



# Faith Leaders as Catalysts for Change: Transforming social and gender norms to address systemic barriers to health equity and Justice

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Presented by: Farida Abdulbasit

# THEORY AND PRACTICE



*Journey to a more healthy, inclusive, just and peaceful world*



### **Quran 49:13**

**"O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may [get to] know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware."**



### **Galatians 3:28,**

**"There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."**



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# Introduction.

- Health inequities are often rooted in discriminatory social and gender norms.
- Faith leaders have significant influence over values, behavior, and policy in many communities.
- Systemic challenges: misinformation, stigma, gender-based violence, lack of access.
- Religious narratives have sometimes upheld these norms, but can also reverse them.
- Correct interpretation of texts to support dignity, equality, and health



# The Role of Faith Leaders.

- Trusted messengers with moral authority.
- Deep community reach and regular engagement.
- Ability to shape values and perceptions through sermons, counseling, and pastoral care.
- Positioned to challenge harmful practices and advocate for dignity and rights.

# How do we leverage on the influence of Faith Leaders for social change?

- Invest in capacity building for faith actors on health and rights frameworks.
- Foster inclusive interfaith spaces for dialogue and action.
- Promote co-creation of messages with women, youth, and marginalized groups.
- Support theological reflection on health equity and justice.



# Some Case Studies - F2AN

FAITH ACTORS FOR GENDER JUSTICE (Women's Rights in Islam and Christianity)



# Faith Leaders' Consultations on Age Appropriate Sexuality Education



Age- Appropriate  
Sexuality Education-  
Briefing Paper for  
Faith Communities



# Faith Leaders' Consultations on Age Appropriate Sexuality Education



Religious Values,  
Beliefs and Teachings  
on Age- Appropriate  
Sexuality Education

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# Some Case Studies - F2AN

- Kenya: Engaging imams and pastors on gender-transformative messages in sermons
- Uganda: Training faith actors on SRHR and youth-friendly services
- Zimbabwe: Building faith champions for inclusive CSE delivery
- South Africa: Supporting faith-based advocacy for maternal health equity
- East African Community – Supporting the SRHR bill in the EALA.

# Why Faith Leaders as Catalysts for Change.

- Credibility & Reach - Trusted faith voices.
- Holistic Framing - Spiritual + health focus.
- Gender Justice Lens - Tackling structural barriers that promote injustice.
- Adaptive Learning - Peer-based iterative improvements.

# Key Recommendations.

- Invest in capacity building for faith actors on health and rights frameworks.
- Foster inclusive interfaith spaces for dialogue and action.
- Promote co-creation of messages with women, youth, and marginalized groups.
- Support theological reflection on health equity and justice.

