It is Who You Know: The Influence of Faith-Based Donor Networks on the Antitrafficking Work of Faith-Based Organizations

Andreas Henriksson
Umeå University, Sweden

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are prevalent actors in antitrafficking work, in part due to the substantial resources existing within faith-based donor networks. FBOs are often funded by churches, other FBOs, and individual donors, which make up donor networks partly secluded from mainstream development funding. Drawing on research practices and concepts from institutional ethnography, I explore the specific composition of the donor networks of three antitrafficking FBOs in Thailand and Cambodia. I demonstrate how the character of donor networks shapes the antitrafficking work of the FBOs. The analysis shows that the three different donor networks contribute to distinctly different approaches to faith in antitrafficking. This article thus contributes to understanding the varied ways in which faith shapes the work of FBOs and sheds light on how the intertwining of religious ideas and material resources influences the particular antitrafficking work of FBOs.

Les organisations fondées sur la foi (OFF) sont des acteurs très importants dans la lutte contre la traite d’êtres humains, en partie grâce aux ressources importantes qui possèdent leurs réseaux de donateurs. Les OFF sont souvent fondées par des églises, d’autres OFF ou les donateurs eux-mêmes. Aussi, les réseaux de donateurs sont en partie isolés du financement de développement dominant. En me fondant sur les pratiques de recherche et les concepts de l’ethnographie institutionnelle (EI), je m’intéresse à la composition spécifique des réseaux de donateurs de trois OFF de lutte contre la traite d’êtres humains en Thaïlande et au Cambodge. Je démontre que l’identité des réseaux de donateurs façonne le travail de lutte contre la traite d’êtres humains des OFF. L’analyse montre que les trois réseaux de donateurs contribuent à trois approches bien distinctes de la foi dans la lutte contre la traite d’êtres humains. Aussi cet article enrichit-il notre compréhension des différentes façons dont la foi façonne le travail des OFF. Il met par ailleurs en lumière les effets de l’enchevêtrement des idées religieuses et des ressources matérielles sur le travail spécifique des OFF en matière de lutte contre la traite d’êtres humains.

Las organizaciones basadas en la fe (OBF) son agentes prevalentes en el trabajo contra la trata de personas. Esto se debe, en parte, a los sustanciales recursos que existen dentro de las redes de donantes basadas en la fe. Es frecuente que estas OBF sean financiadas por iglesias, por otras organizaciones basadas en la fe y por donantes individuales. Todos ellos conforman redes de donantes parcialmente aisladas de la financiación principal para el desarrollo. Partimos de la base de las prácticas de investigación y de los conceptos de la Étnografía Institucional (EI) con el fin de estudiar la composición específica de las redes de donantes de tres OBF contra la trata de personas en Tailandia y Camboya. Demostramos cómo el carácter de las redes de donantes da forma al trabajo que realizan las OBF contra la trata de personas. El análisis demuestra que las tres redes de donantes diferentes proporcionan enfoques claramente diferenciados en materia de cómo la fe lucha contra la trata de personas. Por lo tanto, este artículo contribuye a la comprensión de las diversas formas en que la fe da forma al trabajo de las OBF y arroja luz sobre cómo la unión de ideas religiosas con recursos materiales influye sobre el trabajo particular de las OBF contra la trata de personas.

Introduction

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are prevalent actors in development aid in general (Davis 2019; Dotsey and Kumi 2019; Haugen 2019) and antitrafficking work in particular (Frame et al. 2019; Lonergan et al. 2020). One particular characteristic of Christian antitrafficking FBOs is their distinct funding patterns: In contrast to secular NGOs, FBOs are primarily funded by individual donors, churches, and other FBOs (Schnable 2015, 2016; Henriksson 2023). These faith-based donor networks can be expected to influence the work of FBOs, but previous research has not extensively explored the effects of these dynamics on antitrafficking practice. To further the understanding of antitrafficking FBOs, studies have explored their motivations and experiences (Frame 2019; Pinkston 2019; Henriksson 2021) and the distinctive characteristics of their antitrafficking work (Frame 2017; Graw Leary 2018; Lonergan et al. 2020; Henriksson 2023). While such perspectives are both important and illuminating, they are not sufficient to understand how and why antitrafficking FBOs design their work in particular ways. The relational context in which they are situated and the specific influence that their donors have on them also have to be considered. This article sheds light on the messy reality of the intersection between (religious) ideas and material resources and on how their intertwining matters through an exploration of how donor relationships shape the antitrafficking work of FBOs in Thailand and Cambodia.

The character and composition of donor networks vary distinctly between FBOs, and the category of FBOs is also heterogeneous. Thus, when studying FBOs, it is important to note that FBOs can be affiliated to various faith traditions (Clarke 2006; Jeffery et al. 2017). In addition, FBOs with the same religious affiliation can still vary in terms of their faith-infusion, that is, in terms of how central faith is to their identity and their activities (Sider and Unruh 2004). This article focuses on Christian antitrafficking FBOs with varying degrees of faith-infusion.
Foreign aid interventions rely on successfully maintaining relationships, and interventions ultimately fail because they lose validation (Mosse 2004; Mosse and Lewis 2005, 2006). These relationships are both local and international. Illustrating the influence of international relationships, research has found that local NGOs experience discursive containment as they are disciplined by external ideas, mainly through larger international NGOs (Yea et al. 2014). For example, ideals concerning aid effectiveness constrain the ideas and practices of development practitioners (Campbell and Teghtsoonian 2010). FBOs and other NGOs employ an array of tactics to safeguard autonomy from donors (Mitchell 2014). This is true for development actors in general, but also within the subfield of antitrafficking. More research, however, is needed to explore how antitrafficking FBOs navigate the (potentially conflicting) demands and expectations from their specific donor networks.

In this article, I examine the influence of the specific, faith-based donor networks of antitrafficking FBOs. I explore how these relationships shape the design of programs and intervention strategies, as well as the ways in which faith is activated in the organizations and in their programming. Exploring these dynamics, I address the following research questions: (1) What do the donor networks of FBOs look like? (2) How do these donor networks shape the role of faith in the antitrafficking work of the FBOs? (3) What are the effects on the design of their antitrafficking work? To answer these questions, I have conducted case studies of three Christian antitrafficking FBOs, one in Thailand and two in Cambodia. Using analytical tools drawn from institutional ethnography (IE), I find that the three FBOs have distinct donor profiles, which carries implications for how the FBOs approach human trafficking. Their three distinct faith-based donor networks have expectations about how the issue of human trafficking should be approached and about the role of religion in the programs that they fund. Such expectations and conditionalities, which may also diverge between different donors funding the same FBO, need to be navigated, and sometimes negotiated or resisted, by the three FBOs. The donor network composition matters, where more churches and (Christian) individuals lead to a higher emphasis on faith in antitrafficking work as well as a more individualist focus in programming. A more diverse donor network, with institutional funding and occasional secular donors as well as faith-based donors, tends to generate ambivalence concerning the role of faith in antitrafficking but also tensions arising from conflicting demands and expectations on program content as well as administration. This article thus sheds new light on the varied ways in which faith, in tandem with money, shapes the antitrafficking work of FBOs.

This article continues by reviewing the existing research on donor networks of FBOs, and the influence of donors on NGOs and FBOs, before presenting the analytical approach of the study, namely IE. I also provide a description of the studied FBOs, and the empirical material that this study builds on. I then present the analysis of the three FBOs; first, I explore the donor networks of each FBO, and then continue by discussing how expectations concerning faith in antitrafficking are managed by the FBOs, and how this shapes how antitrafficking work is done by each of them. The article ends with a concluding discussion about key findings and takeaways.

**Previous Research: FBOs and Faith-Based Donor Networks**

FBOs make up a considerable share of antitrafficking NGOs in Southeast Asia (Frame et al. 2019; Lonergan et al. 2020; Henriksson 2023). Despite this, institutional funding (funding from government or inter-governmental donors) is less accessible to FBOs than to their secular counterparts (Davis 2019). This is partly due to a trend where a larger share of development funding is awarded to fewer and larger organizations (Banks and Brockington 2020). Christian FBOs, in particular in the field of antitrafficking, differ from most NGOs in terms of their donor profiles, as Christian FBOs are primarily funded by individuals, churches, and other FBOs, while secular NGOs to a higher degree are funded by institutional donors (e.g., UN agencies or Western government donors) or other NGOs (Henriksson 2023). This is not necessarily a problem for Christian FBOs, as many have extensive national and international faith-based networks, which makes them less dependent on institutional donor funding (Clarke 2006). Five out of the ten largest international development alliances are Christian FBOs (Haugen 2019), pointing toward the substantial financial resources that FBOs can access through their networks. Research points toward the willingness for charitable donations and activism across the FBOs’ networks, as church attendees are more likely to volunteer and to make individual donations as a result of prevailing social norms in these contexts. These faith-based networks also facilitate the founding of new NGOs, made possible through volunteerism and available global ties (Schnable 2015). Thus, it is known that FBOs have distinct donor networks, but less is known about the variations in donor profiles between FBOs, and how these shape the work of FBOs.

It has been found that donors in concert with other stakeholders shape the ideas, beliefs, and practices of development practitioners on the ground (Campbell and Teghtsoonian 2010). Within faith-based networks, religion provides ways of thinking that legitimize development work, and it also provides networks for recruiting donors and volunteers. In addition, it provides modes of action that link FBOs, supporters, and local aid recipients (Schnable 2016). A shared religious faith helps to connect people across cultural and geographical distances to work toward a shared objective (Reynolds 2013; Reynolds and Offutt 2013). In contrast, within mainstream international development, even though FBOs are prevalent actors, secular norms where religion is treated as a personal matter that is either irrelevant or harmful for development are dominant (Hallward 2008; Dragic 2017; Butcher and Hallward 2018). As a result, FBOs often find it challenging to access funding from mainstream development donors, which increases their reliance on faith-based donors.

Another important context for this article is that the modern development paradigm with its emphasis on doing development through projects that can lead actors to reduce the complexity of development issues in order to fit frameworks for results-based management within short project timeframes (Scott 2021). In line with this, donor demands can stifle creativity among implementors. Here, the terms on which funding is provided determine the room for maneuvering, flexibility, and creativity of implementing development actors (Lewis et al. 2021). It is important to consider
how this plays out for FBOs, considering their ways of legitimizing their work in relation to their specific donor networks.

These previous findings about the different ways that donors impact the practical work of development actors on the ground are important starting points for this article. So too are findings about the existence of active and resource-rich faith-based donor networks. This article builds on these findings to investigate how variations in the composition of faith-based donor networks influence how antitrafficking is done by FBOs.

Methods and Material: An IE of Antitrafficking FBOs

The Assumptions, Concepts, and Approach of IE

IE is a feminist-inspired research approach that draws on a variety of ethnographic methods to link, describe, and elucidate tensions embedded in everyday experiences and examines how people’s ordinary practices are linked to a larger fabric, which is not visible from the everyday (Campbell and Teghtsoonian 2010; Rankin 2017a). One of the scholars who developed IE was Dorothy Smith (2005) as she and others set out to develop a feminist understanding and appreciation for people’s embodied experiences—what happens to them, what they do, and what it feels like. By doing so, Smith aimed to make visible the people who “disappear” in objectified knowledge (Walby 2007). IE starts from people’s everyday experiences to show how these experiences come to be, and how the practices in an organization or an institution are organized in a particular way (Smith 2006).

IE scholars view an institution as a complex of cultural rules within a thematic field, which is supported and rationalized through actors, norms, and policies (Smith 2001; Teghtsoonian 2016; Rankin 2017a; Tummons 2017). The institution, or the thematic field, may be experienced differently depending on an individual’s positionality. Antitrafficking can be understood as a thematic field of development aid that is “translocal” in the sense that different local sites are connected by organizing from a distance by ruling social relations (Teghtsoonian 2016; Rankin 2017a; Tummons 2017). One example of translocal organizing from a distance within antitrafficking is the Palermo protocols on human trafficking (UNODC 2006, 2018), and the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) reports issued by the US State Department (USA-StateDepartment 2019), which many governments and antitrafficking organizations view as normatively influential (Riback 2018).

I view IE as a guiding principle of exploring the social world, and thus it is important to note the particularities of how I gathered material and conducted the analysis. Below, I describe how I apply IE’s analytical concepts: standpoint, ruling relations, and problematic. I then continue to describe the studied cases and the material.

STANDPOINT

In IE, a standpoint is a methodological starting point from which one can begin to explore the embodied experiences of an institution, or a field of practice (Smith 2005). The experiences of people from whose standpoint the exploration starts are a grounded gateway into the inner fabrics of the social organization that may otherwise be concealed to the scholar. The concept of standpoint thus refers to a particular position within an institution or in a social organization (Rankin 2017b). This assumes that people are experts on the conditions of their own life, and research should therefore start from their experiences. I have chosen the standpoint of the staff of the three Christian antitrafficking FBOs in Thailand and Cambodia as the starting point of my analysis. Most of them are Christian, but not all, even though their organizations have a Christian identity. Some are part of management, while others are field staff. Their experiences provided crucial and valuable information about what and who influences the design of their antitrafficking work.

The concept of standpoint is interlinked with the analytical concepts of ruling relations and problematics, which are explained below. The studied Christian antitrafficking FBOs will be presented in a later section.

RULING RELATIONS

Within IE, ruling relations are one of the key analytical concepts. Smith describes ruling relations as “objectified forms of consciousness and organization, constituted externally to particular people and places, creating and relying on textually based realities” (Smith 2005). Ruling relations are the manifestation of power of the actors within the thematic field, as in the case of this article concerning the role of faith in antitrafficking, which is “at once present and absent in the everyday” (Smith 2005, cited in Rankin 2017b). Ruling relations are formed through the collective actions, inactions, discourses, texts, and norms of actors within the thematic field. These ruling relations are often textual, but they can also be carried out via implicit norms revealed in interviews and practices and shape how concepts should be understood and translated into action (Campbell and Teghtsoonian 2010). Ruling relations permit, legitimize, or forbid particular forms of social action (Tummons 2017), and they shape the everyday experiences of the staff of the FBOs.

Ruling relations are analytically noticed as they are activated in the local setting, and experienced by people from which standpoint one chooses to explore. Practically, this means looking for ruling texts or influential instructions and thereby identifying tensions between everyday experiences and dominant rules and norms (Rankin 2017b). In my study, ruling relations have primarily been uncovered by interviewing people within the FBOs, and with people surrounding the FBOs, exploring the extent to which they have experienced rules, norms, and expectations that order their everyday actions. I have also observed the work of the FBOs in the communities where their programs are implemented (Tummons 2017). Actual texts have thus not been the primary focus, as I have followed Williams and Rankin’s concept of “phantom texts” to describe the absence of such evidence, and instead relied on people’s talk and activities (Williams and Rankin 2015).

PROBLEMATICS

When engaging with analysis, the starting point in IE is identifying key problematics, that is, discrepancies or tensions between textual (phantom or otherwise) realities and real-life experiences (Rankin 2017b). Many times, ruling relations are accepted without any tension, are not perceived as problematic by the ruled subjects themselves, and unnoticeably shape the everyday of the FBOs. There are, however, also problematics, or tensions, between contradicting ruling relations that need to be managed by the FBOs. Sometimes, the problematics lies in that the ruling relations are in opposition to the core values or beliefs of the FBOs, and other times they clash with the wider norms of society. My analysis centers around the problematics that emerge from the standpoint of the staff of the three studied FBOs. Consequently, it is the response of the FBO staff to these
Table 1. Summary of cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Type of FBO</th>
<th>Established</th>
<th>Annual budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCTP</td>
<td>Rural Cambodia</td>
<td>Community development, and antitrafficking</td>
<td>Faith-centered, Christian-Protestant</td>
<td>Late 1990s</td>
<td>$600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUAT</td>
<td>Rural and urban</td>
<td>Antitrafficking</td>
<td>Faith-affiliated, Christian-Protestant</td>
<td>Mid-2000s</td>
<td>$1,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWOT</td>
<td>Urban Thailand</td>
<td>Antitrafficking</td>
<td>Faith-permeated, Christian-Protestant</td>
<td>Mid-2000s</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

problems, stemming from their relationships to their donors, that shapes the antitrafficking work of the FBOs.

To capture the complex relationships in which the FBOs are situated, and the problematics that arise from these, I asked FBO staff to describe their organization’s relationships with other organizations and actors. These could be in the local field or at the national or international level. These were captured in relationship maps drawn by FBO staff during group interviews, and in tandem with interviews, observations, and documents, these maps have been used to explore the relational experiences of the staff of FBOs in antitrafficking. To identify problematics, I have looked for instances when the participants describe the existence of tension, friction, or contradiction in their everyday work. For the latter stages of the analysis, I used methods aligning with thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), where I have read through the indexed material looking for patterns in problematics. I then categorized these problematics into themes. This procedure allowed easier navigation in the vast and dense material, and helped me to identify the main problematics. The main problematic that I found through the analysis centered around the role of faith in antitrafficking. From this problematic, certain consequences in terms of shaping the work of the FBOs followed. These problematics have then been explored further, focusing on how the FBOs manage the problematics that occur, and how this shapes their antitrafficking work.

Introducing the Studied FBOs and the Empirical Material

The Three Studied FBOs

The particular FBOs in this study can be regarded as small or medium-sized FBOs (Davis 2019). They have all been founded by Westerners but are today increasingly or exclusively staffed by national staff. I have given the studied FBOs three pseudonyms, which means that their identity is not revealed, while at the same I am able to provide more information about what kind of organizations they are. Some key information about the the three studied FBOs are summarized in table 1.

Christian Community Trafficking Prevention (CCTP) is a small to medium-sized national faith-centered Christian-Evangelical development organization in Cambodia. Categorizing the organization as faith-centered means that CCTP has a clear Christian identity, which is reflected in their mission and vision statements (Sider and Unruh 2004). CCTP does not engage in proselytizing but attempts to find ways to engage with religion and religious leaders in constructive ways for the benefit of community development.

Antitrafficking is not their only focus, but the main objective in a specific geographic area where they work. Faith Unite Against Trafficking (FUAT) is a medium-sized faith-affiliated Christian antitrafficking organization with a primary objective to work with antitrafficking in Cambodia, but it also works with international and regional advocacy. The organization is categorized as faith-affiliated (Sider and Unruh 2004). FUAT has over the years de-emphasized its Christian identity and is now looking for more religiously inclusive ways of describing itself.

The Christian Way Out of Trafficking (CWOT) is a faith-permeated Christian-Evangelical antitrafficking organization focusing on sex trafficking, and in particular on helping survivors of sex trafficking in Thailand. The categorization as faith-permeated (Sider and Unruh 2004) signals that for CWOT faith is seen as essential in all aspects of the organization, and its work. CWOT works to help women who have been victims of human trafficking with therapy, legal work, and reparation to their home countries.

Empirical Material

The FBOs were purposively selected with the aim of finding variations in geographic (urban and rural) and strategic focus (categories of human trafficking victims; source and destination contexts). While all are affiliated to Christian Protestant and Evangelical faith traditions, I looked for variations in faith-infusion (i.e., how central faith is to the identity and activities of the organization) based on Sider and Unruh’s typology (2004).

I conducted semi-structured interviews with seventeen FBO staff over Zoom during the period of January to June 2021. The interviews focused on the FBOs’ work against trafficking and their main influences, inspirations, and collaborations. Following these interviews with staff of the three FBOs, I then spent about 4 weeks doing observations of their work and on-site interviews in January (Thailand) and March (Cambodia) 2022. During the field visits, I followed the staff of FBOs as they carried out their activities. To learn more about, and from, the relationships of the FBOs, I also interviewed secular NGOs, government officials, and donors of the FBOs. In connection to the abovementioned observations, I interviewed beneficiaries of the activities or people who lived in the areas of operations of the FBOs. In total, I have conducted fifty-eight individual semi-structured interviews, three group interviews with FBOs, twenty-one observations of FBO activities, thirty-eight document analyses, and three relationship mapping exercises with the studied FBOs.

Participants were provided with information about the purpose of the study both orally and in writing. The partic-

1To get a sense of the relative size of the studied FBO, it was found that the average Canadian FBO had an annual revenue of $816,000.

2Interview with staff of CCTP, 1, 2, and 3.

3Documents of CCTP, 1, 4, and 7.

4Interviews with staff of FUAT, 6; Interview with group of staff of FUAT.

5The research has been reviewed by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority. Approval number: 2021-00407.
ipants, and the studied FBOs, were granted anonymity and confidentiality to protect them from potential negative reactions from employers, donors, governments, or their communities. That is why I use pseudonyms for the FBOs (CCTP, FUAT, and CWOT) throughout the presentation and discussion of the findings. About half of the respondents were women, and 20 percent were from other countries than Thailand or Cambodia, for example, the United Kingdom or the United States.

My experiences as a development practitioner, and with faith-based actors, contributed to filter the knowledge that I have generated (Guillem and Gillam 2004), but it has also proven crucial when detecting veiled religious ideas and practices that were downplayed to evade criticism from a development context infused by secularism (Hallward 2008). It has also helped me navigate the development aid jargon, and provided some common ground with many of my participants. My male, academic, and European vantage point nevertheless placed me as an outsider in many situations but working with gatekeepers (i.e., other antitrafficking organizations) willing to introduce me, and interpreters and cultural guides, allowed me to partially bridge this distance. My research was supported by two development organizations working with antitrafficking in Southeast Asia. These supporting partners assisted me with gaining access to the field, but other than that they did not have any significant influence on the research.

Findings: Ruling Relations of Faith-Based Donor Networks in Antitrafficking

In this section, I describe the specific dynamics between each of the three FBOs and their donors, from the standpoint of the staff of each studied FBO. All three FBOs are embedded in ruling relations, emphasizing the role of faith in antitrafficking and ultimately encouraging them to acknowledge the importance of faith as a force for change, as well as the importance of religious leaders for countering human trafficking. However, the FBOs experience different ruling relations on faith in antitrafficking. These differing ruling relations lead to different problematics, which the FBOs resolve in distinct ways, with different implications for their practices. In the following sections, I explore the problematics regarding the role of faith in antitrafficking that the three FBOs are confronted with, and how they attempt to resolve them. The three FBOs, as explained earlier, can be categorized as faith-centered (CCTP), faith-affiliated (FUAT), and faith-permeated (CWOT) FBOs (Sider and Unruh 2004). I thereby demonstrate the varied influence of the social relations of faith-based donor networks on the practice of antitrafficking work.

CCTP: Drawing on Religious Values for Change

The Donor Patterns of CCTP

CCTP is a Christian faith-centered development and antitrafficking FBO working in Cambodia. CCTP has diverse partners at the local and national level, including schools, police, Buddhist pagodas, community-based organizations, and other antitrafficking NGOs. However, their donor relationships consist almost exclusively of other FBOs who are channeling institutional funds: “We receive the funds from [FBO donor] who receives from [intermediate FBO] and they receive from the government funder.” The FBO believes that they share

---

6 Interview with staff of CCTP, 1.
7 Interview with staff of CCTP, 1.
8 Observation of CCTP, 6.
9 Interview with staff of CCTP, 6.
10 Interview with donor of CCTP, 6.
11 Interview with donor of CCTP, 1.
12 Interview with donor of CCTP, 1.
13 Interview with donor of CCTP, 5.
14 Interview with donor of CCTP, 5.
15 Interview with donor of CCTP, 5.
16 Interview with donor of CCTP, 1.
17 Interview with donor of CCTP, 1.

strategic goals with their FBO donors, as well as the intermediate FBO donors: “We are not that much different.”

This FBO is not, at the time of study, supported in any substantial way by individual donors or churches directly. However, they are currently in the process of diversifying their funding, including finding revenue from local consultancy work. From the standpoint of CCTP, faith is the foundation for their cooperation with their FBO donors. This view is supported by a representative of the main donor, who remarked that “if they [CCTP] would become a secular NGO we would most likely phase out the cooperation over a period of years.”

Thus, the shared faith identity is perceived as a key condition for support.

Historical relationships also contribute to the links between faith-based donors and FBOs. CCTP cooperates with donors that align with them in terms of both faith and strategy, leading to relationships that are relatively harmonious. While the donors have input to the strategy of CCTP, its staff seem to think that they are largely in agreement: “Yeah, the donor also give input to our strategic plan. But [there is] not too much compromise with the donor’s strategic plan.”

The donor describes the cooperation in terms of a partnership, while at the same time recognizing that they are a donor: “We have really tried to build up the partnership aspect [and] that has enabled [CCTP] to discuss challenges a bit more freely than maybe if you’re talking with the donor that you do not have the same partnership with as we have.” Representatives from CCTP describe the relationship with their donor having high degrees of transparency and accountability, which they think is not the same for non-faith-based implementor–donor partnerships.

In addition, staff of CCTP feel they have the power to suggest changes to the program as long as they can refer needs in the community. However, given the requirements attached to the sub-granting of institutional funding, the ability to manage funds and write effective reports are important criteria for funding. Reports are due biannually, and in addition, there are quarterly follow-up meetings and regular project visits by the donor. The main donor explains that funding is preconditioned with following development best practices. When institutional funds are not involved, the donor says that “the strings are not as tight on them, and they have a little bit more flexibility.” Likewise, when the donor FBO reports to their individual sponsors and churches, the focus is more on stories of change rather than on demonstrating how the funds have been used. In summary, CCTP is primarily funded by other FBOs with access to institutional funding, with a long history of partnership with CCTP. Staff of CCTP align with the larger priority and worldview of their donors.

Navigating the Role of Faith in Antitrafficking in a Faith-Centered Way

The faith-centered CCTP has a clear faith identity and draws explicitly on religious values for positive change as it emphasizes religious literacy, i.e., the ability to understand how
different faith traditions interpret core concerns of development (Deneulin and Rakodi 2011), and the potential contributions of faith and religion to development of society.

The faith identity is the foundation of the relationship to their main donor. The donors are projecting ruling relations concerning the role of faith in identity, which CCTP needs to manage and resolve. When (indirectly) receiving institutional funds, this means that religious proselytizing is off the table. However, this is fundamentally not a key problematic for the FBO as this aligns with the values of the FBO.18 To reconcile the problematic of their explicit faith identity within the boundaries for faith in antitrafficking set by mainstream international development, the FBO instead chooses a kind of lifestyle evangelism.19 In this approach, faith and religion are important aspects, and religious leaders are strategically sought out in the communities where the FBO works.20

CCTP highly values its Christian identity and actively seeks out other partners who share a similar religious identity, while at the same time working across religious divides.21 Concerning their active pursuit of other Christian partners and donors, I observed when the leader of the FBO took part in a prayer group consisting of other Christian leaders working in Cambodia. The FBO leader saw the prayer group as an opportunity to expand his networking among Christian organizations, but also to have a space to share struggles among peers and grow spiritually.22 This also contributes to affirming the faith identity of the organization.

Parallel to expectations about faith identity and the role of faith in antitrafficking, the faith-based donor channeling institutional funds have clear instructions about adhering to dominant development paradigms. One such paradigm, as expressed by a donor representative, is imperative to address structural and underlying political roots of human trafficking:23 “[T]he main thing would be if they [the FBOs] have some activities that are not in line with the rights-based approach, then we would ask them to reconsider that.”24 In order to maintain institutional funding, the FBO must excel within the development paradigm of RBA. However, working to realize women’s rights in authoritarian Cambodia can be a risky venture as it can be perceived as challenging the government’s authority. The consequences of challenging the government can be hard to calculate. This is a problematic that needs to be resolved. CCTP is therefore forced to take a non-confrontational approach to the authorities.25 FBO staff explains the supporting role they play in relation to the local authorities: “[O]ur role is to make sure that government is working on their role. It’s like playing the role of inspector who encourage the government officer to keep their responsibility that they have to implement, and also playing role as a coach and mentor.”26 In essence, there is considerable freedom for CCTP to design their antitrafficking response within the boundaries of no proselytizing and adhering to a rights-based approach. This means that their faith identity, and religious literacy, can be activated.

CCTP believes that they, as faith-based actors, have a certain religious literacy.27 The staff therefore assumes that they are well-suited to work in religiously influenced communities, often in contrast to secular organizations’ neglect of the issue of religion and religious actors. The importance placed on religion for change is illustrated by this staff member’s statement: “I think that the role of religion is very important. Our project is working with Pagoda because I think that the religion has a very powerful effect on all people.”28 This ability, and priority by FBOs, was noticeable during my observations of CCTP working with local Buddhist religious leaders to spread awareness about human trafficking. The antitrafficking message was delivered with the Buddhist terminology, theology, and authority, and as such, it legitimized the role and work of the Christian antitrafficking FBO in the community and mobilized the community for action.29

From the standpoint of the faith-centered FBO, it is natural to draw on the values and worldviews of religion as a force for societal change. As one staff of the FBO explains:

> We believe that we are the same image of God, and all people have the same value and no one [can] abuse the value because it means we are not respectful of our God. And in Buddhism there is some law that ban human trafficking also, does not allow people to abuse [other people].30

The quote illustrates how the FBO assumes that religion is inherently positive, and how each religion’s worldview can be mobilized against human trafficking. This is in stark contrast to many secular actors who view Christian FBOs as narrow-minded: “The Christian worldview says we’re right, and all the other religions are false [and then] there’s no investment in understanding those values.”31 Being a faith-based actor in an antitrafficking field dominated by secular views on the role of faith creates a problematic that needs to be resolved. From the standpoint of CCTP, the resolution lies in activating and drawing on religiously motivated values in society. Even if secular NGOs can be trained to take religion seriously in antitrafficking, what sets the faith-centered FBO apart is the importance they themselves place in their faith identity, and how believe they can draw on it:

> No matter how highly you are educated, if you don’t know dignity, love, what is good, what is wrong, this problem is still happening. I am not saying that believers are perfect, or good people [but] at least they have God’s word to reflect on.32

The statement above exemplifies the high regard for religiosity and religiously inspired values, and the choice of CCTP to activate it for change whenever they can.

FUAT: Ambivalence to Faith in Antitrafficking

**The Donor Networks of FUAT**

FUAT is a Christian faith-affiliated organization. FUAT, just like CCTP, has a diverse portfolio of cooperating partners in their work against trafficking, such as the police, local authorities, various government ministries, and other NGOs and FBOs. However, in contrast to CCTP, its donors include a mix of secular donors and faith-based donors. In addition, relationships between donors and FUAT are described as more strained than those between CCTP and its donors.33

The majority of the donors of FUAT are faith-based and Christian, and many of them channel institutional funding. The donors are from, for example, the United States,
Canada, and several European countries. The nature of relationships varies between donors, but when the staff of FUAT describe their relationships with their donors, they describe them as a little strained: “Some donors are a bit aggressive and they want to change our program.”

Another staff member reveals the various administrative demands from donors to the same program: “We also have some other challenges if donors use different ways, different formats, in one project. In one project we have three or four donors.” One example is about a Canadian donor requesting photocopies of all receipts, as this is required by their institutional back-donor. The mix of different donors leads to many different requirements to manage. One of the donors reflects on the differences in requirements depending on the source of the funding: “So, it’s just the different ways we monitor and the ways we report are different. But the impact, yeah, it’s hard for me to see what would be the difference.” The quote signals the absence of a difference in quality or impact, but rather a difference in administrative demands. On the other hand, the staff of FUAT also describe their organizations as quite capable to resist requests from donors: “The Executive Director is very forward thinking in the world of development and would not allow a donor to drive a project.” In summary, FUAT is mostly funded by other FBOs, where many of them channel institutional funding, but also have secular donors. Sometimes, the relationship with some donors is contentious, and the need to manage a diversity of expectations and administrative routines is demanding.

Navigating the Role of Faith in Antitrafficking in a Faith-Affiliated Way

The faith-affiliated FUAT has an ambivalent relationship to faith in antitrafficking, and to their faith identity, yet emphasizes religious literacy as a resource in their programming. They are embedded in opposing ruling relations on faith in antitrafficking. From secular and institutional donors, they are pressured to de-emphasize their faith identity and minimize the role of faith in antitrafficking work. De-emphasizing their Christian identity has been debated both internally and among donors to the FBO, as one staff member recalls: “So, we lost some donors because they wanted an organization that really have a strong tie with Christianity.” At the same time, the faith-based donors and faith-based partners also put pressure on FUAT in the opposite direction, asking for a more explicit faith identity: “Some will say you’re too faith-based. And other donors will say, you’re not faith-based enough.” The choice FUAT has made is to de-emphasize their specific Christian identity while retaining a religious literacy and openness to faith worldviews and to talk about faith in inclusive terms. This ambivalence is manifested at their office where there are few religious symbols, signaling that the best way to remain inclusive is to remove religious symbols, mimicking the secular view that the absence of religion is the neutral stance.

The gradual de-emphasizing of a Christian identity has resulted in strategy changes, manifested through a shift from working with religious leaders specifically to instead regarding them as part of the community in general. In this process, church leaders have received less attention as strategic partners, as one staff member relates: “Before our prevention program, we had a church program […] But currently we do not work with churches anymore. Community prevention in relation to churches have been finished since I joined.” FUAT still engages with religious leaders as important actors, but not Christian leaders in particular. Within the same FBO, the general principle of recognizing the role of faith leaders is interpreted differently, plausibly due to the process of downplaying their religious identity. In a group discussion, the following was said: “We do not focus on Pagodas or those who work in other religions. We just work focusing on them as community members and sometimes we miss that as well.” This can be contrasted with a statement from the leader of the organization:

Yeah, these are communities of faith and the [faith] leaders need to know that it is part of their mandate as religious leaders to keep people in their community safe. […] there are many reasons to embracing the faith piece.

The differences in emphasis within the FBO itself reveal that negotiating different ideas about the role of faith in antitrafficking is difficult. The leader of the FBOs is trying to balance a faith identity without being associated with conservative American faith alliances, as staff shared with me during interviews. FUAT needs to make sure that their faith-based donors do not perceive them to be secular. To balance between the expectations, the FBO seeks to highlight religious values that align with the secular ideals of international development. Such values can be justice or dignity, which are easily connected to scripture and can be communicated externally. Faith and religious values are important to FUAT in many ways, and the founder states in an interview that the organization was founded from a faith inspiration and that “a lot of my own inspiration comes from faith.” At the same time, FUAT and like-minded FBOs join the secular criticism concerning FBOs that are “heavily handed with Christianity” in their antitrafficking work. Following this criticism, FUAT views religious conversions within their antitrafficking work as inappropriate.

The opposing and contradicting ruling relations from their diverse donor portfolio pull FUAT in different directions concerning what kind of antitrafficking work they should focus on. One FBO staff member with long experience in the organization reflects: “Some donors only provide support for trafficking cases but not for sexual exploitation. Some donors want us to change our vision or we will not get the support.” The FBO also has difficulties with donors insisting that they can only help children and not adults, something that excludes adolescents and parents or guardians of the children as well. Thus, their donors collectively, yet not in a coordinated way, push for reducing the complexities of human trafficking and narrowing the focus of the work, while FUAT attempts to maintain complexity: I think that is where few organizations focus because it’s more complicated […] from a

42Interview with group of staff from FUAT, 1.
43Interview with group of staff from FUAT, 1.
44Interview with group of staff from FUAT, 1.
45Interview with group of staff from FUAT, 1.
46Interview with staff of FUAT, 6.
47Interview with staff of FUAT, 6 and 2.
48Documents from FUAT, 9; Interview with group of staff of FUAT; Interview with staff of FUAT, 3.
49Interview with group of staff from FUAT, 1.
50Interview with group of staff from FUAT, 1.
51Interview with staff of FUAT, 1.
52Interview with staff of FUAT, 1.
53Interview with staff of FUAT, 1.
donor level. And I think that’s where [we are] great because [we] focus on all areas.\textsuperscript{53}

The faith-affiliated FUAT is pressured by secular peer NGOs, donors, and policymakers. Former colleagues question the choice of its staff being associated with an FBO: “Oh, I can’t believe you’re working for a Christian organization. I never thought you would do that.”\textsuperscript{54} Furthermore, FUAT wants to play a role in arenas dominated by secularism, and this requires adaptation of how they present themselves and their work. As the leader of the FBO explains:

\textit{I have realized that if [FBOs] are going to sit at the table as professionals, [FBOs] have to change their language. I think that has been a lesson for a lot of faith-based antitrafficking organizations who want to come to the table like government circles, UN circles, academia circles they actually need to professionalize their faith.}\textsuperscript{55}

Thus, as exemplified here, the staff of FUAT adopt the secular logic that faith-based antitrafficking work needs to be professionalized (Tomalin 2018; LonerGAN et al. 2020). Or as one staff member reflects: “Some would say that we should have maybe moved completely out of [our faith identity] if we wanted to be fully professional.”\textsuperscript{56} This further illustrates the difficulties of managing the conflicting ruling relations on faith in antitrafficking by downplaying their religious identity. At the same time, the FBO tries to maintain its competency in dealing with religious leaders and religious topics, and maintaining good relationships with faith-based donors. As the leader of the FBO sums it up: “It’s been a constant balance, frankly.”\textsuperscript{67} And this balancing act requires them to choose wisely, when possible, among their donors. “Well, there are faith-based [donors] but we are a little bit picky as well, because we want only donors who are really open.”\textsuperscript{58} This signals that FUAT is contemplating the need to adjust their donor portfolio further in order to maintain their current balancing act on faith in antitrafficking.

\textbf{The CWOT: Faith as the Solution to Human Trafficking}

\textbf{The Donor Patterns of CWOT}

CWOT is a faith-permeated antitrafficking organization. Just like the two previous FBOs, CWOT demonstrates a diversity of cooperating partners in their antitrafficking work such as businesses, NGOs, police, and the immigration department. In contrast to the other two FBOs, CWOT has more Christian partners such as churches and other FBOs. In terms of the donor relationships of CWOT, they consist of a mix of churches,\textsuperscript{59} FBOs, and Christian individuals: “The majority would be churches, individuals, probably people that find us on the web, but I would say probably the majority would come through a network of churches.”\textsuperscript{60} However, CWOT also receives funding for specific expenses for survivors of trafficking from INGOs or UN Agencies: “International Organization for Migration will pay for medical care for women.”\textsuperscript{61}

Faith-based donor networks have substantial resources thanks to the religiously mandated donations within churches and congregations (Schnable 2015, 2016; Davis 2019). From the standpoint of the staff of the FBO, there is the confidence that their activities will be funded one way or the other: “[The director] raises money from America, but actually we never lack money.”\textsuperscript{62} On their website, CWOT thanks their individual donors for contributing to purchasing a building for their operations, where a donor offered to match donations up to the sum of $100,000.\textsuperscript{63} Due to the fairly reliable inflow of donations from faith-based donors, staff of CWOT do not feel like they are influenced by their donors. This sentiment is expressed by the leader of the FBO: “I value donors, but I will not compromise for donors.”\textsuperscript{64} This conviction that they are not adjusting their program to donors’ demands is also echoed in another interview: “I have not heard that we have ever adjusted our program to fit a big donors’ opinion. In fact, a big donor donates to us because they like what they see.”\textsuperscript{65} The general picture conveyed is a harmonious relationship with donors: “I think that for the most part, the relations with donors are very beneficial, and very supportive.”\textsuperscript{66}

CWOT owns a so-called “freedom business,” where survivors of trafficking are employed. The FBO sells most of their products in Western countries with the help of volunteers.\textsuperscript{67} The volunteers and donors hear about the work of CWOT, and they then offer to contribute with their time or money: “For the most part, people have come to us, they like what we’re doing and they want to support it and they offer assistance.”\textsuperscript{68} Generally, CWOT can rely on a number of long-term donors with whom they have good relationships: “Where I’ve asked for funding has been with churches or organizations that we already have a relationship with and they’re given in the past.”\textsuperscript{69}

In terms of maintaining the relationship with their donors, the requirements for reporting back vary but are generally not very demanding as explained by the FBO representative: “Some are happy with an end of the year report [about] what we did. Some are happy with just a thank you.”\textsuperscript{70} Research has pointed out that even though FBOs have access to a lot of generous donors, maintaining those relationships is also costly, and FBOs spend significant amounts of money on fundraising (Davis 2019). Often, the donors pick one project that they wish to support. So, the donors generally get to choose which project will be funded, but usually this support comes with few strings attached.\textsuperscript{71} Instead, the basis of communication relies on the website, newsletters, prayer requests and thank you letters.\textsuperscript{72} This type of reporting and communication to faith-based donors is in stark contrast to how reporting and communication is done to institutional donors. From the standpoint of CWOT, the communication is based on a foundation of trust where the donors have patience when it comes to reporting. However, there are exceptions where impatient individual donors have demanded replies within a short time period.\textsuperscript{73}

In summary, CWOT is primarily funded by churches, individuals, and other FBOs, and only marginally by institutional donors. In general, their relationship to their donors is long-term, and experienced as supportive and uncomplicated.

\textsuperscript{53}Interview with staff of FUAT, 2.
\textsuperscript{54}Interview with staff of FUAT, 2.
\textsuperscript{55}Interview with staff of FUAT, 6.
\textsuperscript{56}Interview with staff of FUAT, 6.
\textsuperscript{57}Interview with staff of FUAT, 6.
\textsuperscript{58}Interview with staff of FUAT, 6.
\textsuperscript{59}Interview with a group of staff from CWOT, 1.
\textsuperscript{60}Interview with staff of CWOT, 1.
\textsuperscript{61}Interview with staff of CWOT, 1.
\textsuperscript{62}Interview with staff of CWOT, 3.
\textsuperscript{63}Document from CWOT, 22.
\textsuperscript{64}Interview with staff of CTP, 1.
\textsuperscript{65}Interview with staff of CWOT, 5.
\textsuperscript{66}Interview with staff of CWOT, 2.
\textsuperscript{67}Document from CWOT, 12.
\textsuperscript{68}Interview with staff of CWOT, 1.
\textsuperscript{69}Interview with staff of CWOT, 1.
\textsuperscript{70}Interview with staff of CWOT, 2.
\textsuperscript{71}Interview with staff of CWOT, 1.
\textsuperscript{72}Documents from CWOT, 11, 8, and 12.
\textsuperscript{73}Interview with staff of CWOT, 1.
Navigating the Role of Faith in Antitrafficking in a Faith-Permeated Way

The faith-permeated FBO has a clear faith identity, emphasizing the role of faith in antitrafficking, but in contrast to the other two FBOs, they are actively proselytizing through their antitrafficking work. This position on faith in antitrafficking stems from expectations from their donor base, consisting of individuals, churches, and other FBOs who have like-minded views on the role of faith in antitrafficking.

One of the most important donors of CWOT has a mission statement about inviting people to become Christians, and this goal shapes everything the donor gets involved in, even in antitrafficking. Staff of CWOT talks about donations as an act of obedience to God, which is an important discourse within faith-based donor networks. The communication to their donors is filled with prayer requests, intertwined with calls for donations. The prayer requests are sometimes about helping people escape exploitation, but also about the spiritual journeys of their clients, exemplified by a prayer request letter: “Pray for [survivors] to grow in faith [. . .] for [those] who struggle with addictions, demonization, and prostitution [. . .] for the trafficked victims to find freedom and for justice in the courts.” These prayer requests also reach potential volunteers within the faith-based donor networks, who then sign up to help out. As one of the long-term volunteers explained: “My church sent me, I’m not with an official organization. I just raised money [to fund her time with CWOT].” Thus, there is an expectation shared by CWOT and their donor network that Christian spirituality and antitrafficking are intertwined.

The spiritual economy within faith-based donor networks means that CWOT frequently takes on volunteers who finance their own stay and work for several years within the organization. CWOT’s reliance on volunteers from their faith-based donor networks exposes CWOT to ruling relations shaping, and limiting, their response to human trafficking. These volunteers are members of the churches that are part of the donor network of CWOT and share the same worldview. The donor profile with their spiritually mandated donations and the ruling relations on faith in antitrafficking that they project makes it difficult from the standpoint of CWOT to, even if they wanted to, leave out the spiritual component when communicating the results. CWOT’s recognition of the importance of religious dimensions is also demonstrated in the way they take note of how traffickers use religion to manipulate their victims to remain in servitude: “Something that we really brought to the table was recognizing the role of witchcraft as a threat, as a controlling force with trafficked women.” Following this view, the faith-permeated CWOT uses faith in their counseling program. The strategic importance of spirituality is explained by one of the FBO staff working with survivors of trafficking: “The spiritual warfare aspect [. . .] in order for women to be free, to be able to sleep through the night, to not be harassed by evil spirits, is something that we’ve had to do actually intentionally strategically deal with.” Thus, Christian activities such as Bible studies and devotions are mandatory for survivors in their programs, and this has resulted in several conversions to Christianity. One FBO staff member explains: “I think having an aspect of faith in your programs is helpful [like] having times of worship, prayer and Bible teaching is really important. It’s really crucial.” When observing CWOT, I participated in devotions, but also saw books and other materials on the topic of spiritual counseling. These observations confirmed the centrality of faith in their antitrafficking programs. For CWOT, most topics are seen as related to faith. For instance, teaching on topics such as finances draws on religious principles, and is explained within a faith discourse. Another illustration of the centrality of faith in their strategic thinking is a story told by the leader of the FBO about a prophetic dream she had. This prophetic dream was shared among the leadership team and ended up being the pivotal factor in shaping which activities that should be continued. In CWOT, the consensus interpretation of the dream was that God intervened and showed the future path for the organization.

The faith-based donor network of CWOT, with an emphasis on churches and individuals, means that they need to maintain a certain kind of non-structural antitrafficking work. FBOs are often seen as non-political and have in some regards fewer constraints from their donor base as long as they avoid what their donors view as contentious issues (Butcher and Hallward 2018). FBOs may want to avoid to be associated with what their donors perceive as controversial political issues. One NGO representative with insight into Christian FBOs, such as CWOT, critiques this avoidance of politics among the donor base of FBOs: “I think the minute that you start to talk about community development [. . .] that’s like communism.” She goes on to describe how individual donors of FBOs generally view human trafficking: “It’s a clear moral, evil, it’s emotionally compelling and people just want do something about it.” The combined effect is a pressure on CWOT to reduce the complexity of human trafficking to a black-and-white issue of good versus evil. In this donor environment, to get funding you need a compelling story, but the story needs to be adapted to the expectations and worldviews of the donors. If CWOT’s presentation of an alternative agenda, one which is not in line with the expectations of their donor network, they risk disappointing them, which impedes the success of fundraising (Reynolds and Offutt 2013). This dynamic makes it difficult to get individual donors to support less dramatic types of interventions, such as activities addressing the structural issues that allow human trafficking to continue.

CWOT is also pushed toward reducing complexities due to their reliance on volunteers from their faith-based donor network, who influence the organization to a large degree. The influence of volunteers has been a problem and therefore the FBO is attempting to limit the scope of the volunteers’ influence: “We still depend on foreign volunteers, we have this dilemma of seeing the organization shifting with every new group that come through.” The volunteers also contribute to reducing the complexity of the solutions to human trafficking, as the volunteers are not as experienced, and when

---

74 Interviews with staff of CWOT, 1 and 4; Observation of CWOT, 6.
75 Document from CWOT, 14.
76 Interview with staff of CWOT, 1.
77 Document from CWOT, 8.
78 Interview with group of staff of CWOT.
79 Interview with a group of staff from CWOT, 1; Documents from CWOT, 18 and 19.
80 Interview with staff of CWOT, 1.
81 Interview with staff of CWOT, 1.
they go home, new volunteers need to be trained. CWOT manages the pressure from their donors to reduce complexity, with the complex reality of human trafficking, by advocating for individual survivors’ rights of getting compensation, or other types of assistance from the authorities.92 Thereby CWOT steers clear of addressing the structural causes for human trafficking. Advocating for the rights of individuals is not a sensitive political issue for the donor base of churches and individuals. Within the boundaries of the donors’ simplified view on human trafficking, CWOT acknowledges the spiritual, emotional, social, financial, and physical challenges that the survivors need to overcome. As the leader of CWOT explains:

*It turns out to be a lot more complex and there’s no one solution. So, you have to address it from many angles. If you only address one part of it […] it’s not going to stand and they’ll end up falling again and getting re-trafficked.*93

CWOT calls this a victim-centered approach, and this is compatible with maintaining a good relationship with Thai government officials: “The relationship that we have with [authorities] is very important. I saw them changing to [have] a victim-centered approach.”94 Successes in helping survivors are proudly communicated to donors: “[We] were able to assist [survivor] with her documents, with emergency needs, and with the time to heal her soul and body. Without intervention and assistance [she] would have died in Thailand.”95 Thus, CWOT focuses on individual-level aspects of human trafficking.

While religion in antitrafficking is not viewed as inherently problematic, the FBO also directly criticizes toward individuals and organizations who are too aggressive in their approach and call them “Bible thumpers.”96 Attitudes to human trafficking within the church also need to be addressed, since partnering with churches is very important for CWOT. Sometimes, churches are hesitant to engage in antitrafficking due to judgmental attitudes toward women in the sex industry, and it is important for CWOT to contribute to changing these attitudes.97 When marketing their handicraft produce, or at their coffee shop, CWOT tones down their Christian identity, since they know that for some partners being too upfront with Christianity can be a deal-breaker.98 The FBO staff explains how stereotypical views of Christian antitrafficking work can sometimes hinder cooperation: “One of the reasons I don’t want [Christian] labels is because people have stereotypes, they don’t want to know the truth because it’s easier to exclude us from the table.”99 To summarize, CWOT is challenged by explicit expectations to use faith in antitrafficking from their faith-based donor network, while at the same time encountering stereotypical views of Christians by secular actors. This happens parallel to the efforts by CWOT to challenge simplistic and judgmental views of human trafficking by their donors.

**Conclusions**

In this article, I have demonstrated how the specific composition of faith-based donor networks and the rules and expectations they create shape how the three FBOs do antitrafficking work. In particular, I have considered the implications for how the FBOs choose to emphasize faith in antitrafficking. The three FBOs have, within the broader pattern of faith-based donor networks, three distinct compositions of donors, creating different ruling relations concerning faith in antitrafficking.

The donors of CCTP are other FBOs, primarily channeling institutional funds, and CCTP has the most homogenous donor portfolio of the three FBOs. The main basis for the relationship with donors is shared faith identity, however, the sub-granting of institutional funds creates firm boundaries for faith in antitrafficking. CCTP resolves the problematics of faith in antitrafficking by steering clear of explicit proselytizing but drawing on religiously inspired values for positive change, and by highlighting the significant role of religion and religious leaders for countering human trafficking.

FUAT has the most diverse donor profile of the studied FBOs. The donors of CWOT are FBOs with and without access to institutional funds, churches, and a few secular donors. There are competing ruling relations on faith in antitrafficking arising from these diverse donor relationships. FUAT resolves these competing ruling relations by adopting an ambivalent and pragmatic faith identity, and an ambivalence toward the role of faith in antitrafficking. However, their faith identity preserves their religious literacy, which is activated in their antitrafficking work. This change in stance reveals how FBOs are influenced by ideas on the role of religion in development coming from Western secularism. The heterogeneous donor network also subjects FUAT to ruling relations on siloing antitrafficking efforts to certain groups such as children or women, which they resolve through adapting communications about their work to their donors. This is the effect of donors reducing the complexity of human trafficking.

The donor network of CWOT largely consists of individuals and churches sharing their Christian worldview. While drawing from many different sources, the donor network is also clearly Christian, with a few exceptions. CWOT is to a high degree reliant on volunteers in fundraising, communications, as well as implementation. Out of the three FBOs, CWOT most strongly emphasizes faith in their antitrafficking work. Donors expect and encourage that beneficiaries of CWOT have spiritual experiences bringing them from darkness to light. The effects of these ruling relations are that CWOT intertwines Christianity with their antitrafficking work. One consequence of this dynamic is the difficulty in addressing structural matters relating to human trafficking because it is not compatible with the donors’ expectations, moral judgments, and understanding of human trafficking. These expectations, however, do not always match the realities on the ground. This problematic is resolved through focusing on a victim-centered approach.

The findings of this article concerning the subtle and manifest influences of donor networks, which vary depending on their composition, are important for policymakers, donors, and FBOs to reflect upon. A key question for policymakers and donors (and donor networks collectively) is whether the effects of their influences on FBOs and other antitrafficking actors are desirable. FBOs can draw on these findings to reflect on whether they realize the effect donators have on their identity and the role of faith in the antitrafficking work, and whether this change is desirable or not.

In conclusion, the article highlights the varied ways that specific donor networks create ruling relations that pull the FBOs in different directions concerning the role of faith in antitrafficking, and with regards to the design and focus of their work. The article has demonstrated how faith ideals and money interplay to shape the antitrafficking work of

---

92 Interview with staff from CWOT, 1.
93 Interview with staff from CWOT, 1.
94 Interview with group of staff from CWOT, 1.
95 Documents from CWOT, 1 and 2.
96 Interview with staff from CWOT, 3.
97 Interview with staff from CWOT, 2; Document from CWOT, 12.
98 Observation of CWOT, 4; Documents from CWOT, 7.
99 Interview with staff from CWOT, 1.
the FBOs. In particular, it sheds light on the importance of considering the varied and specific donor relations of FBOs to understand their antitrafficking practices. It is thus the FBOs’ particular networks that provide them with internal as well as external incentives for action or inaction. In sum, it is about who you know, and in particular, which donors you know.

**Funder Information**

This work was supported by the Lars Hierta Memorial Foundation [grant number FO2020-0050]; the Theodor Adelwärd Memorial Foundation; and the Industrial Doctoral School for Research and Innovation at Umeå University.

**References**


© The Author(s) (2024). Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the International Studies Association. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted reuse, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.