

CAPACITY STATEMENT



FAITH-BASED APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

The role of faith

To overcome poverty or to change harmful behaviors may require that individuals overcome their most foundational convictions, which often are rooted in their faith. People's religious beliefs influence how they view their ability to change their circumstances and break free of poverty or contribute to social change. Their beliefs impact their acceptance of harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation. In some cases, religious identities fuel civil conflict.

Religious values play a significant role in guiding the thoughts, priorities, and actions of communities. Although a decade ago academics predicted a decline in those who adhere to religious

doctrines, statistics show that faith continues to be a strong influence, with 84 percent of the world's population belonging to an organized religion (Pew Forum, 2012). Religious organizations not only guide beliefs, but also, at least in the developing world, provide vital community services. World Bank estimates that faith-based organizations (FBOs) provide about half of the education and healthcare services in Africa.

By engaging influential faith partners to address the difficult issues of poverty and injustice, World Vision effectively tackles deeply rooted problems such as stigma, abuse, and exploitation. Churches and other FBOs become valuable partners in ensuring that the progress is sustainable, because of their long-term presence in and commitment to their communities.

ABOUT WORLD VISION

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice, including those based in belief systems or cultural norms. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender. Established in 1950, World Vision operates in nearly 100 countries with oversight, fundraising, and implementation branches. More than 42,000 staff members (95 percent of whom work in their own countries) help implement health, education, livelihoods, food security, child protection, economic development, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programs.

Much of World Vision's transformational development work takes place in its area programs, which work in a holistic manner over 10 to 15 years with local communities in a way that multiplies the impact of the assistance and results in self-sustaining development. World Vision's community-empowering model has created strong relationships with local civic actors, faith communities, and governments.

Core strengths

Credibility

As a faith-based organization, World Vision is uniquely positioned to engage with faith leaders to effect change.

World Vision's faith identity and focus on community empowerment enables it to establish trusted relationships with influential local FBOs and faith leaders, who are trusted more than any other societal or governmental leader (World Bank). In 2017, World Vision trained more than 140,000 faith leaders, an important avenue for influencing community attitudes and transforming harmful behaviors.

In fragile states, which are by definition places where government institutions are weak and unable to provide the basic services of the state, faith communities are often one of the few institutions that remain. World Vision's faith-based approach creates natural partnerships for effective programming in these hard-to-reach areas.

Partnerships

World Vision has formed an extensive network of partnerships with faith communities, including Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Christians of multiple denominations.

World Vision and FBOs of many faiths are united by the foundation of precepts that promote justice, wholeness, peaceful relationships, and caring for those in need.

In addition to partnering with local FBOs and faith leaders in its program areas, World Vision is a global leader in convening FBOs to address broader development issues. Some examples include:

- Global partnership with Islamic Relief Worldwide to use the Channels of Hope model for Muslim contexts, including on gender issues—an especially sensitive topic
- Creation of the Asia Pacific Faith Coalition, consisting of ACT Alliance, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Soka Gakkai International, Arigatou International, and Asia Civil Society Partnership for Sustainable Development
- Co-hosting (with the World Council of Churches, Islamic Relief Worldwide, and the ACT Alliance) the “Faith Action

for Children on the Move” conference in 2018 on the plight of child refugees

Faith-based program models/approaches

World Vision has created effective, faith-based program models and approaches that tackle the root causes of harmful behaviors based on cultural norms or values-based belief systems. Going beyond physical needs, these approaches address individuals' spiritual needs to create a sense of resilience and hope. This is vital for long-term sustainability of changes in a community.

These program models focus on creating an environment of mutual respect so community members can engage in informed theological conversation about difficult topics such as abuse, exploitation, and religious- and gender-based violence.

- **Channels of Hope (CoH)** is World Vision's signature program model for catalyzing faith leaders and communities on sensitive issues. It was developed more than a decade ago by the Christian AIDS Bureau for Southern Africa as a faith-based response to the devastating effects of HIV and AIDS. A multicountry, longitudinal study showed that use of CoH increased children's knowledge about HIV by 32 percent, and increased the likelihood that individuals would access voluntary counseling and testing by 12 percent.

World Vision has adapted CoH to address other difficult and often taboo issues such as gender equality, maternal and child health, child protection, and Ebola. In South Sudan, CoH for Gender decreased the number of faith leaders believing female victims of rape should marry the perpetrator regardless of her wishes from 51 percent to only 3 percent. In a CoH project in El Salvador, churches were mobilized to invest \$6 for child well-being activities for every \$1 invested by World Vision. CoH has been adapted for use in multifaith contexts. It is used in more than 90 countries, and more than 455,000 faith leaders have participated in CoH training as of 2017.

- **Empowered Worldview (EWW)** was created as a result of livelihood projects in several World Vision program areas in which participants demonstrated a transformed worldview as they grew in their understanding of their worth in God's eyes. As their mindset shifted from one

of dependence to one of empowerment and personal responsibility, they discovered creative ways to improve their farming methods and increase their incomes. EWV is moving beyond a focus on livelihoods to also encourage peacebuilding efforts and inspire communities to develop their own solutions to community issues.

- **Celebrating Families** is a model developed by World Vision to help parents learn to parent with love, warmth, and respect rather than harsh and punitive parenting techniques. World Vision is using this model in about 60 countries to equip parents on positive discipline and healthy marriages.
- **Interfaith Engagement for Child Well-Being** is an approach that World Vision uses to bring together leaders of many faiths to focus on common goals, such as issues related to child well-being. One tool used is faith-based forums, which include leaders from each local faith group to work alongside key government figures on an agenda for change in their communities. Another interfaith engagement tool is cultural transformation training, which creates an opportunity for people of various faith backgrounds to discuss practices that are harmful to children.

Successful projects

» Women's Empowerment Project

Location: Herat, Afghanistan

Timing: 2015-2017

Goal: To increase women's participation in civil society by promoting women's rights and gender equality

Description: Working with Muslim leaders at multiple levels, World Vision facilitated discussion between male and female community-based organizations to identify cultural barriers to women's participation in decision-making and to implement actions to change attitudes.

Impact:

- 62 percent of Muslim leaders trained on gender issues became supportive of women participating in decision-making in their households and communities.

- 69 percent of community members surveyed reported hearing messages on women's rights presented by their religious leader in prayer sessions.
- 38 percent increase occurred in the number of women participating in decision-making.

Donor: European Union, matched with donations from private U.S. donors

Partner: Social Development and Advocacy Organization

» Safe and Dignified Burial Practices

Location: Sierra Leone

Timing: 2014-2015

Goal: To create and mobilize a network of faith and community leaders to help stop the spread of Ebola, which was being transmitted by the religious custom of washing the bodies of the deceased

Description: World Vision adapted the CoH program model to engage Muslim and Christian faith leaders to convince their followers to use safe and religiously acceptable burial practices.

Impact:

- 71 percent of people reported receiving Ebola prevention messages from their imam or pastor (Johns Hopkins study).
- No Ebola deaths occurred among World Vision's 59,000 sponsored children in Sierra Leone.

Donor: USAID, OFDA

Partners: World Health Organization, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, World Council of Churches, Caritas, Islamic Relief

» Interfaith Peacebuilding Partnership

Location: Central African Republic

Timing: 2013

Goal: To ensure a context-appropriate humanitarian response in a region where political conflict has been fueled by faith identity

Description: World Vision proactively engaged imams, pastors, and priests in decisions on planned programming to ensure it targeted the most vulnerable populations, regardless of faith.

Impact:

- Within a month of World Vision taking over management of Yaloke IDP camp, people who had been confined to the camp (for safety) were able to leave the camp to access local markets and services.
- Christian and Muslim leaders asked World Vision to create one Child-Friendly Space, combining the separate spaces that had previously existed for Christian and Muslim children.
- The Christian host community welcomed the Muslim IDPs to resettle from the camp into the community and register children in local schools.

Donor: U.N., USAID, matched with donations from private U.S. donors

» Gender Equality in the Solomon Islands

Location: Solomon Islands

Timing: 2012-2014

Goal: To reduce gender-based violence in a society where two-thirds of women experience violence from an intimate partner

Description: Using the CoH for Gender program model, World Vision engaged Christian leaders in promoting gender equality.

Impact: A study conducted by Australia National University showed that in Solomon Island communities where CoH for Gender was implemented:

- Women who believe women should not make decisions decreased from 34 percent to 4 percent.
- Men who believe a woman can accuse her husband of rape increased from 70 percent to 83 percent.

Donor: Australian government

» THRIVE (Transforming Household Resilience in Vulnerable Environments)

Location: Tanzania

Timing: 2013-present

Goal: To strengthen the agricultural, environmental, and cultural systems needed to empower 9,000 smallholder farmers in 33 communities in northern Tanzania

Description: THRIVE is World Vision's integrated approach to economic empowerment. The foundation of THRIVE is the faith-based Empowered Worldview approach. This approach is integrated with training on the end-to-end business of farming, improved natural resource management, and disaster risk reduction for smallholder farmers.

Impact: A 2017 study by TANGO International showed that THRIVE participants:

- Earned \$58.04 more a month, on average, than if they had not participated in the program
- Were better able to provide for their children's household and educational needs
- Increased their productive assets more than if they had not participated in THRIVE

Collaborations

- USAID Center for Faith-based and Community Initiatives
- Joint learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities
- World Bank Moral Imperative Initiative
- International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD)
- Columbia University
- Islamic Relief Worldwide

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