

**C4D IN ECD THROUGH FAITH BASED INTERVENTIONS  
ACROSS ALL BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES, SEM LEVELS AND C4D PLATFORMS**

**Adapting Religious Rituals to Promote Demand For Services (Antenatal Care )  
Ghana Council of Champions <sup>1</sup>**

The Council of Champions (CoC) intervention - part of a broader program that Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Ghana Health Service implemented between 2011 and 2015 on child health - was aimed at expanding the demand for services among pregnant women, mothers and infants, in order to reduce the rate of maternal and newborn diseases and deaths. Evidence collected through extensive research was used to design the Social and Behavior Change (SBC) strategy, demonstrating that background evidence must be considered a vital part of the overall intervention. The CoC intervention addressed Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) behaviors in village consultations with faith (Islamic and Protestant) leaders, village chiefs and traditional medical practitioners, as well as female leaders. One particular example was the modification, encouraged by the CoC, of a ceremony that was conducted at around the four-month stage of a pregnancy in which the pregnancy was announced to the community. This had discouraged women from seeking ante-natal care (ANC) until after the ceremony took place, whereas good practices for ANC would encourage care at an earlier stage of the pregnancy. An evaluation test conducted after 1,5 years of implementation showed that 24% more women in the intervention area were accessing early ANC, whereas the same indicator had decreased by 21,5% in the control area.<sup>2</sup> However, other factors, e.g. limited availability of services in the control area, might also have contributed to this difference.<sup>3</sup>

**Faith-Based Actors Promoting Positive Caregiving Practices Through Home Visits  
and Multi-Media Support for Stunting Reduction in Rwanda**

**Integrated Care Groups<sup>4</sup>**

In Rwanda, the Tangiraneza/Start Well project engaged 589 religious leaders, at local and more senior levels, from thirteen denominations. World Relief's Integrated Care Group (ICG) model involving religious leaders, uses monthly homes visits and community meetings led by ICG members to convey messages about health and nutrition for children.<sup>5</sup> The groups also include community health workers, heads of villages, and leaders from women's groups, hygiene groups, and local social affairs leaders. Each member visits 10 homes per month and "Nutrition Weeks" are held by the groups to educate with messaging on nutrition for children. Religious leaders involved in the ICGs were also encouraged to have outreach events in their churches. The household visits resulted in increased exposure of households to

<sup>1</sup> John Hembling, Elena McEwan, Mohammed Ali, Anna Passaniti, Paul Armah Aryee & Mahama Saaka, "Mobilising faith-based and lay leaders to address antenatal care outcomes in northern Ghana," *Development in Practice* 27, no. 5 (July 21, 2017): 634-645, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2017.1327028>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 640.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 642.

<sup>4</sup> See [https://www.mcsprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/WRC\\_Rwanda\\_FE.pdf](https://www.mcsprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/WRC_Rwanda_FE.pdf); <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4556014/>; and <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4570011/>.

<sup>5</sup> Forthcoming in USAID Faith-Based and Community Initiatives report.

childcare messaging, with 39% reporting that they had received messaging on child caregiving from their church in one district.

#### Reduction of stunting through family empowerment<sup>6</sup>

In Rwanda, UNICEF has also worked with religious leaders and networks to build their capacity on stunting prevention. 40 religious leaders, 160 religious volunteers and 40 religious couple counselors took part in the project, learning and raising awareness about key family practices. The messages were also disseminated through weekly religious services, religious schools and radio stations. As a result, after 1 year of the program's implementation, a longitudinal cohort study found that indicators related to stunting prevention were showing improvement in comparison to the control group. For instance, storing water in closed containers reached 52% in the intervention districts, as opposed to 44% in the control group.<sup>7</sup>

### FAITH BASED EFFORTS TO ADDRESS DISCRIMINATION AND HARMFUL SOCIAL NORMS

Efforts with faith communities can also be multi-sectoral and highly integrated. One of the main ways that faith engagement encourages multi-dimensional approaches is the inclusion of psychosocial efforts from faith actors that communicate acceptance and the abandonment of stigma to their broader community. For example, in Northern Uganda, traditional healers have led special ceremonies combining cleansing rituals and prayers aimed at facilitating the reintegration in the community of young wives of former combatants in a post-conflict context.<sup>8</sup> In Cambodia, monks often spread messages to lift the stigma attached to HIV and to promote prevention during sermons.<sup>9</sup> They also held meetings with members of the community who were thought to fuel discriminatory attitudes, and supported HIV-infected people at risk of mental health issues through home visits and meditations at the pagoda.<sup>10</sup>

#### Islamic Relief's Integrated GBV and CP Program in Mali, Niger, and Pakistan<sup>11</sup>

Islamic Relief have adapted the Channels of Hope model for their integrated gender-based violence and child protection (CP) programming in Mali, Pakistan, and Niger. They created CHATs for GBV and CP champions to raise awareness and share messages around prevention of abuse. There were clear examples of religious leaders, who were also CHAT members, taking these messages back to their communities and preaching in sermons about Islamic perspectives on parental skills, child rights, and positive disciplinary measures for children. As discussed in the section on Humanitarian Social and

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Region. "C4D Works! Partnering with religious leaders in Rwanda to Accelerate stunting reduction through family empowerment."

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Neil Boothby, Mike Wessells, John Williamson, Gillian Huebner, Kelly Canter, Eduardo Garcia Rolland, Vesna Kutlesic, Farah Bader, Lena Diaw, Maya Levine, Anita Malley, Kathleen Michels, Sonali Pateli, Tanya Rasa, Fred Ssewamala and Vicki Walker, "What are the most effective early response strategies and interventions to assess and address the immediate needs of children outside of family care?" *Child Abuse & Neglect* 36 (2012): 711–721, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2012.09.004>.

<sup>9</sup> "National Review of Faith-Based Responses to HIV in Cambodia. A joint initiative of the National AIDS Authority and the Ministry of Cult and Religion," (2011), <https://jilifc.com/resources/national-review-faith-based-responses-hiv-cambodia/>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Najah Almgahed, Iman Pertek, and Neelam Fida, "An Integrated Approach to Gender Based Violence and Child Protection" (Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2017), <https://jilifc.com/resources/integrating-protection-integrated-approach-gender-based-violence-child-protection/>.

Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) interventions, the CoH model was also adapted by World Vision to respond to the Ebola public health emergency.

Initiatives aimed at changing social norms concerning delicate issues such as FGM can benefit from the use of a combination of communication tools and engagement strategies. A report commissioned by Tearfund discusses the different roles played by the church to end or fight FGM in Tanzania.<sup>12</sup> In one instance, these included the creation of an alternative rite of passage held in a separate location as a sort of camp for girls. This new ritual had some elements in common with the FGM ceremonies, facilitated the creation of a non-FGM “peer group,” and was organized with the engagement of a traditional community leader who, subsequently, abandoned his involvement in FGM.<sup>13</sup> UNICEF’s Saleema campaign against FGM in Sudan engages local religious leaders and involves the use of mass media but also of community fora, theatre, music, and headscarves worn by supporters of the campaign to stimulate community dialogue.<sup>14</sup> In this context, celebrations marking the abandonment of FGM practices help communities develop a sense of ownership towards the change, and community-level - as opposed to individual - shifts in attitude are supported.<sup>15</sup>

In Uganda, the Catholic Church, Raising Voices (an NGO for women’s rights) and Trócaire (the Irish branch of Caritas) have developed a partnership to prevent domestic violence and HIV in a national campaign during Advent. Activities included:

- *“The distribution of six million prayer cards with a customized Advent prayer, which explicitly but appropriately addressed the prevention of violence in the family.*
- *The distribution of customized homily notes for all Catholic priests in Uganda to construct their weekly sermons during mass.*
- *Posters designed to link liturgy to key campaign messages, sent to the 25,000 Catholic churches across all 19 dioceses.*
- *The training of all Ugandan bishops, Catholic Women’s Bureaus, Catholic Women’s Guilds, as well as all national and diocesan pastoral coordinators—for facilitating dialogue about violence prevention and conducting complimentary initiatives within their dioceses.*
- *The training of 65 personnel from nine Catholic radio stations who would be backing the campaign through programs on domestic violence.”<sup>16</sup>*

Their approach, called SASA!, focuses on activism, using the media for advocacy, using creative and fun communication tools such as posters and comics, and increasing training opportunities for people. Their tools, such as a documentary film with a discussion guide, toolkits for use in schools, case studies, and

---

<sup>12</sup> Waritay, Johanna and Dr Ann-Marie Wilson, “Working to end female genital mutilation and cutting in Tanzania. The role and response of the church,” Report commissioned by Tearfund, (2014), <https://jiliflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Tanzania-FGM-Report-FINAL-VERSION-Low-Res-1.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF, “Saleema Initiative,” (2015), [https://www.unicef.org/sudan/protection\\_6092.html](https://www.unicef.org/sudan/protection_6092.html); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7gYlxKn1wQ>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Trócaire and Raising Voices, “Through the Voice of Faith: learnings to inspire domestic violence prevention through faith institutions,” (2013), <http://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/downloads/resources/ThroughtheVoiceofFaithFINALFeb2013.pdf>.

other reports can be found online and offers a broad range of examples of how to use toolkits and interactive materials to engage groups of people, such as congregations, to reduce domestic violence.<sup>17</sup>

Understanding not only inter-religious difference, but also inter-denominational differences can help identifying specific social norms and address gaps in knowledge. For example, the fast-growing Apostolic community in Zimbabwe relies on their own health system and healing practices, going as far as banning from the church those who are seen accessing healthcare services. As a result, Apostolic households showed various reproductive, maternal, newborn child and adolescent health indicators below national average.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, a study revealed that young Apostolic women were also four times as likely to marry as teenagers compared to Protestant denominations,<sup>19</sup> with early marriage highly increasing the likelihood of HIV infection, and medical testing and treating being discouraged according to Apostolic social norm.<sup>20</sup> A UNICEF C4D program called “Apostolic Maternal Empowerment and Newborn Intervention” addressed some of these social norms through collaboration with local faith leaders on capacity building, advocacy, and community interventions such as the “Gardens,” where health workers and Apostolic women were able to meet outside healthcare facilities. The program resulted in a shrinking resistance to access healthcare services, including child vaccination.<sup>21</sup>

## FAITH BASED ENGAGEMENT ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND PREPAREDNESS

Research on faith and disaster risk reduction has so far often tied religious belief to fatalistic social attitudes and decision-making. There is evidence to show that disaster- and risk-related perceptions and, subsequently, behaviors are deeply connected to people’s beliefs and traditions.<sup>22</sup> However, as Schipper puts it, “relatively rapid evolution of belief systems are possible, on their own, or when triggered by something external,”<sup>23</sup> and religious belief does not necessarily lead to a fatalistic attitude in which people take no action in the face of god(s) divine interventions. There are now several efforts by FBOs to work with religious leaders to encourage disaster risk reduction and preparedness approaches that require action on the part of religious communities and consequent behavior changes.<sup>24</sup> In particular, there is documentation that faith actors can play a key role in promoting and carrying out emergency mobilization through spreading crisis/evacuation messages, for instance through “phone trees.”<sup>25</sup> What

---

<sup>17</sup> See <http://raisingvoices.org/resources/>

<sup>18</sup> UNICEF “Apostolic Maternal and Newborn Intervention (AMENI) Model: Improving Maternal and Newborn Child Health Outcomes among Apostolic Religious Groups in Zimbabwe, Harare,” Report by Brian Maguranyanga and Geoffrey Feltoe (2015), [https://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/Apostolic\\_Maternal\\_Empowerment.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/Apostolic_Maternal_Empowerment.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Denise D. Hallfors, Hyunsan Cho, Bonita J. Iritani, John Mapfumo, Elias Mpfu, Winnie K. Luseno and James January, “Preventing HIV by Providing Support for Orphan Girls to Stay in School: Does Religion Matter?,” *Ethnicity & Health* 18, no. 1 (February 2013): 53–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2012.694068>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Greg Bankof, “In the Eye of the Storm: The Social Construction of the Forces of Nature and the Climatic and Seismic Construction of God in the Philippines.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 35, n. 1. (2004): 91-111, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463404000050>.

<sup>23</sup> E. Lisa F. Schipper, “Religion and belief systems: Drivers of vulnerability, entry points for resilience building?” in Krüger et al. (eds). *Cultures and Disasters: Understanding Cultural Framings in Disaster Risk Reduction*. (Routledge, 2015). ISBN 978-1-317-75463-3.

<sup>24</sup> For example, <https://jiliflc.com/2018/04/mobilisation-of-local-faith-communities-webinar/>.

<sup>25</sup> David P. Eisenman, Kristina M. Cordasco, Steve Asch, Joya F. Golden and Deborah Glik, “Disaster Planning and Risk Communication With Vulnerable Communities: Lessons From Hurricane Katrina,” *American Journal of Public Health* 97, supplement 1. (2007): S109–S115. DOI: [10.2105/AJPH.2005.084335](https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2005.084335).

is even more relevant to SBCC is that local faith actors can greatly contribute to the development of awareness-raising, preparedness and risk-reduction initiatives.<sup>26</sup> For instance, Tearfund work in several countries on disaster risk reduction from a Christian perspective, and have developed a Participatory Assessment of Disaster Risk methodology that involves family and community contingency planning, but also advocacy activities.<sup>27</sup>

Episcopal Relief and Development has also created a toolkit called “Pastors and Disasters.”<sup>28</sup> There is a large field of expertise in the role of religious actors as peacebuilders, such as their ability to act as early warning mechanisms<sup>29</sup> and then mediate<sup>30</sup> between conflicting parties at an early stage to prevent or end violence before it escalates.<sup>31</sup> There are institutions and networks dedicated to this field of study such as the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers and the work on religion and peace by the United States Institute of Peace. However, the specific role of religious leaders to create social and behavior change for children is more difficult to isolate as all peacebuilding work aims to change attitudes and behaviors away from hate and exclusion towards cohesion and inclusion. One example of work with children to encourage interfaith and intercultural understanding for social cohesion is Learning to Live Together,<sup>32</sup> an initiative by Arigatou International and the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), supported by UNESCO and UNICEF. Implemented in several different contexts and in both formal and informal educational settings, the program engages children and adolescents in ethics education workshops aimed at nurturing values like respect, empathy, responsibility and reconciliation, in relation to children’s spirituality and in playful and creative environments.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Alastair Ager, “Local faith communities and the promotion of resilience in humanitarian situations: a scoping study,” Working Paper. Refugee Studies Centre, (2013), <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/local-faith-communities-and-the-promotion-of-resilience-in-humanitarian-situations-a-scoping-study>.

<sup>27</sup> Tearfund Learn, “Disaster Risk Reduction,” [https://learn.tearfund.org/en/themes/disasters/disaster\\_risk\\_reduction\\_drr/](https://learn.tearfund.org/en/themes/disasters/disaster_risk_reduction_drr/); [https://learn.tearfund.org/~media/files/tilz/publications/roots/english/disaster/roots\\_9\\_reducing\\_risk\\_of\\_disaster.pdf](https://learn.tearfund.org/~media/files/tilz/publications/roots/english/disaster/roots_9_reducing_risk_of_disaster.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Episcopal Relief & Development, “Pastors and Disasters: A Toolkit for Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction & Management for members and partners of the Anglican relief and development community,” (2014) [http://www.episcopalrelief.org/uploaded/files/What-We-Do/DRR-Toolkit/Pastors\\_and\\_Disasters\\_FINAL\\_US.pdf](http://www.episcopalrelief.org/uploaded/files/What-We-Do/DRR-Toolkit/Pastors_and_Disasters_FINAL_US.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Olumuyiwa Amao, Dorcas Ettang, Nwabufo Okeke Uzodike and Clementine Tugizamana, “Revisiting the Utility of the Early Warning and Early Response Mechanisms in Africa: Any Role for Civil Society?,” *Peace and Conflict Review* 8, no. 1 (February 2014): 77-97.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264046392\\_Revisiting\\_the\\_Utility\\_of\\_the\\_Early\\_Warning\\_and\\_Early\\_Response\\_Mechanisms\\_in\\_Africa\\_Any\\_Role\\_for\\_Civil\\_Society](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264046392_Revisiting_the_Utility_of_the_Early_Warning_and_Early_Response_Mechanisms_in_Africa_Any_Role_for_Civil_Society).

<sup>30</sup> Jacob Bercovitch and Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, “Religion and Mediation: The Role of Faith-Based Actors in International Conflict Resolution,” *International Negotiation* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 175–204, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157180609X406562>.

<sup>31</sup> For example, IPI, “Preventing Conflicts in Africa: Early Warning and Response,” (2012): 5.

[https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi\\_e\\_pub\\_preventing\\_conflicts.pdf](https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi_e_pub_preventing_conflicts.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children Global Network of Religions for Children, Arigatou Foundation, “Learning to Live Together An Intercultural and Interfaith Programme for Ethics Education,” (2008), ISBN: 978-92-806-4288-9. <https://ethicseducationforchildren.org/images/zdocs/Learning-to-Live-Together-En.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.