

## RESTORING DIGNITY

*A Toolkit for Religious Communities  
to End Violence Against Women*



*R*eligious leaders and communities of faith have the moral authority and the responsibility to work together, in a spirit of multi-faith collaboration, to promote and protect the inviolable dignity of women and girls. People of faith have a unique and unparalleled potential, as moral and spiritual leaders, to be powerful agents of prevention, education and advocacy to end violence against women.



Religions for Peace builds, equips and networks the Global Women of Faith Network, Inter-religious Councils and the Global Youth Network to harness the largely untapped power of multi-religious cooperation to stop war, end poverty and protect the earth. Founded in 1970 as an international, non-sectarian organization, Religions for Peace is now the largest coalition of the world's religious communities, with affiliated Inter-religious Councils in six regions and more than 70 countries. Religions for Peace advances, through common action, a positive notion of peace where the well-being of one is deeply interconnected to the well-being of all.

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*We share a conviction of the fundamental unity of the human family, and the equality and dignity of all human beings. We affirm the sacredness of the individual person and the importance of his or her freedom of conscience.*

— Kyoto Declaration, *Religions for Peace* Eighth World Assembly  
Kyoto, Japan 2006

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# Working Together to Uphold the Dignity of All

Dr. William F. Vendley  
Secretary General, *Religions for Peace*

Violence against women is wrong. We know—each according to her or his respective religious tradition—that the true dignity of every woman is a “gift from God.” This gift of dignity is inviolable. It is not given by cultures, states, societies, communities or individuals. It cannot be taken away by them. But this dignity—which is the true beauty of being a person—must be actively respected, protected and honored.

Violence against women is prevalent. Individuals engage in violence against women, but there are also cultural and social patterns that reinforce or appear to justify individuals’ acts of violence. Some have interpreted their religious traditions as supporting these patterns of violence. Honesty calls us to acknowledge that this is wrong. Violence against women is unspeakable hurtful to them. It also damages families, communities, and ultimately all of us.

Violence against woman is a direct assault on the positive vision of peace that is central to each of our respective religious traditions. As religious believers committed to

cooperating for peace, we need to work together to uphold the inviolable dignity of women and girls by defending them from violence.

Religions for Peace is grateful for and proud of the leadership of women of faith in facing this challenge. However, it is one to be shouldered by all religious believers—men and women. Through the power of multi-religious collaboration, religious leaders and believers can work together to uphold the dignity of every human person. All are injured when any of us is violated, and all are honored when we work together to protect one another.

This toolkit is designed to help equip religious leaders and communities for multi-religious cooperation around needed education and advocacy to defend the dignity and rights of women and girls. Each of us, our families and communities will be supported when we work together so that women and girls can live without fear, unfold their true potential, and live in the inviolable gift of their human dignity.

## Multi-Religious Collaboration to End Violence Against Women

Ms. Jacqueline Ogega  
Director of *Religions for Peace* Women’s Mobilization Program

Each faith tradition speaks to the fundamental dignity and inalienable rights of every human being. Yet, all too often, women and girls are entrapped in cycles of unending violence. From so-called honor killings to domestic violence to femicide to rape, women’s dignity and rights are being trampled upon. The disproportionate impact of poverty and/or HIV/AIDS on women and girls is a direct result of violence. And when rape and sexual violence is used as a brutal combat tactic in conflict and post-conflict situations, women and girls are particular targets. Religious leaders and communities of faith cannot afford to remain silent when

so many girls and women suffer the brutality of violence with impunity.

This toolkit is designed for religious leaders and communities who have the moral responsibility to prevent violence against women and girls and provide care and support to all who have suffered and endured it. The toolkit offers religious leaders and communities the tools to act together in partnership within and across faiths as powerful agents of prevention, protection and support to end all forms of violence against women and girls.



# How to Use this Toolkit

This toolkit was designed in collaboration with religious leaders from countries around the world for women and men of faith working at the community, national or international level. The toolkit offers religious leaders, faith communities and Inter-religious Councils the tools to carry out awareness, prevention and advocacy programs to help bring an end to violence against women.

This toolkit is divided into two sections:

## Section 1

The first section of this toolkit, *Understanding Violence Against Women*, affirms the centrality of mobilizing religious infrastructures, assets and resources for action in response to this urgent crisis. This section includes background information on violence against women that can help people of faith educate themselves about the issue, as well as enable them to educate others. Specifically, this information outlines an overview of violence against women and its different forms, and then it

connects violence against women to other pressing global problems, including HIV/AIDS, poverty, war and conflict.

## Section 2

The second section of this toolkit, *Restoring Dignity: Religious Communities in Action*, provides practical resources and tools for people of faith to use their religious background and moral and spiritual capital to take actions to eliminate violence against women. This section is broken up into different action areas that can help end violence against women including: education and awareness; prevention; advocacy; organizing an inter-religious retreat; support and care; addressing justice; ending impunity; partnering with the media; and monitoring and evaluation. There is a sample tool corresponding to each action area that may help carry out the action. Faith communities and religious leaders can use these tools and develop new ones to effect change as they unite across faith lines and around the globe to defend and restore the inviolable rights and dignity of women and girls.

*“As men and women of religion, we confess in humility and penitence that we have very often betrayed our religious ideals and our commitments to peace. It is not religion that failed the cause of peace, but religious people. The betrayal of religion can and must be corrected.”*

—Kyoto Declaration, First World Assembly of the  
World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP)  
Kyoto, Japan (1970)



Religions for Peace is grateful to the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Ford Foundation, USAID/ Health Policy Initiative and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their partnership and financial support.

# Defending the Inviolable Dignity and Rights of Women and Girls

All religions of the world cherish the inherent dignity of all human beings. Violence against women threatens the lives and well-being of both individuals as well as communities, and it can no longer be tolerated or ignored. Religious leaders and faith communities have the moral authority to raise awareness about violence against women and to respond sensitively to those who suffer from it.

- As highly respected figures in their communities, religious leaders are uniquely equipped to lead activism and prevention efforts to end violence against women. Within their communities, they hold the power to break the silence about the violence and impunity and to put an end to unnecessary suffering.
- More than any other civil society representatives, people of faith have the experience of serving individuals and communities in body, mind and spirit, and their expertise is greatly needed in the inter-religious task of creating a safe and healthy world for all women and girls.
- Religious communities possess spiritual, moral and social assets that can be utilized through the full range of existing structures—leadership bodies, local congregations, women’s groups, youth groups and specialized agencies. When religious communities recognize their shared values, mobilize their collective assets and work together, they can have a decisive impact in ending violence against women.
- People should never have to endure acts that rob them of the right to live healthy and peaceful lives, and religious communities must defend women’s inherent dignity. Where violence and trauma have occurred, mobilizing the compassion and strength of religious communities is an essential part of healing and caring for survivors. Addressing justice and ending impunity of the aggressors is a preventive measure towards eradicating violence against women.

Religion does not tolerate the degradation of any person’s dignity. People of faith must act in solidarity with all survivors and families affected by violence against women. Only through confident understanding of violence against women and its related linkages can such work be done.



*“We are convinced that practices, prejudices or laws that prevent the full participation of women along with men in the political, economic, social, cultural and religious life of their countries are morally indefensible and should be eliminated.”*

—WCRP (*Religions for Peace*) III World Assembly,  
The Princeton Declaration, Princeton, NJ, USA (1979)

# Overview of Violence Against Women

*“It is not just women who are paying an enormous price for this cultural and religious prejudice. We all suffer when women and girls are abused and their needs are neglected. By denying them security and opportunity, we embed unfairness in our societies and fail to make the most of the talents of half the population.”*

—The Global Elders (2009)

Violence against women is a worldwide pandemic of devastating proportions. One out of every three women will experience some form of violence in her lifetime. Violence against women crosses all social, economic, cultural, religious, and political borders. Violence against women knows no geographical bounds; it is a problem in every country in the world.

This violence can be physical, psychological, or socioeconomic in nature, and may be perpetrated by family members, trusted community members, and even authorities. While there is not one specific cause of violence against women, some critical factors that perpetuate this brutality include social inequalities, lack of awareness and understanding, poverty, abuse of religion, war and political conflicts, stigma, impunity and silence.

Religious leaders and people of faith must respond to this horrific violation of dignity with compassion and fierce commitment to defend the intrinsic value of all humanity. All faiths respect and promote the inviolable dignity of all women, men, girls and boys.

Religious leaders and communities have tremendous moral and spiritual influence and thus have a unique and unparalleled potential to be powerful agents of prevention, education and advocacy to bring an end to violence against women. In order to do so, it is necessary to understand the pervasive nature of violence against women and its intricate linkages with other global challenges.





## Understanding Violence Against Women

# Different Forms of Violence Against Women

In order to realize the full scope of violence against women, it is necessary to consider some of its component parts. These forms of violence are all quite different, as are the circumstances that give rise to them. Each of these practices and all other forms of violence against women, are horrific—as well as criminal—and must be condemned. This is not an exhaustive list but a summary of the major types of violence against women.

- **Rape** is forced, unwanted sexual intercourse. Rape knows no borders as it affects females in every country in the world. Rape has even been perpetrated on girls as young as 2, and against women as old as 90. In contexts of war and conflict, rape is prevalent, sometimes using guns and other objects in brutal force.
- **Sexual Assault** is unwanted sexual contact that stops short of rape or attempted rape. Sexual assault takes many forms and is pervasive, occurring at work, in the home or within the community and should never be treated as anything less than a serious offense. Perpetrators may be family members or trusted members of the community, but this does not change the severity or danger of their actions.
- **Domestic Violence** refers to physical and sexual attacks in the home within a family or an intimate relationship. It includes intimate partner violence, marital rape, assault and battery, and sexual abuse of children in the household. Worldwide, 40–70 percent of all female murder victims are killed by an intimate partner.<sup>1</sup>
- **Dowry Murder** is a practice in which a bride’s husband and/or in-laws kill her because her parents are unable to deliver the full amount or meet an increased demand of her dowry. It has also been reported that dowry demands have played and continue to play an important role in women being burned to death.

*“Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women’s lives, on their families, and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence—yet the reality is that too often it is covered up or tacitly condoned.”*”

—United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon (2008)





# Different Forms of Violence Against Women

- **Early Marriage** involves the forced marriage of a young girl, who is then extremely vulnerable to sexual violence. Early marriage refers to a forced marriage of a girl under the age of eighteen; girls as young as six or seven have been victims. Early or forced marriage jeopardizes a girl's physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.
- **Femicide** indicates the systematic killing of women and girls. This extreme act culminates in murder but may include torture, mutilation, cruelty and sexual violence. Femicide is most notorious in several Latin and Central American countries, though it occurs in other regions as well. Sex-selective abortions are another form of femicide, more prevalent in Asia, particularly in countries that do not value female children or when there is a limit on births per family.
- **Female Genital Cutting** refers to practices that are often deeply rooted in traditional understandings of purity and chastity. In the context of rituals or rites of passage, cutting operations, which can cause irreparable pain and health problems, affect nearly 2 million women and girls each year. Between 100 and 140 million women and girls in the world

are estimated to have undergone female genital cutting.<sup>2</sup> Religious leaders must defend the right for all women to live healthy and peaceful lives by condemning this cruel act, which is often based on misused religious principles and misunderstandings.

- **Honor Killing** refers to the murder of women due to their perceived disgrace to the family's or community's "honor" for things such as accused premarital sex, accused adultery, inappropriate behavior such as leaving the house without a male relative, and even rape. Preservation of honor is usually veiled in religious language, a dangerous manipulation of religion to justify an inexcusable practice. Women have been publicly stoned to death, burned alive and attacked with acid for such accused disgraces.

Violence against women not only takes many different forms, but it also has intricate linkages with other global crises, most notably with HIV/AIDS, poverty, war and conflict.



## Understanding Violence Against Women

# Myth Busting: Rejecting myths and sharing real facts

Understandings of violence against women vary among cultures, regions and people and, unfortunately, many inaccuracies about the subject are taken as truths. Religious leaders can help set the record straight by rejecting myths and sharing the real facts about violence against women. These are just a few of those myths, and religious communities should always look out for other falsities about this global crisis, and then help set the record straight.

**Myth:** Violence against women is religiously sanctioned.

**FACT:** No faith condones violence against women or the degradation of women's dignity. Some perpetrators may try to use religion as an excuse to abuse women and girls or carry out harmful traditional practices, but this is misguided and wrong. Religion upholds the dignity of all life, and any abuse of women's rights is against religious teaching.

**Myth:** Violence against women is not that widespread.

**FACT:** Unfortunately, violence against women is alarmingly prevalent. One in three women worldwide will suffer from some form of violence. Violence against women occurs across all aspects of our societies regardless of race, class, religious beliefs, level of education, occupation, community position or cultural/ethnic background.

**Myth:** Violence against women is provoked by the victim.

**FACT:** Violence is NEVER the victim's fault. This mistaken belief holds that women "ask" to be violated through their actions or behavior. For a victim, it is a humiliating and degrading act.

**Myth:** There is nothing we can do to stop violence against women. The violence is inevitable because perpetrators are 'born that way' or are mentally ill.

**FACT:** Violence against women is not the product of biology but rather is learned attitudes and norms, and social inequalities. Just as violence-supportive attitudes can be learned, they can be unlearned.

**Myth:** Victims who do not defend themselves have not been violated.

**FACT:** An act of violence committed against a woman, regardless of whether or not she tried to defend herself, is a great offense and a crime. There are many reasons why a victim might not physically or verbally fight their attacker including shock, fear, threats or the size and strength of the attacker.



# The Intersection of Violence Against Women and HIV/AIDS

Violence against women causes serious health problems for individual women, girls, families and communities. One such health problem compounded by violence against women is HIV and AIDS. Violence against women is strongly correlated to increasing rates of HIV/AIDS infection in women and girls around the world. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to HIV, evident by the increasing number of women contracting HIV that far surpasses the infection rates of men. Unfortunately, these figures are, in part, a result of violence against women and girls, which raises the likelihood of infection. Concurrently, women with HIV/AIDS are more vulnerable to violence against them.

- A clinic in Zambia reported that 60 percent of eligible women opt out of treatment due to fears of violence and abandonment resulting from disclosing their HIV-positive status.<sup>3</sup>
- In the Dominican Republic studies conducted in 2007 concluded that women who experienced violence were nearly four times as likely to have a sexually transmitted infection than women who had not been abused.<sup>4</sup>

- If women face sexual violence such as rape, prostitution and trafficking they have little, if any, way to negotiate safer sex practices and thus prevent the infection if it is with an HIV-positive partner. Women also fear further violence if they pursue HIV testing and/or disclose HIV-positive status to their partners.
- For women that have already contracted the disease, the social stigma and ignorance surrounding HIV and AIDS often leads to increased levels of violence against them. Unequal power dynamics in marital relationships can also have detrimental effects on HIV-positive women deterring them from getting tested, seeking treatment or leaving them powerless to say no to an HIV-positive partner.

Religious communities all over the world have passionately devoted money, programming and time to address HIV/AIDS. By understanding the intersection of HIV/AIDS with violence against women, they can continue with and strengthen this necessary work.



*“Violence against women and girls is disturbingly related to increasing rates of HIV/AIDS infection in women and girls around the world. As people of faith, we must respond with compassion and urgency to end violence against women and its links to HIV/AIDS.”*

—Dr. Vinu Aram, Director of Shanti Ashram, a well-known Gandhian institution in India, and Vice-Moderator of *Religions for Peace* (2008)

## Understanding Violence Against Women

# The Intersection of Violence Against Women and Poverty

Violence against women is often interconnected with issues of economic injustice and lack of opportunities. Some women in search of economic survival get trapped in prostitution or sex slavery in an effort to support themselves and their families. Women who have survived or are living in fear of violence often feel powerless in the face of financial insecurities and are unable to escape violent situations.

- Poverty robs over one billion people of their right to food, shelter, basic health care and education, and extreme poverty kills. Of the roughly 1.4 billion people living on less than \$1 a day, 70 percent are women and girls.<sup>5</sup>
- Pervasive inequalities limit women’s access to basic resources such as education, health care, property rights and employment opportunities. When women are unable to meet their basic needs and support themselves and their families, they may be forced into coercive sexual encounters in order to survive. These women are exponentially more vulnerable to all forms of violence—sexual, physical, emotional and psychological.
- The disadvantaged economic conditions women face immensely increase the likelihood that they will be victims of human trafficking. Human trafficking is the illegal transport of human beings for the purpose of selling them or exploiting their labor. 43 percent of victims of human trafficking are used for forced commercial sexual exploitation, of which 98 percent are women and girls.<sup>6</sup> Women and girls living in unsafe neighborhoods that lack law enforcement and protection measures are often at greater risk for abduction into human trafficking.
- Survivors of violence face greater obstacles for overcoming poverty. For instance, survivors of sexual violence are more likely to face sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, and other challenges that perpetuate extreme, intergenerational poverty.

People of faith have been committed to ending poverty historically up to the present. By working to eradicate violence against women, religious communities can also move forward in their tireless efforts to eliminate global poverty.

*“When you talk of women and violence against women, we’re talking about pain. We’re talking about women that cannot even stand up because they’re not economically empowered. The faith-based community should not ignore the issues of violence that affect women.”*

—Rev. Annie Kaseketi, African Network of Religious Leaders Living With or Personally Affected by HIV/AIDS (ANERELA+)





# The Intersection of Violence Against Women and War and Conflict

Women and girls often embody the terror of war in conflict and post-conflict areas. Beyond the physical, economic, social and environmental destruction that armed conflicts impose on communities, violence against women is used strategically in conflict regions as a brutal war tactic. Examples of this include such deplorable acts as rape, forced impregnation, forced sterilization, sexual humiliation and sexual slavery.

- Rape is used systematically as a weapon of war, with women often being gang-raped by large groups of men. Brutal and widespread rape, characteristic of many conflict zones, can effectively be an act of genocide by damaging women's ability to reproduce or simply ostracizing them from their communities.
- Conflict zones and situations of war present especially unstable circumstances that leave systematic rape and violence against women unaddressed. So many cases go unreported because women are afraid of further attacks if they identify the perpetrators. Even with reported cases, there is enormous impunity that leaves women living with their attackers nearby.
- In an environment of violence and war, infrastructures break down and normal standards of security and law and order disappear. In these lawless conditions, women are in greater danger of facing violence in any place at any time. Women

may also face violence at the hands of those who should protect them such as the police, armed militias, and even peacekeepers.

- Women comprise 80 percent of refugee and displaced populations worldwide.<sup>7</sup> Often families are broken up by the time women reach refugee camps and thus women are seen as unprotected and are at a higher risk for attack. Even within the camps, women remain at risk of violence when carrying out simple tasks needed for survival, from collecting water or firewood, to going to the latrine at night. In the decade from 1991–2001, at least 64,000 displaced women were survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Sierra Leone.<sup>8</sup>

Religious leaders and faith communities are engaged in conflict transformation and reconciliation efforts all over the world. Addressing violence against women is a crucial part of these efforts towards ensuring a peaceful global family.

### We Pray for Action and Understanding

As we gather in faith and action to promote a more secure and peaceful world, we pray to challenge ourselves and strengthen our voices, in collaboration with others, to end violence against women. As people of faith, we stand united to affirm our roles in educating, advocating, preventing and supporting women and girls afflicted with violence. We draw our actions from our deeply shared spiritual assets and religious resources on the inviolable dignity of every human person. Where there is challenge or despair, may we hold to hope and inspire vision as we act together for peace to end violence against women.



## The Religious Imperative to End Violence Against Women

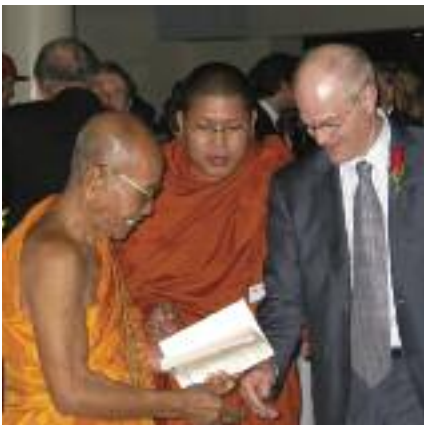
Religious principles of the world’s major faiths affirm the position of religion as a force for good and human dignity. Universal religious principles can be used in services or events with religious communities in order to show that violence against women is of particular concern for the community because it goes against the beliefs of faith. These examples can help to enforce the positive potential of religion to promote peace for every human being. Religious leaders can search through their own sacred texts and teachings as well to find examples that show the need to respect and value women, which can help in the effort to eliminate violence against women.

Religious communities have a unique responsibility to preserve the dignity of women and girls, many who have been traumatized by violence. The first section has outlined the devastating forms of violence against women and how they are linked with other urgent global problems. The second section takes that impulse to act and offers tools, resources and suggestions for how people of faith can work together to

eliminate violence against women in pursuit of a brighter tomorrow. This section includes resources that can be utilized to help educate and raise awareness, prevent violence against women, organize advocacy initiatives, and support and care for survivors. Faith Communities and religious leaders can use these tools and develop new ones to effect change as they unite across faith lines and around the globe to defend and restore the inviolable rights and dignity of women and girls.

Religious principles express an inspiring message of non-violence in the hope of a more equal and peaceful world. They demonstrate a strong ethical position on the dignity of women and mandate that women be valued in society. Faith communities are the right people to address violence against women, a tremendous crisis that threatens the preservation of all these principles.

*“Religious principles of the world’s major faiths affirm the position of religion as a force for good and human dignity.”*



## TOOL: Universal Religious Principles

The **Baha'í** faith upholds an egalitarian model of men and women in the religion. Violence against women is considered a disruption of the social order that must be corrected. Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of Baha'í, himself stated, "Women and men have always been and will always be equal in the sight of God." All of humanity is considered part of one single race so aggression to any individual damages the well-being of the whole human family.

According to its teachings, non-violence is an essential part of **Buddhism** and is the first of five precepts that the Buddha instructed to observe. The Buddhist scripture, Sutta Nipata, states, "Do not injure any being, either strong or weak in the world" and violence against women today clearly disrupts that principle. Women in Buddhism are highly valued as religious leaders, as pillars of family and as deserving of great respect and honor.

**Christians** believe human beings are created in the likeness of God, which demands a concern for the dignity and inherent rights of women and girls. The cornerstone of Christian belief is in the example of the life of Jesus Christ, who demonstrated high regard for the inviolable dignity of women, respected them, and entrusted them with his mission. Living Christian faith warrants ending all forms of violence against women and girls.

One of the central tenets of **Hinduism** is non-injury, thus violence against women is seen as a serious breaking of this principle. Mahatma Gandhi affirmed this Hindu belief in his statement, "Non-violence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our being." Within the faith it is also taught that women should be worshipped and treated with the utmost affection, respect and kindness.

**Islam** values very highly the equality between women and men. According to the Qu'ran, God does not love fasad, violence, and one of God's names is peace, promoting a society that values respect and cooperation and does not tolerate violence against women. "The Believers men and women are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil" (Qu'ran: 9/71).

Lord Mahavira brought an enlightened view of women to **Jainism**, and upheld that there is a universal light inside every individual, men and women included. Women play their part in liberation and are spiritual equals to men. Lord Mahavira also preached that, "Nonviolence is the supreme religion. One who looks on the creatures of the Earth, big and small, as one's own self, comprehends this immense world."

**Judaism** teaches that men and women were both made in the image of God and thus both must be equally valued and esteemed. Chesed, or the act of loving-kindness is central to the religion, and upholding this standard requires the fair and equal treatment of all people. Another key tenet is tikkun olam which requires people to repair the world. All people must be engaged in this work of ending violence against women to perfect the world for all.

Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of **Sikhism**, surprised his contemporaries by preaching that women are worthy of praise equal to men. This view is an important part of the faith. According to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, "She is the most noble of all family. She counsels and advises the elders and youngsters. She is the ruler and God has made us her courtiers." Guru Nanak also subscribed to a philosophy of non-violence and made harmony the basis of its pursuit.

**Zoroastrianism** does not discriminate between men and women, holding that both were created by the same source and both should be seen as equals under religious values. Zarathushtra said, "Put down fury, check violence, you who wish to strengthen the promotion of good mind through righteousness," in the spirit of preserving a peaceful world for all.

# Education and Awareness

Religious leaders and communities are well positioned to educate themselves and others on how to overcome the devastating incidence of violence against women. Education and awareness can help shape shared values on the dignity of the human person that mandates respect for women. It is a powerful tool to critically analyze the root causes of violence and break down ignorance and prejudice—both dangerous preconditions for violence against women.

- **Facilitate education for healing and leadership-building:** This may include conducting trauma healing, empowerment and socio-economic skills-building workshops for survivors of violence to become community leaders. Sharing real-life people’s experiences of violence against women in a safe and confidential manner is also an effective tool in this pursuit.
- **Support religious and inter-religious educational programs for people of faith:** Train religious teachers and clergy on violence against women and the empowerment of women and girls. Organize facilitated interactive dialogues aimed at increasing public knowledge, influencing attitudes and opinions on non-violence as well as promoting a code for living with respect for women and girls.
- **Conduct religious and spiritual educational events:** Organize educational prayer or worship services and ensure that prayers, songs, meditations, messages or religious rituals support education on eradicating violence against women and supporting survivors. Speak out through educational talks or sermons that raise awareness, influence public opinion, shape social values and reject the misuses of religion for violence.
- **Develop and disseminate relevant educational and awareness materials:** These tools should mobilize religious assets and resources to end violence against women. Such educational resources can include fact-sheets, educational quilts, posters, informational brochures, or a collage of educational photographs.

By helping to mobilize religious and spiritual resources and motivations for peaceful co-existence, multi-religious education can promote dialogue and action from the grassroots to the global level to end violence against women. One example of a way to start the dialogue is by having an inter-religious education and awareness week radio program.





## TOOL: Inter-Religious Education and Awareness Week Radio Program

This tool may be adapted for use for shorter or longer air time on radio, as appropriate, or for another context other than radio. Also consider adapting this radio program as a dramatic but informational television or radio program to raise awareness and interest about violence against women.

The objective of this week is to increase awareness on violence against women as a violent threat to peace. Choose a powerful theme that includes a religious aspect and the overall goal to end violence against women. Such a theme might be “Faithful Voices: Religion Can Help End Violence Against Women”. The radio is an effective mechanism for education because it reaches beyond barriers of education, ability to read and write, and it eliminates time constraints as one can listen as they do other chores. It is also appropriate to reach a wide grassroots audience, or you can target it to a specific community. Remember to include faithful songs, chants, or prayers for introductory/concluding sessions.

This is a one week inter-religious educational radio program with five story-lines to be broadcasted each day. Each story-line can be approximately ten minutes long, about two minutes for each educator. Each day will begin with the same introduction and music, prayer or chant and have a similar basic structure. However, the content of each day shall be different and a continuation of the story-line. Also, the speakers may be different, ensuring diverse faith perspectives as well as engagement of youth, children and women on various topics.

**Educator 1:** A survivor of violence speaks about their experience of violence in real life. They may reflect on how religion/faith empowered or disempowered them. The storyteller will help break the silence and assure survivors who have been living in isolation, pain and secrecy that they are not alone. The storyteller will play an

important role in educating listeners on the reality of violence against women and inspiring others to act. Be mindful to keep the survivor’s identity confidential if they fear social stigmatization or reprisals from their attacker.

**Educator 2:** A religious leader will point out the threats to peace that violence against women poses, in line with the real-life story of the survivor. The religious leader will then educate listeners about the different forms of violence against women, its linkages with other problems such as HIV/AIDS and poverty, and dispel myths about its perpetuation and impunity. Reference specifically how religion has been abused to support atrocious actions that no person of faith could endorse.

**Educator 3:** A traditional or community leader will condemn violence against women by affirming the cultural and social mandates to live in harmony with one another and inspire others to act. The speaker here may be substituted by a political leader or civil society leader such as someone from a women’s organization that specializes in this.

**Educator 4:** A person of faith will conclude the session by pointing out religious warrants for the respect of the inherent dignity of all people and the religious resources and spiritual assets that can be mobilized to end violence against women. The religious leader will highlight some resources that are available for prevention, inter-faith retreats, and advocacy as well as refer listeners to where they can find more information or help if they are a survivor of violence.

# Prevention

Religious leaders have tremendous moral and spiritual influence and thus have a unique and unparalleled potential to not only react to violence against women but to change people's thinking and actions before they act. Taking a strong stance can prevent someone from committing an act of violence against women or sway others to join in eliminating this terrible crime.

- **Encourage involvement of both men and women:** While the perpetrators of violence against women are usually men, their involvement is key to prevent future violence. One way to involve men more is to make them the focus of sensitization efforts and awareness campaigns or to solicit influential male partners, including clergy, in these prevention efforts.
- **Collaborate with other religious leaders and communities:** Multi-faith cooperation is particularly powerful because it shows solidarity and strength and allows diverse communities to pool resources and talents for a common goal. Multi-faith cooperation also demonstrates that while different faiths have many diverse traditions, all faiths value that sanctity and dignity of every human life. Multi-faith activities can be organized through local Inter-religious Councils or with leaders of other local places of worship. Consider holding special multi-religious services or vigils where ending violence against women is the universal and unifying goal.

- **Incorporate violence against women into religious gatherings:** Putting violence against women on the agenda not only at community events but also within the services or spiritual meetings that happen on a regular basis sends a strong message about the role of religious communities in preventing violence against women.
- **Focus on talking to youth:** Some young people today might become perpetrators of violence against women but they also could become the positive leaders of tomorrow. As figures of great influence, religious leaders can target youth and tap into their potential to pick up the work of ending violence against women wherever it's left off. The next generation is a crucial factor in building a new culture of cooperation and respect for all.

Prevention of violence against women and girls is a serious commitment to change the reality we live in and improve the lives of women and girls who are suffering around the world. Sharing a statement of religious commitment to ending violence against women during a sermon or event can have a tremendous impact on enlisting more people to work to prevent violence before it starts.



## **TOOL: Adaptable Statement for Religious Leaders to Prevent Violence Against Women**

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This statement can be read at religious services, inter-religious events or other actions. Adapt it with references to your own community or faith tradition. Include appropriate prayers or scriptures, particularly those that support prevention efforts with regard to violence against women.

Our faith celebrates life. It calls on us to treat one another as we would like to be treated—with respect, compassion and kindness—however inequalities are abundant in our communities. Women and girls are often treated with far less respect, compassion and kindness than they deserve. In our community and in communities around the world, violence is used to perpetuate power inequalities and violence against women. The terrifying physical, psychological and spiritual devastation that is a reality for too many of our sisters is an affront to our core values and beliefs. Violence against any member of the human family can never be justified.

And so today, we join together in one voice as women and men of faith, ready to speak out in solidarity with those who have been silenced; we must advocate for their right to live healthy and dignified lives. We must prevent the violence from persisting unaddressed.

Many of us are already actively engaged with ending poverty, caring for the sick, and resolving conflict. We know that transformation is possible with these problems, and therefore we know there is reason for hope that our efforts to eliminate violence against women can also effect change. We will remember and draw lessons from our community's long tradition of promoting

peaceful and healthy relationships, as we continue to work together to promote justice and provide a safe environment for all.

[This could be a good place to highlight examples of past or ongoing actions within your community.]

In speaking out against violence against women and caring for survivors, we are not alone. Many religious communities and individual people of faith are committed to ending violence against women, and our actions will be stronger and more effective if we join together. We are all affected by a culture of violence, and we can all respond by creating a multi-religious community that is safe and healthy for all—women, men, girls and boys.

As a multi-religious front within our own community, we must speak out against violence against women and girls in our sermons and religious instructions to ensure that the violence and suffering stops here and now.

We resolve to make violence against women and girls history, so that future generations of young women and young men can grow up in harmony, non-violence and peace.

# Advocacy

Advocacy is working actively to influence certain outcomes such as changing public policy and public opinion. Religious leaders, as highly respected figures in their communities, are uniquely equipped to lead activism that will address violence against women. Right now religious leaders can and must act out against interpretations and practices that threaten the well-being of any woman or girl; advocacy is a perfect way to do that.

- **Act to recover religion as a force for peace:** Act to recover religion as a force for peace: Promote policies, religious texts and doctrines that respect the dignity of all persons and defend the sanctity of life. Condemn all practices—traditional and otherwise—that endanger the physical, emotional, mental and/ or spiritual wellbeing of women and girls. Speak out against anyone that tries to manipulate or use religion as an excuse for violence or ill-treatment of women.
- **Hold a community meeting:** Religious leaders, women’s organizations, youth organizations, schools and other faith-based groups can take an active role in breaking the silence together. Call a communal meeting to mobilize all the resources and assets of these different groups; this can increase the effectiveness of a united effort to change the status quo.

- **Speak with community and governmental leaders:** Find out from these representatives what is most needed in the community and what can be done as a religious leader to eliminate violence against women. This can help to make religious leaders more visible in the community, and it holds the government accountable for their own involvement and promises to eradicate violence against women as well.
- **Schedule lobbying days:** Religious leaders and their communities can use these days to approach decision makers and talk about what is needed on the ground in their communities—services, laws, policies, implementation of existing policies etc.

Advocacy is a highly effective means to merge the assets of the religious community with other organizations and leaders so that real changes can be made collectively that will help end violence against women. An inter-religious campaign is a great way to broadcast a message of hope and action that will bring all these communities together in pursuit of a common goal to end violence against women.





## TOOL: Launch an Inter-Religious Campaign on Prevention

The objective of this campaign is to increase awareness in religious communities of how to prevent violence against women and mobilize them for action. Such a campaign can build on other kinds of outreach and education by engaging religious communities in sustained efforts to end violence. This may be accomplished through a series of activities and repeated opportunities for common action with short, medium and longer-term goals for peace.

**Choose a Campaign Focus:** Religious communities may raise the following questions in the process of identifying a campaign focus: what is it that religious communities can do best together to prevent violence against women? Preventive peer education, prevention laws and legal systems, preventive counseling and care? Which focus will best meet the needs of the community? How will the campaign address the root causes of violence and how to prevent them? A campaign usually focuses on changes in policies, institutional practices, and social norms including beliefs, behaviors and risk factors. How long will the campaign take?

**Identify the Campaign Resources:** Who are the actors in the campaign? Who are the likely champions? How will these actors be mobilized? For example, religious communities may work with youth in schools for preventive peer education; or government officials, legal officers and police may be engaged in creating prevention legislation or legal reform. Religious communities may also mobilize volunteers and support from their religious congregations through letter-writing campaigns, petition drives and other advocacy efforts.

Who has the knowledge, experience and interest needed to work within that area? Where might religious communities face opposition and how will they cultivate unlikely allies to end violence against women? What other resources will this campaign need—financial, technical, material, and ideological?

**Take Action:** Activities should target specific actors and be geared to meet the campaign's objective. Some general activities may include: outreach and recruitment of actors and volunteers (faith in action groups), community events promoting a safe world where all are free from violence, letter-writing and petition signing, meetings with government officials, community forums for discussion and planning for prevention, inter-faith poster competitions or role playing activities for youth, inter-religious vigils or prayer. The campaign activities may be undertaken through different modes including media, internet-based e-advocacy, and forums for physical convening.

# Inter-Religious Retreat

A retreat is a unique and valuable opportunity to bind spiritual and contemplative reflection with informational and stimulating discussion on violence against women. It allows for an individual journey through personal meditation and also a group journey through learning and talking courageously about ways to end the violence.

- **Lead a spiritual service and/or meditation** to help people be introspective but maintain a mindfulness about why they are on the retreat.
- **Watch a film**, maybe a documentary on any form of violence against women, and then have a facilitated discussion on how it relates to the group and their work/goals.
- **Organize a nature walk**, which allows people a respite from their busy lives and encourages more calm and connectedness during the retreat.
- **Dialogues and roundtable discussions** about the subject should be a center point of the retreat. Consider different ways to have conversations: with the entire group or in small groups, inter-faith or intra-faith, etc. Ideally, facilitated dialogue creates a safe space that fosters sharing and encourages participants to speak about their thoughts and feelings in a productive, equal setup.
- **Interpretation of religious texts:** Consider a workshop examining different interpretations of religious texts, principles and doctrines. Look at texts that can be misinterpreted or manipulated to justify the abuse of women and girls. Counter negative interpretations with principles and doctrines that promote nonviolence and the sanctity and dignity of every human life.
- **Creative work**, such as a making a quilt, group collage, model, sculpture, mobile, poster, mural or painting, can be used as a different means of expression and can be a powerful way to reveal people’s feelings and beliefs.
- **A role play** involves acting out situations to bring issues alive, to explore attitudes, feelings and different points of view and to develop insight into others’ perspectives.

An inter-religious retreat is a particularly powerful tool because it accesses the common goals of different religious groups and gives a forum for these groups to be in agreement, in conversation and in contemplation together on ways to advance the human dignity of women and girls. One idea for a two-day retreat is called, “Living Faith, Compassion and Healing” and can be a chance for strong multi-religious collaboration as well as self-reflection.



## **TOOL: Two-Day Inter-Religious Retreat: Living Faith, Compassion and Healing**

The objective of the Living Faith, Compassion and Healing Retreat is to engage with members of different faith communities in deep spiritual reflection to motivate them to take action to address violence against women. It is essential to determine a specific topic relating to violence against women to address in this two-day retreat. Examples of topics are rape, violence in relation to HIV/AIDS or the harmful traditional practice of child marriage. Faith, compassion and healing will then be applied to one specific topic that is chosen for the retreat. This tool may be used for a shorter or longer retreat time period, depending on the need.

**Introductory Session:** Have a moment of silence to help people to settle in, engage in personal prayer, feel calm and at ease so that they can participate in the retreat more fully and energetically. Have a getting-to-know-you, introductory activity to start the participants off on the right foot as a united group. Introduce the objectives of the retreat and allow participants to share their goals. Address important logistical needs and ensure that each person has a scrapbook or diary that gives them an opportunity to record impressions and emotions they may experience throughout the retreat. Have a key introduction from a spiritual teacher/guest on cultivating inner peace, compassion and healing to end violence against women—on the specific topic chosen.

**Session Two:** *Understanding Violence Against Women.* Watch a film/documentary, or listen to a moving story from a survivor on the chosen topic on violence against women. This will help highlight the enormous negative impacts of violence against women. Have another guest speaker/expert speak to the group about the pervasiveness of violence against women—relating to the selected topic, and the moral responsibility of people of faith to address it.

**Session Three:** *A Nature Walk.* Offer the following questions (verbal or written) for further personal reflection

and thought through self-focused independent contemplation and prayer: How have I been impacted, directly or indirectly, by violence against women? How have I responded or not responded to it? How do my spiritual values of faith, compassion and healing motivate me to take action? Participants may write and/or draw their thoughts and feelings.

**Session Four:** *Facilitated reflection and dialogue.* At the group level collective facilitated reflection and dialogue will help synthesize personal reflection. The following question can be used to facilitate dialogue and discussion: How can the power of faith and compassion be applied to heal women and girls traumatized from violence? What plans of action can be put in place for various faith traditions to end violence against women?

**Session Five:** *Concluding session.* Return to the objectives of the retreat and see if they've been met. Then define new goals for post-retreat follow-up work to continue on track with the ultimate objectives of the program. Have a concluding motivational speaker to encourage further action, grounded in faith. Engage in a quiet moment of deep concluding prayer.

# Support and Care

One of the most powerful ways that religious leaders can respond to violence against women is by supporting and caring for survivors, working with perpetrators and comforting those in fear of violence. All too often people live with their emotions bottled up inside and after such a traumatic experience it is crucial that survivors have strong leaders and communities to support them and hear their voices.

- **Listen to survivors' stories:** Providing a safe and confidential space is essential, as survivors may feel voiceless or fearful that speaking about their experiences will lead to further violence and social stigma. Allow survivors to talk freely about their rage, fears, assumptions, and experiences related to violence against women; in many contexts, religious leaders serve as one of the only safe listeners for survivors, and their voices must be heard to get the appropriate support.
- **Form support groups:** Facilitating group reflections about violence against women can help survivors feel less isolated and powerless. A sense of solidarity may empower survivors to recognize that they in no way deserve to be abused, and that they have a sacred right to live healthy and dignified lives.

- **Link to health care agencies or organizations:** Guiding survivors towards quality health care providers in the community is a critical way to address the physical and psychological effects of violence against women. All too often inadequate health care aggravates issues related to violence against women and securing survivors with a good provider can help in recovery and preventing further violence and complications.
- **Provide guidance and support to individuals living in fear of aggression:** Counseling men and women who are experiencing relationship problems can help address conflicts before they become violent. Listen to people and let them freely share their emotions. It will give them a necessary outlet to share their feelings; having that outlet may make the difference between a healthy relationship and an abusive one.

Grounded in the spiritual and moral richness of their own faith traditions, religious leaders can help transform cultures of violence into cultures of healing and reconciliation, one person at a time. Tips for listening and talking to violence against women survivors can be a tool to help in facilitating that process of healing.





## TOOL: Tips for Listening and Talking to Violence Against Women Survivors

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- **Confidentiality and Disclosure:** A survivor must be completely clear that it's her choice what she wants to share, knowing that the information will remain completely confidential. Disclosing is a very difficult step to take and power shifts when information is shared. The listener should remind the survivor of both risks and benefits of sharing when she is deciding how much to disclose and to whom.
- **Concerns:** Consider some of the major concerns survivors may have when disclosing information and acknowledge them in the conversation. These concerns include, but are certainly not restricted to, fear of shame and social stigma, concern about safety, damage to one's identity in recognizing what happened to them and loss of control from sharing their story.
- **Support:** A survivor may be feeling a range of complicated and intense emotions, such as fear, anger, anxiety, guilt, shame, vulnerability, denial, depression, powerlessness or guilt. It is useful to identify these feelings and also to try to help counteract them. Tell her that she has been through an extremely upsetting and frightening experience, and assure her that she is not to blame for what happened and that she is in a safe place now.
- **Non-Judgmental Listening:** The listener may have his or her own thoughts about what has happened to the survivor, what they have done in response, etc. but it is crucial to reserve that judgment. Listening is a very meaningful act and for a survivor to just be heard without someone giving their opinion is hugely beneficial for them. Put the power in their hands as much as possible and be there for them as a support.
- **Do:** Believe the survivor's story, assure the survivor of divine love and presence, respect the survivor's choices, help the survivor with any religious concerns, pray with the survivor if she wants and give the survivor referral information so she knows what further services are available to her.
- **Don't:** Don't tell the survivor what to do, don't blame the survivor for the violence, don't encourage the survivor to forgive her abuser, don't allow the survivor to become too dependent on the listener and don't do nothing—religious leaders have tremendous potential to be a positive force in her recovery.

## Addressing Justice: Ending Impunity

### What Can Religious Leaders Do About Perpetrators of Violence Against Women?

Religions recognize human rights of every individual with a nucleus to values, duties and responsibilities. These include the need to promote justice and provide redress so that individuals can be protected and perpetrators of violence can be held accountable and sanctioned. Religious institutions have sometimes limited the scope for achieving justice when nobody is called to account for the suffering of women and girls who experience violence.

- **Take a strong stance:** Faith leaders know not to condone any act of violence against women but rather to take necessary steps to lead perpetrators on a path toward rehabilitation.
- **Preserve religion as a source for good:** Make clear that violence against women is never tolerated by any sacred text or faith tradition and be part of the transformation of perpetrators of these crimes into agents for social good.
- **Connect with rehabilitation agencies or organizations:** Perpetrators may require professional assistance beyond what religious leaders are trained to provide.

Referring individuals to effective rehabilitation centers is important so that perpetrators of violence against women do not become repeat offenders.

- **Call the government to take action:** Build alliances with other organizations and even other faith communities and then encourage the government to take action regarding perpetrators and provide serious rehabilitation to prevent future cases.

Actions to ensure punitive consequences of violators enhance security not only for individuals, but for the entire community, because it proves that victims will be protected and perpetrators of violence against women will be caught, tried and punished. Quotes from different faiths condemning the violation of women's rights may be used to demonstrate the multi-faith commitment to upholding women's rights and the need to punish perpetrators. The following quotes from faith leaders can help break the silence and stigma surrounding violence against women.



## TOOL: Voices of Faith to Break the Silence

“For too long, religious leaders and individual people of faith have been silent before the facts of violence against women. It is time to break the silence and act. All people of faith are called to say NO to violence against women and girls.”

—Ven. Dr. Grace Chung Lee, President,  
Won Buddhist International  
in Korea and World Council Member of  
*Religions for Peace*

“I have learned some major lessons, as a man of faith, regarding the suffering of the women with whom we work and this has led me to reaffirm my commitment to ensuring that violence practices are not allowed to spread in our society and to ensure that guarantees and justice are available for women. I consider that this sensitivity for the suffering of women should become a hallmark of faith-based communities. We are called upon to take a stand in our efforts to assist those who suffer, and to pool our resources to ensure that the elimination of violence against women is uppermost in the agenda of the world’s communities. It is time to eliminate all kinds of violence against women.”

—Msgr. Hector Fabio Henao,  
Coordinator of the Justice,  
Peace and Reconciliation Team of Caritas  
in Latin America

“While as people of faith we hold divergent opinions on a wide range of issues, today we proclaim with one voice that violence against women exists in all our communities and is intolerable.”

—Rev. Marie Fortune,  
founder of Faith Trust Institute

“How dare we, who are the sons and daughters of prophets, not add our loudest voices to this debate and bring our texts and traditions into the fray of finding solutions to protecting women from violence and rape?”

— Rabbi Steve Gutow, Executive Director,  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs

“We have been given a mandate from our creator to live in peace as men and women. If the fate of the world is what it is today we have failed. Somehow, men have not learned to treat women in the light of God’s mercy.”

—Imam Johari Abdul Malik,  
Dar Al Hijrah Islamic Center,  
Interfaith Conference of  
Metropolitan Washington

“Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavor will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge.”

—Baha’í Universal House of Justice

“Man and woman, equal in dignity, are called to enrich themselves mutually in communion and collaboration, not only in matrimony and in the family, but also in society and all of its dimensions.”

—Pope Benedict XVI

# Partnering with the Media

Taking advantage of the media is vital in any successful advocacy and public awareness campaign. Religious leaders can raise awareness about violence against women by informing the media what people of faith are doing to prevent and eliminate this crime. Media coverage of your community's actions will both increase public knowledge about violence against women, as well as inspire others to get involved.

- **Encourage the media to cover inter-religious events or special worship services:** Religious leaders should include media presence to raise more awareness as long as people feel comfortable. They can inform the media that the religious community is welcoming and supportive for violence against women survivors and their families.
- **Announce upcoming events or campaigns:** Faith communities can invite reporters to cover their events or to report on the particular concerns in their specific community. Coverage may be through print press as well as radio or television interviews/spots.
- **Write editorials and letters:** Religious leaders can use print to highlight and reflect on the known statistics related to violence against women in their community. They can also circulate a press release when they join civil society campaigns to prevent and eradicate violence against women.
- **Invite local artists to reflect on this issue:** There are creative ways to express the issues related to violence against women, through songs, paintings, poetry, dance, etc. Encourage the media to cover these performances.

### Things to Keep in Mind

- Many religious communities have their own newsletters or other media. They can be an effective means of outreach in addition to public or secular media.
- Members of a given religious community may have experience working with the media. Draw on their expertise when planning media outreach.
- Readers, viewers and listeners are the media's primary concern. Keep in mind the various audiences that different media institutions attract when approaching a newspaper, television or radio editor with a story.
- Stress the positive news about religious communities working together to defend and support the well-being of all women and men. Violence against women is an intense and devastating issue, and it is important to communicate that hope and healing are possible.

Publicizing the efforts of people of faith to end violence against women helps to restore religion as a source for good and encourages others to join in this pressing work as well. Religious communities can draw attention to their commitment to end violence against women using the following Inter-Faith Pledge. The Inter-Faith Pledge may be used to collect signatures and sent to the media to demonstrate support for ending violence.



## **TOOL: Inter-Faith Pledge on Restoring Dignity— End Violence Against Women**

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### **Inter-Faith Pledge**

We—religious leaders, men and women of faith from all regions of the world—pledge our commitment, spiritual leadership and capacities to intensify our role in ending violence against women and girls.

United by one common truth – that violence against women and girls is a violation of the human rights and dignity of one half of humanity, and is contrary to the core values of all faiths – we pledge to work within our own religions, as well as across the diverse spectrum of faiths, to restore dignity by preventing and eliminating all forms of violence against women.

We aspire to achieve this by:

- Speaking out against violence against women and girls in our sermons and religious instruction, emphasizing teachings on the importance of equality and respectful treatment of women and girls.
- Reaching out to men of all ages in our constituencies, to encourage them to take a firm stand against violence against women and girls.
- Providing a safe space for women to come forward and confide in us, without fear of judgment or breach of confidentiality, and lend our support in enabling them to break their silence and to access safe haven and protection, health services and legal redress, as well as educational, economic and other supports.
- Giving care and support through our communities and the networks of health services we offer, including in humanitarian situations, to ensure that women and girl survivors of rape and other forms of violence receive compassionate and prompt care, including community outreach to prevent and reduce stigma and discrimination.

We resolve to make violence against women and girls history, so that future generations of young women and young men can grow up in harmony, non-violence and peace.

Affirming that violence against women and girls is a violation of the human rights and dignity of one half of humanity and is contrary to the core values of all faiths, we are unified in our pledge to Restore Dignity and end violence against women.

Please add my name in solidarity to the Interfaith Pledge on Restoring Dignity.

Signed,

# Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to develop effective and sustainable responses to violence against women, it is important for religious leaders and communities to take deliberate actions to monitor and evaluate violence against women-related programs. This can help track progress in the areas of prevention, care and support as well as determine areas and strategies for improvement. Religious leaders are also encouraged to make use of the wide range of available materials and resources from organizations with expertise in this subject.

- **Establish a plan for collecting and reporting data:** Determine how the data will be collected and who will be responsible for getting the information and reporting it back to partners, donors, etc.
- **Reference established objectives:** If the community has developed objectives and specific action steps for its violence against women-related activities, these can be the basis for a very simple but effective monitoring tool that can measure whether the activities were actually conducted, how many people participated and whether it achieved the desired result and objective.

- **Incorporate findings into future program planning:** Religious leaders and their communities should identify how the monitoring and evaluation results can best be used to plan future program activities related to violence against women prevention and care for violence against women survivors and perpetrators.
- **Share results with partners:** When a faith community or multi-religious advocacy group receives project funds from external donors related to violence against women responses, the process of monitoring, reporting, and evaluating program activities and their results is absolutely essential. Future funding depends on clear and accurate reporting of successes and challenges.

Monitoring and evaluation ensures that the necessary feedback is gathered that will help faith communities be more successful and effective in their efforts to eradicate violence against women. Creating a plan of action is essential because it ensures that objectives are carefully thought through, that planned activities can meet the objectives and that the activity planned is realistic within a certain time frame and with given resources.



## TOOL: Developing a Plan of Action

Always keep copies of any press coverage, pictures, promotional materials, hand-outs from events or other materials. These will help in monitoring and evaluating, planning future events, and in fundraising and partnership building efforts.

### 1. Where are you now? (Situational Analysis)

This helps examine what is the current local, national or regional situation regarding violence against women. What challenges does your community face in ending violence against women?

### 2. What do you hope to achieve? (Objectives)

Establish concrete objectives to guide your actions. What indicators will you use to measure success? How will you know you've met your objectives?

### 3. How will you get there? (Activities)

What can be done to prevent and create awareness on violence against women? Can you offer care and support to survivors? Brainstorm many different ideas and practical actions. Decide what actions are most feasible, and then create a timeline to begin carrying out your plan of action.

### 4. What do you need? (Resources and Partnerships)

Identify any resources, skills, or training that will help with your action and any partners who can help. Reach out to other organizations—faith based, women's organizations, resource centers, etc—to explore partnership and resource sharing opportunities.

### 5. What might get in the way? (Obstacles)

Identify any obstacles that might prevent your plan of action from being successful. Make plans or strategies on how to overcome these obstacles.

**6. Action:** Start the activities you have planned. Assign tasks to specific people.

### 7. Monitoring and Evaluation:

**Impacts and effects:** What has happened as a result of this activity? Were the established goals met?

**Alternatives:** Are there better ways of achieving the desired result? What difficulties or setbacks were encountered? How can these challenges be addressed in future activities?

**Next steps:** What follow up is needed to build upon this activity? Do participants have clear next steps to take to keep them engaged and active in the campaign? Establish a mechanism for participants to provide feedback on activities and suggestions for future activities.

# Appendix

## Religions for Peace

Founded in 1970, *Religions for Peace* is the largest international coalition of representatives from the world's largest religions dedicated to promoting peace. Respecting religious differences while celebrating our common humanity, *Religions for Peace* is active on every continent and in some of the most troubled areas of the world, creating multi-religious partnerships to confront our most dire issues: stopping war, ending poverty, and protecting the earth.

Religious communities are the largest and best organized civil institutions in the world, claiming the allegiance of billions across race, class, and national divides. These communities have particular cultural understandings, infrastructures, and

resources to get help where it is needed most. At a time in history when religion is viewed increasingly as a source of division and violent conflict, Religion for Peace advances the concern for human flourishing found in all religions. *Religions for Peace* builds peace by working to transform violent conflict, promote just and harmonious societies, advance human development, and protect the earth.

The global *Religions for Peace* network comprises a World Council of senior religious leaders from all regions of the world: more than seventy national and four regional inter-religious bodies, the Global Youth Network and the Global Women of Faith Network.

## Global Women of Faith Network

The *Religions for Peace* **Global Women of Faith Network** allows women from different religions and cultures to coordinate strategies and pool resources and capabilities for cooperative action to achieve results that would be difficult for any single member to accomplish alone. Today, the Global Women of Faith Network is comprised of more than 1,000 Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Indigenous, Sikh and Zoroastrian religious women's organizations. The network operates on the global level, with regional networks in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and the Middle East. National women of faith networks have been launched in more than 70 countries.

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





# Appendix

## Resources

All of these resources are available for download at: <http://wcrp.org/resources/toolkits/index>  
Or you may contact: [GlobalWomenofFaith@religionsforpeace.org](mailto:GlobalWomenofFaith@religionsforpeace.org) to request a copy.

**Religions for Peace Guide to Building Women of Faith Networks.** World Conference of *Religions for Peace* (2009). Available in English.



**Religions for Peace Global Women of Faith Network Plan of Action 2007–2011.** World Conference of *Religions for Peace* (2007). Summary available in French. Offers a framework for developing national, regional and global thematic priorities and action for Women of Faith networks.



**Religions for Peace Strategic Plan, 2007.** World Conference of *Religions for Peace* (2007). Available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. Offers strategic vision, mission and general goals for stabling multi-religious collaboration for common action.



**Religions for Peace – A Guide to Building Inter-religious Councils.** World Conference of *Religions for Peace* (2007). Offers a manual on how to build Inter-religious Councils (IRCs). Pages 25–31 are specifically focused on main-streaming gender in an IRC.



**Faith in Action: Working Towards the Millennium Development Goals: An Action Toolkit for Religious Leaders and Communities.** World Conference of *Religions for Peace*. Available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.



**Women of Faith Transforming Conflict: A Multi-Religious Training Manual.** World Conference of *Religions for Peace* (2004). Offers insights for readers who want to learn more about the controversial and often contentious role of women and religion in situations of conflict. It provides step-by-step sessions for trainers working on three issues: (1) conflict transformation; (2) communication and leadership skills; and (3) media and advocacy.



**Religious Women, Armed Conflict: Multiple Challenges, Unique Opportunities.** World Conference of *Religions for Peace* (2002). Provides a political analysis of the role of religion and women of faith in transforming conflicts around the world. Includes perspectives from UN agencies and case studies narrated by women of faith.



**A Woman's Place: Religious Women as Public Actors.** World Conference of *Religions for Peace* (2001). This book describes the religious mandates for women to play an active public role mirrored through different traditions in the voices of women of faith from around the world.



**Mosaic – the Women of Faith Newsletter.** Women of Faith Networks are strongly encouraged to submit reports and exciting news for publication in the Religions for Peace Global Women of Faith Newsletter, Mosaic. To review past Mosaic newsletters, please visit the *Religions for Peace* website: <http://www.religionsforpeace.org/news/newsletters/index>



# Appendix

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> UNIFEM Stop Violence Against Women. [http://www.stop-VAW.org/Prevalence\\_of\\_Domestic\\_Violence.html](http://www.stop-VAW.org/Prevalence_of_Domestic_Violence.html).
- <sup>2</sup> World Health Organization Sixty-First World Health Assembly. Female Genital Mutilation. A61/11. 20 March 2008.
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- <sup>6</sup> UN.GIFT: Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking. [http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues\\_doc/labour/Forced\\_labour/HUMAN\\_TRAFFICKING\\_-\\_THE\\_FACTS\\_-\\_final.pdf](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/labour/Forced_labour/HUMAN_TRAFFICKING_-_THE_FACTS_-_final.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> Gender-Based Violence-Care & Protection of Children in Emergencies: A Field Guide, Save the Children (2004)
- <sup>8</sup> Vlachova, BIASON (editors). Women in an Insecure World. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. 2005.



# Appendix

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