

**'Mobilising Faith Communities in Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict'  
Inter Faith Consultation Meeting, Lancaster House, London  
9 - 10 FEBRUARY 2015**

***Recommendations on the 5 key thematic areas:***

**THEME 1: The Role of Faith Leaders in Promoting Values of Faith and Human Rights**

**Faith leaders to:**

1. Revisit and promote values of faith and human rights that uphold the equal dignity of all women and men, girls and boys, ensuring that these are lived out in our language and actions.
2. Assert zero tolerance of all forms of sexual and gender based violence within and beyond our own communities.
3. Serve as role models, acknowledging past failures, breaking the silence, challenging harmful attitudes, and speaking truth to power wherever sexual violence is used during and after conflict.
4. Work together, and with other community leaders and governmental and non-governmental agencies, to build confidence within communities, empowering families and individuals to prevent and end sexual violence.
5. Promote the rights of women and girls to live safe from harm and have access to opportunities for personal development and empowerment.

**Governments to:**

1. Work with faith leaders across all faiths and seek to understand the role of faith in promoting human rights and dignity for all.
2. Collaborate proactively and partner with faith leaders and faith communities, providing resources where necessary, in the promotion of knowledge and understanding of human rights.
3. Advocate with other governments to comply fully with all international agreements concerning human rights and ensure these are reflected into effective policies and legislation for the people.

**Humanitarian agencies to:**

1. Understand the importance and value of working with faith thereby promoting meaningful partnerships with the faith community in humanitarian responses.
2. Develop strategic partnerships and support female and male faith leaders and their communities in addressing root causes of sexual violence.
3. Support the documentation and dissemination of the learning and good practices of faith leaders and communities.

***We request the UK Government to promote understanding of the role of faith leaders as defenders of human rights, investing in faith champions who model the same and ensuring their meaningful participation in shaping policy and practice.***

**THEME 2: The Role of Faith Leaders in Tackling Impunity and Promoting Justice and Accountability**

**Faith leaders to:**

1. Speak out to ensure that blame and shame are shifted entirely from victims of sexual violence to those who propagate, perpetrate or condone it.
2. Seek to address the culture of impunity at national and community levels, calling governments and judiciaries to account for the robust implementation of national and international legislation concerned with the prevention and prosecution of sexual violence and, where it does not already exist, calling for national legislation that is survivor-centred and well resourced in its operation.
3. Ensure faith leaders and other representatives of religious institutions are not immune from prosecution for sexual abuse and violence, and have explicit policies and practice that reflect the same.
4. Support governmental and non-governmental agencies in raising awareness of the 'International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict' and promote understanding of their own role within community-based support systems in its implementation.
5. Network and develop relationships with other agencies and service providers to provide survivors with protection and access to justice.

**Governments to:**

1. Establish and implement laws and provisions to end impunity and protect survivors of sexual violence, promote knowledge and understanding of these laws, including in remote areas, using appropriate forms of media.
2. Build the capacity of their staff to understand the importance of, and processes involved in ending impunity.
3. Develop a clear strategy aimed at ensuring effective law enforcement. This must include an engagement with authorities such as police and army personnel who may themselves may be complicit in promoting impunity.

**Humanitarian actors to:**

1. Involve faith leaders and faith communities in understanding and addressing the root causes contributing to the culture of impunity.
2. Work with and support faith leaders and communities to address harmful cultures, beliefs, attitudes and practices within faiths that promote impunity.
3. Challenge and support faith leaders to make sure violations are duly reported and dealt with.

*We request the UK Government to work proactively with faith leaders in exploring their potential in supporting the implementation of the International Protocol. We hope faith leaders will be involved in training concerning the use of the protocol, which will lead to context specific processes for their involvement in its implementation. We advocate for a clear expression within the Protocol of how faith leaders can support the implementation of the protocol at the community and national level. This is even more critical in contexts where there is a breakdown in the functioning of effective government.*

**THEME 3: The Role of Faith Leaders in Supporting Survivors of Sexual Violence**

**Faith leaders to:**

1. Speak out against sexual violence and gender injustice, and the harmful practices and traditions that lead to such violence, and be a catalyst in mobilising all faith leaders to do the same.
2. Create and provide safe spaces, support and accompaniment to all survivors of sexual violence – women, girls, men and boys – demonstrating solidarity, ending stigma and affirming them as valued and loved members of communities.
3. Take the initiative in reaching out to survivors, understanding their needs, listening to their experiences and seeking their advice and counsel to shape actions.
4. Identify and invest in the key actors, women and men, within faith institutions who provide support to survivors and their families.

**Governments to:**

1. Establish and resource holistic strategies and programmes to support and rehabilitate survivors.
2. Ensure that relevant government officials are knowledgeable about the root causes of sexual violence and needs of survivors.
3. Ensure all relevant government departments have a zero tolerance policy to gender injustice and victimisation of survivors.
4. Engage with and involve survivors in shaping policies and programmes, including review processes.

**Humanitarian agencies to:**

1. Support faith leaders and faith groups to understand and address harmful beliefs and practices and respond appropriately to survivors.
2. Involve faith groups in programmes responding to survivors.
3. Involve faith groups in community based referral pathways, document and disseminate examples of good practice and promote linkages between service providers and faith groups including those concerned with HIV and AIDS.

***We request the UK government to continue demonstrating meaningful engagement with survivors in the development of key instruments and processes like the International Protocol. Specifically, we ask the UK government to involve survivors as technical advisors, empowering survivors to speak out.***

**THEME 4: The Role of Faith Leaders in Engaging Men and Boys**

**Faith leaders to:**

1. Model just relationships between women and men.
2. Emphasise the caring, compassionate and nurturing attitudes which flow from many holy texts to counteract the false cultural norms of male dominance, power and control which lead to “machismo” attitudes and violent behaviours.
3. Agree on non-violent messages from their specific scriptures and holy writings, which can be taught through leadership and theological training, with unity across the faith traditions.
4. Stand alongside and work with men and boys.
5. Become advocates within their communities to support men and boys in respecting women and challenging male stereotype roles and behaviours.
6. Create a network of faith leaders speaking out against sexual violence in conflict, learning from the example of addressing HIV and AIDS, supported by each other and interacting with government.

**Governments to:**

1. Recognise and support faith leaders as they challenge damaging social and cultural norms in their societies, including within the military, which lead to sexual and gender-based violence.
2. Re-examine the law of their countries where women are subjected to more harsh punishment than that experienced by men.
3. Advocate for the updating of international resolutions to recognise that men and boys are also victims of sexual violence in conflict.
4. Provide counselling and medical treatment for female and male victims of rape and sexual assault and provide psycho-social services to enable perpetrators, who are committed to change, to be rehabilitated.

**Humanitarian agencies to:**

1. Work with faith leaders to promote a united approach to men and boys when tackling sexual violence in conflict.
2. Support faith leaders to grow in awareness and understanding of the reality of sexual violence against women and men and to teach that survivors require positive support and affirmation when dealing with any sense of self-disgust and stigmatisation.
3. Support the development of non-violent masculinities based on faith traditions.

***We request the UK Government to maintain their focus on engaging faith leaders and working with men and boys in the movement to end sexual violence in conflict. We request support for the initiatives from this meeting to develop resources on engaging men and boys and to encourage***

**THEME 5: The Role of Faith Leaders in Peace Building and Peace Processes**

**Faith leaders to:**

1. Improve the quality of secular and religious cooperation, making a concerted effort to bridge differences in language, values and modes of working.
2. Explore the possibility of interfaith movements that have credibility and influence in each national context.
3. Provide opportunities for women, youth and children to contribute to peace building dialogues.
4. Empower women and youth at the grassroots to aspire to positions of leadership, within and outside religious institutions, and challenge patriarchal structures.
5. Model interfaith relationships of trust.

**Governments to:**

1. Understand the capacity of the faith communities in their regions to contribute to peace processes and include them in developing peace and mediation frameworks.
2. Promote affirmative action to ensure meaningful engagement of women in peace building.
3. Develop and implement anti-discrimination legislation, where necessary, to enshrine and embed women's participation in national law.

**Humanitarian agencies to:**

1. Provide women at grassroots and in leadership positions with mentoring and training to enable them to take their part in conflict transformation and peace building.
2. Build capacity of grassroot organisations to enable them to contribute to peace building and peace processes in countries affected by conflict.
3. Advocate for marginalised groups including indigenous peoples.

***We request the UK government to engage with the diversity of faith leaders and faith communities in times of peace and conflict.***