A Mapping of Faith-based Responses to Violence against Women and Girls in the Asia-Pacific Region

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BREAKTHROUGH

World Vision

UNFPA

Acknowledgements

The views expressed in the report are those of the consultants and, where indicated, of the participating faith-based organizations. They should not be taken to reflect, in whole or in part, those of UNFPA, World Vision Australia, or the Asia-Pacific Women Faith and Development Alliance.

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Preface

Violence against women constitutes "any act of gender based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.[1]" It is a consequence of gender inequality and discrimination and is shaped by the interaction of a wide range of social, cultural, economic and political factors. By intention or effect, violence against women serves to perpetuate male power and control and is sustained by a culture of silence, and denial of the seriousness of the physical and psychological consequences of abuse.

With a mandate to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights, UNFPA recognizes that violence against women is inextricably linked to gender-based inequalities and puts every effort into breaking the silence and ensuring that the voices of women are heard. The Fund also works to change the paradigm of masculinity that allows for the resolution of conflict through violence.

For many years UNFPA has recognized the important role that faith-based organizations have traditionally played in providing critical health and welfare services and other forms of development support, as well as their existing and potential outreach as agents for change in supporting efforts to achieve the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). At national level UNFPA has partnered with faith-based organizations in many countries, most frequently to promote family planning and maternal health and, in some cases, to address violence against women.

UNFPA is aware that some faith-based organizations are supporting key interventions to address violence against women and girls, although there is limited information available on the work being done at local levels through networks of faith practitioners. Aware of the significant body of knowledge and expertise available in the region to address violence against women and girls, UNFPA was interested to explore the extent to which there are commonalities between approaches adopted by faith-based and secular organizations, and to understand better some of the challenges facing faith-based organizations in addressing the issue.

Sharing a commitment to gender equality, women's empowerment and the well-being of women and girls, in 2010 UNFPA and the Asia-Pacific Women, Faith and Development Alliance (AP-WFDA)2 collaborated on this initiative to identify and document the efforts of selected faith-based organizations to address violence against women and girls in the Pacific, South Asia and South-East Asia sub-regions. This collaboration between UNFPA and the AP-WFDA thus emerged from a shared recognition that

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1 General Assembly resolution 48/104

2 The Asia-Pacific Women, Faith and Development Alliance was launched on 2 December 2009 at the 'Asia-Pacific Breakthrough' in Melbourne, Australia. Planned by the AP-WFDA partner organisations, this event resulted in over a billion dollars (AUD) being committed to programmes to benefit women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region. The launch of AP-WDFA followed the creation of a similar alliance in the US in April 2008.

faith plays a significant part in the lives of many people in the region, and that faith-based organizations have a wealth of experience in addressing the practical, as well as the spiritual needs of their constituencies.

Under the management of World Vision Australia (a member of the AP-WFDA), and guided jointly by a Steering Committee composed of representatives of AP-WFDA member organizations and UNFPA, a mapping of the work being undertaken by selected FBOs to address violence against women and girls was conducted. Faith-based organizations that were already known to be working within the broad framework of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW) were invited to participate in the mapping exercise.

Through an on-line survey targeting faith-based organizations known to UNFPA and AP-WFDA members, information was gathered on the broad range of approaches faith-based organizations have adopted to address violence against women and girls, and the challenges they face in doing this. The mapping was not intended to assess the quality or scope of the faith-based responses to addressing violence, but rather to obtain a 'snapshot' of the range of approaches adopted. Respondents were also invited to suggest solutions that they thought might help to improve the scope and quality of their work.

The mapping was an ambitious exercise given the size of the region and the time and resources available. An on-line survey was considered to be the tool most likely to reach targeted organizations, although it was recognised that this might limit participation to those with internet access and English language fluency. Given the sensitivity of the issue, some organizations preferred that their responses be confidential.

The mapping shows that there is sub-regional diversity between the number of faith-based organizations addressing violence against women and girls, the ways in which they are responding, and the kinds of issues they are addressing, as well as the different contexts in which they are operating. Due to the culture of silence around violence against women and girls, the issue is sensitive in any context. Many faith-based organizations struggle with the fact that oppressive cultural practices are frequently conflated with religion in policy discussions. Misunderstood or differently interpreted religious viewpoints are also challenges in some instances.
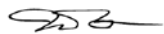
Several of the responses illustrate the relative isolation within which some of the participating faith-based organizations appear to operate. Many do not belong to broader networks of faith partnerships or have direct contact with secular organizations addressing violence against women and girls. Most mentioned being constrained by the lack of faith-contextualised materials addressing violence issues. Limited technical capacity and resource constraints were also frequently mentioned.

There is clearly potential for greater collaboration, although assessment of and capacity building in conceptual clarity and positioning on issues of equity and rights are essential pre-requisites for partnerships with faith-based organizations to ensure common understanding. There is scope however for secular women's organizations and technical agencies to provide skills and knowledge to enhance the work of those faith-based organizations that show a strong commitment to address violence whilst, reciprocally, themselves benefiting from the networks and outreach of faith organizations.

Progressive theologians and religious entities could assist in developing training materials and messages that promote the rights of women and girls to freedom from violence in language based on faith texts that is appropriate and acceptable to individual faiths. Larger faith-based organizations with experience of working at global and regional levels - and familiar with negotiating the 'space' of faith organizations within the secular

development context - could provide guidance and support to smaller organizations. Services provided by some faith-based organizations could contribute to strengthening multi-sectoral responses to violence against women and girls at community level, provided they meet globally accepted criteria. The reach and influence of faith-based organizations could be a significant asset to progressing the reduction of violence against women and girls.

The three-way partnership between UNFPA, the AP-WFDA and World Vision Australia, has been fruitful. It is a positive example of a partnership between secular and faith-based organizations. The two consultants engaged to conduct the mapping have documented a broad range of information on the work being done by faith-based organizations to address violence against women and girls, and have proposed a number of recommendations. We hope that the report will inspire partners – both faith-based and secular - to recognise the potential for further collaboration to address and strengthen the response to violence against women and girls. The door is now opened for further analysis, and for possibilities for networking and collaboration, particularly at sub-regional level.

Nobuko Horibe

UNFPA Asia Pacific
Regional Director

Kerin Ord

Head of International Programs,
World Vision Australia

Chair, Asia-Pacific Women, Faith and
Development Alliance

Acronyms

AFGA	Afghanistan Family Guidance Association
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
AMAN	Asian Muslim Action Network
AOL	Art of Living Foundation
AP-WFDA	Asia-Pacific Women, Faith & Development Alliance
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AusAID	Australian Government Overseas Aid Program
CBO	Community-based organization
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
COMMIT	The Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking
FBO	Faith-based organization
FPAB	The Family Planning Association of Bangladesh
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICRW	The International Center for Research on Women
ILO	International Labour Organization
INCLEN	International Clinical Epidemiologists Network
ISPCAN	International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
LP3A-P	Lembaga Pengkajian Pemberdayaan Perempuan Anak Papua
MACCA	Masjid Council for Community Advancement
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIRN-Nepal	National Inter-Religious Network on Violence Against Women-Nepal
RISEAP	Regional Islamic Da'wah Council for Southeast Asia and the Pacific
SSA	Shanti Sewa Ashram
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programmme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programmme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNiTE	United Nations Secretary-General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women
UNIW	Union of NGOs in the Islamic World
UNRISD	The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
WAMY	World Assembly of Muslim Youth
WCC	World Council of Churches
WERC	Women's Education and Research Centre
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a mapping initiative that aimed to capture how faith-based organizations respond to violence against women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region. As a collaborative initiative between UNFPA and the Asia-Pacific Women Faith and Development Alliance (AP-WFDA), it sought to identify examples of strategies used by faith-based organizations. The report brings together the experiences of 58 organizations collected through an online survey, supplemented by in-depth interviews conducted with selected agencies. Importantly, the survey results represent only a small proportion of the faith-based organizations addressing violence against women and girls across the region.

Distinguishing between faith and secular responses to violence against women and girls might imply an incompatibility of approaches. The findings suggest however that the responses are often very similar. More than half of the participating organizations explicitly cited rights-based international frameworks as key sources of guidance. Many of the participating faith-based organizations expressed their interest in partnering with UN agencies, other secular organizations, and organizations of the same and other faiths. Increasing dialogue and collaboration, they believe, would increase their effectiveness to respond to violence against women and girls.

Forms of violence addressed by faith-based organizations

Across the Asia-Pacific region, domestic violence is the most prevalent form of violence affecting women and girls. Responding to this was reported as a priority issue by faith-based organizations across all three sub-regions.

Organizations in the Pacific reported specifically responding to physical abuse, pregnancy-related violence, and sexual violence and rape. Although there is much variance within Pacific countries and territories, in general, violence against women and girls is considered relatively high, with domestic and sexual violence and abuse particularly prevalent.

In South Asia, three quarters of the survey participants cited the prevention of domestic violence as their most frequent response. In addition, South Asian countries face forms of violence not found universally: namely acid burning, 'honor killings', immolation and dowry-related violence, which some of the organizations address in their work.

Faith-based organizations showed that they do not shy away from responding to large-scale complex national and international issues such as trafficking, particularly among those from the South-East Asia and South Asia regions. Almost 70 per cent of the organizations based in South-East Asia indicated that they worked to prevent trafficking, and a quarter provided support to women and girls affected by trafficking. Among South Asian organizations, 60 per cent worked to *prevent* trafficking, and 35 per cent implemented actions responding to women and girls *affected by* trafficking.

Overall, organizations cited prevention activities more often than the provision of *support* to survivors of violence. For some this situation reflected a lack of financial resources to provide direct services. There were also however examples of faith-based organizations providing counseling, and managing shelters for women, such as the House of Sarah in Fiji which supports survivors of violence. Other organizations made referrals to external service providers, rather than providing direct services themselves. Those faith-based organizations that reported providing health services most frequently worked at national level supporting women affected by domestic and/or sexual violence. Other organizations reported providing legal support in such cases. The Masjid Council for Community Advancement (MACCA) in Bangladesh, for example, reported having a legal support department where women can access help provided by lawyers on a voluntary basis. The voluntary nature of organizations such as this often demonstrates the commitment of certain individuals, and this perhaps also explains the emphasis that these organizations place on volunteerism. Several faith-based organizations mentioned that limited financial resources necessitated that they work with volunteers.

Primary targets of faith-based responses

Nearly all participating organizations worked with women and girls 'in general'. Some also targeted specific groups. The Sarvodaya Sharamadana Movement in Sri Lanka, for example, supports teenagers who become pregnant as a result of rape. Other organizations indicated that they work with women and girls affected by HIV, trafficking and disabilities.

A significant proportion (over a third) of participating organizations reported working with sex workers. The majority of these also supported women affected by forced prostitution. This may reflect these organizations' commitment to ending trafficking, rather than being based on an assumption that all prostitution is forced; this issue was not explored in depth however, and the possibility of conflation between trafficking and sex work should be considered. One participating organization, the Oblate Sisters in the Philippines, reported that they work with sex workers without any assumptions being made about whether or not women are forced into prostitution; their remit specifically deters them from persuading women to leave the sex industry.

Rights-based approaches

Overall, the participating organizations demonstrated a high level of awareness of international commitments and national legislation. Any failure to mention these frameworks may reflect the experience of the individuals who completed the survey rather than the organizations' official positions.

Some organizations reported that they used religious references compatible with human rights-based language in their advocacy efforts. For example, faith-based organizations in the Pacific described engagement in public campaigns where they used both faith and rights-based messages.

National and UN frameworks that focus on ending violence were frequently cited by Pacific faith-organizations, demonstrating that they view their own approaches as compatible with secular priorities. In Papua New Guinea, Divine Word University draws on the national strategy "Vision 2050", the National Constitution Preamble that promotes equality and non-discrimination; the Solomon Islands Christian Association draws on the government's national policy on eliminating violence against women.

Six of the 18 South Asia-based organizations cited national or international frameworks that inform their responses to violence against women and girls. These included CEDAW, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Beijing Platform of Action.

Ten of the 23 organizations based in South-East Asia cited national and international frameworks as informing their work. Additionally, organizations based in Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand, reported the existence of laws on child protection, the prohibition of sexual violence, and on trafficking, that guide their work. Organizations were also informed by recommendations from UNAIDS, UNFPA and UN Women, and by international commitments such as the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (on women, peace and conflict) and regional frameworks such as COMMIT (Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking).

Interfaith and faith-secular collaboration

Just under half of the organizations from the South Asia and Pacific regions had links with UN agencies, which was considerably more than those from the South-East Asia region where only 17 per cent indicated that they partnered with UN agencies in this work.

Most organizations described having partnered with other faith-based organizations or networks, particularly at local level. In Nepal, more than 25 organizations from Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Bahá'í and Jain faiths had participated in a dialogue on violence against women and girls at national level. An example of secular and faith collaboration was mentioned from Afghanistan, where the Afghanistan Family Guidance Association, a Muslim organization, is accredited to the secular International Planned Parenthood Federation.

The unique strengths of faith-based organizations and religious leaders

Many organizations drew on faith-based sources for their motivation, as well as statements from respected religious leaders. A unique strength of faith leaders and faith-based organizations is that they are perceived as credible structures by their constituencies. Existing networks can thus be used for outreach within faith communities, to provide information and to mobilize congregations. Linked to this is the specific advantage faith leaders have as providers of spiritual guidance. The personal commitment of certain faith leaders was also cited as a particular strength. Some respondents reported that under strong leadership, faith communities assist individuals along the path towards a higher purpose in life. Existing faith can thus be used to motivate change.

Several respondents noted that their faith identity is a strength because of the emphasis on compassion that it brings to their work. Organizations such as the Anglican Association of Women in Fiji, and the Asian Muslim Action Network in Indonesia, described how they have used faith tenets to illustrate that violence against women is unacceptable. Drawing on religious texts and allegorical stories, faith-based organizations have been able to promote messages respecting women's rights.

Some faith-based organizations mentioned that their unique strength was the holistic approach they adopted. They compared this to the approaches used by secular organizations which, they thought, tend to neglect the spiritual side of human nature.

Participating organizations also felt that addressing violence against women and girls from a faith perspective ensures that initiatives are not seen as being imposed by Western countries or foreign or minority interest groups. If the issue is highlighted by faith leaders with whom communities and individuals identify, then the motivation (and sometimes obligation) to listen is greater.

Strong partnerships within their own networks, with secular organizations and with governments, were also frequently mentioned as a strength, particularly where regional issues such as trafficking could be jointly addressed, and where learning from other countries could strengthen local responses.

Challenges faced by faith-based organizations

Respondents, particularly from South-East Asia, emphasized the general contextual challenges they faced, such as conflicting laws within legal systems, and a lack of governmental awareness of the issues around violence against women and girls.

Cultural and gender-related challenges were cited across all three sub-regions, with references made to patriarchy, women's lower social status, and expectations of women's dependence on men. Some organizations acknowledged that the low status of women is also reflected within their faith hierarchies, where it is sometimes reinforced by conservative interpretations of religious doctrine. Some mentioned that their organizational responses to violence against women and girls include actions that might be interpreted as controversial within the conservative hierarchy and doctrine of their own faith. Some felt that religious leaders respect women, but are not ready to openly confront issues affecting them as they lack the confidence and skills to do so.

Suspicion or mistrust by secular organizations had been the experience of some faith-based organizations. Several reported that it is a challenge to work with other organizations, government and non-governmental, given that certain pre-conceived notions appear to exist about faith-based organizations.

Moving forward

Across all three sub-regions, faith-based organizations identified as a priority the need for increased training and skills building for staff. The second priority mentioned was the need for additional resources. Almost all organizations mentioned the need for more faith-oriented, or faith-sensitive materials.

At least 70 per cent of responding organizations across the Asia-Pacific region would like to increase their networking and collaboration with secular agencies; two-thirds want to increase their networking with other faith-based organizations. UN agencies and well-established faith-based organizations could play an important role in supporting those organizations that seek more access to partnerships and networks, and consultative meetings could provide opportunities for information-sharing. In Nepal the collaboration between the National Inter-religious Network on Violence Against Women, the Inter-religious Council and other partners, provides an encouraging example of the process of building inter-faith dialogue.

I Mapping faith-based responses to violence against women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region

1.1 Background

> "Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms... In all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture."
>
> —Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 112

Recognising that faith-based organizations have an important role to play in the response to violence against women and girls, and that many are already responding in diverse ways, UNFPA[3] and the Asia-Pacific Women Faith and Development Alliance (AP-WFDA) agreed to collaborate in a region-wide mapping project.

The aim of the mapping was to gain insight into the range and diversity of faith-based responses to violence against women and girls across the Asia-Pacific region, and to identify shared values and commitments between faith-based organizations and secular organizations addressing the same issues. Organizations were invited to participate through an online survey, in addition to which a sample of organizations was interviewed to gain more qualitative data. By no means giving a comprehensive or definitive account of all faith-based responses in the region, this report provides a picture of the priorities and strategies of the participating organizations. As part of the commitment to ending violence against women and girls, which is shared by both UNFPA and AP-WFDA, the review provided an opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of faith-based organizations and to seek new information about their work.

Distinguishing between faith and secular responses might imply an incompatibility of approaches. However, it would be incorrect to assume that this is always or frequently the case. Faith-inspired values and rights-based approaches share many elements, and are often complementary. Input from the Steering Group convened by AP-WFDA for the mapping, and the faith-based organization which tested the survey tool, indicated that some faith-based organizations may fall into the category of faith and rights bridge builders, despite not using rights-based language. Through this review,

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3   United Nations Population Fund

UNFPA and AP-WFDA have sought to map responses to violence against women and girls that demonstrate the effectiveness of faith-based approaches and to highlight examples of where they are compatible with rights-based approaches. Overall the purpose of the mapping was to begin a process of exploring how faith-based organizations can further collaborate with each other and with secular organizations, to ultimately increase the effectiveness of the regional response to end violence against women and girls.

1.2 Methodology

An online survey was targeted at 181 faith-based organizations in 26 Asia-Pacific countries aiming to collect comparable data mainly through multiple-choice questions, with some qualitative data collected through open-ended questions. The main source of qualitative data was through follow up telephone interviews conducted with 19 organizations. Recognizing that responding to violence against women and girls is a sensitive area to work in, and that some organizations may adopt approaches that they prefer to not publicize widely, respondents were invited to participate in confidence. Several organizations requested that they not be identified by name, and this report respects their preference for anonymity.

Certain specific challenges were encountered in relation to articulating issues around violence, including defining and categorizing forms of and approaches to violence. Overarching categories of violence (e.g. psychological, physical, and sexual) were potentially too broad to capture details about the specific forms of violence that organizations address. Through collating examples of categories of violence, e.g. from UN sources, a total of 34 forms of violence were provided in a multiple choice question. The main sources were the UN Declaration of Violence Against Women (1993), WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women (2005) and UN Trust to End Violence Against Women (2010) documents. The list was not exhaustive and participants were invited to add information about forms of violence as they defined or perceived them.

The survey was pre-tested with a regional faith-based organization located in Thailand, and a number of refinements were subsequently made. Post data collection, however, a weakness was identified in the questionnaire. While respondents were asked about organizational approaches to violence against women and girls through multiple choice questions, there was no open-ended question inviting a description of the overall focus of work of each organization, which would have been helpful. So, for example, a third of respondents checked the option indicating that they provided shelter to survivors of violence, but there was no possibility for them to elaborate on the details, or to describe this work within the broader context of the work of the organization. This level of detail was however sought through follow up interviews with the selected cohort of respondents, and through further research, such as through organization websites and publications, where available.

1.3 Summary of participating organizations

The review describes the experiences and views of 58 faith-based organizations that respond to violence against women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region. Forty-four faith-based organizations were situated in nineteen of the countries across the region that UNFPA works in. The remaining nine were international faith-based organizations[4]

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4   Based in Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and the UK

working through partner organizations in countries in the region. In addition to the survey participants, four further organizations were included in interviews, bringing the total number of participating organizations to fifty-nine. Participating organizations identified themselves with nine faiths.[5]

Over half (55 per cent) of the 44 organizations based in the sub-regions of the Pacific, South Asia and South-East Asia were Christian focused. Among these, twelve identified themselves as non-denominational Christian, eight as Catholic and six as Protestant. The six participating Muslim organizations included four inter or non-denominational Muslim organizations, and two Sunni organizations. Two organizations were Buddhist and one was Bahá'í. A quarter of the organizations identified themselves as multi-faith or interfaith, indicating that they based their work on diverse faith principles and/or target people from a range of faiths. In addition to faiths mentioned, multi-faith organizations worked with people from religions including Hindu, indigenous or traditional, Jain, Jewish and Sikh.

Figure 1: Faith identities of participating organizations
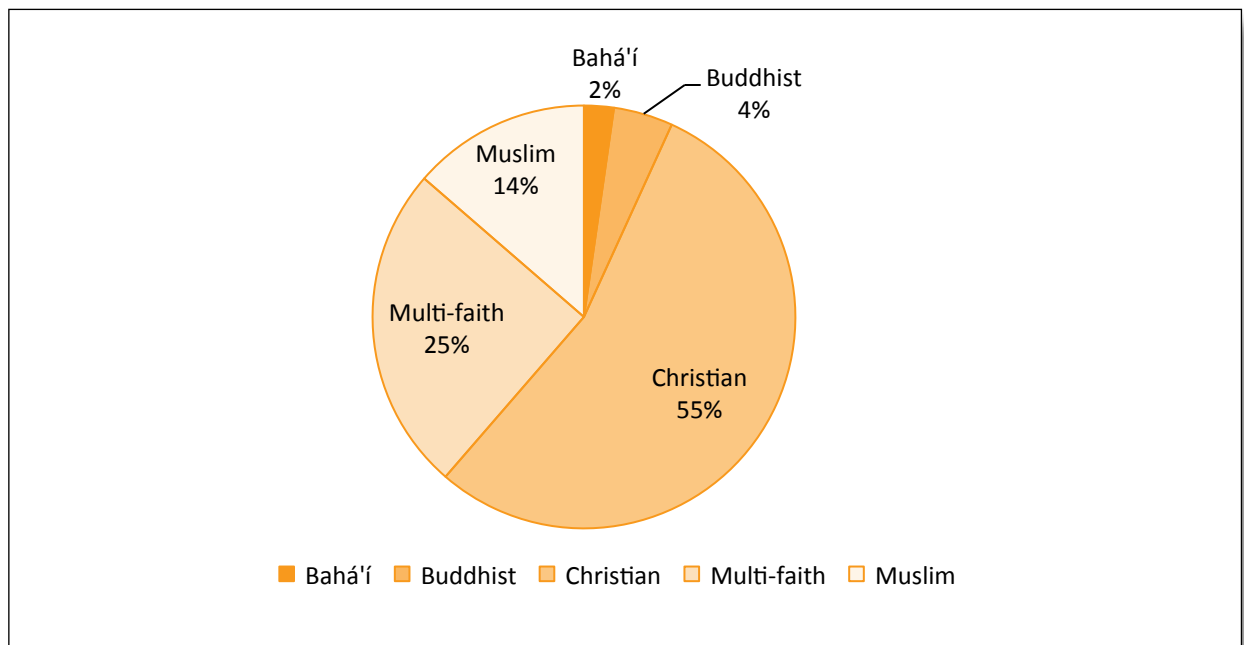
In addition to the responding organizations based in less developed or middle income countries, and the nine organizations providing partnership and funding support to country-level faith-based organizations, responses were also received from two faith-based organizations focusing only on work within Australia. The quantitative responses of these organizations is not included in the sub-regional analyses, but contribute overall to the depth of information about faith-based responses to violence against women in the Asia-Pacific region. (See Appendix 2 for short descriptions of the organizations not based in the countries where UNFPA has programmes.)

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5   Nine faiths were identified assuming "Christian" and "Muslim" to include all related sub-denominations

II Mapping the Pacific region

2.1 Introduction

An overview of forms of violence against women and girls in the region

The diverse Pacific Island countries and territories are characterized by significant numbers of people living rurally. Communities are separated by either mountainous terrain or large expanses of ocean. As in the wider Asia-Pacific context, domestic violence is the most prevalent form of violence affecting women and girls.

According to recent UNFPA-supported research, the prevalence of violence against women in the region seems relatively high compared to data from other countries that have conducted the WHO Multi-Country Study on Domestic Violence.[6] Sexual abuse of girl children is also relatively high in the Pacific region. However, the statistics on violence against women and girls vary dramatically between the diverse Pacific countries and territories. There are three geographical and cultural groupings within the Pacific: Melanesia[7], Micronesia[8] and Polynesia[9].

In (Melanesian) Solomon Islands, sexual partner violence is more common than physical partner violence. Thirty-seven per cent of women aged 15-49 in the Solomon Islands reported that they had experienced sexual abuse when they were under the age of 15, compared to 19 per cent in Micronesian Kiribati.[10] Incidence of forced sex is also high among youth in the Solomon Islands: thirty-eight per cent of 449 sexually active (male and female) youth surveyed in 2009 reported that they had been forced to have sex when they did not want to.[11] This statistic is an average of data collected from four separate sites, belying even higher incidence, for example, on Taro Island, the provincial centre for Choiseul Province, where forced sex was reported by 27.8 per cent[12] of boys and almost half (48.9 per cent) of girls.

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6   WHO, Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence, 2005

7   Melanesia comprises most of the islands immediately north and northeast of Australia including some of the islands of Papua New Guinea, Some of the islands of Indonesia, New Caledonia, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

8   Micronesia comprises thousands of small islands in the western Pacific Ocean, including Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Guam, Nauru and Palau

9   Polynesia is central and southern Pacific Ocean and comprises American Samoa, Cook Islands, Easter Island, French Polynesia, Hawaii, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island, Pitcairn Islands, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Wallis and Futuna

10 Health Sector Response to Gender-based Violence: An assessment of the Asia-Pacific Region, UNFPA, 2010

11 Rubbish Sicki, Bad Sickness: Understanding HIV and AIDS Risk and Vulnerability Among Solomon Islands Youth, UNICEF Pacific Offices and The Government of Solomons, c.2009

12 All population-related percentage figures in the text have been rounded to the nearest decimal point

In both (Polynesian) Samoa and (Micronesian) Kiribati physical violence was more prevalent than sexual violence. Approximately 62 per cent of respondents in Samoa reported that they had been physically abused by someone other than a partner and 11 per cent reported being raped by a non-partner. In the Solomon Islands physical abuse was lower: 18 per cent of women reported being physically abused by a non-partner.[13]

In Vanuatu, recent research by UNICEF found that young people aged 18-25 identified school as one of the three safest places for children in the community. Yet school environments are not free of violence. For example, some teachers continue to administer corporal punishment and 27 per cent of school-going 16-17 year old respondents stated they had been physically hurt by a teacher in the past month.[14]

National research on domestic violence and sexual assaults conducted by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre revealed that 80 per cent of survey respondents had witnessed some form of violence in the home. Sixty-six per cent of women surveyed reported that they had been abused by their partners, and 44 per cent reported being hit while pregnant. Nearly three-quarters (74 per cent) of female victims did not report the violence they had experienced to the police or seek medical attention.[15] Separate research by UNICEF on the protection of children included the role of faith leaders in responding to violence. Religious leaders reported regularly speaking out about violence against children, with many (36 per cent) speaking every month and just under a third (32 per cent) speaking every week. The most frequently espoused message about protecting children from violence among religious leaders was that children are a gift from God (39 per cent), followed by "children have the right to be safe (from violence)" and explanations of what constitutes violence against children (both 14 per cent).[16]

The major religions practiced in the Pacific region

Christianity is the common faith in most Pacific Island countries and territories, with as many as 90 per cent or more of populations identifying as Christian. Many Christian denominations are represented in the sub-region. The following section describes the religions of the five Pacific Islands and countries of responding organizations.

Table 1: Religions of selected Pacific Island Countries

	Hindu	Islam	Christianity	Indigenous	Other
Vanuatu		>10%	90%	5.6%	Bahá'í >10%
Papua New Guinea			96%		
Fiji	30%	7%	52%		
Solomon Islands		>5%	92%	5%	Bahá'í >5%
Tonga			96%		Baha'i Faith, Jehovah's Witnesses, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism <4%

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13 Health Sector Response to Gender-based Violence: An assessment of the Asia-Pacific Region, UNFPA, 2010

14 Protect Me With Love And Care: A baseline report for Vanuatu, UNICEF Pacific, 2009

15 Cited in An Assessment of the State of Violence Against Women in Fiji, UNFPA Pacific Sub Regional Office, 2008

16 Protect Me With Love And Care: A baseline report for Fiji, UNICEF Pacific, 2008

Vanuatu is characterized by a predominantly Christian population, although there is much diversity within this, and indigenous beliefs in the power and presence of ancestral spirits prevail alongside practices of the major religions. An estimated 31 per cent of the population (of 220,000) is Presbyterian, 13 per cent Catholic, 13 per cent Anglican, and 11 per cent Seventh-day Adventist. The Church of Christ, the Apostolic Church, and the Assemblies of God, and other Protestant denominations constitute 14 per cent of the population. An indigenous religious group called the John Frum Movement has its own political party. It is centered on the island of Tanna and includes almost 6 per cent of the population.[17] Members of the Bahá'í faith, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) constitute almost 10 per cent of the population.[18]

Among Papua New Guinea's 6.7 million people, 96 per cent identify as Christian: 30 per cent Catholic, 20 per cent Evangelical Lutheran, 12 per cent United Church, 10 per cent Seventh-day Adventist, 9 per cent Pentecostal, 5 per cent Evangelical Alliance, 3 per cent Anglican, 3 per cent Baptist and 0.2 per cent members of the Salvation Army. Other Christian groups, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Jehovah's Witnesses constitute 8 per cent. There are approximately 15,000 members of the Bahá'í faith and 2,000 Muslims. Many people integrate their Christian faith with indigenous beliefs and practices.[19]

Fiji's population is an estimated 827,000 of whom approximately 52 per cent are Christian, 30 per cent Hindu, and 7 per cent Muslim. Fiji is composed of different ethnic groups, including Chinese, Europeans, Rotumans, and other Pacific islanders. Approximately 60 per cent of the Chinese community is Christian, with 4 per cent adhering to Confucius beliefs. The European community is mainly Christian. The Methodist Church accounts for most adherents of the Christian faith, with approximately 218,000 members.[20]

The Solomon Islands have a population of 552,000 with approximately 92 per cent identifying as Christian. An estimated 35 per cent is Anglican, 19 per cent Roman Catholic, 17 per cent South Seas Evangelical, 11 per cent Methodist, and 10 per cent Seventh-day Adventist. On the island of Malaita the Kwaio community, accounting for 5 per cent of the population, are animist. Other groups, which make up less than 5 per cent of the population, include Islam, Bahá'í, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Unification Church and indigenous religions.

Among Tonga's population of just over 100,000, most identify as Christian, comprising the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (37 per cent), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (17 per cent), Free Church of Tonga (16 per cent) and Catholic (11 per cent). Other Christian groups such as the Tokaikolo Church (derivative of the Methodist Church), Seventh-day Adventists, Assemblies of God, and Anglicans represent 14 per cent of the population. Faiths such as Bahá'í, Jehovah's Witnesses, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism are practiced by approximately 4 per cent of the population.

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17 John Frum Movement began as a form of spirit worship originating in the 1930s which amounts to the rejection of all things European (including the Christian faith brought to the islands by missionaries) in favour of traditional beliefs and practices.

18 International Coalition for Religious Freedom

19 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108420.htm

20 International Coalition for Religious Freedom

Participation from Pacific faith-based organizations

In the Pacific region, twenty organizations were invited to participate in the online survey. Seven organizations from five countries completed the survey, and five were interviewed to gather additional information on their responses to violence against women and girls. Some respondents revealed that they had initially assumed that the mapping was not relevant to their work, although after further discussion they were able to link their organization's work more readily to the objectives of the mapping exercise. This raises the possibility that some faith-based organizations may respond to violence issues, but do not necessarily use the same terminology as the UN or other rights-based organizations. Consequently such faith-based organizations might exclude themselves (or be excluded by others) from wider research and initiatives, because disparities in language may assume, sometimes incorrectly, a divergence in interests and approaches.

A brief profile of the responding organizations

The *Anglican Association of Women* is a Christian (Protestant) organization in Fiji with a presence also in Tonga, Samoa, America Samoa and New Zealand. Its local project in Suva, Fiji, *The House of Sarah*, was established in 2010 to provide support for women affected by violence and to advocate for prevention of violence. It provides counseling services and referrals to other health and social services.

Two other Fijian Christian organizations participated in the survey, both of which requested that their identities remain confidential. The first was a coordinating organization that raises awareness of violence issues among women's groups. Recognizing that violence against women and girls is a serious issue deserving to be addressed more fully, the respondent commented that greater internal organizational commitment will be required before such work can be prioritized. The second organization has prioritized responding to violence against women and girls since 1996, and provides services in the form of counseling, legal and health support. Referrals are an important part of its work and close relationships are maintained with several homes where shelter and support are provided for unmarried pregnant women, and unmarried mothers who are stigmatized and rejected by their families.

Divine Word University is a national Christian educational institute with a Catholic tradition in Papua New Guinea. It has four campuses and plans to extend into other areas in the Pacific, such as the Solomon Islands. In addition to its six academic faculties, the university provides counseling, medical and health services, plus awareness raising and education initiatives among faith and other community groups. Such outreach has been the vehicle for its advocacy work to end violence against women and girls since 2005.

The Solomon Islands *Christian Association Federation of Women* is an interfaith organization responding to violence against women and girls.

The *National Forum of Church Leaders* in Tonga brings together 14 church leaders to educate and advocate for the prevention of violence against women and girls through church networks and leadership. Although it has only recently prioritized responding to violence against women and girls (since 2010), previous activities provided avenues for disseminating information and providing direct support to women affected by violence.

For example, prior to this it had raised awareness of social justice issues to faith communities through sermons, workshops and trainings, and had developed theological publications, faith-based resources and materials. The National Forum provides a range of counseling, shelter, legal, health and medical support, referrals to other services, and also facilitates self-help groups. All of these initiatives have been expanded to include responding to violence against women and girls.

In Vanuatu, the *Seventh-day Adventist Church* is a Christian (Protestant) organization. Although ending violence against women and girls is not the main aim of the organization it has been responding to violence since the formation of its Department of Women's Ministries in 1996, through advocacy and public campaigns.

2.2 Forms of violence addressed by faith-based organizations in the Pacific

The survey asked respondents what forms of violence they respond to, and whether their programmatic responses to violence focused on prevention activities and/or support services to women survivors. An extensive list of 34 forms of violence and abuse was included in the survey within which the types can be summarized into five categories: physical, psychological, sexual and reproductive, state, and neglect. Overall sexual and reproductive violence categories were most frequently cited as the focus of organizations' responses to violence, including rape and pregnancy-related violence, sexual abuse, and sex tourism. Within the category of physical violence, domestic violence and physical abuse were the most common forms of violence addressed, followed by prevention of infanticide.[21] The main areas of focus relating to psychological violence were prevention of harassment (including in the workplace) and emotional abuse.

Figure 2: Forms of violence addressed by participating Pacific FBOs
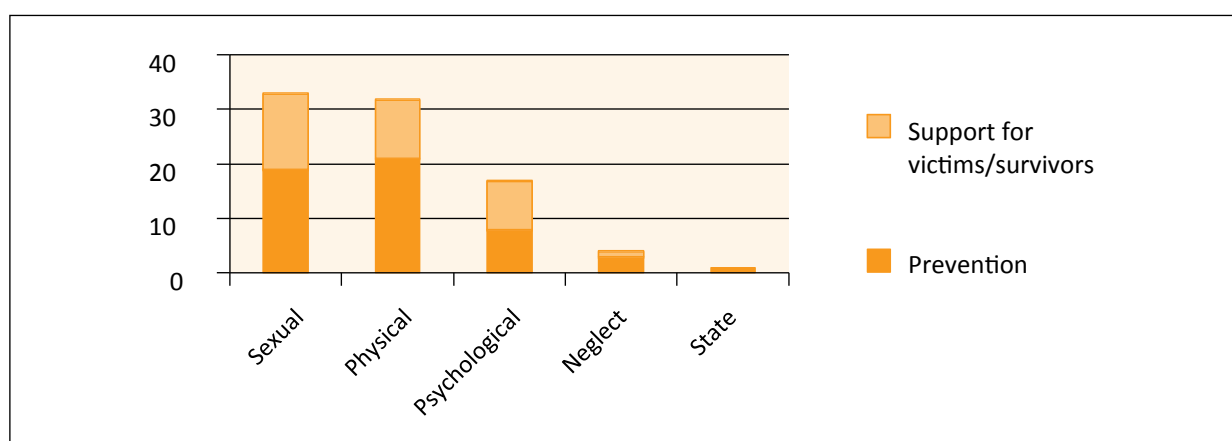
The themes of neglect and state violence had fewer sub-categories to choose from in the survey. Neglect included abandonment and deprivation, and state violence included the death penalty, judicial use of physical punishment,

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21 The organizations which cited prevention of infanticide as part of the responses to end violence against women and girls were from Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. Data on rates of infanticide from these and other countries in the Pacific is lacking but the practice receives public attention periodically.

violence by police or initiated by governments, and neglect by the state. Only one organization indicated that they address neglect by the state. The table below shows the most frequently cited responses to violence against women and girls from the seven participating organizations under the categories of prevention of violence, and providing support to survivors of violence. Forms of violence not cited by any respondents were: abduction, honor killings (primarily a South Asian phenomenon) and slavery.

Table 2: Responses to VAWG according to the categories of prevention and support (Pacific)

Prevention	Support
Domestic violence (4)*	Sexual violence and rape (4)
Physical abuse (4)	Domestic violence (3)
Pregnancy related violence (4)	Harassment (3)
Sexual violence and rape (4)	Physical abuse (3)
Infanticide (3)	Pregnancy related violence (3)
Pornography (3)	Psychological or emotional abuse (3)
Psychological punishment (3)	Psychological punishment (3)
Sexual abuse or exploitation (3)	

* Figures in parentheses show the number of organizations that indicated they are responding to the differing forms of violence against women and girls through prevention, and support, approaches respectively.

Settings in which violence occurs

Of the seven participating organizations that responded, most responded to violence that takes place in the household or within the family (*n*4) and in public spaces (*n*4).

Figure 3: Settings and spaces where violence takes place, and is addressed by Pacific FBOs
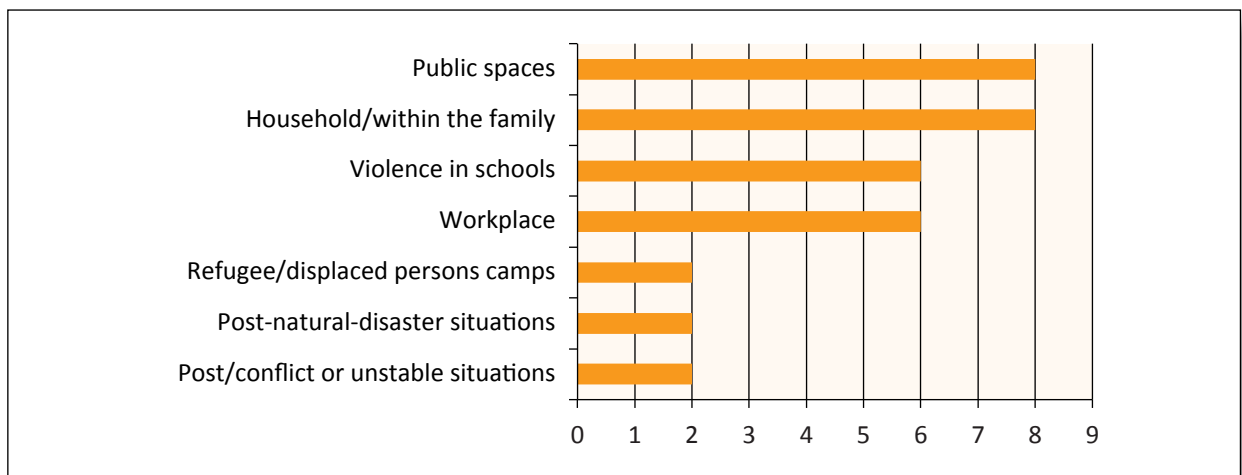
Three organizations respond to violence in the workplace and in schools. One organization, *Christian Association Federation of Women* in the Solomon Islands, responds to violence in conflict/post-conflict contexts.

This organization has been supporting women affected by conflict-related violence since 2000 when ethnic tensions led to violent acts being committed against women, and the organization felt compelled to respond by providing counseling and shelter for affected women. None of the responding organizations' reported that their work relates to custodial violence (i.e. prisons, social welfare institutions, immigration or other detention centers).

2.3 Strategies for addressing violence against women and girls

Of the seven participating organizations, five stated that ending violence against women and girls was a main objective of their organization. All seven reported that they provide some form of direct services for women and girls affected by violence. Six indicated that they provide counseling, five provide referrals and linkages to other services, and four provide health and medical support, and facilitate support or self-help groups. Two provide shelter to survivors and legal advice or support.

All seven organizations said they engage in awareness raising and education on violence against women and girls. Six worked with faith communities through sermons, workshops, training, and with women's groups. During in-depth interviews participants shared their thoughts on why faith-based responses play an important role in addressing violence. Most said that religion is a significant factor in the lives and culture of the majority of the population, and they believe that as faith-based organizations have a direct link to faith constituencies they have the potential for greater impact by reaching out to these audiences. Some respondents also mentioned that conservative interpretations of religious texts can reinforce gender inequality. The *House of Sarah Project* in Fiji takes an active approach to directly addressing beliefs arising from interpretations of religious texts that hinder progress on ending violence against women.

Four organizations interviewed work with community stakeholders (e.g. teachers, health workers) and three provide education to children and young people in schools, youth clubs and universities. Two provide theological publications, faith-based resources or materials, and two work with men's groups. Only one organization indicated that it *directly* raises awareness of violence issues among faith leaders. (Responses to a later question identified that faith leaders were cited most frequently as 'secondary' targets of outreach work, namely those that organizations work with to achieve changes for primary targets. In interviews, respondents indicated that they see religious leaders as 'collaborating partners' with whom to raise awareness rather than as the *targets* of awareness raising efforts.)

In relation to public campaigning and advocacy, four organizations described participating in public campaigns to end violence against women, and four had used community outreach approaches, including wall painting, posters, street plays, community theatre and songs, to promote their messages. Three organizations had engaged with the media, and two facilitated or participated in inter-faith dialogue on violence against women and girls.

A global campaign implemented at local level

The End It Now campaign was launched in 2009 by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and the Department of Women's Ministries of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. This global campaign extends to more than 200 countries and territories and aims to create a global movement of 15 million Adventist Church members to respond to violence against women and girls in their communities, by raising awareness and finding solutions.

Key Campaign messages

- Stand up in favor of human rights, tolerance, the well-being of children, freedom of expression and conscience, and the protection and integrity of families.

- Extend God's vision of love and compassion for all His children.

- Domestic violence has been documented as a major issue within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Incidences of abuse follow trends documented in non-Adventist populations. This is why End It Now seeks to increase personal awareness, responsibility, and involvement to effectively help end violence against women and girls in every family and community.

- While End It Now focuses on violence against women and girls, abuse of any kind should never occur against men or women. This campaign aims to highlight abuse against women because the majority of victims of gender-based violence are indisputably women.

In Vanuatu, Seventh Day Adventist Churches in Port Vila mobilized their members to participate in public demonstrations of support for the End It Now campaign, gaining media coverage in local newspapers.

2.4 Primary targets and secondary audiences

All seven organizations reported primarily targeting women and girls 'in general', with five targeting women and girls in both rural and urban areas. Only one organization indicated in the survey that lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are a primary focus, although in interviews others revealed that they are also creating an enabling environment whereby issues of sexuality can increasingly be discussed openly. As a result, a number of young lesbian women and gay men have sought support from members of a Church group that is leading community conversations on sexuality. Figure 4 shows the responses to each of the categories of primary targets in the survey.

Figure 4: Primary targets of participating Pacific FBOs
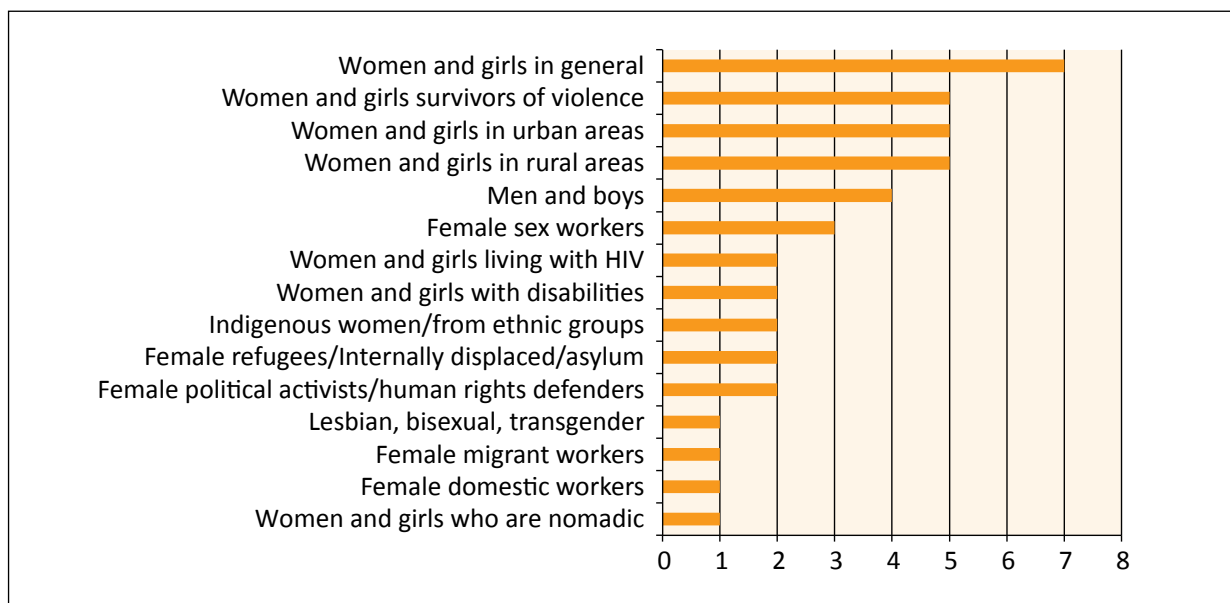
Among the secondary targets that responding organizations work with to make changes in the lives of primary beneficiaries, male and female religious leaders were most often cited: with six of the seven organizations indicating that they work with faith leaders. Several organizations indicated that faith leaders helped them in their advocacy work. The *Seventh-day Adventist Church* in Vanuatu explained that it explicitly draws on the Bible

Table 3: Secondary audiences targeted by Pacific FBOs

Female		Male	
Civil society organizations (including NGOs)	5*	Religious leaders	6
Community-based groups/members	5	Community leaders	5
Community leaders	5	Educational professionals	5
Faith-based groups	5	Civil society organizations (including NGOs)	4
Religious leaders	5	Community-based groups/members	4
Women's groups	5	Faith-based groups	4
Women and girls in general	5	Peer leaders	4
Educational professionals	5	Faith communities	4

*Figures show the number of organization responding to each category

for its violence prevention messages, and the *House of Sarah Project* in Fiji draws on public commitment made by the head of the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Polynesia to eliminate violence (Box 2).

Box 2: Faith leaders transforming commitment into action in Polynesia

Faith leaders transforming commitment into action in Polynesia

In February 2011, Archbishop Winston Halapua of the Diocese of Polynesia followed up on a commitment made at the 2010 International Anglican Family Network gathering in New Zealand, to take a lead role in ending violence against women and girls. He used a Suva cathedral service to emphasize the impact of violence. The Cathedral Men's Group unveiled a banner declaring their commitment to ending violence. The Archbishop invited senior figures from Fiji's police and social welfare departments to be present at the launch of the campaign because they had made private approaches to him about the issue.

Dr Halapua announced that the Dean of the Cathedral, the Very Reverend Fereimi Cama, would commence a training programme on the Elimination of Violence, supported by experienced partners such as the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre.

Rev Dr Feleterika Nokise, Principal of Pacific Theological College, gave a sermon during the service in which he urged everyone to begin by reflecting on their own lives, experiences and behaviors. He highlighted the fact that Pacific Island culture had often emphasized a harsh view of discipline and this had become entwined with men's views of themselves and their masculinity. He linked this to concepts of power, control and authority.

2.5 Networking and collaboration

All seven of the responding organizations reported partnering with both secular and faith-based organizations and networks. Figure 5 shows the different types of organizations, individuals and networks that participating faith-based organizations collaborate with at local, national and international levels as part of their response to violence against women and girls. In Vanuatu, the *Seventh-day Adventist Church* works at national level with government, NGOs and networks of faith-based organizations, is also an observer to NGO bodies and the Vanuatu *Christian Council of Women*, and works closely with local police officers.

Figure 5: Networks and partners of participating Pacific FBOs
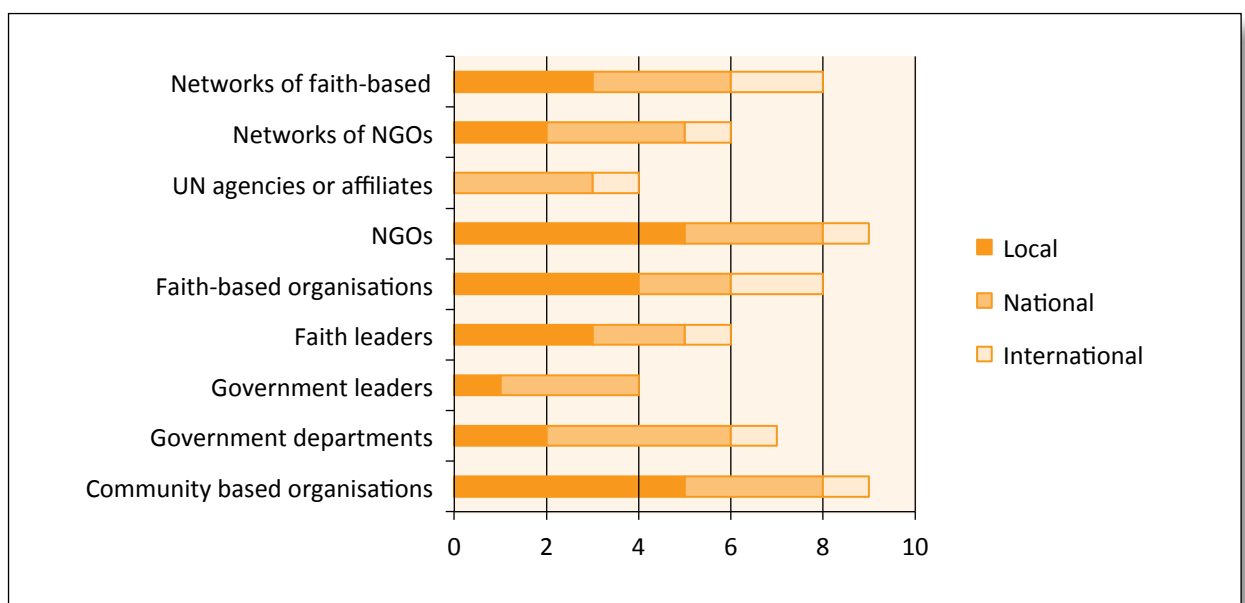
The Solomon Islands *Christian Association Federation of Women* works at local level with community organizations, other faith-based organizations and NGOs. At national level it works with government, UN agencies and networks of both faith-based organizations and NGOs. This organization is a member of the local Christian Care Centre Board and of the national Gender Based Violence Steering Committee. The organization works closely with the Ministry of Women, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

The *House of Sarah* project of the Anglican Association of Women in Fiji collaborates with local and national partners: community based organizations, faith leaders, faith-based organizations and NGOs, working most closely with the (secular) Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. At international level it works to end violence against women as a member of the International Anglican Family Network.

One of the Christian Fijian organizations that requested anonymity is a member of three national forums: the National Action Plan to Stop Trafficking by Fiji Police Force, Prevention of Trafficking by Department of Immigration, and as a partner of Save the Children Fiji in the Prevention of Trafficking.

The *National Forum of Church Leaders* in Tonga works with a wide range of stakeholders at local, national and international levels, and also collaborates with the government, the police, health departments and the World Health Organization. This organization reported working at local level with churches on every island and in every village. At national and international levels it works with other churches and through inter-faith strategies.

Divine Word University in Papua New Guinea reported collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders at local level, including community based organizations, government departments (health, education etc), faith leaders, faith-based organizations, and with NGOs and related NGO and faith-based organizations networks. Its most significant collaborating partner on violence against women and girls is the Church Partnership Programme, an AusAID[22] initiative linking Australian church-based organizations with Papua New Guinean churches to improve the delivery of essential health and education services.[23] At national level, Divine Word University engages with government leaders. The respondent did not cite links with UN agencies and affiliates as part of its response to violence against women and girls.

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22 Australian Government Overseas Aid Program

23 http://www.ausaid.gov.au/country/png/partnerships.cfm

Box 3: Christian ecumenical initiative to end violence

A Christian ecumenical initiative to end violence across the Pacific

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a Christian ecumenical network of 349 member churches across the world. The Pacific WCC members include a key regional body, the Pacific Conference of Churches, eight national ecumenical councils of churches, and 17 denomination-specific churches. Some of the Christian organizations that participated in the mapping stated that their responses to violence against women and girls are informed by WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence. Between 2001-2010, this campaign called for ecumenical engagement by its member churches to address a wide range of violence including inter-personal, economic, environmental, military and other forms of violence in society, families and the church. Each year of the campaign had a geographical focus, with violence in the Pacific region highlighted in 2008.

Faith-based resources, such as study guides, leaflets, posters and materials for worship, were provided to encourage churches to reflect on violence-related issues most relevant to their contexts, and to promote working for peace and reconciliation.

WCC member, the Pacific Conference of Churches, promoted the Decade to Overcome Violence campaign. Its Women's Development programme encourages members to participate in the 16-days of Activism to End Violence Against Women annually.

2.6 Laws, policies and frameworks

Two organizations reported that national legislation and policy inform their responses to violence against women and girls. *Divine Word University* draws on the Papua New Guinea national strategy, Vision 2050[24], as well as the National Constitution Preamble which defines non-discrimination (including on grounds of sex), protection of basic human rights, equal participation by women, and which recognizes Christian principles.[25] In the Solomon Islands the government's national policy on eliminating violence against women informs the work of the *Christian Association Federation of Women*.

Among international frameworks, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was cited by *Divine Word University*, while guidelines on responding to violence against women by WHO and UNDP influence the *National Forum of Church Leaders* in Tonga.

Messages on ending violence against women and girls made by faith leaders or faith-based organizations, influenced organizations at national and international levels. These included policies by the World Conference of Churches (*National Forum of Church Leaders* in Tonga) and the head of the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Polynesia to eliminate violence (*House of Sarah*, Fiji). The Archbishop's initiative to end violence against women and girls is explained in more detail in box 2.

The *Seventh-day Adventist Church* in Vanuatu draws on the Bible for its messages, including the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. It is also guided by several departments of the church such as Family Ministries,

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24 Formally called The National Strategic Plan (NSP) 2010-2050, for more information see http://www.publicsectorreform.gov.pg/about_pngv50.html

25 See the Pacific Law Library http://www.paclii.org/pg/legis/consol_act/cotisopng534/ for the preamble and full text of the Papua New Guinea Constitution

Children's Ministries, Women's Ministries, Education Department, Health Ministries, and Youth Ministries. At global level, the Seventh-day Adventist Church issued a statement on ending violence against women and girls in July 2010 calling for recognition of violence, action to end it, and the promotion of human rights. It also expressed a desire to seek out partnerships with others to address the issue.[26]

2.7 Summary

Faith-based organizations in the Pacific region described how they respond to a wide range of forms of violence. Overall, prevention of violence responses were more frequent than support for women affected by violence. However some organizations, such as *House of Sarah* in Fiji, also focus on support for survivors of violence.

Working collaboratively with faith leaders featured highly in the responses of six of the seven organizations that listed faith leaders as secondary targets. Only one organization reported directly focusing on faith leaders as outreach or advocacy targets. Further exploration would be useful to consider the level and quality of information that faith leaders provided, and whether they are sufficiently skilled and confident to effectively respond to violence against women and girls. Examples provided of advocacy campaigns indicated that faith-based organizations promote human rights (e.g. End It Now Campaign), include men in their responses, and partner closely with rights-based organizations. Responding Pacific organizations reported conducting outreach using gatherings of faith communities to advocate for prevention, and to share information through sermons, workshops and training. These links with faith leaders and faith communities demonstrate that they have considerable reach within faith networks and may be able to reach communities with messages that secular agencies cannot.

Responding organizations also mentioned that they network with other faith-based and secular actors at local, national and regional levels. This shows a level of mainstream interaction which is also reflected in the way that some of the faith-based organizations reported using laws and international frameworks and policies to inform their work. Importantly, the networking that these organizations conduct at local and national levels with other faith-based organizations and networks has the potential to provide opportunities to reach a much broader range of faith-based organizations on violence issues. Additionally, faith-based organizations are already linking with secular organizations that have experience on rights-based approaches, for example organizations focused on women's rights. These examples show that such partnerships are potential mechanisms to further build and strengthen the capacity and skills of faith-based organizations to respond to violence against women and girls.

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26 http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/violence.html

III Mapping the South Asia region

3.1 Introduction

An overview of forms of violence against women and girls in the region

The countries in the South Asia region from which faith-based organizations responded to the mapping were Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Most of these countries are largely characterized by poverty, significant income disparities between the wealthiest and the poorest, and social structures that undervalue and discriminate against women and girls. The countries listed represent a significant proportion of the world's population. With a population of 1.2 billion, India is the second most populated country in the world. Pakistan has 170 million people and Bangladesh has 142 million. Both Afghanistan and Nepal each have just under 30 million people, and Sri Lanka has a population of approximately 20 million.

The most common form of violence experienced by women and girls in South Asia is domestic violence. Studies in several southern Asian countries have documented that violence within the home is normalized and condoned by society at large.[27] A culture of silence surrounds the issues of violence against women and girls, and there is often a lack of legal redress and support mechanisms available to women within governmental and judicial institutional structures.

In addition to domestic violence, a range of other forms of violence are perpetrated against women and girls in both public and private spaces. Honor killings,[28] and acid burning as a retributive measure, manifest as extreme forms of violence against women in specific country contexts in the region. In some South Asian countries internal separatist movements have exacerbated violence against women and girls, with rape often being used a weapon of war.[29] The high rate of widowhood and abandonment, as a consequence of war, also pushes women to the margins of society and can increase their vulnerability to violence in both formal institutions as well as public spaces.

This section gives a descriptive account of statistics related to violence against women and girls, drawing on key studies conducted at country level. The first household survey on domestic violence was conducted in 2000 in India (9,938 households).[30] It documented that 44 per cent of married women reported having experienced at least one episode of psychological violence in their married life, and that 41 per cent of women reported experiencing at least one form of physical violence. Of the women reporting physical violence, half said that they experienced violence during pregnancy.

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27 UNFPA (2003). Violence Against Women in South Asia - A regional analysis.

28 A term first used by Ane Nauta to mean the killing of a person, due to the belief of the perpetrators that the victim has brought dishonor upon the family or community.

29 http://www.trust.org/trustlaw/news/kashmir-rape-as-a-weapon-of-war

30 ICRW and INCLEN, 2000, Domestic violence in India: A Summary Report of a Multi-Site Household Survey

In Bangladesh, a sample survey of 3,130 women aged 15-49, conducted as a part of the 2005 WHO multi-country study[31] on violence against women, found that the majority of women (60 and 61 per cent) in Dhaka and Matlab, urban and rural areas respectively, reported having experienced either physical or sexual abuse, or both. In Dhaka, 48 per cent of women surveyed had experienced physical abuse, the majority by an intimate partner or relative, with only 7 per cent of women reporting that a non-relative perpetrated the abuse. Over half of the women reporting physical violence also reported sexual abuse or violence by their husbands.

In Nepal, a 1997 study by Saathi (a non-governmental, non-profit organization) documented that 77 per cent of violence against Nepalese women was reported as occurring within the family.[32] Fifty-eight per cent of women reported experiencing physical abuse every day. In a 1999 study from Pakistan the husband was found to be the sole perpetrator of physical abuse in 63 per cent of the reported cases.[33] A more recent study, published in 2007, found that 35 per cent of the women interviewed in rural Punjab, and 55 per cent in the most developed peri-urban sites, said they were beaten by their husbands.[34] In Pakistan the practice of honor killings to maintain the honor (*izzat*) of the family and community is widespread, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that honor killing in the region of Swat is among the highest so far known in the world.

In Sri Lanka WHO estimates that the prevalence of domestic violence ranges from 27 per cent to as high as 60 per cent of married women.[35] The recently ended conflict situation in the north and north-east of the country resulted in a high rate of internally displaced populations. This had a gender dimension, with women sometimes experiencing the double burden of abuse both within the home, as well as outside in custodial situations such as police stations and refugee camps.

Due to the porous border between India and Nepal, a high rate of trafficking of children and young girls has been documented from Nepal to India. The exact number of Nepali women trafficked to India is not known, but between 5,000 and 10,000 girls and women are estimated to be trafficked to India every year from Nepal.[36] In 1999, approximately 200,000 Nepalese women and girls, reportedly sold for 25,000 to 50,000 rupees (US$500 – 1,000), were estimated to be employed as sex workers in India and the Middle East.[37]

Afghanistan has experienced war for over a decade. Adding to the violence associated with the conflict, primary data collected by UNIFEM Afghanistan in 2006 indicated that the most common incidents of violence

31 International Centre for Diahrroeal Disease Research, Bangladesh the Centre for Health and Population Research and Naripokkho in Bangladesh, 2005

32 SAATHI. (A Situational Analysis of Violence Against Women in Nepal). *1997.* SAATHI & The Asia Foundation.

33 Qureshi, Asma Fazia, Narjis Rizva, Fauziah Rabbani, and Fatima Sajan, Domestic Violence: Determinants and Consequences, WHO Center, Kobe, Japan, 1999

34 Zeba Sathar and Shahnaz Kazi (1997), "Autonomy, Livelihood and Fertility: A Study of Rural Punjab", Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad.

35 http://www.whosrilanka.org/LinkFiles/WHO_Sri_Lanka_Home_Page_GBV_Country_Factsheet.pdf

36 STOP-India, Maiti Nepal-Nepal, NNGAT-Nepal, referenced in Vidya Shah, Beverly Brar and Sonam Yangchen Rana, Layers of Silence*:Links between women's vulnerability, trafficking and HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh, India and Nepal, UNRISD, 2002

37 The Trafficking of Women and Girls: A Comparative Study of Two VDCs. Gothenburg University, Sweden, Spring 1999, referenced in Effectiveness of Existing Laws and Institutional Mechanism to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children in Nepal - Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD), 2002

were physical attack (22 per cent) followed by forced marriage (16 per cent).[38] The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) estimates that between 60 and 80 per cent of marriages in the country are forced, with available data from 2005 indicating that child marriages make up more than 40 per cent of all marriages in the country.[39] Domestic violence, sexual violence, kidnapping, forced seclusion, honor killings and the exchange of girls and women for debt, or to resolve feuds, continue. The high number of self-immolation incidents indicates a lack of support and legal redress mechanisms for women affected by violence. AIHRC reported that as many as 75 women killed themselves through self-immolation in 2010.[40]

In Bangladesh one of the added dimensions to violence experienced by women in the public space, is acid throwing. Between 1999 and 2010, the Acid Survivors Foundation reported that there were 2,433 acid attacks in Bangladesh affecting 3,114 survivors, with over 70 per cent of the targets being women and girls in 2010.[41]

Table 4: Intimate partner violence prevalence, selected population-based studies in South Asia[42]

Country or area	Year of study	Coverage	Sample			Proportion of women physically abused by partner (%)			Proportion of women sexually abused by partner (%)		
			Size	Study population	Age (years)	During previous 12 months	In current relation-ship	Ever	During previous 12 months	In current relation-ship	Ever
Afghanistan [80]	2006	National (16 Provinces)	4700	III	10-50	39		52			17
Bangladesh [81]	2002	Dhaka	1603	III	15-49	19		40	20		37
	2002	Matlab (rural district)	1527	III	15-49	16		42	24		50
India	1993-1994	Tamil Nadu	859	II	15-39		37				
	1993-1994	Uttar Pradesh	983	II	15-39		45				
	1995-1996	Uttar Pradesh, five districts	6695	IV	15-65		30				
Maldives [82]	2006	National	1900	III	15-49	6		18	2		7

Study population: I = all women; II = currently married/partnered women; III = ever married/partnered women; IV = married men reporting on own use of violence against spouse; V = women with a pregnancy outcome;

38 UNIFEM Afghanistan, Violence Against Women Primary Database, 2007

39 A/60/343: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and on the achievements of the technical assistance in the field of human rights, 2005

40 http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2011/04/17/violence-against-women-on-the-rise-aihrc.html

41 http://www.acidsurvivors.org/statistics.html

42 Health sector response to gender-based violence. An assessment of the Asia Pacific Region, UNFPA 2010

The major religions practiced in South Asia

The South Asia region is the birthplace of four religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism. Christianity, Islam and Judaism arrived in the continent later from West Asia and Europe. Islam was introduced in Afghanistan in the seventh century and currently an estimated 99 per cent of the population is Muslim, with the majority (80–85 per cent) members of Sunni, and most of the remaining Shi'a.[43]

In India, Hinduism accounted for 81 per cent of the population according to the 2001 census. Other major religions include Islam (13 per cent), Christianity (2 per cent), Sikhism (2 per cent), Buddhism (0.8 per cent), and Jainism (0.4 per cent). There are also small numbers of adherents to Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Bahá'í.

Pakistan is the second most populous Muslim-majority country, after Indonesia, with 97 per cent of its 170 million population adhering to Islam. Most are Sunni, with an estimated 5–20 per cent Shi'a. Other major religions include Hinduism (2 per cent), Christianity (2 per cent), and Sikhism (0.001 per cent); small numbers of religious adherents are Parsi (Zoroastrian), Buddhist, Jewish, Bahá'í and animist (mainly the Kalasha of Chitral).[44]

In common with Afghanistan and Pakistan, the majority faith in Bangladesh is Islam (90 per cent), with Sunni being most prevalent, followed by Shi'a. Hinduism accounts for 10 per cent of the population, and the remaining religious adherents are mostly Sikh and Christian.

In Sri Lanka 70 per cent of the population is Theravada Buddhist, 15 per cent Hindu, with remaining equal numbers of Muslims and Christians.

Nepal was formerly the only constitutionally declared Hindu state in the world, but in early 2006 Parliament amended the constitution to declare Nepal a secular state. According to the 2001 census, 81 per cent of Nepalese are Hindu, 11 per cent Buddhist, 4 per cent Muslim, 4 per cent are Kirat (an indigenous religion with Hindu influence), 0.5 per cent are Christian, and 0.4 per cent is classified as other groups, such as those practicing the Bön religion.[45]

The table below shows the proportion of the population which adhere to major religions in the six South Asian countries of the participating organizations in this mapping.

Table 5:   Religious affiliation in selected South Asian countries

	Hindu	Islam	Christianity	Buddhism	Other
India	80.5%	13.4%	2.3%	0.8%	Sikhism (1.9%), Jainism (0.4%), Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Bahá'ís
Nepal	80.6%	4.4%	0.5%	10.7%	Kirat (3.6%)
Sri Lanka	15%	7.5%	7.5%	70%	
Bangladesh	9.6%	89.5%			Sikh
Pakistan	1.6%	95-98%	1.6%		Parsi, Buddhist, Jewish, Bahá'í and animist
Afghanistan		99%			

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43 Country Profile: Afghanistan". Library of Congress Country Studies on Afghanistan. August 2008. Retrieved October 10, 2010.

44 "International Religious Freedom Report 2007". State Department, US. 2007. Retrieved 21 March 2009

45 a branch of Tibetan Vajrayana which itself is the main surviving branch of Indian Vajrayana

Participation from faith-based organizations in South Asia

In the South Asia region, a total of 18 organizations participated in the mapping. Of the 52 organizations invited to participate from the region, 14 organizations completed the on-line questionnaire, five of which were also interviewed to obtain additional qualitative data. The relatively low number of responses could possibly be due to limited access to technology in the region, as well as constraints in being able to respond to a survey in English. In-depth interviews were conducted with nine organizations in the region, five of which also participated in the survey. An additional four faith-based organizations known for their work on violence against women and girls were invited to provide information through interviews in order to expand the scope of the mapping. The tables or charts of numerical data in this section reflect the responses of the 14 organizations that responded to the online survey, and the qualitative examples of responses to violence against women and girls include information gathered through all nine interviews.

Figure 6 shows the faiths that the survey participants most frequently cited as identifying with. Of the 14 organizations responding to the survey, five cited one faith only; the remainder ticked multiple boxes, indicating the number of faiths that guided the organizations' work and/or the different faith groups worked with.

Figure 6: Faith identities of participating South Asian FBOs
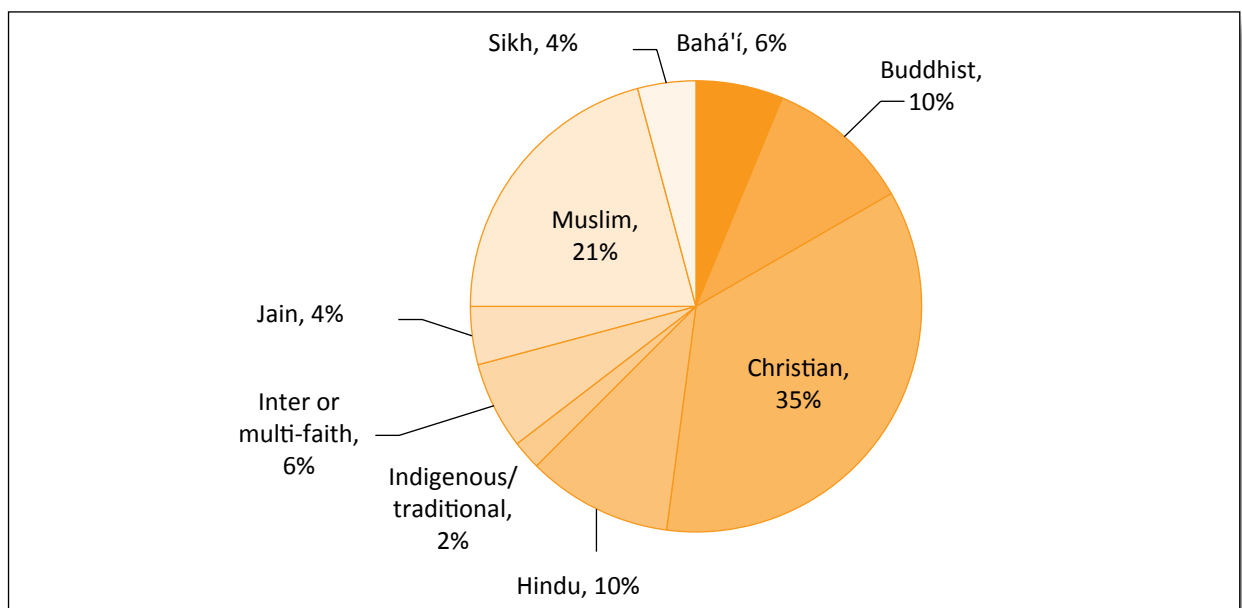
This could reflect a limitation of the questionnaire which did not differentiate between a faith *guiding* an organization, and the faith orientation of communities that the organization *reaches out to*. The in-depth interviews helped clarify this distinction in some cases.

A brief profile of the responding organizations

This section gives a brief description of the participating organizations that responded to the online survey, and the four additional organizations that were invited to participate in interviews.

Afghan Family Guidance Association (AFGA) is a Muslim organization focused on preventing domestic violence, including sexual and physical abuse, in Afghanistan. It is an accredited organization of the International Planned Parenthood Federation and addresses issues of violence through its work on sexual and reproductive health.

The *Masjid Council for Community Advancement* (MACCA) is an interfaith and Muslim organization, based in Bangladesh, working to prevent violence against women by working with faith leaders. It offers direct support services such as counseling and legal services, at the community level.

World Vision International is a Christian (ecumenical) organization. The India office addresses a wide range of violence against women issues. It provides direct support services, such as counseling, health services and shelter, in selected areas where these are not available.

Two Christian organizations in India, that requested their identity to be withheld, work primarily in conflict affected areas and are running community-based support services for women who are trafficked, and programmes focusing on HIV prevention.

The Bahá'í Department of External Affairs of the *National Spiritual Assembly of India*, an international organization with a national chapter in India, undertakes educational efforts to facilitate processes of individual and social transformation, including stopping violence against women.

The *Art of Living Foundation* is an India-based spiritual organization with chapters in most of the South Asian countries. It engages in raising public awareness on issues of violence, in particular on harmful practices such as son preference.

The *Interreligious Council-Nepal* works with a wide range of faith communities to prevent violence against women and girls including the Bahá'í, followers of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, indigenous and/or traditional faiths, and Jain, Muslim and Sikh communities in Nepal. The National Inter-Religious Network on Violence Against Women-Nepal (NIRN-Nepal) works with communities and faith leaders from Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Muslim, Sikh, Om Sai and Shree Krishna Pranami faiths.

Shanti Sewa Ashram Peace Service Centre (SSA) in Nepal is a Buddhist and Hindu organization focusing on preventing domestic violence and supporting women and girls affected by violence. SSA encourages awareness-raising at its *ashrams* (spiritual centers) and is a member of the Interreligious Council-Nepal.

The *Asian Muslim Action Network* (AMAN) Pakistan chapter is a Muslim organization implementing education and advocacy programmes to prevent violence against women and girls.

People's Action for Free and Fair Elections in Sri Lanka works with Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim communities to prevent trafficking, and provides referrals for violence-affected women to organizations that provide support services.

Women's Education and Research Centre (WERC) is a secular organization in Sri Lanka working with Buddhist, Christian and Hindu communities, addressing several forms of violence against women and girls, and providing prevention and support-oriented services. WERC, as a secular organization, was included in the mapping because they specifically engage faith leaders at community level as part of their work to end violence against women.

The four additional faith-based organizations that provided qualitative information were:

Islamic Relief in Pakistan, conducts post-disaster related development activities, and addresses violence against women and girls as a cross-cutting issue in their work.

Kithu Sevana in Sri Lanka, a (Christian) church-based organization working across the country, led by Reverend Adrian De Visser, with programmes addressing violence against women and girls.

The *Sarvodaya Movement* in Sri Lanka, is a people's movement founded on Buddhist principles with substantial programmes on the ground addressing violence against women and girls.

The *Centre for Peace and Spirituality* in India**,** working under the guidance of Moulana Wadiduddin Khan, a revered Islamic scholar, was founded in 2001 and aims to promote and reinforce a culture of peace through mind-based spirituality.[46]

3.2 Forms of violence addressed by faith-based organizations in South Asia

Eight of the fourteen participating organizations said that ending violence against women was one of their strategies or goals. The survey sought responses on the various forms of violence that organizations address. Of the 34 forms of violence listed in the survey, all were cited by at least one of the respondents as an issue being addressed. Where respondents reported that ending violence against women and girls was not a *primary* goal of their organization, they still reported on forms of violence that they respond to in their community level work. During the interviews, several participants explained that while their organization may not yet have an articulated official position on issues of violence against women and girls, they do however respond to cases of violence that are identified in the communities targeted in their general outreach work. Figure 7 shows the comparative prevention and support responses of participating South Asian organizations by summary categories.

Figure 7: Forms of violence addressed by participating South Asian FBOs

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46 http://cpsglobal.org/content/about-us
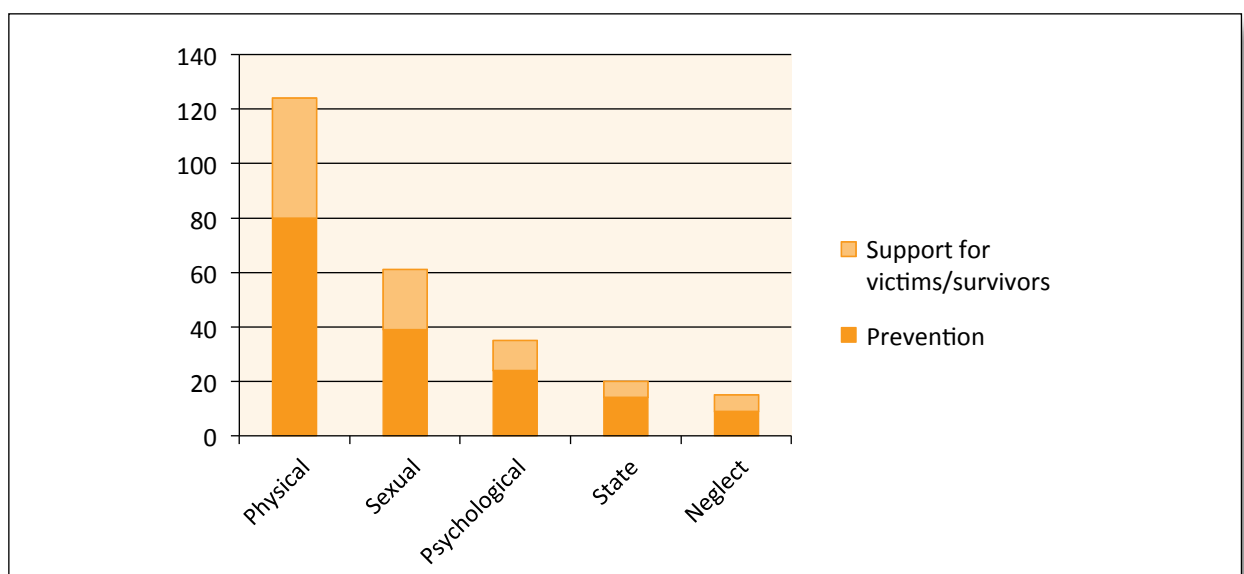
Table 6 shows the most frequently cited areas of violence addressed by responding faith-based organizations.

Table 6: Responses to VAWG according to the categories of prevention and support (South Asia)

Prevention	Support
Domestic violence (11)*	Domestic violence (6)
Harassment (8)	Trafficking (5)
Trafficking (8)	Dowry related violence (4)
Harmful practices – marriage related, son preference (8)	Harassment (4)
Dowry-related violence (7)	Physical punishment (4)
Physical punishment (7)	Sexual violence and rape (4)
Psychological or emotional abuse (6)	Burning -setting on fire (4)

** Figures in parentheses show the number of organizations that indicated they are responding to the differing forms of violence against women and girls, through prevention and support approaches respectively.

South Asian respondents identified domestic violence as the most common form of violence addressed through their work (11 of the 14 organizations). In common with the other sub-regions, organizations are more focused on prevention-related activities than the provision of services supporting those affected by violence. Only six of the organizations reported that they provide both prevention activities and support services: *MACCA* in Bangladesh, *Inter-religious Council* and *Shanti Sewa Ashram* in Nepal, *AFGA* in Afghanistan, *World Vision* in India, and *WERC* in Sri Lanka.

Some potentially contradictory reporting was noted in a minority of survey responses. While organizations reported that they provide support services, in later sections of the survey they state that they are not well placed to provide such services. A follow-up interview with one organization revealed that it did not provide shelter or counseling services to women affected by violence even though they reported that as an activity in their survey response. This disparity was likely caused by the question not clarifying what exactly was meant by *providing* support services. Some organizations indicated that particular services are part of their response because they provide *referrals,* rather than implement the activities themselves.

While the survey provided space for organizations to report details about the support services they provide, in most cases additional descriptive information was not included. The interviews provided opportunities to gather further information about organizational strategies to address violence against women and girls. In some cases, respondents reported that they work on complex and sensitive issues, such as pre-natal sex selection. The *Art of Living Foundation* (AOL) in India collaborates at national level with UNFPA to address pre-natal sex selection and infanticide in the context of son preference. As part of their general outreach work on peace and justice AOL conducts community level activities such as holding mass camps and spiritual gatherings. Notable, is that AOL leaders' command considerable respect within international advocacy forums such as those of the UN. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the organization's leader, is a vocal advocate for peace and social justice issues. This is an example of a faith-based organization with an established relationship with a UN agency at country-level.

A number of organizations indicated that they provide counseling services, although follow-up interviews revealed that there may have been a tendency to conflate *general* counseling services offered (for emotional stress, pressures of modern day living) with more specific counseling for women survivors of violence. A smaller number of organizations reported providing *direct* services, such as shelter, health or legal services. A frequent response during interviews was that funding constraints limited organizational ability to provide shelter and direct support to women and girls affected by violence. Several organizations reported that achieving a peaceful and moral society is one of their guiding principles, so community outreach programmes often focus on morality and family values, promoting messages that violence against women and girls is contradictory to the goal of achieving a peaceful and moral society. Examples of direct support and outreach services offered by faith-based organizations were also found in some contexts.

Box 4: Providing support to women affected by violence in Bangladesh

Masjid Council supporting women affected by violence in Bangladesh

The Masjid Council for Community Advancement in Bangladesh works within the purviews of Islam, but reaches out to communities of all faiths. MACCA has a legal support department as well as a women's department that deals specifically with cases of violence. On a voluntary basis, lawyers associated with MACCA provide support to women who approach them for help. MACCA combines this practical grassroots work with high level advocacy initiatives, by hosting the Council for Inter-faith Harmony*, which seeks to bring leaders from all faiths on a common platform to address social justice issues. With guidance from its widely-respected founder, the Secretary General, Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Council coordinates advocacy platforms for diverse faith leaders at national level, to address issues such as HIV prevention, and violence against women and girls. It thus seeks to raise awareness of violence issues among faith leaders at national level, in addition to providing direct support to women affected by violence.

*www.cihbd.org

Settings in which violence occurs

The survey sought information on the settings in which violence occurs that are the focus of faith-based organizations' responses to violence. Domestic violence is the most prevalent form of violence against women and girls in South Asia and organizations reported responding primarily to violence that occurs within the household (*n*11), in the workplace (*n*7) and in schools (*n*7). Organizations also reported responding to violence against women in spaces such as refugee camps, public spaces and in post-natural disaster situations. In Nepal and Sri Lanka in particular, internal conflict has added a particular dimension to the violence experienced by women, both in the home as well as in public spaces. In interviews, faith-based organizations from those countries explained how, in conflict or post-conflict situations, they see themselves as well-placed to reach out to communities to address issues of violence against women and girls (see box 5). Custodial violence, as well as violence in conflict or post-conflict situations, was cited by four organizations as contexts in which women face violence.

Box 5: Shelter for conflict-affected women and children in Sri Lanka

Shelter homes for women and children affected during conflict in Sri Lanka

The Sarvodaya Sharamadana Movement in Sri Lanka is a people-centered movement built on Buddhist and Gandhian principles of non-violence and peace building. Working in all districts of Sri Lanka, the movement has a legal unit, the Sahanuma, and provides shelters for vulnerable women in each district. The legal unit has volunteer lawyers who take up cases of violence against women and girls. In several districts shelter homes offer support services and counseling to women and children who experienced violence in conflict-affected areas. In addition, a shelter called Maa Sevana provides care and support for teenagers who have become pregnant as a consequence of rape. A youth-led Santhi Sevana or peace brigade spreads messages of non-violence, and raises awareness about violence against women and children.

3.3 Primary targets and secondary audiences

All organizations, except one, reported that women and girls 'in general' are their primary targets, with about half reporting that they work mainly with urban women, and half with rural women. Additionally, seven organizations reported that men and boys are primary targets for their general work. Six organizations reported providing support services for women and girl survivors of violence. Figure 8 shows the number of responses to each of the possible categories of primary targets in the survey.

Figure 8: Primary targets of participating South Asian FBOs
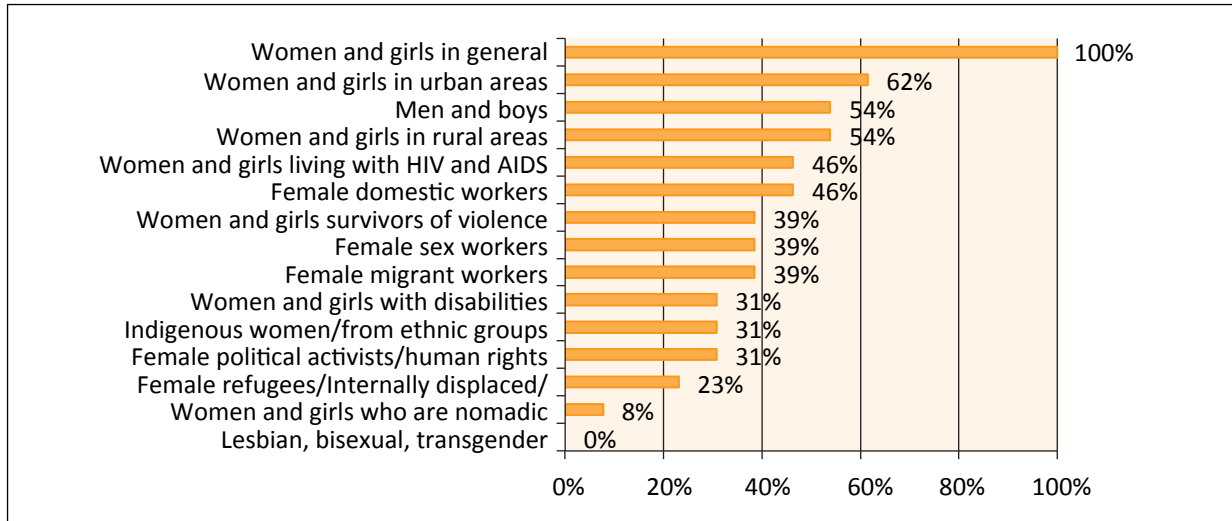
Among the organizations interviewed, *Art of Living Foundation* in India, *Sarvodaya* in Sri Lanka and *Shanthi Sewa Ashram* in Nepal reported that they worked with youth groups to raise awareness on issues of violence, and used peer networks of young people to conduct outreach on non-violence and peace building. *Kithu Sevana* in Sri Lanka supported programmes that focus on both men and women, raising awareness of the causes and impacts of violence against women and girls. An added feature of their outreach was an alcohol rehabilitation programme targeting men, where issues of violence are also addressed.

Box 6: Working with men to prevent violence against women

Working with men in Sri Lanka to prevent violence against women

Modeled on services run by Alcoholics Anonymous, Kithu Sevana runs several alcohol rehabilitation centers for men. The programme ensures anonymity for men, and is run on the basis of an understanding that violence does not end once a case has been resolved through the legal system, or once a man who has committed violence has reformed his behavior. It takes account of the impact on family members who may still have feelings of anger or mistrust. Follow-up family rehabilitation camps are provided so as to engage all affected family members in the process of healing.

Concerning the secondary targets of responding organizations, eleven stated that they work with community leaders, and ten stated that they partner with other civil society and community based groups. Ten respondents said they work with other faith-based groups and with religious leaders. In Bangladesh, for example, Imams are targeted by MACCA through a programme that promotes responding to violence against women and girls in the context of the principles of Islam. MACCA has produced a series of sermon guides that address violence against women and girls, and on international frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals, indicating its approach to combining faith messages with secular rights-based messages. Within these sermons women's rights are addressed with a dedicated chapter on gender issues. In another example, the Family Planning Association of Bangladesh (FPAB) undertook a project to improve the knowledge and understanding of sexual and reproductive health services among Madrasah students and Imams. Deploying a range of innovative ideas, including the use of a documentary film, the project sought to create opportunities for young people to debate issues such as masculinity and violence.[47]

Members of the media, individuals in government and those in education were identified as target audiences by organizations looking to influence societal discourse on violence against women and girls.

Table 7: Secondary audiences targeted by South Asian FBOs

Secondary audiences and targets	Male	Female
Community-based groups/members	10*	10
Community leaders	11	11
Faith-based groups	10	9
Religious leaders	9	8
Political leaders	5	4
Peer leaders	5	4
Faith communities	8	7
Educational professionals (i.e. teachers, educators)	8	7
General public/community at large	6	5
Government officials (i.e. decision makers, policy implementers)	8	7
Journalists/Media	8	7

*Figures show the number of organizations responding to each category.

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47 Personal communication with Jameel Zameer, IPPF South Asia Regional Office

3.4 Strategies to address violence against women and girls

Several participating organizations used broad education initiatives as entry points to address issues of violence against women and girls, aiming to equip communities to deal with violence and to establish systems for legal redress. As data has shown, a correlation between violence against women and low levels of literacy and education is also likely to reduce women's vulnerability to violence.[48] Literacy forums, or adult education and livelihood groups, are often used as 'safe spaces' where women can discuss these issues. Such spaces create opportunities for faith-based organizations to advocate for strategies that women can use to counter violence experienced within the household.

Among more direct support services provided to women, *Kithu Sevana* in Sri Lanka runs shelter homes in different parts of the country and provides women with vocational training to assist them to become self-reliant.

Several organizations responded that large spiritual gatherings (*satsangs* in the South Asian Hindu context) are effective spaces to promote non-violent practices and respectful family values. Most of the survey respondents reported using some form of public campaigning to address violence against women and girls. Respondents reported reaching out using various locally appropriate media forms such as posters, street plays, and films that address violence issues. Several organizations stated that they pursue a strategy of partnering with the media in order to raise awareness on these issues.

In Nepal the *Interreligious Council*, in partnership with the *Shanti Sewa Ashram* and collectives such as the *National Inter-religious Network on Violence Against Women-Nepal* (NIRN-Nepal), have shown documentary films that promote equality for women during religious gatherings. Such efforts have been supported by UN Women at the country level. Leaflets were distributed at these meetings, using religious texts to promote women's rights. The *Afghanistan Family Guidance Association* reported using a multi-pronged strategy to address family violence. A forty-two episode radio drama series entitled '"Happy Family" was broadcast. As a follow-up to this series, senior leaders from the community were requested to select ten families that fit the criteria of a happy, violence free family, and certificates were issued. In parallel, an initiative through the Ministry of Haj used books on family values, non-violence and respecting women from an Islamic perspective, as awareness raising tools among religious leaders.

48 UNIFEM Afghanistan, Violence Against Women Primary Database, 2007

Box 7: Providing a safe space for women in Sri Lanka

Providing a safe space for women to explore self-reliance in Sri Lanka

Kithu Sevana (Under the Shadow of Christ) is a Sri Lanka church-based initiative. While the church is based on Christian principles, its programmes reach out to communities of all faiths and the organization does not proselytze. Following the conflict in the north and north-east of the country, several women were found either abandoned or widowed. They are housed in Appe Kadal (Our Nest) centers run by Kithu Sevana that provide shelter and training in vocational skills to help women become financially independent. Once the women complete the training they are given 'seed' money to establish a business. Women are also rehabilitated in 'host' communities, which then play a protective role in their lives. A model is currently being explored to see whether three or four women can be supported by a venture capitalist to start a business, wherein part of the proceeds from the business will go towards repayment of the loan. One of the key components of Kithu Sevana's response is reintegration of women within communities, where they are provided with a space where they are respected. This is preceded by a strategy of building trust with the local community.

The *Baha'i* community of India provides educational outreach designed to increase understanding of the nobility of human nature, the purpose of life, and the processes of individual and social transformation. As part of this initiative they conduct courses that specifically aim to reduce violence against women and girls through a module called "Equal Wings", and use a booklet called "Beyond Legal Reforms, Culture and Capacity in the Eradication of Violence Against Women and Girls." The *Art of Living Foundation* in India accesses printed media routinely to write articles on violence issues in newspapers. Leaders of *MACCA* in Bangladesh, as well as the *Centre for Peace and Spirituality* in India, appear regularly on television where advice is provided to individuals either calling in, or writing to seek support.

Figure 9 : Public campaigning and advocacy responses of participating South Asian FBOs
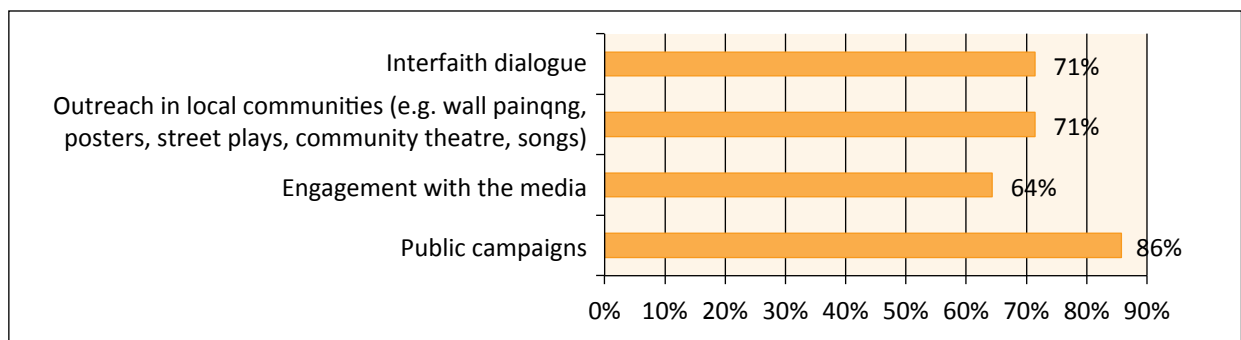
Several organizations in South Asia adopt strategies urging communities to "worship" women and not to perpetuate violence against them. The proverb, "When the woman is worshipped, god will be happy", guides the work of one organization. *Shanti Sewa Ashram* cited the status of Nepal as a Shakti Peeth "so women are well respected here". In Nepal, a Shakti Peeth is a place of worship consecrated to the goddess Shakti, and the influence of the feminine deity is perceived to have a constructive impact on raising the status of women in general. However, Shakti's legend includes self-immolation when her husband is disrespected. In a society where equality exists between men and women Shakti's actions could be seen as an ultimate act of protest at the maltreatment of her husband, but in a society where men have higher social status than women, the legend might serve to reinforce the sacrificial role of women, with potentially fatal implications. In this respect, ideas around worshipping women may reflect a difference between faith-based and rights-based perspectives in relation to women's rights.

Follow-up interviews revealed that often an organization decides to work on violence because of the personal conviction of a leader. One perspective came from the leader of *Kithu Sevana* who described the personal journey that led to him deciding to work on the issue. *"I became restless as a Christian leade. I felt the church is ignoring the issues, it did not want to acknowledge that violence exists in our societies…so I looked into the scriptures for answers and found that they say 'love thy neighbour'. Aren't our wives and sisters our neighbours? I use this principle to work on the issue. I started working on it in 1996 after I went through this self-realization."*

3.5 Networking and collaboration

Survey participants from South Asia provided information about organizations they partner with at local, national and international levels to address violence against women and girls. The majority have partnerships at local and national levels, with most partners identified as being other NGOs, networks of NGOs, or community based organizations (CBOs). Two organizations reported working only at local level, with CBOs. Six of the fourteen organizations reported partnerships with UN agencies, either at national or international levels. Partnerships with government departments, at local or national levels, were cited less frequently. Several organizations reported that they are a part of networks of faith-based organizations.

A number of organizations described inter-faith approaches to dealing with issues of violence against women and girls. This was found in Nepal where the three organizations that responded to the survey - *Violence Against Women Nepal*, *Shanti Sewa Ashram* and the *Inter-religious Council* - are collaborating to engage more than 25 organizations from Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Bahá'í and Jain faiths in a dialogue on addressing violence against women and girls at national level. Their collective strategy aims to work with government, the military and Maoist groups, as well as society in general, to address the issue. The *Art of Living Foundation* in India is also working collaboratively with faith-based organizations from all faiths, both nationally and globally. MACCA in Bangladesh pursues a strategy to engage leaders from Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu and Christian faiths.

Figure 10: Networks and partners of participating South Asian FBOs
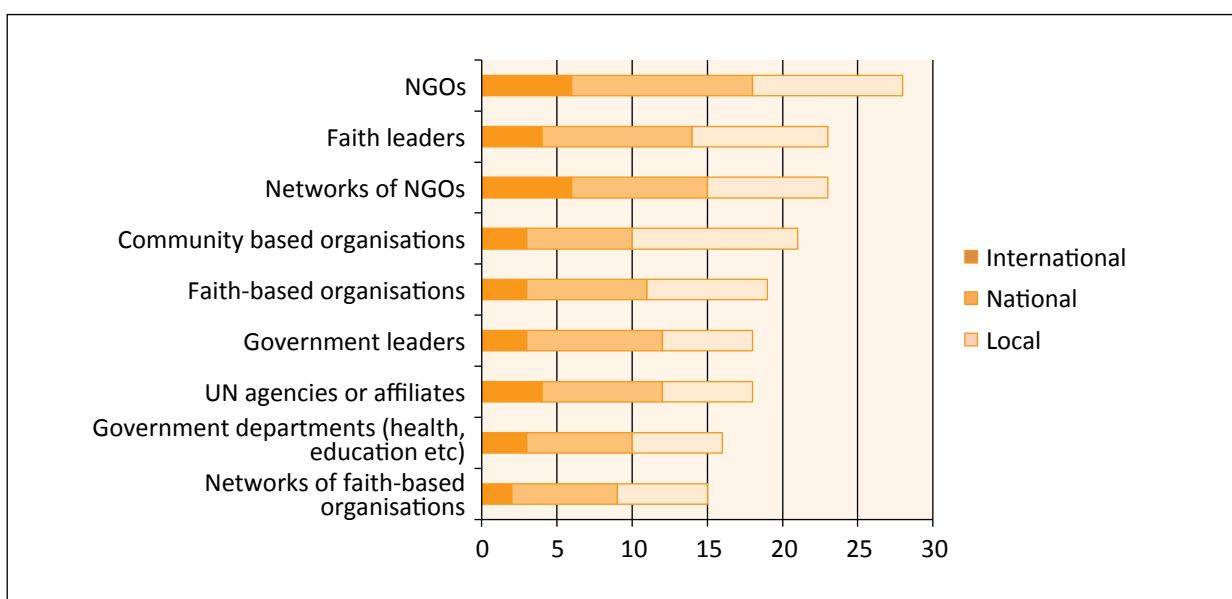
An example of a faith-based organization that collaborates with both faith and secular partners is the *Afghanistan Family Guidance Association* (AFGA), which is an accredited organization of the *International Planned Parenthood Federation* (IPPF). AFGA provides sexual and reproductive health services, and works closely with faith leaders to implement community-based programmes. The organization also partners with other Islamic faith-based organizations to address women's sexual and reproductive health needs, and to implement violence prevention programmes. While IPPF is not a faith-based organization, all their activities in Afghanistan are conducted through community forums where faith leaders play a leadership role. The IPPF and AFGA partnership is a good example of a secular and faith-based collaboration addressing sensitive issues.

The questionnaire also sought information from respondents about specific campaigns, consortiums or networks that the organizations are members of. Nine organizations reported belonging to networks and consortiums at national level. In one such example, *AFGA* in Afghanistan partners with the Ministry of Haj (religious affairs) and with UNFPA and other UN agencies at the national level, and is also part of the national Gender Task Force of the Ministry of Health. Another example was provided by *World Vision* in India, a member of national coalitions and networks working on violence against women and children that participates in national campaigns against pre-natal sex selection and early marriage. *World Vision India* also engages with various government bodies, participates in national forums such as Solutions Exchange (an online discussion forum on development issues), and is involved with campaigns such as the Asia-Pacific Breakthrough Campaign on violence against women and girls. The *Inter-religious Council* in Nepal partners with UN Women at national level as part of the UNiTE Campaign, and is linked into the Men Engage campaign to end violence against women and girls. In Sri Lanka, the *Women's Education and Research Centre* reported that it works with state entities including the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and with a forum that brings NGOs together.

Box 8: Faith-based and secular networks cited by FBOs in South Asia

Faith-based networks	Secular networks
• AMAN network • Asia-Pacific Breakthrough: The Women, Faith and Development Summit to End Global Poverty • Baha'i International Community (Working Group on Girls) • Baha'i Local Spiritual Assemblies • Hindu Vidyapeeth-Nepal • Interreligious Council Nepal • National Interfaith Network for Violence against Women, Nepal • National interfaith network to address violence against women • Regional and State Baha'i Council	• India Alliance for Child Rights • Gender net (Solution Exchange), India • Gender Task force at Ministry of Public Health, Afghanistan • local level self-help groups and child protection mechanisms, India • Men Engage, Nepal • Ministry of Women's Department, Sri Lanka • Ministry of Women, Nepal • NANGAN (National NGOs Network Group Against AIDS Nepal) • National level networks and coalitions addressing violence against children, India • Religions for Peace-Nepal • Sakriya Sewa Samaj, Nepal • Society for Empowerment-Nepal (STEP-Nepal) • Sri Lanka Non-Government Organization Forum (SLNGO FORUM) • UNiTE campaign • Women Act, Nepal • Youth Society for Peace, Nepal

3.6 Laws, policies and frameworks

Six organizations that completed the questionnaire provided details about national or international policies, laws and frameworks that guide their work. The in-depth interviews sought further details about organizations' engagement with rights-based approaches. Overall, the South Asian participating organizations indicated an awareness of rights-based frameworks and approaches, although some also emphasized that faith-inspired action was their primary motivation in the response to violence against women and girls.

Survey responses show that organizations working within both faith and rights-based approaches are aware of national and international laws and frameworks. *World Vision* in India reported being guided by the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and, at national level, the Domestic Violence Act, the Pre-Conception Pre-Natal Diagnostic Test Act, and the Immoral Trafficking Act. *MACCA* in Bangladesh is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the National Child Policy (2010).

AMAN in Pakistan is guided by CEDAW, and the guidelines of the National Women's Commission. The *Bahá'í* in India are also guided by CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Sri Lanka *WERC*, which works with faith communities, draws on the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 2005, the Women's Charter, UN Security Council Resolution 1325, National Plan of Action on Women, Penal Code Amendment, and the Beijing Platform of Action.

Box 9: Muslim Centre for Peace and Spirituality

The unique stance of an Islamic organization working in India

The Centre for Peace and Spirituality under the leadership of Moulana Wadiduddin Khan is an Islamic organization primarily working on preparing individuals to meet the day-to-day challenges that life poses. The Moulana has a wide following, holds frequent televised sermons and is a respected moderate voice from the faith sector. A spokesperson for the organization emphasized that any work they do to address violence against women is from the perspective of peace-building, and not from a rights-based perspective. In their opinion a demand for rights can lead to confrontations between opposing positions. Instead, they prefer to work towards building peace by making individuals aware of their duties towards society and family and, from this *positive* viewpoint, they emphasize violence prevention. They aim their messages at communities of all faiths using the principles of Islam to advance peace.

3.7 Summary

Faith-based organizations in the South Asia region reported that they address multiple forms of violence, with the majority responding to domestic violence. They also address context-specific forms of violence, such as acid-throwing in Bangladesh, pre-natal sex selection in India, and forms of violence against women caused by war and internal conflicts in Nepal and Sri Lanka. In common with the other sub-regions covered in the study, faith-based organizations in South Asia focused more on *prevention* of violence, than on providing support to survivors of violence. One organization explained a preference for working on prevention issues as being due to their view that perpetrators and survivors of violence alike are uncomfortable discussing personal experiences. To avoid putting survivors under stress, or making perpetrators feel threatened, the organization focuses efforts on fairly general awareness-raising of violence issues to reduce incidence.

Fewer than half of the faith-based organizations reported the use of international rights frameworks in their day to day work. This should be interpreted with caution as the responses could reflect the views or experiences of the respondents, rather than organizational perspectives. Generally, the faith-based organizations interviewed revealed an understanding of rights-based approaches, although all but one emphasized that they are guided more by principles of peace and social justice, than by a rights agenda, in their response to the issue of violence against women and girls. Most respondents reported using awareness-raising and education as entry points to address violence against women and girls – emphasizing norms of non-violence within families as key factors contributing to the establishment of a peaceful and humane society. Further work could be done to identify where rights-based and faith-based messages overlap on the issues of violence against women and girls as, at first glance, the divergent language could lead to an assumption that the goals and approaches are not compatible, which does not appear to be the case.

Some of the respondents indicated that they work independently, although many listed national and international networks of faith-based and secular organizations with whom they work to address violence against women and girls, and related issues such as HIV/AIDS. Resource limitations and lack of awareness of available forums and networks might explain why some faith-based organizations seem less linked into networks.

In instances where faith-based organizations articulated specific strategies to address violence against women and girls they emphasized their belief that faith leaders are well placed to introduce ideas of non-violence, being perceived as credible voices by communities. In most instances the personal convictions of individual faith leaders working on violence had guided the scale and nature of work on violence against women and girls.

IV Mapping the South-East Asia region

4.1 Introduction

An overview of forms of violence against women and girls in the region

South-East Asian countries with faith-based organizations that participated in this mapping were Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam. The region is characterized by both urban and rural poverty. Of an estimated population of 1.3 billion, 85 per cent live on less than the equivalent of $2 a day.[49] South-East Asia is home to mega cities with populations of over 9 million people (for example, Bangkok and Jakarta, the capital cities of Thailand and Indonesia respectively) and extremely high density cities: Manila in the Philippines being the most densely populated city in the world, with 43,000 inhabitants per square kilometre. Despite rural-urban migration in many South-East Asian countries, most people continue to live outside of cities. At least two-thirds of the population live in rural areas in Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Timor Leste and Vietnam.

Domestic and gender based violence remain the most prevalent forms of violence against women, with up to 50 per cent of women in the sub-region experiencing physical violence from their intimate partner.[50] Table 8 provides data on intimate partner violence prevalence from selected population-based studies conducted in selected South-East Asian countries.

Cultural attitudes towards men's and women's roles tend to be reflected in and reinforced by gender-biased legislation and policies.[51] Despite all ASEAN[52] countries having ratified CEDAW, national legislation lags behind and is sometimes inconsistent within countries. The South-East Asia region is characterised by significant movement of people who migrate either seasonally, or permanently, for work. Migrant workers have increased vulnerability to abuse and exploitation, because of isolation from their families, language barriers, and their sometimes illegal status, all of which reduce the likelihood of them seeking legal protection. Women are particularly vulnerable to labour exploitation and sexual violence and abuse from employers.

Trafficking in women and children is also a serious issue for South-East Asia. According to the ILO, the prevalence of forced labor and sexual servitude is higher in Asia than anywhere else in the world, affecting nearly three in every 1,000 inhabitants. Men, women and children are trafficked both within and between countries.

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49 World Bank statistics

50 World Health Organization. Violence against women and the role of the health sector. New Delhi: WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia; 1999. Document No. EA/WDD/9.

51 Kaybryn, Intimate Partner Transmission of HIV in Indonesia, Laos PDR and Thailand, UNIFEM, 2009

52 Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Table 8: Intimate partner violence prevalence, selected population-based studies in South East Asia[53]

Country	Year of study	Coverage	Sample			Proportion of women physically abused by partner (%)			Proportion of women sexually abused by partner (%)	
			Size	Study popula-tion	Age (years)	During previous 12 months	In current relation ship	Ever	During previous 12 months	Ever
Thailand [71]	2000	Bangkok	1536	III	15-49	8		23	17	30
	2000	Nakhonsawan (70% rural province)	1282	III	15-49	13		34	16	29
Indonesia[3]	1999-2000	Central Java	765						13	22
Philippines	1993	National	8481	V	15-49			10		
	1998	Cagayan de Oro City and Bukidnon Province	1660	II	15-49			26[j]		
Vietnam [74]	2002	Fila Bavi (rural)	883	III	17-60	8		31	2	7
Cambodia [18]	1996	Six region	1374	III	---			16		
China [75]	1999-2000		1665		20-64		34			
Timor-Leste [76]	2002	Dili (urban) & Alieu (rural)	256	III	18-49	25			16	

Study population: I = all women; II = currently married/partnered women; III = ever married/partnered women;

IV = married men reporting on own use of violence against spouse; V = women with a pregnancy outcome;

The major religions practiced in South-East Asia

This section provides an overview of the religious profiles of the eight countries in which the mapping respondents were based. Overall, Islam is the most widely practiced religion in South-East Asia with approximately 240 million adherents. The majority live in Indonesia where 85 per cent of the 230 million population is Muslim. Other faiths represented in Indonesia include Christianity (9 per cent), Hinduism (3 per cent), and Buddhism (2 per cent).[54]

In Malaysia Islam is the official national religion, although legislation guarantees freedom of religion. Approximately 60 per cent of the population are Muslim, 19 per cent Buddhist, 9 per cent Christian, 6 per cent Hindu, and 3 per cent practice Confucianism, Taoism or follow other traditional Chinese religions.[55]

Cambodia's population is 90-95 per cent Buddhist, the Muslim population is approximately 3 per cent, and the remaining Christian and Bahá'í faith members account for less than 2 per cent.

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53 Health sector response to gender-based violence. An assessment of the Asia Pacific Region, UNFPA 2010

54 Indonesia census 2000

55 General Report of the Population and Housing Census 2000. Putrajaya: Department of Statistics, Malaysia. 2005

Thailand has a similar religious profile to Cambodia, with approximately 95 per cent of the population identifying as Buddhist.[56] Islam has the next largest following (around 4 per cent), with the remaining population (approximately 1 per cent) comprising Christian, Sikh and Jewish adherents.

In Myanmar, 89 per cent of the population are Buddhist (predominantly Theravada), 4 percent practice Christianity, 4 per cent Islam, 1 per cent are animist, and 2 per cent follow other religions, including Mahayana Buddhism, Hinduism, East Asian religions and Bahá'í.[57]

In Vietnam, 85 per cent of the population identify as Buddhists. Vietnam is also characterized by the influences of several philosophical approaches, with most people (80 per cent) ascribing to Tam Dao (which translates as "Triple religion") - a mixture of mainly Mahayana Buddhism blended with Taoism, Confucianism and ancestor worship. Approximately 8 per cent of the population is Christian, and 3 per cent adhere to Cao Dai, a syncretic religion. The remaining population are mainly Muslim, Hindu or Bahá'í.

The Philippines and Timor Leste are the only two predominantly Christian countries in Asia. In the Philippines, approximately 80 per cent of the population is Roman Catholic, with 10 per cent belonging to other Christian denominations, and 5 - 10 per cent of the population being Muslim. Philippine traditional religions are still practiced by some indigenous and tribal groups, often combined with elements of Christianity and Islam. Animism, folk religion, and shamanism remain present as undercurrents of mainstream religion.[58]

In Timor Leste, 97 per cent of the population is Roman Catholic. Of the remaining 3 per cent, Islam, Christian Protestantism, Hinduism and Buddhism are represented.[59] Throughout Timor Leste, local animist traditions continue to influence culture.

Participation from South-East Asian faith-based organizations

Twenty three faith-based organizations responded to the online survey from eight countries in the region. Within the overall mapping, organizations in South East Asia had the highest survey response rate, although 23 likely represents only a fraction of the faith-based organizations working in the region on women's rights and prevention of violence against women and girls. Barriers to participation were likely to be poor internet connections, as many countries in the region have poor telecommunications infrastructure. Language might also have been a factor, particularly as local and smaller community-based organizations were less likely to have bilingual or multilingual staff. The language of rights and violence may have also deterred some faith-based organizations from participating in the survey. As was found in the other sub-regions, many organizations working with vulnerable or impoverished women do not necessarily perceive their response as specifically related to violence against women and girls, nor do they use the language of human rights. In-depth interviews were conducted with five of the participating organizations to gain greater insight into their approaches, strategies and key messages.
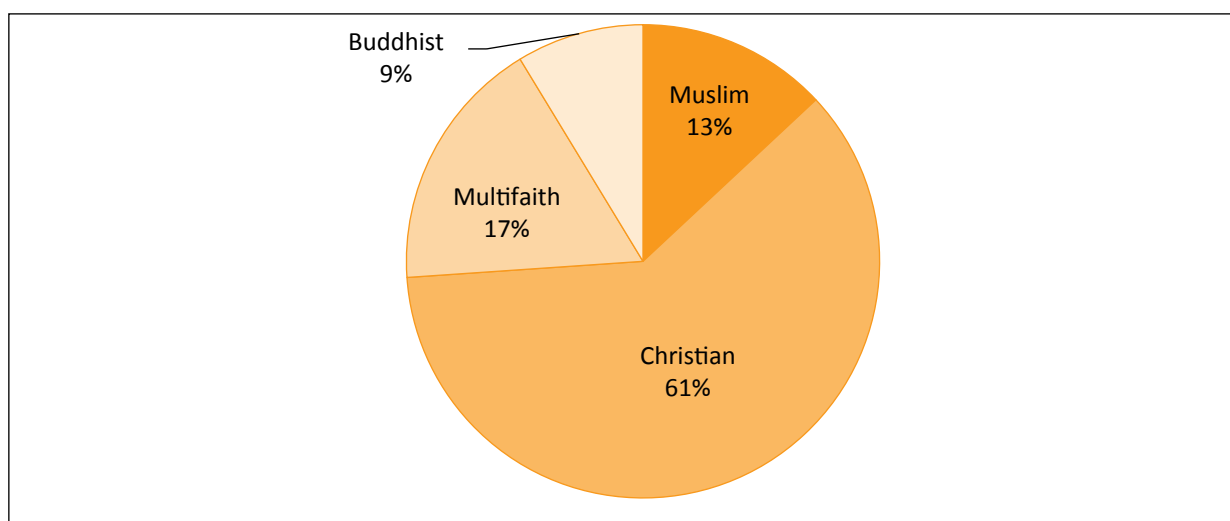
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56 Thailand national census 2000

57 "International Religious Freedom Report 2007 – Burma". State.gov

58 U.S. Department of State. (2008). Philippines: International Religious Freedom Report 2010

59 "Timor-Leste". State.gov. September 14, 2007

Figure 11: Faith identities of participating South-East Asian FBOs

Most (fourteen) of the responding organizations were Christian. The three responding organizations from predominantly Buddhist Cambodia were all Christian, as were the three responding organizations from Myanmar, also a Buddhist country.

The three participating Muslim organizations were from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. The two Buddhist organizations that responded were from Malaysia and Vietnam. Three of the four interfaith organizations were from Indonesia, and the fourth was from Thailand.

Brief profiles of the responding organizations

This section gives a brief description of the organizations that responded to the online survey.

In Cambodia, *Hagar Cambodia* is a Christian (ecumenical) organization that directly supports women affected by violence, and provides adult education and economic empowerment. Two further Cambodian Christian organizations participated in the survey: one providing direct support to women affected by violence, and the other providing referrals for services and working with faith communities to prevent violence against women and girls.

In Indonesia, *Lembaga Pengkajian Pemberdayaan Perempuan Anak Papua* (LP3A-P) Institute of Empowering Study for Women and Children Papua, is a local interfaith organization providing direct services to women affected by violence and implementing advocacy to prevent violence. LP3A-P works in Papua, a region of Indonesia that has experienced sustained conflict over decades, with very high rates of violence perpetrated against indigenous women and girls. *Puan Amal Hayati* is a local community-based interfaith organization that has focused on preventing violence against women since 2000. The Indonesian national chapter of *Asian Muslim Action Network* (AMAN) has worked on violence against women and girls since 2007.

In Malaysia, the *Buddhist Gem Fellowship* is a local organization consisting of professionals that volunteer their expertise for training courses to raise awareness of and prevent, violence against women and girls. *Malaysian Care* is a Christian (ecumenical) organization working with women with addiction issues, and facilitating their access to health and legal services.

Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepherd is a Christian (Catholic) organization providing crisis and relief services for women affected by violence and promoting prevention through education outreach. The Sunni *Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia* has advocated for prevention of violence against women since the early 1980s, and opened a dedicated shelter for women in 2010.

In Myanmar, the ecumenical *National Young Women's Christian Association* focuses on preventing domestic violence and supporting women and girls affected by violence. Two organizations that requested anonymity facilitate women's access to legal and health services and promote the prevention of violence through education and advocacy.

Salvatorian Pastoral Care for Children is a local Christian (Catholic) organization in the Philippines providing direct services to women affected by violence in Quezon City and Cebu City. *Oblate Sisters of the Most Holy Redeemer* are present in 15 countries predominantly in the Americas and also in the Philippines. This Christian (Catholic) order provides support for abused girls and sex workers in Cebu and Manila. *Sabakan Ministry to Women and Children's Concerns, Inc*. is a Christian (Catholic) diocesan-based organization directly addressing issues of violence against women and children.

Based in Thailand, the regional headquarters of the *Asian Muslim Action Network* (AMAN), and the national chapter, have been responding to violence against women since 1990 through its outreach programme at grassroots level. AMAN draws on local experts on gender justice to raise awareness of violence issues and to support women affected by violence through income generating and self-help groups. A Child Protection and Development Center is managed by *the Human Help Network Foundation* in Thailand. It is jointly a Buddhist and Christian (Catholic) organization supporting children and young people. The *Father Ray Foundation* is a Christian (Catholic) organization in Thailand focused on supporting young adults and children with disabilities, who are especially vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation. A Christian (ecumenical) organization provides support women affected by violence and advocates at local, national and international levels to end violence against women and girls.

In Timor Leste, *Progressio* is a UK-based Christian (Catholic) organization and its Timor Leste programme has been supporting the national umbrella network for women's organizations since 2002.

In Vietnam, *Tinh An Lan Nhã (Khemarama)* is a Buddhist organization responding to domestic violence, as well as violence in post-natural disaster contexts at provincial level.

4.2 Forms of violence addressed by faith-based organizations in South-East Asia

The survey asked respondents what forms of violence they specifically respond to, and whether their response was focused on prevention and/or support to women survivors. Prevention work includes, but is not limited to, awareness raising and education on violence issues or promoting human and women's rights, advocacy and campaigning, and programmes which reduce women's vulnerability to violence (for example income generating).

An extensive list of 34 forms of abuse was included in the survey within which the different types can be grouped into five categories of violence: physical, psychological, sexual and reproductive, state, and neglect. As with the responses from faith-based organizations in the other two sub-regions, physical and sexual and reproductive violence categories were most frequently cited responses. Figure 12 shows the responses to violence against women and girls by summary category. Within the category of physical violence, domestic violence, physical abuse, physical punishment and slavery were most frequently responded to. Within the category of sexual violence, the most commonly responded forms of violence addressed were rape, sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, forced prostitution and pregnancy related violence. The main area of focus on psychological violence was psychological abuse and punishment, bullying and harassment.

Figure 12: Forms of violence addressed by participating South-East Asian FBOs
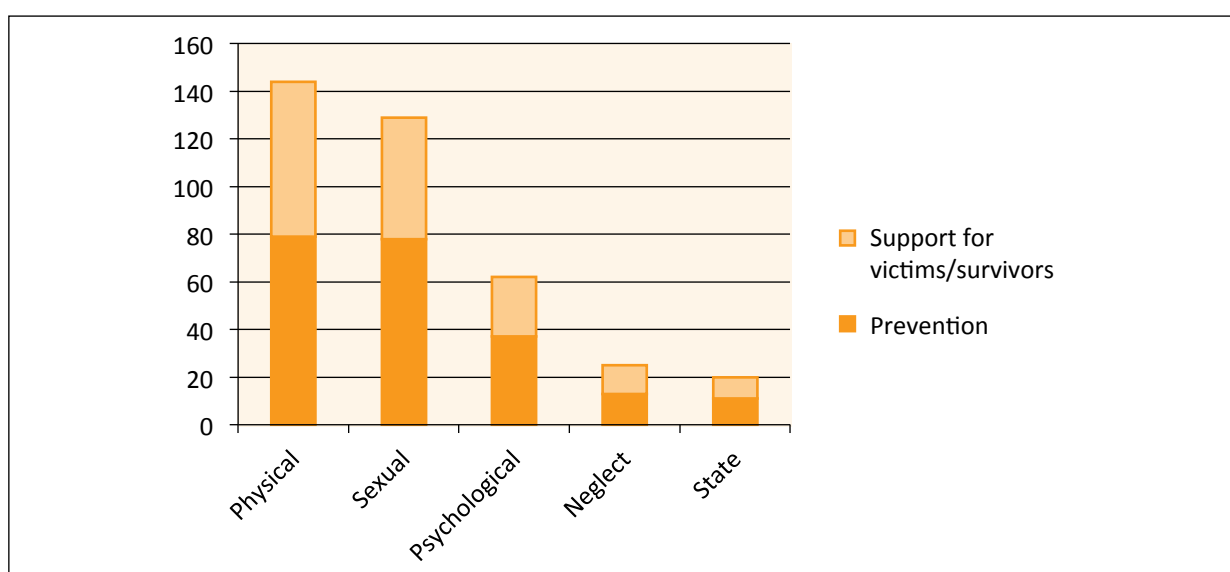
Table 9 shows the forms of violence that faith-based organizations reported addressing as part of their prevention and care responses.

Table 9: Responses to VAWG according to the categories of prevention and support (South East Asia)

Prevention		Support to survivors	
Domestic violence	17	Domestic violence	17
Sexual violence and rape	17	Sexual violence and rape	15
Trafficking	16	Physical abuse	14
Psychological or emotional abuse	14	Psychological or emotional abuse	13
Sexual abuse or exploitation	13	Sexual abuse or exploitation	13
Physical abuse	12	Abandonment	11

* Figures in parentheses show the number of organizations that indicated they are responding to the differing forms of violence against women and girls through prevention and support approaches.

Some faith-based organizations also mentioned addressing forms of violence that were not included in the survey list, such as supporting unmarried pregnant women who face stigma and discrimination because having children outside of marriage is taboo, as well as specific forms of sexual abuse such as incest.

Settings in which violence occurs

Surveyed organizations were asked to identify the settings in which violence occurs that their organization focuses on. There were twenty responses to this question, and all cited violence in households/within the family as a focus of their organizational response to violence against women and girls. Violence in the workplace was cited by 11 (55 per cent) organizations, violence in public spaces by 9 (45 per cent) and seven (35 per cent) addressed violence in schools.

Figure 13: Settings and spaces where violence takes place, and is addressed by South-East Asian FBOs
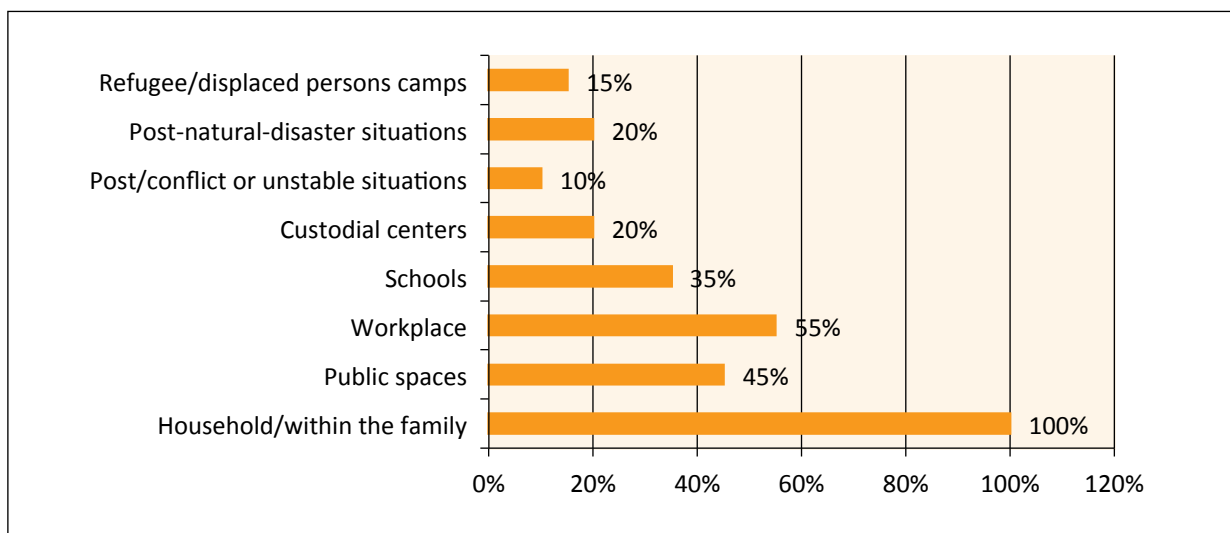

4.3 Primary targets and secondary audiences

Twenty organizations reported targeting women and girls 'in general', although no organization reported working with only this group. The category with the next most responses was survivors of violence (19, or 79 per cent, of organizations). The survey shows that faith-based organizations in South-East Asia respond to some of the most challenging and relevant issues in their contexts. Links between violence and HIV are made and responded to by over a quarter (29 per cent) of the participating faith-based organizations, and the same proportion work with female sex workers. Men and boys, and female domestic workers featured frequently in faith-based responses to violence against women and girls (cited by 9, or 38 per cent). In addition to the list provided in the survey, faith-based organizations also reported responding to women and girls who are victims of forced labor and human trafficking, prisoners, boys who have experienced sexual and gender based violence, women and girls with sexually transmitted infections, male communities in Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), women and girls from Nargis Cyclone affected villages in Myanmar, and Muallafs (women who have recently converted to Islam) who have experienced violence.

In relation to secondary targets, survey respondents showed that more of them engage with secular audiences than with faith audiences. Most organizations (20 out of 23) worked with community based groups and civil society organizations. Eighteen organizations reported working with female religious groups, 15 with male religious groups, 16 with female religious leaders, and 14 with male religious leaders. Respondents also reported working with therapists, counselors and government social workers.

Figure 14: Primary targets of participating South-East Asian FBOs
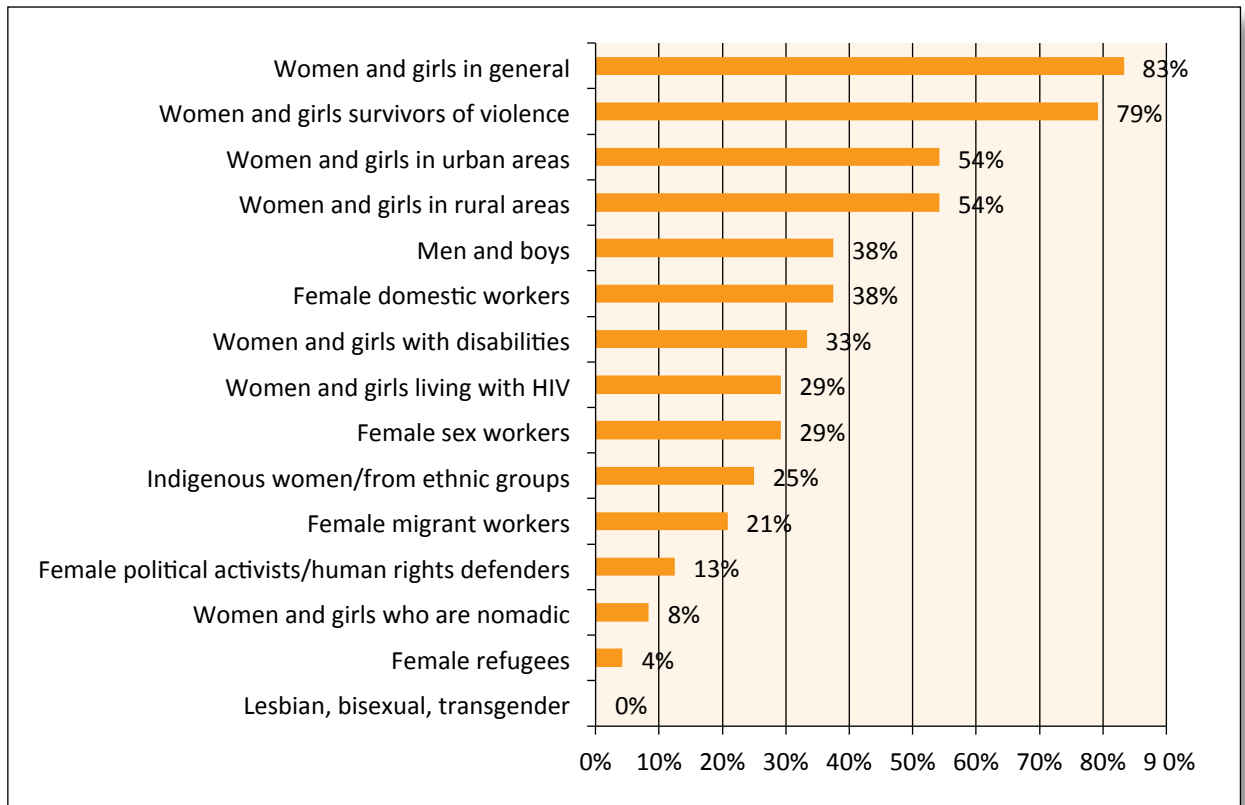
Box 10: Catholic sisters working with sex workers

> **Philippines-based order with over a century of working with sex workers**
>
> The Antonio Center in the Philippines was established in 2000 and is managed by the Oblate Sisters of the Most Holy Redeemer - an order founded in 1864 in Spain with the specific mission to support women engaged in sex work.
>
> The nuns running the Antonio Center adopt a practical approach to supporting women: engaging with sex workers in entertainment venues, supporting them to stay safe and healthy. There is also a rehabilitation center targeting sex workers that have experienced violence at the hands of their clients. Life skills and re-training opportunities are provided at the centre. The sex workers reportedly appreciate the non-judgmental approach adopted by the nuns, who do not aim to persuade them to leave the sex industry, but rather aim to protect them during their time as sex workers, and to support them to find alternative livelihoods if and when they choose to leave sex work.
>
> The Antonio Center has become a member of the Philippines Association of Club Owners and Bar Managers. Although initially wary of the nuns' intentions, members of the association have come to accept their presence. The nuns have made their objectives clear to these 'gatekeepers' and, while viewed as friends of both sex workers and bar owners, bar managers are warned that they must keep within the law, and that they will be reported if they employ underage sex workers. Through this partnership the nuns are able to gain access to sex workers in their place of work, and to ensure that no children are engaged in sex work in these entertainment venues.

4.4 Strategies in addressing violence against women and girls

Nearly two-thirds of respondents reported that addressing violence against women and girls is the main goal of their organization. All of the respondents reported providing some form of direct support services to women and girls affected by violence. Nearly all provided referrals and linkages to other services, and most provided some form of counseling. The *Oblate Sisters of the Most Holy Redeemer* in the Philippines provided therapy for women affected by violence, and capacity-building in the form of income generating initiatives. *Salvatorian Pastoral Care for Children,* also based in the Philippines, provided art therapy sessions for children affected by violence. *Buddhist Gem Fellowship* in Malaysia organized an annual counseling course, within which both domestic and sexual violence are addressed in the course modules.

Thirteen organizations indicated that they provided shelter to survivors of violence, although they did not elaborate on exactly what form of shelter. A Cambodian Christian organization that requested anonymity reported assisted women affected by violence to reintegrate into communities. Eleven provided legal support. *Malaysian Care,* for example, reported advising women affected by violence on their legal and human rights. Organizations also facilitated support groups or self-help groups: the *Child Protection and Development Center* in Thailand provided education programmes and a drop-in centre for women affected by violence. *Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepherd* in Malaysia worked with at risk young people to reduce their vulnerability to violence. Ten organizations provided health and medical services for women affected by violence.

In relation to awareness-raising and education, three-quarters of the faith-based organizations worked with community stakeholders (e.g. teachers and health workers etc). The majority raised awareness among faith communities through sermons, workshops and training. In contrast to the Pacific organizations, where all seven raised awareness through theological publications, faith-based resources or materials, only four of the South-East

Asian organizations said they took this approach. However, a much higher proportion (50 per cent compared to one out of seven in the Pacific) raised awareness of violence against women and girls among faith leaders.

Although most of the organizations engaged in at least one form of advocacy, the most cited approach - outreach in local communities - was implemented by approximately half of the 23 faith-based organizations. Eleven engaged in public campaigning, nine in interfaith dialogue, and eight engaged with the media. Advocacy targets included governments', and communities in general. One of the Christian organizations from Myanmar reported promoting the right of women to live free from physical violence, including domestic violence and rape, (drawing on CEDAW Article 1) through of its network of 312 churches in 21 townships.

Box 11: Buddhists addressing violence against women in Malaysia

Professional volunteers provide training to reduce violence against women

Violence against women became a personal cause for a Buddhist community in Malaysia when a nun survived a sexual attack as she was meditating in a nearby forest. Monastery leaders undertook initiatives to increase the personal safety of women, and to integrate violence against women issues into training and community education work. On a voluntary basis, affiliates of the Buddhist Gem Fellowship provide counseling training, pre-marriage education courses, seminars and work-shops on parenting skills, and preventing sexual violence. The counseling modules include awareness and prevention of sexual and domestic violence. Most of the training is attended by both Muslims and Buddhists as the curriculum has no faith content and takes a rights-based approach.[4]

The organization operates with minimal financial support and the organizers and trainers all volunteer their time to deliver the training: psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, medical social workers, counselors, lawyers, corporate leaders and trainers, analysts, and social activists. Over time the Buddhist Gem Fellowship has established good relations with the local police force. With new recruits regularly joining the rank, interaction is continually updated so that new cadres of police understand violence issues that affect women and girls. As a result of this ongoing dialogue, Buddhist Gem Fellowship has contributed to achieving some institutional change within local police practice: in the past police officers believed they were being helpful in reuniting husbands with their 'missing' wives by telling them where the women's refuge was located. They now demonstrate a more rights-based and protective response to ensure women can avoid abusive husbands.

4.5 Networking and collaboration

Responding South-East Asian faith-based organizations demonstrated that they worked with secular and faith-based organizations and networks at local, national and international levels. Women's organizations and national ministries were cited by six organizations as their most significant collaborators. Children's rights groups, including UNICEF, were the most significant collaborators for two organizations. Four organizations cited faith-based partners as their most significant collaborator, and four organizations cited UN agencies. Other most significant collaborators included government ministries (of religion, women and social development) and the police.

Respondents reported their organizations' participation in a wide range of networks, consortiums or campaigns addressing violence against women and girls at local, national and international levels. Box 12 shows the international networks that organizations are affiliated to as part of their response to violence.

Box 12: Faith-based and secular networks cited in South-East Asia

Faith-based networks	Secular networks
• Asian Muslim Women Commission for Peace c/o AMAN • Break the Chains (American Baptist Churches) • Chab Dai • DKA- Austria • Good Shepherd Sisters who have consultative status with UN ECOSOC • MISSIO-Germany • Regional Islamic Da'wah Council for Southeast Asia and the Pacific (RISEAP) • Sakyadhita International (International Buddhist Women Association) • Tearfund UK • Union of NGOs in the Islamic World (UNIW) • World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) • World YWCA World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) • World YWCA	• Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) • Code Pink: Women for Peace • International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) • Peace Women Across the Globe • UNFPA • UN WOMEN • US State Department G/TIPs (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons)

4.6 Laws, policies and frameworks

Participating faith-based organizations reported that national legislation and international commitments significantly influenced their responses to violence against women and girls. National laws were cited by nine organizations,[60] and ten organizations cited regional and international commitments. Two organizations cited policies or statements issued by faith-based sources including *Sakyadhita International*, *Outstanding Women in Buddhism* and *Good Shepherd Sisters Congregation Directional Statement*.

Regional and international commitments cited by participating organizations:

- Beijing Platform for Action
- *CEDAW (*Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women)
- *COMMIT* (Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking)
- International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (on women, peace and security)
- UNAIDS recommendations
- UNFPA recommendations
- UNIFEM[61] recommendations

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60 Indonesia: Law No 23 (2002) concerning child protection; Law No 23 (2004) concerning the elimination of domestic violence; Law No 3 of (1997) on child justice; Law No 7 (1984) Ratification Of The Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Women Discrimination; Law No. 21 (2001) on Special Autonomy for Papua Province. Philippines: Act No. 8353 (1992) Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination; Act No. 8353 (1997) Anti-rape; Act No. 9262 (2004) Anti-violence against women and children. Thailand: Anti Human Trafficking & Child's Labor Act; Child Protection Act, 2003; Domestic Violence Act; Juvenile & Child Rights Act; Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Law, 1996. USA: Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking Act (2000)

61 UNIFEM became UNWomen in January 2010

This finding may indicate that faith-based organizations in the South-East Asia region are more experienced in using national legislation and international frameworks, than in the other sub-regions where national policy level frameworks were less frequently cited as overarching instruments that guide their responses. Although the survey questionnaire did not specifically ask whether faith-based organizations promote human rights principles, several respondents referred to human rights in general, and to women's and children's rights quite frequently. Some organizations reported promoting rights through advocacy and outreach, while others reported partnering with human rights organizations.

Box 13: Good Shepherd Sisters addressing human rights in the Philippines

Faith-inspired action to realize human rights in the Philippines

The Good Shepherd Sisters issued a 15 page document in 2009 articulating position papers on trafficking, migration, economic justice, prostitution, girl-child and ecology based on the overarching Directional Statement (i.e. strategic plan) for the worldwide congregation.[5] While firmly inspired by the "creative audacity of Saint Mary Euphrasia", the position papers clearly articulate a human rights approach: "In concert with many forms of gender discrimination and global gender-based violence, the trafficking of women and girls is a violation of their dignity and human rights. It challenges [Good Shepherd's] determination to respond. [Good Shepherd] stands with all persons of good will who condemn this phenomena and work to eradicate it."

The position papers call for "implementation of Human Rights based legislation at national, regional and UN level" to eliminate human trafficking and specifically for the implementation of international Human Rights tools.

The Good Shepherd Asia-Pacific Justice Peace Network issued a complementary Statement on Anti-Human Trafficking the same year, at the regional NGO Forum on Beijing +15, which similarly takes a rights-based approach and urges government action to meet the Millennium Development Goals.[6] The statement commits the regional congregation to "develop and strengthen networking on the local, regional and international levels in collaboration with NGOs and governments and other faith-based organizations".

4.7 Summary

Faith-based organizations in the South-East Asia region demonstrated that they respond to many forms of violence. In common with the other sub-regions, prevention responses were more frequently cited than practical support for women affected by violence. Although organizations were not asked to explain their reasons for this, some indicated that lack of resources impinged on their ability to respond to issues of violence as extensively as they would have liked.

In this region, more organizations reported working with civil society organizations than with faith leaders and, among those that did work with faith leaders, slightly more (*n*16) worked with female religious leaders than with male religious leaders (*n*14). Overall, in most categories of secondary targets, women and women's groups were cited more consistently than men and men's groups, except in the category of people who perpetrate violence: nine organizations said they work with male perpetrators of violence, and eight said they work with female perpetrators of violence. Women's role in violent behavior should not be ignored, and a gap in this data collection methodology is that the level of targeting of both primary and secondary audiences was not ranked. Therefore it is not possible to determine from this data set how much time or resources an organization allocates to a particular target, and whether organizations work with these groups on a limited or extensive basis.

Participating faith-based organizations in the South-East Asia region indicated that national legislation was influential in their responses to violence against women and girls in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. These three national contexts are characterized by extensive legislation related to women, violence, child protection and trafficking, reflected by the fact that these countries have the most experience (10 years+) in the region in integrating responses to violence into their national health systems.[62] International and regional commitments also featured highly. The level of influence of national legislation and international commitments indicated that faith-based organizations are informed by rights-based approaches, even when they may not use the language of human rights in their discourse.

The responding South-East Asian faith-based organizations reported participating in a wide range of international faith networks indicating the existence of strategic alliances and potential sources of support.

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62 Figure 2: Stages of countries in responding to GBV through the health sector in Health Sector Response to Gender-based Violence An assessment of the Asia-Pacific Region, UNFPA, 2010

V Unique strengths of faith-based organizations and religious leaders

This section summarizes participant responses to the question '*What do you think are the specific strengths and contributions of your organization in addressing violence against women and girls?*'

Faith identity and commitment

Using their networks to provide information and to mobilize congregations to respond to violence against women and girls, respondents reported having the ability to reach communities at grassroots levels. They see this as possible because faith-based organizations are perceived as credible structures in society. Some respondents mentioned that having a faith helps guides individual who aspire to a higher purpose in life, and to fulfill their sense of duty towards society. Faith can thus be a motivator for change, appealing particularly to those who already have a faith. One respondent observed:

"If a women's organization tells a community to stop beating its wives and sisters, no one will listen… but in the same context if a faith leader says [violence against women and girls] is not accepted, then people will listen out of a sense of fear or duty….without the support of religious leaders you cannot get the support of people."

Linked to this is a specific advantage some respondents mentioned that faith leaders have, namely their role as providers of spiritual guidance and strategic education. The personal commitment of certain individual faith leaders to respond to violence against women and girls was also mentioned.

Several respondents noted that faith identity is part of the strength of their organization because of the compassionate and caring emphasis that it brings to their work. A number provided examples of how specific tenets of faith were used to address violence against women and girls. The Indonesia chapter of the *Asian Muslim Action Network* reported using gender sensitive re-interpretations of Koranic texts, to promote Islamic values respecting women's rights. Additionally, the respondent from *Islamic Relief* in Pakistan expressed the opinion that in a country lacking effective institutional legislative frameworks and judicial mechanisms to address violence against women, faith-based organizations are uniquely placed to address practices such as acid throwing. An advocacy initiative at the national level brought together four Islamic charitable organizations that supported victims of acid throwing. The respondent felt that in societies where violence against women and girls is perceived as the norm, rather than the exception, organizations addressing violence take a calculated approach to address the issue and thus make small gains. The respondent believed that providing examples from the life of the Prophet can be a unique motivator.

Similarly, religious texts were also used a by a number of Christian faith-based organizations to promote messages that promoted protection of women and girls from violence. The level and longevity of commitment that faith-based organizations expressed was articulated by the respondent from *Hagar* Cambodia: "We provide holistic services: whatever it takes for as long as it takes".

The respondent from *Sarvodaya* in Sri Lanka felt that the strength of their organization in addressing violence against women and girls stemmed from the fact that they took a holistic approach to the issue, in contrast to some secular organizations that they believed address only one aspect of individual or societal development. This sentiment was echoed by the respondent from the *Art of Living Foundation* in India, who linked the AOL approach of examining the root causes of societal problems with the fact that it is a faith and value-based organization. The respondent felt that spiritual organizations bring an added dimension to social justice issues, approaching issues from a compassionate position, rather than a punitive one. Therefore, in relation to violence against women and girls, a compassionate perspective includes both the victim and the perpetrator as important actors in the process of change.

Participating organizations also felt that addressing violence against women and girls from a faith perspective ensures that communities do not dismiss such perspectives as arising from Western countries (or 'the West'), or being imposed by foreign or minority interest groups. If the issue is highlighted by faith leaders with whom communities and individuals identify, then the motivation (and sometimes obligation) to listen is greater.

Box 14: Faith-based responses to addressing trafficking in Cambodia

Faith identities motivating action in Cambodia to prevent trafficking

Chab Dai drew on its faith identity to increase the effectiveness of preventing trafficking and sexual abuse by convening a coalition of 48 Christian organizations in Cambodia. Although Christian values are the motivating factor for Chab Dai's work, their messages and materials are informed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The organization and, in fact, has capitalized on its faith identity to increase harmonization of responses by Christian organizations through the network.

All members of the Chab Dai Coalition share similar Christian values and, although programme practice varies, the Director of Chab Dai believes these shared principles facilitate a high level of trust, cooperation and information sharing between members. The network is used to increase the effectiveness of member organization responses through sharing practice and identifying opportunities for collaboration, including providing referrals for children affected by violence. As a Christian organization in a predominantly Buddhist country, Chab Dai had worked hard to gain the trust of the government. With perseverance, it has been successful in building relationships and now participates in the highest level national working group to address sex exploitation and trafficking.

VI Challenges for faith-based organizations in responding to violence

This section summarizes participant responses to the question *'What challenges and /or constraints does your organization face in addressing violence against women and girls?'*

Contextual challenges

Cultural and gender-related challenges were cited across all three sub-regions including patriarchy, the lower social status of women, and expectations of women's dependence on men, all of which overlap both societal and religious contexts. These issues constitute considerable barriers to preventing violence against women and girls, as women are seen as the property or economic responsibility of men. These attitudes are sometimes reflected in national legislation and even where laws are in place that are designed to ensure equality and non-discrimination, changes in local practice and behavior lag behind.

Some of the respondents acknowledged that religion sometimes reinforces patriarchal cultural attitudes that expect men to control or make decisions for women, or that consider women to be 'second class citizens'. Some faith-based organizations felt that religious leaders respect women, but do not yet have the confidence and skills to openly and directly confront issues that affect women, including the impact of violence. The *Anglican Association of Women* in Fiji, along with some organizations in South Asia, highlighted what it believes is a widespread perception - both within faiths and in wider society - that responding to gender (including violence against women and girls) is a 'women's issue': the implication being that most men do not yet see their role in preventing violence against women.

Respondents, particularly from South-East Asia, provided details about their work that reflected the general contextual challenges they face, such as conflicting laws within legal systems, and lack of general awareness of violence against women issues among government departments. Such challenges are similar to those faced by secular organizations, compromising the ability to respond effectively to violence against women and girls.

Development and rights priorities can cause controversy within religious hierarchies

Some faith-based organizations have experienced that their responses to violence against women and girls at community level have been interpreted as contravening their own faith's hierarchy and doctrine. In such cases, faith-based organizations have chosen to engage with religious leaders through a process of dialogue to develop interpretations of religious doctrine or guidance that align with human rights approaches.

Two organizations reported facing resistance to their work by conservative elements of society. Both asked not to be identified. One was a Muslim organization which found that conservative groups levied strong criticism against their work, and that they were accused of trying to convert people away from Islam because of their promotion of women's education, rights and participation. The other organization was a Buddhist organization working in a majority Muslim country, which mentioned that they were careful to avoid similar accusations because it was against the law to attempt to convert people away from Islam (which it had not been doing). As an organization representing a minority religion, that organization was vigilant in checking written material they produced, to ensure that all documents included a disclaimer, stating that the material was "for non-Muslims only". Although that technical requirement reminded the organization of its potentially precarious position in relation to the law, the respondent felt that an even greater challenge was the way in which their organization was de-prioritized for statutory funding, unable to access local or national government financial support because it was not a Islamic organization.

Inter-faith and faith-secular collaboration

Most of the participating faith-based organizations indicated that they work collaboratively with organizations of other faiths. However, one of the challenges identified by some respondents was that they sometimes faced resistance from communities or organizations of other faiths when conducting outreach to address sensitive issues such as violence against women and girls. In some cases faith leaders elected not to identify themselves as belonging to any specific faith in case they were seen as 'meddling' in the affairs of communities of other faiths. Respondents clarified that resistance is usually seen most in the early stages of building a collaborative relationship. One respondent mentioned that the cause of resistance could also possibly reflect the challenges of overcoming the general silence around violence issues that exist in many contexts and cultures

Suspicion of or mistrust directed at faith-based organizations can equally come from secular organizations. One survey participant perceived that there was unwillingness among some of its partners to be identified as faith-based due to 'secularism trends' - meaning that secularism is valued, or perceived to be valued more highly than faith-based approaches. Several respondents mentioned the challenge of working with organizations from government and non-governmental sectors, observing that certain pre-conceived notions exist about faith-based organizations that make secular institutions reluctant to working with them. But, as the respondent from the Chab Dai Coalition in Cambodia observed, the polarisation that often exists between secular and faith-based organizations is most likely attributable to poor communication between respective actors. This aspect, in the Cambodia context at least, is gradually being resolved as organizations learn more about each other and collaborate on issues of common concern.

VII Progressing faith-based and secular responses to violence against women and girls

This section summarizes participant responses to the question *'What internal and external factors would help your organization's response to violence against women and girls increase or be improved?'*

The need for increased training and skills building staff was consistently identified as a priority by participating faith-based organizations across all three sub regions. Specifically, organizations would like to increase their technical knowledge to develop appropriate responses to address violence against women and girls, including advocacy skills.

Another often cited challenge was the need for additional resources. While some faith-based organizations are national or international agencies that are able to raise funds themselves, or to access multiple sources of financing, others rely on volunteers and have minimal operating budgets. This limits the amount and quality of work they can do to prevent violence against women and girls and to support those affected. Minority faith organizations within majority faith contexts, and even majority faith organizations that are perceived as too "liberal" by conservative faith members, experience a form of discrimination that prevents them from acquiring funds that other agencies can access. *Religions For Peace*, based in New Zealand, feels that many donors are "yet to believe that religions can make a difference in this area [of ending violence against women and girls]". Although there are examples of donor initiatives that facilitate faith-based responses to violence against women and girls, such as AusAID's Church Partnership Programme, which links Australian and Papua New Guinea church-based programmes, in general donors do not appear to support initiatives that specifically promote the role of faith-based organizations in responding to violence against women and girls.

The lack of appropriate faith-oriented, or faith-sensitive materials addressing violence against women and girls means that there are insufficient resources to meet demand. Among the ten organizations that included Muslim denominations in their faith identity, 80 per cent (8 out of 10) identified a need for more faith-based materials. Just over two thirds of responding organizations included Christian denominations in their faith identity and, among these, 67 per cent (22 out of 38) would like access to more faith-oriented materials on violence against women. Among Buddhist-inspired organizations, 60 per cent (6 out of 10) mentioned the same thing.

The majority of respondents representing organizations in South Asia mentioned the metaphor of women as the source of life, or the practice of revering women as incarnations of deities, which is frequently used as a starting point to address violence against women and girls. (Author: While this might be an effective strategy to propose norms of non-violence in communities, a deeper understanding of the gender dynamics that result in violence against women and girls needs to be

developed, so that women's roles in society are not seen in purely instrumentalist terms, and to ensure that attitudes of inequality are not inadvertently promoted).

Some respondents cited the need for more open internal organizational dialogue on violence against women and girls, as well as increased engagement with volunteers in the response, particularly with male volunteers. One of the Christian organizations in Fiji expressed frustration, feeling overwhelmed by the severity of the impact of violence against women and girls. In this context, deeper understanding and help to develop strategic responses and priorities are needed to support organizations with limited resources.

Figures 15 – 17 show the internal and external factors that faith-based organizations would like changed in order to increase or improved their responses to violence against women and girls.

Figure 15: Internal and external factors affecting FBOs ability to address VAWG in the Pacific region
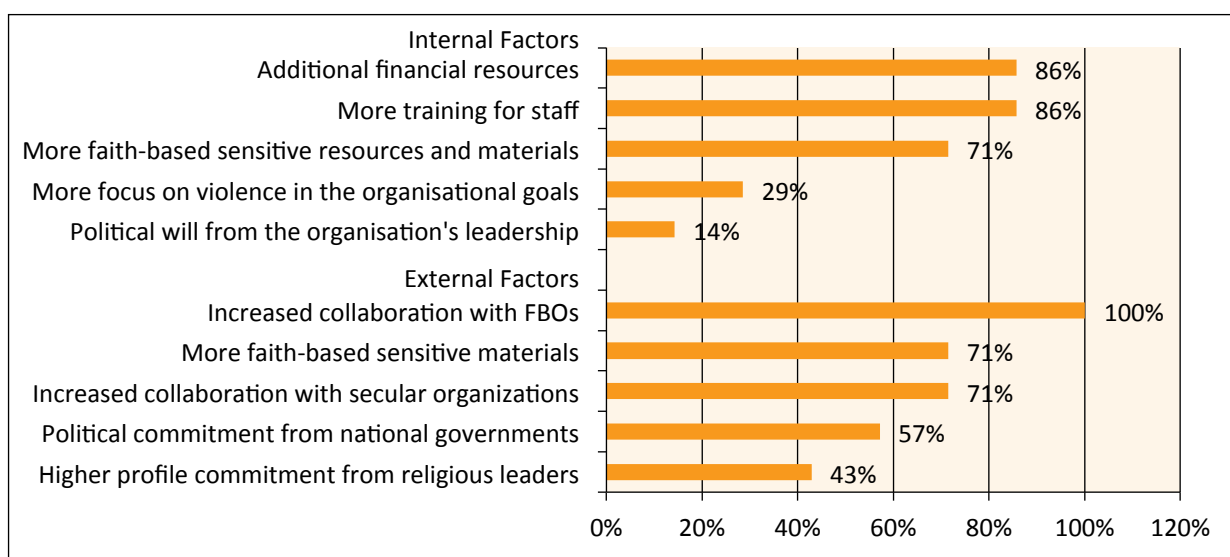

Within the Pacific region, the most pressing *internal* factors that require changing, as identified by participating organizations, are needs for additional resources to support initiatives to end violence against women and girls, and for more training so as to improve knowledge of staff on violence-related issues and to increase the level of skills to respond appropriately. The most important *external* factor that participating organizations from the Pacific cited was the need for increased networking with other faith-based and secular organizations. Faith-based resources on violence against women and girls were also highlighted as a pressing need.

Among the participating South Asian organizations, the lack of sufficient faith-based materials and resources was cited as the most pressing *internal* need. More training for staff was the next most frequently cited internal factor needed to enhance responses to violence against women and girls.

Collaboration with secular organizations was cited most frequently as an important *external* factor that South Asian organizations would like to enhance. Equal numbers (two-thirds) of participating faith-based organizations would like to see more collaboration with faith-based organizations, increased political will from governments, and greater commitment from religious leaders.
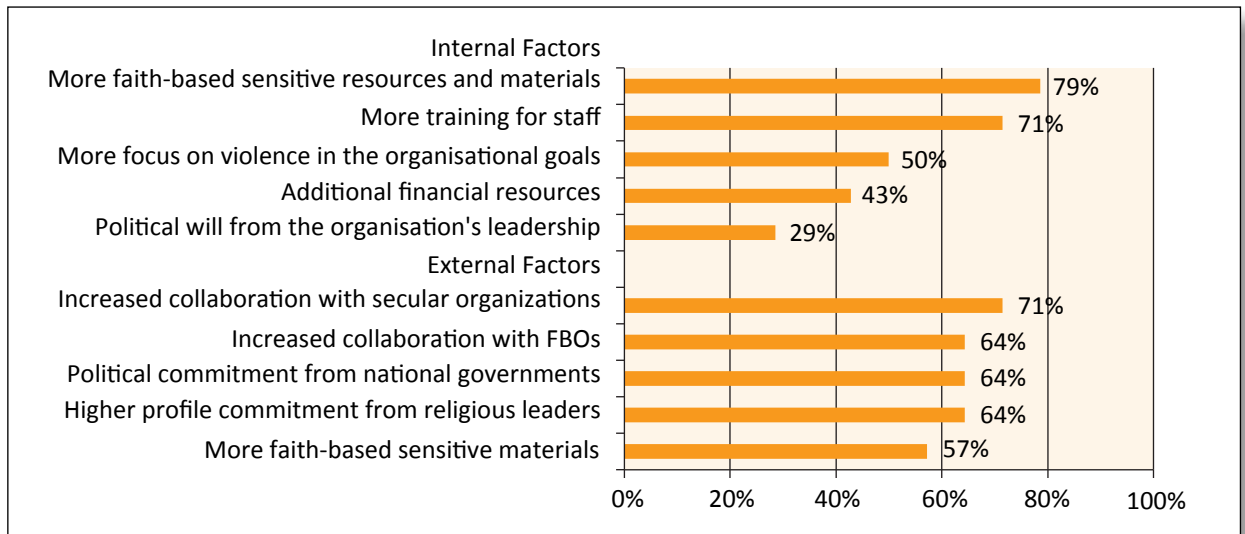
Some respondents in South Asia also highlighted the need to build the capacity of faith leaders themselves, so that a better understanding of violence against women and girls related issues is developed. One respondent felt that religious leaders in particular contexts subscribe to narrow interpretations of scriptures and this leads to conservatism. In order to overcome this, the respondent suggested that spiritual and religious leaders exploring alternative iterations of the scriptures be brought together on the same platform, and that dialogue be promoted so that more leaders could develop an understanding that the scriptures do not condone violence.

Among the participating South-East Asian organizations, the most important *internal* factors identified that need to be changed in order to improve their responses to violence against women and girls are: the need for more faith-based resources and materials, more training for staff, and an increased focus of organizational goals on violence against women. All of the options suggested in the survey related to the *external* environment rated highly with South-East Asian faith-based organizations. Most frequently cited was the need for increased collaboration with other faith-based organizations, and increased political will from national governments.

Figure 17: Internal and external factors affecting FBOs ability to address VAWG in South East Asia region
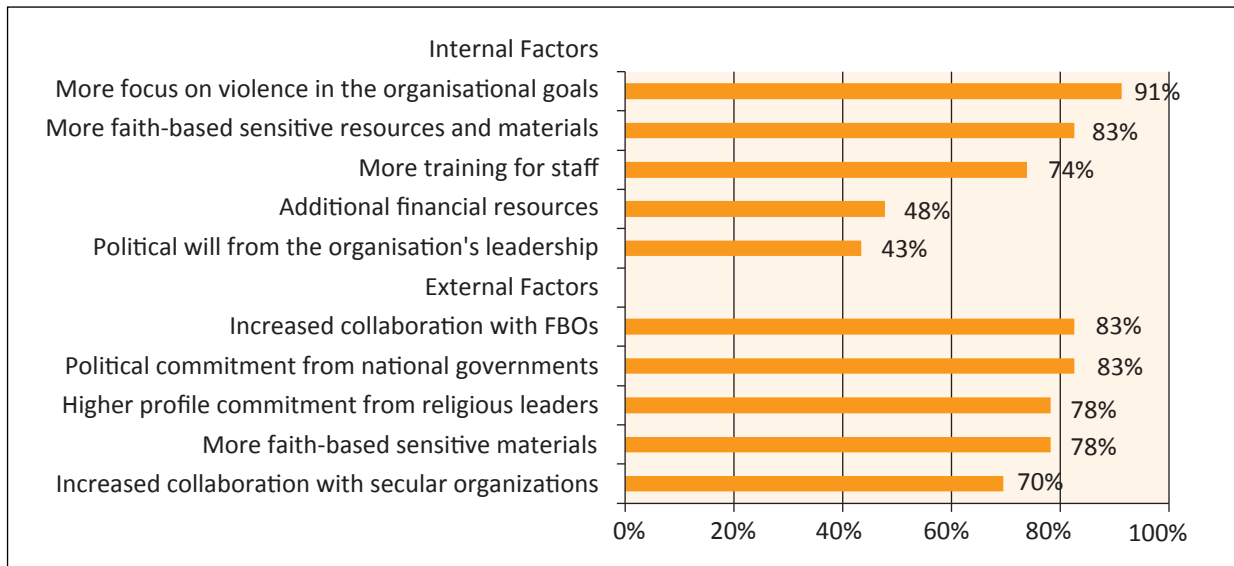
At least 70 per cent of responding organizations across the Asia-Pacific region would like to increase their networking and collaboration with secular agencies working on violence against women and girls, and at least two-thirds of organizations in all sub-regions want to increase their networking with other faith-based organizations.   The organizations that participated in the mapping collectively revealed an impressive range of networks and partnerships. However, it seems that the links between faith-based organizations, and between faith-based and secular organizations, differ from organization to organization.

VIII Concluding remarks and recommendations

This mapping reflects only a small proportion of the faith-based organizations in the Asia-Pacific region, but within the sample surveyed and interviewed it is clear that there is depth and complexity within the responses to violence against women and girls of the participating organizations. At the same time, some faith-based organizations feel that they lack the technical skills and capacity to engage more fully on violence issues, both within communities and within their own faiths.

The survey and interview responses show that there are synergies between faith-based and rights-based approaches to violence, evidenced by the many faith and secular partnerships cited by the respondents. Faith-based organizations respond to context specific forms of violence such acid throwing and honor killings, they respond to regional issues that take place on an international scale such as trafficking, and they respond to highly sensitive issues such as pre-natal sex selection and incest. The fact that they respond to these many and complex violence-related issues, suggests that there are opportunities for faith-based organizations and secular agencies to increase their engagement with each other to address violence against women and girls.

UN agencies and well-established faith-based organizations could play an important role in supporting those organizations that seek more collaboration. Opportunities to increase the understanding of faith perspectives by secular organizations could be encouraged by facilitating dialogue between such organizations on issues of common interest, such as peace building, focusing less on using rights-based terminology.

Consultative meetings could be used to provide opportunities for information sharing on strategies and programme approaches, and these could facilitate replication or adaptation of effective intervention models. Efforts to document the impact of faith-based organizations responding to violence against women and girls could provide opportunities to share lessons learned and, ultimately, translate responses into other contexts. The diversity of faith-based responses to violence are often not widely publicised or known about.

It seems that misconceptions exist on the part of both faith-based organizations about the way that secular agencies operate, and vice versa. A number of respondents reported that secular organizations and governments' sometimes appear reluctant to collaborate with them, indicating that their (faith-based) responses are not well understood by these potential partners. Conversely, a number of survey respondents reported that their approaches to addressing violence against women and girls provide a holistic, compassionate element that is missing from the approaches adopted by secular organizations. Although specific details of responses will inevitably differ, most secular organizations would perceive their interventions to also be holistic and compassionate.

Sharing the aim of preventing violence against women and girls, faith-based and secular organizations should be encouraged to engage in dialogue so as to better understand each other's approaches, and to find common ground where it exists. Better collaboration could increase the effectiveness of responses.

It is important that approaches to addressing violence against women and girls, whether faith-based or secular, are appropriately adapted for the contexts in which they are to be used, and it is also important for faith-based organizations to identify methodologies that have proven to be effective. Secular and rights-based organizations that provide training and skills could reach out to faith-based organizations that are outside of existing forums and networks, enabling them to take up opportunities for knowledge exchange and training.

Although a body of faith-based resources addressing violence against women and girls exists, it appears that some faith-based organizations have limited or no access to such resources, particularly if they are not affiliated to networks. Given the number of respondents who mentioned that they would like to have access to materials (or more materials) from specific faith perspectives, it would seem that there are gaps in the resources available. Additionally, materials developed for one national context may need adaptation for use in others.

In other regions, and at a global level, organizations have adapted materials for use, particularly to address issues such as HIV and AIDS, and also in response to violence against women and girls. A notable example is the Tamar Project developed by the *Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa*, a project designed to overcome the taboo of discussing sexual violence within Church communities, including among faith leaders.[63] Contextual Bible study methodology is used to initiate dialogue and analysis, and applied to current issues. Similarly, work done by the international organization *Sisters in Islam*, has reinterpreted key verses from the Koran that advocate against violence against women.[64]

Based on the findings of the mapping, the needs identified by participating faith-based organizations, and the above reflections, eight recommendations are made.

Facilitate increased collaboration and networking at local, national and regional levels:

1. Use the combined secular and faith-based networks of UNFPA and AP-WFDA to facilitate sub-regional consultative meetings in the Pacific, South Asia and South-East Asia to bring together faith and secular organizations responding to violence against women to share experiences and find common ground. Sub-regional meetings could support development of practical working relationships between organizations located within close proximity to each other, and from similar contexts. Promote cross-fertilization of ideas between faith-based organizations from other regions, to explore the possibility of adapting existing and tested faith-based approaches to violence against women and girls.

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63 WCC/EHAIA, Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa Impact Assessment 2002–2009, 2010

64 http://www.sistersinislam.org.my/news.php?item.656.12

2. UNFPA and AP-WFDA members could promote enhanced relationships with and between existing faith structures, such as national councils of churches, or interfaith forums, particularly where such networks have already issued statements, or implemented activities or campaigns responding to violence against women. For example, the Pacific Conference of Churches could serve as a central focal point to initiate relationships with its members. It in turn is a member of the World Council of Churches, which could provide further links in the Asia-Pacific region.

Increase access to training and skills building:

3. Proactively identify faith-based and rights-based organizations that have the capacity to provide technical assistance to faith-based organizations that are ready to strengthen organizational responses to violence and to incorporate faith and rights based messaging.

4. Encourage and promote collaboration between faith-based and rights-based organizations among UNFPA and AP-WFDA partners and networks. The leadership of both organizations could use their influence to increase commitment for collaboration, and eliminate barriers to networking, such as misplaced assumptions about a lack of compatibility between faith and secular approaches to violence.

Build the capacity of faith leaders to respond to violence against women and girls:

5. Initiate dialogue with and between faith leaders that are already open to responding to violence against women from faith perspectives. Acknowledge their commitment to responding to violence, and support them to increase their capacity to address violence against women and girls.

Increase the body of faith-based materials, and access to them, by faith-based organizations:

6. Identify existing and ongoing work by faith leaders and theologians that articulate faith-inspired interpretations of religious texts or values which promote gender equality. Ensure that UNFPA and AP-WFDA members, and their networks, are aware of existing materials and processes, and promote them widely, as appropriate.

7. In partnership with faith-based organizations, promote and support the adaptation and contextualization of tools and training programmes from other regions of the world, or based on other development issues, which draw on religious texts and values to promote gender equality through dialogue with faith leaders and/or communities.

8. Expand the content of UNFPA websites by including links or 'signposts' to faith-based materials. Similarly AP-WFDA members could actively include or provide links to appropriate materials developed by faith-based and secular organizations. An organization with more technical and financial resources could build up a central repository of both faith and secular resources and provide an information dissemination service.

Appendix 1: Participating organizations

Afghan Family Guidance Association (Afghanistan)

Anglican Association of Women (Fiji)

Art of Living Foundation (India)

Asian Muslim Action Network (Indonesia)

Asian Muslim Action Network (Pakistan)

Asian Muslim Action Network (Thailand)

Australian Lutheran World Service (Nepal)

Baha'i Department of External Affairs of the National Spiritual Assembly of India (India)

Believing Women for a Culture of Peace (Australia)

Buddhist Gem Fellowship (Malaysia)

Caritas Australia (Australia)

Catholic Bishop Conference of Myanmar- Karuna Myanmar Social Services (Myanmar)

CBM New Zealand (New Zealand)

Centre for Peace and Spirituality (India)

Chab Dai Coalition (Cambodia)

Child Protection and Development Center (Human Help Network Foundation) (Thailand)

DIAKONIA (Sweden)

Divine Word University (Papua New Guinea)

Father Ray Foundation (Thailand)

Hagar Cambodia (Cambodia)

Homes of Hope Fiji (Fiji)

House of Sarah (Fiji)

Inter-religious Council Nepal (Nepal)

Islamic Relief (Pakistan)

Kithu Sevana (Sri Lanka)

Lembaga Pengkajian Pemberdayaan Perempuan Anak Papua (LP3A-P) *Institute of Empowering Study for Women and Children Papua* (Indonesia)

Malaysian Care (Malaysia)

Masjid Council for Community Advancement (Bangladesh)

Missionary Sisters of Service (Australia)

Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (Malaysia)

National Forum of Church Leaders (Tonga)

National Inter-religious Network on Violence Against Women-Nepal (Nepal)

National Young Women's Christian Association of Myanmar (Myanmar)

New Life Center Foundation (Thailand)

New Zealand Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (New Zealand)

North East India Committee On Relief & Development (India)

North East India Drugs and AIDS Care (India)

Oblate Sisters of the Most Holy Redeemer (Philippines)

Pacific Conference of Churches (Fiji)

People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (Sri Lanka)

Progressio (Timor Leste)

Puan Amal Hayati (Indonesia)

Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepard (Malaysia)

Religions for Peace (New Zealand)

Sabakan Ministry to Women and Children's Concern (Philippines)

Salvatorian Pastoral Care for Children (Philippines)

Santi Forest Monastery (Australia)

Sarvodaya Movement (Sri Lanka)

Seventh-day Adventist Church (Vanuatu)

Shanti Sewa Ashram (*Peace Service Centre*) (Nepal)

Solomon Islands Christian Association Federation of Women (Solomon Islands)

Tearfund (UK)

Tinh An Lan Nhã (Khemarama) (Vietnam)

Women's Education and Research Centre (Sri Lanka)

World Hope International (Cambodia)

World Vision International (India)

World YWCA (Australia)

Yangon Kayin Baptist Women's Association (Myanmar)

Appendix 2: Additional faith-based organization participating respondents

Faith-based organizations based outside of less developed or middle income countries in the Asia Pacific region

Caritas Australia is a Christian (Catholic) organization working across Asia to reduce poverty, provide HIV prevention and care, and promote gender equality. The Pacific programme has responded to domestic violence, violence in public places, schools and the workplace since 2004.

Missionary Sisters of Service is a community of Christian (Catholic) women working in rural, outback and urban areas of Australia and also in Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea and Singapore, supporting women since 1944.

Australian Lutheran World Service is the overseas aid agency of the Lutheran Church of Australia, and supports development programmes in Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal and Papua New Guinea.

World YWCA is a Christian (non-denominational) organization established in 1855; its Australia chapter participated in the survey. Responding to violence against women and girls is a key organizational priority, and its global network provides services for women facing violence and abuse in 70 countries.

DIAKONIA is a Christian (ecumenical) organization based in Sweden. It supports a programme in Bangladesh providing direct support to women affected by violence, and working with civil society and faith leaders to prevent violence against women and girls.

The **New Zealand Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists** is a Christian (Protestant) organization that has responded to violence against women and girls since 1988, and works with faith leaders and communities to raise awareness of violence issues across French Polynesia, the Cook Islands, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna and the Pitcairn Islands.

ChildFund New Zealand is Christian (ecumenical) organization working in the Asia-Pacific region supporting women's self-help groups, promoting access to counseling and health services, and engaging with the public and media to prevent violence.

Religions for Peace New Zealand works with affiliates at regionally in Asia through the Asian

Conference of Religions for Peace, and at national level in many countries including Philippines, India, Thailand, Japan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, China, Australia, Pakistan and Nepal.

Tearfund is a UK-based Christian (Protestant) organization with programmes worldwide, including in the Asia and Pacific regions, whose work includes drawing on scripture to advocate for ending violence against women and girls.

The work of the two following organizations takes place in Australia, rather than the wider region:

Santi Forest Monastery is a Buddhist organization strengthening the capacity of Buddhist nuns to respond to violence against women and girls in New South Wales, Australia.

Believing Women for a Culture of Peace facilitates inter-faith and inter-culture dialogues and gatherings bringing together women of Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Indigenous, Jewish and Muslim faiths within Australia.