

JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on
FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Religion and Sexual and Gender-based Violence

Setting the Stage

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JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on **FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

An International Collaboration on Evidence for Faith Groups' Activities and Contributions to Local Community Health and Wellbeing

Vision: Full and appropriate engagement of the capacities of faith-based groups in the achievement of the SDGs through effective partnerships with public sector and secular entities, as well as among religious groups themselves





Scoping Study (2015)

World Humanitarian
Summit Brief (2016)

Getting Dirty:
Working with Faith
Leaders (2016)

Hub co-chairs: Liz Dartnall, SVRI & Diana Arango, World Bank
Hub secretary: Veena O’Sullivan, Tearfund

SGBV Hub Members

POLICY/ SECULAR NGO

DFID
Devanna de la Puente
Oxfam - Asia
Save the Children (Sweden) Asia
London -Metro Police
Sexual Violence Research
Initiative
UNAIDS
UNHCR - SGBV Unit
United Nations Population Fund
(UNFPA)
Promundo
28 Too Many
GBV AOR West & Central Africa

ACADEMIC

Coventry University
London School of Hygiene &
Tropical Medicine - UK
Griffith University, Australia
University of Denver
ICRW - Washington DC
Johns Hopkins
The University of Queensland
St Lucia
The University of Groningen
Stellenbosch University
University of Central
Lancashire
University of Massachusetts,
Boston
University of New South
Wales, Australia
University of Oxford
Uppsala University, Sweden
University of Cape Town

FAITH BASED

ADRA Australia
Anglican Communion
CAFOD
Christian Aid
Coalition of Violence Against
Women
Coexist
Episcopal Relief
HEARD, UKZN, South Africa
IMA World Health
Islamic Relief
Muslim Aid
SGB Response in Eastern
DRC
Restored
Sonke Gender Justice
Tearfund
Traidmission
Wangu Kanja Foundation
We Have Hope
World Council of Churches
World YWCA
World Vision International

Religion & SGBV

Challenges

- Faith communities historically have patriarchal cultures **reinforcing gender inequality**
- Faith actors have contributed to **stigma**
- Faith leaders can be unwilling to engage on SGBV as a '**taboo**' topic; this can perpetuate harmful practices
- Faith leaders may contribute to **re-traumatizing** survivors

Opportunities

Globally 84% of people identify as religious
Religiosity is **highest** in the world's poorest countries



Faith Actors: Holistic Approach

- Spirituality and religion are important to survivors for coping with and healing from SGBV.
- Faith actors can be powerful influencers of behavior and change perceptions especially in regards to **stigma**.

Addressing Stigma



‘Then people point fingers at you and gossip about you, and as a result they would not associate with you. You become ostracised within the community...’

Faith Actors: Trust and Influence on social norms



In Liberia, a young Muslim leader said: “Religious institutions have much influence. So we preach that sexual violence should not be kept quiet.”

Case Study: Islamic Relief Worldwide



Islamic Relief
Worldwide

When: 2016-2017

Where: Mali, Niger and Pakistan

What: Community Hope Action Teams (CHATs) to bring together key community stakeholders, including religious leaders, to address GBV and Child Protection issues.

Faith context:

- Faith leaders are heavily involved in both religious and tribal issues, and inter-family disputes. 'They are also rarely challenged so having them on board strengthened our GBV and CP interventions.'
- In these Muslim majority contexts we involved faith leaders as community champions who helped build trust, influence communities & support change



Case Study: Islamic Relief Worldwide

Key Learnings on Faith Leader involvement:

- In the three countries, planned activities, methodologies and targets were similar but all varied according to local needs, & cultural-religious sensitivities
- Role of Faith Leaders very important in **supporting survivors** where formal services are limited e.g.
 - Niger, there are no public safe homes for GBV survivors which puts them at risk- so community & faith leaders handle GBV and CP cases.
- Religious leaders have a **wide sphere of influence** to utilise e.g. Faith leaders developed plans to discuss women's and children's rights in their regular sermons and during marriage ceremonies

*'We found it was tribal and community leaders who settle most cases informally, even if they are reported to the police. **It is therefore essential to understand the local context to recognise and utilise entry points.** In trying to involve women and children in a male dominated community we had to liaise with the decision-makers who in this context were male religious leaders.'* (p 14)

Moving forward

- Faith actors can help humanitarian action be more **responsive, holistic, and inclusive**
- Local religious leaders **are trusted and have authority**
- Faith networks can reach a **diverse range** of actors
- Faith actors work on **large scale**
- Faith actors support **the social and cultural**, as well as the material



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SEXUAL AND
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