# 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

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JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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## Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| **ACK** | Anglican Diocese of Mount Kenya West |
| **ACRL-R*f*P** | African Council of Religious Leaders-Religions for Peace |
| **AFRUCA** | Africans United Against Child Abuse |
| **ARLPI** | Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative |
| **CAFOD** | Catholic Agency for Overseas Development |
| **CALFB** | Child Abuse Linked to Faith and Beliefs |
| **CarNet Nepal** | Children at Risk Network Nepal |
| **CCR** | Centre for Constitutional Rights |
| **CCPAS** | Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service |
| **CDJP** | Catholic-founded Justice and Peace Commission |
| **CHATs** | Congregational/Community Hope Action Teams |
| **CICC** | Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics |
| **CNNV** | Churches' Network for Non-Violence |
| **CoH** | Channels of Hope |
| **CRIN** | Child Rights International Network |
| **ECPAT** | End Child Prostitution and Trafficking |
| **EVAC** | Eliminating Violence Against Children |
| **FBI** | Federal Bureau of Investigation |
| **FBO** | Faith Based Organisation |
| **FCS** | Former Child Soldiers |
| **FECCLA** | Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes Region & Horn of Africa |
| **GBV** | Gender-based Violence |
| **GNRC** | Global Network of Religions for Children |
| **HRW** | Human Rights Watch |
| **IAFCS** | International Association for Child Safety |
| **ICD** | International Classification of Diseases |
| **ILO** | International Labour Organisation |
| **INGO** | International Non-Governmental Organisation |
| **ICSE** | International Child Sexual Exploitation |
| **IRW** | Islamic Relief Worldwide |
| **ISNA** | Instituto Salvadoreño Para El Desarrollo Integral de La Niñez Y La Adolescencia |
| **IRCPT** | Inter-Religious Council for Peace in Tanzania |
| **IRCU** | Inter-Religious Council of Uganda |
| **JLI** | Joint Learning Initiative |
| **LGBTQ** | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/questioning |
| **LRA** | Lord's Resistance Army |
| **LTLT** | Learning to Live Together |
| **LWF** | Lutheran World Federation |
| **MCC** | Mennonite Church Committee |
| **NACOTHA** | National Council of Traditional Healers and Herbalists |
| **NGO** | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| **NSPCC** | National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children |
| **ODI** | Overseas Development Institute |

| | |
|---|---|
| **OHCHR** | Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| **PROMETRA** | Promotion of Traditional Medicine in Uganda |
| **RISE** | Recovering Individuals from Sexual Exploitation |
| **SGBV** | Sexual & Gender-Based Violence |
| **SNAP** | Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests |
| **SSA** | Shanti Sewa Ashram Peace Service Centre |
| **THETA** | Traditional and Modern Health Practitioners together against AIDS and other Diseases |
| **ToT** | Training of Trainer |
| **UK** | United Kingdom |
| **UN** | United Nations |
| **UNFPA** | United Nations Population Fund |
| **UNICEF** | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| **US** | United States |
| **USAID** | United States Agency for International Development |
| **VAC** | Violence Against Children |
| **WCC** | World Council of Churches |
| **WFDD** | World Faiths Development Dialogue |
| **WHO** | World Health Organisation |
| **WV** | World Vision |

# Acknowledgements

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This literature review is one part of three of the JLI EVAC Hub scoping study. It presents an overview of published and grey literature in regard to the unique contributions of faith actors to eliminating violence against children as well as how faith actors have been involved in perpetuation thereof. Evidence of faith actors' involvement in formal and informal child protection systems is reviewed.


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# 1. Introduction and overview

The Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI) Ending Violence against Children Hub (EVAC Hub) is dedicated to better understanding the role of religion and faith actors in protecting children against violence. The UN defines violence against children as all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. 'Child protection' is directly linked to this, and refers to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children acknowledging that these violations occur in every country and inhibit child survival and development.

Violence against children is widespread. The UNICEF Annual Results Report for 2017 shares some statistics that underscore the scale of violence and vulnerability facing young children and adolescents in the world today:

- Every 7 minutes an adolescent is killed by an act of violence.
- Around 7 in 10 (300 million) children aged 2–4 years worldwide are regularly subjected to violent discipline in the home.
- Around 15 million adolescent girls (aged 15–19 years) have experienced forced sexual intercourse in their lifetime.
- Almost one in five homicide victims worldwide was a child – 70 per cent of whom were adolescent boys.
- An estimated 168 million children (aged 5–17 years) are working – including one in four children in some of the world's poorest countries
- Nearly one in four children live in countries affected by humanitarian crises.
- If current rates prevail, more than 150 million additional girls will marry before their 18th birthday.

In a world where 84 per cent of people identify as religious, faith communities have a unique, essential and indispensable role to play in ending violence against children (Hackett and Grimm 2012). In many parts of the world, faith leaders have significant moral authority and profound, trusted relationships with their communities. They frequently have more holistic, sustainable influence in promoting or challenging ideologies and behaviours, for better or for worse. They can play a fundamental role in changing harmful practices, establishing child protection systems, providing direct services and serving as advocates at many levels (Hanmer and Robinson 2012; UNICEF 2017a). At the same time faith actors or individuals within faith communities are known to perpetuate violence through overt abuse or attacks, at times using religious teachings as a justification, or silencing or ignoring children and adults who speak out against this violence.

This literature review forms part of a scoping study commissioned by the JLI EVAC Hub to identify evidence in the literature that indicates the multiple roles that faith actors play in preventing and responding to violence against children. The premise of the review is that there remains limited substantial evidence highlighting those roles. The review focuses on two areas:

- Firstly, the unique contributions of faith communities, both in relation to ending as well as contributing to violence against children, need to be examined in order to understand their involvement in this sphere.
- Secondly, the role of faith actors in influencing wider community and formal and informal child protection systems in relation to prevention and response to EVAC need to be investigated in order to understand the potential that their engagement has for child protection processes.

This particular gap in knowledge is the focus of the scoping study which aims to examine existing evidence, analyse trends, identify key gaps and highlight particular examples of faith actors who are working to end violence against children. This data is crucial to help policymakers, religious leaders and practitioners inform policies and advocate for programmes and prevention efforts with faith communities to end violence against children.

Religious communities have long been at the forefront of the care and protection of children, with care for children a foundational focus for nearly all religious traditions (Robinson and Hanmer 2014; Marshall and Mui 2016). Throughout history temples, mosques, churches and other faith congregations have provided aid, direct services such as education and health care, and have reached out to and taken in orphans, neglected and abused children, and children exploited for labour and sex (Riera and Poira 2014; Robinson and Hanmer 2014; Marshall and Mui 2016). Faith groups have also pressed for policy changes to protect children and, in humanitarian situations, have provided physical protection, cared for those who are displaced and have taken the lead in providing aid (Riera and Poira 2014).

Many of these initiatives are not, however, formalised. Faith communities, particularly at congregational and grassroots levels, may not have formed an organization that can be registered and identified, nor named the programmes they run with and for children. Thus, contributions of faith actors at the grassroots level who are working to protect children from violence and to support those who have experienced abuse, are often undocumented. Over the past decade, a body of literature has begun emerging that does begin to capture evidence of the broad work of faith-affiliated groups. Within international reports and some academic journals, the engagement of national and community-based faith is increasingly a focus as the unique placement of faith-communities in the lives of the communities is beginning to be recognised. These documents generally seek to communicate the importance of engaging faith-groups as primary stakeholders and to mobilize further collaboration with faith groups (Jones 2012; Riera and Poira 2014; CNNV 2015a). Faith-based organisations are described, for example, as having greater social capital than governments and NGOs, able to 'reach and influence the public more regularly and consistently' (Erasmus and Mans 2009; Jones 2012). The holistic nature of FBO approaches are likewise noted as aligned with the worldview and culture of the local population, and thus have the understanding of cultural dynamics essential for sustainable change (Karam 2010). Because of these capacities, many documents from faith and non-faith international actors, highlight the inherent potential of faith actors to lead communities towards transforming the lives of children (Hashima and Melton 2008; CNNV 2015a).

However, many documents also highlight evidence of religious leaders and communities violating children directly or allowing the perpetuation of violence against children. This includes overt sexual abuse of children by faith leaders, the justification of forced marriage and accepting forced child labour in some religious schools. This tolerance and perpetuation of violence by some faith actors cannot be ignored and must not only be acknowledged but also analysed, in order to be able to counter it. In examining the faith actor contributions detailed in the literature, many of the contributions do not fit neatly within an either/or approach such as 'perpetuating' or 'opposing' violence. Sometimes within single congregations, groups were seeking to protect children while others were perpetuating violence. A complex picture emerges which highlights the mixed contributions of faith groups to this issue.

Whether out of concern or optimism, most of the literature indicated the perspective that partnering with religious communities is not only 'possible' but "essential to addressing violence against children and promoting systems at national and community levels to enhance the protective environment for children" (Robinson and Hanmer 2014).

The literature review will first provide some of the evidence available on positive contributions of faith actors, including initiatives aimed at prevention, advocacy, direct interventions, survivor support and involvement in formal and informal child protection systems. This will be followed by a discussion of the range of different religious interpretations of issues pertaining to violence against children, where we will examine in more detail some of the controversial and divergent opinions in faith groups about practices such as corporal punishment and early marriage. Finally, the perpetuation of violence against children by faith actors and within faith communities will be discussed. As this negative aspect of the topic cannot be ignored, it is vital that we gain insight into the religious justifications offered for continuing with these practices. We will examine the role of culture and context, as well as the silence surrounding specific acts of violence from within faith communities.

## 2. Methodology & limitations

Literature was identified through CINAHL, EBSCO, ProQuest, PILOTS, ScienceDirect, and Almanhal databases, as well as through Google Scholar and within the Taylor and Francis, Springer and Sage publishers' sites in particular. The types of literature reviewed included grey literature, journal articles, book chapters and select media articles. The grey literature primarily included situational or evaluation reports from the UN, global and national networks and Non-Government (NGO) agencies. A significant portion of the grey literature that was included in the final analysis was sourced through JLI EVAC Hub online resources and member submissions.

Inclusion criteria included studies referring to children and young people under the age of 18 of any gender. All geographic locations were included, along with all religions. Nearly all pieces were published in the last two decades. All vulnerable groups were included and there were no limitations in relation to the context of violence, such as school-based, family-based or religious institutions. The exclusion criteria was literature focused on Female-Genital Mutilation (FGM) and/or Harmful Traditional Practices because

the JLI Gender Based Violence (GBV) Hub has already published scoping studies and literature on these particular topics[1]. Some literature on early marriage was, however, included in this literature review (see section 5.3.).

Approximately 375 abstracts were identified as having relevance to one of the related lenses of exploration and were analysed in further detail. Out of that group, 172 were identified as the sources for intensive analysis to inform the findings of the literature review. Most of the relevant documents available were grey literature, from sources other than academic journals or books, thus this type represents 60% of the documents reviewed. Some topics were well documented while others were less so. The following tables give an indication of topics and their frequency of occurrence in the reviewed literature:

**Areas that are well documented (brackets denote total number of documents):**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overarching VAC – multiple types | 58 | Sub-Saharan Africa | 47 |
| General Focus/Both Genders Together | 119 | United States | 40 |
| Violence within Religious Institutions | 27 | Christianity as sole focus | 62 |
| Women & Girls Combined Focus | 23 | More than 2 Religions named specifically (a) | 37 |
| Sexual Abuse General | 32 | Prevention only (b) | 67 |
| Adolescents (Specifically Included) | 87 | Perpetuation of violence (c) | 39 |

- (a) Refers to documents where multiple religious were referenced in one document. Most of the references to Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and other belief systems fall in this category.
- (b) Significant majority of these are related to Mobilisation and Education
- (c) Mostly child sexual abuse, frequently related to the Catholic Church and witchcraft abuse focused on African communities in the UK and Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Areas that are relatively well documented (Between 10-20):**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Prevention & Survivor Support | 20 | Adolescents (Main Focus) | 14 |
| GBV General - Adults included | 20 | Islam as sole focus (b) | 17 |
| Global South General Reports | 19 | Islam and Christianity joint focus | 10 |
| Community-Based Context | 12 | Traditional Beliefs as sole focus (c) | 13 |
| Corporal Punishment & Physical Abuse (a) | 11 | Europe (d) | 10 |

- (a) There were documents focusing on Physical Abuse in general, however these frequently incorporated corporal punishment.
- (b) There were additional references (more than 10) to Islam in the literature that focused on multiple faiths. Approximately 25% of the literature was explicitly related to Islam.
- (c) There were at least 8 additional references to traditional beliefs in the multi-faith literature.

[1] For additional information, please see the JLI Gender-based violence Learning Hub https://gender-based-violence.jliflc.com/

- (d) Europe was not covered significantly in the literature, without intentional research to identify European issues.

**Areas somewhat documented (Less than 10)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Girls primary (Adults excluded) (a) | 8 | Family-Based Context | 8 |
| Boys primary (a) | 9 | Central America | 6 |
| Child Labour/Exploitation | 7 | South Asia | 6 |
| Survivor Support Interventions | 6 | Middle East | 5 |
| Early Marriage | 6 | | |

- (a) Most of the literature (nearly 70%) included both genders. When separated, approximately 20% of the literature focused on females (including women and girls and those focusing just on girls) while 5% focused specifically on boys. When the focus was specifically on children and excluded adults, the content was spread fairly evenly between the genders.

**Areas not well documented (Less than 5):**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Children w/physical vulnerabilities (a) | 3 | Judaism as sole focus (b) | 2 |
| Orphans | 2 | Buddhism as sole focus (b) | 1 |
| LGBTI | 2 | Hinduism as sole focus (b) | 0 |
| Child Labour/Exploitation | 7 | North Africa | 1 |
| Child Combatants | 1 | South America | 1 |
| Russia, Caucuses, East China | 1 | Southeast Asia | 4 |
| Middle East | 4 | Asia-Pacific/Oceania | 3 |

- (a) This category includes persons with mobility and developmental challenges; however, it also includes others that have physical issues that make them more vulnerable. This includes a document from a UN workshop focusing on albinism that detailed faith-actor involvement.
- (b) Each of these are referenced approximately 8-10 additional times in other studies that reference multiple religions in the same document.

Limited literature that features and examines local faith-actor work that is not related to wider international interventions and reports was identified with most reports discussing grassroots initiatives through the lens of international agencies and organisations. This is problematic because local faith actors are frontline groups engaged in organic and self-initiated work that is not being captured and disseminated adequately. At the same time, it should be noted that the documents from the international agencies and United Nations are the primary conduits for what information does exist. This critical role makes local voices more visible and shares learnings. The global forum from Arigatou International's Global Network of Religions for Children is an example of how this works effectively.

There is limited academic literature focused on faith-based initiatives. Academic pieces that did emerge tended address EVAC issues in the Global North. Approximately 6% of the literature was related to Europe and was predominantly focused on child abuse in religious institutions (primarily related to scandals in the Catholic Church) and violence associated with spirit possession. The latter represented 60% of literature sourced and was focused on migrant communities. The majority of these documents were academic.

In terms of major religions, as much of the literature was related to Sub-Saharan Africa, the focus tended to be on Christianity, Islam and Traditional Beliefs. Christian-focused literature represented approximately 40% of documents that mentioned religion, while Islam was more mixed. The focused specifically on Islam represented only 10%. Muslim engagement was also discussed in documents that combined Christianity and Islam as the focus, and then again in the multi-faith documents. In total, it is estimated that 1 in 4 documents were linked to Islam and Muslim actors in some way. Traditional healers and beliefs were covered in just under 10% of the documents, however, nearly all of the references related to perpetuation (witchcraft abuse in general and child sacrifice).

Literature focused solely on Hindu and Buddhist was minimal. There were approximately 10 additional mentions of each however in multi-faith documents. When referenced, the information was frequently focused examples of work but also on theological issues, particularly related to corporal punishment and early marriage. Regarding Jewish actors, it was difficult to locate documents detailing faith group contributions related to EVAC (although some related to corporal punishment and theological underpinnings were identified and included). The global literature that 'mapped' actors were the documents that included many of the specific faith-based community level examples are cited in this review. Nearly all of those are Global South oriented.

There is a significant segment of academic and grey literature on EVAC that does not refer to faith or faith actors, other than perhaps referring to religion as a factor like culture. One example is the 300-page World Report on Violence Against Children (UN 2006). The lead actors in the report production were high-level, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO). In the document, there appear to be three references. In reports from Family for Every Child in 2013[2] and 2015[3] and ChildFund Alliance in 2014[4] that included feedback from tens of thousands of children in more than 70 countries there was no mention of the religious beliefs or faith-related groups, positively, negatively or otherwise. The omission of religion or religious actors in the mass of documents on EVAC raises questions about whether this reflects the secular orientation of the child protection field in general or that of researchers. Since faith and religion forms a core part of every aspect of life in many parts of the world, and certainly in relation to children's upbringing, understandings of parental and child responsibilities and family life, such an omission is

[2] https://familyforeverychild.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/My_world_my_vision.pdf
[3] https://familyforeverychild.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/A_world_without_violence_against_children_brief.pdf
[4] https://childfundalliance.org/resources/publications/reports/1210-children-speak-about-being-free-from-violence-and-exploitation

problematic. Root drivers of perpetuation and resources for prevention and survivor support and children's opinions on these incorporate religious and faith aspects and as such should be captured.

### Limitations

With the exception of some Spanish language literature requested from JLI EVAC Hub members, all of the literature reviewed was in the English language. In Global South areas where English is commonly used, such as East Africa, this may have influenced the relatively high number of studies from these areas available in academic databases and therefore the perception that there is more literature in general related to those areas. This does not explain the dearth of literature from Europe, although academic databases in general tend to include articles written by authors in the Global North as well as focus on issues in this area as well.

Lastly, as noted above, much of the available literature is generated by UN and INGO groups and many of the pieces are reports. While the most relevant resources were found within texts from these types of organizations, it is important to note that some reports are developed with the aim of promoting work in a positive light, thus examples of work with local groups may highlight positive examples over others.

# 3. Positive contributions to ending violence: Prevention, advocacy, direct interventions for specific vulnerable groups and survivor support

Faith-based initiatives seeking to end violence against children included a range of actions along a spectrum of pre-violence prevention, advocacy, direct interventions and service provision and survivor support. These will be discussed in turn.

## 3.1 Prevention through mobilisation and education

Mobilisation and education were the most frequently reported forms of preventions work and mostly involved the provision of training and developing guides for faith actors to engage in particular subject areas related to a range of child protection issues.

Training and workshops were the most common formats for mobilisation and education work and involved international agencies (including international faith groups, INGOs, UN), frequently targeting faith communities. However, some literature highlighted training and mobilization actions initiated and led by faith-based national and community organizations as well. A few examples are now discussed.

In Nepal, a Buddhist and Hindu organization, Shanti Sewa Ashram Peace Service Centre (SSA), focuses on support for girls and women affected by violence and preventing violence through encouraging awareness raising specifically in the spiritual centres (ashrams) (Kaybryn and Nidadavolu 2012 / UNFPA). The Baha'i community of India likewise conducts courses focused on reducing violence against women and girls. A

module called 'Equal Wings' and a booklet called 'Beyond Legal Reforms, Culture and Capacity in the Eradication of Violence Against Women and Girls' were developed by the community and are used in the courses.

One unique model noted as well was led by the Anglican Diocese of Mount Kenya West (ACK). Rather than focusing on faith-communities and leaders as a core target group, the Diocese implemented a three-year project that focused outwardly on higher-level, external systemic actors - such as government representatives, teachers, chiefs, religious leaders and community members. The project included training, mobilization and economic development support with the goal of decreasing gender-based violence and improving child protection in Nyeri County in central Kenya where 'very high incidence of violence' were noted in two areas (Caulfield 2016). The primary target group included Nyumba Kumi community-policing cells, teachers and local leaders who were trained in rights under Kenyan Law, child protection, a strength-based approach and counselling. These members were then key in taking the actions forward, addressing GBV and child abuse in the target communities (Caulfield 2016).

The evaluation looked at the perceptions of knowledge and practice change, and the level of abuse being reported and noted that prior to the project, 30% of respondents were unsatisfied with the actions authorities were taking in response to GBV (Caulfield 2016). Following the project, the report states that 'the majority' of study participants stated that 'more people were reporting cases of violence', that there was increased confidence in the Nyumba Kyumbi, chiefs, teachers and government actors to be able to handle the reports effectively (Caulfield 2016). Respondents likewise stated that they perceived there had been a decrease in incidence violence and that they had applied the learning in response to cases of abuse, violence and neglect. Those trained, such as Nyumba Kyumbi, Chiefs and teachers, reported that knowledge and capacity to respond had increased, and, significantly, that there had been a positive 'culture change' in the schools (Caulfield 2016). While this work demonstrates a model of an FBO-led project that resulted in a high-level of perceived change in the community, further research is needed to verify the sustained impact of the work.

A few examples of Training of Trainer (ToT) cascading models of education and mobilization were reported in the literature where participants involved in an initial training programme take the initiative forward to train and mobilise others. One example of a ToT type of model –- is called Channels of Hope (CoH) and was developed by World Vision as a methodology and a process that focuses on catalysing religious leaders and local faith communities to lead change processes in the wider community (Kachale, Eyber and Ager 2015). CoH Child Protection specifically seeks to motivate and build capacity of faith leaders and communities to address harmful practices affecting children, advocate for children's rights and to foster a "wider enabling environment to strengthen the child protection system" (Kachale, Eyber and Ager 2015 p. 5). This is done through a workshop format and includes a four-phase process that involves Congregational/Community Hope Action Teams (CHATs), formed by the faith leaders who develop and implement plans to address child protection concerns in the wider community (Kachale, Eyber and Ager 2015 p. 5). The process emphasizes the grounding of child protection and well-being in existing religious understanding and scriptures. As World Vision self-identifies as a Christian organization, the curriculum is

rooted in principles from the Christian Scriptures, however Islamic Relief Worldwide has developed a Muslim version of the CoH curriculum (Eyber et al. 2018 p. 32).

The CoH Protection intervention is currently being used in 38 countries[5]. An evaluation of a CoH Protection pilot project facilitated in Malawi indicated strong evidence of an increased understanding of child protection among faith leaders following the workshops, reflected in changes in the individual understanding and behaviour and changes in the perception of their role in the community related to child protection (Eyber et al. 2018 p. 33). Pastors reported integrating child protection messaging in sermons and community meetings, and a majority of pastors reported that they had been directly involved in "preventing individual children from being abused or extricating children from situations that represented a violation of their rights" (Eyber et. al. p. 35).

Guides and toolkits developed for faith communities are a frequent feature of reports and evaluation studies in this area. Many guides emerged in the review, such as an Anti-Trafficking Toolkit from UNICEF USA, an Early Marriage Toolkit from Christian Aid, an Interfaith Guide to End Child Poverty from Arigatou International, the guides for how to end Corporal Punishment from CNNV and numerous others. While many of the guides were developed internationally, several guides were developed by local and national religious institutions and were then linked with regional and global entities – such as church councils and academic institutions. A few are briefly discussed here.

The Tamar Campaign is a primary example in the literature. Three women in Kenya are cited as the founders of the movement, having developed a contextual Bible study manual focused on GBV that focuses on issues faced by women, girls and boys and seeking to challenge the church to 'speak out against any form of violence' suffered by women and children (Nyabera and Montgomery, eds. 2007). The manual has since been reviewed by additional scholars (male and female) and is being used broadly in the region, in ecumenical settings (WFDD 2016). One notable aspect is the local level link to the World Council of Churches, St. Paul's University in Kenya and FECCLA[6] who are leaders in the Tamar Campaign (Nyabera and Montgomery, eds. 2007).

Another widely cited resource is the SASA! Initiative started in Uganda by a group called Raising Voices. It is a sensitization, training and mobilization model, based on the SASA! An Activist Kit for Preventing Violence against Women and HIV (Raising Voices, 2008). The model engages youth and seeks to involve all in the community. Unique aspects include a 'benefits-based' approach rather than negative messaging, encouraging community members to examine the 'positive effects of balancing power in relationships between men and women' (Carlson n.d.). There is a specific focus as well on the impact of violence against children and issues related to disciplining children. The work is also implemented in a number of phases over an extended period, and thus is not focused on standalone training or short-term initiatives which were frequently the norm in other approaches. The toolkit is reportedly being used in more than 20

[5] https://www.wvi.org/church-and-interfaith-engagement/channels-hope-child-protection
[6] Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes Region & Horn of Africa http://www.fecclaha.org/index.php/en/

countries, in different contexts, including refugee settlements, urban and rural areas and in Catholic and Muslim – faith-based institutions.

## 3.2 Advocacy

The second most frequently reported form of prevention work is advocacy which, although closely linked to mobilisation and education, is usually targeted at the higher level of national, regional and global actors through advocacy campaigns.

### Conferences and Forums

Examples of the types of gatherings documented include the global forums held by Arigatou International such as the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) that focus specifically on ending violence against children. In their 2017 report, it was noted that more than 520 participants from 70 countries participated, including 'leaders and members of the world's religious and spiritual traditions, girls and boys, women and men… alongside representatives of governments, the United Nations, as well as international and grassroots organizations.' Like other literature pertaining to similar gatherings, case studies and presentations are shared, in addition to commitments from participants for actions that will be taken. There are many other global campaigns related to violence against children, such as those spearheaded by Family for Every Child and ChildFund Alliance, however references to faith and faith-actors are minimal in many of these global reports. Notable exclusions of faith issues or faith actor roles (positive or negative) can be seen in large-scale reports seeking to capture the perspectives of tens of thousands of children in Asia, Africa, Latin and South America (Mann 2013; Cala et. al 2014; Mann 2015).

### Joint Statements

The statements that are developed by participants at the meetings and workshops seem to form the backbone of many of the faith-related campaigns against VAC. From example, the Kyoto Declaration, which is seen to be a foundational global interfaith agreement to push for rights of children and legislation to prevent violence of children, came from an assembly hosted by UNICEF and Religions for Peace in 2006 (Kyoto Declaration 2006). Other examples targeted at particular issues are the Declaration on the Role of Religion and Religious Leaders in Confronting Corporal Punishment for Children that came out of a 2011 conference hosted by UNICEF in Iran. Developed by 100 multi-faith religious leaders and decision makers at the conference, the statement was a public commitment for those involved to combat VAC and served as a wider instruction on corporal punishment for religious leaders in other countries to consider (UNICEF Iran 2011). These types of statements that come out of debate and dialogue at gatherings hosted by and targeted towards faith community leaders operate as influential advocacy reference points.

### Localised Advocacy – News Media & Reports

News articles (digital and non-digital) are a key literature source in sharing examples of localised advocacy efforts. The examples shared were frequently related to global campaigns facilitated by international organisations. The World Day of Prayer and Action is a primary example. It is observed on November 20th each year and activities take place in approximately 50 countries. The movement was started by international groups and the actions are documented and disseminated by these groups to the media, however the activities are generally related to locally led efforts (Hanmer and Sommarin 2011). Likewise, locally led advocacy efforts were also often captured in documents from international agencies. An Islamic Relief Worldwide evaluation of projects in Mali, Niger and Pakistan for example cite stories of imams mobilising advocacy and teaching, with more formal processes being used by the communities to report and register cases of abuse (Almugahed et. al. 2017). In a UNICEF Interfaith Toolkit to End Trafficking, for example, a case study is given that details the role of Islamic leaders in Senegal in advocacy against child labour. The Senegal Ministry of Family and Children worked with UNICEF and Islamic leaders to study the teachings of Islam in relation to protection of children. As a result, there was agreement on the Qur'ans emphasise on child protection and positive parenting, and these issues, along with discussions on the negative consequences of child exploitation and labour, were discussed on national radio and television during Ramadan (UNICEF Interfaith Toolkit to End Trafficking 2017). This synergy between local and international advocacy levels seems to work effectively in raising awareness of what is possible for faith communities in the area of EVAC.

### National and Regional Religious Network Actions

In addition to the advocacy mobilised internationally, literature was available – though to a lesser degree – noting work of national and regional religious networks. One example that is captured in an advocacy document from an international group is the work of the Inter-Religious Council for Peace in Tanzania[7] (IRCPT). The coalition, described as the largest coalition of representatives of religious communities in the country, signed a pledge to end VAC through actions like building networks to respond to VAC and provision of safe havens for maltreated children. The case study also cites the IRCPT influence on Tanzania's "Multi-Sector National Plan of Action to prevent and respond to violence against children" (2013-2016[8]).

## 3.3 Initiatives aimed at reducing vulnerability

Faith-based organisations are also leading actions to reduce vulnerability of children through service provision targeted to address root causes. The examples below highlight the role of FBOs in providing direct services comparable to those provided by secular agencies. This type of outreach and service-provision, led by faith actors, is common in practice, but is less visible in documentation than similar work

[7] http://ircpt.or.tz
[8] www.togetherforgirls.org/wp-content/uploads/Tanzania_FINAL3_year_national_plan.pdf

done by secular counterpart traditions (Robinson and Hanmer 2014; Marshall and Mui 2016). Faith-based development interventions "reach so many and provide so much and many are critical venues for outreach, resources and service delivery"[9] (UNFPA 2009 p.1; Karam 2010 p. 437). Examples are given of the extensive work of faith actors, in collaboration with governments and the UN. An example comes from the Philippines where a faith-based foundation examined root causes and identified that when parents are poor and need to work, they are often unable to find suitable childcare and are more likely to abandon their children to institutions. This group, the Kaisahang Buhay Foundation of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, now provides child-care during the week, including meals and medical check-ups for the children. Pregnant mothers have access to skills training, shelter, health care and counselling and the foundation helps find families to adopt abandoned children (Christopher Bold / Christian Aid, UNICEF and Islamic Relief n.d.). Similarly, the Hindu religious organisation, Bharat Sevashram Sanga[10], works in the Bihar, one of the poorest states in India, to protect children through providing services, basic needs support, shelter and education and skills training for the parents (Lai-Smith 2016). Bharat Sevashram Sanga, founded by Swami Pranavananda in the early 20th century, works across India, and globally through a network of volunteers, on welfare issues related to education, health, scriptural teaching and vocational training.

Literature pertaining to Latin America tended to focus on faith-led service delivery in support of at-risk youth. Don Bosco, a movement established by a Roman Catholic priest (Giovanni or John Bosco[11]) in Italy in the 1800s, is closely related to the Catholic order, the Salesians[12] and focuses on supporting vulnerable youth, with an emphasis on vocational training, formal and non-formal education and institutional services. Globally, the Salesians operate schools, youth centres, colleges, medical centres and shelters, reportedly serve more than 1 million children[13][14]. An evaluation report related to the work of the Boys and Girls Network with Don Bosco in Santo Domingo, El Salvador, highlights the work in areas of high gang and urban violence, reaching an estimated 1,300 teens, with the goal of providing safe spaces for the youth to pursue education and develop vocational skills that will enable the adolescents to have employment options (Zapata 2011).

Another prominent example is the work of The Mary Barreda Association (Asociación Proyecto Mujer Barreda)[15] in Nicaragua. The Christian group focuses on reducing vulnerability among girls exposed to prostitution, violence, sexual abuse and child labour in the city of León where more than 14,000 cases

[9] From UNFPA's Guidelines for Engaging FBOs as Cultural Agents of Change (2009), p. 1, http://www.unfpa.org/culture/docs/fbo_engagement.pdf
[10] http://www.bharatsevashramsangha.org/
[11] https://www.donboscoyouth.net/don-bosco.html#;
[12] http://www.salesianmissions.org/about-us/our-history
[13] http://www.salesianmissions.org/about-us/about-us
[14] The Don Bosco movement also includes a network of development NGOs that are leading child-focused projects ranging from food security to refugee support and an international network for youth sports organisations, among other groups.
[15] The organization is named in honor of a Christian woman who was kidnapped, tortured and killed, along with her husband, in the war in Nicaragua from 1981-1990, due to her "evangelical and revolutionary commitment to justice for the poor": http://mary-barreda.org/

sexual abuse were reported between 1998 and 2008 (CAFOD n.d.). Many girls leave home at an early age, increasing their vulnerability to sexual violence, commercial exploitation and prostitution (CAFOD n.d.). The Association's work focuses on prevention efforts and training and education, in addition to provision of health care for sex workers and therapy and support for those seeking to transition into alternate ways of living and earning an income (CAFOD n.d.). A unique aspect of the work that was highlighted in the literature was the group's intentional focus on working with the police force, male family members and schools to mobilise cooperation, educate and, in the case of the police – to improve security and protection for girls.

## 3.4 Direct interventions for specific groups of children affected by violence

Though the majority of the literature focused on gender-based violence in general or sexual abuse, many of the documents included examples of contributions faith actors are making on a range of subjects. It is not possible to cover all the different types of service provision to different groups; instead, just a few examples of different types of violence are presented below.

### 3.4.1 Faith Actor, Government and UN Integrated Models for Preventing and Responding to Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation among Children

Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation is not a core focus of the literature review, as there is a working group within the Joint Learning Initiative entitled The Anti-Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery[16] hub that is dedicated to the subject. A few examples only will thus be briefly mentioned here. Literature identified that focused on faith contributions to eliminating trafficking among children includes examples that showed two models of stakeholder engagement, namely the potential of multi-level networks helping to target grassroots issues and a model of inter-agency faith actor work involving government actors in the Global North.

An anti-trafficking initiative in Nepal, for example, involved UNICEF, an international network called Viva, another network called CarNet Nepal (Children at Risk Network), church leaders in Bageshwori Village Development Committee in Central Nepal and community-established Child Protection Vigilante Groups. Viva is a faith-based international charity that works with local networks for the protection and well-being children. CarNet is a faith-inspired NGO that works with local communities and faith groups on the same issues. In Bageshwori Village, the Development Committee learned that children in their area were going missing, and faith-leaders formed a Child Protection Vigilant Group which collects data on vulnerable children and provides clothes for children to stay in school. The UNICEF report also notes that church volunteers led a door-to-door program to campaign against child sexual abuse and trafficking (UNICEF USA Interfaith Toolkit to End Trafficking 2017; Viva 2017). A similar model implemented in Bangladesh reportedly led to a decline in trafficking. In that case, USAID funded the Bangladesh Human Rights Advocacy Program, who then worked local NGOs and The Chakoria Imam Association. The imams began

[16] https://aht-ms.jliflc.com/

to incorporate messages in their Friday prayers related to combating child trafficking. The initiative subsequently expanded, with more than 1,600 imams taking part in 20 districts in Bangladesh. UNICEF reports that community watchdog groups were formed, the groups would locate the families of rescued victims and village gatherings were organised. One of the reasons noted for the high-level of engagement was that anti-trafficking was linked to the teachings of Islam and observable changes that could result from the efforts within the community were underscored (UNICEF USA Interfaith Toolkit to End Trafficking 2017; USAID Press Release 2009).

There was also a notable example of faith-action in relation to a faith-based anti-trafficking programme called Second Chance in the state of Ohio in the United States. Despite having a low population proportionally to other areas in the US, northwest Ohio has one of the highest rates of trafficking and related arrests in the country. Recognising this, a local faith-leader and academic established the Lucas County Human Trafficking Coalition in the early 1990s. The Coalition is still in operation today and includes churches and non-faith related health care agencies, social work organisations, local criminal justice actors, businesses, academics, adult survivors and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), through their Innocence Lost Task Force. The goal is to provide a comprehensive response that includes clinical case management with spiritual care, immediate relief support, legal action and prosecution, community education and legislative (Perdue 2012; Williamson, 2008 in Perdue 2012). Currently, the work renamed RISE – Recovering Individuals from Sexual Exploitation and also includes case management support to those at-risk of sex trafficking or street-based sex work and to those currently involved the industry. The initiative is currently led by the Salvation Army[17].

### 3.4.2 Initiatives to reduce youth violence & promote conflict resolution

Most of the reviewed literature in this field relates primarily to Latin America, with some exceptions, and looked at issues among men and boys[18]. Several references, in addition to the Don Bosco examples detailed in sections above, were related to El Salvador, which is noted as having very high incidence of violence, situated in a region where a number of countries have 'severely elevated levels of youth violence' (Salas-Wright 2013). It was observed that there are community organisations who are engaged in providing assistance to gang-involved youth, and that most of these have religious affiliations, to varying degrees (Salas-Wright 2013). Research was conducted that investigated what associations exist, if any, between religious coping, spirituality, social developmental factors, and violence among high-risk and gang-involved youth (Salas-Wright 2013). The study examined survey data from 290 youth aged 11-25 in the capital San Salvador, using structural equation modelling to examine the relationships between factors. The results indicated that greater levels of religious coping and interest in spirituality were significantly associated with less antisocial bonding and that antisocial bonding is 'robustly associated' with the likelihood of participation in violent behaviours (Salas-Wright 2013). Thus, the researchers concluded that study findings suggest that "religious coping and spirituality are indirectly protective for youth violence among this high-risk population" (Salas-Wright 2013 p. 183).

[17] https://neo.salvationarmy.org/northeastohio/NWOASRise
[18] Literature may have been missed as the review focused mostly on literature in English.

The second study related to El Salvador is a part of a wider evaluation of an FBO initiative seeking to reduce vulnerability of youth to gang violence through engaging youth in educational programmes focused on conflict resolution, ethics, culture, diversity and the participant's reflection on their spirituality. The evaluation is specifically related to the use of education model and curriculum, entitled Learning to Live Together – An Intercultural and Interfaith Programme for Ethics Education (LTLT). The curriculum has been developed by Arigatou International's Global Network of Religions for Children, the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children and UNICEF, among others. The model focuses on training and education directly with children, in coordination with local faith and non-faith actors and schools, and it is used in more than 30 countries, including El Salvador. Some examples include the Casa de la Juventud for youth which was developed by the Catholic Sisters of Ángel Guardián in a part of El Salvador with high rates of violence and is described as 'an ecumenical safe space', providing courses and training programmes for youth vulnerable to gang violence. The focus is to help youth "to live, learn together and prevent violence from gangs" (Arigatou International / Barros 2015).

In addition to work where the faith-groups are the direct implementers of the work, there are models examined in literature where youth are mobilised to become the leaders of anti-violence efforts. In Uganda, the Lutheran World Federation (LFW) utilises a Youth Pyramid Structure approach, among refugees, where one young-person is trained and that person then reaches out to others through household visits (door-to-door approach to people in their 'circle of influence') with sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and anti-violence messaging for girls, boys, women and men (Mirghani 2017). That youth trains two others, and then those train others and this continues until there are groups of youth activities at the village-levels, and ultimately among other areas (Mirghani 2017).

### 3.4.3 Fighting Child Labour & Supporting Recovery of Street Working Children

The subject of child labour was frequently noted within wider documents on violence against children but was less frequently the sole focus of documents. The low-level visibility of the subject as a sole focus seems in contrast with perspective captured in a Family for Every Children 2015 report where child labour was named among the top concerns (among punishment, sexual violence, trafficking and child marriage) of children interviewed for the report. The report included responses from 12,000 children in 70 countries (Mann 2015).

One particular focus for faith-based actions relate to street-living and street-working children. A journal-published evaluation of programming highlights the Covenant House[19], a Catholic Organisation based in the U.S that works in 31 cities across the U.S. and counterparts (called Casa Alianza) in several Latin American countries, including Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua (Ferguson 2004). The organisation is the largest, privately funded agency in the Americas, providing a spectrum of services to homeless and street-living youth[20] (Ferguson 2004). Their work involves outreach to children and youth

[19] https://www.covenanthouse.org/
[20] http://ee.covenanthouse.org/images/pdf/ch-presskit.pdf

in the streets, providing drop-in centre locations, immediate needs response and both short and long-term residential care. They reportedly support an estimated 80,000 children each year and provide services such as medical care, counselling, prayer (optional), addiction support and social work assistance. A unique aspect about this group is that in contains only one of two references noted in the literature review related to LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/questioning) youth. Covenant House reports that the risk of homelessness among LGBTQ youth is 120% higher than the risk among their peers and that approximately 40% of youth who are homeless are from LGBTQ community[21] (Choi et al. 2015; Morton et. al. 2017). In light of this, Covenant House rolled out an assessment tool (True Inclusion Assessment developed with the True Colors Fund[22]) that measures inclusivity of policies, physical space, programs and practices. This tool was used in the US and Canada locations and a comparable review was conducted in the Latin American locations. As a result of the surveys, Covenant House US and Latin American has worked with external consultants to develop an inclusivity training curriculum and action plan, with modules focusing on helping to develop understanding of the staff and how to provide a safe and welcoming space in each area. As an organisation where Catholic/Christian faith (phrasing as noted by the organisation) is a visible component in agency identity and the model of practice, the intentional adjustment to actively take steps towards inclusion and embrace of LGBTQ youth, this example was unusual. When LGBTQ issues and faith subjects were noted in literature, it was primarily related to potential conflict as non-faith based INGOs or UN actors seek to change beliefs and practices of some religious communities in the Global South to become 'inclusive' – with which those communities may not agree.

### 3.4.4 Developing Integrated Models to Care for Child Combatants

A range of faith-based programmes exist for supporting child combatants. Arigatou International, the Global Network of Religions for Children and The Goldin Institute from the U.S. partnered with the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU)[23] and the African Council of Religious Leaders-Religions for Peace (ACRL-R*f*P) commissioned a study in Uganda, to gather insights and recommendations from former child soldiers (FCS) and other stakeholders (Komakech 2014). Those recommendations were sought in order to advance a joint effort by the partner groups to establish a regional mechanism, in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, for preventing the recruitment of children into armed groups and to support reintegration of FCS. It is estimated that more than 30,000 children have been kidnapped and forced to become soldiers, sexual slaves or to provide other support to the conflict, by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda from the late 1980s to the present (Robinson 2010).

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[21] https://www.covenanthouse.org/homeless-issues/lgbtq-homeless-youth

[22] https://truecolorsfund.org/

[23] The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) is an indigenous, national faith-based organization uniting efforts of religious institutions to jointly address issues of common concern. IRCU is constituted by; the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), the Church of the Province of Uganda (Church of Uganda-COU), the Uganda Orthodox Church (UOC), the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC), the Seventh-day Adventist Uganda Union (SDAUU), the Born Again Faith in Uganda (BAF) and the National Alliance of Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches in Uganda (NAPECU). Similarly, IRCU works with other religious organizations, namely the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i, the Methodist and Lutheran Churches.

The research, led by Gulu University Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies in Uganda, included interviews with 180 former child soldiers, more than 80 parents and community leaders and more than 30 organisations. The extensive report provides recommendations for what reintegration should entail and what groups such as the government, I/NGOs and communities need to consider. What is notable here is not just the type of faith-integrated, national/international collaboration, but the unique concerns from the youth regarding the spiritual realm and reintegration. Specifically, the youth reported "being haunted by the spirits of those who had been killed by FCS on the orders of the LRA" (Komakech 2014 p. 29). The youth report nightmares, screaming, flash backs, and interrupted sleep and in some locations, there are high rates of suicide among FCS (Komakech 2014). After some 20 suicides occurred in one county in just five months, the inter-faith Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative[24] organized 'healing prayers'. The report cites comments that "what the religious leaders are emphatic about is the fact that effective reintegration should also combine the efforts of spiritual healing and cleansing of the FCS from the bad spirits (*cen*) of those they were forced to kill while in the bush" (Komakech 2014 p. 29).

The concern thus is that the current practice of the government and NGOs that largely focuses on material assistance is setting aside concerns of the FCS, local belief systems, the transformative capacity of spiritual engagement and the leaders who will remain in the post-conflict period:

> The 'mind-set fixated around materiality' whereby reintegration not only takes a limited, narrow and generalized form but also, is skewed towards basic needs provision which lacks in empowerment and transformative components….The national strategy must not neglect the need for FCS to be freed from the bondage of evil spirits whether real or imagined. Thus, effective reintegration should combine the efforts of spiritual healing and cleansing of the FCS from the bad spirits of those they were forced to kill (Komakech 2014).

### 3.4.5 Supporting Orphans & At-Risk Children

One of the areas where faith-communities were highlighted as primary responders to the needs of children and prevention of violence, accordingly, was in relation to orphans and children without adequate care in SSA. The interventions varied, from family and community-based support to institutional care. It was noted in literature that taking on the care and support of children without caregivers may reduce their vulnerability to violence. An anti-trafficking guide from Christian Aid for example notes that when parents die, children are more likely to live on the street, to be vulnerable to trafficking and to engage in drug use (Bold n.d.). The scale of the faith-actor leadership in such responses and the grassroots, volunteer-led nature of the work forms a significant part of the literature. In a UNICEF Religious for Peace

[24] The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) is an interfaith peace building and conflict transformation organization formed in 1997 as a proactive response to the conflict in Northern Uganda. ARLPI brings together leaders of six different religious sects/denominations (Anglican, Catholic, Muslim, Orthodox, Pentecostal, & Seventh Day Adventist) and their respective constituencies to participate effectively in transforming conflicts in Northern Uganda and the surrounding region. http://www.arlpi.org/about-us

study on responses by FBOs in six countries – Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Uganda – it was found that nearly 140,000 orphans and at-risk children were being supported through community-based work that involved psychosocial, education, material and spiritual support (Foster n.d.). Interviews were conducted with 686 FBOs during the study and more than 7,800 volunteers were cited to be leading the work. Most of the work detailed related to Christian FBOs, given the particular context, however Muslim, Baha'i, Hindu, Traditional belief groups and Jewish congregations were also noted for leadership in such responses (Foster n.d.). The report also notes a significant finding that is contrary to common beliefs. The FBOs were found to have financial and governance capacity on par with larger NGOs and to be leading the work without significant technical or financial support from external actors. Given the needs and the capacities for response, UNICEF in fact recommends small grants to FBOs working on this issue.

## 3.5 Survivor Support: Counselling and Continuum Care

As noted above, survivor support was less of a focus overall than prevention with just 20% of the literature focusing on this type of activity. The literature, particularly Global North literature, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa, tended to focus on counselling as the primary manner of survivor support with a significant part concentrated on survivors of sexual abuse. Other forms of support include aspects such as outreach, immediate relief support, shelter, vocational skills and jobs, health care and legal assistance.

In an example from Kenya, the Catholic Church in the Suguta Mar Parish operates an education and rescue centre to accommodate girls who are survivors who may have fled their homes as a result of forced marriages and other forms of GBV (CAFOD n.d.). Counselling is also provided. In a nearby Diocese where there is a 'gender desk' that oversees the projects throughout Samburu County to ensure gender issues are addressed in each project (CAFOD n.d.). In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Catholic-founded Justice and Peace Commission (CDJP) runs 'listening centres' for survivors of rape. The centres provide immediate support and counselling and then focus on legal support, mediation in families and income generation training (CAFOD n.d.). Another support effort of a faith-inspired group that is working with rape survivors is the Sarvodaya Sharamadana Movement in Sri Lanka. The organisation, founded on Buddhist and Ghandhian principles, works across Sri Lanka and provides shelter for vulnerable women, legal support and (in some districts) counselling for women and children. The organisation has a unique focus on providing care for teenagers who have become pregnant as a result of rape – running a particular shelter to care for their needs.

A unique model of engagement relates to the Oblate Sisters of the Most Holy Redeemer. The Catholic order runs centers for abused girls and sex workers in the Philippines. The work includes therapy and life-skills support; however, in a somewhat divergent approach to other groups, the nuns do not seek to convince the women to leave the sex industry, but instead go to the places of 'entertainment' and endeavour to help the women stay safe and healthy. The sisters likewise seek to prevent underage sex workers from being employed. In this process, the sisters have joined the Philippines Association of Club Owners and Bar Managers, working as 'gatekeepers' within the bars and clubs. From within the industry

itself, they are able to connect with the sex workers without seeking to take the workers out of the industry (thus being permitted access by the bar owners) and the sisters monitor the club owners' compliance with laws preventing employment of underage sex workers. If a child is hired, the sisters report the employer to authorities. One of the ultimate goals is to be present for the women, to help them find other income-generation opportunities, if and when the women choose to leave the sex industry. The Order is present in 15 countries, predominantly in the Americas and in the Philippines.

## 3.6 Interventions aimed at eliminating child sexual exploitation through digital media

Finally, an area on which not much literature was available, especially academic literature, but that has increasing importance is that of exploitation through online means. With the widespread increase in use of digital technologies for communication and information sharing in the past 15 years, a vast and appalling dimension of child sexual abuse has emerged (Lai-Smith 2016). There are different types of abuse cited as common: the sharing of images online and by text that show sexual abuse of children by adults, sextortion[25], harassment, grooming and bullying (IAFSC 2018). There are reports that an estimated 800 million children are at risk and that the incidents are 'measured in millions, daily' (IAFSC 2018). Interpol[26] and a leading global child protection agency End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT[27]) conducted a review in 2018 of 1 million images of child sexual abuse already catalogued within the International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) Database[28]. Among many findings, it was shown that, when a child's age could be determined, the majority of the subjects in the images were pre-pubescent children, with babies and toddlers also targeted (Interpol 2018). The severity of the violence was linked to age: younger victims were more likely to suffer the worst forms of violence (Interpol 2018).

The focus on the issue seems to be on the rise in the past decade however, as government bodies and organisations have become active in combatting online abuse. Information on faith actors' engagement however was minimal with some indications that this is beginning to change. In 2016, the United Nations Religions for Peace coalition and ECPAT produced a seminal guide for religious leaders and communities to help them advance protection of children from online sexual exploitation. The guide is a call to action, grounds the issue in specific protective elements in religious teachings and provides tools for helping the faith leaders to work with parents, children, congregants and communities. The most significant faith-led action against online sexual exploitation immediately visible in the review is from the Interfaith Alliance for Safe Communities[29]. The network includes global religious leaders, senior government officials from countries with varying religious foundations and representatives from leading faith-based child protection

[25] Sextortion is a form of sexual exploitation that involves non-physical forms of coercion to extort sexual favours from the victim...In the online sphere it is frequently a form of blackmail where sexual information or images of a person, and threats to distribute them, are used to extort sexual favours. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sextortion
[26] https://www.interpol.int/About-INTERPOL/Overview
[27] https://www.ecpat.org/
[28] https://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Crimes-against-children/Victim-identification; file:///C:/Users/kkrutledge/Downloads/ICSE_Infographic-2018-01.pdf
[29] https://iafsc.org/about-us

and rights agencies. The Alliance emerged following the World Congress on Child Dignity in a Digital World in 2017[30] and the resulting Declaration of Rome in 2017[31]. The Alliance hosted its first international forum Child Dignity in a Digital World, in November 2018, with the focus on how religious leaders and faith-based organisations can prevent and respond to online sexual exploitation and abuse of children. There were 450 participants representing a spectrum of major faiths and a range of other sectors including governments, the United Nations, academics, organisations and civil society. One of the sessions included a panel of Muslim, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist religious leaders, some of whom are also senior leaders for UN and international child-focused agencies, discussing how to respond to online child abuse[32] (IAFCS 2018). The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Marta Santos Pais, called upon the Forum to strengthen the alliances with religious and spiritual communities and leaders and underscored that faith communities are uniquely placed to help mobilise preventive action and to educated youth and families regarding the risks and opportunities related to the digital sphere.[33]

As engagement in this area of EVAC grows, it is important to recognise the challenges faith actors face in this realm. Faith leaders may be less clear regarding what the role of parents versus the faith leadership can and should be on the subject. The scale, the severity of the abuse, the continued spread of digital use and its consequences on the lives of children indicate that this is an area that will require faith leaders and communities to grapple with the issue in the years ahead. A statement from His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder of the United Arab Emirates, where the IAFCS Forum took place, captures this well: 'Future generations will be living in a world that is very different from that to which we are accustomed. It is essential that we prepare ourselves and our children for that new world.' (IAFSC 2018)

# 4. Strengthening formal and informal child protection systems

In addition to facilitating changes in knowledge and practices related to child protection through training and advocacy, religious leaders and faith communities are also leading actions to create sustainable mechanisms to foster protection of children, from household to national levels. This section presents findings regarding faith actors' involvement in the 'formal' elements of child protection systems, such as regulated support and supervision provided by official systems, laws, policies and regulations and the 'informal' aspects related to the values, attitudes, behaviours and cultural practices in society (Rojas 2017). Formal actors primarily include government authorities, including government leaders, military, those in the justice system and the police, while non-formal includes community leaders, caregivers, local organisations, faith leaders, and children and youth, among others (Rojas 2017).

[30] https://www.childdignity.com/
[31] https://www.childdignity.com/blog/declaration-of-rome
[32] IAFSC Newsroom November 20, 2018. Child Dignity in the Digital World Forum November 19-20 2018 in United Arab Emirates. Panel Discussion: Faith Leaders Discuss How To Respond to Online Child Sexual Abuse https://iafsc.org/newsroom/Faith-leaders-discuss-how-to-respond-to-online-child-sexual-abuse
[33] United Nations Online Media. Office of UN SRSG Violence against Children. Abu Dhabi: November 20 2018. Faith leaders commit to strengthen child protection from online violence. (Accessed February 9 2019).

## 4.1 Large-Scale Multi-Stakeholder Systems

International faith-based organisations are highlighted in the literature as active agents in larger-scale systems change to improve the protection of children. World Vision's work in El Salvador is an example of this. In a five-year effort targeted specifically on strengthening child protection systems and reducing violence against children, World Vision focused on mobilising collaboration between youth, parents, teachers, faith-actors, community service organisations, municipality leaders and national groups such as the Salvadoran Institute for the Protection of Minors (ISNA), the National Council for Childhood and Adolescence and the Ministry of Education (Rojas 2017). An Intersectoral Committee was developed to engage the range of stakeholders on child rights, particular violence concerns and policy issues, followed by the formation of Local Rights Committees in fifty municipalities (Rojas 2017).

In Uganda, there are strong formal mechanisms involving interfaith collaboration, integrated with government systems (Jailobaeva and Eyber 2018). These groups include the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative[34] (ARLPI), the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda[35], and the Uganda Joint Christian Council[36]. The Acholi initiative involves leaders from various religions who work together on peacebuilding, conflict resolution and reconciliation in Northern Uganda. The ARLPI plays a key role in the effort to prevent conscription of child combatants and to provide holistic, survivor support (Komakech 2014). There are also informal mechanisms, such as various faith communities coming together for community events and inter-faith marriage. An analysis of these mechanisms found that FBOs and faith-communities in the country have played a significant role in development including child protection (Jailobaeva and Eyber 2018 p. 6)

Similarly, an initiative in the U.S. that is largely implemented by faith communities, has helped to cultivate a community-wide culture of protection and a safety net for children in many communities in the state of South Carolina. As described in literature, the goal of the initiative is "to ensure that every child and every parent would know that if they had a reason to celebrate, worry, or grieve, someone would notice and someone would care" (Haski-Leventhal et al. 2008). This is done through a neighbourhood-based child protection approach[37] that focuses on relationship development in one's immediate neighbourhood and community and cultivates an active collaboration between families and primary institutions, such as public safety agencies, schools, businesses, family health clinics and churches, to work together to protect children (Melton, Holladay, Kimbrough-Melton 2008). One notable aspect is that the work was not done primarily by paid employees, but involved more than 5,000 volunteers (over a five year period), more than 210 religious groups, some 190 business and 85 non-religious volunteer organisations (Haski-Leventhal et al. 2008). An example of the type of work done includes firefighters who volunteered to go door-to-door to bring local residents to meetings and direct mentoring of children. It should be noted that in

[34] http://www.arlpi.org/
[35] https://ircu.or.ug/
[36] https://ujcc.co.ug/
[37] This is a model that originates from U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect report that highlighted the need for new models for protection (Melton, Holladay, Kimbrough-Melton 2008).

addition to the local leadership, the wider initiative was founded and facilitated by a non-faith based academic institution, namely Clemson University's Institute on Family and Neighbourhood Life, demonstrating the excellent collaboration that can exist between secular and faith-based child protection actors.

According to a multi-method evaluation conducted over four years, the initiative was found to show 'significant changes' in child safety in the home, improved parental practices, decreased parental stress levels, collective efficacy and, importantly, a reduction in rates of substantiated incidents of child maltreatment and reduction in rates of ICD-9[38] coded child injuries that indicate the injuries may be linked to child maltreatment (McDonnell, Ben-Arieh, Melton 2015). This case example and the evaluation results demonstrate the central role faith communities can take and are taking to create far-reaching community child protection systems that lead to measurable reduction in child maltreatment.

## 4.2 Informal Project Initiatives

The larger-scale initiatives include intensive grassroots aspects; however, accounts of smaller scale initiatives are the most common in literature. Examples of the types of contributions of faith actors in this type of approach include a World Vision project in Nepal, where community members were mobilised to form groups and develop their own initiatives regarding child protection education and systems within their communities. The report from an external evaluation indicates that the project, which engaged Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Om Shanti faith leaders, did facilitate those groups to develop their own plans to work on child protection issues with their communities (Lamjung Evaluation Report 2017). Information was not available on the extent the groups implemented their plans.

Similarly, in Mali, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) used the Channels of Hope programme (see section 3.1.) to mobilise communities to develop groups – called Community Hope Action Teams (CHAT) - to work toward a decrease in GBV and child abuse. In addition to education, the focus was on community level child protection systems, from reporting cases, referring to specialist services, further justice issues and the like. As a result of the work, IRW reports that 44 cases of GBV and child abuse were reported and referred for support and specialist services.

Faith-communities frequently step into the social protection gap in various ways. The literature frequently notes faith-communities serve as informal support providers, thus filling a particular role in the overall protection system. In Nigeria, the ODI reports states that 'informal safety nets do still play a role in protecting children from the worst forms of child protection deficits' and 'the importance of faith-based organisations should also not be under-estimated' (Jones 2015). For most respondents, the benefit of

[38] ICD-coded child injuries are referring to the codes of the International Classification of Diseases global diagnostic tool, also known as the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Purposes. There is currently a version 11 available. It can be located on the World Health Organisation website, among other agencies. http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/

church participation was mainly social protection and moral guidance, however, 'churches also emerged as significant safety nets in times of need' (Jones 2015 page 33 Nicole). Examples are cited, such as FBOs providing cash assistance to help families cover immediate, basic needs in addition to health care and schooling (Jones 2015).

## 4.3 Child Protection in Religious Institutions

An interesting initiative by the Mennonite Church Committee (MCC) in the US was highlighted in literature. The study was one of few related to protection systems and safeguarding within religious institutions that was available in academic literature. In a survey, the MCC in the US identified gaps in understanding and implementation of child protection policies in congregations. This led to the MCC board approving a child protection framework that requires all MCC institutions to have and comply with policies and procedures and likewise requires the same for all external partners of MCC. To help oversee the implementation and to support congregations, the MCC programme Dove's nest provides support for policy development and writing of those guidelines. The programme included aspects from health and safety in facilities to monitoring staff and volunteers after hire and reporting issues to authorities. Procedures include topics such as ensuring there are windows in doors so that adults are not alone with youth without visibility, that first aid kits are available, that certain hazardous materials (like cleaning chemicals) are stored safely, that background checks are done, training is provided including how to report issues to authorities, that staff and volunteers are monitored and that children's responses to adults working with them are observed. While many procedures in other institutions noted background checks as important, the literature on Dove's Nest highlighted the policy that background checks should be formal (legal) and informal – seeking feedback from informal (Harder and Haynie 2012; Harder 2016).

Another example of faith engagement in development of child protection within religious institutions comes from Sikh leadership in the UK. In 2015, the UK Sikh Council established the Safer Sikh Partnership[39] in order to combat sexual abuse, grooming and violence in Sikh places of worship and within Sikh communities and organisations. In coordination with the NSPCC, trained practitioners and police authorities, the Safer Sikh Partnership[40] is working to support *Gurdwaras* (Sikh places of worship) to advance child protection, through tailored training, provision of educational tools and facilitating development of policies and procedures for safeguarding and responding to reports of abuse. This is reportedly the first initiative of its type within the Sikh community, as sexual abuse is usually a taboo issue and carries significant stigma in communities, with many families keeping quiet about abuse (UK Sikh Council 2015).

[39] Cited in Lai-Smith 2016: UK Sikh Council, December 8, 2015. London: UK Sikhs launch campaign to promote safeguarding and tackle child grooming; Accessed: February 8 2019. https://sikhsiyasat.net/2015/12/08/uk-sikhs-launch-campaign-to-promote-safeguarding-and-tackle-child-grooming

[40] https://www.facebook.com/SaferSikhs/

On a global level, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and UNICEF have worked together to develop the "Principles for Child-Friendly Churches"[41], shaped through global consultations with faith-communities, with emphasis on receiving guidance from youth and children. The resource aims help churches to develop their own plans for creating child friendly faith-communities. The WCC represents nearly 350 Christian communities worldwide in more than 100 countries and is prominent in literature as key actor in child protection efforts[42].

## 4.4 Working with Law Enforcement

A few examples in the literature focused on initiatives of faith communities to engage in coordination with law enforcement in order to pursue systemic change. A number of examples were given of faith-led programmes where the role of the police was key in positive changes that have taken place. In addition, significantly, the examples showed faith-actors mutually assisting law enforcement to achieve their own EVAC priorities.

The work of The Mary Barreda Association (Asociación Proyecto Mujer Mary Barreda) Nicaragua, for example, focuses on creating systemic change in beliefs and approaches within local law enforcement. The Association works closely with the police force to improve security and protection for girls in León, Nicaragua, where there are high rates of sexual abuse and where many girls and young women leave home, increasing their risk of sexual exploitation and prostitution (CAFOD n.d.). The work with the police force includes actions such as facilitating gatherings where the police meet directly with the vulnerable groups and leading six trainings per year within different levels of the police force (CAFOD n.d.)

Similarly, the Buddhist Gem Fellowship in Malaysia works closely with the local police in the effort to improve safety for girls and women, and institutional change seems to be taking place. Believing they were being helpful, police officers report that they previously would tell husbands the locations of 'missing wives' who were fleeing their homes due to domestic violence. This has apparently changed after the Buddhist initiative started (Kaybryn and Nidadavolu 2012 / UNFPA). In the U.S., in the anti-trafficking initiative facilitated by the Salvation Army, one of the primary partners is the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Innocence Lost Task Force. The groups work together toward a common goal while also mutually supporting the other to achieve their specific mandate. In Pakistan, Islamic Relief worked closely with the police in an effort to end the practice of early marriage. The police took on the responsibility of calling girls' parents, discussing the rights of the girls and communicating that the violation of those rights is 'punishable by law' (Almugahed et. al. 2017). As a result, the majority of parents agreed not to have the girls married at a young age and signed a commitment to this effect with the police authority (Almugahed et. al. 2017).

[41] https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/wcc-unicef-partnership-shares-guide-for-child-friendly-churches
[42] https://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us

# 5. Religious interpretations of aspects related to violence against children

In a scoping study of this nature, it is necessary to discuss the complex and diverse underpinnings of religious justifications presented for both eliminating as well as promoting certain types of violence. Much of the literature reviewed highlights the complex and varied influences and interpretations of scriptures and religious doctrines of faith actors regarding the status and protection of children. This section attempts to outline some of the key issues that play a role in how faith actors understand and respond to how children are treated in their communities. Two themes will be examined. First, interpretations of sacred texts and dominant beliefs within particular faith traditions which are used to justify and/or combat certain acts of violence toward children will be briefly discussed. The example of corporal punishment will be used to examine this theme in more detail. Second, the diversity of actions, including the combatting and perpetuation of violence against children that can exist within the same faith community will be examined, using the example of early marriage as an example.

## 5.1 Religious Teachings: Foundations for Child Protection in Sacred Texts

Statements directly in support of violence against children were not identified in any of the literature reviewed. However, it is clear that certain actions which would be classified as violence under globally accepted definitions were not always defined as such by community members and religious groups. This included subjects such as corporal/physical punishment and early marriage, and some forms of deprivation. Significant diversity exists as to whether or not those were understood as acts of violence and this dissonance was frequently related to interpretations of sacred texts as well as the influence of local cultural understandings of child-adult relationships.

Most of the literature related to theologies and religious teachings focused on demonstrating that the teachings do not support violence. Here the focus was more generally on highlighting the centrality of protection and care in various faiths which are founded on positive values such as moral values, respect and non-violence. The groundings for child rights and protection in Islam and Christianity in particular were discussed in several documents. An example of this is an Al-Azhar University (Egypt) and UNICEF guidebook that seeks to underscore that development and protection of children is central to Islam (Hanmer 2010; Al-Azhar University and UNICEF 2005). The manual, entitled “Children in Islam, Their Care, Protection and Development” references the Qur’an, Hadiths, Sunnas and Islamic Sharia (Hanmer 2010). Key messages from texts include the view that children are a blessing, the equality of girls and boys, sexual abuse as violation of children and ‘covenant with Allah’, the mandate to care for orphans and that discipline is required but that harm against body and soul is prohibited Al-Azhar University and UNICEF 2005 p.1).

A further example comes from the literature on corporal punishment where reference to the teachings of other faiths can be found. The guides and advocacy pieces from The Churches' Network for Non-Violence[43] (CNNV) are among the most prominent. CNNV, along with such groups as the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, focuses broadly across religious communities, seeking to mobilise an interreligious and ecumenical movement to end corporal punishment. Documents produced by this network present, for example, refer to core foundations of the Buddhist faith based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama which reject causing pain to others and promote non-violence. Further, they state, that the Sigâlovâda Sutta, which is described as the "Buddhist code of discipline" is that if everyone develops the kind of mutual respect, loving kindness and compassion that is at the heart of the Buddhist teaching, then "children will not be ill-treated" (CNNV 2015b). Similarly, the documents refer to excerpts from Sikh scriptures such as "God cherishes all children, and reaches out with God's hand" (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 957 in CNNV 2015b) and reflections on the Baha'i Faith by Dr. Moojan Momen, a Baha'i scholar, that the norm for all relationships is intended to be loving fellowship and consultation and mutual respect, and that families should reflect this. Dr. Momen states: "Violence towards, vilification or humiliation of husband, wife or children is not an acceptable part of family life. Abdu'l-Baha disapproved of the corporal punishment of children." (Dr Moojan Momen, Iran, The Family in Baha'i Faith cited in CNNV 2015b). Reflections on Hinduism are also shared in CNNV and in the Arigatou Interfaith Guide to End Child Poverty, including an essay from Professor Anantandand Rambachan, who states that:

> The abuse of children and our failure to protect them from exploitation is incompatible and at variance with the most basic Hindu teachings. The Hindu teaching about the unity of existence in God and in the sacredness of life that is an expression of God is the foundation of its cardinal ethical principle, non-injury (*ahimsā*). *Ahimsa*, is regarded as the highest virtue (*parama dharma*). …. Eradication of child abuse and child exploitation is a measure of our commitment to the core values of the Hindu tradition (Nyabera et al. 2017 p.45).

## 5.2 Diverse Interpretations & Practices Regarding Corporal Punishment

Despite the teachings cited above regarding protection of children, a number of studies highlighted that certain violent practices within some faith traditions were accepted as 'normal' or even required as part of their duty as parents and for the well-being of a child and obedience to God. In literature that focused on a specific type of violence, corporal punishment was the subject covered most prominently.

In some literature related to the Christian and Jewish faiths, for example, it was noted that child-rearing practices, including corporal punishment, are Biblical commands for the ultimate benefit of the child. Verses commonly cited include 'Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them' (Proverbs 13:24) and 'Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish them with the rod, they will not die. Punish them with the rod and save them from death' (Proverbs 23:13-14) (Hebrew Bible; Holy Bible New International Version 2011; Greven 1990; Bottoms et al. 2004). Such discipline is presented in some texts as a parallel model of how God shows benevolence through

[43] churchesfornon-violence.org

correction (1 Corinthians 11:32; Deuteronomy 8:5; Hebrews 12:7). In other words, that "it is better to inflict temporary pain" so that their children avoid wrong behaviours (sin), trouble in life and eternal punishment after death (Bottoms et. al. 2004).

Building on the same Scriptures however, Jewish and Christian scholars are quick to point out that how one carries out that discipline it also directed by Scripture. For example, such discipline should not be conducted out of anger and should be "accompanied by expressions of warmth and love, as is shown by the following passage from the Talmud: 'A child, discipline him with the left hand and draw him closer with the right hand.'" (Sotah 47a; Jewish Agency Website[44]). This is said to mirror the concept regarding the relationship between God and humans in Scripture where discipline is a part of fatherly love (Proverbs 3:12). In the 2016 guide from Al-Azhar University and UNICEF, in collaboration with the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt, regarding key messages from Islam and Christianity on violence against children, it is noted that when the Holy Bible directs parents to raise their children it includes bringing them up "in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4) which means "in keeping with the Lord's way …. so that punishment is not given without a prior warning. The issue must be defined and explained convincingly. That is God's way of discipline and warning." (Al-Azhar University, UNICEF & Coptic Orthodox Church 2016).

Similarly, interpretations of Islamic texts vary, with some stating that Islam gives parents the 'right to guide and discipline their children' in accordance with Sharia but that this discipline must take place "without use of violence or abusive language" (Children in Islam 2005 p.55). Other interpretations state that physical punishment is permissible in Islam. This can be seen in a UNICEF report capturing the perspectives of four Ayatollahs and two Grand Ayatollahs in Iran. In the publication, entitled Disciplining Children with Kindness: A Shiite Shari'a Perspective, each leader provided responses on the subject of 'the correct ways in Islamic education'. One of the leaders said that corporal punishment is prohibited while others felt it is permissible (Nitzsche and McHugh 2008).

The literature however highlights the blur between culture and religion when seeking to examine the practice. In Indonesia, in both Christian and Muslim communities, an evaluation of a UNICEF project highlighted that community members believed physical punishment was normal, with one respondent stating that "violence is like a tradition to people in the community" and that violent behaviour such as "hitting, twisting ears, tying children to trees, putting children to stand in the hot sun, constantly shouting" is felt to be "fundamental and necessary" (Edberg et al. 2016 p. 26). One of the recurring sayings recorded was that "There is gold at the end (or edge) of a rattan stick" (Edberg et al 2016). Another survey in Indonesia noted that approximately 40% of the children surveyed reported being "hit, smacked, or beaten at home" (UNICEF & Badan Pusat Statistik, 2013; p.21). In these cases, while the community members, religious leaders and teachers may identify as Christian or Muslim, this may not indicate however that a particular faith community or faith belief system is perpetuating violence.

[44] http://www.jewishagency.org/life-cycle/content/24235

What is clear however, is that, while religion and religious communities have inherent values in the texts that promote protection of children and are uniquely positioned to play a positive role in the lives of children, religious traditions are also "implicated in a range of practices that are harmful to children" (Hanmer and Robinson 2012; Jones 2012). This was acknowledged by more than 1,000 religious leaders in 2006, who signed what is now called the Kyoto Declaration, in which they state that their religions had not upheld the duty to protect children from violence to the degree that is required and that this had been done through "omission, denial and violence" (Kyoto Declaration 2006). The tension within the reality of elements of protection and perpetuation existing within teachings and practice is captured well in this statement:

> "In spite of the positive roles religion and religious communities can play, some beliefs, attitudes, and practices associated with religions promote or condone violence and discrimination against children. Whether these are actual religious tenets or the misuse of religion to justify harmful beliefs and practices, they can violate a child's physical, emotional, and spiritual integrity…." (Robinson and Hanmer 2014 p.606)

### Faith-Communities Actions to End Corporal Punishment

Despite the content focused on theological and contextual issues perpetuating physical punishment, the majority of the literature on corporal punishment highlighted examples of faith-community actions to end corporal punishment. A few of these will be briefly discussed here.

As noted above, The Churches' Network for Non-Violence[45] is a leading advocacy for ending corporal punishment and works closely with the Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children and Save the Children on the global campaign. Their work cites a range of actions being taken by inter-faith and other religious groups to end corporal punishment, including specific examples of Christian leaders in South Africa, the UK, the US, New Zealand and the Caribbean who are pushing for national legal reform to prohibit corporal punishment (CNNV 2015b).

In a movement to ban corporal punishment in South Africa, it was found that while much of the opposition to the ban came from the "religious right", the South African Council of Churches was key in helping to address the arguments of those in opposition and carrying the message that raising children without violence is possible and desirable (Bower 2008). However, a polarisation of faith communities on this issue continues to be problematic with important legal reforms remaining contested to this day at the Constitutional court by 'religious right' organisations and social norms and attitudes identified which still mitigate against policy change[46] (Rohrs, Mathews and Mahlangu 2018). As a result, secular organisations

[45] churchesfornon-violence.org

[46] See *YG vs the State* 2018 (1) SACR 64 (GJ). The organisation *Freedom of Religion South Africa* was admitted as a 'friend of the court' in the case and has been given leave to appeal the judgement that 'reasonable chastisement' can no longer be used as a legal loophole for abuse by parents in the home. Significant recent evidence exists around the long-term impacts of violence against children in South Africa. However, most of it does not engage with religious factors beyond a mention of social norms and was therefore not able to be included in this study

here such as Sonke Gender Justice have built alliances with supportive faith voices such as the Quaker Peace Centre to tackle ways in which sacred texts are still being misinterpreted to support punitive hierarchies of the child as the 'property' of adults (Sonke Gender Justice 2014).[47] In Mauritania, where corporal punishment is a common practice and is considered appropriate in schools and families, the Imams' and Religious Leaders' Network for Child Rights and UNICEF carried out a study on corporal punishment in the Qur'an. Based on that study, it was concluded that corporal punishment was not in alignment with the Qur'an and should not be practiced in Islam. A new *fatwa* (a ruling on Islamic law from a religious authority) was issued prohibiting physical and verbal violence in schools and homes (Hanmer 2010). According to UNICEF, the *fatwa* was then distributed to more than 2,000 schools, where corresponding workshops also took place (Hanmer and Somarin UNICEF press release 2011).

## 5.3 Diverse Interpretations and Practices Related to Early Marriage

A further example of such diverse interpretations within specific cultural and religious contexts is that of early marriage which is not consistently considered to constitute violence. Because of this, some religious leaders may not view proclamations against violence within a religious community as incongruent with facilitating early marriages. In addition, perhaps, more than any other VAC issue, the separation of culture and religion as distinct drivers is unclear.

The literature tends to fall into three categories – looking at the prevalence of the issue, the belief systems and structural factors contributing to perpetuation early marriage and faith-related actors' responses to end the practice. It was noted that the practice is most common in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Central America with nearly half of all girls in South Asia marrying before the age of 18 (Park 2008). Reports noted however that in some places early marriage is common among younger girls – with roughly half of girls in Bangladesh married by the time they are 16 and, in Nepal, where 7% of girls are married by the time, they are 10 years old (Park 2008). Of all the locations, early marriage in India came through as a prominent focus, followed by Nepal.

In regard to sacred texts, much of the literature focused on religious belief systems as negative drivers perpetuating early marriage, particularly related to Hinduism and Traditional Beliefs. The majority of literature on the subject in fact focused on regions where those belief systems prevail – namely South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, in examining religious beliefs as negative drivers, one study in India explored historical and religious influences which highlight the beliefs that 'sexual control over women' was needed to 'maintain purity of caste and hierarchy'. Religious texts, such as the Manusmriti, stated that "women's nature was 'fickle' and they were "bearers of impure thoughts, wrath, and dishonesty" and thus marriage was a way to discipline women, minimise the social threat and (in some interpretations), reduce the 'social vulnerability' of women (Gopal et al. 2016 p. 18). Religious teachings regarding Islam and polygamy, as interpreted in some communities, impact the perpetual search for younger brides as previous wives age and it may be said that girls are ready to marry when they begin

[47] https://genderjustice.org.za/publication/sparing-rod-really-spoil-child/

menstruation (World Vision 2008). In some Hindu festivals, such as Shivrathri in India, getting girls marry may be seen as a way to bring luck and future success (World Vision 2008).

However, the literature indicates that in discussion of this issue the terms 'culture' and 'religion' are often used interchangeably. In looking at the examples above related to Hinduism and Islam, this blurring could be seen which may be even more pronounced perhaps in countries where traditional folk religions and culture are indistinguishable. Examples are noted related to Sub-Saharan Africa where, in Chad it may be considered by some to be a "curse for a girl to begin menstruating while still living under her parents' roof" or in Mali where local proverbs say that a girl who marries and has a child quickly "will have more luck in life" (World Vision 2008).

The complexity of culture and religious influences – and separating which is the primary driver of perpetuation of early marriage – was not just noted within communities. Some literature from international faith-based actors noted the same integration of culture and religion in thinking was present within in-country staff members and that this led to significant disagreement on GBV and child protection issues. For example, in an evaluation of a GBV and Child Protection projects in Mali, Pakistan and Niger, Islamic Relief Worldwide hosted team discussions where strong disagreement among staff members emerged regarding what religious teachings say about certain issues such as early marriage. Participants in the discussion groups would refer to what the local religious leader (such as the imam) believed to be true, whether or not this was aligned with teachings in the Qur'an. The challenge, according to the report, was helping the staff get to a point where they could "distinguish between religious teaching and harmful cultural practices" (Almugahed et. al. 2017).

### Faith-Communities Actions to End Early Marriage

Because of the influence of local culture within religious contexts there is a significant body of literature focused on highlighting what the formal religious texts teach on the issue. The literature indicates for example that there has been a concerted effort by international agencies, academics and advocacy groups to demonstrate that the sacred texts prohibit violence, including forced marriage. Much of the literature that leans in this direction focuses on Christian and Islamic texts. Limited literature emerged in the review that explored texts of other religions that link specifically to prohibition of early marriage. The Christian perspective is detailed in a number of documents, including a toolkit developed by Christian Aid Nigeria for faith leaders in Nigeria. The guide states that "there are no biblical scriptures that prescribe age of marriage" and refers to Genesis 2:18-25 command that marriage should be between a man and a woman, indicating that 'both must be mature', as the only relevant directive. The guide states, the man and woman should be ready for marriage 'physically, emotionally and psychologically' (Kawu et al. 2017).

Similarly, a 2005 guide from UNICEF and Al-Azhar University that details specific Islamic texts in relation to children, it is underscored that in the Islamic Sharia no particular age for marriage is specified. What is emphasised however, is maturity and the "the detection of sound judgement" in any decision-making process (Al-Azhar University and UNICEF 2005). Some Islamic teachers do indicate that women who have

not reached puberty are allowed to marry if there is a legal guardian overseeing the decision - however that a woman has the right to accept or reject marriage proposals (Kawu et al. 2017). It is stated that, according to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH[48]), if that marriage goes ahead without consent, a woman may annul the marriage. It is also affirmed by stories reported by Ibn Abbas[49] where the Messenger of Allah gave a girl the choice whether to agree to marriage (Ahmad, Hadith no. 2469[50] cited in Kawu et al. 2017). The documents thus seek to make the point that while some "dominant social norms may condone, or at least find nothing wrong in, all or some violent practices", however, "the fact remains that where custom encourages early marriage, the practice stems from nothing but the norms of the people. Sharia has nothing to do with it" (Al-Azhar University and UNICEF 2005)

Specific faith-actor interventions regarding ending early marriage frequently focused on mobilisation and education of religious leaders, local authorities and community stakeholders and advocacy, while some included actions to target root causes such as healthy livelihoods for families and education participation for girls. Some examples will be briefly described. The World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) highlights the work of the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) in Kenya that is working the police, schools and religious leaders to combat early marriage, high teenage pregnancy rates and sex tourism (Corman 2016). Similarly, local leaders in the Catholic Church in Malawi are leading projects that are focused on GBV and early marriage, providing training on girls' rights and the negative consequences of early marriage to traditional leaders, religious leaders and communities (CAFOD n.d.). On a global scale, UN publications, such as those from UNFPA, detail global partnerships with faith groups to combat violence against women and girls in 30 countries, including working with faith actors to combat early marriage in Kazakhstan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The National Association of Traditional Leaders is a focus of engagement for UNFPA in the DRC and, in Kazakhstan, Sunni Muslim and Orthodox Christian communities and leaders are leading advocacy actions regarding early marriage and other health and GBV issues (UNFPA 2016).

Faith-related INGOs are playing a significant role in leading direct interventions or providing resources and technical support to networks of local groups. Governments are also noted as playing key roles in both resourcing and scaling up the initiatives to national levels. In Yemen, a majority Muslim country, the government's Ministry of Religious Affairs instructed all religious leaders to share messages regarding the negative consequence of child marriage in their Friday sermons. This took place after a pilot project, funded by USAID, was conducted where religious leaders were engaged in training and advocacy regarding the issues surrounding child marriage. That pilot led to 57 child marriages being stopped (Tomkins 2015).

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[48] Peace Be Upon Him. https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_be_upon_him_(Islam)

[49] Ibn Abbas was a companion and cousin of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). http://sunnahonline.com/library/history-of-islam/299-abdullah-ibn-abbas

[50] That a virgin came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and mentioned that her father gave her in marriage forcibly, so the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave her choice [to keep marriage or to invalidate it]. (Ahmad, Hadith no. 2469)

This section has examined the diverse approaches and interpretations of scripture and doctrines as they interact with a range of cultural, economic and social contexts. Some of the perpetuation of VAC from religious perspectives will be further examined in Section 6 below.

# 6. Perpetuation of violence against children

There is a wide body of evidence confirming that some religious communities and leaders are actively involved in perpetuating violence against children. The nature of the examples cited frequently pertained to child sexual abuse at the hands of faith leaders or justification of those actions by religious communities, at times using sacred texts or traditions. Further, examples of religious leaders perpetuating forced child-labour, child sacrifice and the killing of children with disabilities emerged in the literature. Approximately one in four documents in the literature review detailed examples of overt perpetuation.

In addition to the disturbing nature of the actions and the level of prevalence in media coverage, the source of documents in the literature review may also be influencing the number of documents located. Searches of academic databases tended to produce content from the Global North and the United States in particular. Of all academic literature, more than half of all journal published articles came from the United States, and the priority subjects that emerged in U.S. literature were sexual abuse in religious institutions and, to a lesser degree, domestic violence. Documentation of examples of sexual violence against children were not limited to the Global North, however, as is explained below.

## 6.1 Sexual Abuse in Religious Institutions

A number of factors emerged from the literature on sexual abuse in religious institutions: direct or overt sexual abuse perpetrated by religious leaders; cover-up or poor handling of sex abuse cases; complicit reinforcement of sexual violence through silence of religious communities; and theological underpinnings contributing to justifications of certain types of sexual violence.

### 6.1.1 Overt Sexual Abuse

Overt sexual abuse examples were the most frequently cited examples of sexual abuse within religious institutions. In this review, such abuse refers in general to an 'adult using a minor for sexual stimulation' and, specifically, to all forms of sexual violence, rape and molestation (CRIN 2014). Much of the literature focused on documenting the scale of the abuse and the impact of that abuse on adult survivors of that abuse. A 2014 report from the Child Rights International Network (CRIN) captures an overview of reports from the United States, Europe and Australia that detail tens of thousands of reported cases of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church, usually perpetrated by clergy. A 2013 report from the Centre for Constitutional Rights (CCR) that was submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the

Child, on behalf of the Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests (SNAP[51]), provides further clarification, stating that some estimate the number of victims of sexual violence is "approaching 100,000" over a 25 year period starting in 1981. Sexual abuse is documented in locations such as Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Malta, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, the United States (Gallagher and Spees 2013 with more information forthcoming from Latin America and Africa.

Though literature detailing examples of perpetuation of sexual violence in the Catholic Church is widely accessible, there is evidence of violence against children within religious institutions across global regions and religions. The heavy emphasis on abuse within the Catholic Church in the literature retrieved may be due in part due the greater accessibility of literature from the Global North, from the U.S. in particular, and the extensive focus given to the subject in the United States.

Noting this literature gap, one study in the U.S. sought to examine incidents of sexual violence across a broad spectrum of religious affiliations. The qualitative research sought to capture the experiences of forensic interviewers[52] in the United States, conducted research among 39 interviewers in 22 states (Tishelman and Fontes 2017, p.121). Those professionals, collectively, recounted having worked with 42,000 children and noted that clients represented a wide array of religions, including[53]: Amish, Assembly of God, Baptist, Catholic, Christian, 'a cloistered Christian sect', Conservative Christian, Evangelical, Fundamentalist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Hasidic, Jewish, Lakota Lutheran, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Mormon, Muslim, Orthodox Jewish, and Pentecostal (Tishelman and Fontes 2017, p. 122). Despite the examples shared, the authors noted that literature on sexual abuse outside of the Catholic Church remains 'insufficiently explored' (Tishelman and Fontes 2017, p. 121).

While the literature available on the subject tended to focus on Global North examples of direct perpetuation of abuse, there were likewise examples noted of sexual abuse in the Global South. A 2009 Violence against Children Survey in Zanzibar, for example, found that children are vulnerable to sexual violence in a number of contexts, including at *madrasa* or Qur'anic schools in particular (Lees and Devries 2018). Another study underscores that sexual abuse of adolescents by traditional faith healers in Malaysia is not uncommon and reviews a particular case to examine the psychosocial impact and what might be done to respond (Chan et. al. 2012).

### 6.1.2 Cover-Ups, Justification and Silence

Referring again to the wider subject of sexual abuse in religious institutions, a range of examples were given that related to other aspects of that perpetuation, beyond overt abuse. A significant body of

[51] http://www.snapnetwork.org/

[52] The term forensic interviewers refer to persons at Child Advocacy Centers who trained to be the primary focal point for children to share incidents of sexual violence. These interviewers then, with the permission of the child, relay the required information to police, medical professionals, legal proceedings and child protection specialists. This process is intended decrease the frequency of children having to recount traumatic experiences repeatedly.

[53] Religious groups named in accordance with the exact words and phrases used by the participants.

literature, for example, focused on the 'cover-ups' of child abuse and/or poor handling of reports within religious community. In the Tishelman and Fontes 2017 survey, many of the child sexual abuse forensic interviewers reported that religious leaders, communities and institutions tend to prefer to handle the issues 'in-house'. This sometimes included 'supressing children's disclosures and pressing for children and families to forgive the abuser, instead of pursuing secular interventions.

Other literature related to other faiths detailed similar themes. Following reports of rabbis perpetuating sexual abuse, a range of stakeholders, including rabbis, counsellors, educators and mental health professionals, among others, were brought together to discuss various aspects of the issue. The discussions highlighted how religious communities may 'unwittingly' contribute to cover-ups, how they may ignore or cast-off victims and tend toward protecting religious leaders (Neustein, Amy ed. 2009). Another article, focusing on the Orthodox Jewish Church outlined similar themes within the religious community (Katzenstein and Fontes 2017).

There was likewise a significant body of literature focusing on the Protestant religious community that outlined the spectrum of responses – from intentional cover-ups or avoidance to unintentional poor-handling due to lack of awareness and capacity (Gilgun and Anderson 2015). Many of the responses seemed to indicate lack of awareness and understanding of how to respond as primary issue. In a case study among mothers who had reported to their pastors that they had concerns regarding sexual abuse of children in their families, the women found that some (of the pastors) were helpful and knowledgeable, some appeared bewildered, and others were hostile and blamed the women. In the blaming scenarios, particularly related to domestic violence in families or in response to sexual violence against adolescent and adult females, theologies related to the submission of women to the male as head of the household and the importance of staying in the situation to avoid divorce were drivers in responses. In cases of rape, there were also issues noted across the literature where women may be viewed as partially responsible for the sexual violence occurring (Gilgun and Anderson 2015).

In other cases, communities and faith groups, not primarily faith leaders, were discussed as complicit through their silence. The literature in this case focuses on the faith communities' awareness of the issue but avoidance of action. One article on gender-focused sexual violence in South Africa captures the theme well: "Communities and churches are often silent on the issue, implying apathy and acceptance of sexual violence. This often prevents survivors from feeling able to disclose and seek support and justice (Johnston 2013).

Lastly, while the majority of the literature on the subject was related to the Global North, this does not necessarily indicate that overt and covert sexual abuse occurs less frequently in other regions. Sexual violence literature is frequently embedded in Gender-Based Violence literature, which covers a broad range of subjects, and in literature focused on adult women. Sexual violence against children is less visible as a standalone subject in any way that would be comparable to the reports discussed above.

### 6.1.3 Combatting Sexual Abuse in Religious Institutions

The literature on sexual abuse specifically within religious institutions emphasised the diverse actions that can exist within the same religious community. This underscores the reality that faith leaders, much less faith communities, are 'not a homogenous group' and within a particular church, temple, mosque or religious school there may be those protecting children, while others perpetuate sexual abuse (Eyber et al. 2018 p.31).

In an article that details the sexual abuse perpetuated by Jewish rabbis in the U.S. for example, a significant portion of the content looks as well at the "solutions that have been successful and others that may be", with the foundational belief that Jewish communities can spearhead change to overcome "the ignorance, bias, and corruption associated with clergy sexual abuse" (Neustein 2009). UNICEF's global Religions for Peace initiative highlights the work of the New York Board of Rabbis in the New York Metro area in the U.S. Through their Domestic Violence Initiative - 'Dayenu! Enough!' - established in 2007, more than 2,500 people in the community have been trained in prevention of child sexual abuse and they have led a free child abuse prevention programme at Temple Emanu-El for clergy, teachers, parents, community leaders and others (Lai-Smith 2016).

Literature related to the Catholic Church likewise shows the same mix of condemnation for abuses, with emphasis that the Church can itself be an agent for positive transformation on the subject. Examples are cited of efforts underway, including Protecting God's Children programme. The initiative is an adult training programme that has been used broadly in Catholic schools, churches, sports groups and social service bodies. In this programme, adults seeking to work or volunteer with children in these contexts must attend a three-hour training programme (plus other aspects like passing background checks) (Nurse 2017).

Thus, while the majority of literature that focused on perpetuation focused on sexual abuse and most of the pieces were related to vehement condemnation, a number of studies also focused on the potential of the faith community to become the primary driver for change. Some of the literature, as above, also highlighted case examples where the faith groups are creating that change, but many others exist.

## 6.2 Child Sacrifice in Folk Religion & Animism Influenced Communities

Child sacrifice[54] refers to removal of body parts, blood or tissue of a child while the child is still alive (Fellows 2013). The practice is also referred to as child mutilation (Fellows 2013). The motivation is frequently cited as the belief that allowing such violence will appease negative spiritual powers or ancestors that may bring harm, and that the sacrifice will instead bring blessings such as health, wealth and good fortune (Bukuluki 2009; Fellows 2013). The practice is not a new one and it occurs in many

[54] HumaneAfrica Report 2013 Definition: Child sacrifice is the harmful practice of removing a child's body parts, blood or tissue while the child is still alive. These body parts, blood or tissue are either worn, buried or consumed by an individual in the belief that they will assist with a number of issues such as overcoming illness, gaining wealth, obtaining blessings from ancestors, protection, initiation, assisting with conception and dictating the gender of a child (p. 8). http://www.whrin.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Child-Sacrifice-and-the-mutilation-of-children-in-Uganda.pdf

contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa, however, the issue historically has been under-reported (Bukuluki 2009; Bienvenu n.d.). The literature reflects this with just 3% of the literature reviewed covering this issue with most of the literature focused on Uganda.

A research study conducted in Uganda by HumaneAfrica[55], involving ten researchers working across 25 communities in nine districts, gathered feedback from more than 850 respondents and from 140 informants with first-hand eyewitness accounts of body parts, blood or tissue missing or having been removed (Fellows 2013). The study found that, in the four-month research period from February to June 2012, one child mutilation/sacrifice had taken place each week in one of the 25 communities (Fellows 2013). Additional data indicated that more than 10,300 youth, representing each district Uganda, confirmed that they had heard of a child being sacrificed in their community (Fellows 2013). Other documents, also focused on Uganda, also indicate the breadth of the practice. In a 2009 report, cited by UNICEF, the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect states that nearly 3,000 children disappear each year and that many of these are suspected to have been killed for sacrificial purposes (Bienvenu n.d. p.4).

Traditional healers or diviners are frequently identified as motivating or instigating such sacrifices. Communities often believe that these informal leaders have certain powers or access spirits for healing and the facilitation of blessings from supernatural powers. While most healers are focused on promoting health and wellbeing through spiritual means and herbal remedies, a minority engage in communication with spirits who are said to require individuals to commit acts such as killing someone in order to receive wealth, blessings, protection, and good luck. The HumaneAfrica 2013 report states that traditional healers confirmed prescribing 'potions' include children's body parts, blood and/or tissues in order to secure the desired benefit and that people belief the presence of those ingredients increases the power of the medicine (Fellows 2013). These potions are meant to be consumed or the body parts worn or buried by the individual seeking the benefit (Fellows 2013).

Children with limited caregiver engagement – such as orphans, unaccompanied children, street children and the like – are among those at greater risk of being selected for sacrifice (Bukuluki 2009). In some cases, child sacrifice is linked to child trafficking and organ trade (Bukuluki 2009). While traditional healers are frequently cited as instigating the violent practices, in the case of organ trade, there may or may not be a link to established traditional healers in all cases (Bukuluki 2009 p. iii and p. 23).

The MGLSD report likewise states that there is a link between child sacrifice and poverty – with the violent practice increasing as poverty increases (Bukuluki 2009). A traditional healer may recommend child sacrifice to the person seeking wealth, for example, and that person may then pay the healer for a child to be mutilated/sacrificed (Bienvenu n.d.). The identification, kidnapping and delivery of a child to a healer

[55] HumaneAfrica works with UNICEF, World Vision, the Salvation Army, Save the Children, Governments, local Embassies and local child rights organizations in Mozambique, South Africa and Uganda, conducting research into the harmful practice of child mutilation and garnering commitments from stakeholders to eliminate practices which harm children. The group likewise trains partners to support children with special needs. http://www.humaneafrica.org/

may be done by someone who is paid and receives a share of the payment (Bienvenu n.d.; Bukuluki 2009). Focus group respondents cited in a UNICEF report that "child sacrifice has become a business, with demand and supply" (Bienvenu n.d. p.13).

Though traditional faith leaders are most frequently cited key in perpetuating the violence, traditional faith leaders are also noted as seeking to combat child sacrifice. Groups such as the National Council of Traditional Healers and Herbalists (NACOTHA), the Promotion of Traditional Medicine in Uganda (PROMETRA) and Traditional and Modern Health Practitioners together against AIDS and other Diseases (THETA) are noted as initiating anti-child sacrifice awareness raising activities (Bukuluki 2014). Likewise, an array of grassroots and national FBOs have engaged in advocacy and, in some cases, are providing direct services to children affected by or at-risk of mutilation. Kampisi Childcare Ministries[56] is highlighted, for example, as the community-based organisation was one of three partners in the large-scale HumaneAfrica research study and the ministry is also highlighted in a 2014 report on coalition actions underway to end child sacrifice (Fellows 2013; Byansi 2014). Other national religious groups, such as the Inter Religious Council of Uganda, which is the umbrella organisation for major faith groups in the country (i.e. Muslims, Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants and Seventh Day Adventists), initiated awareness raising activities through their networks (Byansi 2014). Likewise, international FBOs, such as World Vision, are actively involved in anti-child sacrifice efforts in Uganda (Byansi 2014).

## 6.3 Killing and Abandonment of Children with Disabilities

Similar to child sacrifice, the issues of killing children with developmental disabilities were mentioned in small portion of the wider body of literature identified. However, the nature of the issue and the concern that the prevalence of the practice far exceeds available literature on the topic. The connection of the practice to religious actors' perpetuation of violence against children blurs somewhat, as violence against children with disabilities is a wider issue perpetrated by many, faith-related or not. For example, one 2017 study in Malawi and Uganda that examined the experiences of children with disabilities found that the majority of children study reported experiencing physical or emotional violence (Banks et. al. p.8). The perpetrators of violence were varied, including peers, caregivers, teachers, other adult family and community members (Banks et. al. p.8). Abuse of children with development disabilities is not necessarily related to religion or faith-actors. The focus in this section of literature review, however, is related specifically to traditional beliefs regarding the supernatural and traditional headers – and targeting of children with disabilities for abandonment and ritual killing based on those beliefs.

In some folk religions, which may exist in a syncretistic way alongside Western education and adherence to other more formal religions, it is believed that when problems happen, it can mean that "two or more spirits are in conflict, or a particular spirit is displeased by a certain action or occurrence" (Bayat 2015 p.4). When a child with developmental disabilities is born, families holding those beliefs may infer that the child is or has an evil spirit. In Cote D'Ivoire such children may be referred to as *snake* children and in Ghana, these children may be referred to as spirit children. Because it is believed by some that once a child is a

[56] http://kyampisi.org/what-we-do

snake child, there is no cure, the outcomes for children identified as such often include "being killed, being left to die, or being allowed to live in the community as the 'other', non-human" (Bayat 2015 p.17). Evidence of this practice in literature is limited; however, the legitimacy of the practice may be reflected in the government of Ghana's intervention in 2013 to ban the practice in northern Ghana (Bayat 2015 p.1). One Ghanaian NGO projects that 4% of all infant deaths are a result of killing of children with disabilities, while an epidemiological study suggests that of all child deaths that are from unknown causes, approximately one in four may be result of the ritual killing of disabled children (Bayat 2015 p. 2). Due to the limited literature available on the topic, little information was obtained on initiatives from religious groupings to combat this practice.

## 6.4 Alleged Spirit Possession, Witchcraft and Faith-Related Child Abuse

Traditional beliefs and practices are not generally classed as abusive. Many faiths share comparable beliefs such as the spirit or demon possession and the need for deliverance. The focus in this section is the abusive application of those beliefs referred to more broadly as Child Abuse Linked to Faith and Beliefs (CALFB). There is literature available that explores this issue in many contexts globally, including in Europe, and there are indications that the abuses are on the rise (Ikponwosa 2018. This section focuses on the literature and trends relating particularly to Europe, as this literature was most readily available. The example given below shows how one country, the United Kingdom, is grappling with this global issue.

The cases in the UK are linked primarily with migrant communities, relocating from countries where the practice of witchcraft and corresponding beliefs systems are embedded in the culture (Garcia 2013; Ikponwosa 2018). This is particularly evident in African migrant communities, as the practice of witchcraft – and, in some cases, crimes against 'child witches' -- are more common in some African countries (Garcia 2013). In the UK, the prevalence is frequently linked with the Nigerian and Congolese populations (Stobart 2006; Garcia 2013). However, in a study looking at UK cases of abuse of children believed to be witches between 2000-2006, the children were from a variety of backgrounds, including African, South Asian and European (Stobart 2006). Likewise, authors underscore that, though many Africans may believe in witchcraft, the proportion of Africans living in Europe who are actually involved in or approve of witchcraft abuses is 'extremely small'. (Briggs 2011; Gracia 2013 p. 13).

### 6.4.1 Difference between Beliefs and Abusive Applications

Witchcraft is interpreted in different ways, however, the definition used in this review is "the invocation of alleged supernatural powers to control people or events, using sorcery or magic" (AFRUCA 2017 p.6). Spirit possession is understood to "involve spirits, gods, demons, or other dis-incarnate entities taking control of a human body, resulting in noticeable changes in health and behavior" (UK National Action Plan 2012 p.5). Designation of a child as a 'witch' generally indicates a belief that the child is possessed and is able (knowingly or unknowingly) to "use evil forces to harm others" (Stobart 2006 p.5).

One of the points noted in literature is that it is important to differentiate child abuse related to witchcraft and the beliefs related to supernatural powers. The beliefs themselves are covered by the right to religious freedom and referred to as such in UK, Europe and international texts.
The belief in the existence of supernatural powers and that these powers can act for good or evil, including possessing an individual, is present in many religions, such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Southeast Asian and South American traditions (Briggs 2011 p.5; UK National Action Plan on Child Abuse Related to Faith and Belief 2012; AFRUCA 2017). Christian and Islamic teachings also affirm that a person can be possessed and that actions can and need to be taken to help free a person from actions of those evil spirits. In Islam and Christianity there is frequently differentiation between possession by evil forces and forces for good. In Christianity, the evil forces may be referred to demons or the devil possession individuals, while the Holy Spirit is seen as a force for good and may also dwell within a person (AFRUCA 2017). In Islam, it is believed that evil eye or evil spirits called jinn can affect a person's life negatively, including causing physical ailments (AFRUCA 2017). In Hinduism, there is a similar concept, referred to as the *dakini* (UK National Action Plan 2012). Briggs summarises the complexity well: 'It is vital to recognise different forms of deliverance. Almost all religious and spiritual communities include ritual prayer in the service of healing. The harmful aspects of deliverance rituals occur when they are used on vulnerable individuals, therefore technically all children, and individuals who have not requested such interventions' (Briggs 2018 p.7).

In Christianity and Islam, the practice of witchcraft is forbidden, with prayer and reciting sacred texts identified to counter it (AFRUCA 2017). In other cases, such as in Haitian Voodooism and African Traditions, among others, witchcraft is acceptable and can be used for positive benefit in addition to harm. Thus, some of the literature, including the UK National Action Plan to Tackle Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief[57] (CALFB) is quick to point out that the beliefs themselves are not evidence of maltreatment (Briggs 2011; Garcia 2013; UK National Working Group on CALFB 2012). The crimes and human rights violations that may take place as a result of those beliefs is the focus of much of the literature detailing actions to combat related violence against children (Garcia 2013).

### 6.4.2 Child Abuse Linked to Faith and Beliefs (CALFB) in the UK

Given that distinction, this section of the review focuses on the Child Abuse Linked to Faith and Beliefs (CALFB), which is the term incorporated in the UK National Action Plan to Tackle Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief[58]. There are two key components in CALFB: First, the accusation that a child is possessed by an evil spirit, followed by the actions taken to combat that evil spirit. The child sometimes branded a 'child witch', is believed to be able to martial the evil forces to cause harm to others (Garcia 2013). This accusation frequently coincides with family or community misfortunes. As migrant communities face significant economic and social challenges and the population seeks to make sense of misfortunes, this

[57]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175437/Action_Plan_-_Abuse_linked_to_Faith_or_Belief.pdf
[58]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/200099/DFE-00095-2012_Action_Plan_-_Abuse_linked_to_Faith_or_Belief_-_Summary.pdf

creates a "fertile ground for the belief in the influence of evil spirits to flourish" (AFRUCA 2017 p. 7). Children are frequently scapegoated because of these problems and are accused of being witches (AFRUCA 2017; Santos Pais 2018 p. 5).

In order to deal with the evil, the so-called 'child-witches' can be subject to violence within the family and within faith organisations and may be subjected to abuses such as violent punishment, stigmatisation, neglect and isolation and ritual killings (AFRUCA 2017; Santos Pais 2018 p. 5).

Certain children have been found to be more vulnerable than others. Children are particularly vulnerable if they are seen to be different in some respect, such as children with disabilities including downs syndrome, epilepsy and autism, children who have mental health issues or learning disabilities, children who are 'naughty', left handed children, children who have dead relatives, and even children who are 'geniuses or exceptionally bright (AFRUCA 2017 p. 8). In a 2016 study, the Witchcraft and Human Rights Network[59] studied 398 cases of human rights violations globally relating to the beliefs and found that the majority of cases were rooted in misunderstanding of public health issues (Ikponwosa 2018). Children with albinism are increasingly being acknowledged as a vulnerable group, with the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children, Marta Santos Pais, co-organising an international workshop with the Independent Expert Ikponwosa Ero, that focused on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism in 2016.

### 6.4.3 Faith-Related Child Abuse in the UK

High profile cases in the early 2000s first brought the issue to light in the UK. In 2000, Victoria Climbié was tortured to death for being perceived to be a witch. The eight-year-old Ivorian girl was starved to death by her carers – in the belief that this would expel the evil spirit inside of her (AFRUCA 2017 p. 13 & Briggs 2011 p.14). In 2001, the torso of a young African boy was found in the River Thames. It was believed that the boy, called "Adam", was between ages four and seven and was brought to the UK from West Africa to be killed in a ritual sacrifice (Briggs 2011 p.14; Garcia 2013). A third high profile case was the murder of three-month-old Samira Ullah in 2004, as her father believed she was possessed by "jinn" (Briggs 2011; AFRUCA 2017). These cases, particularly the case of Victoria Climbié, led to inquiries, legislative changes and the commissioning of seminal research, conducted by Eleanor Stobart in 2006, focusing on the issue of faith-related abuse in the UK. The Victoria Climbié Foundation[60] was also established to seek to improve child protection policies, practices and inter-agency coordination. Significant advances have been made, however the exact scale of the issue in the UK however is difficult to determine (Garcia 2013; AFRUCA 2017).

The overall trajectory of reports of child abuse cases linked to faith or belief is increasing. The London Metropolitan Police statistics from 2003-2015 show 189 case of faith-based abuse while, in a one-year period, from 1st April 2014 to 31 March 2015, there were 60 allegations of faith-based abuse (AFRUCA

[59] http://www.whrin.org/
[60] https://vcf-uk.org/

2017 p. 13). Since that time the CALFB category has been included in the UK government's annual Characteristics of Children in Need Report, which summarises the number of children referred to and assessed by social services and the nature of those issues. The findings of the 2017-2018 report indicate an 11% increase in the references to CALFB in safeguarding assessments in comparison to 2016-2018. Child abuse linked to faith or belief was mentioned 1,630 times in the Children in Need Census 2017-2018, an increase from 1,460 mentions in safeguarding assessments from the previous year.[61][62] AFRUCA points out that the cases of CALFB likely remain underestimated.

While cases are frequently link to the black African community and those self-identifying as Christians or Muslims within those, CALFB cases are not limited by religion, culture or ethnic affiliation. One notable case is Eunice Spry, a Jehovah's Witness and British women who was convicted in 2007 for 'inflicting sadistic punishments' on her foster children as she believed the children were possessed by the devil and in other research, cases from South Asia emerge (Stobart 2006; Briggs 2018, p.4).

### 6.4.4 Faith Actor Engagement Combatting CALFB in the UK

The role of faith actor engagement is mixed and complex. Disagreement exists with faith communities as to whether all types of deliverances/exorcisms are abusive, seeing faith leaders as new cultural leaders in the migrant communities or as continuing practices from the countries of origin and the need to stay rooted in the defined teachings of the particular formal religion.

The role of religious leaders in perpetuating the abuse is unclear. While the majority of the abuse takes place in the home, consultation with a religious leader to 'diagnose' the possession or to provide guidance or direct involvement in deliverance is usually undertaken (Garcia 2013; Sobart 2016). The case of Victoria Climbié show that sometimes congregations are aware of what is taking place and do not, or feel that they cannot, intervene (Briggs 2018 pp. 3-4).

There is reference in literature to the wider, pivotal role faith organisations play in supporting their migrant communities, where 'poverty, inequality and lack of access to key resources can impact negatively on children' (Briggs 2011 p. 8). AFRUCA reflects that the Church or Mosque are frequently places of support and refuge where migrants get guidance on life in the UK, emotional support and information (AFRUCA 2017 p.9). Because of this critical role however, there is a significant opening for misuse of power and exploitation of vulnerable people (Briggs 2011 p.8). The migrant families are more likely to believe what the priest, pastor or imam says regarding a child being possessed and, in some cases,, parents of so-called 'child witches' must pay a fee to the faith-leader to have their child delivered (AFRUCA 2017 p.9). Many who support some of the actions that may be defined as CALFB believe the possession is true and that the methods for getting the demon to leave are necessary. The literature indicates two general motivations for accusations and deliverances taking place:

[61] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need-2017-to-2018
[62] https://vcf-uk.org/census-suggests-11-increase-in-cases-of-child-abuse-linked-to-faith-or-belief/

- Replicating the types of beliefs and practices from their home countries that are unrelated to an organized religion, even if the person is affiliated with an institutional religious community in the UK
- And/or continuing the practices because of the belief that the sacred texts – such as the Quran and Christian Scriptures teach those beliefs.

### 6.4.5 Prevention and Survivor Support

Globally, there are many examples in the literature of faith-influenced organisations combatting the underlying beliefs that lead to witchcraft abuse. Among these, what has been known as the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) is a primary leader. Recently renamed Thirtyoneeight[63], the organization focuses on developing child protection within faith communities, including incorporating non-violent forms of deliverance. They provide training and literature to faith leaders to help provide guidance regarding praying for children and use of words as prayers (Stobart 2006; Briggs 2018 p.8). They also work with churches to advance other protection systems, such as undertaking criminal record bureau (CRB) checks on their staff (Stobart 2006).

The Churches Together for England[64] Minority Christian Affairs department also engages with the working group. They represent 44 member churches or councils of churches and have counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Smaller groups such as Peace International and the Peace Alliance were also noted as members of the working groups. Peace International[65] is affiliated with the Congolese migrant community in the UK and implements a range of projects in community development, poverty alleviation, conflict resolution and education. One particular initiative, the Safe Faith Project[66] focuses on improving the welfare of children with faith, through a training programme with Muslim leaders, African and Asian church leaders and female Madrassah teachers.

The Peace Alliance[67] is a charity launched by the pastor of Freedom's Ark[68] church in north London. The pastor, Reverend Nims Obunge (MBE) is a widely recognised faith and community leader, working on justice, equality, social cohesion and youth issues. The Alliance works with government agencies, the police, the corporate sector, voluntary and faith related organisations and Nims has personally received accolades at the highest levels. Because of this work, the Alliance was on the UK National Working Group on CALFB and helped to develop the UK National Plan to tackle CALFB. His work and the work of the Alliance is an example of local and county level faith communities that are working on issues to counteract violence and abuse of youth and children. This work is an indicator that there are local initiatives

[63] https://thirtyoneeight.org/about-us/
[64] https://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/42314/Home.aspx
[65] http://www.peaceinternational.org.uk/who-we-are/4545454816
[66] http://www.peaceinternational.org.uk/our-uk-programmes/4545454689
[67] https://thepeacealliance.org.uk/
[68] https://www.freedomsark.org/

undertaken by faith-leaders and faith communities to combat CALFB. The visibility of such initiatives is poor, however, with little media and research attention given to this aspect.

In the most visible faith-focused literature related to witchcraft and the UK, there seems to be an emphasis on the Christian community. There are resources available on wider safeguarding in a variety of faith communities. Two notable resources include a safeguarding guide focusing on Madrassahs[69], and materials from the NSPCC that focus on a spectrum of faiths[70]. There is likewise a vast repository of academic papers[71] managed by the Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network that provides extensive information on a range of issues globally and in the UK, which include dozens of papers and reports including further exploration of Islam, Christianity and Wicca in relation to witchcraft[72].

## 6.5 Child Labour & Deprivation in Religious Institutions

According to UNICEF, an estimated one in four children are engaged in child labour in the world's poorest countries (UNICEF 2017b). The type of labour referred to is that which may be detrimental to the health and the development of the child and there are varying categories used by UNICEF and the International Labour Organisation to classify child labour[73] [74] (ILO 1999; UNICEF 2017b). The literature reviewed in this study focuses on child labour linked to religious groupings.

A number of articles highlight the maltreatment of children, called *talibé*, in Quranic schools called *daaras* in parts of West Africa. The practice involves sending boys, ranging in ages from 3 to 15, to live at a *daara* and study the Quran under the care of a *marabout* or imam (Balde 2010; Ballet et. al. 2012). A *marabout* is described as a 'master' and teacher upon whom the boys are dependent for spiritual and religious learning and for daily provision. The practice is founded on the belief that the boy "cannot hope to reach paradise, that is, achieve beatitude, without the assistance of a master (or Sheikh)" (Ballet et al 2012). The boy must completely submit to the *marabout* and in exchange for taking on the responsibility of the child,

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[69] http://www.kirkleessafeguardingchildren.co.uk/managed/File/External%20publications/Handbook%20Madrassah%20Management%20&%20Safeguarding%20FaithAssoc.pdf

[70] https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/news-opinion/safeguarding-children-young-people-faith-settings/?_t_id=1B2M2Y8AsgTpgAmY7PhCfg==&_t_q=faith+communities&_t_tags=language:en,siteid:7f1b9313-bf5e-4415-abf6-aaf87298c667&_t_ip=62.254.173.13&_t_hit.id=Nspcc_Web_Models_Pages_NewsPage/_b8648a21-e052-4e8a-85f0-1259a76c9c2b_en-GB&_t_hit.pos=2

[71] http://www.whrin.org/academic-papers-2/

[72] http://www.whrin.org/?s=child

[73] The UNICEF definition of child labour includes: "A child is considered to be involved in child labour activities under the following classification: (a) children 5 to 11 years of age that does at least one hour of economic activity or at least 28 hours of domestic work, and (b) children 12 to 14 years of age that during the week preceding the survey did at least 14 hours of economic activity or at least 42 hours of economic activity and domestic work combined." https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-labour/

[74] International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions 138 (1973) and 182 (1999) define child labourers as all children younger than 12 working in any economic activities, children 12–14 years old engaged in more than light work, and all children engaged in the worst forms of child labour – in which they are enslaved, forcibly recruited, prostituted, trafficked, forced into illegal activities or exposed to hazards.

his upkeep and his education, the master requires payment. As many parents cannot afford payment (money or in-kind, the compensation also comes through "money obtained by the child by means of begging" (Ballet et. al. 2012). In Senegal, the International Labour Organization estimates that there are 'at least 50,000' *talibé*s children who usually spend five hours a day begging, in exchange for food, housing and education (ILO 2013; (Human Rights Watch 2017).

From the cultural and religious perspective, begging itself has moral value in that it may be help the boy to grow in humility and to be able to cope with hardship (ILO 2013). However, the research indicates that, in some cases, the tradition is being manipulated for profit, with *marabouts* running the schools as 'businesses under the pretext of teaching the Quran' (ILO 2013; Human Rights Watch 2017). In some cases, a quota is given for the amount of money required daily and failure to collect the required amount may result in beatings, being tied up or chained (Balde 2010; ILO 2013). According to the ILO Senegal report, the housing provided is frequently unhygienic and unsafe, many of the children are malnourished and the children are exposed to hazards and sexual abuse on the streets (ILO 2013). The Human Rights Watch organisation likewise reported that, in the first half of 2016 in Senegal, at least five children living at Quranic schools died, reportedly as a result of beating from their teachers or in traffic accidents while begging (HRW 2016).

In the literature, it is emphasised however that not every *daara* is abusive, many *talibé* do not experience exploitation and many teachers respect the rights of children (HRW 2010 in Balde 2010; HRW 2017). Further, there are faith groups working to combat the practice of *talibé* exploitation in Senegal and other countries. However, abuse of children is taking place in others and Islamic scholars elsewhere, in examining Quranic teachings and Sharia law, have stated strongly that such child labour goes against the commands of Islam (Al-Azhar University and UNICEF 2016).

# 7. Summary

The literature indicates that faith actors, from grassroots community groups to international faith-based organisations, are leading and participating in efforts to end violence against children in every region globally. The initiatives represent diverse faith traditions, in addition to ecumenical and interfaith collaborations, and the evidence in literature indicates that the contributions are primarily positive. Changes in beliefs, attitudes and practices regarding issues such as physical punishment and early marriage are highlighted. Faith-affiliated volunteers are providing direct services to help parents protect their children and to be able to provide a safe environment where the children can thrive. Community groups are being supported to assist survivors on a number of levels. Faith-groups are providing frontline support, from rescue to shelter to recovery and reintegration as well as providing safe-spaces for youth in challenging and violence contexts. Child protection policies are being strengthened, with community-led actions and safety nets expanding through multi-stakeholder involvement.

However, faith actors and groups are also involved in the perpetuation of violence against children and this cannot be ignored. The disturbing nature of these accounts which include overt perpetuation of violence, justification thereof and silence and cover-ups, require attention and visibility. The divergence

of theological approaches to issues such as corporal punishment and early marriage highlight that this perpetuation is not uniform across faiths and that significant work is being done to emphasise teachings in religious texts that prioritise protection of children and prohibition of disputed practices. As Robinson & Hanmer point out:

> What should not be taken away from the negative examples of religious practice is the polarized view that all religion (or a particular faith tradition or denomination) is harmful for children. Indeed, for every disclosure of a priest or pastor found to have sexually abused children within their communities, there is a Christian medical professional or paraprofessional healing, rehabilitating, and comforting people (usually of any denomination) who are ailing and dying. As Islamic extremists are attacking girls attending school, there are imams in Afghanistan promoting girls' enrolment and allowing mosques to be used as classrooms and centers for children's activities. Although some Buddhist monks are wreaking violence on Muslim communities in Myanmar by killing, maiming, and displacing women and children, there are Buddhist monks throughout Southeast Asia taking orphans into the temples for food, care, and education and reaching out to the sick and the vulnerable in their communities. (Robinson and Hanmer 2014 p.601)

While more than two-thirds of the literature highlighted positive contributions faith leaders and groups are making there was very little documentation of evidence of the outcomes and the actual impact created through the efforts. Further longitudinal, community-level focused research is needed to provide evidence of these positive contributions.

The literature review demonstrates faith actors' engagement on the subject. Highlighting how they work on the frontlines to prevent violence against children and support to survivors, across the world and in ways other actors may be unable to do. Malia Robinson and Stephen Hanmer (2014), leaders in the field who have authored some of the seminal UN documents, summarise the conclusion from this study well:

> Religious actors, such as religious leaders, scholars, educators, and faith-based organizations, can play critical roles in behavior change (e.g. changing harmful attitudes and practices), service delivery (e.g. faith-based organizations providing community health services), referral pathways (e.g., identifying and referring abused and neglected children to government protective services), and advocacy (e.g., lobbying national governments to develop and implement child protection laws and policies). Religious communities have tremendous moral and spiritual influence and vast networks they can use to protect children against abuse and neglect. The all-encompassing and holistic nature of religion provides a unique entry point for collaboration between child protection actors and members of religious communities to address violence against children (p. 602).

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