



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

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***Protecting and Nurturing Children  
in Today's Challenging World***

*G20 Interfaith Forum, Tokyo, Japan*

Contributions of Faith Communities to  
Ending Violence Against Children



Jean Duff, President,

# VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

## **UN DEFINITION of VAC:**

**“All forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse”.**

- Every 7 minutes an adolescent killed by an act of violence.
- 7 out of 10 children aged 2–4 years worldwide-- violent discipline in the home.
- 150 million adolescent girls marry before 18<sup>th</sup> birthday
- Almost 1 in 5 homicide victims worldwide is child– 70 % are boys.
- 1 in 4 children under 18 are working in the poorest countries (estimate 168 million)
- Almost a quarter of all children live in countries affected by humanitarian crises.

# FAITH INFLUENCE

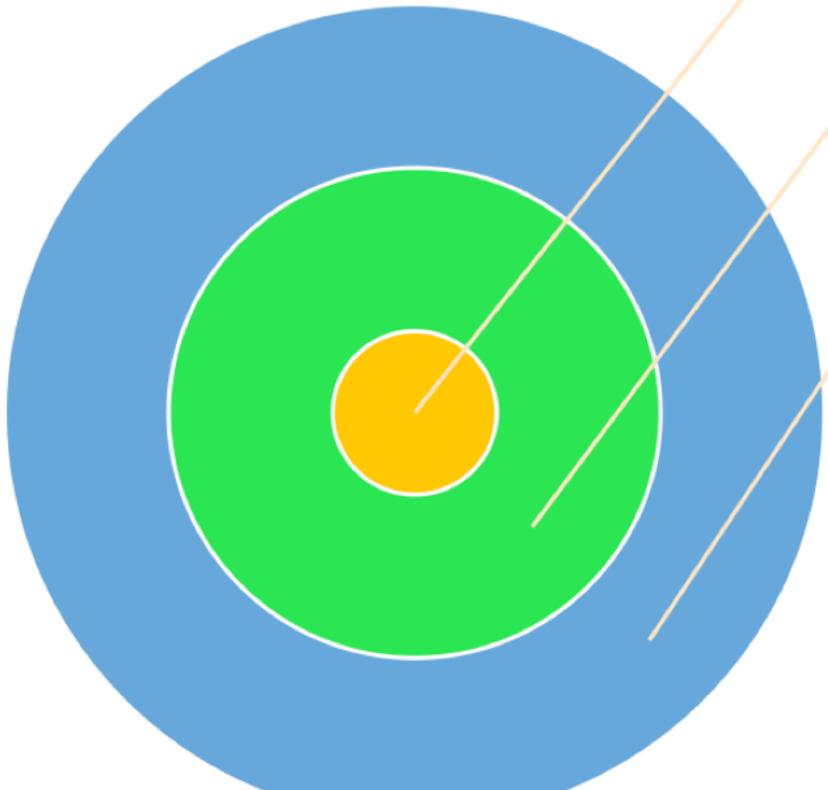
- Scale of violence and vulnerability requires coordinated response among stakeholders –
- But faith contribution often overlooked or siloed
- Wide range of Faith contributions in prevention, perpetration , survivor support , child formation processes
- Powerful Faith influence—access, social and spiritual capital

# ACCESS, SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL CAPITAL OF FAITH FOR EVAC

**Spiritual capital** - faith traditions uniquely draw on and engage faith resources and authority - through prayer, sermons, sacred texts and religious rituals. This can play a role in transforming beliefs and practices that underpin child maltreatment, reaffirming religious imperatives for protection and prevention and stand against moral normalisation or silencing of abuse.

**Social capital** - faith actors bring social influence, organisations, funds, buildings, people and motivation to the EVAC task. However they are used by secular actors as instrumentally valuable only. This involves limited or no engagement with their explicit spiritual dimensions

**Access capital** - faith leaders are used as initial gatekeepers to the local community. They are employed in token, one off ways by the wider EVAC



## FAITH INFLUENCE –A MIXED BLESSING

Faith community also active in direct abuse, indirect cover ups and underlying justifications

Two predominant types of violence are a key nexus with faith:

- **Sexual Abuse** (and silence and complicity in its cover up across multiple faiths)  
The Murphy Report
- **Corporal Punishment** (tied to Physical Abuse) shaping relations between caregivers and children in ways that affect the whole lifecycle and the child's legal status Latin America vs South Africa

# QUESTIONS ABOUT FAITH AND EVAC AND CHILD PROTECTION

## ***Research Questions:***

What is the unique role of faith communities in relation to ending, as well as contributing, to violence against children (VAC)?

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What is the role of faith actors in influencing wider community and formal/informal child protection systems in relation to ending violence against children (EVAC)?

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Cross cutting issues : Child participation; gender; interfaith engagement

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# JLI LEARNING HUB: ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



## Hub Co-Chairs

- **Rebeca Rios-Kohn**, Arigatou International
- **Neelam Fida**, Islamic Relief Worldwide
- **Carola Eyber**, Queen Margaret University
- **Robyn Hagan**, World Vision International



GLOBAL NETWORK OF RELIGIONS FOR CHILDREN, PANAMA 2017

# Three part EVAC Hub Scoping Study Launched June 5, 2019

<http://bitly/2Imtrso>

**Dr Carola Eyber, QMU; Dr Selina Palm Stellenbosch U;  
Kathleen Rutledge, EVAC Hub members**

Scoping Study: **Faith actors' involvement in the elimination and perpetuation of violence against children—3 parts:**

- *Literature review*
- *Case Studies*
- *Expert Consultations*

3 forthcoming **Policy Briefs**

- *Positive contributions of faith communities EVAC*
- *Engaging the mechanisms of faith TO EVAC*
- *Navigating ambiguities: Critical issues facing faith communities*



JLI ENDING VIOLENCE  
AGAINST CHILDREN  
LEARNING HUB

Faith actors involvement in the prevention, elimination  
and perpetuation of violence against children

LITERATURE REVIEW



[evac.jliflc.com](http://evac.jliflc.com)

March 2019

Kathleen Rutledge  
Carola Eyber

JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on  
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 Queen Margaret University  
INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL HEALTH  
AND DEVELOPMENT

## 4 CASE STUDIES

- **Faith actors protect children from Violence and Harmful practices in Egypt**

*Peace Love and Tolerance* project. Collaboration between Coptic Orthodox Church Al-Azhar University, UNICEF to develop faith specific tools on EVAC used in a cascade training model by faith communities. Reached over 6,800 children and youth and nearly 20,000 parents. Interfaith collaboration

- **Ethics and Rights intercultural interfaith education in El Salvador**

*Learning to Live Together* Arigatou International , Global Network of Religions for Children, Centre Bartolomé de las Casas  
Capacity building training of facilitators engaged 636 children in public schools. Evaluation showed positive impact on childrens' relations with others and on the nurturing children's spirituality

## 4 CASE STUDIES--contd

- **Empowering Children as Peacebuilders in Central African Republic**

World Vision with local Muslim and Christian faith communities . Participatory community-based management of safe spaces ( Peace Clubs) where children and adolescents are supported to become agents of peace and change for themselves, their family and their communities. 4900 children including 590 formerly associated with armed groups

- **The Butterfly Project in Cambodia**

Reintegration of child survivors of sexual exploitation and trafficking .Christian after care facilities . One finding is the need for Christian programs to engage constructively with the majority spirituality (Buddhism) of the social context to avoid social isolation being faced by survivors on their return to the community.

## RESULTS

- Study findings reinforced the complex intersections between VAC and faith - faith communities are **both perpetrators and protectors**. Parents and caregivers trust faith communities with their children around the world - faith communities are trusted care providers for children.
- Children primarily **encounter violence within homes and schools**, often delivered by trusted adults with a specific duty of care to them. Witnessing violence has long term intergenerational effects.
- Child agency and participation is key. Promising models emerged of a **child-centred focus** by faith-based organisations even within extreme humanitarian crises.
- **Emerging forms of violence** posing new challenges to which faith communities must respond (e.g. internet/online).

# LESSONS LEARNED

- Local faith communities are **important first responders** at community and family levels. They need to be equipped to respond appropriately. International FBOs can have a key role in capacity sharing
- **Involve children directly** at community level as focus of all EVAC work to hold together protection and participation
- Address child protection through a **socio-ecological model** to understand the complex contextual drivers of VAC, including neglect, poverty and family breakdown.
- **Religious and cultural beliefs are entangled** and need to be addressed directly by local faith communities as a unique and cross cutting role.
- More **robust documentation** is required of informal faith-based local models if they are to be credible in the wider EVAC sector. Academic research institutions can play a role in developing sustained documentation and robust evaluation of what works in local faith communities. Researchers need to work longitudinally and collaboratively alongside faith practitioners to develop a credible evidence base for scale up.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR G20 FOR FAITH FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND NURTURE IN TODAY'S CHALLENGING WORLD

- **Recognize faith communities are key partners in child protection.** Religious leaders play a key role in breaking the silence on EVAC, recognizing and referring cases of child abuse and educating their communities around prevention
- **Hold faith leaders accountable for child sexual abuse** to the fullest extent of the law.
- **Actively integrate faith communities into all levels of child protection.** Faith assets often overlooked or excluded But faith communities are positively contributing to ending child violence at multiple levels : child, family , community, institutional and public systems and at the national and international policy level. Religious mandates around care and protection of children in faith traditions can be creatively harnessed to mobilise faith communities..

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR G20 FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND NURTURE IN TODAY'S CHALLENGING WORLD

- **Support child participation in the work of local faith communities.** Child centred approaches are essential. Linking child participation and protection improves child social status, enables the voices of children to be part of the changes needed and avoids a passive victim lens
- Adopt a **consultative co-creative way of working** with faith communities to counter instrumentalization and assure sustainable partnerships that work for children
- Partner with faith communities to **bridge gaps between high level policies and grassroots practice,** and between senior faith leaders and local faith communities
- Support **capacity building of faith communities** to achieve child protection aims
- Support **robust documentation of effective mechanisms** of partnership and engagement with faith communities for EVAC

## GABRIELA MISTRAL

We are guilty of many errors and many faults.  
But our worst crime is abandoning the children,  
neglecting the Fountain of Life.  
Many of the things we need can wait.  
Right now is the time her bones are being formed,  
His Blood is being made,  
And her senses are being developed.  
To Him we cannot answer “ Tomorrow”  
Her name is “Today”.

# JLI Ending Violence Against Children Hub

EVAC 3 part Scoping Study: <http://bit.ly/2Imtrso>

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