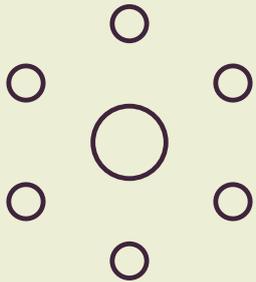




Working Together to Promote the Freedom of Religion or Belief



This document is a guide for people working to promote the freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). It offers practical advice on how civil society organisations (CSOs), faith or belief groups (FBGs) and governments may work together to reduce violations of this human right and to support a culture of respect and good relations between people of all faiths and beliefs.

The **freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief** is largely recognised as a universal right, encoded in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For many years, FoRB was an under-developed human right. In the last 25 years increasing attention has been paid to it and today there are a wide variety of FoRB initiatives. There remains a need for greater learning and development of effective and inclusive FoRB interventions which draw on expertise from a variety of actors.



Using this guide

This guide builds upon recently published guidelines and research. Inclusive and effective FoRB work involves:

- Promoting universal rights and values in a context-specific, culturally-sensitive manner
- Increasing literacy about the ways in which religion or belief form a crucial part of many people's worldviews, identities and practices
- Connecting religion or belief identity to other identities (gender, ethnicity, nationality, LGBT+, class) and understanding how FoRB violations overlap with other types of discrimination for vulnerable individuals and groups
- Recognising that the language of FoRB and religious freedom carries different meanings in different contexts
- Building greater solidarity between groups, across borders and across sectors of society
- Supporting engagement that is led locally and is as long-term as possible, drawing on local wisdom and experience
- Joining, where possible, multiple types of engagement including advocacy, dialogue, and education
- Advocating for the rights of different religion or belief groups and individuals of conscience in concert
- Linking FoRB outcomes with related work for peacebuilding, sustainable development and humanitarian aid

Many groups from different sectors of society need to work together to advance FoRB. This guide focuses on three groups: 1) civil society organisations (CSOs), 2) faith or belief groups (FBGs) and 3) policy professionals (people who design and implement projects on behalf of governments). Each section of this document is addressed to one of these groups, and each section includes links to further resources and highlights examples of existing work for further learning.



This guide acknowledges that people are involved in FoRB work in different ways: addressing specific violations of rights, promoting a culture of human rights and tolerance, and supporting development and peacebuilding which leads to greater FoRB for all. This guide mainly addresses people who commission, design and implement FoRB programmes. Other groups which are central to FoRB work may access toolkits and other helpful resources to support their engagement with FoRB: elected government officials, private sector and media organisations.

Whatever approach you take to FoRB, this guide can be used to:

- Understand how your work fits within the broader context of FoRB projects and related work
- Reflect upon building wider and stronger coalitions between different groups
- Explore different approaches to FoRB
- Connect with resources and organisations for further learning

How this guide was developed

Between 2019 and 2021, The Faith and Belief Forum (F&BF) hosted five participatory events bringing together 64 people representing civil society organisations, faith and belief groups alongside policy professionals, diplomats and academics working on FoRB. Two events were held in London and three more were hosted online, bringing together participants from 18 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. At these interactive events, participants shared their success and challenges in working together, and they made recommendations for effective and inclusive FoRB. They also reviewed a draft version of this guide and made suggestions. This document includes their reflections alongside a review of recent publications and resources.



Civil society organisations

Civil society organisations working for human rights, development, justice and peacebuilding regularly implement projects which promote better FoRB outcomes. How can this work be more effective and inclusive?

Learn...

Specific context of engagement

- Consider using **monitoring data** to understand which **groups or individuals** are affected by FoRB violations at the **country level**; complement existing data with your **own monitoring** when possible
- Think about the connections between religion or belief and other human rights violations (**gender-based violence, ethnic minority groups**)
- Consider other factors which drive FoRB violations using **contextual analysis** (culture, **conflict analysis**, education, **development**, governance, **legal systems**)



Partnerships

- Having undertaken an analysis of the local context, conduct **stakeholder mapping** for current and potential partners (government, other CSOs, FBGs, local activists etc)
- Map existing forums for affected groups and in doing so, identify gatekeepers and allies in local groups
- Make time to **listen to local groups** to understand how FoRB is perceived by them and the people with whom they work (think about affected communities, majority communities, and national and local governments)

Approaches

- Research past FoRB work in your area, including projects delivered explicitly under the FoRB banner as well as related projects
- Build up a collection of case studies of effective projects; reflect on what made different approaches **effective in your specific context** (e.g. advocacy, dialogue, peacebuilding, and education)

Within your group

- Work with your team / colleagues to understand how the work of your organisation intersects with FoRB outcomes; try to think about how you are perceived by other groups
- Make time to assess your capacity and understand risks for of engaging in FoRB work (e.g. to personnel, reputation, finances)
- Consider training in **conflict sensitivity** and **power dynamics**



Prepare...

Specific context of engagement

- Think about which FoRB messages will fit with local needs and priorities, try to tailor your language to match local expectations
- Consider developing priorities for your FoRB programming which address multiple types of discrimination (e.g., gender, ethnicity, LGBT+)
- Think about how the use of incentives and related programmes might enhance the FoRB outcomes of your project (e.g. development, aid, peacebuilding)

Partnerships

- Make time to build relationships with key groups considering the **power dynamics** which could be at play
- Make use of **existing platforms**, where possible recognising that local stakeholders may have trust in those networks
- Expand engagement with gatekeepers while also considering those groups often excluded (women, young people)

Approaches

- Develop a **Theory of Change** for your project
- Map where your project fits with the work of others in the use of advocacy, dialogue, peacebuilding and education
- When appropriate, work with others to align programmes with effective locally-relevant messages for promoting FoRB

Within your group

- Invest in training on FoRB engagement and religion / belief literacy for staff and volunteers
- In doing so, seek funding opportunities which align with your organisation's identity and risk profile



Specific context of engagement

- Develop **sustainable mechanisms** to regularly monitor FoRB violations and the wider context (including the wider Human Rights context), in order to adapt your engagement and delivery
- Where possible and appropriate, connect your project with wider programmes and social movements

Partnerships

- Support and strengthen **national and local actors** whenever possible so they become the spokespeople for interventions, remembering that **working with faith or belief leaders** has its own set of advantages and disadvantages
- Take time to think about how to include groups who face discrimination and to sustain their engagement
- Join platforms working on similar areas of concern locally, nationally and internationally

Approaches

- Think about implementing projects which link short-term milestones to longer-term engagement
- Consider working at **multiple sites and with different local partners** to enhance local engagement
- Think about how impact could be enhanced by blending approaches to engagement

Within your group

- Work with your team and colleagues to think about your other projects, seeking ways to **mainstream FoRB** and religion / belief engagement into them
- Develop and implement processes to improve **religion and belief literacy** and engagement



Faith or belief groups

Faith or belief groups at the international, national and local levels are closely connected to FoRB projects: as people affected by FoRB violations, and as key actors in promoting FoRB within their own groups and in their communities. How can this engagement be more effective and inclusive?

Learn...

Specific context of engagement

- Identify FoRB violations against your group and other groups in your context using **monitoring data** (where available); understand which groups or individuals are affected by FoRB violations in different areas, and what other forms of discrimination they are facing
- Create an inventory of major challenges in your national and local context (e.g. conflict, development, governance, legal systems) and explore how they affect your group and other faith or belief groups



Partnerships

- **Identify allies and opponents** of FoRB amongst other groups with the same faith or belief identity as your group (intra-group) and with other groups (inter-group)
- Map existing forums for faith and belief groups in your context, both at the national and local level
- Consider risks and benefits of partnerships with international groups, including governments

Approaches

- Explore **local concepts** which support a culture of respect for practices of religion or belief
- Research past FoRB work in your area, including projects delivered explicitly under the FoRB banner as well as related projects

Within your group

- Research the history of work within your group in FoRB and related work and collect learning about what has been effective in your area (e.g. advocacy, dialogue, peacebuilding, and education)
- Assess existing knowledge within your group **about FoRB** and working with other faith or belief groups
- Identify potential leaders in your group, considering especially those who are most affected and may have been excluded previously (e.g. women, young people)
- Make time to assess your capacity and understand the risks of engaging in FoRB work (e.g. to personnel, reputation, finances)



Prepare...

Specific context of engagement

- Make time to build relationships with affected groups in your chosen area, seeking to understand how FoRB violations are a shared concern between your group and other groups
- Prioritise issues which will enable you to join with other groups to build coalitions

Partnerships

- Build relationships with potential allies of FoRB amongst other groups with the same faith or belief identity as your group (intra-group) and with other groups (inter-group)
- Join and support local and national forums for faith or belief groups and identify issues of shared concern
- Reach out to national and international partners who could support your work

Approaches

- Work with partners to craft message and projects which promote FoRB in a manner that fits with local concepts, supporting a culture of respect for practices of religion or belief
- Ensure that your FoRB work includes other faith or belief groups (as appropriate) to build influence on shared issues of concern

Within your group

- Provide training for current and future leaders on FoRB and how to work with other groups, in collaboration with partners
- Seek funding opportunities which align with your group's identity and priorities



Specific context of engagement

- Adapt your work as your context changes, keeping an eye on changes in governance, laws and conflicts
- Where possible and appropriate, connect your project with wider programmes and social movements

Partnerships

- Work with partners in faith or belief group forums on shared campaigns and projects, and recruit and include new leaders in your group
- Prioritise national and international partnerships which respect and listen to local leadership and take a long-term approach

Approaches

- Work with political and religious leaders, and with gatekeepers in communities
- When possible, advocate for changes alongside other affected groups from different religion or belief backgrounds

Within your group

- Encourage new leaders within your group, especially those who may be underrepresented (e.g., women, young people) or who experience additional and specific barriers to engagement
- Use learning from FoRB projects to improve engagement with human rights within your group



Policy professionals

Policy professionals (including civil servants, diplomats, and other government employees) regularly participate in FoRB and related projects as funders, connectors, and advocates. How can this engagement be more effective and inclusive?

Learn...

Specific context of engagement

- Review **monitoring data** to understand which **groups or individuals** are affected by FoRB violations at the **country level**, and what other forms of discrimination they are facing
- Think about the connections between religion or belief and other human rights violations (e.g. **gender-based violence**, **ethnic minority groups**)
- Consider other factors which drive FoRB violations using **contextual analysis** (culture, **conflict analysis**, education, **development**, **governance**, **legal systems**)

Partnerships

- Having undertaken an analysis of the local context, conduct stakeholder mapping for current and potential partners (other governments, CSOs, FBGs, local activists)
- Map existing forums for working on FoRB issues (Parliamentary groups, multi-national FoRB forums), as well as consulting with affected groups; identify gatekeepers and allies amongst civil society organisations and local groups



- Make time to listen to **potential partners** to understand how FoRB is perceived by them and the people with whom they work (think about affected communities, majority communities, and national and local governments)

Approaches

- Research past FoRB engagement in your institution, focusing on both projects delivered explicitly under the FoRB banner, as well as related projects (e.g. religious diplomacy, religious freedom advocacy)
- Build up a collection of case studies of effective FoRB projects in which government actors play a key role; reflect on the part played by governmental actors in different approaches to FoRB (e.g. advocacy, dialogue, peacebuilding, and education)

Within your institution

- Create an inventory of which departments and individuals in your institution work on areas related to FoRB outcomes (e.g. human rights, development, diplomacy, and trade)
- Consider how your government is perceived by potential partners nationally and internationally; to what extent does your **government promote FoRB** both domestically and internationally?
- Make time to assess your institution's **awareness of FoRB concepts** and **religion and belief literacy**, and understand internal risks to your institution as part of engagement with FoRB work

Prepare...

Specific context of engagement

- Work with partners to develop positive incentives for FoRB work that align with local priorities and needs
- Consider setting priorities for your FoRB programming which address multiple types of discrimination and other human rights



Partnerships

- Make time to build relationships with key groups considering the **power dynamics** which could be at play
- Support and strengthen existing platforms (transnational, national and local) where possible, recognising that local stakeholders may have trust and authenticity in their contexts
- Encourage engagement with gatekeepers while also holding in mind those groups often excluded (e.g. women, young people) or who face additional barriers to participation

Approaches

- Consult with national and local actors on the extent to which international government intervention is needed or useful, and adapt programmes accordingly
- Support partners to develop a **Theory of Change** for their funded FoRB projects, and support robust, realistic monitoring and evaluation
- Consider a funding profile which supports multiple approaches to FoRB (e.g. advocacy, dialogue, peacebuilding, and education)

Within your institution

- Invest in training on FoRB engagement and **religion / belief literacy** for government officials and civil servants
- Develop and support initiatives to **improve FoRB compliance** domestically, to strengthen credibility
- Explore opportunities for mainstreaming FoRB outcomes into other departments and areas (e.g. human rights, development, diplomacy, and trade)



Specific context of engagement

- Support **sustainable mechanisms** to regularly monitor FoRB violations and the wider context (including the wider human rights context) in order to adapt your engagement and delivery
- Adapt incentives and priorities of FoRB programming to changing local needs and priorities (e.g. peacebuilding, aid, and the human rights context)

Partnerships

- Support and strengthen **national and local actors** whenever possible so they become the spokespeople for interventions, remembering that working with faith or belief leaders has its own set of advantages and disadvantages
- Take time to think about how to include groups who face discrimination and to sustain their engagement
- Connect other governmental actors with local and regional partners as needed, to ensure long-term engagement

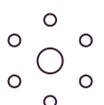
Approaches

- Support projects which link short-term milestones to longer-term engagement
- When possible, work at **multiple levels** (international, national and local) and at **multiple sites** with different local partners and communities
- Share monitoring and evaluation data with other funders to improve effective engagement



Within your institution

- Develop and implement processes and platforms to improve religion and belief literacy
- Advocate for mainstreaming FoRB outcomes into other departments and areas (e.g. human rights, development, and diplomacy)
- Collect learning from international FoRB engagement and connect with FoRB engagement within your country



Further Reading and Resources

Defining FoRB

Humanists International (2020) [The Freedom of Thought Report 2020](#)

International Commission of Jurists (2019) [Primer on the Rights to Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief](#)

OSCE (2004) [Guidelines for Review of Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief](#)

OHCHR (2020) [International Standards on Freedom of Religion or Belief](#)

Petersen, M. J. and Marshall, K. (2019) [The International Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief: Sketching the Contours of a Common Framework](#)

Learning about FoRB

CREID (2020) [Promoting FoRB in fragile contexts: emerging lessons from CREID](#)

IPPFoRB (2020) [The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief Toolkit](#)

Nordic Ecumenical Network on Freedom of Religion or Belief (NORFORB) (2018) [FoRB Learning Platform](#)

Norwegian Centre for Human Rights (2021) [The Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief \(OC\)](#)

OHCHR (2021) [Faith for Rights Toolkit and Resources](#)

OSCE / ODIHR (2019) [Freedom of Religion or Belief and Security Policy Guidance](#)

Wilton Park (2018) [Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief: What is the Role of Education?](#)

Monitoring FoRB violations

OHCHR (2001) [Training Manual on Human Rights Monitoring](#)

OHCHR (2021) [Annual reports of the Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Religion or Belief](#)

Pew Forum (2020) [Religious Restrictions around the World](#)

Search for Common Ground (2018) [Monitoring and Evaluation to Counter Hate Speech](#)

US Department of State (2021) [International Religious Freedom Reports](#)



Case Studies

- Adyan Foundation (2015) [Arab Toolkit for Education on Inclusive Citizenship](#)
- ACT Alliance (2019) [New possibilities for Gender Justice in Africa](#)
- Development Initiative of West Africa (2020) [Spreading Peace in a Multi-Cultural Environment in Nigeria](#)
- Human Rights Resource Centre (2015) [Keeping the Faith: A Study of Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion in ASEAN](#)
- Immanuel, J. M. (2010) [Peace Building by Cultural Communities: Learning from Indonesian Cultures and Several Considerations](#)
- Office of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process (2021) [Religion, Peacebuilding and Human Rights in Cyprus: An Introduction](#)
- OSCE/ODIHR (2021) [ODIHR Freedom of Religion or Belief Programme](#)
- Search for Common Ground (2018) [Freedom of Religion or Belief in the Kyrgyz Republic: legal regulations practices in accordance to constitutional and international standards](#)
- Search for Common Ground (2018) [Solidifying Religious Freedom in Indonesia](#)

Connecting FoRB with related areas

- Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs (2021) [Religion and Diplomacy: A Resource of the Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy](#)
- OHCHR (2020) [Hate Speech and Incitement to Hatred or Violence \(relationship to FoRB\)](#)
- OHCHR (2020) [Religion and Freedom of Religion or Belief Literacy](#)
- OHCHR (2020) [Report on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Gender Equality](#)
- OHCHR (2020) [Report on safeguarding freedom of religion or belief for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)
- Peace Direct / Alliance for Peacebuilding (2020) [Local Peacebuilding: What Works and Why](#)
- Petersen, M. J. (2020) [Promoting FoRB and Gender Equality in the Context of the SDGs](#)
- Tadros, M. and Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2020) [Inclusive Development: Beyond Need, Not Creed](#)

Tools for analysis and action

- ACT Alliance (2020) [Engaging with Local Faith Actors and Communities: A Toolkit](#)
- CiFORB (no date) [Theory of Change for Freedom of Religion or Belief \(FoRB\)](#)
- Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (2020) [Conflict Analysis Framework: Field Guidelines and Procedures](#)
- International Religious Freedom Roundtable (2019) [Keys to Success: Multi-Faith International Religious Freedom \(IRF\) Roundtable Establishment Checklist](#)
- New Tactics in Human Rights (2020) [Strategy Toolkit](#)
- OHCHR (2021) [Faith for Rights Toolkit and Resources](#)
- Oxfam (2021) [Quick Guide to Power Analysis](#)



Petito, F., Berry, S. and Mancinelli, M. (2018) [Interreligious Engagement Strategies: A Policy Tool to Advance Freedom of Religion or Belief](#)

Search for Common Ground (2020) [The Common Ground Approach to Religious Engagement](#)

UK Cabinet Office (2019) [Faith and Belief Toolkit: A Practical Guide Providing Information about Faith and Belief in the Civil Service](#)

UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2016) [FoRB Toolkit](#)

USAID (2009) [Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding: an Introductory Programming Guide](#)

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