

Building an Evidence-Base: Meaningful Faith Engagement to End Violence Against Children



IMA World Health

The Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities (JLI) Ending Violence Against Children Learning Hub (EVAC Hub) provides a unique platform for a global network of knowledge from academics, policymakers, and practitioners that are growing the **evidence-base** of effective faith-based partnerships to prevent and end violence against children.

Every year, at least one billion children experience violence - that's half of the world's children.

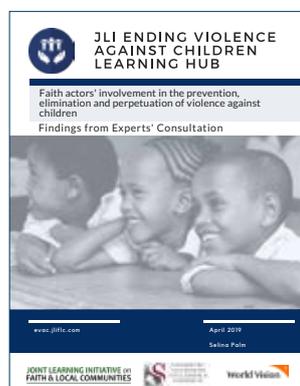
A common value shared across diverse people of faith is the belief that each person, regardless of age, has infinite value, dignity and worth. The responsibility to care for and protect vulnerable children also forms an explicit mandate in many faith traditions. Although violence against children is a global epidemic, such violence is preventable. In a world where 84% of people identify as religious, faith communities have a unique, essential and indispensable role to play in ending violence against children. They can be first responders to recognise, refer, report and respond to this violence, but can also play critical roles in changing harmful practices, bridging gaps between formal and informal child protection systems, and serving as advocates for and with children at many levels. Faith actors have unique spiritual roles to play nurture positive beliefs around the protection and care of children and to tackle and transform harmful underlying beliefs that still perpetuate or enable violence. This is already happening in many places. But they must be further equipped. More research is essential to understand current gaps, new threats and to robustly document their existing diverse roles.

Spotlight: Scoping study

This study explored the faith community's role in eliminating, perpetuating and preventing violence against children.

Methodology:

- 172 documents -grey and academic literature reviewed,
- 6 cases collated and
- 14 interviews conducted



A shared commitment



The EVAC Hub partners are committed to:

- convening an inclusive and diverse Hub to advance a core set of values and principles to end violence against children.
- an evidence-based process focused on local faith communities and religious leaders
- understanding 'how' to engage, and what works and does not in order to provide practical recommendations for policy makers, practitioners and academic researchers

Key findings



The JLI EVAC Hub Scoping study highlighted ten key findings supported by a growing evidence-base.

1. Faith actors have a **unique faith-based mandate** to care for and protect vulnerable children as created and loved by God. They can draw on specific faith resources and traditions, but also work collaboratively across faiths to develop shared values based on the dignity and worth of all children.
2. Faith communities are often important and trusted **first responders** to violence against children. They need to be further equipped and trained at local levels to recognise, report, refer and respond to child survivors' needs appropriately.
3. Faith communities can play key roles in **preventing violence against children**, by empowering children to understand their intrinsic value and know their rights, educating caregivers and communities on prevention, and tackling specific, harmful beliefs that can fuel this violence.
4. Faith actors can use their trusted positions in their spiritual community to **challenge, transform and offer positive alternatives** to harmful religious, cultural, societal and gendered beliefs and practices. These form an underlying driver of specific forms of violence against children in homes and communities.
5. Faith communities can be complicit in and perpetrate forms of violence against children. They have a responsibility to **"break the silence"** and publicly acknowledge and challenge all its forms. Systems must ensure that faith actors are held accountable for any attempts to cover up abuse.
6. Faith communities can create spaces for **meaningful child participation** in all decisions that affect children's lives, especially building skills to listen respectfully to children's voices within families, communities, and faith spaces.
7. People of faith play an important role in the community's **formal and informal child protection systems** by developing collaborative relationships with caregivers, educators and local authorities to ensure a comprehensive, multisectoral response that is also responsive to new threats to children.
8. Faith actors should help **improve child safeguarding** approaches within their religious institutions.
9. Faith based organisations and local faith communities can help to **bridge gaps** between global or national policies on children and the realities of their communities.
10. Many promising faith-informed initiatives remain informal practices or are not documented. Intentional collaboration between researchers and practitioners is needed for more robust documentation on impact and causality. **Further research gaps** were identified in a range of areas.

For more information, scan this code or visit the JLI Website at <http://evac.jliflc.com>



EVAC Hub Co-Chairs:
 Carola Eyber,
 Queen Margaret University;
 Neelam Fida,
 Islamic Relief Worldwide;
 Silvia Mazzarelli,
 Arigatou International;
 Andrea Kaufmann,
 World Vision International.

About the JLI Learning Hubs

JLI is dedicated to convening multi-sector collaborations through learning hubs and knowledge partnerships to increase the evidence of faith engagement to inform and improve policy and practice between faith groups, humanitarian, and development communities. Collaborate in joint learning with opportunities to share resources, events and news with others in the field.

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>1 Convene:
Bring together experts from policy, practice, and research</p> | <p>2 Collect:
Gather evidence on faith-based engagement through scoping (evidence review, case studies and interviews.</p> | <p>3 Communicate:
Use evidence to inform and improve policy and practice</p> | <p>4 Commission:
Joint hub work to respond to research gaps and collaborate on research</p> |
|---|---|---|--|



JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES

JLI Ending Violence Against Children Learning Hub



#FAITHRESPONDERS

#ENDVIOLENCE