and Gräb 2016; Abdulsalami 2020; Akindolie 2020; Ositelu 2020). They do so with immense commitment and largely without outside funding. Even small churches implement activities that contribute towards sustainable development as outlined in the SDGs, be it through HIV/AIDS awareness raising, offering scholarships for students, entrepreneurship workshops or youth empowerment (see e.g. Ajibade 2020; Akindolie 2020; Owusu-Ansah and Adjei-Acquah 2020; Dah 2020; Gukurume 2020; Taru 2020). Many churches establish schools, training centres, clinics and hospitals (see e.g. Adeboye 2020; Onyinah 2020; Anim 2020; Owusu-Ansah and Adjei-Acquah 2020; Ouedraogo 2020). OAIC, jointly with its member churches, implements a decentralised livelihoods programme focused on agriculture in East Africa (see Kurzstellungnahme 01/2019 AICs in Ostafrika – Unabhängigkeit, Bildung, Landwirtschaft (Frost and Öhlmann 2019)). Larger African Initiated Churches found universities, offer micro insurance or even finance public infrastructure (see e.g. Adeboye 2020; Adedibu 2020; Onyinah 2020; Anim 2020; Owusu-Ansah

and Adjei-Acquah 2020). Moreover, at different political levels African Initiated Churches act in the interest of their members (Bompani 2008) and speak out against corruption and misuse of power (see Lekganyane 27.03.2016; Asamoah-Gyadu 2020; Ajibade 2020). Because of their institutional and financial independence, their agendas are less likely to be biased by donor interests.

1.4.3 African Solutions

Third, African Initiated Churches stand for African solutions. They are actors embedded in the local context. In large parts, they are grassroots movements (Swart 2020; Bowers-Du Toit 2020). In contrast to NGOs depending on external funding and development experts from the Global North, they constitute durable autochthonous social and institutional structures. Hence, in light of their independence and their contextuality, they are well positioned to achieve "development [that] is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people", as stipulated in the African Union's Agenda 2063 (African Union 2015, 8).

This is particularly relevant in contexts where government structures are weak and unreliable. Development-related activities implemented by contextually embedded religious communities such as African Initiated Churches increase ownership by the local population as well as transparency and accountability (cf. Ouedragogo 2020, van Zyl 2020), as the Nigerian Bishop and president of OAIC Daniel Okoh highlights:

> *People from Sub-Saharan Africa [...] are highly religious, and anything that touches the religion of the people, they take it very seriously. And because of our colonial history, there is a way that people look at secular things. [...] They look at it as government and government is still seen as something that is very far away. But if it is religion, people take it to heart. And so, when you are talking about bringing the spiritual and the [...] the social, it is important because, it is only by doing that, that you can actually engage the active participation of the people. And the people would come into it and say, 'this thing, God is in this thing, you must be very, very careful'. That is how you can get something positive in transparency, in accountability and all that, because of the spiritual aspect. (Interview Daniel Okoh, 2017-N-04)[4]*

1.4.4 Empowerment and Agency

Fourth, African Initiated Churches seem to be conducive to economic initiative in the market economy. The theology of many African Initiated Churches is directed towards the liberation of the person from poverty. The Christian faith and the power of the Holy Spirit find their expression in the believers' material life. This sets free motivational forces, shapes new subjectivities and fundamentally affirms the individual's agency (Maxwell 2005; Togarasei 2016; Ruele 2016; Owusu-Ansah and Adjei Acquah 2020; Dah 2020; Gukurume 2020; Taru 2020). Togarasei (2016) emphasises the relationship of African prosperity theology with traditional African notions on the connection between the divine and physical well-being and material prosperity. This is facilitated by what we have described above as the key characteristics *contextuality* and *spiritual world view*. Moreover, Freeman describes a parallel between African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches and Max Weber's Protestant Ethic:[5]

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[4] According to the wishes of the interview partners, they are quoted either by name or anonymously.
[5] See Berger's similar thesis on Latin American Pentecostalism (Berger 2010).

> *It is a form of Protestantism that not only fits with African sensibilities, but also stimulates a transformation of behaviour that can lead to success, or at least upward mobility, in the contemporary neoliberal economy. It motivates new behaviours and renders them moral. It is the notion that 'God wants you to have abundance' and that this is the divine plan that motivates these new behaviours, not an anxious quest to find evidence of one's election for salvation in the next world. Nevertheless, the consequences are the same: hard work, saving and a limitation on certain types of consumption. (Freeman 2012b, 20)*

Nearly four decades ago, Turner similarly highlighted this with respect to African Independent Churches (previously described as first- and second-generation African Initiated Churches):

> *[A]ttitudes pervade many of the independent churches, which exhibit a loose parallel to the Protestant work ethic. People do tend to prosper when they join these groups, not only because of moral reform, health improvement, less wasteful spending practices and regular habits built round the 7-day week programme of their church, but also because of a belief that they now have access to the power of the Spirit made available through these churches, their founders and practices, and through the Bible. This encourages confidence, initiative, perseverance, adaptability to the changing modern situation and freedom from distraction through political or other hysterias. (Turner 1980, 528–29)*

Promotion of business and entrepreneurship plays an important role for many African Initiated Churches. In many African Pentecostal Churches, Prosperity Gospel is not only preached from the pulpit, but is complemented by the active promotion of empowerment and business initiatives (Freeman 2012b). Churches offer entrepreneurship training and support business start-ups of their members with finance and expertise (Gukurume 2020, Taru 2020). While this is particularly important in African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches, similar tendencies have also been documented in other realms of the African Initiated Church movement as well (Öhlmann, Frost, and Gräb 2016; Turner 1980). Moreover, education is almost universally considered the key to personal success and sustained development. One key result from our own research, encompassing individual interviews and focus group discussions of African Initiated Church leaders, is that SDG 4: Quality Education is nearly unanimously rated as one of the most important development goals (see Figure 7). Several church leaders underlined that "development starts with education", because all other forms of development would follow from it (Interview Daniel Oppong, 2017). The importance of education in African Initiated Churches is inter alia highlighted in the contributions that were produced within the framework of our research project by Adeboye (2020), Adedibu (2020), Owusu-Ansah and Adjei-Acquah (2020), Ouedraogo (2020) and Gukurume (2020).

1.4.5 Transformation

Fifth, African Initiated Churches can be considered as agents of social change and individual transformation (see e.g. Asamoah-Gyadu 2020; Adeboye 2020; Adedibu 2020; Gukurume 2020; Taru 2020). Due to their consideration of "African sensibilities" (Freeman 2012b, 20; cf. Asamoah-Gyadu 2015) and their interwovenness with an African *spiritual world view*, African Initiated Churches have a high "transformative potential", i.e. "the capacity to legitimise, in religious or ideological terms, the development of new motivations, activities, and institutions" (Eisenstadt 1968, 10).

This can be illustrated with the example of the Zion Christian Church, the largest church in Southern Africa. In his Easter Sermon, the church's Bishop, Barnabas E. Lekganyane, called upon believers to vote:

> *Be in a state of readiness. Make sure you are registered to vote in your area. Prepare your-*
> *selves to go elect your local leaders who will represent your aspirations. Even those who will be*
> *asking your vote should remember that leadership is about service to the community. I know*
> *that some of the candidates will be coming to you for the first and last time ever even if they*
> *win. We can only hope and pray that they will not forget about you once you've elected them.*
> *When talking about leadership, Henry A. Kissinger cautions thus: 'The task of the leader is to*
> *get his people from where they are to where they have not been', adding that, '90% of the poli-*
> *ticians give the other 10% a bad reputation'. Remember that every community deserves the*
> *leadership they elect. So you've got the power to determine who leads you. Utilize that power*
> *to choose correctly and to empower your people. (Lekganyane 27/03/2016)*

Such encouragement to contribute to the democratic process by voting in the upcoming municipal elections is likely to have substantial impact on the church's millions of members precisely because of ZCC's rootedness in African belief systems and the church's significance in the religious dimension of people's lives. Asamoah-Gyadu 2020 describes a similar type of encouragement for civic engagement in the Ghanaian context: International Central Gospel Church leader Mensa Otabil prior to the 2016 elections encouraged his congregants to exercise their right to vote in a sermon titled "Your Vote". Similar arguments are also brought forward by Ajibade 2020, while Adeboye 2020 is more sceptical regarding the Nigerian context. The Church of Pentecost in Ghana deliberately engages with the public sphere, for example by hosting Christian leadership conferences for politicians (Onyinah 2020).

The transformative potential is also visible at the individual level. African Initiated Churches aim at a transformation of the whole person and at enabling each person and the community to live a good life. Elijah Daramola, at that time Pastor in Charge of the Southern Africa Region of the RCCG, pointedly stated:

> *You need to change the whole person. Because it will be a waste of time and money if you train*
> *people without their lives being changed. […] Our goal must be made clear. Is it in just impact-*
> *ing people and leave them living anyhow? Or is it impacting people and mak[ing] life peaceful?*
> *If we have this agreement, we will flow together. But otherwise [our] work will not be a bless-*
> *ing to others. (Interview Elijah Daramola, 2016-S-01)*

It is the interaction of spirituality and socioeconomic development that goes along with a mutual openness to local culture that breaks the ground for transformation and sustainable development. African Initiated Christianity creates spaces that make (ecologically, socially and economically) sustainable development also culturally sustainable.

1.4.6 Decolonising Development

Sixth, African Initiated Churches have the potential of making key contributions to a decolonisation of development. In his inaugural lecture for the Chair of Development Policy and Postcolonial Studies at University of Kassel, Aram Ziai highlighted two desiderata regarding the decolonisation of development. First, taking into account other notions of development than the dominant ones undergirded by "Western [...] hegemonial models of the organisation of economy, politics and knowledge" and second the "dismantling of hierarchies between development experts and the people concerned" (Ziai 18.04.2017, authors' translation; cf. van Zyl 2020; Bowers-Du Toit 2020). In a related vein, Mayer (2019) draws on postcolonial theory to develop three criteria for postcoloniality with reference to African Initiated Churches. These criteria are, first, "resistance and

indigenization" (building on Varela, María do Mar Castro Varela and Dhawan 2015 and Heuser 2016), second, referring to Chakrabarty 2008, "decentralization and empowerment", and third, the "dismantling of Eurocentric patterns of thought" (relating to Said 1978, Heaney 2015, Böttigheimer 2016, and Becker 2018). Essentially, this takes up and relates to the key themes of *independence*, *contextuality* and *spiritual world view* introduced above. It hence emerges that these central characteristics can be directly transposed as conceptual categories delineating their contributions to decolonising concepts and practices of development.

Because of their institutional and financial *independence*, they are much less subject to the influence of donor agendas than donor-funded NGOs or religious development organisations. Hence, African Initiated Churches have the potential of contributing to the decolonisation of development by enabling agency of people and communities (Bowers-Du Toit 2020). As independent actors, African Initiated Churches can thus promote development based on local agendas, agency and ownership. In their independence from outside funding also lies great potential for internal accountability and transparency, as inter alia the case of the Church of Pentecost illustrates (Onyinah 2020; Anim 2020; see also Owusu-Ansah and Adjei-Acquah's 2020 on Perez Chapel International). Moreover, the ends of their activities have the potential to be more focused on the priorities of the respective local communities. This relates to the idea of "development from below" (cf. Swart 2020), that development needs to not only be driven by international organisations and governments, but by people and organisations at the micro and meso levels of society. As Swart 2020 highlights, various authors argue that African Initiated Churches bear great potential for a "development from below", a development driven by the local people. Many contributions that emerged during the course of our research project show how this "development from below" is put into practice and even trickles upward to wider levels of society – for example through the provision of schools, hospitals and universities and the engagement with political circles (see e.g. Asamoah-Gyadu 2020; Adeboye 2020; Onyinah 2020; Anim 2020; Owusu-Ansah and Adjei-Acquah 2020).

Moreover, due to their *contextuality* their actions have the potential to be more aligned to contextual notions of development informed by contextual culture and religion. African Initiated Churches are embedded in their respective context. Beyond being independent, they are thus able to make reference to, navigate in and incorporate local social structures as well as cultural and religious world views and cosmologies, for example *Ubuntu* (Gichimu 2020; Bowers-Du Toit 2020) or *Ilosiwaju / Omoluabi* (Adeboye 2020). Moreover, they can be seen not only as representatives of the local communities, but rather as a focal point of people's actions themselves, as Swart (2020) points out with reference to Sanyal and Korten:

> [W]hen considered in terms of NGO organisational theory, AICs could according to this appreciation as development from below agents even be seen as surpassing NGOs' role as 'third-party' organisations that operate on behalf of people's interests [...]. Instead, they could be seen as taking on the role of 'first-party' organisations that embody people's direct participation [...].

But perhaps the greatest potential for decolonising development is related to the ideological level. The *spiritual world view* of African Initiated Churches fundamentally challenges dominant, secular notions of sustainable development (Öhlmann et al. 2018; Bowers-Du Toit 2020).[6] As we have pointed out with reference to Gifford (2015), Masondo (2013), Oosthuizen (1988) and Freeman (2012b), "AICs are embedded in a specific discursive, material and practical context. They are root-

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[6] In this section we refer to earlier arguments in Öhlmann et al. (2018d).

ed in a world view in which the spiritual, social and physical spheres constitute various layers of the same reality" (Öhlmann et al. 2018), and in which "religious or spiritual, moral and cultural dimensions [...] are inseparable from other spheres of society" (Adogame 2016). Freeman (2012b) notes with respect to African Pentecostal Churches: "[T]hey maintain a magico-religious worldview in sharp contrast to mainstream development's rational secularism." This statement can largely be generalised with regard to African Initiated Churches. Religious dimensions are essential and inseparable parts of notions of development:

> *It becomes clear that from the perspective of African Initiated Churches and the communities they are embedded in, it is vital to note that spirituality is an essential part of a good life and hence a fundamental dimension in development. (Öhlmann et al. 2018d)*

This can be illustrated with quotes from church leaders interviewed in our field research. Elijah Daramola, already quoted above, expressed this in the pointed statement "[s]piritual development is part of development. A good life includes spirituality" (Interview Elijah Daramola, 2016). Notions of a good and fulfilled life extend beyond material and social aspects, as Elias Mashabela, Bishop of Bophelong Bible Church in Polokwane, South Africa, explained:

> *The NGOs are taking care of people, but they do not take care of the spiritual part of the human being. So, we are taking care of the people, [...] but we go beyond. We also look at the spiritual well-being of the persons [...]. We run similar programmes, but we do more by adding the spiritual level. (Interview Elias Mashabela, 2016-S-13)*

A church leader from Nigeria declares these dimensions as inseparable:

> *When it comes to development, we have spiritual development, we have physical and social development. So, so you cannot separate any of the developments from each other, because the church provides both the social and the spiritual development (Interview 2017-N-14)*

In the field of tension between (Western-dominated) secular concepts of development and (African) spiritual world views, decolonising concepts and practices of development inter alia means bringing forward alternative notions of development, which adequately take into account local religious knowledge and cosmologies and incorporate cultural and spiritual dimensions. This is the primary contribution African Initiated Churches can make to the decolonisation of development.

2 Policy Recommendations

On the basis of the research conducted within the framework of the project "Potentials of Cooperation with African Initiated Churches for Sustainable Development", the following recommendations for German development policy can be highlighted.

2.1 General Principles

2.1.1 Realising the Added Value of Religion

The example of African Initiated Churches shows that with regard to development policy, the benefits of cooperating with religious communities and their integration into development cooperation lies in their transformative potential and the motivational factors they activate. Following sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt, we understand transformative potential as "the capacity to legitimize, in religious or ideological terms, the development of new motivations, activities, and institutions." As Eisenstadt elaborates: "[T]here may take place a transformation of the original religious impulses which may in its turn lead to the transformation of social reality" (1968). Because of its close connection to values, world view and culture, religion has the potential to fundamentally shape and change people and societies. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires that this transformative role of religion is taken into account. In this context the cooperation with African Initiated Churches enables a form of development that relates to the basis of the "pyramid of challenges and barriers to rights fulfilment" (Figure 4) described by Thomsen (2017), the level of values and world view.
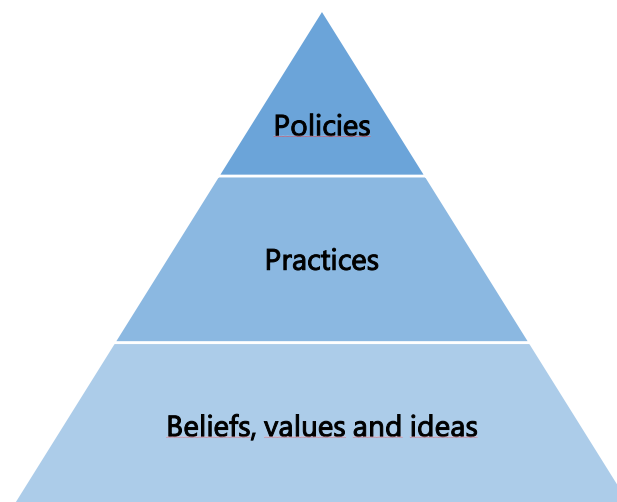
Figure 4: Pyramid of challenges and barriers to rights fulfilment (Thomsen 2017)

If the promotion of sustainable development relates to this basic level, it can bring about fundamental change. As a Nigerian church leader states, "You can't separate social from spiritual because they are interwoven. Any social life without spiritual guidance is baseless, and any spiritual life without good social input is useless" (Interview 2017-N-03). African Initiated Churches, as actors particularly anchored in a local, religiously shaped culture and world view, offer institutional points of contact for the promotion of fundamental transformation and change at the level of values.

Furthermore, it is apparent that African Initiated Churches release and promote great motivational forces at the individual level. In relation to African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches this has been pinpointed by Freeman in the title of her book *The Pentecostal Ethic and the Spirit of Development* (Freeman 2012a) published in 2012. Our research shows that African Initiated Churches support empowerment and agency. They assist people in overcoming the adversities of their lives, to free themselves from those adversities and to shape their lives in a self-determined way. This is only possible because of the churches' connection to culturally and religiously shaped contextual world views. The promotion of independence and self-determination clearly emerge as central themes in African Initiated Churches' understanding of development. Empowerment and agency are advocated primarily through the theology of the churches. The research literature often mentions Prosperity Gospel in connection with Pentecostal Churches (e.g. Heuser 2015). In essence this describes the idea that God blesses people by means of material prosperity. On the basis of the data we have collected, three aspects stand out in particular. First, central themes of Prosperity Gospel can be found in all subcategories of African Initiated Churches. Secondly, African Initiated Churches' understanding of prosperity is not limited to material well-being. It can be much better understood considering that it aims first of all at a liberation from abject poverty, but always includes the spiritual and social, and in some cases even ecological, dimensions. Enabling people to live a good life in all these dimensions is at the core of the theology of many African Initiated Churches. Third, it is visible that this releases immense motivational abilities. It is precisely through the certainty that a good, fulfilled life is God-willed and that one's own life receives blessings from a divine power that the individual gains the agency to shape that life in a self-determined way.[7]

The added value of development cooperation with religious actors such as African Initiated Churches, in comparison with cooperation with state or other secular actors, is based on the enormous importance that the religious dimension has for the practical life orientation of people belonging to these churches. This added value can be realised in development cooperation, particularly if the religious dimension is integrated into development programmes. Cooperation with African Initiated Churches should therefore also include those areas in which religious elements play a role. This does not mean that the development policy, which rightly remains neutral with regard to religion, should finance religious activities. It is rather a matter of not leaving out the religiousness brought in by religious communities as partners. Church programmes for the promotion of entrepreneurship, democratic participation or ecological sustainability gain in effectiveness precisely because of their religious references. Here, religious partners must be allowed to introduce these references.

2.1.2 Agenda-Setting by the Churches

African Initiated Churches, like many other churches and religious communities, are deeply rooted in local communities and the respective cultural contexts. In order to utilise the churches' potential for promoting sustainable development and for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, po-

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[7] In the literature, two opposing views are held, especially with regard to the Prosperity Gospel. One, argued among others by Gifford (2015), maintains that by relying on divine intervention Prosperity Gospel promotes fatalistic attitudes among believers and leads to passivity. In the other reading, represented among others by Freeman (2012b), motivational factors are set free precisely by the belief that God blesses one's own life. In the data we collected, empirical evidence for both interpretations can be found. In the vast majority of cases, however, the second reading seems to be the more accurate – especially when the churches emphasise the importance of individual initiative and work ethics, and when most churches themselves contribute to the empowerment of their members, among other things through a variety of training and qualification activities.

tential cooperation with German development cooperation should follow the priorities of the churches themselves. In this way a direct contextual relevance of development policy programmes and projects can be ensured and a high degree of local ownership achieved.

The following figures illustrate the priorities seen by the African Initiated Churches surveyed in our study. They display the responses of church leaders on the questions of what constitutes a good life (Figure 5), the most serious problems (Figure 6) and the five most important SDGs from the perspective of those interviewed (Figure 7). With regard to the SDGs (Figure 7), the first four goals (no poverty, no hunger, health and well-being, quality education) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) received most votes. The remarkably high valuation of SDGs 1 (no poverty) and 4 (quality education) also corresponds to the most frequently mentioned problems: poverty and lack of education. Education in particular plays an important role in almost all questions (Figures 5–8, Figure 10). At the same time, the priorities of the African Initiated Churches reflect a multidimensional understanding of development. When asked about a good life, some interviewees explicitly answered that spiritual and material needs must be met. Material, social, health-related and spiritual aspects can be found in Figures 5 and 6. This is also true of Figure 8, which shows the activities mentioned by the church leaders when asked how they support the community. On the one hand, this illustrates the holistic approach of the African Initiated Churches and, on the other hand, shows that their activities address the problems they identified.

Responses from 60 interviews and 11 focus groups in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. Open-ended question. Multiple answers possible.
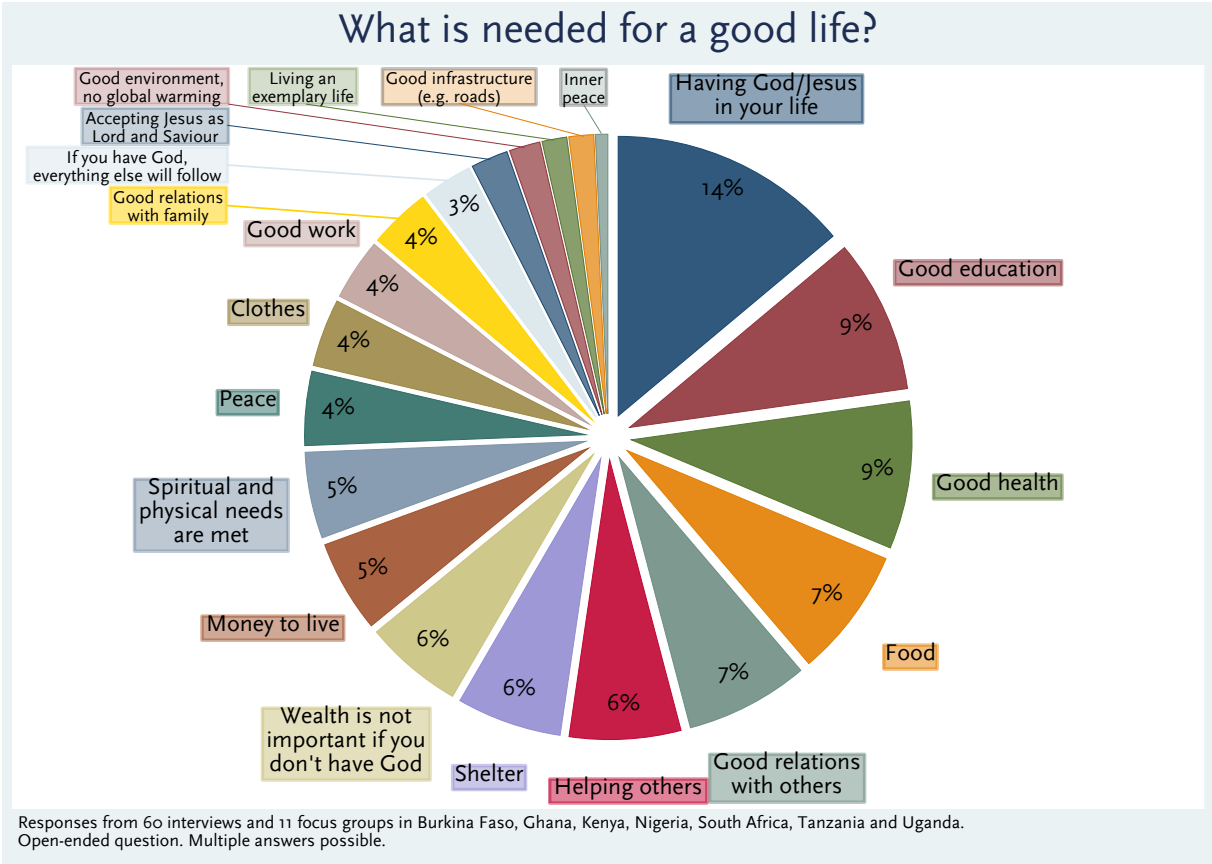
Figure 5: Answers to the question "What is needed for a good life?"

What are the major problems in people's lives?

Poverty, lack of food or clothes — 30%
Lack of education — 14%
Unemployment — 12%
Health-related problems — 11%
Spiritual problems (e.g. need for healing, sinfulness) — 7%
Lack of infrastructure (e.g. housing, electricity, water) — 7%
Crime — 6%
Substance abuse — 4%
Family problems
Early pregnancy
Discrimination of women
Lack of tolerance and respect
Corruption
No site for church
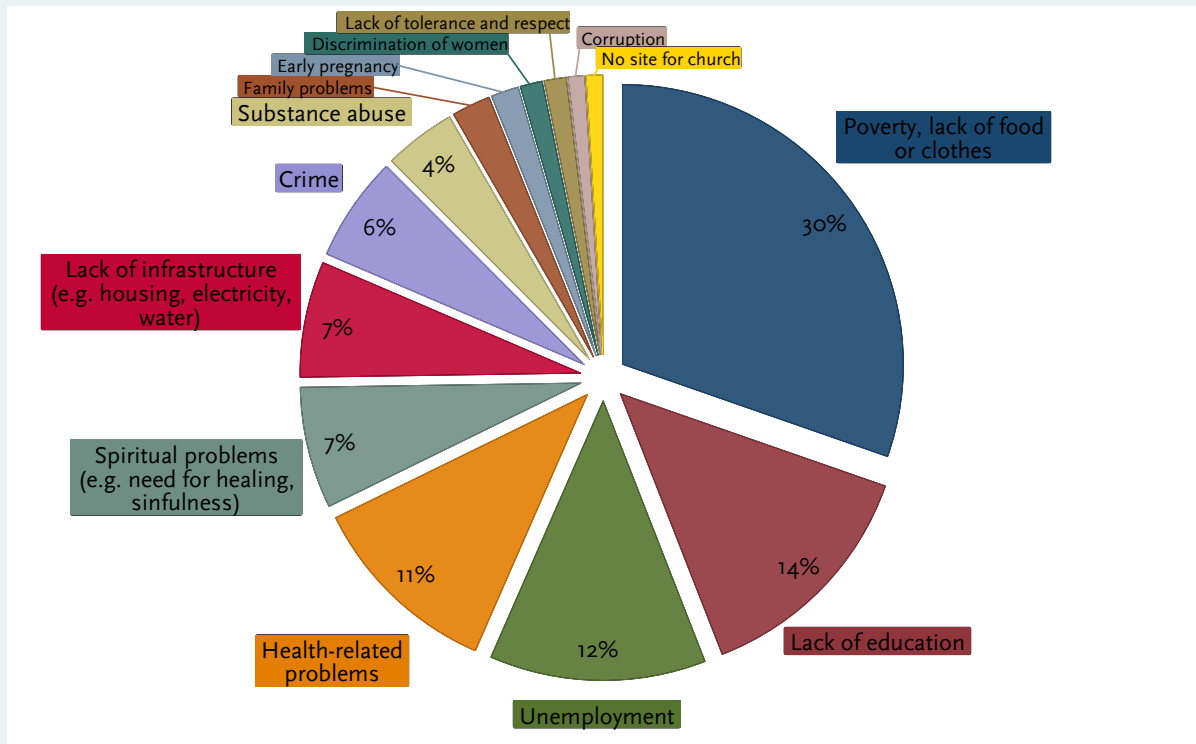
Responses from 72 interviews and 20 focus group discussions in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. Open-ended question. Multiple answers possible.

Figure 6: Answers to the question "What are the major problems in people's lives?"

What are the five most important SDGs?

SDG	Value
1 No Poverty	308
2 No Hunger	174
3 Good Health and Well-Being	245
4 Quality Education	302
5 Gender Equality	54
6 Clean Water and Sanitation	140
7 Affordable and Clean Energy	76
8 Decent Work and Economic Growth	119
9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	54
10 Reduced Inequalities	28
11 Sustainable Cities and Communities	30
12 Responsible Consumption and Production	15
13 Climate Action	33
14 Life below Water	10
15 Life on Land	32
16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	162
17 Partnerships for the Goals	98

Respondents: 376 leaders of African Initiated Churches in 74 interviews and 13 focus groups in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda. 5 votes per person.

Figure 7: Answers to the question "What are the five most important SDGs?"

2.1.3 Using Existing Potential

African Initiated Churches are development actors. They already contribute directly, practically and in manifold ways to processes of sustainable development.[8] This engagement extends in particular to the areas of education, health and the promotion of entrepreneurial and economic activity. However, they are also active in the promotion of human rights, political participation and commitment to ecological sustainability. As shown in Figure 8, the churches are engaged in various sectors of sustainable development and beyond direct social welfare type assistance to those in need. The focus of church activities is precisely on those areas which they consider to be of particular importance and where the greatest deficits are seen.

A special focus of the churches' development work is the education sector. Education is seen as the key to success by the interviewed church leaders:

> *Education is a key to development, without education, you can't develop. You develop the heart, the mind and the whole body. First here [pointing to his head], then the heart, and the whole body. That is why we choose education. (Interview John Mahero, 2018-K-04)*

A total of 42 of the churches surveyed stated that they run their own schools. Seven even have their own universities. In addition, there are scholarship programmes for students at universities and schools, at times backed by considerable financial resources.

Another important area of church activities is the promotion of economic empowerment. Fourteen of the churches surveyed conduct training courses on business start-ups and entrepreneurial activity. Forty-six churches conduct skills training or even run their own vocational training centres. The primary goal is to help people to stand on their own feet economically:

> *We want to do seminars on skill acquisition, we want to do seminars on economic principles, we want to do seminars on doing successful businesses […] let's develop the people, so they become productive and self-reliant and train youth in skill acquisition. (Interview 2017-N-30)*

Entrepreneurial activities and entrepreneurship, even if on a small scale, are considered to be of great importance in the eyes of the church leaders: "Because I think it is now not time for having a job, but it is a time for what you are thinking and doing it for themselves. Be self-employed" (Interview Doris Matlala, 2016-S-04). "My take will be it's best to become an entrepreneur, because you are able to control your funds, you are able to make money" (Interview Titus Mookeletsi, 2018-TS-03).

Many of the churches surveyed are also active in the health sector. Small churches often hold health-related workshops and training (29 of the churches surveyed), while larger churches run clinics and hospitals. Rehabilitation programmes for drug addicts are offered as well.

The churches' programmes are not only open to their membership, but usually aimed at the entire community. This becomes particularly clear in the church's commitment to infrastructure. A total of

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[8] See Kurzstellungnahme 01/2017 AICs in Westafrika – Professionelle Träger sozialer Grunddienste im Bildungs- und Gesundheitssektor (Öhlmann et al. 2018a), Kurzstellungname 04/2018 Youth Empowerment and African Initiated Churches in Urban Zimbabwe (Gukurume 2018), Kurzstellungnahme 01/2019 AICs in Ostafrika – Unabhängigkeit, Bildung, Landwirtschaft (Frost and Öhlmann 2019), Kurzstellungnahme 02/2019 Religion und Politik in Afrika: Neue Dynamiken des Politischen in African Initiated Churches (Öhlmann 2019).

18 churches stated that they provide water and sanitation infrastructure in their communities (mainly boreholes for drinking water), while six churches even contribute to the construction and repair of roads.

It is important to emphasise that the development activities of African Initiated Churches are (with a few exceptions) completely self-financed. Only in a few cases is there a cooperation with international development organisations. In some cases, churches' educational and health facilities are co-financed by or jointly operated with government agencies. The development activities are usually carried out with substantial funding from church budgets and with immense commitment by the membership. The limiting factor is usually the financial resources available. Nicta Lubaale, General Secretary of the Organization of African Instituted Churches, emphasised in the development policy panel discussion "Development Policy and Religion: What is the way forward?" on 4 July 2019 in Berlin:

> *Let me start with the partners in the South, the family, the congregation, the faith communities at the local level, women's organisations, the young people's organisations, the farmers' organisations and those are the contributors who bring over 80% of the resources that are needed […]. I am saying this because I am starting with the biggest partners. And then, there are the smaller partners like Bread for the World, who bring the important 20%. Interestingly, if that 20% is not available it's difficult to activate the 80%. So, these partnerships are deeply important.*

Primary points of entry for German development cooperation should be those activities and areas in which the churches are already active. On the one hand, this ensures the contextual relevance of development policy. On the other hand, contributions by German development policy can substantially increase the mobilisation of local resources and existing development action by the churches.
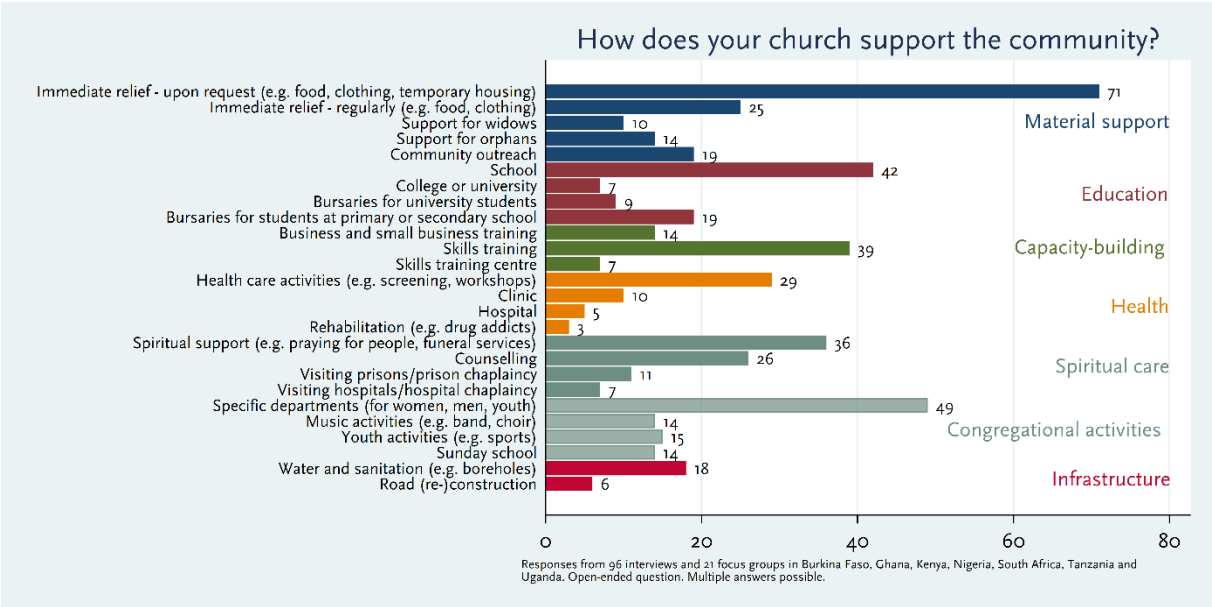

Figure 8: Answers to the question "How does your church support the community?"

2.1.4 Transparency and Partnership on Equal Footing

Almost all African Initiated Churches are open for development cooperation, but not at any cost. Transparency and accountability are by far the most frequently demanded prerequisites for successful cooperation and were also most frequently mentioned as recommendations to development organisations (Figure 9 and Figure 10).

a) Clear Expectations

Various church leaders stressed the importance of clear communication and the need to negotiate mutual expectations and goals of possible cooperation in advance:

> I think we have to sit at the table and agree that we are here for the better, for the development to work together, in unity and harmony. So that the development partners air out their views and say, this is who we are and this is what we do. Then the church will say, okay, fine, but here we are not comfortable, or fine, we have got no problem, let's move on. (Interview Elitaia Sakha, 2018-K-12)

b) Equal Partnership

The demand for joint planning discussions is closely linked to the request to be treated as equal partners. This was the third most frequently cited condition and recommendation (Figure 9 and Figure 10). Sam Akaka, head of the House of Recap Ministry International, a Christian orphanage in Nigeria, criticises the image of the poor and needy, which is often still prevalent in development cooperation.

> The stereotypes that have come to identify development work, I think we can shift from some of those stereotypes. Sometimes people are moved and carried away by pictures of poverty, extreme poverty, and people want to take pictures of people looking wretched and helpless and here, we, we don't want to send such pictures out. (Interview Sam Akaka, 2017-N-29)

In addition, one employee emphasises that both sides must recognise the dignity of the other.

> What I will say is that any group that wants to come to help us must recognise our dignity, our human dignity. Recognising our human dignity will help them to not limit our relationship to the material value but that they are coming as human beings to us, to meet human beings, not to meet people who are lost. So human dignity will help us to be… you know, at the same level. (Interview 2017-N-29)

Pastor Don Makumbani, founder and leader of Covenant House Family Church in South Africa, also stresses that cooperation must not lead to dependence:

> Some people want to help you but they want to keep you on a leash. […] I don't want that. To that I'll gladly say no, even if somebody comes with a bag of money. I'll gladly say, please carry your bag, go back, I want independence for our people. They must be independent thinkers, they must be able to work for themselves and make a living by themselves. (Interview Don Makumbani, 2017-TS-05)

c) Respect for Religious Identity

An important aspect of mutual respect is respect for religious identity. It was mentioned by church leaders as the second most common requirement and one of the most important recommendations

for partnership. For some it is even the only requirement, as the following quote from a church leader demonstrates:

So, I want to say that, if it is something that affects our faith, if it is something that is going to harm our Christian doctrine or our faith, then that will be a problem. But if it [is] something that is free to help humanity, in line with our faith, the Christian faith is quite open, is humanitarian, is charitable. […] Any cooperation that gives room for the Christian ethical standard is okay by us. (Interview 2017-N-24)

Many church leaders mentioned the spiritual aspect of their work as an asset and as being closely related to social and economic activities and programmes. Especially in this area there is a high level of sensitivity within African Initiated Churches. As we mentioned in our first study on African Initiated Churches in South Africa in 2016, "[m]any AICs do not want to become part of secular development work as faith-based NGOs" (Öhlmann et al. 2016b).

d) Transparency and Accountability

At the same time, almost all church leaders are well aware that cooperation requires concessions and possibly changes. The demand for transparency and a sense of responsibility is directed not only at the partners in development cooperation, but also at the churches themselves. Bishop Stephen Mukhisa Kagoro, founder and director of the Prince of Peace Ministries International in Uganda, makes this clear:

Transparency must be maintained. […] Transparency and accountability, because when we are given this pen to use, when I am writing I must use it faithfully, and knowing that I have been given a pen to use on writing. Not again to use it on another thing. (Interview Stephen Mukhisa Kagoro, 2018-U-04a)

Most churches have internal financial control mechanisms, as shown by our in-depth study in South Africa. For example, the amount of the collection, or financial support to individuals, e.g. in the form of scholarships, is announced during the service. Donations are paid into special accounts that can only be accessed by certain people in a group. The responsible treasurers prepare regular reports on the finances of the Church. Whenever possible, these tasks are specifically assigned to church members who have appropriate training, for example as accountants. Some churches have external audits conducted, others would agree to external audits if they were working with development agencies.

Despite the general appreciation of transparency and responsibility, cases of mismanagement and corruption also occur in African Initiated Churches. The church leaders themselves are also aware of this. Many interviewees recommended that the churches be carefully screened before working together (see Figure 10). As one church leader pointed out during a focus group discussion in Ghana with regard to churches with whom a cooperation is considered:

[T]he churches [should] be those properly registered [and] with organised administrative structures, so the help can go to members and pastors and not just leaders who may divert assistance. (Focus group discussion, 2017-FG-01f)

Regardless of the question of possible external audits, several church leaders indicated that they are open to audits of the accounts or the progress and outcomes of their development activities. Pastor Étienne B. Yameogo, head of the Assemblées de Dieu Reformées in Burkina Faso, explained that regular visits serve as mutual motivation and ensure that both partners are satisfied with the results.

C'est bon que ceux qui nous soutiennent, de temps en temps, viennent vraiment voir la réalisa-tion. Ça les encourage et ça nous met aussi à l'aise. Quand on est conscient de ce qu'on doit faire, on veut que ce soit contrôlé. Moi personnellement, je souhaite que ce qui se réalise soit contrôlé et que ceux qui donnent soient satisfaits et que moi aussi je sois satisfait. (Interview Étienne B. Yameogo, 2017-B-05)

The demands for a respectful collaboration with clearly defined goals and measures may sound self-evident. However, the concerns expressed should be taken seriously when planning and implementing the cooperation – inter alia because they are usually based on prior negative experiences (see Kurzstellungnahme 01-2019 AICs in Ostafrika – Unabhängigkeit, Bildung, Landwirtschaft (Frost and Öhlmann 2019)). The prerequisites and recommendations mentioned by the church leaders show that they are quite open to critical questions or reviews, as long as they are carried out in respectful interaction and are unbiased from both sides.

For the collaboration with African Initiated Churches by German development cooperation we recommend that potential church partners should be carefully examined, but that the underlying examination criteria should also be transparent and reasonable.
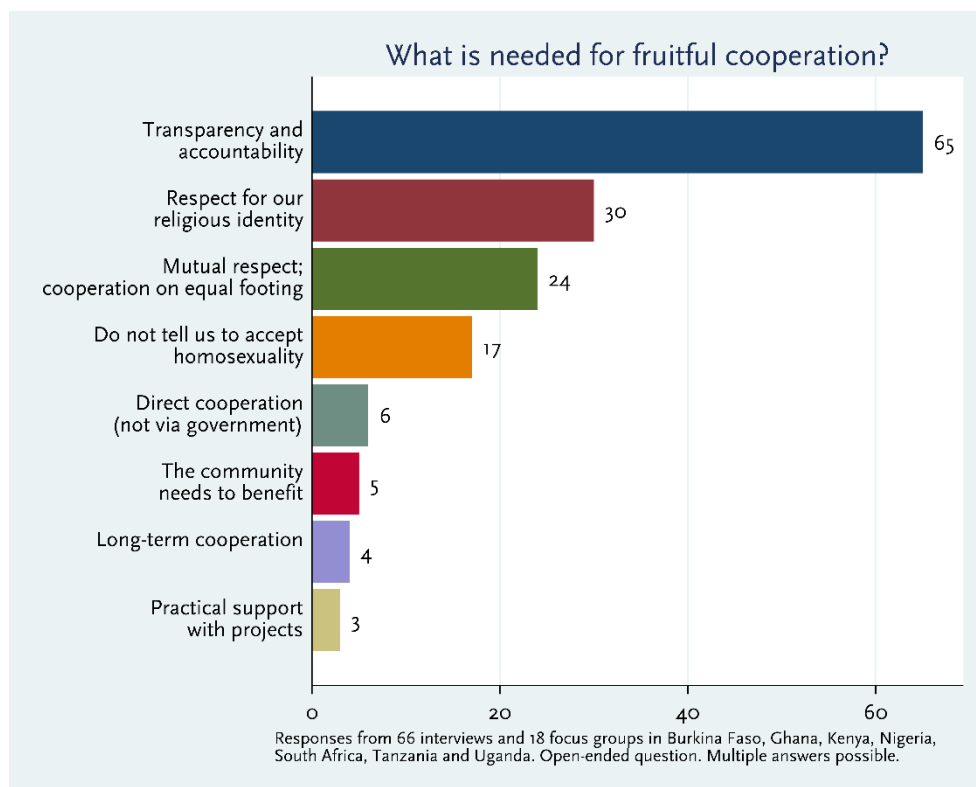

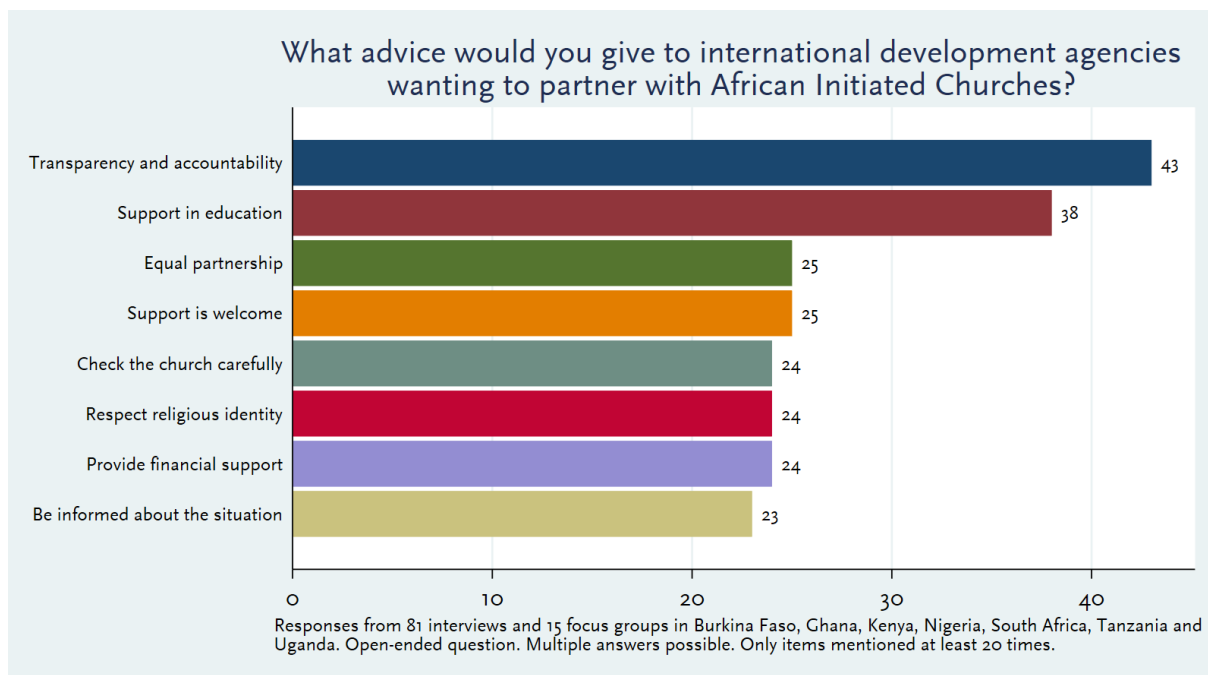**Figure 9: Answers to the question "What is needed for a fruitful cooperation?"**

Figure 10: Answers to the question "What advice would you give international development agencies wanting to partner with *African Initiated Churches*?"

2.1.5 Religious Literacy

A fundamental prerequisite for successful partnership between development agencies and religious communities is a basic understanding of the religious communities on the part of the development agencies. In most African countries, religion is not considered a private matter. Social dimensions of religion are more important than individual religiosity (Selinger 2004). Religious knowledge and a world view shaped by religion are closely linked to all areas of the SDGs. Therefore, contrary to many Western societies, religious language does not need to be translated into a secular language (for example, an ethical or political argumentation) in order to be socially relevant (Öhlmann et al. 2016b). Religious patterns of reasoning are legitimate bases for action even beyond the area of directly religion-related communication. Development cooperation faces the challenge of being able to connect to both religious language and religious patterns of justification:

> *So, for Africa, because of the religious nature, you'll always find a way of using it to get the [...] commitment of the people to the project, whatever it is. If it is water, it must be explained spiritually. If it is [an] agricultural project, it must be explained spiritually. [...] Honestly, if you don't do that, you will lose it. (Interview Daniel Okoh, 2017-N-04)*

This is also one of the conditions for fruitful cooperation expressed by the representatives of the African Initiated Churches themselves. "Respect for religious identity" (see also section 2.1.4) was given as the second most important answer to the interview question on the conditions for cooperation (Figure 9). It is also included in a prominent place in the recommendations to international development cooperation (fifth most frequent mention, Figure 10). Don Makumbani explained:

> *I wouldn't want you to say that, 'Don, here is money, I want to help your cause, but stop certain things.' I think that would be problematic. [...] Like I said, don't ask me to compromise my beliefs. That is all. If I am not asked to compromise my beliefs, I am ready to go. (Interview Don Makumbani, 2016-S-09)*

In order to be able to enter into effective partnerships with African Initiated Churches and to involve the churches in the promotion and implementation of the SDGs, the following elements of religious literacy should be regarded as essential:

(1) A fundamental knowledge of Christian faith in general and of the African Initiated Churches in particular. This includes, for example, knowledge of the contexts in which religious needs should be taken into account when ordering conference catering.

(2) An understanding of the fundamental importance of faith and religion in people's daily lives and actions, as well as in society. One example is the fundamental importance of pastoral care in hospitals: when people come to a hospital they do not only expect medical care, they also expect that prayers are said for them (Öhlmann et al. 2018d).

(3) Understanding and being able to speak religious language in order to be able to recognise the meaning of religious terminology and to be able to engage in dialogue with representatives of the churches. Here it is important to note that

> 'secular' discourses, as much as 'religious' discourses, are a specific form of pragmatically creating reality through language. From a discourse analytic perspective there is no reason to a priori consider religious language pragmatics inferior to secular ones.[9] (Feldtkeller 2014, translation by the authors)

(4) Closely related to this, a basic understanding of religious patterns of motivating is important when it comes to actions in the private, in the sociopolitical and especially in the economic sphere. The reference to precisely these patterns of motivating can contribute to establishing changes in mindsets, as is required, for example, for the implementation of ecological sustainability. If those responsible in development cooperation can theologically justify SDGs, this can substantially contribute to their relevance in people's thinking and acting.

(5) This does not mean that people working for development organisations must have a particular religious affiliation themselves or that development policy must abandon its religious neutrality. Rather, it must be ensured that it is possible to enter into an exchange with religious communities such as African Initiated Churches by means of religious speech patterns that understand the set of values that are important to these communities. On the part of the African Initiated Churches this exchange should also include the willingness not only to enter into dialogue (and possibly cooperation) with secular organisations but also to interact directly with people who have a different religious affiliation or none at all.

The existing initiatives to increase religious literacy as well as knowledge about religion in official German development policy are pointing very much in the right direction. These processes should be pursued and expanded. What would seem particularly fruitful in this field is a cooperation with German church-based development agencies and the organisations represented in the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development. Cooperation with academic institutions that have expertise in this area should be expanded. There is also untapped potential in migrant religious communities in Germany, whose expertise could be incorporated into religious literacy in develop-

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[9] ‚Säkulare' Diskurse ebenso wie ‚religiöse' Diskurse jeweils eine bestimmte Form der sprachpragmatischen Erschaffung von Wirklichkeit sind. Aus einer diskursanalytischen Perspektive heraus besteht kein Grund, eine religiöse Sprachpragmatik gegenüber einer säkularen von vornherein als minderwertig zu betrachten.

ment cooperation. Moreover, training courses on specific religious communities, such as African Initiated Churches, represent an important desideratum.

2.1.6 Context Analysis

"Religion is like a chameleon. It changes colour depending on context", Claudia Zilla, Head of the Americas Research Group at Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik emphasised at the panel discussion "Development Policy and Religion: What is the way forward?" at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in July 2019. This coincides with an important observation by the church leaders interviewed. They emphasised not only the respect for religious identity but also the need to be familiar with the local context. Thus among the eight most important pieces of advice to international development cooperation is also the recommendation "Be informed about the situation" (see Figure 10). Even though it might sound self-evident, our comparative study, conducted in eight countries, showed that this fact is of great importance. Religion finds its expression in religious communities, which are always shaped by the surrounding context. The field of African Initiated Churches is, as described above, by no means homogeneous, but comprises an extremely diverse movement of churches. The role African Initiated Churches play in sustainable development depends on the specific church and is influenced by social, political, economic, cultural and geographical factors. It is essential to know these factors in order to be able to utilise the potentials and the developmental added value of cooperation with African Initiated Churches in a specific country, a specific region and in relation to a specific sector optimally for development cooperation.

2.2 Challenges and Risks

2.2.1 Religious Neutrality[10]

The Marshall Plan with Africa specifies the intention to cooperate with churches and other religious communities as part of the three pillars of future development cooperation (BMZ 2017). German development policy is to "support religious communities as an element for promoting peace" and expand the "International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development" further (BMZ 2017). This is a remarkable and courageous step. After all, the inclusion of churches and other religious communities in official development cooperation must distinguish between their religious and social activities and may only promote the latter.

The distinction between social and political activities of religious communities on the one hand and their religious intentions and activities on the other, as required for development policy in secular constitutional states (Gräb 2019), could, it seems, easily diverge with the self-conceptualisation and praxis of African Initiated Churches. However, these churches are well able to differentiate between the religious and the social-diaconal programme, and even more so political actions. But at the same time, they are committed to not letting the religious and the social fall apart, because for them the social diaconical engagement is decisively based on religiously motivated empowerment. The religious inspiration and motivation of the social and political programmes is a basic characteristic of the understanding of development of African Initiated Churches. Worship, preaching and prayer deter-

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[10] On this topic, see Kurzstellungnahme 03/2019 Religion und Entwicklung: Die Herausforderungen staatlicher Entwicklungspolitik in der Zusammenarbeit mit religiösen Gemeinschaften (Gräb and Öhlmann 2019) as well as Öhlmann et al. (2018d).

mine the meetings of the congregations, which at the same time provide educational, social and health services and are also increasingly engaged in political advocacy.

As soon as we do not only take an institutional-organisational perspective (in which African Initiated Churches know to distinguish between religious and social issues too), but pay attention to the understanding of development which is formed in African Initiated Churches from religious knowledge, the togetherness of religious-spiritual and social work, as seen in African Initiated Churches, moves once again into a different light. Their achievement consists, as described above, not only of reaching people with their religious message, but in the fact that this message has a power to liberate and change the whole person. The religiousness of African Initiated Churches is directed towards liberation from negative influences and releases motivational energies, which contribute substantially to empowerment and a self-determined life. African Initiated Churches are interesting as religious development actors and could increasingly become important partners in development cooperation precisely because they integrate religion into the sociocultural dimensions of development. African Initiated Churches come into view as development actors who, out of religious motivation, carry out social development work, as churches have "[always] done" (BMZ 2017), and who, in addition, also impact people in their religious-spiritual needs and thus their holistic ideas of a good and successful life. Cooperation with religious communities such as African Initiated Churches, therefore, could have particular added value for development policy, particularly if it is possible to enter into a dialogue at the value level.

The question how official, secular development cooperation can utilise the potentials at the level of values of religious communities, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, while at the same time staying religiously neutral is extremely complex. It requires further, fundamental and context-related empirical research in order to expand the BMZ's highly promising approach of including religion in development policy. Possibilities for manoeuvring in this field of tension are outlined in section 2.3.

Considering the immense importance of religion in many African societies – in which in some cases over 95% of the population belong to a religious community – it would be worth considering whether religious neutrality in development cooperation could be understood not only as secularism but also in the sense of equal treatment of all religious actors represented in the respective context. If such an equal treatment is applied as condition for the neutrality of the state, without setting a certain world view as normative, then development policy's possibilities for action in cooperation with religious communities at the values level can be substantially expanded.

2.2.2 Structural Incompatibility

A second challenge in the context of cooperation between African Initiated Churches and German development policy are structural and institutional differences. On the one hand, there is a multitude of churches of different sizes and degrees of institutionalisation. From small churches with only a few people and no buildings of their own to churches with millions of members that run universities and their own social agencies, everything can be found in the movement of African Initiated Churches. On the other hand, there is a German government ministry with a budget of billions and implementing organisations with thousands of employees. On the one hand, there are locally rooted religious communities that know the needs of the people and contribute to their immediate empowerment. On the other hand, there is a globally active development ministry that implements a large number of programmes around the world and promotes the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustain-

able Development at the international level. On the one hand, there are flexible structures that enable uncomplicated development-relevant action. On the other hand, there are a large number of regulations, accountability obligations and formalised, bureaucratic organisational forms of development policy.

Structural differences are clearly evident in these examples. For this reason, cooperation between African Initiated Churches and development policy is not easily and in all cases directly possible. Especially with large churches or umbrella organisations like the Organization of African Instituted Churches direct cooperation would be possible, and would meaningfully promote development policy goals. African Initiated Churches could also be specifically integrated into existing programmes and projects of development cooperation or such programmes could be set up. Especially in the case of small churches, however, it is also advisable to examine indirect ways of cooperation. Church umbrella organisations and the church development agencies in Germany, for example, could be considered as intermediaries. However, structures that are suitable for cooperation with African Initiated Churches (and other religious communities) could also be created in the implementing organisations of state development cooperation themselves. In section 2.3 we make recommendations on the question of which approaches of cooperation can be chosen in different cases and development policy sectors.

In our opinion, the risk of structural incompatibilities can be well countered by choosing the right instruments of cooperation. It is important to note that individual cases of corruption and abuse of power can also be found in individual African Initiated Churches. Here too, the choice of the right instruments, including adapted control and accountability mechanisms, can help to prevent the misuse of funds and corruption from the outset, provided that these mechanisms and requirements are transparent and comprehensible to all parties involved.

2.2.3 Divergences in Values

In addition to structural incompatibilities, a further challenge lies in the divergence of values. First of all, it should be noted that with regard to development policy goals (such as the 2030 Agenda) and principles (such as human rights) there is a broad consensus on values between the vast majority of African Initiated Churches and German development cooperation. As our interviews clearly show, African Initiated Churches support both SDGs and human rights. There are, however, areas in which divergences can sometimes be observed. One example is issues of gender equality. Patriarchal role models are at times also prevalent in African Initiated Churches. Another example is the question of tolerance towards homosexuality. Here the churches surveyed present a diverse picture, but the basic tendency is to reject homosexuality (Geidel 2019). However, it must be taken into account that homosexuality is a punishable offence in all countries surveyed except South Africa. Figure 11 shows an analysis of the interviews conducted by our research team with regard to the topic of homosexuality.
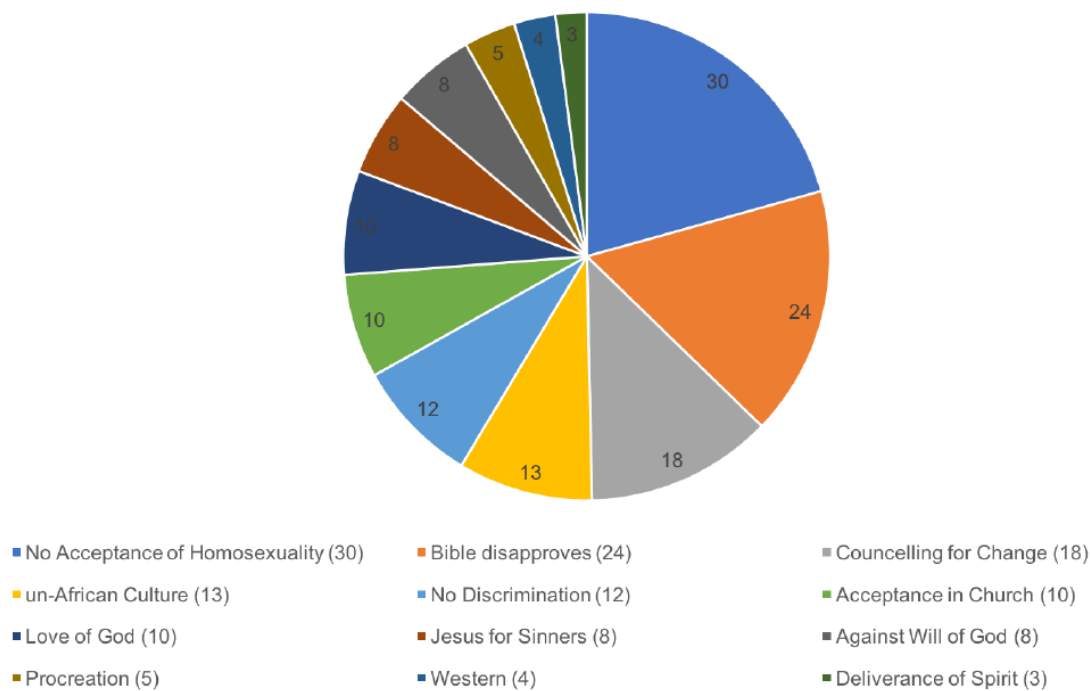
Figure 11: Attitudes towards homosexuality in African Initiated Churches (Geidel 2019).
Each category represents a specific view on homosexuality. The categories were derived through qualitative content analysis from 37 qualitative church leader interviews in Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa. In one church more than one attitude can be expressed.

2.3 Approaches for Engagement and Cooperation

Taking into account the potentials identified in section 1.4, the principles described in section 2.1 and the challenges mentioned in section 2.2, we recommend to German development policy three approaches for the cooperation with African Initiated Churches, consisting of project cooperation in the form of financial support, knowledge transfer, and development-related and sociopolitical dialogue. These complementary approaches facilitate different intensities of cooperation and thereby account for different requirements as well as the heterogeneity of the field of African Initiated Churches.

Project Cooperation
- Establishment of project funds for financial support
- Promotion of church development work in selected areas
- Co-financing of church scholarship programmes

Knowledge Transfer and Provision of Expertise
- Entrepreneurship and business support
- Promotion of democracy and political participation
- Ecological sustainability
- Further areas

Development-related and Sociopolitical Dialogue
- Knowledge exchange on development policy
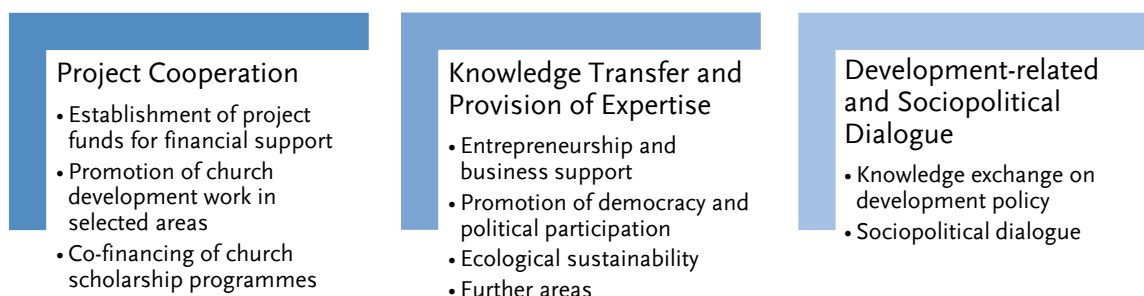- Sociopolitical dialogue

Figure 12: Recommended approaches for cooperation between German development policy and African Initiated Churches

2.3.1 Project Cooperation

A first approach to cooperation with African Initiated Churches, which fulfils the principles mentioned above, is financial support of initiatives, activities, projects and programmes. This allows existing structures and initiatives to be used and priorities are implicitly determined by the churches themselves (agenda-setting). In this way, existing potential can also be used optimally and a high degree of ownership by the religious actors themselves can be expected. Furthermore, such support of church activities contributes greatly to the mobilisation of local resources and commitments and substantially increases their reach and impact.

As a matter of principle, church activities should only be co-financed with development funds. To ensure ownership and priority-setting by African Initiated Churches, the churches should always be required to make their own (financial) contribution. In this way it can be avoided that almost exclusively externally financed church aid agencies are created, whose agenda is determined by the priorities and interests of the donors. Mutual co-financing of church programmes also contributes to mutual transparency and accountability.

Such activities that include religious elements should explicitly not be excluded. As outlined above, they often bear important added values for development policy. In order to preserve the ideological neutrality of secular, official development policy, co-financing by the churches could ensure that development policy funds are not used for the dissemination of religious content. The "Verfahren der Förderung entwicklungswichtiger Vorhaben der Kirchen in Entwicklungsländern aus Bundesmitteln vom 17.11.1983 in der Fassung vom 01.01.2015" ("Procedure for the Promotion of Developmentally Important Projects of Churches in Developing Countries from Federal Funds of 17.11.1983 as amended on 01.01.2015") describes a practicable approach which also seems suitable for cooperation with African Initiated Churches: "If an individual project includes, in addition to the measures important for development, also those of ecclesiastic proclamation, the estimates of the financing plan are to be reduced by the expenditure incurred on the parts of the proclamation measures or the [churches'] own contribution is to be increased accordingly" (BMZ 2015). Thus, the religious added value could be realised and the ideological neutrality of state development policy could be maintained at the same time.

a) Establishment of Project Funds for Financial Support

Based on our study conducted in South Africa in 2016, we recommended the establishment of a micro project fund for African Initiated Churches:

> We therefore recommend the establishment of a fund to support micro projects within African Initiated Churches. In view of the size of the churches and their activities, financing should already start at triple-digit euro amounts. Even such small sums can release immense commitment and have significant positive effects. For example, such sums could be used to purchase sewing machines for sewing courses, to conduct health education training or to finance school attendance for children.[11] (Öhlmann et al. 2016b, translation by the authors)

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[11] Wir empfehlen daher die Einrichtung eines Fonds zur Unterstützung von Kleinstprojekten innerhalb der African Initiated Churches. Angesichts der Größe der Kirchen und ihrer Aktivitäten sollte die Finanzierung bereits bei dreistelligen Eurobeträgen beginnen. Schon solche kleinen Summen können immenses Engagement freisetzen und signifikante positive Wirkungen entfalten. Beispielsweise könnten mit derartigen Beträgen Nähmaschinen für Nähkurse angeschafft, Schulungen zur Gesundheitsaufklärung durchgeführt oder der Schulbesuch von Kindern finanziert werden.

While in the previous study, which focused exclusively on South Africa, attention was paid to the ability to connect to small religious communities, to which the vast majority of the African Initiated Churches in South Africa belong, the studies in other countries show that such a project fund should not be limited to small or micro projects.

We therefore recommend the establishment of project funds to co-finance the development activities of religious communities. Although our research only relates to African Initiated Churches so far, there is no obvious reason why such project funds should not be open to other religious communities as well. Indeed, religious neutrality requires interdenominational and interreligious openness. However, it should be ensured that priority is given to precisely those actors who do not yet receive international funding. The thematic areas should not be defined a priori but should originate from the priorities of the religious communities. Various models should be considered with regard to the scale of project volumes, for example with a gradation of (a) financing below €5,000, (b) financing between €5,000 and €25,000 and (c) financing between €25,000 and €100,000. The contribution to be made by the project implementers could be in the region of 10% to 20% for the small volumes to enable small, financially weak religious communities to finance projects. For larger volumes, larger contributions of up to 50% can be considered. Various models could be considered for the administration of such project funds to be established at national or sub-national level:

(1) The establishment of project offices for cooperation with religious actors by implementing organisations of German development policy, possibly in cooperation with government agencies in the respective country. This would have the advantage of immediate religious neutrality.

(2) The involvement of religious development organisations in Germany, for example the church development agencies, as mediators. One advantage would be that the religious development agencies have a lot of experience in working with religious communities. However, a risk could be religious bias, in that the available funds primarily benefit a certain group of churches and religious communities. For example, so far African Initiated Churches have only been sporadic partners of church development agencies.

(3) Establishing project funds with local interdenominational and interreligious structures or the creation of such structures for precisely this purpose. This option would involve the greatest local expertise possible, but has high potential for administrative weaknesses.

Which of the options (or which combination of different options) are suitable must be decided in each case on the basis of a situation and a stakeholder analysis in the respective country. In any case, it must be ensured that representatives of the religious communities are involved in the decision-making as well as defining the funding criteria. In accordance with the recommendations of the church leaders we interviewed, attention should be paid to transparency (both in the awarding of funds and in project implementation) and to accountability. Furthermore, the requirements for the religious communities with regard to project administration should be adapted to the respective context and made as simple as possible – subject to the necessary accountability and transparency.

Programmes for financial project support should be accompanied by the transfer of knowledge and expertise. Qualification measures in project management, accountability and impact orientation can contribute to the effective use of development policy funds by the churches and to their management in accordance with the requirements. Risks related to project administration can thereby

be countered. In addition, such form of development policy qualification enables religious actors to make their work compatible with international standards and to raise additional funds for it.

b) Promotion of Church Development Work in Selected Areas

Parallel to the establishment of project funds, we recommend financial support of existing development activities of African Initiated Churches. This is particularly appropriate where the churches themselves are already active on a larger scale, for example in the education or health sectors. Such sectorally focused project cooperation on a large scale could be carried out either directly by government development cooperation and its implementing agencies or through the church development agencies in Germany, if they are willing to cooperate with African Initiated Churches.

We recommend the co-financing of existing organisations and programmes. For example, German development cooperation funds could be used to support the expansion of existing hospitals, schools, universities and vocational training centres of African Initiated Churches as well as the establishment of new institutions. Financial support for church programmes and funds for business start-ups or agricultural and vocational training is also possible. While a project fund could be relevant for the entire movement of African Initiated Churches, targeted co-financing of church institutions and programmes would be predominantly relevant for large, institutionally consolidated churches that are already active in the respective areas, or institutionally consolidated umbrella organisations and associations. Here too, emphasis should be placed on a substantial contribution from the churches themselves. In addition, where possible, government agencies in the respective countries should also be called upon to contribute to co-financing, especially in the basic areas of education and health.

A very specific area recommended for cooperation are scholarships in the tertiary education sector. We recommend the establishment of a programme to co-finance church scholarship programmes for university students. Several large churches already successfully operate their own scholarship programmes. Examples are the Bishop Edward Lekganyane Bursary Fund of the South African Zion Christian Church or the scholarship programme of Central Aid, the development arm of the International Central Gospel Church in Ghana. In this area, which has been identified as a priority by the churches, the Marshall Plan with Africa and the Agenda 2063, German development policy could tie in directly with existing church structures. German development funds could be used to expand already existing, successful programmes and substantially increase the number of young people who are offered university education. In addition to existing programmes, new, jointly financed scholarship programmes could be set up by African Initiated Churches and German development policy – for example in the form of a joint African scholarship programme of African Initiated Christianity and German development cooperation. The expansion of scholarship awards in the tertiary sector could indirectly strengthen the universities run by African Initiated Churches and enable young people from low-income families in particular to attend these universities, which are dependent on tuition fees. Furthermore, cooperation with African Initiated Churches in the area of scholarships could help to reach those social groups and strata that have had limited access to university education up to now.

In contrast to the results of our 2016 study, which focused on South Africa, the interviews now conducted in six other countries do not show that African Initiated Churches have given priority to construction projects. Thus, in contrast to the 2016 recommendations on the South African context, in the overarching view presented here, we do not recommend a specific focus on construction projects, although they should not be excluded in the context of project funding.

2.3.2 Knowledge Transfer and Capacity-Building

A second approach to cooperation is to integrate African Initiated Churches into existing development programmes and to implement specific programmes for and together with the churches. In contrast to financial project support, here the focus is on aspects of knowledge transfer and capacity-building. The interviews conducted by the research team clearly show that the churches are very interested in qualification and knowledge transfer. Support in the area of education and training is by some margin the second most frequent recommendation for development organisations intending to work with African Initiated Churches (Figure 10). The integration of African Initiated Churches into existing development policy programmes can offer an entry point into cooperation without first having to create specific structures.

With regard to possible new projects and programmes, project implementation can also be carried out by the implementing organisations of official development cooperation or by external partners with the relevant expertise. If the structural conditions are in place, project implementation can also be done by African Initiated Churches or their umbrella organisations themselves. By integrating African Initiated Churches into existing or future programmes, a large number of churches can be involved flexibly and in accordance with their thematic priorities. However, in this approach particular attention should be paid to ensuring that the relevant programmes follow the thematic priorities of the churches and that no agenda-setting from outside takes place here (see also sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3). We see particular potential for cooperation in the form of knowledge transfer and capacity-building in the following areas:

a) Entrepreneurship and Business Support

In our previous study in 2016, we recommended with regard to South Africa

> [c]ollaboration with AICs to carry out training courses on setting up small businesses and management, for example on basic financial education, market analysis or fundraising. (Small-scale) entrepreneurs in the churches can become important multipliers and role models within the churches and communities through such training. They should be involved as key actors in the dissemination and support of local micro and medium-sized enterprises in both the formal and informal sectors.[12] (Öhlmann et al. 2016b)

It now materialises that these results can claim full validity for the regions of West and East Africa. The area of promoting entrepreneurship in the form of establishing of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises is one of the most important areas of development-relevant action of many African Initiated Churches also beyond South Africa. Especially in view of high unemployment rates, self-employment is seen as the key to economic success. This is where development cooperation can start. Education, training and capacity-building programmes carried out by development organisations would meet immediate needs and could further improve church involvement in this area. For example, training courses could be carried out in the entire field of management (founding a company, business management, cost-benefit analysis, marketing, finance, etc.).

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[12] Zusammenarbeit mit AICs zur Durchführung von Schulungen zur Gründung von Kleinunternehmen und Geschäftsführung beispielsweise zu grundlegender finanzieller Bildung, Marktanalyse oder der Beantragung von Geldern. (Klein-)Unternehmer in den Kirchen können durch solche Bildungsangebote zu wichtigen Multiplikator/innen und Vorbildern innerhalb der Kirchen und der Gemeinweisen werden. Sie sollten als Hauptakteure in die Verbreitung und Unterstützung von lokalen Kleinst- und mittelgroßen Unternehmen sowohl im formellen als auch im informellen Sektor einbezogen werden.

The research literature on entrepreneurship points out that especially the promotion of personal initiative is of great importance (Campos et al. 2017). This is an ideal starting point for cooperation with African Initiated Churches, since this is what many of the churches promote among their members, but also beyond: personal initiative, motivation and agency. In this area almost ideal potentials for cooperation can be identified, which correspond with the priorities of the churches and at the same time make use of the added value of cooperation with African Initiated Churches for development policy. In terms of promoting entrepreneurship, for example, German development cooperation could contribute through capacity-building in management and business skills, while training on personal initiative and the importance of entrepreneurial action could come from the churches. In addition, business people in the churches are often available as role models who can contribute their expertise.

b) Promotion of Democracy and Political Participation

"African Initiated Churches are influential social and political actors in many African states. They not only act in the interest of their membership, but increasingly advocate for the provision and protection of public goods", as we emphasise in [Kurzstellungnahme 02/2019 Religion und Politik in Afrika: Neue Dynamiken des Politischen in African Initiated Churches](Öhlmann 2019). Coherent with the emphasis on transparency and accountability, many of the churches denounce mismanagement and corruption. While African Initiated Churches had for a long time been considered apolitical, at present it seems that there is a move

> *towards more political participation in the AICs themselves. New dynamics of political participation in AICs are emerging in different regions of the African continent and across conventional categorisations. While in many cases [...] the churches emphasize their political neutrality (certainly also in order not to get into party-political conflicts), various forms of socio-political engagement and political participation can be observed. [...] The Organization of African Instituted Churches, the umbrella organization of AICs, enables church leaders and members to carry out political advocacy at local and national level within the framework of its Just Communities programme. The churches' engagement extends beyond the immediate needs of membership to include advocacy for public goods. For example, the Church of Pentecost, one of the largest churches in Ghana, is working to ensure that the government finally does something about illegal mining activities in the country, which are causing immense environmental destruction and social disruption.[13] (Öhlmann 2019)*

Development cooperation should build on the churches' existing commitment in this area. African Initiated Churches are important discussion partners for development policy and its implementing organisations, but also for political foundations and German diplomatic missions abroad. Involving the churches in programmes to promote political participation and state accountability at various

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[13] ein Wandel hin zu mehr politischer Beteiligung in den AICs selbst zu vollziehen. Es zeigen sich in verschiedenen Regionen des afrikanischen Kontinents und über die gängigen Kategorisierungen hinweg neue Dynamiken des Politischen in den AICs. Während in vielen Fällen [...] die Kirchen ihre politische Neutralität hervorheben (sicherlich auch um nicht in parteipolitische Konflikte zu geraten), sind vielfältige Formen gesellschaftspolitischen Engagements und politischer Beteiligung zu beobachten. [...] Die Organization of African Instituted Churches, der Dachverband der AICs, befähigt im Rahmen ihres Just Communities-Programms Kirchenleitende und -mitglieder dazu, auf lokaler und nationaler Ebene politische Advocacy-Arbeit durchzuführen. Dabei erstreckt sich der Einsatz der Kirchen auch über die unmittelbaren Bedürfnisse der Mitgliedschaft hinaus auf öffentliche Güter. So setzt sich die Church of Pentecost, eine der größten Kirchen in Ghana, dafür ein, dass die Regierung endlich etwas gegen die illegalen Bergbauaktivitäten im Land tut, die zu immenser Umweltzerstörung und sozialen Verwerfungen führen.

levels and creating joint programmes in these areas can have substantial developmental impact. Further capacitating the churches to play an active role vis-à-vis politics and the state, advocating in people's interests and against corruption and mismanagement could be one approach in the context of knowledge transfer.

c) Ecological Sustainability

In the previous activities of the churches surveyed, ecological issues have played a subordinate role. However, a change seems to be taking place at present (see Kurzstellungnahme 04/2019 Ökologische Nachhaltigkeit in African Initiated Churches (Stork and Öhlmann 2019). At two conferences organised by the research team together with the University of Pretoria and Bread for the World with leaders of African Initiated Churches in October 2018 ("Consultation on African Pentecostal and Independent Churches' Approaches to Development") and October 2019 ("Churches in Southern Africa as Civil Society Actors for Ecological Sustainability") it became clear that there is great interest in knowledge about ecological sustainability and climate change on the part of the churches. Furthermore, church leaders themselves emphasised that they could contribute significantly to mainstreaming ecological issues in local communities. Providing relevant knowledge, both from a scientific perspective and in theological reflection on ecological issues, could be a starting point for German development policy. Possible formats would be the organisation of expert consultations on specific ecological issues, the production of materials for church use or holding further training courses on specific topics of ecological sustainability. The transformation to ecological sustainability requires fundamental changes in values, attitudes and behaviour. The added value of cooperation with African Initiated Churches for development policy is that, within the scope of their transformative potential, they can promote precisely such changes in people's mindsets.

d) Further Areas

Further areas for cooperation in the form of knowledge transfer can be identified. The health sector is just as relevant here; so is the education sector. One example of such knowledge transfer would be university cooperation for development with universities founded by African Initiated Churches, especially in West Africa. This could promote the establishment and expansion of these young academic institutions. In particular in the East African context, where the Organization of African Instituted Churches carries out agricultural training programmes together with its member churches, the agricultural sector would also be a suitable area for cooperation.

2.3.3 Development-related and Sociopolitical Dialogue

As a third realm within a comprehensive approach of cooperation with African Initiated Churches for sustainable development we recommend exchange and dialogue formats.

a) Knowledge Exchange on Development Policy

As they are relevant actors for development, there should also be an increased exchange of development expertise with African Initiated Churches. At present, African Initiated Churches are hardly included in this type of exchange – unlike mission churches. On the one hand, this is probably due to the fact that African Initiated Churches are a relatively young movement of churches, but on the other hand also to the fact that – unlike mission churches – they have no partnership lobby in the form of partner churches and their development agencies. German development policy and its implementing agencies should increasingly integrate African Initiated Churches into the relevant formats such as conferences and international networks. An important format in this respect is the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD). Efforts should be

made to ensure that representatives of African Initiated Churches are also involved in PaRD. On the one hand, knowledge exchange on development with African Initiated Churches can contribute to knowledge transfer for the churches. On the other hand, it can contribute to the qualification of development policy by introducing the contextual, development-related and religious-cultural knowledge of the churches into the discourse on development policy.

b) Sociopolitical Dialogue

Religion, beliefs and ideas can promote change, but religion, beliefs and ideas can also block change (as quite a number of religious institutions continue to do for women). However, the fact that religion is ambiguous just proves that it is important: it can be either conducive for development or block development, but it is never irrelevant for development. Certainly not if change is to be rooted, lasting and sustainable. (Thomsen 2017)

This fundamental insight is fully applicable to African Initiated Churches. While a coherence of values between the majority of African Initiated Churches and German development policy can be observed to a very large extent, there are, as outlined in section 2.2.3, sociopolitical issues in which value divergences may exist. These are, for example, issues of gender equality, homosexuality or interreligious dialogue. In this regard, it needs to be pointed out once again that African Initiated Churches are a heterogeneous movement of churches and this is reflected in the wide range of attitudes on sociopolitical issues. Sometimes a broad spectrum of attitudes can be observed, ranging from liberal to conservative. In these areas, it is important to reach a dialogue on equal terms, in the framework of which a constructive and meaningful exchange of perspectives can take place. The issue of homosexuality, for example, is often highly politicised (Tweneboah 2018). In Ghana, the research team repeatedly encountered references to US President Obama, who, during his visit to the country, had publicly called on the Ghanaian government to stop punishing homosexuality. Attitudes towards homosexuality are charged in this discourse by de-colonial self-assertion against Western authorities supposedly acting in a neo-colonial way.

Especially in cases of divergence of values, we recommend confidential dialogues on equal terms and – as emphasised by the church leaders themselves – based on mutual respect. In this context, it is important to create spaces of dialogue not charged by instrumentalising politicisation. Moreover, such dialogues should be conducted independent of conditionality on other areas of cooperation. Important actors in such dialogues can also be progressive forces among the African Initiated Churches, but there should be an exchange with representatives of all areas of the spectrum of attitudes.

2.4   Possible Partners

The selection of possible partners should be based both on the formats of cooperation and on the respective context. First of all, it is particularly important to include the large number of small African Initiated Churches in a possible cooperation. They are often particularly rooted in the local communities from which they originate. Especially in these local, community-based churches an immense development-relevant commitment can be observed, which could be promoted with relatively small amounts of funding. Thus, especially for cooperation through project funding mentioned in section 2.3.1 under (a), small churches should be included. At local level, they could also be integrated, in formats of knowledge transfer and development and sociopolitical dialogue proposed in sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3, since they could benefit immensely from knowledge transfer. Even if structural in-

compatibilities between state development policy and African Initiated Churches are potentially greatest in relation to small churches, they should not be left out of the equation.

Larger, institutionalised churches are particularly suitable partners for promoting the development work of African Initiated Churches in specific areas (section 2.3.1 (b)), such as the co-financing of church scholarship programmes. Many of these churches carry out professional social and development work and operate specialised agencies for their work. They have structures which are durable and in principle suitable for direct cooperation with the implementing agencies of development cooperation. Examples of this in Ghana are the Church of Pentecost, which is active in the education and health sectors through its development arm Pentecost Social Services, and the International Central Gospel Church, which runs the Central University and the development arm Central Aid. In Nigeria, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, which has built up several specialised organisations for development and social services, hospitals and educational institutions, or the Church of the Lord (Aladura), which inter alia operates schools, should be mentioned. With regard to South Africa, one example is the Zion Christian Church, which runs a large scholarship programme for university students and offers microinsurance and business training, among other things, through its development wing.

A third institutional point of contact are umbrella organisations of African Initiated Churches, above all the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) with its headquarters in Nairobi. It is already active in various areas of development cooperation and works together with Bread for the World, among others. A large number of churches can be reached through the cooperation with OAIC, especially since the structures of the organisation reach down to the grassroots level of the churches. The organisation successfully links local communities with international development policy. In addition to OAIC, cooperation with national umbrella organisations should also be considered.

In order to create structural linkages, intermediary organisations could be involved as mediators in the cooperation. Here especially church development agencies are relevant actors, but also national councils of churches and international ecumenical organisations can be considered for such a function, as long as they also represent African Initiated Churches. At the same time, however, intermediary structures could also be created, via special project offices for cooperation with African Initiated Churches (or more broadly for cooperation with religious communities) in the implementing agencies of development cooperation. It would be recommendable and effective to carry out such initiatives in close cooperation with the OAIC, or also in cooperation with church development organisations in Germany (e.g. Bread for the World). Intermediary structures, such as special project offices, could be set up on a country-specific basis or at a higher level with a pan-African perspective.

When assessing which African Initiated Churches are suitable for which forms of cooperation, primary attention should be paid to their development-relevant work. The central criterion should be what effects the churches are already achieving in terms of sustainable development and what impact can be expected from cooperation with German development policy. As with any partners of development programmes, it is important to assess the administrative capacities of the cooperating churches, especially in the case of financial cooperation. This also corresponds to the recommendations of African Initiated Churches themselves. Before entering into cooperation, especially in the financial sector, it should be ensured that the administrative requirements are in place.

2.5   Desiderata for Future Research

On the basis of the findings of the project, the following desiderata for further context-related, empirical research on religion and development emerge.

a) *Extension of research to other churches and other religious communities, as well as other countries and regions*

The present results show that in many respects there lies particular potential for sustainable development in the cooperation with African Initiated Churches. There are indications that many of the results are also valid for other religious communities. Future research should therefore investigate with similar methodology other churches and other religious communities as well.

b) *Quantitative impact studies in the field of religion and development*

Qualitative research on religion, as presented in this report, suggests that membership in African Initiated Churches has a substantial impact on economic and social action. To date, however, no quantitative impact studies are available. Future research should therefore make use of quantitative methods such as randomised controlled trials (Banerjee et al. 2020), which can help to identify causal effects, for example in relation to the economic effects of the Prosperity Gospel.

c) *Research on the contribution of religious communities to ecological sustainability*

Given the threat posed by climate change to many people and the fundamental importance of ecological sustainability, future research should focus on this area. Particularly with regard to African Initiated Churches, a beginning dynamic is emerging, which holds great potential for promoting ecological sustainability. At the same time, little research exists on this topic.

d) *Research on the added value of religious communities for development cooperation*

The transformative potential of religious communities emerges in particular from the religious dimension, which is closely interwoven with the shaping of attitudes towards life and the initiation of social, political and economic involvement. An important question for further research, not only with regard to African Initiated Churches, is how this added value can be incorporated in secular development policy.

e) *Research on the contribution of religious communities to the decolonisation of development policy*

In cooperation with religious communities for development, it becomes clear that they always question conventional notions and conceptualisations of development and structures of international development cooperation. Future research should focus on how religious communities can contribute to the dismantling of unjust power structures and unilateral dominance relationships as well as to the creation of partnerships on equal terms in international development cooperation. Attention should also be paid to the potential of religious communities to promote notions of development in which people and local communities, in the sense of a comprehensive agency, are the driving forces behind their own ideas of development.

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