



**Partnering  
with Religious  
Communities  
for Children**

unite for  
children

unicef 

# “In everything we do, the most disadvantaged children and the countries in greatest need have priority.” – UNICEF’s Mission Statement

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# FOREWORD

Long before there was a UNICEF, faith communities were among the greatest advocates for the world's neediest children, providing guidance, aid and comfort to millions of disadvantaged families.

In fact, the Convention on the Rights of the Child – the most widely accepted human rights treaty in the world – reflects deeply-held values embedded within religious traditions that uphold the inherent dignity of every child and the centrality of the family in building strong communities.

Today, faith communities continue to be an indispensable partner in UNICEF's work to advance children's rights and enhance their well-being. Such partnerships are especially important in our renewed focus on reaching the poorest, most vulnerable and hardest to reach children and families.

*Partnering with Religious Communities for Children* is primarily intended to strengthen those partnerships and make them even more effective as we work together to improve children's lives. It provides valuable information about religious traditions, identifying the diversity of perspectives that often exist even within the same tradition. The guide also includes useful examples of partnering and best practices across a range of programme areas, including child protection, education, health, nutrition, and HIV/AIDS, among others. And it contains a wealth of other resources for field staff, including listings of other partners at UN and other multilateral agencies, as well as civil society organizations across a broad spectrum of focus areas.

To succeed in deepening our partnerships with religious communities, we must work hard not only to identify common ground and maximize our comparative advantages, but also to encourage open dialogue, even about complex, sensitive issues. This is especially true in addressing attitudes and practices sometimes associated with religious beliefs which harm children physically or emotionally, or exclude them from fully participating in their societies.

Much has been accomplished already through the rich collaboration between religious communities and UNICEF; with the publication of this guide, we can more fully tap the enormous potential of these relationships. Together, we will build on each other's strengths and achieve much more, for the children.



Anthony Lake  
UNICEF Executive Director

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
FOREWORD.....	iii
1. OVERVIEW.....	2
2. PARTNERING TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN .....	6
What are religious communities? .....	7
Why work with religious communities? .....	10
Shared values.....	11
Moral influence and leadership.....	11
Extensive networks.....	12
Children, religion and spirituality.....	15
3. PARTNERING ACROSS PROGRAMME SECTORS.....	16
Child protection .....	18
Education .....	22
Health .....	25
HIV and AIDS .....	29
Nutrition .....	33
Water, sanitation and hygiene.....	36
Cross-cutting issues .....	39
Early childhood development.....	39
Humanitarian action .....	40
Gender equality.....	42
Child participation.....	44
4. PREVENTING THE MISUSE OF RELIGION.....	46
5. FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGEMENT.....	50
Understand values, structures and leadership .....	51
Focus on shared values and a rights-based framework.....	54

Ensure impartiality .....	55
Identify strategic entry points.....	56
Integrate partnerships into programming.....	60
Build on convening and technical strengths.....	60
Ensure adequate competencies .....	62
<b>6. PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>ANNEXES.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Annex 1: Key Actors.....</b>	<b>70</b>
United Nations.....	70
Non-governmental organizations .....	72
Academic and research actors.....	72
Faith-based organizations.....	73
Religious and inter-religious organizations, networks and alliances .....	74
<b>Annex 2: Key Resources .....</b>	<b>80</b>
Development and children’s rights .....	80
Child protection .....	81
Child survival and development .....	82
Early childhood development .....	82
Education .....	83
HIV and AIDS .....	83
Humanitarian action.....	84
<b>Annex 3: Sample Logframe.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>PHOTO CREDITS.....</b>	<b>94</b>



# 1

## OVERVIEW

*A person living with HIV receives a Buddhist 'blessing' string from one of the monks who offer spiritual and emotional support to attendees at self-help group sessions that are part of the Government/ UNICEF response to the epidemic (Lao People's Democratic Republic).*

“We find strong consensus across our religious traditions about the inherent dignity of every person, including children... Our faith traditions take a holistic view of a child’s life, and thus seek to uphold all the rights of the child in the context of its family, community and the broader social, economic and political environment. All children hold these rights equally and we must ensure that boys and girls have equal opportunities to enjoy these rights, particularly education, protection, health, social development and participation.”

— *Multi-Religious Commitment to Confront Violence against Children*<sup>1</sup>

UNICEF and other child rights organizations\* have a long history of partnering with religious communities of all faiths on a wide range of issues that affect children. Religious communities are uniquely positioned to promote equitable outcomes for the most vulnerable children and families. Their moral influence and extensive networks give them access to the most disenfranchised and deprived groups, those that international organizations and governments are sometimes less able to reach effectively. They are also grounded in philosophical frameworks that shape their call to community service into long-term commitments to achieving peace, justice and social equality.

Several key elements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – the most widely ratified and comprehensive legal instrument for the protection of child rights – reflect values shared with the world’s major religious traditions. These include:

- A fundamental belief in the dignity of the child.
- An emphasis on the family as the best place for bringing up children.
- High priority given to children and the idea that all members of society have rights and duties towards them.
- A holistic notion of the child and a comprehensive understanding of his or her physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs.<sup>2</sup>

Aside from the potential benefits that religious actors bring to partnerships, spirituality and religion can have a profound influence on children’s development and socialization and have the potential to reinforce protective influences and promote resilience. The beliefs, practices, social networks and resources of religion can instil hope, give meaning to difficult experiences and provide emotional, physical and spiritual support. Impact can be far-reaching when child rights efforts are grounded in the protective aspects of religious beliefs and practices in a community.

In spite of the positive roles religious communities can play, it is important to acknowledge there are sometimes concerns about working in partnership with these groups. Although the fundamental values of all the major religious traditions uphold the dignity and right to well-being of children, some beliefs, attitudes and practices associated with religions promote or condone violence and discrimination against children. Whether these are actual religious tenets, or religion is misused to justify

\* In this guide the term ‘child rights organizations’ refers to non-religiously affiliated NGOs and networks. Child rights organizations that are affiliated with religions are included here under the term ‘faith-based organizations’.

harmful beliefs and practices, they can violate a child's physical, emotional and spiritual integrity. There may also be apprehensions that faith-based organizations will pressure aid recipients to convert or only provide aid to those with similar religious views.

Some attitudes and behaviours that are understood to be grounded in religion are, in fact, rooted in other social and cultural norms. These distinctions are important since harmful practices that are based on other cultural values can be challenged and redressed by religious actors themselves. There remain, however, valid concerns about engaging with religious actors whose approaches and practices are so far out of line with child rights principles that collaboration with them would potentially undermine the integrity, neutrality and effectiveness of organizations working to realize children's rights.

At the same time, religious communities also have concerns about partnering with child rights organizations. For example, some have reservations about working within secular structures and being co-opted or used to achieve secular goals.<sup>3</sup> There are also suspicions for some religious communities about the language of rights contradicting core beliefs and forcing religious communities to compromise on their values. It is essential to understand these concerns, as well as why religious communities would want to partner with child rights organizations.

Partnerships are most likely to be productive where there is mutual understanding, respect, trust, open dialogue and shared priorities. Experience in working with religious communities has highlighted the importance of child rights actors having adequate knowledge, skills and

## THE UNITED NATIONS AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Engagement with religious communities has significantly expanded within the United Nations over the past 20 years. Various UN General Assembly resolutions – such as the 2010 resolution 65/138 'Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace' – and the World Interfaith Harmony week launched in 2011 reflect the growing visibility and importance given to religion.

In addition to UNICEF, there are many other UN

agencies, such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), that have extensive experience working with religious communities. The increased engagement within the UN is also reflected by the 2009 creation of an Inter-Agency Task Force on Faith-based Organizations and the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals),<sup>4</sup> currently comprised of 10 UN agencies, as a way to ensure a common platform and means of sharing ideas and the results of engagement.

## WHAT DOES UNICEF MEAN BY AN EQUITY APPROACH?

For UNICEF, equity means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop and reach their full potential without discrimination, bias or favouritism. This interpretation is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees the fundamental rights of every child regardless of gender, race, religious beliefs, income, physical attributes, geographical location or other status. The equity-based approach in UNICEF's programmes and policies seeks to understand and address the root causes of inequity so that all children, particularly those who

suffer the worst deprivations in society, have access to education, health care, sanitation, clean water, protection and other services necessary for their survival, growth and development.

As reflected throughout this guide, religious communities are uniquely positioned through their values, moral influence and extensive networks to promote equitable outcomes for the neediest children and families.



## UNICEF FOCAL POINT ON WORK WITH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Civil Society Partnerships (CSP), Programmes, serves as UNICEF's focal point on work with religious communities. CSP develops technical guidance and provides support within headquarters and to country and regional offices working with religious communities. A main goal of CSP is to

facilitate sharing of expertise and experiences among country and regional offices as well as links to relevant global and regional external organizations and initiatives. For more information or to share relevant experiences, go to <http://www.unicef.org/about/partnerships/index.php>.

attitudes for effective and constructive collaboration. It is important, for example, to understand the immense complexity and diversity of religious communities. Even within particular religious traditions there is a contextualization of moral theology, its interpretation and implementation into action, and a diversity of perspectives among their leaders that needs to be understood to identify entry points for dialogue and partnership around even the most sensitive issues. Ultimately, partnerships should contribute to children's well-being by building on the assets of religious communities as well as learning from them to shape programme priorities. In many contexts where child rights organizations work, religious beliefs are a significant factor in determining community attitudes and behaviour. Programmes need to understand these dynamics (whether positive or negative) and take religious factors into account in their theory of change. Within such contexts, the question is not *whether* to engage with religious communities, but *how*.<sup>5</sup>

It is also important to be aware that the distinctions between religious and secular structures are not always clear cut, given the important role religion plays in the lives of many individuals, including government officials and civil society actors, working within secular institutions. There are also people working within UNICEF and other child rights organizations for whom religion plays an important role and who can serve as a bridge to better understand and engage with religious communities.

This guide is primarily intended to be a reference document for UNICEF staff and partners (including other child rights organizations) on building effective partnerships with religious communities, in particular religious leaders, networks and local faith communities.

- Section 2 provides an understanding of how and why religious communities can positively contribute to the promotion of child rights.
- Section 3 presents concrete examples of collaborative work in the main areas of UNICEF programming and advocacy.
- Section 4 addresses the challenges presented by the misuse of religion.
- Section 5 outlines strategies for effectively engaging with religious communities.
- Section 6 briefly discusses some approaches to planning, monitoring and evaluation of partnership programming.
- The annexes highlight key actors and resources. A separate working paper will provide brief overviews of the major religious traditions for further reference.

**Note:** This guide cites principles and practices within religious traditions, as interpreted by religious actors from those traditions. These views are not interpretations made by UNICEF. It is not the role of UNICEF to interpret religious texts, practices, or traditions.



# 2

## **PARTNERING TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN**

*A Muslim religious leader with a young child at a UNICEF-supported early childhood development centre (Democratic Republic of Congo).*

## WHAT ARE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES?

The term 'religious communities' broadly refers to both female and male religious actors and to systems and structures that institutionalize belief systems within religious traditions at all levels – from local to global.<sup>6</sup> These include:

- Local worship communities (e.g., churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, etc.)
- Denominational leadership (e.g., bishops, clerics, ayatollahs, lamas, etc.)
- Scholars, theologians and religious educators
- Mission workers
- Youth faith or inter-faith groups
- Women of faith networks
- Faith-based or faith-inspired organizations
- Denominational, ecumenical and intra-religious institutions, umbrella organizations and networks
- Inter-faith institutions

There is an immense complexity and diversity among religious communities with regard to both their position and status in society and organizationally. "These actors vary in size, mission, role, geographic scope and technical capacity – some operate on shoe-string budgets, while others administer over one billion dollars annually... Some organizations are loosely inspired by faith principles, while others are formally linked to religious institutions."<sup>7</sup> It is important that religious communities be understood on the basis of the ways in which they identify themselves.

### Structures

Most of the major religious traditions have intra-religious (or denominational) organizations and associations that seek to consolidate the collective strength of their various branches or denominations in pursuit of policy-making, advocacy and other efforts to advance the principles of their faith. "The degree of structure... varies, as the sector includes both defined religious communities with hierarchical leadership structures as well as decentralized 'movements' of individuals with shared principles and interests."<sup>8</sup>

Some religious communities form organizations/networks/instruments for other specific purposes. Among these, some of the most visible in humanitarian and development contexts are referred to as faith-based organizations (FBOs) or faith-inspired organizations (FIOs). These organizations operate in much the same way as other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in supporting development and, in many cases, emergency humanitarian responses across the whole spectrum of programming.

However, there are many more actors and structures comprising the full range of religious communities that should be better understood by child rights actors. While often overlooked, some of the strongest work is being carried out quietly by religious women's and youth groups, for example, spearheaded by members of religious communities who may not be in formal leadership roles but who are on the frontlines of advocacy and service delivery for those most in need at the community level.

Religious communities may also join together in formal or informal networks and platforms that go beyond their own faith tradition. These inter-religious mechanisms leverage the social, spiritual, moral and other assets of different religious communities to align around common problems and accomplish positive change by harnessing their collective and complementary strengths.<sup>9</sup> Many of them focus their efforts specifically on the promotion and protection of different aspects of children's rights. The table on the next page provides an overview of the potential roles that religious actors could play depending on their type.

### ENGAGING WITH INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS

This guide focuses on work with the major religious traditions and not as much on work with indigenous traditions. Engagement with indigenous communities is critical, however, and UNICEF is developing a guide for its staff on indigenous and minority groups' issues in order to respond to one of the main recommendations from the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. UNICEF is also very active in this area at the country level, with various programmes and activities specifically designed to advance the rights of indigenous peoples ranging from bilingual

and intercultural education to culturally sensitive health services, birth registration and ending the violence, abuse and exploitation suffered by indigenous children. For example, the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean has been working consistently since 2004 with a programme on the rights of indigenous children in 17 country offices to generate strategic information, empower indigenous peoples (primarily women and adolescents) and build the capacity of counterparts (mainly governments) and UNICEF staff.



*An eight-year-old indigenous boy from an area where UNICEF supports the training of teachers and community leaders to promote traditional languages and customs (Venezuela).*

## POTENTIAL ROLES OF RELIGIOUS ACTORS BY TYPE

Actor	Description	Potential Roles
Faith-based NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faith-inspired NGOs inhabiting both the faith and secular development worlds, requiring them to work effectively in both domains.</li> <li>Connected to faith constituencies, but can sometimes operate independently of faith hierarchies and exercise some autonomy and flexibility.</li> <li>Some larger international FBOs maintain sophisticated bureaucracies with significant technical and management capacity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administer programs, including service delivery, advocacy and research/analysis.</li> <li>Mobilize faith constituencies for volunteer, financial or advocacy support.</li> <li>Facilitate greater linkages among local faith efforts and between local faith efforts and the broader development community, including knowledge exchange, partnership brokering, and resource mobilization.</li> <li>Build capacity of local faith efforts.</li> </ul>
Faith-based networks and intermediaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operate nationally, regionally, or globally, and comprised of faith-inspired members, sometimes representing different faith traditions and diverse perspectives.</li> <li>May represent large faith-inspired constituencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobilize and represent a collective moral voice; engage in advocacy.</li> <li>Mobilize constituencies for volunteer, financial or advocacy support.</li> <li>Coordination and brokering among faith members and between members and the broader development community, including as a platform for knowledge sharing, networking, coordination and resource mobilization.</li> <li>Provide member-support services (e.g. capacity building, technical assistance, standard setting).</li> </ul>
Faith-based service delivery infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes 'hard' service-delivery infrastructure (e.g. schools, clinics, and hospitals).</li> <li>Variable degree of alignment with national service delivery infrastructure.</li> <li>May have a long history of local service provision, tradition of working with marginalized populations, and deep local knowledge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operate 'on the front lines' to provide direct services to local communities.</li> <li>Influence behaviour through service delivery.</li> </ul>
International and national faith leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Often visible, well-respected public figures.</li> <li>Opinion leaders with cultural and political influence, as well as thought leaders, who interpret faith text and spread ideas.</li> <li>Influence can transcend faiths and geographical boundaries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moral voice and a platform they can use to influence and inspire their followers as well as others.</li> <li>Can influence followers directly, or through local leaders via denominational hierarchies, where they exist.</li> <li>Advocate with policymakers.</li> </ul>
Denominational hierarchies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variation in degree of organization and centralization of authority across faiths.</li> <li>Can be influential and political and cultural figures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guide, coordinate and support the work of their local faith communities.</li> <li>Channel for communicating concerns rising from local faith leaders and laypersons upwards to national and international faith leadership.</li> <li>Advocate with policymakers.</li> </ul>
Local congregations and houses of worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Congregations and their leaders have deep community roots and serve as regular gathering places for congregants.</li> <li>Local faith leaders are often trusted community figures and can sometimes influence national policies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local religious leaders can be effective change agents, mobilizing congregations by influencing attitudes and behaviors and inspiring action, and engaging in advocacy.</li> <li>Congregational members can be mobilized locally or across borders to donate, volunteer, advocate, or monitor their communities.</li> <li>Houses of worship can serve as the infrastructure for gathering people or as a distribution channel.</li> </ul>

Source: Excerpted from Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty, 2010.<sup>10</sup>

## WHY WORK WITH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES?

“The instinct to care for children comes from deep within the teachings and spiritual vision of all religious traditions, which motivates people of faith to make the commitment to take practical actions for children. Fulfilling these commitments requires the collaborations of religious communities with each other, and with other partners, because these challenges cut across all religions and are too great for any one group to handle alone.”

— *World Conference on Religion and Peace*<sup>11</sup>

Religious actors have deep and trusted relationships with their communities and often have strong linkages with the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members. As such, they are particularly well placed to address inequity related to societal factors such as social norms, behaviours and practices that affect access to services or fuel discrimination and deprivation – and thus facilitate efforts towards the realization of the rights of the most disenfranchised.

### REACHING THE MOST VULNERABLE

All major religious traditions emphasize the importance of addressing the needs of marginalized individuals and communities.

In **Buddhism**, *karuna* (compassion, or love for all beings) stands alongside *prajna* (wisdom) as a central pillar of the faith. An expression of *karuna*, and one of the most important works of merit (*punya*) is *dana* (charity) – acts of generosity to any living creature, most often towards the community of monks.<sup>12</sup> In turn monks and nuns provide care and support to those experiencing suffering.

In **Christianity**, human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and look to the example of Jesus to live their lives. Care of children was central to the works of Jesus (Luke 18:16), and he taught that those who perform acts of love are recognized as if they had directly served God: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:35–40).

In **Hinduism**, all are encouraged to practice compassion (*daya*) and generosity (*dana*) as the

highest expressions of *dharma* (virtuous or righteous duty). The Bhagavadgita (17:20) teaches that we should be generous to the needy, offering our gifts at those times and in those places where support is needed most. We should do so without expectation of receiving anything in return.<sup>13</sup>

In **Islam** social justice is a sacred value and a central tenet of the faith. *Zakat* and *sadaqa'h* are intended to balance social inequality and hence promote a more just society. Indeed the Qur'an considers charity as one of the most virtuous deeds because it challenges social inequalities. *Zakat*, which is one of the five pillars of Islam, is a form of obligatory charity in which Muslims donate a specified portion of their earnings and belongings every year for the poor and needy; *sadaqah* is a voluntary donation of any amount at any time.<sup>14</sup>

In **Judaism** the obligation to care for the poorest of the poor is found throughout the Torah, with special reference made to widows and orphans. *Tikkun olam*, meaning ‘the repair of the world’, has come to refer in modern Reform Judaism to social action work. *Tzedakah* (charitable giving) and *gemilut hasadim* (acts of kindness) are related concepts in progressive Jewish approaches to social issues.<sup>15</sup>

## Shared values

The Convention on the Rights of the Child expresses a holistic vision of the child that is informed by and reflects values shared with the world's major religious traditions, such as:

- Fundamental belief in the dignity of the child.
- High priority given to children and the idea that all members of society have rights and duties towards them.
- A holistic notion of the child and a comprehensive understanding of his or her physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs.
- The importance given to the family as the best place for bringing up children.<sup>17</sup>

“It is a moral obligation for us to provide an environment that enables children to fully explore their innate potential with human dignity, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the major vehicle to accomplish this essential task.”

— *Global Network of Religions for Children*<sup>16</sup>

Religious communities have developed structures and defined relationships shaped by these values, and their mandates and belief systems encourage efforts to speak out on behalf of and assist the disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable. Their traditions of intergenerational sharing of knowledge and faith help to sustain and perpetuate these systems.

### RELIGIOUS LEADERS ADVOCATING FOR THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Religious leaders have been at the forefront of advocating for implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Just prior to the Convention's launch at the 1990 World Summit for Children, UNICEF and the World Conference on Religions for Peace (now called *Religions for Peace*) – a global multi-religious coalition advancing common action among the world's religious communities for peace – organized a major conference called 'The World's Religions for the World's Children'. This conference set the tone for

inter-religious cooperation for children and promoted universal ratification of the newly adopted Convention.

On the occasion of the United Nations Special Session on Children in 2002, *Religions for Peace* convened a multi-religious forum with religious leaders from conflict and post-conflict countries. With high-level representatives from UNICEF, including the Executive Director, the group declared its commitment to advocate for a 'World Fit for Children'.

## Moral influence and leadership

Due to their moral influence, religious leaders can influence thinking, foster dialogue and set priorities for members of their communities. For example, 74 per cent of people in Africa identify religious leaders as the group they trust most.<sup>18</sup>

- Religious leaders shape social values and promote responsible behaviours that respect the dignity and sanctity of all life.
- Many religious leaders are skilled and influential communicators who can reach the hearts and minds of millions of people in ways that humanitarian actors cannot.
- Because they have more access to the family and personal spheres than most outside actors, religious leaders serve as an important conduit of communication for social change and transformation.

- In situations of conflict, the moral influence and trust bestowed on leaders of religious communities allows them to play significant roles in mediation and reconciliation, as well as to advocate for the special protection needs of children and other particularly vulnerable members of their communities.
- Religious leaders provide spiritual support and stability, which can help meet people's psychosocial needs in the face of adversity.

### COMMUNITY DIALOGUES TO SAVE CHILDREN'S LIVES IN NIGERIA

In **Nigeria**, one of the last battlegrounds in the fight against polio, unfounded rumours in the predominantly Muslim northern region about the safety of the oral polio vaccine stopped the immunization campaign, threatening to undermine the entire global eradication effort. UNICEF and other agencies worked closely with religious leaders to address their own communities to counter the rumours and get the campaign back on track. Support included high-level advocacy, with UNICEF Egypt requesting the Grand Shiekh of Al Azhar to issue a statement on the importance of vaccination that could be used to engage and mobilize religious leaders in Nigeria to support the vaccination programme.

At the local level, community dialogues were the core strategic approach to promote ownership and participation in immunization services. These involved identifying the more vulnerable communities, briefing the *Mai Angwa* (traditional leader) who chaired and facilitated the dialogue, then ensuring that women, religious leaders and local organizations were represented. Local service providers supported factual responses to questions and created space for community advocates to respond to concerns raised as they could make the link to local norms and

proverbs that complemented proposed behaviours. Polio survivors were often given the opportunity to talk about the challenges they faced. The dialogues ended with the group agreeing on key action steps to be implemented, which were supported by the UNICEF health team.

An assessment of the programme revealed a 16 per cent increase in the number of children immunized in 89 communities with monitored dialogues and a 60 per cent reduction in the number of non-compliant households in 54 communities with monitored dialogues in the most high-risk states. Within a year of its introduction, community dialogues became the primary approach to increase social learning, participation and ownership as well as to initiate steps towards more equity in information sharing and participation in communities.

One of the key lessons learned identified in the assessment was that purposefully engaging local networks, especially traditional and religious leaders as advocates, expands the dissemination of knowledge and skills to families and communities and overrides any behaviours of adults seen to be harmful to 'our' children and community.

*Source: United Nations Children's Fund, 'Nigeria', 2009.<sup>19</sup>*

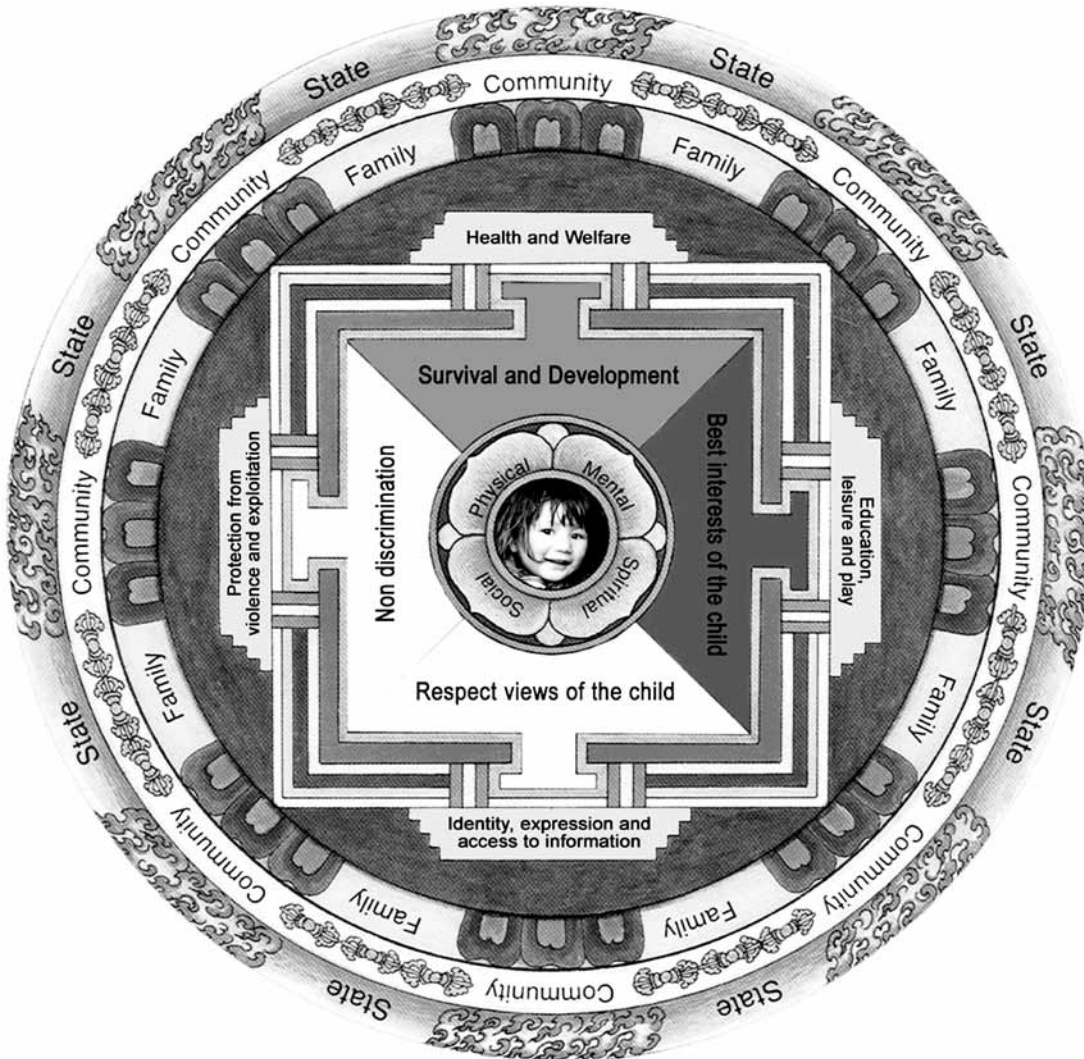
## Extensive networks

With religious communities counting almost 5 billion members, their potential for action is great. From the smallest village to the largest city, and from districts and provinces to national and international levels, they offer a variety of networks for the care and protection of children and the safeguarding of their rights. The following are some examples of the reach of religious and inter-religious actors:

- They are involved in the provision of social services such as education, health and socio-economic support for especially vulnerable persons.
- Their influence and access is particularly important at the family and community levels and generally transcends socio-economic and class barriers.
- They have volunteer networks rich in dynamic and creative human resources.



## CHILD RIGHTS EXPRESSED AS A BUDDHIST MANDALA



The child is at the heart of **Bhutan**'s development. UNICEF Bhutan has translated the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into a *mandala* that reflects both the Buddhist approach to life and the basic child rights framework.

In Sanskrit, *mandala* means circle or centre. The centre is the abode of the deity, and in this case the child is placed in the centre surrounded by a series of circles and squares symbolizing the provisions and principles of the Convention. The *mandala* is

traditionally a symbol used for concentrating the mind so that it can pass beyond superficial thoughts and focus more precisely on valued concepts progressing toward enlightening the mind. Using the mandala in this context helps to promote greater understanding of and consensus on the human rights of children as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Source: United Nations Children's Fund, 'Report of Work in Bhutan on the Rights of the Child', 2006, <[www.unicef.org/bhutan/mandala.htm](http://www.unicef.org/bhutan/mandala.htm)>, accessed 22 July, 2011.

- They operate diverse media and channels of communication, including newsletters, websites, radio and television. These media can facilitate advocacy efforts and reach millions of people with behaviour and social change communication.
- In emergency situations – whether human-made or natural disasters – they are often first responders in providing emergency support at the community level.

In spite of the positive role religious communities can play, there are sometimes concerns about working in partnership with religious communities, as very real problems and challenges exist. There are times and places in which such partnerships may not be beneficial. There may be religious actors whose approaches and practices are not in keeping with child rights principles. *(For more discussion of these issues, see section 4 Preventing the Misuse of Religion and Section 5 Framework for Engagement.)*

### UNICEF PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LATIN AMERICAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

UNICEF and the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), a conference of Roman Catholic Bishops in Latin America, began partnering together in the early 1980s to address the needs of the most vulnerable children and families. Some of the highlights of the partnership include:

- In 1983, UNICEF launched the Health Revolution, a programme received by the Holy See with a very optimistic and positive response, consequently endorsing its memorable commitment in favor of health and the wellbeing of children. The Catholic Church supported this initiative with its network roster around the globe and more so in the developing countries. The first experience of co-operative work between CELAM and UNICEF started when the National Secretariat of the Social Pastoral in **Colombia** produced the “Road to Health for Children” manual, and trained promoters in 20 jurisdictions. In 1985, both entities participated in the National Survival Plan, which was developed by the Colombian government.
- In 1986 in Londrina and Brasilia, a convention of 15 Latin American Bishops was held for the purpose of evaluating progress on the collective work between UNICEF and the **Brazilian** Episcopal Conference. The Latin American Secretariat of CARITAS, SELAC, joined this effort by promoting co-operation programmes at the national and diocese levels, motivating their active participation throughout the country.
- In 1987 the Children’s Pastoral was launched to continue with this successful endeavour. Educational materials were produced, training workshops were implemented and regional and sub-regional conclaves were held throughout Latin America. As part of a stronger commitment, in 1991 a co-operation agreement was signed between UNICEF and CELAM, oriented to address child survival activity in support of integrated early childhood development programmes, as well as child protection, and focusing on the mother and family in general.
- In 1993, a third co-operation phase was launched, when the formal Co-operation Agreement between CELAM and UNICEF was introduced. Following the World Education Summit in 1990 (in Jomtien, Thailand), education programmes became a priority and implementation took place by integrating communities as partners, where protection and legal promotion of women, children and family rights were of greatest importance. Based on these premises UNICEF and CELAM launched the “Children’s Social Pastoral and Education for Peace, Democracy and Development of the Human Being and Society” programme. This became the umbrella for the “Right to a Name and Nationality” programme and the movement for children’s rights campaigns. Several programmes were created, such as a high-risk HIV/AIDS preventive education Pastoral, and a drug-addiction preventive project, all within the frame of caring for the poorest, promoting better living conditions for the integral development of children and adolescents throughout the region.
- Partnerships with the Children’s Pastoral have expanded outside Latin America to countries such as **Angola** and **Timor-Leste**.

*Source: Excerpted from Consejo Episcopal Latino Americano and United Nations Children’s Fund, n.d.<sup>20</sup>*

## CHILDREN, RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY<sup>21</sup>

“The mosque, church or temple often provides children’s first point of contact with the community beyond their immediate neighbours and with wider social institutions. There, children learn not only religion but also important lessons about morals, social behaviour and their own value as human beings. They also learn subtle messages about whether the world is a safe place, how to be a good person, and what their responsibilities are as members of a religious group. Their developing religious identity becomes part of the wider, collective identity that binds children and adults together into a people having a sense of collective meaning and place in the world.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the benefits that the structures and systems of religious communities bring to child rights efforts, it is important to understand the role that faith and spirituality play in the lives of children. Four articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly recognize the ‘spiritual’ as an element of holistic child development, along with social and moral well-being, cultural development and physical and mental health (articles 17, 23(3), 27(1) and 32(1)).

Whether or not they are members of established religious communities, all children have a sense of awe and wonder that can lead them to connect with and derive meaning from the world around them, including the natural environment. As children develop, these innate sensibilities begin to be shaped more formally, primarily by the family and then by their broader communities. Religion often influences them through the social and cultural institutions in which they participate.

The profound influence that spirituality and religion can have on children’s development and socialization offers the potential to reinforce protective influences and promote resilience. The beliefs, practices, social networks and resources of religion can strengthen children by instilling hope, by giving meaning to difficult experiences and by providing emotional, physical and spiritual support. When child rights efforts are grounded in the protective aspects of religious beliefs and practices and a community that encourages and enriches the spiritual and religious life of each child, the impact can be far-reaching and sustained.



*A boy whose parents are migrant workers from Myanmar attends a religious ceremony to remember fellow citizens who died in a tsunami (Thailand).*



# 3

## **PARTNERING ACROSS PROGRAMME SECTORS**

*Girls wash their hands at a Catholic primary school to which UNICEF provided a water tank, latrines, educational supplies and teacher-training (Rwanda).*

As discussed in the previous section, there are compelling reasons for UNICEF and other child rights agencies to engage meaningfully with religious communities in promoting and protecting children's rights. These communities have the inherent advantages of legitimacy and moral influence as well as the reach of organic and extensive networks and structures. Many are already providing direct services and have the ability to identify and refer vulnerable children and families who need additional support. They thus play a myriad of roles for the care and protection of children.

UNICEF has long been collaborating with religious communities in all areas of its programming at the global, national and local levels. This section will present examples of the diverse and creative nature of these partnerships to highlight the potential for action through strategic engagement. Section 5 outlines strategies for effective engagement.

### EXAMINING CHILD RIGHTS IN THE ISLAMIC CONTEXT

UNICEF has facilitated dialogue and research with theologians, clerics, academics and professionals in **Egypt** and **Iran** to examine children's rights in the Islamic context, seeking interpretations of Islamic principles and norms that are consistent with and supportive of child rights. This has led to the development of tools to be used as part of religious and secular efforts aimed at promoting child rights in predominantly Muslim settings.

For example, UNICEF and Al-Azhar University jointly developed a manual, *Children in Islam: Their care, protection and development*, designed to underscore the centrality of the care, protection and

development of children to that religion. The manual includes research papers and extracts from Quranic verses, *hadiths* (sayings from the prophetic tradition) and *sunnas* (traditional social and legal norms and customary practices) that provide useful guidance on children's rights in areas such as health, education and protection.

The partnership with Al-Azhar University has helped facilitate work with Islamic religious leaders in other countries, including **Afghanistan** and **Nigeria**, reflecting the value added of engaging academic and/or religious institutions with global impact.



*Boys walk near a mural promoting peace at a centre that provides young people in violence-affected communities with a safe space for recreational activities and training in life-skills and conflict-resolution (Jamaica).*

## CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection means preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse. All children are at risk of harm, but for many girls and boys this risk is heightened by their age, gender or ethnic, religious, socio-economic or other status. An equity-based approach to child protection emphasizes child protection systems (laws, policies and service provision) and societal factors, including social norms, and seeks to understand how the two intersect. These two complementary 'pillars' are applicable in all contexts, including emergencies. By addressing governance and institutional reform, as well as harmful discriminatory social norms, UNICEF's child protection strategy focuses on the root causes of inequity using context-appropriate strategies that are consistent with a human rights-based approach.<sup>23</sup>

### **Why partner with religious communities for child protection?**

Violence against and exploitation and abuse of children violate the fundamental tenets of the world's major religions, which speak to the inherent dignity of all human beings (*see box on next page*).

In every setting, religious communities provide care and support for their members, particularly the poorest, most marginalized and most vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse. They often prioritize the educational needs of vulnerable children and assist with shelter and access to needed services, including medical and legal support. They provide counselling and spiritual guidance and speak out on behalf of those who are powerless to advocate for themselves. They can be powerful allies in protecting the most vulnerable children.

In emergency settings such as conflict, where children face particular protection concerns including displacement or recruitment into armed forces or groups, religious communities may have some of the only remaining structures and resources. They are called by their faith traditions to attend to those most in need and will remain long after the emergency is deemed to be over from an international perspective. They thus provide the foundations on which to build long-term protective environments.

## RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS: CHILDREN AND NON-VIOLENCE

### Buddhism

Non-violence in thought, word and deed is an essential feature of Buddhist morality. Buddhism is concerned with the welfare of all beings; if everyone develops compassion, mutual respect and loving kindness, children will not be ill-treated. The Buddha's advice to parents is to support children to become generous, compassionate and responsible. In the Buddhist view, true compassion has the power to uproot the causes of misery and suffering in people's lives and direct them to happiness.

### Christianity

Christians believe human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and look to the example of Jesus to live their lives. Jesus always treated the vulnerable with love and compassion. The recorded interactions between Jesus and children demonstrate kindness and respect, and his reported words about causing children to stumble (Matthew 18:6), and the consequences for doing so, are among the strongest in the New Testament. When Jesus set a little child in the midst of the disciples and said, "the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14), he demonstrated enormous regard for children. By blessing and laying his hands on children, Jesus recognized them as people in their own right; he gave them status and dignity (Mark 10:16).

### Confucianism

The traditional culture of a large portion of humanity has been shaped by Confucian principles of conduct. Although externally strict regarding obligations among members of society – especially with one's elders – these are based on deep harmony of the part with the whole. The family, as one of the smaller wholes, mirrors the harmony of the cosmos when all its members behave with respect, compassion and love toward each other. The Confucian philosopher Mencius states that everyone has a heart that "can't bear to see others suffer" (Mencius 1.6) and illustrates this principle with the example of no one being able to bear the sight of a young child being thrown down a well.

### Hinduism

According to the Hindu Vedas, one should never commit violence against another living being, as all beings have an inherently divine nature. For Hindus, children are viewed as a precious gift, and sometimes as a relative from a previous lifetime and incarnation. One of the most popular depictions of the Hindu deity

Krishna is as a mischievous child, illustrating that it is possible to know the divine through a relationship with one's children.

### Islam

Islam views human life as a sacred gift from God. The Qur'an repeatedly stresses the sanctity of life (*hurmat al hayat*). The life of every individual – regardless of gender, age, nationality or religion – is worthy of respect. There is no distinction made between young and old, male or female. Corporal punishment and other forms of humiliating treatment of children conflict directly with the advice of the Prophet, which recommends treating those who are under the age of seven as children (employing tenderness and compassion), those from age seven to fourteen with care and concern and those from fourteen onwards as close friends (with trust and cooperation). The Prophet emphasized: "Be generous, kind and noble to your children and make their manners good and beautiful."

### Jainism

Jainism is a religion whose moral tradition is focused on non-violence, respecting the life of all beings, with the goal of complete non-violence in action, speech and thoughts. Jains believe in "showering love and respect towards all living beings". The Lord Mahavir added the vow of non-violence to those followed by monks and nuns: "Know that violence is the cause of all miseries in the world. Violence is in fact the knot of bondage. Do not injure any living thing."

### Judaism

The birth of a Jewish child is welcomed with words of blessing *Baruch haba, B'ruchah haba'ah* (Blessed be the one who arrives). The Talmud cautions parents against generating fear in children, citing the story of a child who died of such fear (Semakhot 2:5-6). Prayers of blessing for one's children for parents returning from worship are enjoined in the Siddur, or prayer book. Children are to be raised in a climate promoting *tzedek* (fairness) and *kevod* (respect), and are to engage in the performance of *mizvoh* (good deeds). The Babylonian Talmud comments: "Jews are compassionate children of compassionate parents" (Betzah 32a).

*Source: Adapted from UNICEF and Religions for Peace, 'From Commitment to Action: What religious communities can do to eliminate violence against children', New York, 2010, p. 5. Additional feedback was provided by Varun Soni, Dean of Religious Life, University of Southern California, and Jeff Israel, New School University.*

## What can religious communities do to protect children?<sup>24</sup>

- Interpret child protection principles in a language that is meaningful and appropriate to their communities, thus raising greater awareness of key child protection issues.
- Use teachings from religious texts that emphasize child protection in worship services, religious education and in the proceedings of special religious events such as holidays and rites of passage.
- Utilize religious media, such as radio and television networks run by religious organizations, to disseminate messages regarding the importance of addressing violence against children.
- Speak out against all forms of violence against children, including sexual abuse of girls and boys, in their communities and beyond.
- Advocate for the prohibition of physical and humiliating punishment in all settings.
- Clarify that cultural practices harmful to children, such as female genital mutilation/cutting, are not part of religious beliefs and practices and advocate for their abandonment.
- Develop and implement codes of conduct regarding appropriate interaction with children within their places of worship, organizations, institutions (including schools and orphanages) and community associations, including reporting and response mechanisms for child abuse.
- Promote education and training for families, teachers and others in the community on addressing all forms of violence against children. Invite professionals (e.g. teachers, doctors, social workers) from religious communities to talk to their own members during worship services about children's rights, child development and the importance of positive parenting and non-violent discipline.
- Lend their moral influence to campaigns addressing child protection issues and advocate for favourable changes in policy and legislation to strengthen legal and monitoring systems to better protect children. Religious communities can also facilitate or assist in community monitoring mechanisms.
- Mobilize communities to take actions to protect children and assess their needs, such as:
  - Ensure safe, family-based care for vulnerable children, including separated or unaccompanied children.
  - Improve access to needed social services, including child-sensitive counselling.
  - Facilitate childcare for parents seeking support.
  - Organize safe spaces for children to play and learn.
  - Engage and empower children in decision-making whenever relevant and appropriate.
  - Provide material, spiritual and emotional support to families who are struggling in the face of adversity.
  - Link parents/caregivers with cash-for-work or other livelihood support schemes to ensure adequate financial resources available to households to care for children.
  - Advocate for formal and non-formal education and prevention of child labour.
  - Advocate for the prevention of child recruitment and the release of children associated with armed forces or groups. Religious leaders can also play an important role in mediating between returning children and families/communities that may not be receptive to their return. By offering spiritual guidance, perhaps performing religious rites or prayers, they can use their authority to restore a sense of dignity and belonging to children, especially girls, who have been marginalized or shunned following the return to their communities.



## PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLES

- UNICEF **Mauritania** has established a partnership with the Imams and Religious Leaders Network for Child Rights to address the widespread use of corporal punishment in *mahadras* (Quranic schools) and secular primary schools, as well as within families. The Network carried out a study to assess whether corporal punishment is allowed in Islam and concluded that violence has no place in the Qur'an. This led to a *fatwa*<sup>25</sup> barring physical and verbal violence against children in the educational system as well as in the home. "The evidence that corporal punishment is forbidden by Islam is clear and abiding for all of us," declared the President of the Network, Hademine Ould Saleck.<sup>26</sup>
- UNICEF and *Religions for Peace* are collaborating on a multi-year project to strengthen the engagement of religious communities and child protection actors to enhance protection for children affected by conflict. Project objectives include strengthening religious communities' capacity to protect children affected by conflict and elaborating successful approaches to collaboration between religious communities and child protection actors. Activities include the implementation of country projects (currently in **Kenya**, **Liberia** and the **Philippines**) and the development of guidance material and tools (including a manual: 'From Commitment to Action: What religious communities can do to eliminate violence against children' (see annex 2: Key Resources).
- UNICEF has supported key religious leaders, scholars and institutions in **Iran** to conduct theological research and academic discussion to produce documents that interpret the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child from Islamic (Shi'a) perspectives. These efforts have led to the development of three publications:
  - a) A booklet titled 'Disciplining Children with Kindness: A Shiite Shari'a perspective', which reflects the viewpoints of a number of senior Islamic leaders/scholars on violence-free child disciplining.
  - b) An advocacy package (consisting of a booklet, brochures and posters) for religious leaders to sensitize them on child rights and prevention of violence against children through highlighting links between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Islam's views on how to treat children.
  - c) A draft resource book titled 'The Rights of the Child: A comparative study of Islam and international instruments', which offers both Shi'a and Sunni perspectives and covers all the articles in the Convention.

The first two publications have been widely distributed among targeted religious leaders/ students and institutions. UNICEF Iran is also supporting the first National Inter-Religious Conference on Violence against Children, in collaboration with Mofid University (a major school of Islamic sciences in Qom), to be held in 2011.
- The European Union and UNICEF in **Moldova** undertook a successful integrated communication campaign on de-institutionalization in 2007 and 2008, which included mass media components (TV/radio/press) and printed

materials. The campaign targeted parents and decision makers in support of reducing the number of children placed in residential institutions. The Orthodox Church, considered one of the most trusted and reliable sources of information within Moldova, was one of the partners in this campaign and, together with UNICEF, developed a special brochure promoting a family environment for all children that the Church distributed to all its priests to use within their congregations.

- Through successive programmes of cooperation, UNICEF **Venezuela** has established partnerships with a variety of religious organizations in order to promote and protect the rights of children and adolescents. In the past decade, there has been a particular investment in creating spaces at community level to ensure the rights of and psychosocial support to Colombian refugees, especially children and their families, in Venezuelan border areas. In the current country programme, through a national alliance with the Venezuelan Association of Catholic Schools, teachers are being trained on human rights and child rights. In addition, UNICEF and the Apostolic Vicariate are promoting a communication network among young indigenous communities from Zulia and Amazonas states.
- UNICEF and others have been exploring some of the cultural dynamics of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and encouraging its abandonment in countries such as **Egypt**, **Ethiopia**, **Kenya** and **Somalia**. A booklet on FGM/C was prepared in a participatory manner by UNICEF Egypt to be used by religious leaders engaged in efforts to stop the practice. Containing a foreword by the Former Grand Shiekh of Al Azhar, the booklet addresses religious leaders' concerns on this issue and also presents important counter-arguments to those who may think that FGM/C has a religious foundation. (See the box on p. 47 for further details of this programming.)
- The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (DPAC) initiative is a global effort to mobilize secular and faith-based organizations to work together for the well-being of children and highlight the important role religious communities can play in promoting child rights. It is held every year around 20 November to coincide with Universal Children's Day and the anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. DPAC's main partners at the global level include UNICEF, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, Pastoral da Criança, *Religions for Peace*, Save the Children and the Global Network of Religions for Children. The theme for 2011–2013 is violence against children (with areas of focus including positive disciplining, child marriage and birth registration). (More information on the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children is available at <[www.dayofprayerandaction.org](http://www.dayofprayerandaction.org)>; see p. 33 for an overview of 2010 activities, which focused on breastfeeding.)

More examples of partnering with religious communities to promote child protection can be found on pp. 17, 24, 40, 42, 47, 49, 57, 59, 83.



*A girl writes on the blackboard inside a mosque that serves as an informal community-based school to which UNICEF provides teacher training, textbooks and other supplies (Afghanistan).*

## EDUCATION

Education is a fundamental human right of every child. A quality basic education better equips girls and boys with the knowledge and skills necessary to adopt healthy lifestyles and take an active role in social, economic and political decision-making as they transition to adolescence and adulthood. Educated adults are more likely to have fewer children, to be informed about appropriate child-rearing practices and to ensure that their children go to school.

UNICEF's approach is to ensure that every child – regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background or circumstances – has access to a quality education. Its focus on equity highlights the importance of education for any society as a primary tool for empowerment and transformation and its essential role in breaking inter-generational cycles of poverty and deprivation. Across the world and over time education, and in particular the education of girls, has been shown to be a prerequisite for improving the lives of all children in multiple ways, including reduced child mortality and under-nutrition and improved maternal health.<sup>27</sup>

“... most religious tradition, scriptures, and leaders have a deep commitment to education. Their history is the history of education and the oft-stated commitment to human dignity and the development of human potential are what education is about.”<sup>28</sup>

### Why partner with religious communities for education?

Education has been an integral aspect of all the major faith traditions, with religious schools providing the foundation for the modern school movement and also being among the first institutions to offer basic schooling for girls.<sup>29</sup> Sharing the insights of prophets, messengers and other founders of religious traditions was, in itself, an educational process. The emphasis on learning from sacred texts, interpreting religious jurisprudence and contributing to the body of knowledge each faith possesses required systems of learning to become increasingly formalized.

Today, the hundreds of thousands of schools around the world run by religious communities represent an important constituency in educational programming, though in many places child rights organizations may have little interaction with them given political or other sensitivities.

Across countries religious and faith-based schools are often the providers of various social protection components of education such as reduced school fees, credit or loan schemes for poor families and nutritious feeding programmes in schools.<sup>30</sup> This makes religious institutions particularly significant in their ability to increase access for children in lower-income countries.

## EDUCATION IN ISLAM

Education has been greatly emphasized in Islam. The first verse of the Quran to be revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) indicates the importance of education in Islam; the verse started with the word “*Iqr’a*”, it is a command that means ‘read’ in Arabic, and that implies the concepts of ‘learning’, ‘exploring’ and ‘seeking enlightenment’. This demonstrates that reading (knowledge) is the way to approach the Creator of all that exists. Verse 96/1–5 states:

*“Read! In the Name of your Lord who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot*

*(a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not.”*

Hence, Muslims believe that Allah created humanity and commanded that they seek knowledge in order to become stronger in their faith. Other verses of the Quran emphasize the high status of those who are knowledgeable and those seeking knowledge.

*Source: Abuarqub, 2009.<sup>31</sup>*

“Pertinent models like the Fe y Alegria and Christo Rey systems in Christianity, and the Gulen movement and varying Islamic systems in Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and India, illustrate the constructive roles faith institutions can play in meeting service delivery challenges for the poorest populations.”<sup>32</sup>

However, just as it is important to highlight the positive role religious schools can have, it is also important to address the potential negative impacts of religious schools. For example, learning may be confined to memorizing religious texts or children may be subjected to corporal punishment.

Even in working with public/secular schools in predominantly religious contexts, establishing relationships with religious communities can be an important step in finding common ground for developing sound educational programming. Theologians and religious educators in particular, as opinion leaders, can spearhead efforts to develop curricula and translate fundamental concepts of child rights and equitable access to education for all – especially the most vulnerable and marginalized children – into language appropriate to their communities.

### What can religious communities do to promote education?

- Stress and act on religious teachings that emphasize concern for the poorest and most marginalized in communities to influence more equitable access to education. For example:
  - Address gender discrimination, sometimes manifested in the preference to enrol boys and not girls in school.
  - Mediate at the community level when obstacles for some children to access educational services (secular or religious) are identified. These include children with disabilities, those from particular ethnic, racial or religious groups and other particularly vulnerable children.
- Develop and implement codes of conduct regarding appropriate interaction with children, including reporting and response mechanisms for child abuse.
- Implement educational programming ranging from formal schooling up through the tertiary level to non-formal programmes such as literacy and vocational training for children unable to access the formal system.

- Carry out advocacy campaigns to influence education policy at local and national levels.
- Utilize religious media, such as radio, television and publications, to provide distance education to remote communities that are lacking in quality educational services.
- Make places of worship and other structures available to be used temporarily for schooling when educational infrastructure has been damaged in emergencies.

## PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLES

- In **Afghanistan** development and humanitarian agencies work closely with religious leaders to promote key programmes including girls' education. Imams across the country regularly promote girls' enrolment through Friday worship. In areas with limited school facilities, mosques are used as classrooms and centres for children's activities.
- UNICEF and the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) developed alternative education programmes for children and adolescents working on the streets in **Bolivia** and trained teachers from the private and public sectors in related issues. Together with the Catholic Church, UNICEF promoted communication and alternative education programmes for girls, boys, adolescents, women and adults, mainly from indigenous communities, to promote knowledge, dialogue and respect for human rights.
- Arigatou International, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNICEF, developed *Learning to Live Together: An intercultural and interfaith programme for ethics education*. This guide is designed for youth leaders and educators worldwide to help children understand and respect people from other cultures and religions.
- The Ma'An (Together) Towards a Safe School campaign, initiated by UNICEF **Jordan** in 2009 to reduce violence by teachers against children in schools, involved a three-track strategy: school-based activities to promote a new way of discipline among teachers; community-based meetings, celebrations and religious activities to encourage zero tolerance of violence in schools; and robust media-based coverage to make the campaign known. The campaign utilizes traditional communication channels such as mosques, religious leaders and community drama, among other methods, to influence families and communities.



*A newborn baby sleeps in the Princess Christian Maternity Hospital (Sierra Leone).*

## HEALTH

“In Sub-Saharan Africa...faith-based facilities provide up to 70% of the region’s health care... In other parts of the world, FBOs manage 10–30% of national health sectors. It is estimated that more than 90% of these FBO facility- and community-based programmes offer [maternal and newborn health] MNH services.”<sup>33</sup>

Health programming has been a focus of UNICEF’s work since its founding. The agency has made great strides in immunization, the provision of oral rehydration to save the lives of infants with severe diarrhoea, promoting and protecting breastfeeding, and developing appropriate and effective health education. UNICEF has an extensive global health presence and strong partnerships with governments and NGOs, including religious organizations, at national and community levels.

### Why partner with religious communities for health?

Nearly every major religion views life as a sacred gift from a divine creator or creating force(s). Promoting and maintaining good health in children is not only a universal priority but also an obligation in many religious traditions. Mothers and fathers are duty bound to provide for the health of their children, who are not able to care for themselves.

“It is a grave sin for one to neglect a person whom he is responsible for sustaining.”  
— *Muslim hadith referring to the life and health of the child*<sup>34</sup>

Healing traditions are also found in many religions, from the performance of healing miracles by divine beings or prophets to well-developed medical approaches such as *ayurveda* in South Asian cultures. Many Buddhist monasteries and temples provide traditional health care to members of the surrounding community. Large-scale hospitals with free care have been a characteristic of Muslim society from early times.<sup>35</sup> There is an extensive platform

of Christian health associations across 12 African countries that often provide 30 or 40 per cent of hospital beds and (according to household surveys) up to 15 per cent of all health care (including traditional healers, self-medication, pharmacists, etc.) in their respective countries.<sup>36</sup>

Many religious communities directly provide health-care services, ranging from small community clinics to large hospitals, which often emphasize pre-natal, newborn and children’s health services. While some traditions stress physical health and the prevention of illness, many traditions also recognize the importance of emotional and mental health and encourage practices to promote it, such as meditation (found in some form in most faith traditions, particularly within Hinduism and Buddhism) and prayer. This holistic approach to well-being can be an important foundation on which to build multi-pronged health programming.

“Faith, prayer and fellowship offer comfort to children whose lives are filled with sorrow... when they join in prayer with others facing similar hardships, their spirits are uplifted, helping to reduce anxiety and depression. When you add prayer, faith and social support in equal measures you restore hope!”

— Jean Webster, *Zimbabwe Orphans through Extended Hands*<sup>37</sup>

## PARTNERING WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO ERADICATE POLIO IN INDIA

Over 80 per cent of the children in **India** struck by polio in 2002 were below age two, predominantly boys and predominantly Muslims. The majority of cases – 80 per cent – were traceable to Uttar Pradesh (UP) in northern India. World Health Organization and Government of India surveillance data showed children in western UP, primarily those in Muslim communities, as being consistently missed during National Immunization Days or Sub-national Immunization Days and for routine immunization.

The reasons behind this situation were multiple and complex. In terms of general health care, the region was already greatly underserved; many parents did not believe it was necessary for all children to be vaccinated against polio and regarded vaccination as ineffective; and most believed that polio could be cured by giving ‘proper medication’. There were also high levels of fear and suspicion. The Muslim population in western UP had already been targeted for birth control initiatives and saw the repeated rounds of polio vaccination as another attempt to control population growth.

In order to address the misperceptions, fear, suspicion and lack of trust this confluence of issues created, UNICEF partnered with key opinion makers, professionals and influential figures within the affected communities. Three Muslim universities, each with an extensive network of institutions – religious, academic and professional – and organizations close to the grass roots partnered to conduct advocacy and outreach and plan and implement the vaccination campaigns.

Partners that constituted the District Task Force, led by the District Magistrate (the highest governing authority of a district), engaged in intensive social and community outreach activities. Community mobilizers then carried out a series of actions 15 days before each vaccination round that included:

- Courtyard meetings and mothers’ meetings to enhance knowledge of polio, address concerns of repeated doses, side effects and whether vaccination is possible when a child has fever.
- Day-long health camps to offer general curative care for children, routine immunization and preventive health counselling for parents.

- Meetings with ‘influencers’ – respected figures such as imams, teachers, medical doctors and local activists – to enhance the quality of interaction with families, often door to door.

### Lessons learned

The combination of advocacy, social mobilization and behaviour change communication approaches yielded lessons in several workable approaches:

- The support of religious leaders, eminent persons and medical authorities, including traditional health workers, helped address resistant attitudes founded on rumours.
- Opinion changes through local interactions with resistant families were sustainable only when buttressed by similar opinions in the larger environment, especially through the engagement of religious leaders whose viewpoints mattered greatly to targeted communities.
- The presence of traditional health workers and religious figures in every neighbourhood represented an effective source of outreach and a channel for tracking down missed children.
- The district health department recognized the value of the Jamia Millia Islamia network’s involvement in planning, coordination and implementation.
- The appeals and statements secured from important Islamic centres such as Darul Uloom and Miftaul Uloom Deoband proved helpful to changing behaviours in reluctant Muslim families.
- The advocacy booklet that was prepared was also critical to opening doors to more Muslim institutions and opinion makers to enlist further support.
- The seamless coordination between these institutions and their local networks contributed to high turnout on both days and the effective house-to-house search for children.

Source: Adapted from United Nations Children’s Fund, *‘When Every Child Counts’*, 2004.<sup>38</sup>

## What can religious communities do to promote child health?

- Review and validate the rationale for the designed health interventions in light of their belief systems.
- Incorporate messages and information about child health care into worship services, religious festivals and childhood religious rites. This may be made especially relevant with the use of special prayers and readings of religious scripture that relate to the relationship between faith and good health.
- Organize support groups for new parents that provide health education and information about where to seek child health services.
- Challenge attitudes that reject evidence-based health interventions for children such as hospital-based birth, immunization and breastfeeding, for example, and facilitate changes in attitudes and practices.
- Educate medical and social work practitioners about blending appropriate medical, religious and cultural practices into their work.
- Use religious media, such as radio and television, to disseminate messages regarding the safety and importance of child health interventions such as immunization and malaria prevention.
- Provide extensive outreach services for immunization, micronutrient supplementation and other important childhood health interventions by leveraging their moral influence and vast networks.
- Quickly mobilize community networks in emergency situations to provide life-saving first aid, immunization and cholera prevention and response, among other critical health services.
- Contribute to national health policy development through advocacy and technical assistance and help clarify misconceptions about harmful traditional practices being part of religious teachings

### PARTNERING WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO PROMOTE PUBLIC HEALTH IN BANGLADESH

Historically, imams not only provide religious leadership to the people in **Bangladesh** but also contribute to promoting and maintaining public health, development activities, social peace and communal harmony. In general the population, particularly in rural settings, place great importance on the imams' instructions. UNICEF has partnered with religious leaders in a number of ways, including:

- Working with Islamic as well as Buddhist leaders in support of community-based measles campaigns that were incorporated into regular religious services, including weekly prayers.
- Forming a strategic alliance with the National Islamic Foundation, seeking the support of imams on the dissemination of healthy and positive messages for children and their families and the promotion of child rights at national and local level. The UNICEF Country Representative participates regularly in the National Imam's Conference to discuss children's issues,

seeking religious leaders' support on the promotion of key life-saving, care and protective behaviours for children. Particular issues of focus have been the promotion of hand washing with soap, breastfeeding, education and health-related behaviours. Booklets with the key messages and information have been shared with communities. As a result hand washing with soap is being promoted before ablutions and at critical moments in the day, and some communities are donating soap to the mosques.

- Mobilizing imams and Buddhist monks from districts affected by the H5N1 and H1N1 viruses to promote preventive and response behaviours.

To ensure ongoing communication with religious leaders, especially within local communities, UNICEF created a database with the mobile phone numbers and addresses of religious leaders.

*Source: United Nations Children's Fund Bangladesh Country Office, 2011.<sup>39</sup>*

## PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLES

- In 2010 UNICEF entered into a partnership in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** with the five major Christian, Muslim and traditional religious communities, which have a combined network of over 30 million people, to promote key family health practices such as breastfeeding and immunization. The five groups were strategically selected based on their credibility and capacity to promote behaviour and social change, as well as their representation of almost half of the country's estimated 65 million people. A similar programme is underway in neighbouring **Republic of Congo**.
- The Catholic Vicariate Apostolic of Esmeraldas and UNICEF are partnering in north-western **Ecuador** to support mainly indigenous rural communities in: (a) primary health care, including maternal and child health and nutrition; (b) teacher training and development of culturally relevant educational materials; and (c) life-skills activities for at-risk adolescents and youth. The Government relies on the Catholic Vicariate Apostolic of Esmeraldas for the provision of these services because of its influence and reach within this highly volatile region of the country.
- UNICEF and the **Algerian** Ministries of Religious Affairs and Health launched a series of training sessions in 2009 for *mourchidates*, or women preachers, on promoting and protecting the health of women and children. More than 30 *mourchidates* have been trained in a programme targeting 300 women preachers throughout the country. The programme seeks to introduce participants to principles of communication for behavioural change, providing them with essential information on the health of mothers and children and highlighting the role of communication in promoting health.
- In the **Dominican Republic** in 2009 UNICEF provided technical and financial assistance for the extension of the Catholic Church's Pastoral Materno Infantil [Maternal and Child] programme, which provides training for mothers in health and nutrition, group dynamics and communication skills, as well as home visits. With UNICEF support and advocacy, the Pastoral was included in the National Public Budget to make its work more financially sustainable.
- UNICEF **Myanmar** conducted over 400 Facts for Life training sessions – with an avian influenza component – in over 50 townships with the help of six religious/ethnic groups: Buddhist, Catholic, Muslim, Protestant and ethnic Kayin and Chin. UNICEF also published a 'Buddhist Leadership Project Manual' for Lay Buddhist trainers in 2006.
- During the 2010 cholera epidemic in **Haiti**, UNICEF partnered with an interfaith coalition – the Haiti chapter of *Religions for Peace* – that brought together Catholic, Protestant, Voodoo and Muslim communities to reach thousands of people with both information about cholera and emergency care. More than 4,000 religious community members were trained with cholera prevention and response messages and, in turn, reached close to 2 million people (20 per cent of Haiti's population) with their social mobilization efforts
- Together with the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation and the Inter-Religious Council of **Kenya**, UNICEF launched an initiative in 2009 to promote key high-impact interventions for maternal and child health. Christians, Muslims and Hindus came together and prioritized seven such interventions, which they then translated with reference to the Bible, Qur'an and Gita. The final product is a 'Handbook for Faith Communities' promoting maternal and child health in Kenya. Through the religious coordinating bodies in the country's 47 counties, this programme will reach all 8 provinces and train 27,000 religious leaders. Each trained leader is expected to share information on maternal and child health with at least 1,000 congregation members over a three-year period.
- During the civil war in **El Salvador**, the Catholic Church negotiated a ceasefire to allow children on both sides of the conflict to be immunized. Similar efforts have been replicated in other conflict-affected countries such as **Sri Lanka** and **Sudan**.
- Before announcing **Egypt** as polio free, UNICEF Egypt requested the Grand Mufti to issue an important *fatwa* that encouraged and mobilized caregivers during the undertaking of the intensive polio campaigns.
- UNICEF partners with the Inter-Religious Council of **Sierra Leone**, a national inter-faith network with representation in all districts of the country, to promote essential family practices and other child survival and development practices. The partnership includes a memorandum of understanding between the two organizations outlining a closer and more strategic collaboration.





*A woman holding her HIV-positive nephew, for whom she is caring after his mother died of AIDS (Zambia).*

## HIV AND AIDS

Reaching the poorest, most marginalized and least served has been at the core of successful HIV and AIDS programming. That imperative is even greater in an era of static resources and ever more complex competing priorities.

The elimination of new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths in children is possible, but it will require vision, leadership, system-wide improvements in health-care delivery and support for linkages to families and communities, as well as deep-seated social change and continued implementation of best practices.

Integrating interventions into existing systems without losing the capacity to address the specific needs of children affected by AIDS is a challenge in all four of the 'Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS' priority areas: preventing mother-to-child transmission; providing paediatric care and treatment; preventing infection among adolescents and young people; and protecting and supporting children affected by HIV and AIDS.<sup>40</sup>

### **Why partner with religious communities to address HIV?**

*"We have a unique presence and reach within communities. We have unique structures and programmes that are already in place. We are available. We are reliable. And we are sustainable. We were there long before AIDS came and we will still be there when AIDS goes away."*

*— Canon Gideon Byamugisha<sup>41</sup>*

The foundational principles of all the major faith traditions – love, compassion, respect for the dignity of all persons and charity for the less fortunate – ground the work of religious communities in the face of HIV. Religious leaders are the moral compass of faith communities and can foster inclusive and compassionate responses to those affected by the disease in their midst.

Religious communities are already at the forefront of efforts to prevent and respond to the pandemic, particularly at the community level. The financial contribution "of faith-based volunteers throughout Africa to address HIV was estimated to be worth US\$5 billion per annum in 2006, an amount similar in magnitude to the total funding provided for the HIV response by all bilateral and multilateral agencies".<sup>42</sup> Focused at the community level, religious organizations can quickly respond and adapt to changing needs. Community members report that what they most value about religious actors' provision of HIV services is their capacity to deliver spiritual and psychosocial care, even above the more tangible medical services.<sup>43</sup>

Recognizing the significant role that religious communities are playing in the provision of a range of HIV-related services, while acknowledging areas in which they could be supported to respond more effectively, has led to the development of the *Partnership with Faith-based Organizations: UNAIDS strategic framework*. The purpose of the framework is to encourage stronger

“For the churches, the most powerful contribution we can make to combating HIV transmission is the eradication of stigma and discrimination...”

— World Council of Churches<sup>44</sup>

collaboration between the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), partners such as UNICEF and FBOs to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, which includes the integration of FBOs in comprehensive national AIDS responses.

For all that religious communities do to uplift people affected by HIV and AIDS, there are situations in which the stigma attached to living with HIV can lead to a culture of silence in

religious communities, often fostered by religious beliefs that sustain the shame associated with the illness and instil fear. This silence and fear holds many back from seeking needed treatment and emotional support. Additionally, many people at highest risk for contracting HIV – such as sex workers, men who have sex with men and people who inject drugs – engage in behaviour that may be considered taboo. Leaders in religious communities can be instrumental in challenging attitudes and confronting stigma, shame and taboo subjects by focusing on the values of dignity, respect and compassion their faiths share.

## PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLES

- Through its Regional Buddhist Leadership Initiative Sangha Metta ('compassionate monks'), UNICEF has worked with governments and Buddhist leadership on HIV and AIDS prevention and care efforts in **Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand** and **Viet Nam**. Specific programmes vary from country to country and include prevention programmes with young people, spiritual counselling and healing, community education in temples and supporting vulnerable families and children affected by HIV and AIDS. UNICEF supported a process in which Buddhist leaders developed a training approach that related key learning about HIV responses with their own religious beliefs about the Four Noble Truths. This approach was central to mobilizing the wider Buddhist leadership to engage with this initiative.
- UNICEF, together with UNAIDS and *Religions for Peace*, produced a guide for religious leaders from various faith communities on how to use their influence, moral leadership and resources to support children affected by HIV and AIDS.
- In 2007 UNICEF **Iran** and religious academics from Imam Sadeq University addressed practical challenges for children's rights and well-being in a book: *What Can We, Religious Leaders, Do in Response to HIV/AIDS?*, providing recommendations based on Quranic and Shia religious references. The following year the text was distributed among leading national religious organizations. High-level advocacy events for selected key religious leaders raised their awareness concerning the fight against HIV and AIDS.
- In 2009 UNICEF **Chad's** advocacy with civil society organizations such as the Alliance of Religious Bodies against HIV/AIDS and other Pandemics helped create a think-tank and action unit that included a formal commitment by religious leaders to actively address HIV and AIDS as well as education, child protection and child survival and development.
- In **Nicaragua** in 2010 UNICEF partnered with the Theological and Social Research Centre and Acción Medica Cristiana to promote theological-pastoral reflection on the HIV epidemic. This has succeeded in mobilizing churches, mainly on the Caribbean Coast, regarding the rights of people living with HIV. Prominent Nicaraguan theologians produced a book on the theological foundation for church participation in the national response to the epidemic. Educators from 10 biblical institutes and religious leaders from 200 churches have been trained on the theological approach to the HIV epidemic.

Women of faith play an important role in both caregiving to families affected by AIDS and HIV prevention efforts. While they may not often be visible in the formal leadership structures of religious communities, they are key actors in efforts to deal with the pandemic's effects and related issues such as reproductive health and sexual and gender-based violence. It is important to make efforts to seek them out and support their substantial leadership.

There will, inevitably, be areas of work in which there is disagreement about particular approaches. For example, condom distribution as an HIV-prevention activity may not be supported by some religious communities. Yet it may be possible to disagree on certain aspects and still work together on areas of common agreement such as, for example, addressing stigma and discrimination against children affected by HIV. The UNAIDS framework outlines the roles and responsibilities of United Nations and FBO partners in the AIDS response and can be an important starting point to negotiate the more controversial aspects of HIV and AIDS interventions.

“Religious leaders are uniquely poised to break this silence by acknowledging suffering and reaching out with compassion to the excluded and rejected. They have the power to end guilt, denial, stigma and discrimination and open the way to reconciliation and hope, knowledge and healing, prevention and care.”<sup>45</sup>

## **What can religious communities do to address HIV and AIDS?**

In all of the following areas, religious communities can refer to sacred texts, scripture and scholarly works to promote compassion, healing and actions that respect the dignity and sanctity of all life. Depending on the epidemiological setting, they can also mobilize their significant human resources – including volunteers, women and youth groups – for large-scale or focused community education and advocacy.

### ***Preventing mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV***

- Encourage early infant diagnosis when parents are HIV-positive.
- Support access and linkages to health facilities and services.
- Strengthen PMTCT services – in line with national policies and protocols – in religiously affiliated hospitals and medical centres, particularly in rural areas, and ensure coordination with national health systems addressing HIV prevention and treatment of AIDS-related illnesses and/or anti-retroviral therapy for those who need it.

### ***Providing paediatric treatment and care***

- Deliver care, treatment and supportive counselling, particularly in the most rural and disenfranchised communities. This includes palliative and hospice care for end-of-life support.
- Ensure coordination with national health systems and adhere to national plans and protocols on HIV prevention and AIDS-related treatment.
- Direct charitable resources to evidence-informed prevention and care activities, including early infant diagnosis and follow up.
- Train and educate caregivers and family members of persons living with HIV or who have AIDS-related illnesses by providing information relevant to their faith.

### *Preventing infection among adolescents and young people*

- Disseminate and discuss teachings that promote safe and healthy behaviours and practices to prevent sexual and non-sexual HIV infections and transmissions.
- Provide non-judgmental support to populations most at risk of HIV to enable greater access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services.

### *Protecting and supporting children affected by AIDS*

- Use the moral influence of religious leaders to challenge stigma and discrimination, and foster dialogue within their communities to change attitudes of rejection of persons living with HIV or AIDS to acceptance and support.
- Join broader advocacy efforts, including linking to national systems, beyond their respective religious communities to change policy, legislation and general perceptions.
- Direct charitable (cash and in-kind) resources to family-based care and support activities, notably those that promote social protection strategies and policies, are AIDS sensitive and address the needs of these and other vulnerable populations.
- Facilitate access to health and social services and promote the protection and education of the children of those living with HIV and AIDS.
- Train and educate caregivers and family members of persons living with HIV and AIDS with information relevant to their faith.
- Provide spiritual guidance to enhance individual and community acceptance of children affected by AIDS.

#### REACHING THE UNREACHED THROUGH CHURCH NETWORKS IN NAMIBIA

**Namibia** is one of the countries most highly affected by HIV and AIDS, and in a context of food insecurity and high levels of poverty it has an increasing number of orphans and vulnerable children. The Church Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) was established in 2002 with start-up funding from UNICEF and the Ford Foundation as an interfaith networking organization to provide these children with care and support.

CAFO was established under the auspices of the Council of Churches in Namibia and has an ecumenical approach that builds on the widespread influence of the country's churches. It has strengthened the capacity of religious communities to rally their members to provide protection, care and support for vulnerable children.

By 2010 CAFO was distributing and administering grants to the value of US\$600,000 annually to over 539 congregations that joined the alliance. In return the congregations received training and technical assistance to equip them to manage projects and

monitor and report on results. Over 20,000 vulnerable children benefited from support channelled through local congregations.

CAFO has continued to play a valuable advocacy role, linking communities through churches to service providers including civil society and government, and has been central to policy debates. As a member of the Cabinet-mandated Orphans and Vulnerable Children Permanent Task Force, CAFO has been involved in developing standards for service delivery as well as national related policies, plans and legislation. A high profile 'Walk for Children' raised awareness of the situation of vulnerable children.

Through its community-based grants, training and projects, linked to civil society and government partners, CAFO demonstrates how religious communities can meaningfully fulfil their obligations to reach vulnerable children.

*Source: United Nations Children's Fund Namibia Country Office, 2011.*



Girls pray before breakfast at the Government Home for Tsunami-Affected Children, which provides care, shelter, basic education and recreational activities for orphans and other vulnerable children, most of whom are from fishing villages (India).

## NUTRITION

Adequate nutrition is a fundamental right of all children and helps provide the best start in life. High-impact nutrition interventions focus on infant and young child feeding, sufficient micronutrients such as vitamin A and iodine, nutrition security in emergencies, and nutrition and HIV and AIDS. These are delivered using a life-cycle approach, emphasizing partnerships and integrated interventions to maximize effectiveness.

### Why partner with religious communities for infant and young child nutrition?

“The world, both animate and inanimate, is sustained by food. Life arises from food: this is observed all around, there can be no doubt about it... The giver of food is the giver of life, and indeed of everything else. Therefore, one who is desirous of well-being in this world and beyond should specially endeavour to give food.”

— *The Mahabharata*<sup>46</sup>

Essential to life, food plays a significant role not only in our biological lives but in our social and cultural lives as well. The role of food in religious and indigenous beliefs can be found in texts, stories and oral traditions. These describe how food nourishes life, brings people together in community and represents earthly life and spirit.

However, malnutrition is not merely a result of too little food but is caused by a combination of factors: insufficient protein, energy and micronutrients, frequent infections or disease, poor care and feeding practices, inadequate health services and unsafe water and sanitation.

#### RELIGIOUS LEADERS PROMOTING EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING

Nineteen UNICEF country offices participated in the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (DPAC) initiative in 2010 that mobilized religious communities around a common agenda for maternal health and child survival, with a focus on exclusive breastfeeding. In **Algeria**, for example, sermons in the country's 15,000 mosques focused on children's rights and

the importance of breastfeeding; in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, four of the main religious groups, which have a combined network of nearly 30 million people, led week-long campaigns on the importance of key family health practices such as breastfeeding and immunization.<sup>47</sup> (See p. 21 for more on the Day of Prayer and Action for Children.)

The moral and religious obligation of mothers and fathers to provide adequate nourishment to their children is also emphasized in most traditions. For example, specific protocols for breastfeeding and transition to solid foods are enumerated in Islamic law and teachings.

“The mother shall give suck to their children for two whole years, [that is] for those [parents] who desire to complete the term of suckling, but the father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother’s food and clothing on a reasonable basis.”

— *Al-Baqara, verse 233*<sup>48</sup>

Many religious traditions have dietary restrictions such as vegetarianism, avoidance of particular foods that are considered unclean and guidelines for preparation of some foods (such as those considered halal for Muslims or kosher for Jews, for example). An understanding of the religious and cultural norms of food – its preparation and delivery – can greatly enhance efforts to ensure adequate nutrition for infants, young children and their mothers.

#### PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLES

- In **Madagascar** UNICEF found that religious and community leaders, as well as local radio stations (including young reporters’ clubs), were strategic in mobilizing communities for child rights, including the provision of services such as screening children for malnutrition and child protection.
- In 2009 UNICEF **Kyrgyzstan** conducted orientation meetings with religious figures and other representatives from all levels of state structures for a nutritional programme aimed at fortifying complementary food for children aged 6–24 months.
- UNICEF in **Algeria** advocates with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Waqfs to encourage the active participation of religious leaders in promoting and supporting breastfeeding.
- UNICEF began working with imams in North Darfur (**Sudan**) in 2009 to promote breastfeeding and other aspects of infant and early childhood nutrition. After receiving training, over 100 imams began including information about the importance of breastfeeding in the first two years of a child’s life in their worship services. Many imams would reference the Qur’an and other Islamic teaching. As their audience was male, they also incorporated messages about the importance of caring for wives and children. The success of the programme has been indicated by a significant increase in the number of children being brought into centres for nutrition assessments and supplemental treatment. Women reported that the messages from the imams were the reason for their changes in behaviour.

## What can religious communities do to promote infant and young child nutrition?

- Incorporate messages and information about the importance of nutrition into worship services, rituals, religious festivals and childhood religious rites. Theologians and educators can reinforce nutrition messages by citing scripture and other religious texts.
- Offer nutrition education and food preparation instruction for parents, particularly stressing the importance of micronutrients and six months of exclusive breastfeeding and up to two years of continued breastfeeding, as well as challenging attitudes and norms that reject breastfeeding or giving colostrum to newborns, for example.
- Utilize religious media, such as radio and television, to disseminate messages regarding the importance of optimal infant and young child nutrition (i.e., exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, thereafter receiving nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods while breastfeeding continues up to two years of age or beyond).
- Support distribution efforts during periods of food insecurity using churches, mosques, temples and other religious structures as distribution centres. Religious leaders can reinforce the message that in emergency situations breast milk substitutes, other milk products, bottles and teats should never be part of a general distribution. Dried milk products should be distributed only when pre-mixed with a milled staple food and not as a commodity so as to avoid the temptation to prepare them as breast milk substitutes.
- Provide information about community needs in areas where humanitarian organizations may have difficulty accessing this.
- Conduct outreach services for immunizations, micronutrient supplementation and other important childhood health interventions by leveraging their moral influence and vast networks.
- Advise humanitarian organizations on their communities' dietary restrictions and other principles that may hinder the effectiveness of conventional nutrition interventions (e.g., many gelatine capsules for micronutrient supplements would not be appropriate in some religious communities, though halal and vegetable glycerine options exist).





*A boy drinks water from a hand pump (Bangladesh).*

## WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Inadequate access to safe water and sanitation services coupled with poor hygiene practices affect millions of children every day through illness, death, impoverishment and lack of opportunities for development. Parents are less productive due to illness and time taken collecting water and thus less able to provide adequately for their children's needs. When schools lack private and decent sanitation facilities, girls in particular are denied access to education. In response UNICEF focuses on supporting sanitation and hygiene behaviour change as well as improving access to water supply. Data show that the poorest are most likely to lack water supply and sanitation, particularly the latter, which is one of the most inequitably distributed interventions. Inequities in access to water and sanitation are made worse by humanitarian disasters and fragile contexts.

### **Why partner with religious communities for water, sanitation and hygiene programming?**

“Linking faith with construction of water facilities and toilets in schools does not sound like an obvious link, yet it is important. Water plays a central role in many religions and beliefs around the world: source of life, it represents (re)birth. Water cleans the body, and by extension purifies it, and these two main qualities confer a highly symbolic (even sacred) status to water. Water is therefore a key element in ceremonies and religious rites. This is reflected in the way people use water, in the way they design water systems and the need for accessibility of water for cleansing after toilet use or washing hands.”<sup>49</sup>

Water is the most essential element for human survival and as such has a prominent place in many of the world's faith traditions. Cleansing with water is a nearly universal metaphor for spiritual cleansing, expressed in rituals such as bathing in the Ganges River for Hindus, washing before prayers in a mosque or baptism in the Christian tradition.

Clean water is the foundation of good hygiene and sanitation, which many religious traditions promote with prescriptions about waste management and cleansing rituals before spiritual functions. For example, within Hindu society people “must defecate beyond the distance of an arrow shot from their home, and never in a temple enclosure, at the borders of a river, pond or spring, or in a public place. During the act, Muslims cannot face towards Mecca and

“Water symbolizes God's presence, which is why Krishna says, ‘I am the taste in water’.” — *Bhagavad Gita 7:8*<sup>50</sup>



Hindus must not face celestial bodies, a temple, priest or holy tree.”<sup>51</sup> Jewish law outlines specific practices regarding hand washing as well as dealing with human waste.<sup>52</sup> Consulting with religious authorities to learn about the religious attitudes and corresponding behaviours regarding water, sanitation and hygiene practices such as hand washing can go a long way in developing appropriate and utilized systems.

“With globally about 64% of schools being faith-related, there are unique opportunities and benefits from linking spiritual learning with learning on water, sanitation, hygiene and the environment, and the improvement of water and sanitation facilities in schools.”<sup>53</sup>

The availability of good water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools – and education about these issues – is critical for facilitating children’s right to water, sanitation and hygiene as well as their right to education. Loss of school days due to diarrhoea, intestinal worms and other illnesses caused by poor water and hygiene greatly affects learning and development. Girls and female teachers also lose days due to the lack of facilities that take menstrual hygiene into consideration. Given that, as noted above, a majority of schools are faith-related it is vital that these faith communities provide facilities and effective water, sanitation and hygiene education in their schools.

#### PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLES

- Religious leaders in **Indonesia** helped develop and implement a hygiene and health project, the ‘Clean Friday Campaign’, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Institute Agama Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry (Ar-Raniry State Islamic Religion Institute), CARE International, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs. *Ulama* (religious leaders) were instrumental in crafting health messages positively linked to Quranic verses and Islamic teachings on basic hygiene and personal cleanliness. They are committed to spreading these behaviour change messages in their communities through their Friday prayers, community meetings and speeches.<sup>54</sup>
- In 2009 during a cholera outbreak in **Zimbabwe** there were a large number of deaths among members of the Apostolic faith, who do not accept modern medical treatment. UNICEF led major advocacy efforts to increase the acceptance rate of treatment. UNICEF also trained 96 religious leaders and produced a programme on cholera hosted by a popular talk show hostess that was shown on national television and reached an estimated 300,000 people with appropriate hygiene messages.
- A 2009 Religion and Health Project evaluation in **Bhutan** indicated that a sanitation and water project was effective and relevant for improving and promoting health, hygiene and sanitation in religious institutions and their neighbouring communities. The project included training religious health workers with the skills to maintain and sustain the improved health and hygiene conditions in religious schools.
- In 2010 the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), which works with the major religious traditions to develop their own environmental programmes based on their core teachings, beliefs and practices, joined the Call to Action for WASH in Schools campaign led by UNICEF. The objective of the Call to Action is to realize a vision where all children go to school and all schools provide a safe, healthy and comfortable environment where children grow, learn and thrive. As part of the campaign a global virtual library of WASH in Schools experiences has been compiled through the leadership of ARC and with the voluntary assistance of WASH in Schools professionals from 39 countries. It is available at <[www.unicef.org/wash/schools](http://www.unicef.org/wash/schools)>.

## **What can religious communities do to promote water, sanitation and hygiene?**

- Highlight the importance of water in faith traditions, particularly as it relates to worship and rituals such as cleansing, purifying, baptizing, etc. Religious leaders can use such opportunities to reinforce the need for clean water and good sanitation and challenge attitudes and practices that run counter to good sanitation and hygiene.
- Provide clean water and well-maintained hand washing and sanitation facilities in places of worship, religious schools and other facilities to model good practice for the community. In emergencies, these may be used as centres for water storage and distribution.
- Include lessons about the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene and good practices in the curriculum of religious and faith-related schools.
- Conduct public awareness and, particularly with religious youth, peer-to-peer campaigns illustrating the importance of and demonstrating good water, sanitation and hygiene practices.
- Utilize religious media, such as radio and television, to disseminate messages and public education regarding the importance of good water, sanitation and hygiene practices such as hand washing, clean toilets and availability of clean water, particularly in schools and other places where children assemble.
- Include water, sanitation and hygiene education in worship, ritual and holiday services, especially with the assistance of community-based religious health organizations.
- Advise humanitarian organizations on their communities' principles and practices regarding water – such as hand washing, sanitation and hygiene considerations around defecation, menstrual hygiene, etc. – in order to develop appropriate and effective interventions.



*As part of a Buddhist leadership Initiative supported by UNICEF, a monk visits a woman caring for her orphaned granddaughter (Cambodia).*

## CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

### Early childhood development

The earliest years of a child's life are the most crucial for his or her development. With proper nutrition and health care, as well as social and emotional support and caring, children are able to thrive physically, mentally and emotionally. However, when these factors are not present and learning opportunities are inadequate to provide stimulation, development can be seriously impaired, affecting not only the future of the child but also her or his family, community and society as a whole. Poverty is the underlying cause of these situations, and early interventions that take a holistic approach in promoting the conditions that foster well-being are the most effective in breaking cycles of poverty.

### **Why partner with religious communities for early childhood development?**

As already illustrated, every major religious tradition stresses the inherent sanctity of life and dignity of every person, including the child. This translates to the importance of caring for a child's well-being and offers holistic perspectives on how that can be done. Understanding, respecting and building on these beliefs can reinforce integrated and organic early childhood development programmes. Religious leaders have access to the most intimate social unit: the family, where early childhood is shaped. They can be crucial partners in providing information, guidance and support to families of young children that can promote each child's right to healthy development.

### **What can religious communities do to promote early childhood development?**

- Provide or support early education for children that includes elements promoting healthy physical and emotional development, as well as gender equity, especially for poor or marginalized children who may not have other opportunities for such exposure.
- Include peace education and teachings of mutual respect in early childhood education programmes.
- Bring important early childhood development information into the family setting, stressing families' obligation to provide for their young children, offering information on how to do this and supporting them when they face difficulties.

- Include references to scripture, special prayers and discussion of the elements important in early childhood development in worship services, study sessions and particularly at special events such as the celebration of childhood rites of passage.
- Develop peer education groups for women's and men's associations to share information about early childhood development, and support members whose children are not accessing appropriate services through, for example, referral and financial assistance.

## PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLES

- In **Jordan** as part of a nationwide 'Better Parenting Project', UNICEF worked with imams to produce a booklet, 'Imam's Guide to Early Childhood Development', that could help fathers learn parenting skills that promote development in their young children. The booklet includes the 'Twelve Friday Sermons', relevant sayings from the Qur'an and quotes from the Prophet, such as "Who does not like a child does not have a heart". Many sessions are held in mosques, which proved a breakthrough in reaching men.
- Recognizing that Muslim children from poor socio-economic backgrounds in East Africa had limited opportunities to access early childhood education, and that much of what was available was provided by Christian educators, the Madrasa Early Childhood Development Programme began in **Kenya** in 1986, supported by the Aga Khan Foundation. The result has been quality, affordable, culturally appropriate and sustainable education for marginalized Muslim children. The programme was subsequently expanded to **Uganda** and **Zanzibar (United Republic of Tanzania)**. Testing has shown that children in the programme perform as well as or better than children in more established programmes. The programme's success has also led to the enrolment of non-Muslim children.<sup>55</sup>
- UNICEF has formed an alliance in **Angola** with key religious and government actors to enhance knowledge and positive behaviours of families towards the survival, development and protection of children under five. The Alliance includes the 10 most important Churches in the country, the Ministry of Family, an Inter-sector Committee comprised of other ministries (such as Health and Social Welfare) and government institutions such as the National Institute of the Child. Alliance partners will implement an integrated communication and social mobilization plan to disseminate key messages on maternal and child health, hygiene, nutrition, early child development and violence prevention. The goal by 2013 is to train more than 10,000 community and religious leaders using a multimedia kit (booklets, music album and radio mini-dramas) developed through a participatory approach and to reach up to 1 million families in all 18 provinces of the country. During a visit to Angola in 2011, the UNICEF Executive Director participated in the formal signing ceremony creating the Alliance. Evaluations will be undertaken in 2013 to measure the impact of the interventions, especially in relation to changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices.
- In 2009 the UNICEF **Philippines** Education Programme continued to support the piloting of an Islam-responsive early childhood curriculum in 17 pilot pre-schools in conflict-affected areas. Future programming at the sub-national level will help develop models of quality early childhood education services, especially those targeting the most disadvantaged children, with the end view of influencing national policies to bring these innovations to scale. It will also sustain support for the adoption of an Islamic-focused early childhood education curriculum beyond conflict-affected areas.

## Humanitarian action

Emergency contexts such as conflict or natural disasters can greatly exacerbate existing child rights concerns and create significant obstacles to fulfilling these rights. During emergencies children are especially vulnerable to disease, malnutrition, violence and separation from family or caregivers. Education can be disrupted through displacement and loss of infrastructure. Sexual and gender-based violence usually become more prevalent, placing children and women at particular risk of physical and emotional trauma.

The Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) are the main policy guidelines for UNICEF's work in crises, whether these are of a sudden or slow-onset nature, natural disasters or conflict situations. According to the CCCs, humanitarian action encompasses preparedness and response, which includes early recovery.

In emergencies UNICEF works in collaboration with local and international partners to ensure comprehensive and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance that permits the diverse array of programmes necessary to address the full spectrum of children's rights. Partnerships are a key cornerstone of effective humanitarian action. However, in certain contexts – in particular those marked by armed conflict, human rights violations and/or civil and political unrest – there are particular challenges to partnerships that should be taken into account. Most importantly, when delivering humanitarian assistance in conflict settings, actions by all actors must be consistent with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity.<sup>56</sup> In partnering with religious communities, this should be taken into consideration and a risk analysis conducted around any proposed partnership based on the specific context.

“Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

— James 2: 15–17

## Why partner with religious communities in emergencies?

In emergency situations the roles of religious communities can be even more clearly advantageous in providing immediate and sustainable support to affected people.

- The expansive reach of religious communities' presence means that they are likely to have structures or systems in place in many areas that might be inaccessible to humanitarian actors. This also gives them an inherent capacity to mobilize community resources.
- Most religious communities are community-based service providers already, providing care and support for vulnerable persons, such as foster and other care for children without adequate parental care, and emergency support such as food and shelter.
- Religious leaders have the trust and presence within their communities to provide spiritual support and stability during difficult circumstances.

A greater understanding of a community's religious as well as cultural beliefs and practices is also important in planning emergency response actions. Determining appropriate supplies of food and shelter and the design of shelter and WASH facilities should, to the extent possible, take into consideration the local religious codes of conduct in order for them to be utilized effectively.

While religious differences are used to justify and fuel conflicts, this should not be a reason to avoid engaging with religious leaders. Sensitivity and a deeper understanding of the religious as well as socio-economic and political dimensions of a conflict are essential. In these situations, inter-religious mechanisms or associations may be very effective in creating space for humanitarian assistance as the trust bestowed on religious/spiritual leaders can allow them to play significant roles in mediation and reconciliation.

It is also important to recognize that in situations in which conflict is centred on or around religion, child protection actors can play an important role in facilitating inter-religious coordination by acting as impartial conveners around child-centred issues and initiatives.

## ENSURING THAT CHARITABLE DONATIONS ARE APPROPRIATE

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami in Aceh (**Indonesia**), donations of clothing were shipped in from all over the world. Most of these clothes were inappropriate not only for the tropical climate but also in terms of the conservative Muslim culture and so could not be used.

Few if any outside organizations had thought to make provisions of women's headscarves or conservative dress. For women whose homes had been destroyed, particularly in rural communities where shops were

also destroyed, the lack of headscarves was an enormous preoccupation. Also of concern was the lack of basic ingredients to make traditional sweets for an upcoming Muslim holiday. Women said that they just wanted to feel normal and celebrate as they always had.

These simple items, along with prayer mats, that were initially overlooked by foreign, non-Muslim aid organizations would have made an immediate contribution to survivors' well-being and resilience.

See programme specific examples on previous pages of religious communities collaborating with UNICEF and other organizations in emergency settings.

## Gender equality

Discrimination based on gender or sex denies children opportunities for development and the realization of their basic rights and deprives the world of the proven and multiple benefits for all from gender equality. While gender discrimination can affect boys and men in many ways, it disproportionately affects girls and women in much of the world, denying them access to education, health care, participation in governance and decision-making, and protection from violence and abuse. The impacts of discrimination extend beyond individuals to their families, communities and societies at large, preventing them from developing to their full potential. The Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved in the absence of equal outcomes for girls and boys.

UNICEF integrates gender equality into all aspects of its programming as well as into its commitments with partners at all levels. Promoting equal outcomes for girls and boys is an element of all partnerships, and some partnerships may be entirely focused on such outcomes. Where partners' commitments to gender equality are not yet substantial, UNICEF supports efforts to further develop these and the institutional capacity to act on them.<sup>58</sup>

*"The goal of UNICEF's work with partners in pursuit of gender equality and the equal rights of girls and boys is to contribute to poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through results-oriented, effective and coordinated action that achieves the protection, survival and development of girls and boys on an equal basis."<sup>57</sup>*

Engagement with religious communities can provide rich opportunities for confronting discrimination and promoting equal outcomes for girls and boys. Tapping into the deeply held values of dignity and the sanctity of life shared by most faith traditions, religious partners can mobilize assets for change that child rights organizations would not be able to do alone.

It is important to acknowledge concerns that many religions and religious communities themselves discriminate against women and marginalize them from formal religious spaces. "[M]any religious traditions are patriarchal, denying women leadership positions in their organizations. Women are often prevented from gaining access to senior formal clerical roles or pursuing education that allows them to interpret their religious traditions with authority."<sup>59</sup>

## RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES OF EQUALITY AND RESPECT FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

The **Baha’i** faith upholds an egalitarian model of men and women in the religion. Bahá’u’lláh, the founder of Baha’i, stated, “Women and men have always been and will always be equal in the sight of God.” All of humanity is considered part of one single race, so aggression to any individual damages the well-being of the whole human family.

**Buddhist** sources of equality for women include early stories of women becoming fully enlightened alongside men, and the Buddha’s teaching that the moral quality of one’s mind is central regardless of gender or caste.

**Christians** believe human beings are created in the likeness of God, which implies the dignity and inherent rights of women and girls. The cornerstone of Christian belief is the example of the life of Jesus Christ, who demonstrated high regard for the inviolable dignity of women, respected them and entrusted them with his mission.

Amongst the major world religions, **Hinduism** is unique in its embrace of the feminine divine (*shakti*), which is viewed as the creative power that animates the universe. With a strong Goddess (*devi*) tradition at its core, Hinduism teaches that women and girls are divine and should be treated with the utmost respect and affection.

**Islam** values equality between women and men very highly, “and the Qur’an and in particular numerous hadith reports encourage Muslims to treat children –

males and females alike – with indiscriminate justice and impartiality. ... A hadith narrated by `Ali Ibn al-Ja`d from Abu Huraya states: ‘The best of you in God’s eyes is the best in terms of morality, and the best of you is the one who is most excellent to his daughters and wives.’”

Lord Mahavira brought an enlightened view of women to **Jainism**, and upheld that there is a universal light inside every individual, male and female. Women play their part in liberation and are spiritual equals to men.

**Judaism** teaches that women and men are both made in the image of God and thus both must be equally valued and esteemed. Courageous, learned, and pious women are abundant in Jewish texts and history. In modern times, Jewish women have been at the forefront of political action on behalf of gender equality and have often drawn on deep sources in the Jewish tradition for inspiration and support.

Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of **Sikhism**, taught that women are worthy of praise equal to men. This view is an important part of the faith. According to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, “She is the most noble of all family. She counsels and advises the elders and youngsters. She is the ruler and God has made us her courtiers.”

*Source: Adapted (except ‘Islam’) from Religions for Peace, Restoring Dignity, 2009; the passage on Islam is from Browning and Bunge, 2009.<sup>60</sup> Additional feedback was provided by Varun Soni, Dean of Religious Life, University of Southern California, and Jeff Israel, New School University.*

In most cases religious leaders justify these barriers – which are characteristic of social norms and cultural beliefs that often pre-date religious traditions – by scripture as well as precedent. Dialogue with religious leaders and educators can be instrumental in unpacking these complicated and nuanced concepts.

It is also important to see how women in various faith communities assert their rights or express their viewpoints, which may be via parallel systems to men’s or through channels that are recognized as women’s pathways in their religious tradition (i.e., they may have nominal leadership in some instances and an influential role in others).<sup>61</sup>

Some considerations in promoting gender equality in working with religious communities are:

- How do different members of the religious community – women, men, youth, children, leaders, lay members, etc. – understand and talk about gender discrimination? Is it discussed at all?
- What are the values, principles, tenets and teachings of the religious community vis-à-vis gender roles, expectations and relationships?
- Are prevailing social norms based on culture and traditions or certain interpretations of religion?

- How are these values expressed in the daily functioning of the religious community? Is gender equality evident in the structures and systems of the community – for example, in access to leadership roles and services provided?
- Does the community have organizational codes or processes to ensure gender equality in its functioning and service to its members?
- What are the strategic entry points for addressing gender equality and ensuring its prominence in the partnership?
- Are there groups or individuals in the religious community who are initiating gender-inclusive policies and practices?
- Is the religious community implementing programmes that are, or with support could be, models of gender equality in action – for example, diversity training and mentoring, or programmes demonstrating equal outcomes for boys and girls in the areas of education, HIV or early childhood development?
- Many religious communities have a disproportionate number of men in the higher levels of leadership. What might be some strategies to confront this and include them in the process of promoting gender equity?

*(See pp. 31, 57 and 58 for information on engaging women of faith networks and pp. 21 and 47 for examples of engaging with religious communities on female genital mutilation/cutting.)*

## Child participation<sup>62</sup>

Children’s participation can play a crucial role in furthering their protection from violence. Through their participation, girls and boys can raise awareness of the violations they experience as well as positively contribute to preventing and addressing violence and abuse.

Participation offers opportunities to strengthen children’s and adolescent’s capacities to better protect themselves, to address discrimination and to access the means to improve their own and other children’s lives. It also builds on children’s resilience and can help girls and boys in the recovery process. In addition, taking into account the views of children and adolescents is important to ensuring that relevant policies, programmes and services are child friendly, adequate and appropriate.

Religious communities are multi-generational and are in a unique position to encourage the participation of children by creating opportunities for them to express their thoughts, ideas and solutions for promoting and protecting their rights. Children’s participation not only facilitates their healthy development but also benefits the religious community as a whole.

*“A child’s faith grows as the child grows. Adults who model faith and provide opportunities for children to participate positively in a faith community influence children’s future involvement in worship, education, stewardship, and service to others. If we are to grow and nurture the church of the future, children must be primary participants.”*

*— National Council of Churches USA<sup>63</sup>*

Promoting a partnership culture in settings where adults have usually been in positions of power in relation to children can create a space for the insights and experiences of children to play a major part in identifying solutions to problems they face. This has special implications for very young children and those who have traditionally been marginalized or excluded from decision-making such as girls, children with disabilities and those from minority groups. Being given an opportunity to share their views in a meaningful way with a respected religious person can be a very empowering experience for them.



Some considerations in working with religious communities to promote meaningful child participation might include:

- What are some of the ways in which children participate in the religious community?
  - Do they have distinct roles in worship services, rituals or special holidays?
  - Are older children and youth involved in the religious education of younger children?
- What barriers to participation do children in the religious community face?
  - What is the source of these – for example, religious teachings, administrative structures and systems, particular opinions of adult leadership?
- What preparation and support do children need to participate in a meaningful way?
- What training and support is available to adults in the religious community to facilitate children's meaningful participation?

Some suggestions for actions in partnership with religious communities to enhance meaningful child participation are:

- Provide information, support and training to equip adults in religious communities to work with children and young people in ways that respect children's age, development, safety and well-being.
- Support initiatives for children to become fully conversant with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and raise adults' awareness and understanding of it. This should include discussion about how religious values shaped the understanding of children's rights enshrined in the Convention.
- Provide space for children to develop their own ideas and activities to address issues of importance to them.

#### YOUTH PARTICIPATION TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS COOPERATION IN A CONFLICT SITUATION

In the Molukus (**Indonesia**), where religious conflict had torn communities apart and created intolerance and distrust, a Muslim-Christian coalition of NGOs partnered with UNICEF in 2002 to establish a Children's Parliament to give voice to children and create opportunities for those from different religions to interact. It was not only the first Children's Parliament in Indonesia but also the first significant event to cross the religious divide. The initiative led

to child rights workshops in different conflict-affected areas of the country and to peace-building activities that contributed to the peace initiative in the Molukus, including a peace education curriculum integrated into the provincial education system.

*Source: United Nations Children's Fund, 'Adolescent Programming Experiences During Conflict and Post-conflict', 2004.<sup>64</sup>*



# 4

## Preventing the Misuse of Religion

*A Muslim religious leader speaks to a group of women about the dangers of female genital mutilation/cutting (Egypt).*

“[W]e must acknowledge that our religious communities have not fully upheld their obligations to protect our children from violence. Through omission, denial and silence, we have at times tolerated, perpetuated and ignored the reality of violence against children in homes, families, institutions and communities, and not actively confronted the suffering that this violence causes. Even as we have not fully lived up to our responsibilities in this regard, we believe that religious communities must be part of the solution to eradicating violence against children, and we commit ourselves to take leadership in our religious communities and the broader society.”

— *Multi-Religious Commitment to Confront Violence against Children*<sup>65</sup>

Although the fundamental values of all the major religious traditions uphold the dignity and right to well-being of children, some beliefs, attitudes and practices associated with religions promote or condone violence and discrimination against children. Whether these are actual tenets of religion, or religion is misused to justify harmful beliefs and practices, they can violate a child’s physical, emotional and spiritual integrity.

Some actions, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and early marriage, are sometimes carried out in the name of religion though they are typically based in older cultural traditions. In such cases, engagement with key religious actors can be critical in addressing and ending violent or abusive customary traditions by clarifying their non-conformance with religious principles.

It may also be the case that such practices, and others such as the creation of orphanages over community-based alternative care, are actually seen as beneficial to children from the perspective of the community and grounded in their faith values. Research has shown that confrontational and shaming approaches are often futile or even counterproductive in addressing many harmful practices, particularly those that are based on cultural belief systems. By first establishing the common ground of the best interests of the child, it is possible to confront and explore the implications of attitudes and practices with the goal of fulfilling children’s rights.

#### DISTINGUISHING TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PRACTICES FROM RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS

Female genital mutilation/cutting is widely practiced in **Egypt** for cultural and religious reasons. Eradication efforts have long focused on health advocacy messages and national legislation criminalizing the practices, often with little success. The significance placed on dutiful religious conduct, as well as the belief that the practice was in the best interest of girls to make them socially acceptable and marriageable, was not well understood or acknowledged. Evaluations carried out by UNICEF and the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre have illustrated how community-level abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting has been rapidly and effectively accomplished through a combination

of community dialogue processes that examine the role of the practice in the socio-cultural context and foster consensus against it and affirmation from religious leaders that there is no religious basis for the practices, thus supporting abandonment.

This is a good example of how religious and cultural values, beliefs and norms are often overlapping and intertwined in subtle ways. It highlights the importance of engaging in processes that clarify the distinctions in order to appropriately respond to some of the most difficult child rights challenges.

*Source: United Nations Children’s Fund Innocenti Research Centre, 2010.<sup>66</sup>*

Even where there is not purposeful mistreatment of children, there may be hesitancy in some religious communities to address particularly sensitive child rights issues, such as sexual and gender-based violence against children or other issues seen as taboo in the socio-cultural context. These can include matters relating to women's reproductive health; menstrual hygiene; sexuality, particularly homosexuality; drug use; sex work, etc. Addressing them is fundamental to promoting equitable access to needed health, social and educational services, including responding to HIV in an evidence-informed fashion. The silence and stigma surrounding such

“Without engaging with religious communities and leaders, the enduring taboos and prejudices that work against equality and rights for women cannot be addressed.”<sup>67</sup>

important issues runs counter to human rights-based programming and can quickly strain relationships with religious communities and erode trust in partnerships.

It is important to remember that religious communities are not homogenous, nor are they static. Even within particular denominations there is a contextualization of theology, its interpretation and implementation into action, and a diversity of perspectives among leaders that will provide entry points for dialogue and partnership around even the most sensitive issues.

Other strategies such as involving affected community members – for instance, people living with HIV, women and young people – in collaborative engagement with religious actors could pre-empt likely disagreement or mistrust.

It is also important to be aware that working with religious communities to transform local practices can take a long time. It involves a multi-pronged approach: engaging with theologians on the understanding of religious practices as they apply to local norms, transforming leaders' teaching and engaging parents and children at the grass roots on the basis of the practice so they can make knowledgeable choices for change. If the goal of sustainable community transformation over the long haul is to be attained, religious communities need to be fully engaged throughout.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, there is the reality that individuals who profess a particular faith do not always fulfil the spirit of their beliefs and may act contrary to the tenets of their faith. Examples of such behaviour might include the physical and sexual abuse of children while they are in the care of faith-based institutions.

The following section highlights some considerations in determining when and how to partner with religious communities and suggests ways to address some of the challenges that may arise. Also discussed are issues that will determine when not to pursue engagement, as this will not always be in the best interest of child rights programming.

“Churches can play an important role in creating non-stigmatizing and inclusive models of community. But if they are to do so, then they need theologians and ethicists to confront issues of sin, sex and sexuality: issues which have lain at the root of the moralization and judgementalism for which religion has gained such an adverse reputation in terms of the global response to HIV prevention.”<sup>69</sup>

## THE FAITH TO ACTION INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE POSITIVE CARE PRACTICES FOR ORPHAN AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Many Christian churches and organizations within the **United States** have responded to the needs of vulnerable children without adequate parental care, mostly in Africa, through the establishment of orphanages for children. In 2004 a six-country study of responses to orphans and vulnerable children by faith-based organizations in Africa found that institutions were being established with increasing frequency, and often with support from Christian communities abroad. While the efforts are well intended, orphanages are expensive and reach very few children. They separate children from family and community life, and they rarely can meet the developmental needs of children. Additionally, they can contribute to further weakening of families as children are relinquished into institutional care at higher rates in order to receive services such as food and education.

In light of this, the Faith to Action Initiative was developed to bring together US Christian leaders,

care experts, and key international stakeholders to shift the trend in US Evangelical Christian donor responses to vulnerable children globally.

The Faith to Action Initiative was developed in response to this challenge. The Initiative brings together US Christian leaders and care experts, together with key international stakeholders to integrate international child protection standards and better practice with the faith-based call to serve the needs of orphan and vulnerable children. As part of the Initiative, for example, a multi-country study of promising practices by US Christian churches highlighted effective alternatives to building orphanages as well as resources on good practice when starting an orphan ministry, standards and principles of care for residential settings and guidance for building relationships with African communities and churches.

*Source: The Better Care Network, n.d.<sup>70</sup>*

## ADVOCATING WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS, MEDIA, AND GOVERNMENT FOR THE PROTECTION AND WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN

In **Senegal**, as part of a national advocacy and communication campaign against child maltreatment led by the Ministry of Family and Children, with support of UNICEF, prominent Islamic religious leaders and networks conducted a study that highlighted the importance given in the Qur'an and other Islamic texts to the protection and well-being of children. During the month of Ramadan religious channels on national television and radio discussed

the issue to raise awareness about the negative consequences of child begging, exploitation and corporal punishment and to highlight the Qur'an's emphasis on positive parenting, positive discipline, education and child protection. These broadcasts included a call-in element to involve the public in the discussion.

*Source: United Nation's Children's Fund Senegal Country Office, 2011.<sup>71</sup>*



# 5

## FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGEMENT

Earthquake-affected children from a Christian Evangelical School, who are learning in a tent classroom, locate their country on an inflatable globe supplied by UNICEF along with other teaching and learning materials (Haiti).

“The value of a partnership lies in combining the complementary strengths and contributions of two or more parties to achieve greater impact and synergy than when operating separately, thereby contributing to better results for children and the promotion of their rights.”<sup>72</sup>

As can be seen from the examples in section 3, there is a long history of partnering with religious communities throughout the world and in all areas of programming, including advocacy and provision of direct services.

Partnership with religious communities, as with other civil society actors, should focus on delivering results for children and their families. Partnerships must provide clearly defined added value to efforts to achieve concrete results and be committed to the principles of equity, accountability and transparency at all levels.<sup>73</sup>

Given the tremendous diversity among religious communities, the processes for effective engagement will vary depending on the community itself, the organizational level at which work needs to be carried out and the type of programming (e.g., advocacy, direct service provision or coordination), as well as other social, cultural and political factors.

The starting point to decide whether or not to partner with a religious actor should be the result sought and the added value of engaging with a religious actor to achieve that result. It is also important to understand why religious communities would want to partner with child rights organizations.

This section will outline the following recommended core elements of a framework for effective engagement with religious communities:

- Understand values, structures and leadership
- Focus on shared values and a rights-based approach
- Ensure impartiality
- Identify strategic entry points
- Integrate partnerships into programming
- Build on convening and technical strengths
- Ensure adequate competencies

## **UNDERSTAND VALUES, STRUCTURES AND LEADERSHIP**

Religious communities differ widely in terms of their size, geographical focus, structures and operational and technical capacities. Even within a single religious organization there will be differences in the theological emphasis, political leanings and cultural influences. Individual leadership can also result in variations. Some religious communities are informal in nature, typically volunteer-driven and motivated by passion grounded in their faith. These may lack the administrative and management systems normally expected of partners.

## BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Collaboration Can	Through the Following Means
Expand coverage of interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing the pool of available resources (human, financial, material)</li> <li>• Coordinating implementation to ensure coverage of excluded and/or underserved populations</li> </ul>
Improve cost efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capturing economies of scale and pooling purchasing power</li> <li>• Increasing throughput from 'fixed cost' delivery infrastructure</li> </ul>
Amplify advocacy and communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggregating multiple actors to influence policy decisions</li> <li>• Reinforcing public messaging at various levels (local, nat'l, int'l) and from various sources (faith and secular)</li> </ul>
Catalyze learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematizing the collection of data and information</li> <li>• Facilitating knowledge exchange and best practice sharing</li> </ul>
Develop trust and tolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a foundation for building relationships and mutual respect</li> </ul>
Facilitate cross-sector engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating 'politically neutral' platforms for secular entities to engage the faith sector (as opposed to partnering with single faiths)</li> <li>• Lowering the transaction costs (for donors, governments, secular NGOs) through consolidated points of contact</li> </ul>

Source: Excerpted from Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty, 2010.<sup>74</sup>

At the same time it is important to remember that the complexity of child rights organizations, including UNICEF, will present a similar challenge to potential partners in the religious community. Therefore, both actors need to make every attempt to clarify for the other their organizational structures and related systems in order to find the most appropriate linkages for effective engagement.

As part of any assessment it is important to ensure the inclusion of information on the presence, structure, influence and relationship with government bodies of religious communities – especially grass-roots religious actors, women and youth leaders and structures that tend to be overlooked in assessments and stakeholder analyses, leading to missed opportunities for highly organic and sustainable interventions. This is particularly the case for traditional or indigenous religions.

Child rights organizations should know the basic concepts, principles and teachings of religious traditions in which they work. This information can be obtained not only by reading but, importantly, by engaging with members of religious communities in a spirit of inquiry. There



are also people of faith working within UNICEF and other child rights organizations who can serve as a bridge to better understand religious traditions and engage with religious communities. In some countries there are government bodies that collect information on religious communities and could also be contacted.

## Structures and systems

- What are the predominant faith traditions (and geographical focus, if applicable)? It is important to remember that this may include traditional or animistic communities that may lack visible or formalized structures to the external eye.
- What are their basic organizational structures and systems (e.g., houses of worship, formal and informal ceremonies and celebrations)? Are there government entities responsible for religious issues (e.g., Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Culture)?
- What dynamics exist between religious communities or within a particular community that may be characterized by other factors (i.e., ethnic, economic, political) that would potentially affect collaborative programming?
  - What existing services and/or advocacy initiatives are religious actors undertaking in relation to children’s rights and do they adhere to national guidelines and standards?
  - Some of these may be support to formal structures in the broader community, such as management of health facilities, outreach services, community radio, newspaper and television programming, provision of educational programmes.
  - There may also be mechanisms within the religious tradition to provide assistance to particularly vulnerable members of their community, such as *zakat* in Muslim communities and church funds from donations or tithing.
  - Some assistance may be informal or even ad hoc, such as offering the use of worship spaces for education, community activities or shelter in emergencies.
- What relevant technical experience or skills do religious actors have (including knowledge of systematic codes of good practice and appropriate/ethical conduct regarding children)?
- What financial resources do the religious structures have for carrying out the intended activities? If they need additional financial support, do they have the organizational capacities to handle financial inputs and the accompanying reporting requirements?
- What, if any, involvement and influence do religious communities have in local, national or regional social and political governance, especially in addressing the needs of the most marginalized children and families? Is this influence the result of established structures or due to individual leaders with particular charisma or influence?

## Leadership

Understanding leadership and management structures, as well as identifying the focal persons who have the authority to enter into collaboration and move the work forward, is key to any partnership. If a religious community is new or unfamiliar, however, this can be an especially challenging process. It is important to find out information such as:

- How does the religious community define leadership?
- Is there a formal, centralized or hierarchical system of designated leaders, or is the structure decentralized with leadership residing closer to the community level?

- At the different levels of the religious structure, and particularly at the grass-roots level, are there persons who may not have formal leadership status but are perceived to be opinion leaders (e.g., an elder in the community, a school teacher, an individual who self organizes groups within the community around a particular social issue)? These individuals often educate, reflect and mobilize community members in ways important for implementing any given programme.
- Who are the people responsible for making decisions regarding the partnership as well as the implementation and oversight of programming (these may not be the same individuals)?
- If there is a highly structured system of decision-making necessitating dialogue at different levels, can decision makers be mobilized at comparable levels within child rights organizations to engage in the process? This can be very important in expressing respect for and adhering to the protocols of the religious community and will greatly enhance the sense of partnership and collaboration.

## FOCUS ON SHARED VALUES AND A RIGHTS-BASED FRAMEWORK

Keeping child rights and related areas of programming as the point of reference for partnership can help to avoid tensions and potential pitfalls that can arise from incompatible goals or competing agendas. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. This understanding is also reflected in the principle of non-discrimination that appears in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 2).<sup>76</sup>

Religious communities offer many social, spiritual and material assets to a strategic partnership with child rights organizations that can enhance both partners’ work to address the needs of the most vulnerable children and families. Partner assessment and selection should prioritize those contributions that religious actors can make to child rights programming because of who they are. At the same time, some religious groups have raised concerns about the child rights agenda, such as that it erodes or competes with the rights of parents to raise their children as they wish. An important starting point is to learn how potential religious partners understand and relate to fundamental child rights principles through the following steps:

- Clarify and agree on where there is common ground and, if relevant, where action is already underway that can provide a starting point for collaboration. Some likely starting points might be shared values focusing on the inherent dignity of the child, the importance of the family in the life of the child and an emphasis on reaching the poorest of the poor.
- If concerns or differences are discovered, try to identify the root causes. Are they due to a misunderstanding of language used to articulate religious beliefs – or equally of human rights? Are they due to fundamental and deeply held beliefs that are incompatible with child rights principles? Are such beliefs based on core religious teaching or are they actually based on other cultural factors? Are they due to a lack of information or resources (human, financial)?

Humanitarian principles and right instruments must remain the frameworks for action and provide the boundaries that define acceptable partnerships. However, without listening to and then aligning the language of rights with the articulation of deeply held socio-cultural and religious

values and beliefs, there can be a perception of alienation and imposition of foreign ideas despite the fact that the human rights framework is inherently based on these deeper values. Thus, language and approach are critical elements in the process of establishing and building meaningful partnerships.

In trying to understand religious value systems, it is very important to consider that religion is one component of a dynamic interaction between social and other cultural factors. Attitudes and behaviours that are understood to be religious in nature are often more characteristic of other social and cultural norms. These distinctions, while nuanced, can be very significant when addressing child rights concerns that are associated with religious values but may actually be grounded in cultural values that religious actors can challenge and help to change.

There will, inevitably, be areas of work in which there is lack of agreement about particular approaches. One example, as mentioned earlier, is that condom distribution as an HIV-transmission prevention activity may not be supported by some religious communities. It may be possible to disagree on such an issue and still be able to work together on areas of common concern – for example, promoting HIV testing, addressing discrimination against children affected by HIV and/or providing care and support for orphans and other vulnerable children. Agreeing to disagree should, moreover, be done with mutual respect and the avoidance of actions to disparage each other.<sup>78</sup> In addition, it is important to keep the door open for dialogue even where there is no active partnership.

However, there may be instances where disagreements focus on issues that are at the core of each actor's mandate and values, making partnership undesirable if not impossible. From a rights-based perspective, this would include any practice or approach that infringes on basic child and human rights. For example, it would be unacceptable to work with a faith-based organization that pressured aid recipients to convert or made any aid conditional on religious views or practices. This is different to child rights organizations working with religious actors to promote child rights issues within their own faith communities. An example of this might be providing information and support to religious leaders to develop messaging for use in services for their congregations on the importance of caring for children as reflected in their holy texts.

*“As someone who has been a Commissioner with the UK Human Rights Commission I have always contended that the ‘human rights-based approach’ is a younger relative of the religiously inspired human dignity approach. It seems to me that the premise of human dignity is a level philosophical playing field for religious and child rights actors to partner together.” — Rev Joel Edwards, Micah Challenge International Director<sup>77</sup>*

## ENSURE IMPARTIALITY

Recognizing that religion is or could be a highly political issue in many contexts, it is important that efforts to engage with religious communities are impartial and non-partisan. This is critical in situations where religious differences may be used to fuel conflict or competition for political power. Such situations will require transparency in communications with the different parties, or prioritizing work with a recognized inter-religious body that can advance child rights efforts without being overshadowed or used to advance another agenda. High-level advocacy may be required in addition to the more operational-level discussions.

By emphasizing their political neutrality and mandate, child rights organizations can often open a space for activities to promote the rights of children and cultivate a broader base of support than may be possible by partisan actors. This support often extends to the highest levels of religious communities, which may be more responsive to child rights organizations that exhibit political and religious neutrality.

There may also be contexts in which it is better not to engage with religious actors in programming. This is likely to be the case where religion is politicized to the point that any such engagement would threaten a child rights organization’s neutrality – or even perceptions of its neutrality. It is also possible in some contexts that the beliefs and practices of a specific religious community are so far out of line with child rights principles and a child rights organization’s mandate that engagement would call into question the latter’s legitimacy and good reputation. Obviously, these assessments need to be made carefully and thoroughly to ensure that the opportunities afforded by engagement always outweigh the risks.

## BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

Social Factors	Operational Factors	Structural Factors
<b>Lack of familiarity</b> – Ignorance about a would-be partner’s strengths and strategic potential.	<b>Differing operational norms</b> – Difference in approaches to program delivery, results monitoring, and financial tracking, for example.	<b>Fragmentation of actors<sup>^^</sup></b> – Diffuse and difficult to navigate sectors with weak organizing structures.
<b>Preconceptions and stereotypes</b> – Presumptions about a potential partner’s level of commitment or quality of work, for example.	<b>Divergent priorities</b> – Conflicting (or often changing) views about which issues or approaches should be given precedence.	<b>Competition<sup>**</sup></b> – Rivalry among actors for resources or recognition.
<b>Suspicion and mistrust<sup>**</sup></b> – Fear of hidden motives, such as proselytizing, or a history of tensions between two groups.	<b>Lack of a shared language<sup>*</sup></b> – Differences in the common lexicon and technical terminology.	<b>Exclusion of actors<sup>^</sup></b> – Under-representation or systematic exclusion of some actors from collaborative mechanisms.
<b>Desire to maintain boundaries</b> – Faith actor’s concern about being co-opted or instrumentalized, as well as secular actor’s unease about potentially over stepping religion/ state boundaries.	<b>Uneven capacity</b> – Concerns about skill gaps (e.g. technical expertise, management capacity, M&E), or the ability to administer funds.+	

\* Marshall, K. and Van Saanen M., “Development and Faith,” The World Bank, 2007.

+ For example, critics of PEPFAR’s funding of FBOs highlighted the “limited capacity of many indigenous FBOs to absorb large grants and use the funds effectively.” Berkley Center, “Mapping the Role of Faith Communities in Development Policy: The US Case in International Perspective,” 2007.

^^ For example, a study of HIV/AIDS partnerships in Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Malawi identified fragmentation within the Christian faith entities and donor groupings as a barrier to effective collaboration. Haddad B., et al. “The potential and perils of partnerships,” ARHARP, 2008.

^ Karam, A., “Concluding Thoughts on Religion and the United Nations, Redesigning the Culture of Development,” CrossCurrents, September 2010.

\*\* Haddad B., Olivier J., De Gruchy S. 2008. The potential and perils of partnership: Christian religious entities and collaborative stakeholders responding to HIV and AIDS in Kenya, Malawi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Study commissioned by Tearfund and UNAIDS, Interim Report ARHAP.

Source: Excerpted from Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty, 2010.<sup>79</sup>

## IDENTIFY STRATEGIC ENTRY POINTS

Engagement on child-related concerns is in itself a shared entry point, as this is an area in which most religious communities are theologically comfortable and motivated. An analysis of the assessment results will reveal possible starting points for collaborative relationships with religious communities. These may seem very small initially, such as an expression of interest in dialogue or an invitation to participate in a religious event with a focus on children. It is important to recognize

the potential of every point of contact for building relationships over time that will foster successful partnerships. Strong relationships are of central importance to most religious actors and are crucial for effective engagement.

While cultivating relationships is key, there are challenges if the partnership is not institutionalized. Individuals representing religious communities can change, as can staff within child rights organizations, particularly international staff (which often leaves national staff to deal with highly complex and sometime challenging situations). While individuals may have provided the entry point for the collaboration, the partnership ultimately needs to be grounded in the institutions in which the individuals work. In identifying religious actors with whom to partner it is critical to ensure that these actors be respected by the targeted communities. There may be instances where a religious actor may be open to engagement but not have the required legitimacy from his or her community.

## Leaders of religious communities

Clerics, bishops, rabbis, imams, priests, abbots, nuns, shamans, etc. – as well as lay leaders and leaders of coordinating bodies and inter-religious associations – can be powerful allies in advocacy for children’s rights at the highest levels nationally and internationally. Religious leaders speak with authority on behalf of significant portions of the population, and they bring that authority and legitimacy to child rights work that may be perceived as primarily secular, particularly when the focus is on legal or political reform. It is important to identify the leadership level at which engagement is necessary for the planned programming (e.g., national, district, local), particularly with religious communities that are very hierarchical.

### PARTNERING FOR ADVOCACY ON CHILD RIGHTS

Building on strong advocacy with Christian and community-based organizations initiated in **Botswana** in 2008, UNICEF’s support for the realization of the Children’s Act in 2009 led to strengthened faith-based partnerships that resulted in the development of 37 publications with 13 different religious organizations from Baha’i, Muslim, Seventh Day Adventist and

Ecumenical denominations. These publications include children’s books for use during Sunday School (or equivalent), sermon notes and training materials on a wide variety of issues, including birth registration, early childhood development, nutrition and HIV and AIDS.

*Source: United Nations Children’s Fund Botswana Country Office Annual Report, 2009.*

## Women of faith networks

Women of faith networks in any community are already undertaking efforts to care for vulnerable children and their families, including orphans, persons living with HIV and survivors of gender-based violence. For large segments of the female population, women of faith leaders are their conscience and give voice to their needs regarding reproductive health, sexuality and other topics that may be deemed taboo by male religious leaders. Many women of faith working on the periphery of formal religious structures “play important roles in their local places of worship or in their family’s religious life... [shaping] religious traditions in less obvious but influential ways”.<sup>80</sup>

## Youth groups

Youth groups are found in many religious communities and have the capacity to harness the enormous energy of young people of faith. These young people know first-hand the needs as well as the strengths of children and youth and they can work on child rights issues with authenticity. However, it is important to ensure youth groups are inclusive and encourage opportunities for

## THE RELIGIONS FOR PEACE GLOBAL WOMEN OF FAITH NETWORK

The Global Women of Faith Network allows women from different religions and cultures to coordinate strategies and pool resources and capabilities for cooperative action to achieve results that would be difficult, if not impossible, for any single member to accomplish alone. It is comprised of more than 1,000 Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Indigenous, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian religious women's organizations. The network operates at the global level as well as through regional networks in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and the Middle East. National women of faith networks have been launched in more than 30 countries.

The network provides a valuable opportunity for women of all faiths to communicate and learn from each other and to build bridges and partnerships between faith-based women's organizations, major international agencies and the United Nations. The priority themes for collaborative action include: network building; peace and security; women of faith as agents of conflict transformation; and gender, poverty and health. Ending violence against women and girls is a primary commitment for the network, which aims to create a safer and healthier world for all with the help of passionate women and men of diverse religious traditions.

*Source: Religions for Peace, 'A Guide for Building Women of Faith Networks', 2009.<sup>81</sup>*

## FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS MODEL COOPERATION IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

In 2006 during heavy fighting in eastern **Sri Lanka**, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and Muslim Aid (MA) were both supporting an influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Muslim communities into a predominantly Sinhalese area. There were already significant ethnic/religious tensions between these groups. Few other NGOs were working in this area, and UMCOR and MA quickly found themselves working together to provide relief services. They soon realized that their cooperation had benefits beyond the immediate facilitation of logistics and aid delivery.

Both agencies worked in coordination with their respective faith and community leaders and councils to coordinate the mobilization of thousands of volunteers who brought food and non-food relief items to the IDP camps and distribution centres. MA engaged with the imams, the coordinating council for Muslim

theologians and communities, discussed the impartial nature of humanitarianism with them and vouched for UMCOR staff's neutrality. Discussions centred on the imperative of both faiths to serve humanity and reduce the suffering of the disadvantaged. This was language which people could understand and relate to. UMCOR did the same through local Methodist priests in Christian areas – and with Hindus whom the priests knew. Soon those villages where UMCOR workers had been held at gunpoint and attacked by villagers a couple of weeks previously welcomed both UMCOR and MA staff.

The partners also worked with Buddhist community leaders who joined in the inter-faith relief effort. UMCOR and MA eventually formalized their partnership at the international level and continue collaborating in inter-faith relief efforts.

*Source: Hovey and Saleem, 2008.<sup>82</sup>*

marginalized young people to be involved. Youth are not a homogenous group and participation needs to provide for equality of opportunity for all, without discrimination on any grounds. There may also be opportunities for engagement with outstanding individual youth faith leaders who can be influential in bringing about change.

## Faith-based organizations (FBOs)

FBOs are structured similarly to other NGOs but their efforts are grounded in the tenets and values of a particular faith. Both international FBOs – such as World Vision, Islamic Relief and Catholic Relief Services, among many others – and national or local ones can establish credibility and authority with local religious communities and, in many instances, continue to provide support beyond the duration of specific projects. In addition, many FBOs have locally connected

operational networks that can be mobilized for response. For example, the global Caritas network for the Catholic Church and the national and local archdiocesan and other church-based structures are the means by which Catholic Relief Services carries out all its emergency and development programmes. Such networks can enable FBOs to respond in an efficient and sustainable manner and reach into communities in ways that secular NGOs often cannot. In situations of religious tension, FBOs of different faith traditions can model cooperation by working together and with secular organizations. This can have a mediating effect and facilitate responses that may not otherwise be possible.

### UNICEF COLLABORATION WITH IMAMS IN SUDAN

In **Sudan** UNICEF has addressed issues of abandonment of infants and alternative family care by securing the support of prominent imams. Significantly, in 2006 the Fatwa Council of Sudan issued a *fatwa* stating that abandoned babies should be viewed as orphans within the Islamic context and thus had the right to full state and community support. The *fatwa* also declared that pregnancy alone

was not proof of adultery and that mothers and their children should not be separated if they were in the judicial system, which had been a common practice. The programme saw significant success in finding alternative community-based care for institutionalized children as well as establishing stronger child protection law.

*Source: United Nations Children's Fund Sudan, 2007.<sup>83</sup>*

## Theologians and educators

Theologians and educators play an important role in articulating and disseminating the beliefs and teachings of religious communities and garner enormous respect. While those with very extreme or radical views can be alienating, and even perpetuate harmful practices, mainstream theologians can be a powerful force in changing attitudes and behaviours. As educators – and, in some traditions, jurists – they can examine and interpret basic concepts and principles of child rights (e.g., international law, major principles and guidance documents) and demonstrate the relevance of these to religious communities and their belief systems. They are key actors in confronting and changing social norms that are harmful to children but may be perceived to be religiously mandated by members of the community. In contexts where theologians are jurists, they can shape legal systems that uphold the rights of children.

“Multi-religious cooperation is a powerful way to engage these social, spiritual and moral religious assets to advance shared security and counter the abuse of religion. It can be more powerful – both symbolically and substantively – than the efforts of individual religious groups acting alone.”<sup>84</sup>

## Inter-religious mechanisms

Individual religious communities bring to every partnership an array of assets that contribute to ensuring the well-being of children. When the collective energy and resources of a number of these communities is harnessed, even better outcomes can be achieved.

- Inter-religious approaches to child rights partnerships can broaden the base of shared values, reinforcing the fundamental principles underlying the work of child rights organizations as they are articulated to a larger audience.
- Such partnerships model cooperative attitudes and behaviours that can have an impact on and potentially enhance community perceptions of child rights work.

- Inter-religious cooperation in conflict situations, particularly those in which ethnic and/or religious issues are points of tension, can be a powerful display of the positive and unifying power of religion for communities who have come to view differences as divisive. In contexts where religious conflict is a critical aspect of the wider conflict, focusing on the needs of children can actually serve as a bridge to bring together parties that normally do not wish to deal with each other.

## INTEGRATE PARTNERSHIPS INTO PROGRAMMING

The processes needed to build strong partnerships are not separate from those of programme development and implementation. Partnership should be seen as a strategy to enhance programmatic success by learning from religious communities to shape programme priorities as well as by sharing and building on each partner's assets.

- Effective partnerships are the result of long-term and deliberate efforts that need to be integrated into work planning and funding cycles.
- Strategies for engagement with religious communities should be made explicit in country programme action plans as well as annual work plans for programme sections, ensuring that religious communities are involved in national policy and planning forums, especially when they play a major service delivery role in that sector.
- Efforts should also contribute to national development plans, ensuring the participation of religious communities in national processes.
- The hard work, time and resources needed to foster effective engagement need to be built into the design, budget, management and monitoring of any programme.
- As part of the on-going learning process around defining and creating effective partnerships with religious communities, it is important to systematically document and evaluate experiences (especially the value-added of joint partnership). This can help in the development of new methodologies for increasingly effective and sustained collaboration.

## BUILD ON CONVENING AND TECHNICAL STRENGTHS

### Convening role

Organizations such as UNICEF, which is recognized and respected globally for organizations advancing the rights of children, wield significant influence in convening public and private actors at all levels. They can thus play a catalytic role in forging effective collaborations around child-focused initiatives through, for example:

- Using their status and legitimacy to act as a convener of different religious groups by maintaining a focus on child rights issues and initiatives.
- Ensuring that religious partners who contribute significantly to children's issues are at the table when national, regional and global programming is being developed.
- Inviting the highest levels of leadership of major religious traditions to discuss and agree on an important advocacy initiative to increase the global political impact of children's rights organizations' work.



- Using their influence to call together decision makers on behalf of smaller religious communities or members who feel they cannot raise important child rights issues with their leadership, thus ensuring the latter’s participation in important initiatives.

## Technical expertise and field presence

With their extensive technical capacity and field presence, organizations such as UNICEF have developed considerable expertise in all areas of programming. Their far-reaching field presence also facilitates the dissemination and application of knowledge, data and policy within religious communities.

### TOOLS AND AGREEMENTS FOR COLLABORATION

As noted above, collaborative engagement with religious communities can contribute to all aspects of programming: advocacy, direct service provision, coordination, policy development, etc. It may take different forms, ranging from contractual agreements to informal relationships of a consultative nature. The particular context, programme goals, presence and interest of potential partners will determine the most effective strategies and approaches. In addition, the nature of the partnerships may change over time, varying from less to more formal arrangements as trust is built and further opportunities arise. Sometimes significant work can be undertaken without a written

agreement. “Informal collaborative arrangements remain a highly valued modality for engagement at all levels of UNICEF and, where appropriate, should be acknowledged and valued.”

Determining the most appropriate type of partnership is a process that relies heavily on clear goals, a thorough evaluation of potential partners and an honest assessment of a child rights organization’s own capacities to contribute to the different facets of partnership. It is also important to understand the legal status of religious actors to enter into agreements and manage the transfer of funds.

### SUMMARY OF UNICEF TOOLS AND AGREEMENTS

Type	Main purpose	Other features
<b>Memorandum of understanding (MoU)</b>	Articulate and agree on common goals and interests.	Involves no transfers of cash or supplies.
<b>Programme cooperation agreement (PCA)</b>  Two forms of agreement – ‘light’ and ‘more complex’ – depending on the scale, nature, assessed level of risk and the complexity of the partnership.	Agreement to work for common goals, with shared risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits. The PCA is based on a joint work plan and budget.	Resources may be transferred to the partner to assist it in carrying out its roles. The partner is uniquely positioned and has specific capacities or advantages to carry out its roles under the PCA.
<b>Small scale funding agreement (SSFA)</b>	Limited support provided to a local/ grass-roots organizations or other CSOs, not to exceed US\$20,000.	Flexible, with highly simplified planning format and reporting requirements.

Source: United Nations Children’s Fund, December 2010.<sup>95</sup>

Some activities might include:

- Mapping the role and contribution of religious communities in programming areas to promote integration in national planning and programming.
- Strengthening technical skills that religious actors bring to their work in health, education, nutrition, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene, and HIV and AIDS.
- Providing evidence-based information that can be communicated in ways that resonate effectively with religious communities.
- Sharing good practice and guidelines, such as child protection codes of conduct that religious communities can adapt and apply to their organizational structures.

## ENSURE ADEQUATE COMPETENCIES

Successful partnerships are based on trust, mutual respect, a common vision and shared values. Effective communication leads to a deeper understanding of how each partner approaches the issues at hand even when they may seem, at the outset, to be at odds. It is therefore important for staff in child rights organizations in all areas of programming to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes to effectively engage with religious communities in constructive ways. An understanding of their assets, the roles they are already playing and their working methods will improve communication as well as providing effective entry points for co-operation.

Some steps toward achieving this involve attitude, knowledge and skills.

### Attitude

- Cultivate an openness and curiosity about the religious and spiritual traditions where you are working.
- Be aware of your own feelings and potential biases about religion, spirituality and those who identify with a particular religious tradition.
- Acknowledge the diversity of religious traditions and avoid pre-conceived notions regarding whether one tradition or another may advance child rights.
- Seek out common values and principles of your work shared by the religious communities with which you engage.
- Display respect through appropriate dress, greetings and protocols when meeting with members of the community in order to enhance the partnership process and earn respect in return.

### Knowledge

- Learn about the basic concepts, principles and teaching of religious traditions regularly encountered. This can be done not only by reading but, importantly, by engaging with members of religious communities in a spirit of inquiry.
- Invite representatives of religious communities (including women, youth and elders) to share their perspectives on the work you are doing.

- Understand why religious communities would want to partner with child rights organizations.
- Identify and seek to understand human rights and child-related issues that may be contentious and potentially divisive in interactions with religious communities and find ways to address them without alienating or losing potential allies.
- Incorporate this information in orientations for newly arriving staff.
- Include information about religious communities, as well as their participation in community processes, in situation analyses and assessments.
- Confirm the roles already played by religious communities in promoting and protecting children's rights

## Skills

- Listen, learn and display respect for traditional values. When these seem incongruent with child rights perspectives, mediate and negotiate to find the common ground with religious traditions.
- Learn to articulate and meaningfully convey the language of child rights in the more commonly understood tenets and beliefs of religious communities (e.g., perhaps talking about rights without using the word itself, which can sometimes serve as an immediate disconnect).
- Develop facilitation skills for interactive processes that allow for sharing and integration of key religious and child rights concepts.
- Respectfully, but directly, confront fundamental challenges to child rights presented by religious communities.



*At a roundtable discussion on ending violence against children organized with Religions for Peace at UNICEF headquarters (left to right): Bishop Gunnar J. Stålsett, Bishop Emeritus of Oslo and Moderator of the European Council of Religious Leaders; H.E. Sheikh Shaban Ramadhan Mubaje, Grand Mufti of the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council and Co-Moderator of the African Council of Religious Leaders; and Chief Rabbi David Rosen, President of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*



# 6

## PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

*Girls work on a craft project in an art workshop at the UNICEF-assisted Al Madrassa Al Jadida Primary School (Morocco).*

It is critical to systematically assess the contribution of engaging with religious communities to achieve desired results. 'Planning, monitoring and evaluation' refers to the continuum of actions undertaken to develop an evidence base for measuring the quality, success and challenges of programmes. Effective planning, monitoring and evaluation systems improve accountability (to communities, governments, civil society), learning (within and outside the implementing partners) and the performance of interventions. Data are collected and analysed at every step to determine how a programme should be implemented (its design), how to measure progress according to the plan (monitoring) and determine whether objectives have been achieved (evaluation). These data include any qualitative or quantitative information that is objectively collected.

What is most important for effective planning, monitoring and evaluation is to ensure the process is realistic and achievable with the necessary financial, time and human resources available and that there is genuine participation of all partners and key stakeholders, especially children.

What follows is a simplified breakdown of the planning, monitoring and evaluation process. The focus is on partnering with religious communities, but the process also applies to working with other stakeholders. A sample logical framework (logframe) is also provided in annex 3 on partnering with religious leaders to address corporal punishment. A logframe is a management technique used to develop the overall design of a development project, improve monitoring and strengthen evaluation by clearly outlining the essential elements of the project throughout its cycle.<sup>86</sup>

Unlike many child rights organizations, religious communities – particularly local ones – may not have technical experience of this way of working and will need support and capacity building to be able to engage in planning, monitoring and evaluation processes as engaged and contributing partners.<sup>87</sup>

## Planning

As previously addressed in section 5, the decision whether or not to partner with a religious actor should be based on data that clearly highlight the particular value of working together to achieve desired results. Once agreement has been reached to partner on an intervention, the jointly created programme design should reflect the value added as an integral and measurable component of the programme framework.

The **goal** – the long-term change expected as a result of programme interventions – will be focused on the child rights issue of concern. One of the **objectives** – a key outcome to be achieved by the end of the programme cycle that will lead towards achievement of the goal – might focus on measurable achievements of the religious partner that enhance their contribution to the overall programme accomplishments.

In order to measure progress and achievement, programme implementation would begin with a process to collect baseline information, the starting point of partner and community knowledge, expectations, attitudes and behaviours. This is usually done through surveys and individual and group interviews of a representative sample of the community. Once the information is collected and analysed it will help develop

relevant and measurable indicators of accomplishment, including the contributions of partners to project outcomes and, possibly, impact. This information is then the reference point for monitoring and evaluation.

Both a needs/resources assessment and **situational analysis** should explore the roles that religious actors play and the influence they exert in the community in relation to the issue being addressed. Information collected can answer questions such as:

- What influence do religious leaders have on decision-making at the individual, family and community levels? How many individuals, families and communities can they reach?
- Are religious actors viewed as contributing positively or negatively to issues of importance in the community? What are their roles vis-à-vis social problems, conflicts or other concerns?
- What is the role of faith in shaping social norms? Do religious leaders play a part in this?

## Monitoring

Once there is an accurate baseline, it is possible to watch the progress of implementation and measure changes as they occur. Watching the project as it is happening, or monitoring, allows for programmatic changes to be made immediately if a particular strategy is not working as initially intended. **Monitoring** is the on-going and systematic collection and analysis of data related to specific indicators. An **indicator** is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement or to reflect the changes connected with an intervention. Indicators are compared over time in order to assess change. Monitoring provides information on the extent of progress to achieve intended objectives and the appropriate utilization of inputs.

The monitoring process usually focuses on outputs, or the most immediate results of activities; for example, did the training workshop occur as planned? Further on in the life of a programme, it will be possible to measure higher-level outcomes, or more substantial changes from implemented activities such as in behaviours, as a result of sustained programming and multiple activities.

Monitoring should be seen as a part of regular programming. Making site visits, checking reports and records, talking with staff, partners and community members are all monitoring activities. Documentation is essential, though it does not need to be overly burdensome.

In the sample programme logframe in annex 3 of a partnership between religious leaders and child rights organizations to address corporal punishment, there are indicators that specifically refer to outcomes one may wish to measure in partner attitude, knowledge and performance, the premise being that these will directly contribute to positive programme impact.

For example, see *Result area 1.1: Religious communities demonstrate knowledge about the impact of corporal punishment on child development and well-being* (p. 85). At the beginning of the programme partnership, as part of the situational analysis, it will be necessary to understand how religious partners understand the issues around corporal punishment. Do they see it as

'punishment' or as a positive exercise that contributes to children's proper development? Do they support only certain methods or its use in certain situations? Do they reject it outright?

One benefit of this is that it enables child rights actors to gauge how closely aligned (or not) the knowledge and attitudes are with evidence-based principles of good practice. It also provides better understanding of how the partners' religious beliefs shape their understanding and practice, which will contribute to stronger, more creative and, in theory, more effective interventions.

There are different ways that knowledge, attitudes and behaviours can be assessed.<sup>88</sup> Tools such as knowledge, attitude and practices surveys may be used. These require some technical skills and can be time-consuming. Focus group discussions are structured group interviews that can allow more flexibility in subjects discussed. When planning any capacity-building intervention such as training that intends to build knowledge, it is very important to measure current knowledge on the issues to be addressed (a pre-test) and repeat the measure after the exercise (a post-test) to see any immediate changes in knowledge that can be attributed to the exercise.

Referring again to the logframe and *Result area 1.2: Religious communities design and implement activities* (p. 87), once the proposed capacity-building is underway the programme calls for the leadership of religious communities to apply what they have learned by incorporating accurate information into their work, such as worship services, education and counselling. They will also organize and facilitate discussions about corporal punishment within their communities. Child rights actors need to give their religious partners the room to develop messages and approaches in ways that are suited to their religious communities. However, monitoring of these activities will be crucial to ensure that:

- The information they are presenting is accurate and unbiased.
- Their strategies for presenting the information are appropriate and aligned with good practice in child protection.

For example, in a religious activity such as a worship service, the leader might set a time aside to discuss the negative impacts of corporal punishment. She or he might present accurate information (a positive output of capacity-building activities), but without prior consultation call a child up before the participants and ask her to share her experience of corporal punishment. Though this approach might be well intended, to give a voice to a child and take the discussion out of the abstract, it could be very embarrassing and painful for the child. This would indicate that not all of the information learned in the training was fully understood or internalized. By responding at once to this situation individually with the religious leader, the child rights actor can prevent its recurrence and support the leader's efforts to become a stronger child advocate. Later measures of changed, positive behaviours on the part of the partner will reflect a successful outcome.<sup>89</sup>

Some methods for monitoring the implementation of partners' activities include directly observing activities and interviewing members of the community – including children and young people – about the content of presentations or discussions as they leave services, rites or festivals. This will provide information about the frequency of incorporation of the theme in regular religious activities, as well as community perceptions about the information and methods of dissemination.

## Evaluation

Measurement of the longer-term impact of a programme (goal) and the achievements of its objectives is **evaluation**, which is carried out at the end or after the end of a programme cycle. For projects of a very long duration (i.e., over many years) it is common to conduct a mid-term evaluation for accountability and to verify that the process is proceeding as planned.

The project will be evaluated by looking at, for example, the attitudes and behaviours at that point in time compared to those documented in the baseline. It is then that the overall outcome of the implementation strategy can be determined. Have attitudes and behaviours changed? Have attitudes changed but not behaviours?

By integrating partner relationships, capacity-building and interventions in the programme framework, it is possible to measure aspects of partnership that relate directly to programming. Beyond looking at the changes in partners' knowledge and attitudes about the child rights issues inherent in the programme (outputs) and their actions in implementing the activities effectively (outcomes), an evaluation would seek to verify that their involvement actually contributed to the measurable impacts of the programme. This is not always straightforward, but with good data documented in the design phase of the programme, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation, trends will be much easier to detect and analyse.

Returning to the example of a corporal punishment programme, monitoring should have been conducted on a regular basis. At the end of the programme, the initial baseline data collected should be reviewed in light of the indicators for the objectives and the goal of the programme. Questions asked could, for example, include:

- Was there accurate dissemination of information on the negative effects of corporal punishment?
- Were there demonstrations of positive child protection actions and behaviours?
- What were concrete outcomes of community discussions facilitated by religious leaders?
- Were agreed upon actions followed up on and implemented?

A thorough evaluation would seek to again collect the information sought in the baseline (assuming it is still deemed to be relevant), examine it in light of the baseline and then analyse those results along with the most significant findings of the monitoring process.

Finally, there are the organizational aspects of partnership that are outside of direct programming, though influencing it. Partnerships themselves have their own processes and outcomes. The governance aspects of partnerships are worth monitoring and evaluating in order to understand the dynamics that may strengthen or weaken them. Measurement would generally focus on values, capacity, communication and process. Some general indicators of good governance principles are:<sup>90</sup>

- Legitimacy: the extent of effective participation by relevant stakeholders in major governance and management decisions.
- Accountability: the extent to which accountability is defined, accepted and exercised along the chain of command.



- Responsibility: the extent to which the programme accepts and exercises responsibility to stakeholders who are not directly involved in governance.
- Fairness (equity): the extent to which partners and participants, similarly situated, have equal opportunity to influence the programme and to receive benefits from it.
- Transparency: the extent to which a programme's decision-making, reporting and evaluation processes are open and freely available to the general public.
- Efficiency: the extent to which the programme has converted or is expected to convert its resources/inputs (such as funds, expertise, time, etc.) economically into results in order to achieve the maximum possible outputs, outcomes and impacts.
- Probity: the extent to which all persons in leadership positions adhere to high standards of ethics and professional conduct over and above compliance with the rules and regulations governing the operation of the programme.



*As part of the Day of Prayer and Action for Children initiative, which aims to mobilize religious communities to promote children's rights, the Bishop of Dili along with children and special guests gather in front of the cathedral to release balloons signifying hope for a better protective environment for children (Timor-Leste).*

# ANNEX 1: KEY ACTORS

## UNITED NATIONS

### **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)** <[www.unaoc.org](http://www.unaoc.org)>

This initiative of the UN Secretary-General aims to improve understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions and to help counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism. The Alliance is supported by the Group of Friends – a community of over 85 member countries and international organizations and bodies.

Working in partnership with governments, international and regional organizations, civil society groups, foundations and the private sector, the Alliance supports a range of projects and initiatives aimed at building bridges among a diversity of cultures and communities.

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### **United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Faith-Based Organizations and the MDGs**

The Inter-Agency Task Force aims to support the work of UN staff towards the shared objective of learned, strategic and sustained engagement with key partners in the faith-based world and to support respective and collective efforts to realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Task Force acts as a shared platform for reflection and exchange of experiences as well as a resource hub on partnerships with faith-based development organizations within the UN as well as for external developmental counterparts.

Participating UN development organizations include: the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

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### **Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)** <[www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)>

Comprised of the UNAIDS Secretariat and its 10 cosponsors, UNAIDS is responsible for developing and advocating for policy and technical guidance on HIV and AIDS-related issues. Within this mandate, it works across a wide range of related cultural, health, social and economic issues including human rights, gender, emergency and humanitarian response, counselling and testing, HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, sexual and reproductive health, science and research.

UNAIDS recognizes the significant role that religious communities are playing in the HIV response, including the provision of HIV-related services, while acknowledging areas in which they could be supported to respond more effectively. This has led to the development of the *Partnership with Faith-based Organizations strategic framework*, the purpose of which is to encourage stronger partnerships between the UNAIDS family and FBOs in order to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, which includes the integration of FBOs in comprehensive national AIDS responses. See: <[data.unaids.org/pub/BaseDocument/2009/jc1786partnershipwithfaithbasedorganizations\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/BaseDocument/2009/jc1786partnershipwithfaithbasedorganizations_en.pdf)>.

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### **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** <[www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)>

UNDP is the United Nations' global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. UNDP is on the ground in 177 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. Its network links and coordinates global and national efforts to reach these goals. UNDP's focus is helping countries build and share solutions to the challenges of democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, environment and energy, and HIV and AIDS.

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### **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

<[www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)>

UNESCO's mission is to contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. Within the larger framework of intercultural dialogue, which also encompasses interreligious dialogue, special focus is placed on encouraging cultural pluralism and discouraging expressions of extremism. Programme areas through which UNESCO does this include: General and Regional Histories publications; Routes of Dialogue such as the Slave Route Project; and the Intersectoral Platform on Contributing to the Dialogue among Civilizations.

Additionally, UNESCO has a well-established network, 'UNESCO Chairs of Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding'. The network is a partnership between international academic centres recognized for their expertise in this field and brings together professors, researchers and specialists in the history of religions who are personally committed to the achievement of interreligious dialogue. See <[www.unesco.org/en/unitwin/access-by-domain/culture/intercultural-interreligious-dialogue/](http://www.unesco.org/en/unitwin/access-by-domain/culture/intercultural-interreligious-dialogue/)>

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### **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** <[www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org)>

UNFPA is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect. UNFPA works in partnership with governments, as well as with other agencies and civil society broadly, in three core areas: sexual and reproductive health, population and development strategies and gender equality and women's empowerment. The UNFPA Global Forum on Faith-based Organizations for Population and Development (Istanbul, 20–21 October 2008) brought together over 100 faith-based organizations and religious leaders from all major faiths and regions. They discussed successful practices and ways to move forward in partnerships with UNFPA in its core areas. The Global Forum culminated in the launch of the Global Interfaith Network on Population and Development, which represents the agreement of faith communities around the world on principles of working together, and with UNFPA, to combat global urgencies of maternal death, AIDS and poverty, and address violence against women and issues related to youth and migration. For more information on the Network, as well as related documentation, go to: <[www.unfpa.org/culture/fbo.html](http://www.unfpa.org/culture/fbo.html)>.

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Additional United Nations entities working with religious communities include the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** <[www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)>; the **World Health Organization (WHO)** <[www.who.org](http://www.who.org)>; and the **United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)** <[www.un.org/en/development/desa/index.html](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/index.html)>; and the **World Bank** <[www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)>.

## NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

### Academic and research actors

**African Religious Health Assets Programme (ARHAP)** <[www.arhap.uct.ac.za](http://www.arhap.uct.ac.za)>

ARHAP is an international research collaboration working on the interface of religion and public health, with a focus on Africa. It seeks to develop a systematic knowledge base of religious health assets (RHAs) in sub-Saharan Africa to align and enhance the work of religious health leaders, public policy decision makers and other health workers in their collaborative efforts to meet the challenge of diseases such as HIV and AIDS and to promote sustainable health, especially for those who live in poverty or under marginal conditions.

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**Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, & World Affairs** <[berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/home](http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/home)>

Located at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, the Center hosts interdisciplinary programmes to build knowledge, promote dialogue and support action in a critical area at the intersection of religion and world affairs. Programme areas include: Religion and Global Development; Religion, Conflict and Peace; Globalization, Religions and the Secular; and Religious Pluralism in World Affairs.

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**Center for Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence**

<[www.spiritualdevelopmentcenter.org](http://www.spiritualdevelopmentcenter.org)>

The Center is a global initiative to advance the research and practice of spiritual development in children and adolescents by conducting qualitative and quantitative cross-cultural research on the nature, processes and outcomes of spiritual development in childhood and adolescence; create an online community for scholars and a searchable database of available literature on spiritual development around the world; and develop tools, resources and partnerships to help youth workers, parents, educators and others more effectively nurture the spiritual lives of children and adolescents.

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**Patheos** <[www.patheos.com](http://www.patheos.com)>

This website is designed to serve as a resource for those looking to learn more about different belief systems as well as participate in productive, moderated discussions on some of today's most talked about and debated topics. It has an extensive library of information on most of the major world religions developed and peer-reviewed by theologians and academics.

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### **Religions and Development Research Programme (RaD)**

<[www.religionsanddevelopment.org](http://www.religionsanddevelopment.org)>

Based at the University of Birmingham, England, RaD is an international research partnership exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. It focuses on four countries (India, Nigeria, Pakistan and United Republic of Tanzania), enabling the research team to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional belief systems. The programme works with researchers in other UK institutions and the focus countries.

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### **The Center for the Study of Law and Religion, The Child in Law, Religion and Society Program, Emory University** <[cslr.law.emory.edu/research/the-child-in-law-religion-and-society](http://cslr.law.emory.edu/research/the-child-in-law-religion-and-society)>

The Center is an interdisciplinary research programme focusing on birth, naming and growth; children's rights and rites; education and formation; child abuse, poverty and homelessness; and juvenile delinquency, violence, public policy responses and reforms.

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### **The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life** <[pewforum.org](http://pewforum.org)>

The Forum seeks to promote a deeper understanding of issues at the intersection of religion and public affairs. It conducts surveys, demographic analyses and other social science research on important aspects of religion and public life in the United States and world affairs. It also provides a neutral venue for discussions of timely issues through roundtables and briefings.

## **Faith-based organizations**

Faith-based organizations (FBOs), sometimes referred to as faith-inspired organizations (FIOs), are some of the most visible religious actors in humanitarian and development contexts and operate in much the same way as other NGOs in supporting development and, in many cases, emergency humanitarian initiatives across the whole spectrum of programming. Grounded in the tenets and values of a particular faith, FBOs can establish credibility and authority with local religious communities and, in many instances, have locally connected operational networks that can be mobilized for response. Such networks can enable FBOs to respond in an efficient and sustainable manner and reach into communities in ways that secular NGOs often cannot.

Some of the larger international FBOs include: **Adventist Development and Relief Agency** <[www.adra.org](http://www.adra.org)>; **Aga Khan Development Network** <[www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org)>; **American Friends Service Committee** <[www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org)>; **American Jewish World Service** <[www.ajws.org](http://www.ajws.org)>; **Caritas Internationalis** <[www.caritas.org](http://www.caritas.org)>; **Catholic Overseas Development Agency** <[www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)>; **Catholic Relief Services** <[www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org)>; **Church World Service** <[www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org)>; **Compassion International** <[www.compassion.com](http://www.compassion.com)>; **Episcopal Relief & Development** <[www.er-d.org](http://www.er-d.org)>; **Habitat for Humanity** <[www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org)>; **International Orthodox Christian Charities** <[www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org)>; **Islamic Relief** <[www.islamic-relief.com](http://www.islamic-relief.com)>; **Jesuit Refugee Services** <[www.jrs.net](http://www.jrs.net)>; **Lutheran World Federation** <[www.lutheranworld.org/lwf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/lwf)>; **Lutheran World Relief** <[lwr.org](http://lwr.org)>; **Mercy Corps** <[www.mercycorps.org](http://www.mercycorps.org)>; **Muslim Aid** <[www.muslimaid.org](http://www.muslimaid.org)>; **Norwegian Church Aid** <[www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en](http://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en)>; **Salvation Army** <[www.salvationarmy.org](http://www.salvationarmy.org)>; **World Service Office** <[www.sawso.org](http://www.sawso.org)>;

**Tearfund** <[www.tearfund.org](http://www.tearfund.org)>; **United Methodist Committee on Relief** <[new.gbmg-umc.org/umcor](http://new.gbmg-umc.org/umcor)>; **World Vision** <[www.worldvision.org](http://www.worldvision.org)>; **Young Men's Christian Association** <[www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net)>; and **Young Women's Christian Association** <[www.worldywca.org](http://www.worldywca.org)>.

## Religious and inter-religious organizations, networks and alliances

**Accord** <[www.accordnetwork.org](http://www.accordnetwork.org)>

Accord is a network of Evangelical Christian churches and over 60 organizations focused on the elimination of poverty.

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**Action by Churches Together (ACT)** <[www.actalliance.org](http://www.actalliance.org)>

Action by Churches Together is a global alliance of Protestant churches focused on humanitarian and development work.

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**African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL)** <[www.acrl-rfp.org](http://www.acrl-rfp.org)>

The mission of the African Council of Religious Leaders is to advance African multi-religious cooperation in support of peace and sustainable development. The ACRL also works to highlight, support and connect the work of the African national inter-religious councils affiliated with *Religions for Peace*.

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**Anglican Alliance** <[www.anglicanalliance.org](http://www.anglicanalliance.org)>

The Anglican Alliance connects and builds capacity for the development, relief and advocacy work of the churches of the global Anglican Communion.

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**Arigatou International** <[www.arigatouinternational.org](http://www.arigatouinternational.org)>

Arigatou International is an international faith-based NGO promoting interfaith cooperation to realize child rights, with a special focus on empowering and involving children and youth. Examples of initiatives include: the Global Network of Religions for Children, intended to provide a global platform for inter-religious cooperation for children; *Learning to Live Together: An intercultural and interfaith programme for ethics education*, a guide designed for youth leaders and educators worldwide to help children understand and respect people from other cultures and religions; and the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, intended to mobilize people from diverse religious traditions to improve children's lives through prayer and practical acts of service.

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**Catholic Peacebuilding Network** <[cpn.nd.edu/about\\_us.htm](http://cpn.nd.edu/about_us.htm)>

This voluntary network of practitioners, academics, clergy and laity from around the world seeks to enhance the study and practice of Catholic peace-building, especially at the local level. The CPN aims to deepen bonds of solidarity among Catholic peace builders, share and analyse 'best practices', expand the peace-building capacity of the Church in areas of conflict and encourage the further development of a theology of a just peace.

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**Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty (CIFA)** <[www.centerforinterfaithaction.org](http://www.centerforinterfaithaction.org)>

The Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty was created to work with faith institutions that have for centuries been the primary source of care and service to the poorest of the poor around the world. CIFA is committed to harnessing the potential of the faith sector as a positive force for global development through increased interfaith coordination, best practices and model sharing, innovative mobilization of resources and influential advocacy to governments and the general public.

CIFA has a number of resources available on its website, including:

- Links to many global faith-based efforts:  
<[www.centerforinterfaithaction.org/initiatives/other-faith-based-global-efforts.html](http://www.centerforinterfaithaction.org/initiatives/other-faith-based-global-efforts.html)>
- A database of multi-religious collaborations for relief and development:  
<[www.centerforinterfaithaction.org/initiatives/database.html](http://www.centerforinterfaithaction.org/initiatives/database.html)>

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**Christian Alliance for Orphans** <[christianalliancefororphans.org](http://christianalliancefororphans.org)>

The Christian Alliance for Orphans unites more than 80 Christian organizations and a network of churches with initiatives that seek to stimulate and help grow Christian communities committed to adoption, foster care and global orphan care in the local church.

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**Churches' Network for Non-Violence (CNNV)** <[www.churchesfornon-violence.org](http://www.churchesfornon-violence.org)>

CNNV is a network of support, information and practical resources to assist people in churches and communities to promote positive, non-violent discipline. The website offers publications and resources to download and links for multi-religious organizations: <[www.churchesfornon-violence.org/links.html](http://www.churchesfornon-violence.org/links.html)>

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**Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations** <[www.trunity.net/rngo](http://www.trunity.net/rngo)>

The Committee is a coalition of representatives of national and international organizations that define their work as religious, spiritual or ethical in nature and are accredited to the UN. The Committee's focus is twofold: It serves as a forum to inform and educate its constituencies about the global challenges of our time, and the constructive role that the UN can play in addressing these issues; and it serves as a forum for exchanging and promoting shared religious and ethical values in the deliberations of the UN.

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**Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions** <[www.parliamentofreligions.org](http://www.parliamentofreligions.org)>

The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions was created to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions in order to achieve a just, peaceful and sustainable world. Every four years the Council organizes the world's largest interreligious gathering, bringing together religious and spiritual communities, their leaders and their followers to a gathering where peace, diversity and sustainability are discussed and explored in the context of interreligious understanding and cooperation.

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**Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA)** <[www.e-alliance.ch](http://www.e-alliance.ch)>

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance is an international network of churches and church-related organizations committed to campaigning together on common concerns. Current campaigns focus on HIV and AIDS and on food. Activities include raising awareness and building a movement for justice within the churches as well as mobilizing people of faith to lobby local and national governments, businesses and multilateral organizations.

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**European Council of Religious Leaders** <[www.rfp-europe.eu](http://www.rfp-europe.eu)>

The Council is a coalition of senior religious leaders of Europe's historic religions – Christianity, Judaism and Islam – with Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Zoroastrians in Europe who have committed themselves to cooperating on conflict prevention and transformation, peaceful coexistence and reconciliation and encouraging members of their respective communities to do the same. It is one of four regional inter-religious councils of *Religions for Peace*.

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**Faith to Action Initiative** <[www.faithbasedcarefororphans.org](http://www.faithbasedcarefororphans.org)>

The Faith to Action Initiative promotes dialogue among Christian faith-based organizations, churches and individuals seeking to respond to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children in sub-Saharan Africa. The primary goal of the initiative is to provide the US faith community with resources that support informed and compassionate action on behalf of the growing numbers of children affected by HIV and AIDS in Africa. The Initiative advocates for sustainable approaches that support family and community as a first-line response and institutional care as a temporary and last resort.

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**Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC)** <[www.gnrc.net/en](http://www.gnrc.net/en)>

This network is the only worldwide interfaith organization exclusively devoted to working for child rights and other children's issues.

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**Global Working Group on Faith, SSDIM & HIV**

The Global Working Group on Faith, SSDIM (Stigma, Shame, Denial, Discrimination, Inaction and Mis-action) & HIV brings together diverse religious leaders, communities and theological and faith-based organizations to address the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.

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**Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC)** <[www.ifyc.org](http://www.ifyc.org)>

Interfaith Youth Core builds mutual respect and pluralism among young people from different religious traditions by empowering them to work together to serve others.



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**Interfaith Center of New York** <[www.interfaithcenter.org](http://www.interfaithcenter.org)>

The Center aims to increase respect and mutual understanding among people of different faith, ethnic and cultural traditions and solve common social problems by fostering cooperation among religious communities and civic organizations. Its programmes include education, training and outreach services to immigrant communities. The Center partners with grass-roots religious and community leaders, as well as universities, in developing its programmes.

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**Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)** <[www.isna.net](http://www.isna.net)>

The Islamic Society of North America is an association of Muslim organizations and individuals that provides a common platform for presenting Islam, supporting Muslim communities, developing educational, social and outreach programmes and fostering positive relations with other religious communities and civil and service organizations.

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**Micah Challenge International** <[www.micahchallenge.org](http://www.micahchallenge.org)>

Micah Challenge International is a global coalition of Christians holding governments accountable for their promise to halve extreme poverty by 2015. Promoting the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Micah Challenge aims to empower Christians to speak out for justice and to turn compassion into action.

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**NetsforLife** <[www.netsforlifeafrica.org](http://www.netsforlifeafrica.org)>

A partnership of corporations, foundations, NGOs and FBOs brought together by their commitment to eliminating malaria in sub-Saharan Africa, *NetsforLife* is managed and monitored by Episcopal Relief & Development in 15 countries and Christian Aid in two. Programmes are implemented by local Anglican dioceses, churches and faith-based groups, including women and youth networks.

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**ONE Episcopalian Campaign** <[www.episcopalchurch.org/ONE](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/ONE)>

In 2006, the General Convention declared the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be the top mission priority of the Episcopal Church. The ONE Episcopalian Campaign represents a partnership between the Episcopal Church and the ONE Campaign that strives to end extreme global poverty and achieve the eight MDGs set by the United Nations and affirmed by every nation in the world.

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**Religions for Peace** <[www.religionsforpeace.org](http://www.religionsforpeace.org)>

*Religions for Peace* is the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition that works to advance peace. The global *Religions for Peace* network comprises a World Council of senior religious leaders from all regions of the world; six regional inter-religious bodies and more than seventy national ones; and the Global Women of Faith Network and Global Youth Network.

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**Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding** <[www.tanenbaum.org](http://www.tanenbaum.org)>

The Center is a secular, non-sectarian organization rooted in the work of the late Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, an eminent activist and scholar in inter-religious relations. The Center develops programmes to foster inter-religious understanding and dialogue. These focus on religious diversity in the workplace, in health care and in education, as well as conflict resolution.

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**Tony Blair Faith Foundation** <[www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org](http://www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org)>

The Tony Blair Faith Foundation aims to promote respect and understanding of the world's major religions and show how faith is a powerful force for good in the modern world. It supports educational programmes to increase young people's faith literacy and explore how faith can benefit the global community, as well as social action programmes in the areas of health care and malaria eradication.

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**The Humanitarian Forum** <[www.humanitarianforum.org](http://www.humanitarianforum.org)>

The Humanitarian Forum is a network of key humanitarian and development organizations from Muslim donor and recipient countries, the West and multilateral networks. It improves the lives of those in need, and relations between communities, through bridge building and quality humanitarian action both internationally and locally in a global network of peers. It also fosters a conducive, unbiased and safe environment to empower these organizations to work to their full potential.

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**United Religions Initiative** <[www.uri.org](http://www.uri.org)>

This global community is committed to promoting enduring, daily interfaith cooperation and to ending religiously motivated violence. URI has a Global Youth Network and Young Leaders Program.

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**Viva Network: Together for Children** <[www.viva.org](http://www.viva.org)>

The Viva Network of churches seeks to keep at-risk children safe and healthy, with opportunities to learn and the chance to play an active part in shaping their own futures. Viva works in 14 different countries through partnerships ranging from large international charities to tiny grass-roots initiatives, supporting projects working with children at risk in 22 city-wide networks.

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**Women, Faith, and Development Alliance (WFDA)** <[www.wfd-alliance.org](http://www.wfd-alliance.org)>

The Women, Faith, and Development Alliance (WFDA) is a partnership of internationally focused faith, development and women's organizations dedicated to engendering global efforts to reduce poverty by increasing political will and action to increase investments in women's and girls' empowerment around the world.

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**World Council of Churches (WCC)** <[www.oikoumene.org/en/home.html](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/home.html)>

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of 349 churches from nearly all Christian traditions in more than 120 countries seeking unity, a common witness and Christian service.

The WCC initiated the 'Decade to Overcome Violence (2001–2010), Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace', a global movement that strives to strengthen existing efforts and networks for preventing and overcoming violence as well as inspire the creation of new ones: <[overcomingviolence.org](http://overcomingviolence.org)>.

The WCC also initiated the 'Accompanying churches in situations of conflict' project that accompanies churches faced with religious intolerance, discrimination and conflict, and advocates for inter-religious cooperation, human dignity, sustainable values and just relationships. It emphasizes those aspects in all religions that promote harmony among communities that help people to live their individual faith with integrity while living together in mutual respect and mutual acceptance of each other's faiths: <[www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/interreligiousdialogue/churches-in-situations-of-conflict.html](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/interreligiousdialogue/churches-in-situations-of-conflict.html)>.

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**World Day of Prayer and Action for Children** <[www.dayofprayerandaction.org](http://www.dayofprayerandaction.org)>

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children initiative is a global effort to mobilize secular and faith-based organizations to work together for the well-being of children and highlight the important role religious communities can play to promote the rights of children. It is held every year during the week of 20 November to coincide with Universal Children's Day and the anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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**World Evangelical Alliance (WEA)** <[www.worldevangelicals.org](http://www.worldevangelicals.org)>

The World Evangelical Alliance is a network of evangelical churches in 128 countries and over 100 international organizations serving as a platform to more than 600 million evangelical Christians.

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**World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD)** <[berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/wfdd](http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/wfdd)>

WFDD is an NGO working at the intersection of religion and global development. It has two central objectives: to reinforce, underscore and publicize the synergies and common purpose of religions and development institutions addressing poverty; and to explore issues on which there is little consensus and where common ground is unclear among different faith traditions, within faiths and between faith and development institutions.

WFDD supports forward-thinking dialogue around action-oriented partnerships between faith-inspired and 'secular' development institutions – such as the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, the Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty and the Berkley Center's programme on Religion and Global Development – and supports some of the analytical work necessary to assess the efficacy of these partnerships.

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## ANNEX 3: SAMPLE LOGFRAME

On the next page is an example of what a logframe might look like after concerns about the use of corporal punishment in a particular community have led a child rights organization to consider a programme intervention.

The child rights organization first carries out a situation analysis that shows many community members holding deeply rooted beliefs in the benefits of strong discipline, including corporal punishment, to a child's development. Interviews and focus groups reveal many references to religious teachings in support of these practices. What is also emphasized in the data collected is the influential role played by religious leaders in much of daily life in the community. They are cited as some of the most trusted people in the community.

Interviews with religious leaders show differing perspectives on corporal punishment, ranging from support to strong disagreement with its use. A few leaders indicate that they have wanted to address the issue but were not sure how.

Based on the results of the situation analysis the child rights organization sees there is an opportunity to work with some religious leaders who can use their status and networks to address the issue at the household and community levels. The programme is jointly designed with religious leaders to provide them with information, support and training, which they will use to work within their religious communities to discuss the importance of not harming children and seeking alternative, non-violent methods of discipline.

Note that to be valid the programme logframe would need to include baseline and target information and the indicators would have to be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time sensitive).

	Objective statements	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Assumptions
<b>Goal</b>	<i>Measurable reduction in the use of corporal punishment in community X</i>	<i>% change in number of children self-reporting experience of corporal punishment in the school or home</i>  <i>% change in the number of parents who express belief that corporal punishment is acceptable in the school or home</i>			
<b>Objective 1</b>	<i>Effective participation of religious leaders in actions to reduce the use of corporal punishment within their communities</i>	Measurable change in attitudes and expectations towards corporal punishment that adults in the community attribute to religious leaders' influence  Measurable change in knowledge about the negative impacts of corporal punishment that adults in the community attribute to religious leaders' influence			Religious communities and child protection actors are able to and want to partner to address corporal punishment
<b>Result area 1.1</b>	<i>Religious communities demonstrate knowledge about the impact of corporal punishment on child development and well-being</i>	Measurable change in knowledge on issues of violence against children including corporal punishment  Demonstrated ability to communicate accurate information about corporal punishment/ violence against children			Attitudinal and behavioural change will lead to more effective actions
<b>Activity 1.1.1</b>	Capacity-building activities tailored to religious communities	# of activities  # of individuals participating (male/ female)			Capacity-building activities will be effective in leading to measurable increases in knowledge, attitude and behaviour
<b>Sample sub-activities</b>	Development of methodology for situational analysis and knowledge and attitude assessment	Tool/methodology developed			Specific methodologies probably do not exist and will have to be developed with some input of expertise and review of existing methodologies
	Situation analysis conducted	Report of situation analysis			Thorough understanding of situation, assets and challenges will enhance programme effectiveness
	Knowledge and attitude assessment of target population	Report of assessment activities			Effective assessment will contribute to more appropriate and effective capacity-building

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	Objective statements	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Assumptions
<b>Sample sub-activities</b>	Analysis of assessment results and development of recommendations on proposed technical assistance activities and resources needed	Final report of assessment and recommendations			
	Development of capacity-building strategy and implementation plan	Strategic implementation plan document			Plan will accurately reflect the needs, resources and interests of stakeholders, and will have had their input
	Development of capacity-building materials (e.g., training materials)	# and type of materials			
	Implementation of capacity-building interventions	# and type of activities # of males and/or females participating Baseline documentation			Technical assistance may not always take the form of training workshops – there may be more effective forms of capacity-building  Members of religious communities, traditional leaders and youth are able to, and want to learn good practice principles of child protection and explore how they can participate in effective child protection
	On-going monitoring of discreet activities	Monitoring reports			Programmes need ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure programme quality  Monitoring and evaluation should be a transparent and participatory process
	Evaluation at end of intervention, focusing on lessons learned	Evaluation report, analysis against baseline			

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	Objective statements	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Assumptions
<b>Result area 1.2</b>	<i>Religious communities design and implement activities</i>	# of planned activities implemented			Implementing agreed upon action items that come out of facilitated dialogue will contribute to increased participation of stakeholders in further and more effective dialogue
<b>Activity 1.2.1</b>	Facilitation of community discussions on corporal punishment within their community	# of discussions held # of participants by group (age and gender disaggregated)			Proposed activities will be able to be implemented given the operating environment, available resources, community willingness to participate, etc.
<b>Sample sub-activities</b>	Development of methodology for facilitation process	Tool/methodology developed and agreed upon			Methodologies do exist, though may need to be adapted and need to be agreed on by all partners
	Communication with community leaders and youth to organize dialogues	Report of dialogue activities			Effective reporting will contribute to more appropriate and effective interventions
	Analysis of results of dialogues and key action points to implement	Final report of dialogues			
	Plan follow up activities around key action points from dialogues	Strategic implementation plan document			Plan will accurately reflect the needs, resources and interests of stakeholders, will have had their input and will be appropriate to the situation
	Implement action points from dialogues	# and type of activities # of males and/or females participating groups (traditional leaders, religious leaders, youth, parents, etc.)			Conditions and motivation will allow for the implementation as planned
	Ongoing monitoring of discreet activities	Monitoring reports			Programmes need ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure programme quality

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	Objective statements	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Assumptions
<b>Sample sub-activities</b> ... continued	Monitoring and evaluation should be transparent and participatory	Evaluation report, analysis against baseline			
<b>Activity 1.2.2</b>	Incorporation of messages about corporal punishment in religious activities (e.g. worship services, rites and rituals, holidays and festivals, etc.)	# and type of actions			Well-planned and appropriate advocacy campaigns contribute to enhanced child protection  Advocacy actions will be appropriate to context and developed in a participatory and representative fashion
<b>Sub-activities</b>	Assessment of message priorities	Baseline of beliefs, attitudes and knowledge of members of community			Effective assessment will contribute to more appropriate and effective interventions
	Development of messaging strategies and specific activities	Strategic implementation plan document			
	Development of advocacy campaign materials	# and type of materials			Plan will accurately reflect the needs, resources and interests of stakeholders, will have had their input and will be appropriate to the situation
	Carrying out messaging activities during specified time period	# and type of activities # of males and/or females participating Baseline documentation			Appropriate resources are available
	Ongoing monitoring of discreet activities	Monitoring reports			Conditions will allow for the implementation as planned
	Evaluation of activities	Evaluation report			Programmes need ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure programme quality  Monitoring and evaluation should be transparent and participatory

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- <sup>5</sup> Reverend Rachel Carnegie, Archbishop of Canterbury's Secretary for International Development, personal communication, 26 July 2011.
- <sup>6</sup> In Roman Catholic and Anglican contexts the term 'religious communities' refers to historical networks of nuns, monks and lay orders that live according to a specific rule of life (Benedictines, Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, etc.) and also engage in humanitarian work. They historically run hospitals, schools, etc. and tend to be active on issues relate to children (Abigail Nelson, Episcopal Relief & Development, personal communication, 21 July 2011). However, for the purposes of this guide, the term is used to be broadly inclusive of most religious actors and systems.
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- and to refrain from engaging in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature". Neutrality is separate from impartiality, which means ensuring that assistance is delivered to all those who are suffering based only on their needs and rights, equally and without any form of discrimination. In terms of the Convention on the Rights of the Assembly, impartiality relates most closely to non-discrimination. More information is available from the Humanitarian Policy Section, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPs), United Nations Children's Fund.
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