

Institution: University of Winchester		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 31		
Title of case study: Transforming Conflict and Building Peace Through Religion and Conflict Analysis		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2011 – 2021		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Mark Owen	Director, Centre for Religion, Reconciliation and Peace	27/04/09 to present
Anna King	Professor of Religious Studies and Social Anthropology	1/09/92 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? Yes		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This ICS presents robust evidence of the impact of our applied research on better understanding religions' role in reconciliation and peacebuilding through four examples: three case studies which showcase our work in conflict-affected countries, Myanmar, Somalia, and Uganda; and the significance and reach of our research on international organisations and practitioners. In Myanmar, our research has informed peacebuilding project design, implementation, and activities in five post-conflict locations and at national level, resulting in attitudinal and behavioural changes in people previously divided by ethno-religious violence. In Somalia, our pioneering religious peacebuilding analysis framework was used by the Somali government to help bring peace in Herale, and in the establishment of a 'New Inclusive Galmudug' state. Our research also supported the development and implementation of the first ever 'National Reconciliation Framework for Somalia'. In Uganda, our research informed the Jesuit Refugee Service's (JRS) work with local faith-based peacebuilders to prevent and manage conflict between South Sudan refugees, and between refugees and Ugandan host communities. Organisations such as JRS, and the Religions for Peace global network have also used our research to underpin the strategies and objectives which shape their faith-based peacebuilding activities in over 50 countries. As a result, this ICS demonstrates local, national, and international levels of impact, with wide reaching and significant proven positive change.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The innovative research which underpins this case study has been carried out by Dr Mark Owen and Professor Anna King between 2011 and 2020 with the support of Professor Simon Keyes (Professor of Reconciliation), Dr Majbritt Lyck-Bowen (Research Officer), and in collaboration with Owen Frazer from Centre for Security Studies, ETH Zurich and invaluable contributions from many peacebuilders and project participants. The main geographical focus for data collection has been in Asia, and in particular India (2000–), Nepal (2011–) and Myanmar (2015–). However, data collection on religions' role in peacebuilding and reconciliation has also taken place in the Balkans, Somalia, Turkey/Syria and Uganda (2012-).</p> <p>Research Context and Problems</p> <p>Two principal problems/aims have driven our research in religion and peacebuilding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Firstly, the widespread recognition that as a relatively new area of academia, the field of religion and peacebuilding is largely unsystematised and under-theorised. It currently relies heavily on insights from case study material, and a small number of overarching studies which offer some important, if generalised, insights, but tend to lack methodological sophistication. As a result, there is an imperative to develop more methodologically rigorous and evidence-based ways of understanding and interpreting the potential role of religion in peacebuilding processes. 2. As an applied area of research there is currently a conspicuous gap between theory and practice in religious peacebuilding, to the detriment of both. This is of growing importance given 		

the increasing emphasis by governments, multinational organisations and peacebuilding practitioners and funders on engaging religious actors in peacebuilding processes. Consequently, there exists a compelling need for evidence-informed peacebuilding ‘tools’ which can be used to develop more sophisticated and robust approaches to engaging religious actors in peacebuilding. This project responds directly to this demand both in the academic development of religion and peacebuilding, but also in the field of peacebuilding practice.

Research Process

The research activities designed to address these challenges included:

1. A process of critical reflection drawing on insights from the area of Religious Studies to nuance the often overly simplistic understandings of ‘religion’ in driving conflict or supporting peace, leading to the development of a framework for analysis proposing ‘five dimensions’ of religion which require attention in any analytical process (3.3).
2. A critical examination of existing conflict assessment and analysis theories and methods, which was subsequently used to devise original, evidence-based analytical frameworks and methods for understanding the complex dimensions of religious traditions and actors in specific conflict and peacebuilding contexts (3.3, 3.2).
3. The design of more systematic and methodologically rigorous ways of collecting and analysing data on religion and peacebuilding, and their relationship to, and intersection with, other influential factors in a peacebuilding process (3.6, 3.5, 3.2).
4. The collection of primary data in a range of contexts where religion had played a role in driving conflict, and/or was perceived to be an important resource for building peace. The data were analysed using an inductive approach to understand the impact of a range of complex factors on the effectiveness of religion to support peacebuilding and reconciliation processes.

Research insights and outputs which have directly informed impact

Research insights and findings include:

- Illustrating the detrimental impact of simplistic understandings of religion on peacebuilding processes and developing a strong case for adopting a more nuanced and complex approach to assessing religions’ potential in peacebuilding processes (3.6, 3.4, 3.3, 3.2, 3.1).
- Identifying the complex relationships between local, national and international understandings of key concepts such as religion and peacebuilding, and revealing how this impacts on the process and mechanisms for building peace in post-conflict contexts (3.6, 3.5, 3.3, 3.2, 3.1).
- The development of the first ever evidence-based conflict analysis framework designed specifically to maximise the potential of religious actors and assets in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. This was developed by Mark Owen and Owen Frazer, rigorously peer-reviewed and published by the United States Institute for Peace (3.3). The rationale for this analysis framework is that accurate and evidence-based assessment will lead to more effective and context-relevant peacebuilding activities. It was used extensively to inform the impact demonstrated below.
- The publication of a pioneering risk assessment framework for peacebuilding projects which explicitly focus on religious dimensions and actors, which can be used to design mitigation strategies for a range of factors which might undermine peacebuilding efforts (3.2).

The underpinning research has been published in established peer-reviewed publications, and article metrics suggest significant engagement from peers and practitioners – for example 3.1 and 3.2 have been downloaded nearly 2000 times as of February 2021. The findings have also been used to develop and contribute to policy papers, organisational strategies, conflict assessments, peacebuilding project evaluations, a commission paper and related trainings and workshops.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1 - King, A. & Owen, M. 2020. ‘The Promise and Challenge of Multireligious Peacebuilding in the 21st Century: A Myanmar Case Study’, *Religions* 2020, 11(3), 121; <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11030121>

3.2 - Owen, M. & King, A. 2019. ‘Enhancing the Efficacy of Religious Peacebuilding Practice: An Evidence-based Framework for Assessing Dominant Risks in Religious Peacebuilding’. *Religions* 2019: 10, 641; <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10120641> Submitted in REF2

Impact case study (REF3)

3.3 - Frazer, O. & Owen, M. 2018. *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding: An Analysis Guide*. United States Institute of Peace; https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339128837_Religion_in_Conflict_and_Peacebuilding_Analysis_Guide

3.4 - Owen, M. 2016. 'A Buddhist Response to the Theology of Religions'. In Elizabeth J. Harris, Paul Hedges and Shanthikumar Hettiarachchi (Universities of Colombo and Kelaniya). *21st Century Theology of Religions*. Leiden: Brill. Submitted in REF2

3.5 - King, A. 2015. 'Peace by Peaceful Means? A Preliminary Examination of Buddhist Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Nepal'. *Religions of South Asia*, 8 (3), 339-368. <https://doi.org/10.1558/rosa.v8i3.28340> Submitted in REF2

3.6 - Owen, M. 2014. 'Preparing for the Future: Reassessing the Possibility of Violence Emanating from Tibetan Exile Communities in India' 2014. *India Review*, 13 (2), 149-169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2014.904154> Submitted in REF2

Outputs were reviewed by external assessors and secured 3* or higher.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Myanmar Impact - As an emerging democracy, Myanmar's importance to the wider international community is demonstrated by the UN's and other nations' interventions in the widespread ethno-religious violence in Rakhine state, which left thousands dead and over one million Muslims forcibly displaced. Dr Owen and Professor King's pioneering research has informed the design and implementation of successful interreligious peacebuilding projects which have played a verifiable role in rebuilding relations after communal violence and preventing further conflict in 5 different locations across Myanmar. Beginning in 2016, Dr Owen and Prof King carried out a 'Peace and Conflict Assessment' for local partner Religions for Peace Myanmar (RfP-M). The assessment process employed the insights and analytical framework developed from our research (3.6, 3.5, 3.3). The results and recommendations from the assessment informed the implementation and activities of the RfP peacebuilding project 'Multi-Religious Networks Promoting Religious Diversity and Tolerance'. Funded by the U.S. Department of State, the project was carried out in three conflict-affected locations (KaukPyu in Rakhine, Meiktila, Myitkyina) and worked with over 500 participants affected by communal violence. Evaluation data (5.2) clearly demonstrated significant positive impact, including: enhanced contact and communication across religious/ethnic divides; improved understanding and trust of 'other' religious/ethnic communities; and empowerment of local interfaith women's groups. RfP Myanmar substantiates these findings: "the project had a direct positive impact on participants' attitudes and behaviour toward those from other religious/ethnic groups; with many reporting increased respect for members from other religious communities, and an increase in community cohesion and participation" (5.1). During a subsequent research visit, the head of the Gorka-Hindu Women's Association in Meiktila revealed; "RfP at the national level and the regional encourage women's empowerment.... Our ideas are changed. We don't fear Muslims anymore. Muslim women are members of the community and they are involved in RfP activities". Consequently, Dr Owen was asked by RfP-M to use the assessment process to design a further peacebuilding project in Mrauk U in Rakhine, Pyay and Meiktila. The one-year 'Supporting Reconciliation through Dialogue' project was carried out in 2018-19 with funding from USAID paid directly to RfP, and delivered 55 training workshops, 242 dialogue sessions, and over 400 meetings to 1755 participants. Examples of impact include a Muslim woman in Pyay revealing how she used her new skills learned as part of the project to prevent domestic violence. In addition, when a Buddhist young man was hospitalised following a beating by a Muslim employer, RfP participants used their networks and dialogue skills to encourage the wider community to understand this incident as a workplace dispute, as opposed to an inter-religious conflict, and not to take retributive action. A very similar incident had previously sparked widespread anti-Muslim violence in Meiktila in 2013. Further assessments in project areas identified economic disparities as a barrier to project participation. Consequently, in 2019 Dr Owen and Prof Keyes helped devise and implement a multi-religious social enterprise for the women's group in Meiktila. This is a unique initiative in this area, providing income generation whilst also building relations and understanding across religious/ethnic divides. In August 2020

the cooperative produced their first clothes for sale (5.14), enhancing livelihoods and interreligious relations.

Somalia Impact – Nearly 30 years of civil war in Somalia has led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, the collapse of a functioning state apparatus, and widespread ethnic and communal violence. Our research has helped families and communities come back together after years of conflict and has supported the Somali Government in adopting and implementing a National Reconciliation Framework for Somalia. Over the last five years we have worked closely with a senior figure advising on National Reconciliation and Peacebuilding, who in August 2020 was also appointed as a senior UN Coordinator for Reconciliation in Somalia. Staff from the Centre for Religion, Reconciliation and Peace (CRRP) have been advising the UN Coordinator for Peacebuilding in Somalia since 2015 on better understanding religion and peacebuilding in Somalia, and in June 2018 Dr Owen and Prof Keyes travelled to Hargeisa, Somaliland to deliver a training workshop to government staff from the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MoFAR), representatives and staff from Jubbaland Ministry of Interior, the Somali Stabilization Initiative (SSI/IOM), and Transitional Initiatives of Somalia. Developed directly from our research (3.1, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6) and using our unique analysis framework (3.2), the training helped participants better understand religion's role in reconciliation and peacebuilding. In September 2019 the UN Coordinator for Peacebuilding in Somalia sent this unsolicited message: "one of the most difficult conflicts in the central regions has been resolved recently by the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior with my facilitation... Herale conflict was the real one, which I analysed using the new Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding Analysis Guide co-authored by Dr Mark Owen. We are so grateful for all your help". The transformation of this conflict has changed the lives of many thousands of people (5.4, 5.5), and brought families and community members back together after years of division (5.14). Our analysis framework has also been used by the government in bringing peace to the conflict-ridden Galmudug State as part of the 'New Inclusive Galmudug' process (5.6). These two examples have had a positive impact on tens of thousands of people, transforming lives, helping end violent conflict and rebuild communities and relationships. Dr Owen and Prof Keyes have also drawn on CRRP research to support the development of a landmark National Reconciliation Framework (NRF) for Somalia. In November 2018 we invited five members of the Somali National Reconciliation Team to Winchester, and spent one week helping them analyse data collected during a one-year consultation process on local understandings and resources for reconciliation and peacebuilding, and in devising a culturally, religiously, and contextually relevant framework and implementation plan for reconciliation in Somalia (3.2, 3.1, 5.7). We continued to support this process, providing feedback and expert input into draft plans, resulting in the formal adoption of the first ever comprehensive 'National Reconciliation Framework for Somalia' by the government in March 2019, with the role of CRRP publicly acknowledged. The NRF has helped give the hope of peace to millions of people across Somalia.

Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) – In 2019 Dr Owen used the unique CRRP conflict assessment framework (3.3) to carry out a religion, conflict, and peace assessment in Adjumani (North Uganda), home to approximately 200,000 South Sudanese refugees, and eighteen large refugee camps/settlements. JRS works in a cluster of refugee camps where violent conflict between refugees, and between refugees and host communities, is endemic. The assessment informed peacebuilding training with religious leaders, and peacebuilding activities in refugee settlements (5.9). JRS reported that CRRP research was used, "In dealing with conflict between Seven Day Adventists, host communities, and schools in Uganda, when problems arose due to final exams taking place on a Saturday. This caused inter-religious tensions within and between communities; and whilst seemingly trivial these types of problems can become extremely serious in volatile communities. Drawing on the knowledge and experience from the conflict assessment, our local project manager worked with Dr Owen to help reach a compromise between the communities"; helping protect thousands of refugee and host community from renewed conflict.

Impact on peacebuilding organisations and practitioners

CRRP research has also led to wider institutional and organisational changes in other significant cases. JRS has drawn heavily on our research to develop a religion, peacebuilding and reconciliation training programme for 7000 staff in 57 countries. "Dr Owen's research has played

a significant role in informing our understanding of, and engagement with, religious leaders and communities in our reconciliation and peacebuilding work in refugee and host communities in a number of countries and contexts” (5.8). In Myanmar the success of the projects informed by our analysis framework has led directly to RfP Myanmar securing significant government funding from Norway and Germany used to implement a national dialogue process on minority rights. The ‘Advisory Forum on National Reconciliation and Peace’ has facilitated dialogue between over 200 senior “religious leaders, government officials, military leaders, ethnic armed organizations, parliamentarians from ruling and opposition parties, representatives of civil society organizations, United Nations representatives, governments and other international organizations” (5.3). The Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding publication has informed training workshops at the World Parliament of Religions, with workshop evaluation data showing it has directly increased knowledge and understanding of religion’s role in peacebuilding. Finally, our research also informed a Commission Paper for Religions for Peace’s 2019 World Assembly preparation (5.11), which was used in over 50 countries across five continents by religious organisations to better understand religion’s potential for peacebuilding. The outcomes of these assessments have fed directly into the Religions for Peace 2020-2025 Global Strategic Plan to advance multi-religious collaborative action for peace (5.12).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1 - Religions for Peace Myanmar, 2020. ‘Supporting statement’. Senior representative of Religions for Peace, Myanmar.
- 5.2 - Owen, M. & King, A. 2016. ‘Multi-Religious Networks Promoting Religious Diversity and Tolerance. Final Project Evaluation’. Religions for Peace, University of Winchester.
- 5.3 – ‘Religions for Peace Advisory Forum Provides “Open Space” to Advance National Reconciliation and Peace in Myanmar’. 2018. <https://www.rfp.org/religions-for-peace-advisory-forum-provides-open-space-to-advance-national-reconciliation-and-peace-in-myanmar/>
- 5.4 - UN Coordinator for Peacebuilding in Somalia. 2020. ‘Supporting Statement’.
- 5.5 - EU Press Release. 2018 ‘The road to reconciliation – preventing conflicts in Somalia’ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/49883/road-reconciliation-%E2%80%93-preventing-conflicts-somalia_en
- 5.6 - 2020 ‘Somalia International Partners’ Joint Statement following Dhusamareb FGS-FMS Meeting’ - <https://unsom.unmissions.org/somalia-international-partners%E2%80%99-joint-statement-following-dhusamareb-fgs-fms-meeting-0>
- 5.7 - Somali National Reconciliation Framework
- 5.8 – Senior representative of Reconciliation and Peacebuilding. Jesuit Refugee Services. 2020. ‘Supporting statement’.
- 5.9 - Owen, M., Vella, D. & Nana, C. 2019. ‘Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Report: Adjumani, Uganda’, for Jesuit Refugee Service.
- 5.10 – Senior representative of Religions for Peace International. 2020. ‘Supporting Statement’.
- 5.11 - Owen, M. 2018. ‘Preventing and Transforming Conflicts, Including War and Terrorism’. Religions for Peace. <https://www.rfp.org/10th-world-assembly-of-religions-for-peace/>
- 5.12 - Religions for Peace. ‘2020-2025 Strategic Plan’. <https://www.rfp.org/religions-for-peace-launches-2020-2025-strategic-plan/>
- 5.13 - ‘Pre-Parliament Workshop: Participant Evaluations’. <https://parliamentofreligions.org/blog/2018-08-16-2052/pre-parliament-event-offers-introduction-religion-conflict-and-peacebuilding>
- 5.14 – Owen, M. 2020. ‘Visual Evidence of Impact’.