

Ideas to Collaborate with Local Faith Leaders & Agencies

"This, I think, is the difference between charity and justice. Justice means moving beyond the dichotomy between those who need and those who supply and confronting the frightening and beautiful reality that we desperately need one another."

— Rachel Held Evans, *A Year of Biblical Womanhood*

As respected members of society, especially in rural communities, faith leaders are key to preventing and responding to violence against women and girls. The deep roots and influence of these faith leaders in their communities mean they are uniquely positioned to champion the empowerment of women and drive social change.

We recognize, however, that fostering change in attitudes and behavior starts with the faith leaders themselves. This project provides space for these leaders to reflect on their role and moral responsibility in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls and confront their own — sometimes harmful — views on cultural norms for women and men regarding relationships and power.

"Faith leaders are now creating safe spaces and facilitating meaningful dialogue amongst their congregants about violence. Women faith leaders, in particular, are increasingly taking a leading role in supporting women and girls by sharing their own experiences and reflecting on the underlying causes of violence against women and girls." ~ Ernest Cajuste, Senior Program Officer at Episcopal Relief & Development.

Using This Toolkit to Make a Plan

1. Use a supported process of experiential learning and self-reflection to examine your community's beliefs and actions around human dignity, community and well-being.
2. Build skills in contextualizing holy Scripture, counseling and communications for speaking out against VAWG.
3. Create local coalitions with whom you can participate in dialogue, strengthening their engagement with one another and their institutions, improving links to national, county and district-level services and accountabilities.
4. Act and speak out against VAWG at churches, mosques, synagogues, radio programs, schools, local and national task force, meetings and conferences and provide/improve support to survivors.

Communities that hear and see faith, youth and community leaders acting and speaking out against VAWG experience positive shifts and supportive behaviors toward women's rights and empowerment and against VAWG.

Your actions have the opportunity to:

- Strengthen self-awareness at individual and interpersonal levels
- Strengthen, influence and impact the community
- Strengthen influence and impact at organizational and institutional levels
- Use public platforms to speak out against VAWG
- Transform behaviors