

Discussion questions based on the booklet “Freedom of religion or belief for all”

Length		10-15 minutes
Difficulty		Easy to intermediate
Group size		Small to large
Aim	To break up the lecture with a simple “beehive/buzzing group” exercise and make the participants familiar with the core elements of FORB in an interactive way.	
Description	Questions for group or plenary discussion in connection with teaching about FORB	
Resources needed	Keen participants that are at ease talking with each other Copies of the booklet “Freedom of religion or belief for all” from Stefanus Alliance (Booklets can be downloaded from the FORB Learning platform in several languages.) Flip chart/white board and markers in different colours	
Source	Stefanus Alliance	

Tips for facilitators

In any training, it’s good to vary the methods you use to share information. Films, presentations and written materials are all good sources of learning. The discussion questions below relate to short chapters from the booklet “Freedom of religion or belief for all” from Stefanus Alliance, but can also be used in connection with watching the FORB Learning Platform films, or teaching you formulate yourself.

You can use several/all of the questions for a chapter to create longer group work discussions, but they are really designed to be used one at a time to interactive mini-breaks in teaching sessions.

Chapter 2: Why is freedom of religion or belief important?

- What does freedom of religion or belief (FORB) mean to you? In what ways is it important for you and for others? Do you think it means different things for different people? Why?
- Which FORB violations have you heard of or read about recently?
- Can you give examples of how FORB is interconnected with other human rights? Which ones and how?
- In what ways can and do religious communities play a positive role in strengthening democratic development in society? What conditions do you think need to be in place in order for this to happen?
- In what ways do you think FORB contributes to economic development and socioeconomic wellbeing?

Chapter 3: What is freedom of religion or belief?

- When reading chapter 3, did your understanding of FORB change? If yes, in what way?
- Do you know someone who has converted from one religion or belief to another? How does your community react when somebody converts to another religion or belief? Is it different from how you react if somebody embraces your faith? Why? What do international human rights norms say about conversion?
- When expressing and practicing your religion or belief, what is important for you? Do you think it is ok for followers of other religions or beliefs to express and practice their faith in the same way? Is there a difference? Why?
- What obstacles does your own religious/belief community face regarding the outer freedom?
- Which legitimate restrictions on FORB occur presently in your context?
- Which restrictions on FORB in your society do not fulfil all the three requirements making restrictions legitimate? Which dimensions suffer most from these illegitimate restrictions?
- Which restrictions on FORB do you think are lacking in your society? Would these be legitimate or illegitimate according to international standards?

Chapter 4: Possible tensions

- Do you think FORB is a universal right, i.e. a right that is the same for everyone, everywhere? Why or why not?
- What do you think of criticizing religion, questioning doctrines and making fun of religious figures and sacred texts? What do international norms say?
- Even if you have the right to do or say something, does it mean that you have to or should do it? Is it always wise?
- How can blasphemy laws be misused and violate FORB?

- What does FORB mean for women? In which ways do women suffer from FORB violations in your context?

Chapter 5: How is FORB abused?

- Look at the four different cases (page 5, 13, 19 and 23) in this booklet and discuss:
 - o Who is the victim? What religion or belief does the victim have?
 - o Who is committing the wrongdoing?
 - o Describe what is happening in the case. Is it disinformation, discrimination and/or violent persecution?
 - o Is the government actively involved, or are they passively letting other non-state actors commit these violations without stopping or punishing them?
 - o Which of the seven dimensions of FORB are affected?
 - o What other human rights are violated?
- What restrictions on FORB exist in your society and who imposes them? Who is suffering from them? What role does the government play?
- Can you give examples of disinformation, discrimination and violent persecution from your own context?

Chapter 6. What can we do?

- What needs to change in your society in order for everyone to enjoy freedom of religion or belief? How can this be done?
- How can you contribute? What are potential risks?
- Think about other religious groups or belief communities in your society. Which prejudices are common in your society against them?
- Do you know anybody from other religious groups or belief communities? Why/why not? What prejudices do you personally have towards other religious groups? Why? How can you start to overcome them?
- Which prejudices are common towards your own religious/belief community, if you belong to one?