

Case study 1 - Peace, Love, and Tolerance: Basic Messages from Islam and Christianity to Protect Children from Violence and Harmful Practices

A joint study, toolkit and training of trainers' program in Egypt about bonding faith-based stakeholders from Christianity and Islam in a united message to end violence against children that focused on eleven types of violence identified in the region.

Context on the area of implementation

Egypt has recently experienced profound political turmoil with power changing hands and instability increasing. According to Amnesty International, frequent attacks on Christian and Muslim institutions have increased, with a significant trend of violence against Christian communities. For example, the Palm Sunday church bombings on 9 April 2017 that killed at least 45 people. On 24 November 2017, dozens of gunmen attacked a mosque in Sinai during Friday prayers, killing 300 people.

The situation remains difficult for children in Egypt. Even though the Egyptian Child Law of 2008 sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 years old, nearly 1 in every 20 girls between the age of 15 to 17 and 1 in every ten adolescent girls are either currently married or were before, according to National Council⁶ for Childhood & Motherhood Child Rights Observatory 2017.

The Project

The “Peace, Love & Tolerance” project was developed in cooperation with UNICEF Egypt, the International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research at Al-Azhar University and the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt, Bishopric of Public, Ecumenical, and Social Services (COC-BLESS).

The main goal of the project was to develop three publications concerning ending violence against children, one from the perspective of the Holy Bible, one from the perspective of the Holy Quran, and the third as a joint publication⁷. The targeted groups for this were priests, church leaders, sheiks, and imams.

All three documents are based on “three common pillars: peace, love, and tolerance.” The main goal of the publications is to prevent violence inside families, schools, and social circles. In total, they covered 11 forms of violence⁸, from child marriage and forced marriage to child labour and trafficking.

After the release of the publications, both the COC-BLESS and Al-Azhar held Trainings of Trainers (TOT) to disseminate their knowledge and sensitize the clergy to the pointed issues of violence against children.

Results

The project had two main results, both aligned with its purpose. First, the dissemination of the message of the publications with 13 TOT workshops carried out with 155 people participating. Ninety-four age appropriate

Quick-Facts

Area of Implementation: Egypt

- Human Development Index: 0.691
- HDI Rank: 111
- Population: 91.5 million
- Child Labor: 7%
- Employment to population: 43.5%
- Proportion of employed people who live on less than US\$ 3.10 a day (in Purchasing Power Parity terms): 48.2%

Organization: UNICEF Egypt, International Islamic Center of Population Studies and Research at Al-Azhar University, Coptic Orthodox Church-BLESS

Case Submitted by: Christian Aid in consultation with BLESS

Timeline: From 2013, on going

Scale: 6,809 young people and 19,148 parents

⁶ See <https://www.unicef.org/egypt/reports/policy-action-ending-child-marriage>

⁷ See <https://iliflc.com/resources/peace-love-tolerance/>

⁸ These include child marriage and forced marriage, Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), discrimination among children, child labour, sexual abuse of children, absence of family care and children living on the street, Domestic violence against children, Violence in schools and educational institutions, children in armed and other conflicts, child trafficking, violence against children on television and the Internet.

seminars were delivered on the topic of ending violence against children were held with 6,809 young people reached, and 19,148 parents also participating in seminars or different outreach activities.

Second, UNICEF Egypt, COC-BLESS, and Al-Azhar University also held a range of workshops and inter-faith dialogues, about female genital mutilation, early marriage, and cyberbullying. It also developed an interactive docuseries on ending violence against children enabling wider reach into local communities.

Conclusion

The project was able to establish a positive relationship between Muslim and Christian institutions, bringing them together with a united message on EVAC and involving religious, theological institutions and faith structures for added credibility. Also, the awareness brought from the carefully developed publications to a targeted group of trained trainers was seen to be of great importance since faith leaders in this context can promote social cohesion and build peace and tolerance.

The project also highlights that when ending violence against children, both Christian and Muslim institutions have shared values that reflect love and tolerance on which interventions can draw. Both values are necessary to work towards the end of violence against children. Also, the project reminds us that faith leaders alone will not change social norms, but equipping them to work collaboratively alongside parents, teachers, and educational institutions can create sustainable change.

Documents consulted:

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UNICEF – A Familiar face – Violence in the lives of children and adolescents, 2017

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