



**PARTNERING
WITH FAITH-BASED
ORGANISATIONS
AND RELIGIOUS
LEADERS TO
PROTECT CHILDREN
FROM ONLINE
SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION**

**GUIDE TO ACTION FOR CIVIL
SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS**



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Background information about ECPAT International

ECPAT is a network of 90 member organisations in 82 countries with one common mission: to end the sexual exploitation of children. ECPAT builds collaboration among civil society actors, international agencies, governments and the private sector to form a global movement for protection of children from sexual exploitation. Based on evidence collected by ECPAT members in the field and by world-class researchers, ECPAT advocates at all levels to strengthen national justice and protection systems and increase investment in the fight against sexual exploitation of children. At the heart of ECPAT's work are the voices of children, reflected across the organisation's research agenda, programmes and campaigns. The ECPAT International Secretariat, based in Bangkok, Thailand, coordinates research, programmes and high-level advocacy, and serves the Network.



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Acronyms

AIDS:	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
CEOP Command:	Formerly the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (UK)
CSAM:	Child sexual abuse materials
CSOs:	Civil society organisations
EI:	ECPAT International
FBOs:	Faith-based organisations
GNRC:	Global Network of Religions for Children
HIV:	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICT:	Information and communication technologies
ITU:	International Telecommunication Union
LGBT:	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
NCMEC:	National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (USA)
NGO:	Non-governmental organisation
NRSV:	New Revised Standard Version
OCSE:	Online child sexual exploitation
RfP:	<i>Religions for Peace</i>
RL:	Religious leader
SDG:	Sustainable Development Goal
SEC:	Sexual exploitation of children
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
WCC:	World Council of Churches

Introduction

Addressing online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) requires more than comprehensive policies, effective law enforcement and assistance to victims. The economic, social and cultural factors that underpin online child sexual exploitation also need to be analysed and addressed. Evidence suggests that these crimes are often facilitated and/or conducted by someone in the child's circle of trust (e.g. family, teachers, caregivers, etc.). Thus faith-based organisations (FBOs) and religious leaders are uniquely positioned to engage with families and communities to tackle the social, moral and ethical dimensions of the issue.

Out of seven billion people in the world, more than five billion identify as members of religious communities. Churches, mosques, temples and other physical or social structures representing faith are located in nearly every village, district and city. Though religious groups and communities vary in size from country to country, they often represent the most developed, inter-connected and localised form of social organisations in existence, reaching the smallest villages to capital cities and beyond.¹

Therefore, religious leaders and their communities are in a unique position to take action to end violence against children.

Some religious leaders, however, have also recognised that “religious communities have not fully upheld their obligations to protect our children from violence. Through omission, denial and silence, [they] have at times tolerated, perpetuated and ignored the reality of violence against children in homes, families, institutions and communities, and not actively confronted the suffering that this violence causes. Even as [they] have not fully lived up to [their] responsibilities in this regard, [they] believe that religious communities must be part of the solution to eradicating violence against children, and commit to take leadership in [their] religious communities and the broader society.”²

Ultimately, faith-based communities contain significant channels for positive and safe communication, accountability and action to protect children from violence and online sexual exploitation.

Many ECPAT members and other civil society organisations (CSOs) around the world realise how important it is to engage with religious leaders and FBOs in order to design and implement integrated responses to address the sexual exploitation of children (SEC). This Guide is designed to facilitate CSO engagement with religious leaders and faith communities.

It is our hope that it will help them motivate and support religious leaders and FBOs to become powerful agents of healing and change.

1. *Religions for Peace* (2014), adapted from introduction of “The Power of Multi-Religious Cooperation”, *RfP Strategic Plan 2014-2018*, Annex II.
2. *Religions for Peace* (2006), “A Multi-Religious Commitment to Confront Violence against Children”, *RfP VIII World Assembly* in Kyoto, Japan, 28 August 2006.

Past and current faith-based partnerships

Working with religious groups is not new to ECPAT. In fact, ECPAT was established in 1991 by a number of FBOs and religious leaders together with secular groups. In the past 20 years, significant work has taken place to build and strengthen faith engagement to end the sexual exploitation of children.

Some of ECPAT's past and current collaborations between its global network and faith-based organisations include: ECPAT Italy's connection to the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences; ECPAT Peru's engagement with Decanato IV in Lima; ECPAT's partnership with the Waldensian Evangelical Church (Chiesa Evangelica Valdese) in Peru and India; ECPAT members in India's engagement with Justice and Care and International Justice Mission, which offers support services such as medical care, legal aid, vocational training to survivors and victims of SEC and ECPAT International's partnership with *Religions for Peace* to develop resources such as a Guide to Action for religious leaders and FBOs to prevent and protect children from sexual exploitation online.

ECPAT's Strategic Framework 2015-2018 specifically targets engagement with FBOs and religious leaders as a priority for strengthening the movement to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children. To this aim, ECPAT collaborated with a faith-based organisation, Arigatou International, to co-host the Forum on Religious Ideals and Reality: Responsibility of Leadership to Prevent Violence against Children³ in August 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland. Experts from child focused organisations and representatives from religious communities attended this Forum to discuss issues and challenges related to preventing violence against children.

Similarly, ECPAT International is involved in a global initiative with the World Council of Churches and UNICEF to encourage the idea of "child-friendly churches". This Guide to Action is being developed as part of a wider project, which includes the production and dissemination of a Guide to Action for religious leaders in partnership with *Religions for Peace* (RfP).

3 To view a brief video from the forum, visit <https://prayerandactionforchildren.org/news/video-gallery/video/forum-on-religious-ideals-and-reality-geneva-2015>.

Definitions



The following are definitions for the purpose of this Guide to Action.⁴

Civil society organisations (CSOs): Encompass a diverse range of actors engaged in not-for-profit activities, including policy advocacy groups, transnational coalitions, NGOs, individuals, women and youth groups, social movements, volunteer associations, professional and media associations, think tanks, academia and trade unions.

Faith-based organisations (FBOs): This refers to organisations that derive inspiration and guidance for their activities from the teachings and principles of a religious tradition or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within that faith.⁵ They can represent a range of religious charitable organisations affiliated with one or more faith and spiritual traditions, which may include the following:

- religious congregations (e.g. churches, mosques, synagogues or temples);
- charities sponsored or hosted by one or more religious congregations;
- non-profit organisations founded by a religious individual or congregation, or based on faith and spiritual traditions;
- youth faith or interfaith groups;
- women of faith networks;
- denominational, ecumenical and intra-religious institutions, umbrella organisations and networks; and
- interfaith institutions.

Religious leaders: Men and women who have a formal affiliation to a religion or spiritual tradition and play influential roles within their communities and the broader civil society. Examples include:

- denominational leadership (e.g. bishops, priests, pastors, ministers, imams, rabbis, clerics, monks, nuns, ayatollah, lamas);
- traditional indigenous spiritual guides (e.g. shamans and sukias, and lay [non-ordained] religious leaders);
- scholars, theologians and religious educators; and
- mission workers.

⁴ These definitions are adapted from the United Nations Development Programme (2014), “Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations and Religious Leaders”, October 2014, http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/partners/2014_UNDP_Guidelines-on-Engaging-with-FBOs-and-Religious-Leaders_EN.pdf.

⁵ Clarke, G., *et al.* (2008), “Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular”, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Religious Assets

Religious communities possess unique assets⁶ that set them apart from others and enable them to make unique contributions towards addressing injustices in the world. The following are descriptions of these assets that can be utilised towards fighting online child sexual exploitation.

- **Social assets:** Religious entities have social structures (e.g. churches, mosques, temples, schools, etc.) located in every village, district and city in the world. While the extent of these structures vary, in many developing countries they are the most developed, inter-connected and locally-led social infrastructure in existence. These social assets represent significant channels for communication and action that, when engaged and transformed, enable religious believers to function as powerful agents of change in the resolution of conflict and promotion of collective well-being.
- **Moral assets:** Religious leaders are uniquely positioned to use their moral stature and influence to encourage mutual understanding and respect for human dignity within their communities. They can work to develop the standards, based on their religious teachings, to establish a moral consensus regarding the need to address injustices and work for the non-violent resolution of conflict and other threats to society. Through their networks, religious leaders can help mobilise other religious believers to support and engage in action to seek justice.
- **Pastoral assets:** Religious leaders and communities are able to offer emotional, spiritual and physical support and care for their believers. Followers look to them for direction, support and to provide resources to help followers deal with pain and loss and to celebrate joys and victories.
- **Legitimacy and influence:** Faith leaders are often influential and trusted and can help overcome barriers, shaping new behaviours and social norms, while also reducing or curbing suspicions. The respect and authority they command enables them to speak out to promote the justice and the protection of children.
- **Transnational communal relations:** Many religious communities are organised on multiple levels – global, regional, national and local – and this enables them to develop national as well as transnational strategies to tackle challenges from the grassroots to the global level.

6 *Religions for Peace* (2014), adapted from introduction of “The Power of Multi-Religious Cooperation”, *RfP Strategic Plan 2014-2018*, Annex II.

Ways to Engage with Faith-Based Organisations and Religious Leaders on Online Child Sexual Exploitation

There are many possible ways to engage with faith-based organisations (FBOs) and religious leaders in addressing online child sexual exploitation (OCSE). These include changes within the faith community's institutions and programmes to ensure that children are safe and protected from sexual exploitation. The following section, adapted from *"Protecting Children from Online Sexual Exploitation – A Guide to Action for Religious Leaders and Communities"* by Religions for Peace and ECPAT International, also includes points on how to increase awareness and discussion on OCSE. ECPAT members and CSOs can provide FBOs and religious leaders with information on how to care for child victims, report abuse and advocate to better protect children everywhere.

Creating safe and child-friendly spaces⁷: Churches, *gurdwaras*, *madrasas*, temples and all places of worship and religious institutions should be safe places for children and adolescents and may be able to offer help and support to girls and boys who are victims of violence. ECPAT members and CSOs can support religious institutions to help ensure they establish, implement and follow safeguarding policies and procedures that include the following:⁸

- **Assessing and developing child safe activities and programmes:** Help partnering faith groups and religious leaders review their current activities and programmes, especially child-focused ones, to assess potential child protection issues and online risks to children. They should also ensure that new activities and programmes are designed to prevent any physical or online risks to children.
- **Ensuring child-safe recruitment, monitoring and training:** Recommend that partnering faith groups and religious leaders screen all staff and volunteers. At a minimum, this should include conducting two verbal reference checks, including one from a recent employer, behaviour-based questions for staff who will be working with children and a signed disclosure that the staff member has not been charged with child abuse or exploitation offenses. Screenings should also include a criminal background check.

Defining a child-friendly and child-safeguarding Code of Conduct: Explain to faith partners that this Code of Conduct is meant to describe what FBO staff or religious leaders and others should and should not do when working with or in the proximity of children in the faith community. This also includes activities that are not child-centred. The Code of Conduct should guide FBO staff, volunteers, as well as children and adolescents to understand what behaviour is acceptable and what behaviour should be reported.

7 World Council of Churches (2015), "Principles for Child-Friendly Churches", accessed 20 October 2015, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/presscentre/events/capacity-building-for-child-friendly-churches>.

8 To obtain useful templates, tools, and checklists to develop any of these guidelines, please see <http://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Child-Safeguarding-Guidance-Document.pdf>.

Examples of these can range from the type of language used by staff and community members around children and families, physical proximity when working with children, the use of electronic and digital communication with children and young people and social media usage by staff and community members. In relation to OCSE, the Code should specify guidelines for the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), including device usage and policies related to video and photo-taking and how to obtain permission for any audio/video recordings or photographs of individuals or groups of children during programmes and events hosted or organised by the faith community.

- **Appointing a child protection focal point:** ECPAT members and CSO partners can encourage partner FBOs and religious leaders to establish a system for children and adolescents to safely report if they witness violence or abuse, or are subjected to it themselves. This could be done by appointing a focal person for confidential support who would be available for children and adolescents (especially those who are or have been victims of violence or abuse). Similarly, ECPAT members could recommend a faith group to appoint fully-vetted and trained child mentors and family mentors to work alongside the community on a more personal basis.
- **Establishing procedures for child-friendly incident reporting:** ECPAT members and CSO partners can help faith communities understand how these procedures can be a crucial aspect to preventing abuse or risks of child exploitation. Religious institutions and FBOs should have clear procedures and guidelines, which are accessible and appropriate to the local context (such as an established reporting or referral mechanism) to ensure action is taken when there are suspected incidents of violence or abuse towards a child. Children must be made aware of the procedures. These procedures should also be used for reporting a breach of the Code of Conduct by a staff member or others (also see “Reporting Abuse” section).

ECPAT members and CSOs can use the following tips to advise a partner in developing an internal reporting plan or mechanism within a religious institution or FBO.

- Ensure that the safety and best interests of the child remains paramount at all times during an internal investigation.
 - Review all internally reported cases and determine the extent of the investigation needed, ensuring that the safety of the child remains the primary concern.
 - Dismiss any staff or lay member or other person associated with the faith group who is found to have sexually abused or exploited a child.
 - Report systematically any allegations or complaints to management/authorities as appropriate, regardless of the nature and severity of the case and requirements of faith community members/partners.
 - With a view to protect the child’s confidentiality, all information about child protection concerns and reports is to be kept private, discussed only with the Child Safeguarding Focal Point, and any other parties designated by them according to reporting requirements.
- **Taking measures to ensure child-safeguarding online and ICT usage:** ECPAT members and CSO partners should advise religious institutions and FBOs to adopt policies to filter and block CSAM in addition to age-inappropriate content such as adult-only content (e.g. pornography) on computer equipment and ICTs used in its religious community. As previously highlighted, this should include expectations in the Code of Conduct on how staff members and volunteers contact and communicate with children electronically, especially in regards to setting standards and expectations for their own social media usage and policies on recording events or programmes where children and families are present, for example, in securing permission to use pictures for publishing.

ECPAT members and CSO partners can also encourage faith groups and religious leaders to teach children and young people about the dangers of online sexual exploitation and what could place them at risk. This dialogue could occur during designated meetings or integrated within existing child-focused programmes (e.g. Sunday Schools, *madrasas* or synagogues).

Suggested strategic actions for religious leaders could include:

- forming an advisory committee for a child-safe faith environment, including the participation of children and adolescents;
- empowering children to feel safe by creating a confidential and non-judgmental environment to encourage discussion of issues around sexual exploitation and allow them to participate in developing the faith group's child safeguarding policy;
- helping boys and girls understand that violence and abuse against them is always wrong and teaching them how to recognise and tell a trusted adult about physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, family violence, bullying, etc.;⁹
- providing emotional, psychological and medical treatment where necessary to respond to abuse; and
- teaching children about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through child-friendly resources like "The World We Want: A Guide to Goals for Children and Young People"¹⁰ and animated films and downloadable comics to help children advocate for the prevention of online child sexual exploitation.

Caring for child victims: ECPAT members and other CSOs can engage with religious leaders by advising them on how to care for child victims and survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation by:

- providing child victims with care and protection, including counselling, shelter, medical treatment prior, during and after trial, as appropriate;
- assisting in reintegrating child-victims into families and communities when it has been assessed that it is appropriate to do so;
- protecting child-victims from stigma and bullying and
- informing child-victims and their families about their rights through resources like the Bill of Rights of Child Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

Awareness-raising: People often look to religious leaders for moral guidance and advice. ECPAT members and CSO partners can assist in the discussions about these issues within religious communities, encouraging open conversations about how certain faiths view issues relating to sexual abuse and exploitation. They can help support faith communities create awareness and prevent children from becoming sexually exploited online by:

- Encouraging religious leaders to organise a series of sermons or public talks followed by small group meetings where both children and adult members are encouraged to openly discuss the issue safely.
- Working with religious leaders to help parents and caregivers understand that violence against children and adolescents is always wrong and teaching them how to prevent physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, family violence, bullying and online risks.¹¹

9 You can download both adult and child-focused resources at "Preventing Exploitation of Children through the Internet and ICTs", ECPAT International Resources, <http://www.ecpat.org/resources/>.

10 These and a variety of other child-friendly resources are all available to download in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, Bengali, Indonesian and Hindi at "Child-friendly learning materials", UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/post2015/index_82235.html.

11 ECPAT International, "Preventing Exploitation of Children through the Internet and ICTs", ECPAT International Resources, http://resources.ecpat.net/EI/EI_publications.asp.

- Supporting religious leaders in opposing violence against children, including sexual abuse by family members and traditions that are harmful to children and adolescents such as child marriage.

ECPAT members and CSO partners can engage with religious partners by helping them raise awareness in order to prevent people within their communities from becoming offenders. This type of awareness-raising could include:

- making sure people at risk of offending know where they can find a safe place to share their concerns and seek help;
- raising awareness about the different manifestations of online child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse as well as the severity and impact on victims and
- creating awareness about the illegality of actions regarding child sexual abuse and exploitation, and potential repercussions if apprehended as a deterrence measure (e.g. breaking a culture of silence, establishing reporting mechanisms, communicating about cases in the community). This could also be done via traditional or digital communications channels such as flyers, booklets, online blogs and social media posts.

Reporting abuse: ECPAT members and CSO partners can encourage religious leaders to start conversations and educate followers about the dangers of exploitation and encourage children and community members to report any incidents of abuse. ECPAT members can offer guidance to faith groups that may be aware of or concerned about any potential or immediate danger to a child in the community by providing information on how to contact law enforcement agencies or helplines.

Child Helpline International (CHI) is an excellent source of information for partnering with FBOs and religious leaders. CHI consists of a global network of 183 members in 142 countries¹² that supports the creation of national, toll-free child helplines worldwide. A directory of national and regional helplines is available at <http://www.childhelplineinternational.org/where-we-work/>.

ECPAT members and CSO partners can also refer religious leaders and FBOs to the following reporting mechanisms that receive and address online reports from the public regarding CSAM, online illegal content, illegal conduct, sexual exploitation of children in prostitution or persons travelling to sexually exploit children:

- INHOPE Hotlines to report illegal Internet material, including child sexual abuse material: <http://inhope.org/gns/report-here.aspx>.
- The Virtual Global Task Force is an international alliance of law enforcement agencies and has a reporting platform: <http://www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com/report-abuse/>.
- The Cybertip Line accepts reports globally and is operated by NCMEC, a North American organisation: <http://www.missingkids.com/cybertipline/>.
- Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), a UK organisation that actively works to block and remove CSAM, accepts reports globally: <https://www.iwf.org.uk/>.

¹² As of December 2015, Child Helpline International (CHI) had 183 members in 142 countries.

ECPAT members and CSO partners could also direct FBOs and religious leaders to resources designed to help adults who suspect or witness cases of online child sexual exploitation to respond in an appropriate manner.

- Resources developed by the UK Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP Command): www.ceop.police.uk.
- Child Online Protection Guidelines for parents and other caregivers, educators, and industry developed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and available in six languages: <http://www.itu.int/en/cop/Pages/guidelines.aspx>.
- Useful tips and resources for concerned adults provided by Stop it Now!, a UK-based organisation: <http://www.stopitnow.org/help-guidance>.



Advocating: ECPAT members and CSO partners can encourage faith communities to use their influence to speak out on the risks and consequences of sexual violence and by supporting local and national institutions in charge of protecting children.

In particular, ECPAT members and CSO partners can support faith communities to:

- advocate with politicians and governments to create laws and structures that help prevent violence against children and make society safer for them;
- take part in consultations or meetings organised by governments or local authorities on the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure that addressing and preventing OCSE is on the agenda;
- support on-going efforts to strengthen legal and policy frameworks (e.g. use of good conduct certificates), implement and increase investments to prevent and fight OCSE and increase technical capacity of law enforcement; and
- organise local campaigning and fundraising activities to support campaigns aimed at educating community members on the negative impact of violence and sexual exploitation of children and young people.

Training and staying informed: ECPAT members and CSO partners can support FBOs and religious leaders who wish to learn more and train others on how to prevent and tackle OCSE. This could be done by hosting or facilitating workshops, roundtables and dialogues on OCSE and disseminating materials, such as factsheets developed by ECPAT International.¹³

¹³ To access ECPAT International's factsheets on manifestations, technology and legal frameworks related to the online child sexual exploitation, please click here: <http://www.ecpat.org/resources>.

Guiding Principles and Steps for FBO Engagement

The key to working successfully with FBOs and religious leaders is to initiate, build and sustain a relationship of mutual trust and respect. These principles work best when applied to a partnering faith group that shares similar values, objectives and commitments to ECPAT's goals and ethos.

The following are several guiding principles and steps¹⁴ to keep in mind when engaging with FBOs and religious leaders.

- **Seeking impartiality and transparency:** It is important to remain neutral and non-judgemental when engaging with faith groups. The best way to ensure transparency is to work within an interfaith coalition or network that focuses on cooperation and working with a shared vision and goal that does not favour one religion over another.
- **Building trust and mutual respect:** As with any collaborative effort, try to identify and share a common vision with mutual trust and ownership.
- **Finding common ground:** Open, frequent and transparent communication should be used to develop trusting relationships between CSOs and FBOs. Take time to establish a common message and terms that can be used to communicate shared priorities. This way, the faith community will not feel pressured to take on more secular or technical language and vice versa. One FBO Director reported¹⁵ that religious leaders may find the language used by CSOs to be unintentionally condescending. The Director in the above example found that religious leaders responded more positively to meetings that were referred to as “forums” rather than “workshops”, which invoked feelings of being treated like school children. Whatever the case, it is wise to maintain an honest dialogue about what each partner hopes to achieve and how this is meant to look.
- **Seeking collaboration with interfaith forums:** Inter-religious or multi-faith cooperation can be more powerful – both symbolically and substantively – than the efforts of individual religious groups acting alone.¹⁶ Interfaith partnerships focused on protecting children can broaden the base of shared values and reinforce the principles upon which child rights are built because they will be communicated to a larger audience.¹⁷

Partnerships amongst inter-religious groups can also help strengthen or solidify a local community's views on child rights. Such a model can benefit areas where ethnic or religious issues are a source of conflict or tension. By focusing on the needs and protection of children, multi-faith partnerships can help unite members of a community around this shared priority, even when they may not normally work together.¹⁸

14 United Nations Development Programme (2014), “Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations and Religious Leaders”, October 2014, accessed 14 April 2016, http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/partners/2014_UNDP_Guidelines-on-Engaging-with-FBOs-and-Religious-Leaders_EN.pdf.

15 As reported by the project consultant, Cat-Dan Lai-Smith, following a consultative meeting with a Global Director from Arigatou International.

16 *Religions for Peace* (2014), adapted from introduction of “The Power of Multi-Religious Cooperation”, *RfP Strategic Plan 2014-2018*, Annex II.

17 United Nations Children's Fund (2012), “Partnering with Religious Communities for Children”, accessed 3 December 2015, http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Partnering_with_Religious_Communities_for_Children.pdf.

18 *Ibid.*

As previously mentioned, many FBOs and religious leaders are already involved in interfaith dialogues on a wide range of topics and issues. These groups and forums are open to joining civil society networks like ECPAT and welcome opportunities to become involved in joint project planning and implementation. They are also open to focusing on shared visions and goals through discussion and evaluation. ECPAT has proven to be successful in building partnerships with the faith community through involvement with global interfaith FBOs, such as *Religions for Peace* and Arigatou International.

- **Mapping FBOs and religious leader capacities:** Take time to become familiar with a faith group's mission, ethos and technical language, just as they would have to learn the same about ECPAT and CSO partners. Review existing and past projects, resources, data and stories to gain a better understanding of a FBO's perspective regarding their issues and means of addressing them in the community. Similarly, this will enable the FBO to provide feedback on faith and spiritual traditions that may increase the CSO's or ECPAT's capacity and understanding of an issue.
- **Determining strategic entry points:** Most FBOs and CSOs share similar objectives on various social justice issues and may already be engaged with, or at least willing to become involved with, the issue of child protection. A section of this guide, entitled "Major Faith Groups," will provide CSOs with brief background insights on how the six major faith groups globally are theologically motivated to tackle issues related to the sexual exploitation of children. In many cases, faith groups are already working on projects and in communities where ECPAT and partnering CSOs are currently engaged.
- **Other steps to improve FBO engagement:** When assessing a potential FBO partner, the following points¹⁹ should be considered to improve engagement with FBOs and religious leaders.
 - Cultivate openness and curiosity that recognises and accepts the diversity of local faith and spiritual traditions as part of a greater appreciation of the societal and cultural context of the community in question.
 - Seek to understand the basic concepts, principles and teachings of local faith and spiritual traditions by engaging with members of religious communities, including the ways in which they diverge from ECPAT's or a CSO's values.
 - Reflect on personal attitudes and potential biases about religion, spirituality and sacred traditions.
 - Show respect through appropriate dress, greetings and protocols when meeting with members of the faith community.
 - Invite representatives from religious communities to share their perspectives on ECPAT's or a CSO's work in areas of mutual interest, as well as their own work with beneficiary communities.
 - Draw expertise from other CSOs or ECPAT members to help encourage dialogue among partners of different faiths and spiritual traditions.
- **Challenges and risks:** When working with faith groups, remember that faith and spirituality are their prime motivators. Be mindful of potential areas of conflict due to different interpretations and beliefs or practices. These can or have caused social, ethnic and even political tensions.²⁰

Always keep such differences in religious beliefs or practices in mind when conducting initial research, for example when viewing a FBO or a religious leader's website and accessing other resources and materials. These challenges should not be seen as reasons to avoid engaging with a particular faith group, but areas to take note of for further dialogue as ECPAT members and CSO partners need such information to build relationships of trust.

19 United Nations Development Programme (2014), "Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations and Religious Leaders".

20 United Nations Development Programme (2014), "Challenges, risks and mitigation strategies", Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations and Religious Leaders, October 2014, accessed 14 April 2016, http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/partners/2014_UNDP_Guidelines-on-Engaging-with-FBOs-and-Religious-Leaders_EN.pdf.

Major Faith Groups

Faith groups are incredibly diverse. There can be significant differing priorities and viewpoints within a single faith tradition in one local area, let alone between the practices and cultures of different faiths and spiritual traditions across the world. From religious institutions to local community service providers, it is important to understand the mission of potential partners and their capacity to deliver, and carefully assess the extent to which a common ground can be found on the basis of shared values.

ECPAT members and CSO partners should have a solid understanding of a faith group and its core beliefs when assessing the benefits and risks of potential relationships with FBOs and religious leaders. It may also prove useful to prepare for inter-religious partnerships. In this regard, the section below contains an overview of major religious groups' perspectives on child protection.



***“However many holy words you read, however many you speak,
what good will they do you if you do not act on them?”***

— *Gautama Buddha*

Buddhism is a transformative way of life focused on right action, right speech and right thought. Life is seen as traveling on a right path of loving kindness in keeping with the compassionate nature of Buddha as expressed in the *Gandavyuha Sutra*: “The Great Compassionate Heart is the essence of Buddhahood.”

Buddhist teaching states that everything is linked through ‘interdependent origination’ or ‘dependent rising’, also known as the *Pratītyasamutpāda*. This represents the understanding that everyone and everything in life is connected, including *dukkha* (suffering). As a result, Buddhists strive to live in harmony and reach enlightenment through knowledge in order to end suffering.

Buddhists are taught to “face all who suffer, both (themselves) and others, with loving kindness and empathy, to discern the mechanism of suffering, and to walk the path of truth as beings who share one universe.”²¹

21 Rev. Okochi, Hidehito (2012), “Reflections from the Buddhist Tradition on How Poverty Affects Children”, (report on GNRC’s Fourth Forum, Dar es Salaam, 16-18 June 2012), accessed 3 December 2015, <https://gnrc.net/en/what-we-do/gnrc-forums/fourth-forum/reports/3248-reflections-from-the-buddhist-tradition>.

These tenets were practiced by the historical figure of Buddha throughout his 45 years of compassionate ministry to all he encountered. His followers across the world have been trying to follow his example ever since. The scholar Warren Matthews writes: “Individuals have a responsibility to the future to live an exemplary life now. In the Buddhist teaching of karuna, or compassion, there is a strong social concern. Buddhism has taught compassion for all living creatures, animal life as well as human.”²²

Buddhism and child protection

For Buddhists, this foundation of compassion and love towards others extends naturally towards children. In fact, this description from the *Khuddaka Patha*, Metta Sutta offers a vivid illustration of this, saying, “As a mother with her own life guards the life of her own child, let all-embracing thoughts for all that lives be thine.” Thus, Buddhists are mindful of the systems and structures that can cause children to suffer, as well as those that can help protect them.

According to Rev. Hidehito Okochi, Chief Priest of Juko-in Temple, all forms of violence against children “can only be overcome by a society, which embraces human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which came into being through deep reflection on the many aspects of human suffering.”²³

Buddhist faith in action

Buddhism states that the solution to end suffering is found in the knowledge of what causes suffering so that something can be done about it. This means taking practical action since all actions and deeds have an impact on the universe (also known as the Law of Karma).

One example concerns Buddhist nuns living out their faith by working to end the suffering of trafficking victims in Nepal. *DhammaMoli* is an initiative in Nepal that, inspired by the Buddhist faith, provides shelter and education to young local girls at risk of being trafficked to brothels in India. When asked about the spiritual motivation behind their work, one of the founders of DhammaMoli, Sister Dhamma Vijaya explained: “The fundamental discourse of Buddhism is loving kindness to all living beings, even your enemies. In short, Buddha has said [in the *Tripitaka* Buddhist scriptures] that one should try, in whatever capacity one can, to help others — and more so, those that cannot take care of themselves. Even if you are able to save one life, that counts towards your achievement of Nirvana.”²⁴

The following is a passage from the Shantideva, Guide to the *Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* (8.126-128):

“If, for my own sake, I cause harm to others, I shall be tormented in hellish realms; But if for the sake of others I cause harm to myself, I shall acquire all that is magnificent.

By holding myself in high esteem I shall find myself in unpleasant realms, ugly and stupid; But should this [attitude] be shifted to others I shall acquire honours in a joyful realm.

If I employ others for my own purposes I myself shall experience servitude, But if I use myself for the sake of others I shall experience only lordliness.”

22 Matthews, Warren (1995), “Buddhism: Community and Ethics”, in *World Religions*, second edition, Minneapolis/St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 173.

23 Rev. Okochi, Hidehito (2012), “Reflections from the Buddhist Tradition on How Poverty Affects Children”.

24 In the classical Chinese novel *Journey to the West*, also called in English *Monkey God*, a character named Tripitaka says, “To save one life is better than to build a seven-storeyed pagoda.”



"To remain neutral in situations of injustice is to be complicit in that injustice."

– Archbishop Desmond Tutu

The heart of the Christian faith focuses on God's unconditional love and relational nature. From the very beginning of the Bible, the writer of Genesis describes God as the Creator who has made people in his own image (Genesis 1:27).²⁵

Throughout the Bible, there are also repeated calls to God's people to remember the "widows" and "orphans" who represent a community's more vulnerable members and to protect them (Luke 18:16).

God wants to ensure that his people follow his example of protecting orphans and children. In a well-known passage of the Gospels, Jesus is speaking to a crowd. When some of his disciples try to prevent the children and their families from approaching him, Jesus reprimands them saying, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs' (Luke 18:16).

Jesus also speaks out forcefully against anyone who might take advantage of children and their trusting nature:

"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come!"

(Matthew 18:6-7, Holy Bible, New International Version)

From these examples, it is evident that, in Christianity, God values children very highly and expects his followers to ensure they are protected.

²⁵ Unless otherwise specified, all Christian biblical scriptures quoted in this section are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Christianity and child protection

From its earliest history to today, the Christian church has rejected infanticide, cared for orphans, healed the sick, educated children and fought for their legal protection. Over the centuries and around the world, Christians across denominations have built institutions that serve children and young people, such as relief agencies, hospitals, and schools. In these and other ways Christians, both conservative and liberal, have sought to nurture, protect and act as strong advocates for children.²⁶

Certainly, the Christian church cannot remain complacent on the issue of child protection due to the exposure of child sexual abuse cases that have come to light over the past fifteen years. Pope Francis has spoken out publicly against this abuse by describing it as a “grave problem” and stating that one case “is enough for us to be ashamed of ourselves and do what needs to be done.”²⁷ The Pope also announced the appointment of the committee to combat sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church and offer help to victims, which was established in 2014.²⁸ It is important to note such child sexual abuse has not been limited to the Catholic Church. Offenders often abuse positions of trust and authority, and similar cases have emerged in other faiths and among other Christian denominations. They too recognise the need to do more to protect children within their own communities.²⁹

Christian faith in action

Christianity is a faith that requires action. If the Church is to respond faithfully to God’s unconditional love, then Christians must join together across denominations to fight the abuse and exploitation of children.

One prime example of the Christian faith in action is the development of *Principles and Tools for Child-Friendly Churches*³⁰ by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and UNICEF. The principles and tools aim to raise awareness of these critical issues and help churches across the world tackle them at local level. Consultations have been taking place around the world to enable the views of children and young people to be heard. This initiative grew from the ‘Child Friendly Church Award’ scheme launched by the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Across Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, church leaders and congregations have already been transforming their communities through child-friendly church initiatives. Christian leaders have gained a better understanding of the rights and needs of children and are creating opportunities and safe spaces for children to express their ideas, share their worries and suggest solutions. In 2015, 700 children in Kisumu, Kenya led a procession during the World Weekend of Prayer, marching through the city in front of hundreds of people, declaring that: “It is God’s desire for children to be loved and protected.”³¹

Ultimately, the Christian Church can act to protect children and those who have been abused or exploited because Christianity acknowledges the power of Jesus to heal and forgive. This is described in Psalm 147:3, when the writer states, “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”

26 World Council of Churches (2015), “Principles for Child-friendly Churches”, accessed 20 October 2015, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/events/capacity-building-for-child-friendly-churches>.

27 Martín, Inés San (2015), “Pope Francis calls sexual abuse scandals a ‘grave problem’”, CRUX: Taking the Catholic Pulse, 13 March 2015, accessed 20 October 2015, <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/03/13/pope-francis-calls-sexual-abuse-scandals-a-grave-problem/>.

28 BBC News (2013), “Pope Francis sets up Vatican child sex abuse committee”, BBC News, 5 December 2013, accessed 20 October 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-25235724>.

29 Associated Press (2007), “Data Shed Light on Child Sexual Abuse by Protestant Clergy”, The New York Times, 16 June 2007, accessed 21 October 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/16/us/16protestant.html?_r=2&...

30 World Council of Churches (2016), “WCC-UNICEF partnership shares two child-friendly versions of the Draft ‘Principles for Child-Friendly Churches’”, 31 March 2016, accessed 14 April 2016, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/wcc-unicef-partnership-shares-two-child-friendly-versions-of-the-draft-2016principles-for-child-friendly-churches201d>.

31 Viva-admin (2012), “5 ways to make your church more child-friendly”, Viva: together for children blog, 6 July 2012, accessed 20 October 2015, <http://na.blog.viva.org/index.php/2012/07/06/5-ways-make-church-child-friendly/#sthash.QpMb12Be.dpuf>.



“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

Hinduism acknowledges that life contains external and internal forces such as injustice and greed that can cause violence and suffering. This violence can take a physical and forceful form that will hurt or abuse others. It can also take a more mental or emotional form caused by thoughts, desires, words or even inaction, which is described in the following passage in the *Bhagavad Gita* (3.36-41):

***“Arjuna: What is the force that binds us to selfish deeds, O Krishna?
What power moves us, even against our will, as if forcing us?***

***Krishna: It is greed and anger, arising from the state of being,
known as passion; these are the appetites and evils, which threaten
a person in this life.***

***Just as a fire is covered by smoke and a mirror is obscured by dust,
just as an embryo is enveloped deep within the womb, knowledge is
hidden by greed – hidden, Arjuna, by this unquenchable fire for self-
satisfaction, the inveterate enemy of the wise.***

***Greed is found in the senses, mind, and intellect, misleading them
and burying wisdom in delusion. Fight with all your strength,
Arjuna! Controlling your senses, conquer your enemy, the destroyer
of knowledge and realisation.”***

Overcoming greed through wisdom, service and taking responsibility for one’s own actions lie at the very heart of Hinduism. This passage from the *Bhagavad Gita* (3.10-26) describes the requirement to live selflessly and the rewards for doing so:

***“Every selfless act...is born from the eternal, infinite Godhead. God
is present in every act of service. All life turns on this law. Whoever
violates it, indulging his senses for his own pleasure and ignoring
the needs of others, has wasted his life. But those who realise
the God within are always satisfied.... Strive constantly to serve
the welfare of the world; by devotion to selfless work one attains
the supreme goal in life. Do your work with the welfare of others
always in mind.... The ignorant work for their own profit, the wise
work for the welfare of the world, without thought to themselves.”***

Hinduism and child protection

Hindus believe that all human beings are equal and that value is given to everyone and everything. The dignity and value of the human being in the Hindu tradition arise from the equal presence of God in everyone.

*“I look upon all creatures equally; none
are less dear to me and none more dear”*

(Bhagavad Gita 9.29).

Hindus are obliged to protect children as a moral and religious duty. They are responsible for ensuring that children have a proper upbringing and for their well-being. Hinduism emphasises that children should be loved and should not experience any form of neglect or abuse. According to Dr. Anantanand Rambachan, the chief ethical value in the Hindu tradition is non-injury (*ahimsa*). The sexual exploitation of children on the Internet or through any other means is a blatant form of violence. Mahatma Gandhi, the great teacher of *ahimsa*, reminded us that the helpless among us are most deserving of our protection from cruelty and abuse. Children are the most vulnerable in our families and communities and our willingness to protect them is a test of our commitment to *ahimsa*.³²

Hindu faith in action

Hindus believe that suffering can be reduced by the practices of self-control, generosity and compassion towards others. The tradition teaches that we should identify with others in suffering and in joy and, without seeking reward, act to relieve pain and suffering.

According to a prolific author on Indian religions and philosophy, Mr. Jayaram V says: “In Hinduism, causing intentional harm to others in any form is considered sinful, with negative consequences for one’s rebirth. One should avoid intentional harm by all means.”³³ This understanding should motivate Hindus to do all they can to help prevent any type of harm or threats to children in their communities. Ultimately, however, Hindus avoid harming others and practice compassion because they recognise God as existing in all.

One example of this is the great work being carried out by one initiative in Bihar, India. Bharat Sevashram Sangha, a Hindu organisation, works to protect children in Bihar, one of the poorest states in India with high rates of illiteracy, inadequate health care facilities and limited access to social services. Poor children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by people who lure them to Delhi and other large cities by providing false promises of education and employment. These children often fall into the hands of slave traders and are sold into child labour. Bharat Sevashram Sangha provides shelter, basic needs and education to these vulnerable children and their family. The organisation is currently providing shelter for more than 200 children, as well as skills training for their parents. Through these child protection efforts and engagement with parents, Bharat Sevashram Sangha is able to prevent the exploitation and trafficking of these children.³⁴

32 Dr. Anantanand Rambachan, Professor, Religion Department, Saint Olaf College.

33 V., Jayaram, “Violence and Abuse in Hinduism”, accessed 21 October 2015, http://hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/h_violence.asp.

34 Swami Parameshananda, Bharat Sevashram Sangha.



“If you see evil, intervene to change the situation, if you cannot, then condemn it with words, and if you cannot even do that, then disapprove it in your heart, which is the least you can do for the faith.”

- Emir Abdelkader El Djezairi³⁵

Islam is a religion of revelation in which God calls His followers to peacefully submit (the meaning of “Muslim”) to Him and His will. It has a strong focus on the importance of respect, rights and responsibilities. The words of the *Quran* and the traditions of the prophet, Muhammad, contain the rights and responsibilities granted by God to humankind.

“Surely Allah enjoins justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion. He admonishes you that you may be mindful” (*Quran* 16:90).

The principles and rights enshrined in Islam include the rights of children. Their rights are not necessarily guaranteed by the actions of their parents, their communities, or even their governments alone. Instead, Muslims believe that God himself guarantees children’s rights.³⁶

Islam and child protection

“A child is a special being entrusted to mankind by God and, therefore, the child must be protected, educated, and well prepared for the sustainable continuation of the human race,” states Dr. Din Syamsuddin, Leader of *Muhammadiyah*, Indonesia and President of *RfP* Asia.

Islam views childhood as a period of life that should be viewed with hope and aspiration. According to the *Quran*, children are a gift from Almighty Allah to His faithful servants. In its essence, and by virtue of its rules and regulations, Islam provides children with a protective environment. According to the Prophet Muhammad, “Allah will (on the Day of Reckoning) question each person in a position of responsibility about what he (she) was responsible for (in this life).”³⁷

Islam has always placed great emphasis on children and their well-being. All of this can be found in the Quranic verses and in the traditions of the Prophet Mohammed.³⁸ Scholars have broken down this Islamic understanding of children and child rights into the following key areas:

- a child’s right to health and life;
- a child’s right to a family, kindred, name, property and inheritance;

35 Kiser, John W. (2002), “The Monks of Tibhirine: Faith, Love, and Terror in Algeria”, New York: St. Martin’s, 271.

36 Stacey, Aisha (2013), “What Islam Says About Children (Part 1 of 5): God Guarantees the Rights of Children”, The Religion of Islam, accessed 4 April 2016, <http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/3584/what-islam-says-about-children-part-1/>.

37 Reported by Al-Tirmidhi in his Sunan; Kitab Al-Jihad (The Book of Jihad); Chapter “Rulers pertaining to the (rights and responsibilities of the) head of state; 4/208 narrated on the authority of Anas bin Malik may Allah be pleased with him.

38 Safe Network Hub and NPSCC (2015), “Safeguarding young people in multifaith settings”, NPSCC, 30 March 2015, accessed 21 October 2015, <https://www.npscc.org.uk/fighting-for-childhood/news-opinion/safeguarding-children-young-people-faith-settings/>.

- a child's right to healthcare and proper nutrition;
- a child's right to education and the acquisition of talents;
- a child's right to live in security and peace, and enjoy human dignity and protection under the responsibility of the parents;
- a child's rights to justice and quality in treatment among his/her siblings;
- a child's rights to enjoy her/his childhood; and
- the caring role of society and the state to support all of these rights and support families incapable of providing appropriate conditions for their children.³⁹

Islamic faith in action

One example of Muslim groups putting their faith into action effectively can be seen in the collaborative dialogue project between Muslim communities and local anti-violence agencies in London, Ontario, Canada. The initiative came about after a study found that local Muslim women and their children who were being abused were struggling to access assistance or find safe shelter for themselves and their children.

The Muslim Family Safety Project is a community-based partnership between local Muslim communities in London and the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse. The project was launched in February 2004 at the London Muslim Mosque with the participation of over 250 members of the Muslim community and representatives of local agencies. This collaboration has created an environment in which local service providers and the Muslim community can share ideas and perspectives and learn from one another. Project members have been able to talk, develop trust and undergo training in effective family violence prevention and intervention services. Local agencies have learned more about the Islamic perspective on violence, and high-profile events have been held in local mosques with the participation of the Imams.

The main objective was to implement a community outreach plan for the Muslim community to address the issue of gender violence and for service providers to be sensitive to the needs of the Muslim community.⁴⁰

Indeed, the Islamic community can do much to protect the vulnerable and maintain justice in your community as the Quran states:

"O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah, even though it be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives — whether he be rich or poor, Allah has a better right over them both. So follow not (your) low desires, lest you deviate. And if you distort or turn away from (truth), surely Allah is ever Aware of what you do"
(Al-Nisaa, 4:135).

39 UNICEF and International Centre for Population Studies and Research, Al-Azhar University (2005), "Children in Islam: Their Care, Development and Protection", accessed 20 October 2015, <http://www.unicef.org/egypt/Egy-homepage-Childreninislamengsum%281%29.pdf>.

40 For more information about the Muslim Family Safety Project, including the project's objectives, visit <http://www.lfcc.on.ca/mfsp.html>.



***“(A child is) a human being created in the Divine Image
affording him or her all human dignity that must be
protected from abuse, but precisely his or her vulnerability
makes them more deserving of our regard and obliges
us with greater responsibility towards them.”***

– Rabbi David Rosen

At the heart of Judaism is the covenant relationship between God and His chosen people, the Jews. It is through this relationship of loving kindness and faithfulness that Jews can find their purpose and fulfilment as a people.⁴¹ The *Hebrew Bible* describes God in Psalm 145:8-9 as good and compassionate and as caring for everything he has created, including children:

***“God is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and great in grace.
God is good to all; His compassion rests on all his creatures.”***

This compassion extends especially to the vulnerable in society, and what the Torah describes as the “orphans” and the “fatherless.” It is clear, therefore, that Judaism promotes responsibilities towards others, and especially to children.

Judaism and child protection

Followers of Judaism believe that children, like all other people, are human beings created in the Divine Image and, as such, hold a human dignity that must be protected from abuse. In fact, a child’s vulnerability makes them more deserving of notice and requires a greater sense of responsibility towards them.

Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee and *RfP* Co-president, states that Judaism affirms that young people are more than the product of an older generation: they also guarantee the future. Rabbi Rosen also says that the sages of the *Talmud* describe children as “the Messiahs of humankind,” as a result of their potential.⁴²

This is why the Jewish tradition empathises with Abraham’s yearning for his own children as described in Genesis,⁴³ and why Jewish communities are extremely family-orientated. Indeed, there is a view in Judaism that it can function without the synagogue and school, but not without the family. As a result, Judaism values children very highly and their lives and well-being are seen as critical for society as a whole.

⁴¹ Matthews, “Introduction to Judaism”, 276.

⁴² Rabbi Rosen, David, “The Rights of the Child – Jewish Perspective”, accessed 14 April 2016, <http://www.rabbidavidrosen.net/Articles/Judaism/The%20Rights%20of%20the%20Child%20-%20A%20Jewish%20Perspective.doc>.

⁴³ See the Book of Genesis, chapter 12, verse 5.

Clearly, the Jewish Biblical perspective based on the *Hebrew Bible* makes it clear that child victims of violence are like the “ultimate litmus test” of one’s own religious values.⁴⁴ This test is based on the extent to which a faith community will respond to the needs of an abused child.

Jewish faith in action

Jews view the world and their faith through the lens of community and their responsibilities towards others because they are answerable to God for their conduct. According to the *Talmud*, “all men are responsible for one another” (*Talmud*, Sanhedrin 27b). This responsibility extends to ensuring that children are safe and protected from abuse.

Rabbi Diana Gerson, Programme Director at the New York Board of Rabbis, shared her thoughts about this at an interfaith forum discussing violence against children. “I have to tell you how many of my colleagues fear making that phone call. When I see a child in distress who’s clearly been abused, and we meet as a staff, and somebody says, ‘Well, I don’t think we should get involved in this one.’” She then declared, “We have to make the report, we have to stand up for this child because if no one does, that child will be left to suffer. And if it’s not my job, whose job is it?”⁴⁵

The New York Board of Rabbis has addressed this issue through their Domestic Violence Initiative -- ‘Dayenu! Enough! -- which has trained about 2,500 people in the New York Metro area since initiating its child sexual abuse prevention training in 2007.⁴⁶ They have hosted a free child abuse prevention programme at Temple Emanu-El in Port Richmond, Staten Island in New York for clergies, community leaders, teachers, parents and concerned adults. The Board sees this initiative as an opportunity to provide an important service to the entire community as, they state, they recognise that child abuse could occur in every religious, ethnic and economic group.

The temple’s leading rabbi has said that it is important to have such events and trainings because he acknowledges that child abuse is far more prevalent than people would like to think. He wants people to learn about the issue, know what to watch out for, and what to do when they come across cases of abuse. He also hopes that being alert to abuse can help to prevent it, with community and religious leaders able to respond in a more constructive and positive way. In addition, greater awareness can allow them to offer more effective help to victims.

44 Rabbi Rosen, “The Rights of the Child – Jewish Perspective”.

45 Arigatou International and ECPAT International hosted the Forum on Religious Ideals and Reality: Responsibility of Leadership to Prevent Violence against Children in August 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland. To view a featured video of the forum, visit <https://youtu.be/Z2VI87iTF5Q>.

46 Grunlund, Maura (2012), “Preventing sexual abuse is focus of training for clergy, others at Staten Island workshop”, S.I News, 5 June 2012, accessed 20 October 2015, http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2012/06/preventing_sexual_abuse_is_foc.html.



“Kot brehmand ko tthakur suaami... Almighty God is the Master of millions of universes, the Giver of all beings; Constantly he cherishes and cares for them – but foolishly we recognise not even one of His virtues.”

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib⁴⁸

The Sikh faith emphasises that the light of God dwells in all beings. If we genuinely see this light in every child, woman and man, and in all creation, we become morally incapable of abusing or exploiting any other person. The One, all-embracing Creator (*Ik Oankar*) is Eternal Reality (*Sat Nam*) and the source of spiritual attributes given to every human. It is not enough to know or talk about ‘Truth’ in the abstract; what matters is our ability to walk the way of truth, through our moment-to-moment conduct.

“Sachoh orai sabh ko, oupar sach aachaar.”

Truth is higher than everything; but higher still is truthful living.

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib⁴⁹

The attributes that characterise the spiritual self include: *daya* (compassion), *sat* (purity, truth and integrity), *santokh* (contentment), *nimarta* (humility), *prem* (love) and *khema* (forgiveness). *Haumai*, the selfish ego, is necessary for survival, but destructive when it is allowed to consume us unchecked. It fuels the ‘five thieves’ of blind lust, vengefulness, incessant greed, possessive attachment and self-centred arrogance, joined by drives towards exploitation, hypocrisy, manipulation and deceit.

The key thrust of the Sikh faith is to constantly inspire us to overcome our negativity and to mobilise the best within ourselves.

Sikhism and child protection

“Poota, maata ki aasees...”

Oh my child, let this hopeful vision be your mother’s blessing and advice to you:

May you never for an instant forget the Creator of the universe

May remembrance of the divine always resound within you.

May the Guru be kind to you, that you may love the company of enlightened souls

May your clothes be God’s preservation of your dignity and honour.

And may your food be the daily singing of His praises....

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib⁵⁰

47 Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh, Chairman, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha and Trustee of RfP.

48 *Ibid*, p. 612

49 *Ibid*, p. 62

50 *Ibid*, 496.

Sikh means 'learner'. We are all, at whatever age, 'somebody's child' as well as a 'child of God.' The idea that children arrive in this world with innate attributes and capacities is highlighted in accounts of those Sikh Gurus who, as children, were able to illuminate and transform the narrow-minded or foolish behaviour of adults.

In the womb, Sikh teaching informs us, the child is blessed with a meditative state and protected by an intimate connection to God. There is power too in a mother's hopes for her children and her prayers for the things that will enable them to navigate their way wisely through their lives. Children benefit when this vision is extended through family, community and society at large.

Inadvertently, today's online culture provides an outlet for the darker side of human nature. Parents and communities are required to be more vigilant and systems of social surveillance are on the increase, as we resort to 'police control' to deal with symptoms of deep-rooted problems in the social fabric. In search for solutions and cures, faith teachings work by prevention. They offer a resource to nurture our individual lives as well as the relationships (e.g. those of marriage and family life), that make children feel loved, cared for, listened to and supported and less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Sikh faith in action

"Mithiaa tan nahi paroupkaraa..."

False is the body, which does not do good to others.

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib⁵¹

"Kam krodh kaaiya kou gaalai..."

Obsessed by lust and vengeance,
the body disintegrates and wastes away.

– Sri Guru Granth Sahib⁵²

The Sikh ideal of the 'saint-soldier' (*sant sipahi*) stresses courageous action steered by the inward qualities of a saint. The outward identity of the *Khalsa* order (of initiated Sikhs) emphasises to: wise, value-driven leadership (*dastar* or turban); being attuned to the Creator's presence and divine attributes (*kes* or uncut hair); untangling the mind from self-delusion (*kangha* or wooden comb); commitment to ethical action (*kara* or metal wristlet); defending goodness and the dignity of all (*kirpan* or noble, sword-like); the vow to absolute fidelity to one's spouse, taking no part in extra-marital relations or sexual exploitation (the *kachhehra*, or drawstring undershorts). In historical accounts of invasions involving the abduction of thousands of women and girls, Sikhs have been noted for their relentless efforts to rescue them and return them safely to their families.

Contemporary action by Sikhs includes the 2015 launch of the Safer Sikh Partnership⁵³ to promote 'effective safeguarding practices' to protect children from sexual abuse, grooming and violence, to facilitate collaboration with police services and act on issues considered taboo or highly stigmatised. Sikhs have also provided inter-religious input to develop an educational framework of 24 spiritual and moral dispositions⁵⁴ for schools in Birmingham, UK, as part of a longer term strategy to embed value-led thinking across all aspects of societal life.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 269

⁵² *Ibid*, 932.

⁵³ Sikh Council UK (2015), "UK Sikhs launch campaign to promote safeguarding and tackle child grooming", Sikh Siyasat News, 8 December 2015, accessed 21 October 2015, <http://sikhsiyasat.net/2015/12/08/uk-sikhs-launch-campaign-to-promote-safeguarding-and-tackle-child-grooming/>.

⁵⁴ Faith Makes a Difference: Religious Education in Birmingham, "The 24 Dispositions", accessed 21 October 2015, <http://www.faithmakesadifference.co.uk/content/24-dispositions>.

Other religious perspectives

This section acknowledges the wealth of scriptures and teachings from other religions that focus on social responsibility, avoiding selfishness, excessive desire and greed, and wherever possible, thoughts on children. Although they are of a standalone nature here, perhaps they will provide ECPAT members and CSO partners with more ideas of other types of FBOs or religious leaders with whom they could potentially engage.



“O Thou kind Lord! These lovely children are the handiwork of the fingers of Thy might and the wondrous signs of Thy greatness. O God! Protect these children, graciously assist them to be educated and enable them to render service to the world of humanity. O God! These children are pearls, cause them to be nurtured within the shell of Thy loving-kindness. Thou art the Bountiful, the All-Loving”

(Adbu'l-Baha, from Bahá'í Prayer).⁵⁵



“Right belief, right knowledge, right conduct, these together constitute the path to liberation”

(Tattvarthasutra 1.1).

“Rendering help to another is the function of all human beings”

(Tattvarthasutra 5.21).

⁵⁵ Quoted from the prayer as provided by Ms. Bani Dugal, Principal Representative to the UN, Bahá'í International Community.



"The man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others"

(Analects 6.28.2).

Mencius said,

"Those who are morally well-adjusted look after those who are not; those who are talented look after those who are not. That is why people are glad to have good fathers and elder brothers. If those who are morally well-adjusted and talented abandon those who are not, then scarcely an inch will separate the good from the depraved"

(Mencius IV.B.7).



"The Way of Heaven is to benefit others and not to injure"

(Tao Te Ching 81).



"Do not seek to benefit only yourself, but think of other people also. If you yourself have an abundance, do not say, "The others do not concern me, I need not bother about them!"If you want to amass everything for yourself, other people will stay away from you and no one will want to be with you. If you should one day fall ill, no one will visit you because, for your part, you did not formerly concern yourself about others."⁵⁶

56 Myss, Caroline (2004), "Invisible Acts of Power: Personal Choices That Create Miracles", New York: Simon and Schuster.

Conclusion

This Guide has presented a very small glimpse of the scope and breadth of the world's religions, and the significant role that religious leaders hold in influencing their faith communities. Most religions contain beliefs and messages that encourage its followers towards selfless action on behalf of others, and others express the dignity and value of children.

By using the guidelines and examples within this Guide, members of the ECPAT Network and CSO partners can engage with FBOs and religious leaders to work towards the common goal of protecting children from online sexual exploitation. Through mutual dialogue and planning, ECPAT and CSO partners can combine technical and policy experience with the spiritual maturity, expertise and authority of religious leaders to mobilise people on this pressing issue.

Annexes

Annex A: Fundamental questions when researching potential FBO partners⁵⁷

The following are some sample questions that ECPAT members and CSOs can use to identify and assess a potential FBO partner:

What are the predominant faiths and spiritual traditions in the region? (Remember that traditional or animistic communities may lack formal structures.)

What is its relationship to the government? To other non-government actors? Do conflicts exist?

Are FBOs under the umbrella of a government entity (e.g. Ministry of Religious Affairs or Ministry of Culture)?

What types of relationships exist between the different religious and spiritual communities in the region?

What services or advocacy initiatives are religious actors undertaking in relation to ECPAT's goals and do they adhere to national standards?

What relevant technical experience or skills do FBOs and religious leaders have? Are they able to respond in case of an emergency or manage complex operations?

What financial resources do FBOs and religious leaders have in order to carry out intended activities? If they need additional financial support, do they have the organisational capacity to handle financial inputs and reporting requirements?

What influence do FBOs and religious leaders have in local, national or regional politics and governance, especially in relation to addressing the needs of the most marginalised communities?

What influence do FBOs and religious leaders have on local perceptions regarding sensitive issues such as sexuality, HIV and women's rights?

What human rights-based work around religion and culture, including women's rights and gender equality, is taking place in the region? And by whom?

What is the gender balance of the FBO leadership? Do their faith and spiritual traditions hold men and women in equal regard? Do women participate in planning or providing community services? Do local FBOs or religious leaders condemn or minimise the participation of any group of individuals?

Are there secular women's groups or religious groups in the region that allow women to hold prominent roles? Can women be included in equal partnerships, particularly if FBOs or religious leaders in the region do not have a gender balanced perspective?

⁵⁷ United Nations Development Programme, "Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations and Religious Leaders".

Annex B: Capacity-mapping exercise for potential FBO partners⁵⁸

The following are some sample questions that ECPAT members and CSOs can use to map the capacity of a potential FBO partner:

What do you know about the faith actor approached by/approaching ECPAT/your CSO? Are you familiar with its mission, values, internal organisation and human, technical and financial capacities?

Is the FBO you are in contact with recognised by the government?

Has the FBO already been assessed by other CSOs in the country? Who conducted the assessment? How and when did it take place? What were the results? Is this organisation partnering with ECPAT or another CSO in another country?

Does the identified FBO have a 'Code of Ethics' or human rights standards that are compatible with ECPAT/your CSO?

What is the group's position on gender equality and on respecting the human rights of all ethnic, religious and other groups?

Have we involved all parties in the FBO (e.g. male and female leaders)?

Does the organisation carry out any services or advocacy initiatives that are contrary to ECPAT/your CSO's principles, which may jeopardise the work and legitimacy of one or both organisations?

What benefits does ECPAT/your CSO gain from collaborating with this specific FBO?

Can this collaboration potentially create a conflict between FBOs of different faiths or between the FBO and ECPAT/your CSO? If yes, how can we mitigate this risk?

Does each party clearly understand the terms of agreement? Has ECPAT/your CSO clearly communicated the objectives of the collaboration?

Should conflicts of interest arise, how might ECPAT/your CSO smoothly exit the relationship?

⁵⁸ United Nations Development Programme, "Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations and Religious Leaders".



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