



Integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion  
in Faith Programming

# GESI and Faith

**A REFERENCE GUIDE**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This reference guide seeks to further the goals of World Vision's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Approach and Theory of Change and its Toolkit for Integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in design, monitoring and evaluation developed by the GESI Team in collaboration with Evidence and Learning Team at World Vision U.S..

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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. We serve all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.



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# Introduction

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. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is central to achieving this mission. GESI is a goal in its own right, vital in achieving sustainable humanitarian response, development, and peace. Effective GESI integration that incorporates a faith lens requires planning and resources to ensure that general principles are translated into action.

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## About this GESI and Faith Reference Guide

This document provides guidance on the intersections of GESI and faith for World Vision and others to follow as they integrate GESI-transformative faith-based interventions into their work. It aims to provide practical guidance on how to use a faith lens to promote gender equality and social inclusion specific to different programming sectors, and vice versa.

Faith often interplays with GESI in complex ways that can either promote gender equality and social inclusion, or in unfortunate situations, increase gender inequality and social exclusion. If GESI and faith dynamics are not intentionally considered, interventions may result in obstacles to access, decision-making, participation, and well-being of the most vulnerable, and reinforce unequal systems that would prevent the most vulnerable, especially women and girls, from contributing to or benefiting fully from recovery, development, and peace. Additionally, World Vision's programs that utilize the Faith and Development approach need to apply its Gender Equality and Social Inclusion lens to ensure equal and inclusive access, participation, decision-making, systems, and well-being.<sup>1</sup>

The reference guide will help sector teams to take GESI and faith into account when conducting program analyses and setting priorities for more equal and inclusive programming. It provides teams with necessary knowledge of faith-based and GESI-responsive approaches. Specifically, the guide does the following:

- Introduces some of the main concepts in GESI and faith.
- Presents key aspects of GESI-Responsive programming that consider faith-based approaches and integrate the different GESI domains.

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## How to Use this Reference Guide

This guide familiarizes the user with GESI concepts and faith-based approaches and demonstrates the relevance of GESI to faith and development. When adapting a GESI approach, teams must understand the various barriers and opportunities, including those that relate to faith. The guidance is focused on the practical integration of GESI in faith-based programming and processes.

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## The Audience for this Reference Guide

Individuals and organizations can use this reference guide to apply a GESI lens in faith and development approaches and ensure this is reflected in all stages of program's design, implementation, and evaluation. The reference guide is intended for use by World Vision's staff, secular and faith-based practitioners, partners, and government stakeholders who engage faith structures and communities in development programs, humanitarian assistance, advocacy, convening, or other forms of engagement.



# GESI and Faith-Based Approaches

As a faith-based, child-centered, community-empowering organization, World Vision considers both GESI and faith as critical to advancing transformational development and humanitarian emergency assistance, working to overcome poverty and eliminate violence by advancing gender equality and social inclusion. World Vision's faith-based programming is used to support the achievement of goals in different sectors including child protection, education, food security and livelihoods, and health.

World Vision seeks to deepen commitments to the most vulnerable and focus our ministry for greater evidence-based impact across all programming. Within World Vision's strategic plan, GESI is a strategic initiative to address the accelerators of extreme child vulnerability. Gender equality and social inclusion is also central to achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the various international conventions onto which World Vision has signed. The goal is to consistently apply a GESI lens in a systematic manner and to strengthen evidence of impact. World Vision has prioritized the development of this reference guide to strengthen GESI-responsive design and program quality assurance relating to faith-based approaches.

## KEY CONCEPTS IN GESI AND FAITH

### GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

World Vision defines **gender equality and social inclusion (GESI)**<sup>2</sup> as a multi-faceted process of transformation that promotes equal and inclusive access, decision-making, participation, systems, and well-being so that the most vulnerable can have life in its fullness.

**Gender equality** is the state or condition that affords women and girls, men and boys, equal enjoyment of human rights, socially valued goods, opportunities, and resources. It includes expanding freedoms and voice, improving power dynamics and relations, transforming gender roles, and enhancing overall quality of life so that males and females achieve their full potential.

**Social inclusion** seeks to address inequality and/or exclusion of vulnerable populations by improving terms of participation in society and enhancing opportunities, access to resources, giving voice, and respect for human rights. It seeks to promote empowerment and advance peaceful and inclusive societies and institutions.

### SOCIAL NORMS

The implication is that effective GESI and faith-based interventions must also transform harmful gender and social norms, perceptions, and relations to enable the most vulnerable to participate in and benefit equally from development interventions. **Social norms** are defined as perceptions of social expectation of typical and appropriate behavior within a valued reference group, often enforced by peers, families, and communities.<sup>3</sup> Social norms shape different kinds of behaviors such as those relating to sexual debut of adolescents, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and early marriage. They also affect access to education, healthcare, and information.

2 See World Vision (2020). Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, The World Vision Approach and Theory of Change.

3 See definitions in USAID's Passages Project on Transforming Social Norms

## AGENCY

GESI also aims at building **individual and collective agency**, resilience, and action in promoting the empowerment and well-being of vulnerable children, their families, and communities. Multi-level social and behavior change approaches that target individuals, faith leaders, and communities have the capacity and potential to shift harmful social norms, establish life-course individual and collective change, and foster protective environments for vulnerable children, adolescents, and adults.

Our GESI approach raises awareness and fosters demonstration of **agency** so that vulnerable individuals (and groups) who previously exercised little power develop their own capacities for self-understanding and expression, and gain control over their lives, resources, beliefs, values, and attitudes. Agency facilitates self-empowerment—power to and power within—through individual consciousness and the transformation of personal attitudes, self-perceptions, and power relations. Participants develop critical consciousness and see themselves as capable, with a right to choose, act and influence their lives, households, communities, and societies. In addition to self-transformation, agency also facilitates collective empowerment— power with—through social cohesion, movement building, and collective action for sustained change.

## EMPOWERMENT

World Vision's GESI approach facilitates **empowerment** by challenging deep structures of inequality and exclusion, and enhancing human rights, power, and agency of vulnerable populations. While empowerment often comes from within and cannot be done to or for anyone by others, cultures, societies, and institutions, including those of faith, can create conditions that facilitate or undermine possibilities for empowerment.

The systematic integration of gender equality and social inclusion is necessary to advancing World Vision's strategic imperative on **faith and development**.

## FAITH

Faith is widely used both as a term to describe a specific religious tradition or affiliation and the values, narratives, or beliefs associated with that tradition or affiliation. Evidence suggests that 84% of the world's population belong to a religious group,<sup>4</sup> representing an important opportunity to engage faith leaders and faith communities as drivers of social norms change. In humanitarian contexts, the word is generally intended to be seen as inclusive of diverse religious groupings, traditions, and spiritualities.

## FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

The term Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) is used to describe a broad range of organizations influenced by faith. They include religious and religion-based organizations/groups/networks, communities belonging to a place of religious worship, specialized religious institutions and religious social service agencies, and registered or unregistered non-profit institutions that have a religious character or mission. At the international level they include major humanitarian agencies, but the emphasis in this guidance is more at the local level.

## FAITH LEADERS

Faith leaders are people who play influential roles within their faith communities and the broader local community. They benefit from trust and exercise moral authority over members of their local faith community and shape public opinion in the broader community, even at the national or international level. They are often older men, but there are many examples of women or youth holding significant leadership responsibilities within faith communities.

## INTER-FAITH ASSETS AND COLLABORATIONS

World Vision seeks meaningful partnerships with various faith leaders, communities, and actors across the world to ensure that progress made in community development is GESI-responsive, has greater reach, and is more sustainable. Multi-faith collaborations have the potential to utilize various multi-faith assets for action on GESI.

**FIGURE 1: FAITH-BASED ASSETS TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION**

<b>Community Roots and Place-Based Knowledge</b>	Faith-based communities and leaders are often rooted in their communities, have extensive place-based knowledge, and embody a long-term presence and commitment to their communities, even in the most fragile of contexts.
<b>Religious Values, Social Influence</b>	Their religious values and practices have a strong social influence within most societies and they play a significant role in guiding the thoughts, priorities and actions of individuals and communities.
<b>Presence, Reach</b>	Their presence and reach is often greater than that of civil society organizations and even governments, often providing critical educational, health, social, and other services.
<b>Trusted Relationships, Authority, Credibility, Links</b>	With deep and trusted relationships, authority, credibility, and links with their communities, faith leaders are essential for community transformation and are key partners in World Vision's work on GESI.



## GESI APPROACH AND THEORY OF CHANGE

World Vision's GESI Approach and Theory of Change highlights pathways of transformational change that faith-based interventions can achieve along the five GESI domains and at the four levels of the socio-ecological model—individual, household, community, and societal levels.

**FIGURE 2: THE FIVE WORLD VISION GESI DOMAINS<sup>5</sup>**

### ACCESS

The ability to access, use, and/or own assets, resources, opportunities, services, benefits, and infrastructure.

### DECISION-MAKING

The ability to make decisions free of coercion at individual, household, community, and societal levels. This can include control over assets and ability to make decisions in leadership.

### PARTICIPATION

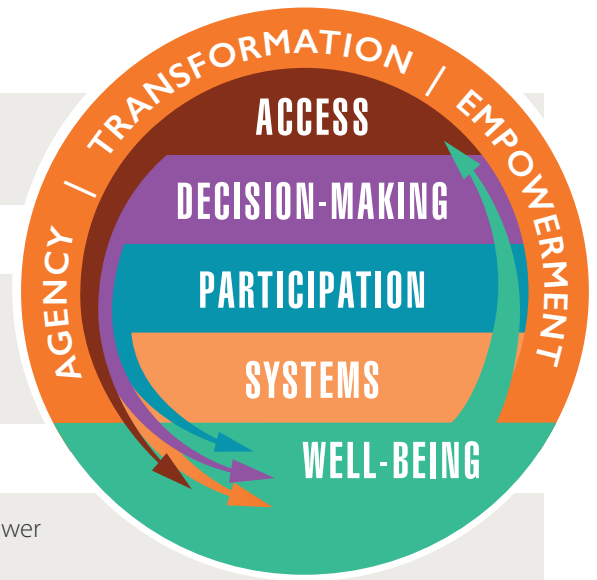
The ability to participate in or engage in societal affairs and systems of power that influence and determine development, life activities, and outcomes.

### SYSTEMS

The availability of equal and inclusive systems that promote equity, account for the different needs of vulnerable populations, and create enabling environments for their engagement.

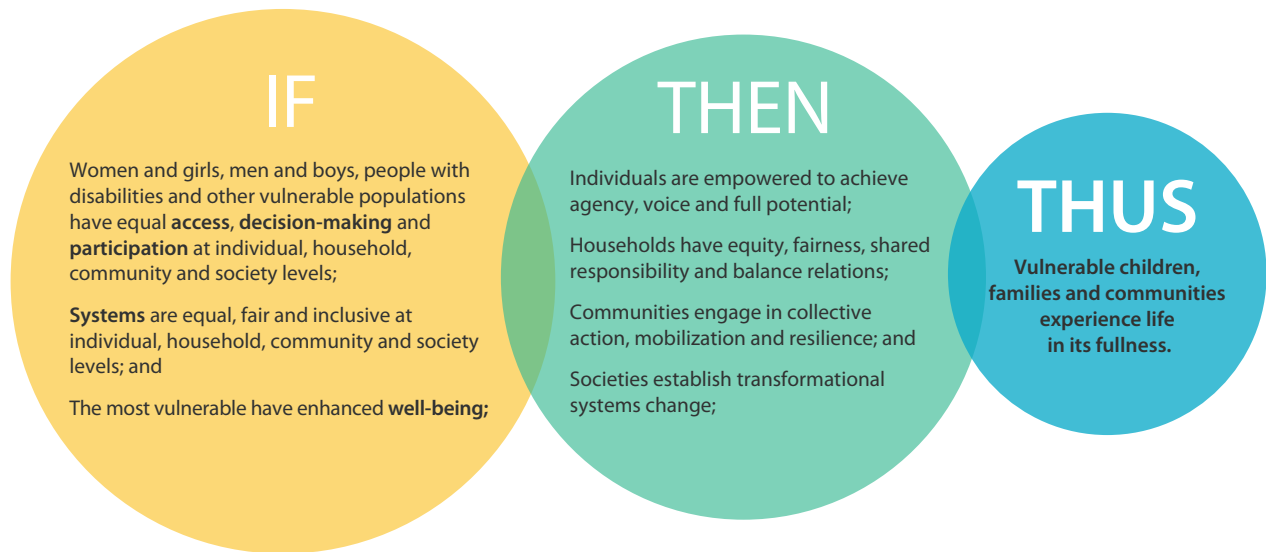
### WELL-BEING

The sense of worth, capability, status, confidence, dignity, safety, health, and overall physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being. This includes living free from gender-based violence and all forms of stigma and discrimination.



Faith-based interventions that promote change along these five GESI domains would achieve sustainable and inclusive development goals.

FIGURE 3: WORLD VISION'S GESI THEORY OF CHANGE



By applying this theory of change, World Vision's grassroots presence and faith-based approaches can help bring people of all faiths (or no faith) together to collaborate on the advancement of gender equality and social inclusion and contribute to the sustained realization of the needs of the most vulnerable.

## SHALOM

Different faith communities have concepts that align with GESI, and it is important to identify them and map their relevance to advance gender equality and social inclusion. From a Christian perspective, one of the key faith concepts that encompasses the vision for gender equality and social inclusion is **Shalom**. The biblical notion of shalom is a rich and holistic concept that starts with the idea of wholeness or completeness, and includes peace or harmony between two parties, whether with humans (Genesis 26:31) or God (Isaiah 54:10). But shalom also encompasses physical health and safety (Genesis 43:27-8). It means wholeness in both personal and communal contexts (Psalm 4:9, Zechariah 8:19). It can address situations in which restitution is required and can thus refer to justice (Exodus 22:3-6; Judges 11:13). Shalom is a holistic term that refers to one's entire welfare and well-being. Some representative biblical uses of shalom include Psalm 122 and Isaiah 32. Psalm 122 is a well-known poem that celebrates Jerusalem and looks to her restoration, which will be characterized by shalom.

*Pray for the shalom of Jerusalem:  
'May they prosper who love you.  
Shalom be within your walls,  
and security within your towers.'  
For the sake of my relatives and friends  
I will say, 'Shalom be within you.'  
For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,  
I will seek your good. (Psalm 122: 6-9)*

Like the Psalm, Isaiah 32 pulls the biblical ideals of justice, righteousness, and shalom together. This is a vision of a just and peaceful future that places people in harmonious, whole relationships with their God, with one another, and with their surrounding environment. Shalom is characteristic of inner peace and confidence (see also Psalm 4:8, Isaiah 26:3, and Isaiah 11:6-9), which aligns with GESI concepts of agency, voice, and power—power with, power within, and power to—that mobilizes the most vulnerable to act as agents of change both individually and collectively.

The book of Joel includes a powerful promise of restorative shalom, in the context of restoration after suffering: The word “repay” in the first line in this text is the verb shalom. This promise to “make whole” includes physical sustenance, safety, and the elimination of shame.

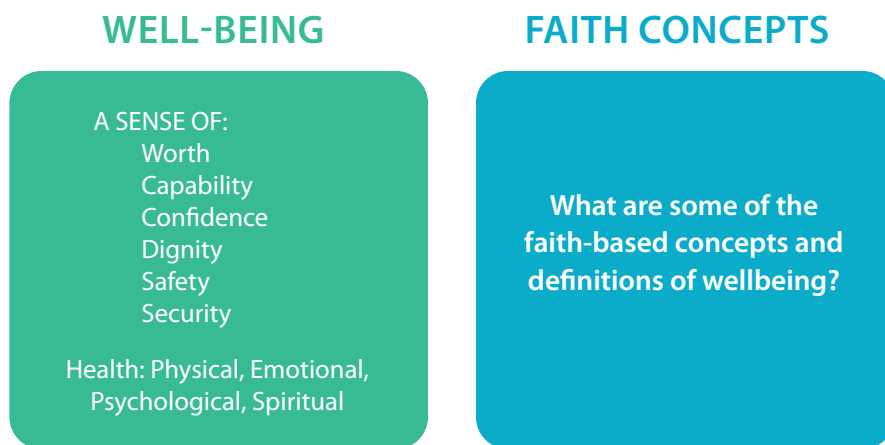
The Hebrew Bible’s idea of shalom thus corresponds fully to the GESI approach and its domain of well-being—making whole. It encompasses physical and emotional needs and operates in personal, interpersonal, and community-wide spheres. It addresses broken relationships and injustice, offering hope for the possibility of psycho-social healing as well as economic restitution.

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### Reflection Activity

Take a moment to reflect on the concept of well-being as presented in the GESI approach and theory of change. Figure 4 presents the definitions of well-being on the diagram’s left column. Think of your own religious texts or understandings of well-being and complete the diagram’s right column with those faith-based concepts and definitions, referencing specific religious texts or teachings.

**FIGURE 4: FAITH-BASED CONCEPTS ON WELL-BEING**



### INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality represents the various social, economic, and political characteristics that apply both to individuals and groups that influence whether a person or group are included or excluded in society. These characteristics include sex, age, disability, race, religion, ethnicity, marital status, economic status, and other characteristics, some of which have been identified in the faith narratives above. The complex overlapping and inter-relation of these characteristics determine which people or groups are included or excluded from household, community, and societal affairs and resources. For example, a person with a disability may face double marginalization because of gender norms and expectations, as well as stigma toward their disability.

# FAITH AS A FRAME OF REFERENCE FOR GESI

World Vision utilizes faith teachings and understandings of humanity and well-being as a frame of reference to assist in identifying inequality and exclusion along the five GESI domains. This is important because faith does not always play a positive role in people's lives, and in society, and it has the potential to be misused. Cultural and religious practices have at times influenced acceptance of gender-based violence and related harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and stigmatization of the most vulnerable. In some cases, religious identities fuel civil conflict.<sup>6</sup> Gender inequality and social exclusion can sometimes be difficult to identify due to misuses of religion, socio-cultural norms, and unequal structures.

World Vision's GESI approach considers faith as a powerful resource in shifting harmful and discriminatory individual and community convictions and norms, and in reinforcing or establishing positive norms, values, and beliefs that promote social change and sustainable peace and development. The faith lens can be crucial in providing a perspective needed to recognize GESI-related vulnerability and injustice and prompting action to advance gender equality and social inclusion.

To influence the fundamental societal norms, beliefs, and practices that result from practices that promote gender inequality and social exclusion, people with influence and credibility are needed to champion alternatives. Faith leaders are such people and are important gatekeepers into a community.<sup>7</sup> Since faith leaders are often incredibly influential in the community, their interpretation and the resulting application of religious texts can shape female and male relationships and gender dynamics and norms within families and communities.

## FAITH NARRATIVES AND GESI

Faith leaders and communities need to incorporate a GESI transformative lens at their core. They must be cognizant of when traditional interpretations of religious texts have been used to harm, rather than to help.

*A note on the use of the religious texts: because historical recording of religious texts was part of broader unequal societal structures, the texts produced bear the marks of that inequality and exclusion. Thus, when we look to any faith's scriptures, we must be critically aware of the cultural and social markers borne by the text. And we must be willing to bring those markers into conversation with our own beliefs, which are often developed in conversation with a range of religious texts in the first place.*

A GESI lens can support careful reflection on religious narratives, guiding faith leaders to more positive influence and lasting transformation. There are promising examples where faith leaders and communities have been engaged in efforts to utilize faith narratives to advance gender equality and social inclusion.

6 World Vision's Faith and Development Overview

7 World Humanitarian Summit (2016). *Evidence for Religious Groups' Contributions to Humanitarian Response*.

## INTERFAITH ROUNDTABLE JOINT COMMITMENT

In India, World Vision convened an interfaith roundtable for faith leaders from different faith communities to transform attitudes towards children with disabilities and to use their resources to provide support and services. The Interfaith roundtable on disability in Nagpur India brought together 70 people of faith, including those with disabilities, representing the traditions of Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Indigenous, Islam, Jainism, and Sikhism. The participants included diverse leaders such as clerics, theologians, academicians, and practitioners. The faith leaders examined disability within the different holy scriptures and religious teachings/values and reflected on faith communities' attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Participants committed to a joint declaration that promoted equality and inclusion:

Therefore, we, the followers of different religious and faith traditions, solemnly declare that:

1. **We affirm** the innate potential of our respective religions /faith practices to enable us to recognize the divine image of the Almighty in one another and be loving human beings.
2. **We condemn** stigmatization and discrimination as morally unacceptable wherever it is practiced and by whoever.
3. **We recognize** the need to create awareness within our religious communities on issues vis a vis religion and disability and towards transforming our communities into one of mutuality and inclusivity.
4. **We discern** the need to redefine our traditions and rituals, festivals and feasts, scriptures and practices, to purge them of ideologies of exclusion.
5. **We commit** ourselves to review and redefine those teachings and moral codes of our belief systems that stigmatize and relegate people who are different from us.
6. **We pledge** to accompany friends and families who are stigmatized due to their physical conditions and extend to them fellowship and solidarity in their yearning to be loved and struggle to live with dignity.
7. **We commit** ourselves to transform all our common places of worship into a welcoming and compatible space for PWDs.
8. **We dedicate** ourselves to safeguard the rights of all PWDs and to join hands with all civil society initiatives towards just and inclusive communities.
9. **We call upon** religious leaders to preach inclusivity and to practice non-discriminatory employment policies in their institutions, and also to engage in affirmative actions to end the discrimination that PWDs face in admissions and appointments.
10. **We resolve** to work incessantly to create just and inclusive communities with consistent practice of values of inclusion, compassion, justice and acceptance so that the divine image of God will be celebrated in all diverse manifestations.

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### Reflection Activity

1. Map each of the 10 interfaith joint commitment to the GESI domains of Access, Decision-Making, Participation, Systems, and Well-being. Are there any gaps? If so, please suggest additional commitments that would address all the GESI domains.
2. How else can the joint commitment be enhanced to address the intersectionality of disability inclusion with gender equality? Please re-write the joint commitment with a GESI lens, reflecting that enhancement.

Here are some additional examples of how applying GESI-responsive reflections on religious texts can act as a lens that brings into focus the importance of gender equality and social inclusion.

#### FIGURE 5: GENDER AND SOCIAL CATEGORIZATION

### GENDER, SOCIAL STATUS, AND IDENTITY

#### Paul's Letter to the Galatians (Use relevant examples for different faith groups)

*In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29)*

In this passage Paul takes his theological belief that all ethnicities (in this case, Jew, and Greek) are equal before God in faith and extends it to advocate for a broader unity across the believing community. Just as the barrier between Greek and Jew is eliminated in the church, so is the barrier between the free person and the enslaved person, between female and male. His perspective covers three broad arenas of our existence: gender, social status, and identity group. In the community of faith, these categories are rendered irrelevant.

It is unlikely that Paul believed we could actually eliminate these distinct characteristics of humanity—he does not seem to be advocating for the eradication of difference. Paul was a realist, and in the book of Philemon and elsewhere he seems to maintain a certain acceptance of slavery that many readers find deeply problematic. But in Galatians, he is advocating for equal treatment, equal standing, and equal identity before God and with one another. This is perhaps the most inclusive of Paul's statements and recalls his belief that "we are all children of God" (Galatians 3:26).

#### Reflection Activity

1. Identify at least five other categories in societies today besides in addition to gender, social status, and identity group.
2. How are such categories at times used to perpetuate inequality and exclusion?
3. In what ways can such categories be used to promote gender equality and social inclusion?



## FIGURE 6: FEMALE PARTICIPATION AND DECISION-MAKING

### FEMALE PARTICIPATION AND DECISION-MAKING

#### **Deborah the Judge** (Use relevant examples for different faith groups)

*At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgement (Judges 4:4-5).*

While the vast majority of leaders in the Bible are men, there are worthy examples of females in specific leadership roles. An important example is Deborah, described in Judges 4. The role of prophet is a complex one in the Hebrew Bible, and most named prophets are men. We do know of groups of prophets, but we do not know whether those groups include female prophets. While our contemporary notions of prophets and prophecy contain an element of prediction, the ancients were primarily doing the work of assessment, encouragement, and challenge. Deborah's work here is more in line with what Moses is doing in Exodus 18. Deborah's work is public; people come to her for "judgment," which could be anything from wise counsel to the settling of a dispute. She also seems to be quite well-known, in that the "Israelites" come to her; this indicates her fame was spread beyond her local clan and tribe.

And the fact that her work is conducted beneath the "palm of Deborah" indicates that even the tree under which she worked was as well-known as she was.

Deborah's work encompasses both religious and secular realms; the text offers us no clue as to the precise nature of her judgments. As her story progresses, she demonstrates leadership in a military context as well (Judges 4:6-10). Deborah leads the army with Barak, who refused to participate without Deborah's company:

*'If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.'* (Judges 4:8)

Deborah's response is telling:

*'I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will [defeat the enemy by] the hand of a woman.'* (Judges 4:9)

The uniqueness of the situation is not lost on Deborah; she knows how unusual it is for a woman to lead an army, and she even shames Barak by declaring that victory would come by the hand of a woman. Deborah calls attention to the irony of the situation by articulating to Barak that God would then upturn the typical, gendered hierarchy.

Deborah is a model of full participation and decision-making—her work is outside the domestic sphere, it is acknowledged in the broader community, and it impacts the religious, secular, and political areas of her community..

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#### **Reflection Activity**

1. Map Deborah's leadership roles and activities to the relevant GESI domains—Access, Decision-Making, Participation, Systems, and Well-being. What gaps or opportunities do you see?
2. Identify at least two examples of female leaders in your religious texts or narratives and note which component of the GESI domains their roles or activities touch upon. What gaps or opportunities do you see?
3. Reflect on the barriers to leadership that women and girls face today. How might the example of Deborah and other female leaders you have identified provide inspiration and opportunities for their leadership?

## FIGURE 7: THE POOR AND VULNERABLE

### THE POOR AND VULNERABLE

#### **The Widow, the Orphan, the Alien** (Use relevant examples for different faith groups)

*Biblical and theological scholars have long noted that the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Scriptures place an emphasis on caring for the needy. This emphasis has motivated people of faith to commit vast resources to addressing these needs. Faith-based organizations (e.g., World Vision, World Relief, Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services, the Mennonite Central Committee, American Jewish World Service) universally reference religious text's call to caring for the impoverished and most vulnerable.*

The biblical text frequently uses the word “poor” in connection with the words “widow,” “orphan,” and “alien.” These last three terms are more specific than “poor,” and refer to something more than an economic status. Poverty is nearly always the consequence of any number of factors, and familial, social, and ethnic status are three powerful conditions. Take away a husband, parents, and homeland, and poverty is likely to follow. “Widow,” “orphan,” and “alien” denote the neediest of society, as the ancient patriarchal communities were built around households centered on free men. Further, while “poor” is sometimes used in combination with these other terms, is also often used to describe men who are temporarily impoverished. Thus, while the Hebrew prophets, the Torah, the teachings of Jesus, and other scriptures address the concerns of the “poor,” the Bible’s concern for the widow, the orphan, and the alien should focus our attention on these particularly vulnerable ones.

It is not surprising that Scriptures make no reference to the needs of the widower; even if a man loses a spouse, he will not lose his safety net. The neediest will always be women, children, aliens, and those with disabilities. A patriarchal society ensures that men are the most protected, and those systems guarantee that others—even children—will suffer before the men do. Hence, our concern for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the alien, should compel us to consider how societies (from antiquity to present) treat their women, children, and other vulnerable populations, even before they become the neediest.

Gender equality and social inclusion are thus critical, intersectional lenses through which to consider aid and development. Indeed, one could argue that an ounce of gender protection before poverty sets in is worth a pound of cure afterwards. So how much more the case that adequate aid and development for the widow, the orphan, and the alien require a gender- and inclusion-sensitive analysis and perspective.

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#### **Reflection Activity**

1. Who are the most vulnerable that are identified in your religious texts or teachings? Please identify at least five categories and reflect on the intersectionality of their vulnerabilities, based on GESI and faith concepts.
2. Who are the most vulnerable in society today? What structures place these groups at risk? What customs privilege certain groups at the expense of others? How does an economic system rely on unjust treatment of some for the sake of “progress?”



## FIGURE 8: WOMEN OF FAITH AS LEADERS

### FEMALE RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

#### The Prophetess Huldah (Use relevant examples for different faith groups)

*So the priest... went to the prophetess Huldah, wife of Shallum, son of Tikvah... She resided in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, where they consulted her. She declared to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel..." (2 Kings 22:13-15)*

In the latter years of Ancient Judah, king Josiah ordered a restoration of the Jerusalem temple. During that process, the high priest reported that he had found the book of the law in the house of the LORD (2 Kings 22:8). The book is taken to the King, who directs the priest to inquire of the LORD for him and all the people of Judah. The priest goes to the Prophetess Huldah. Huldah then speaks on behalf of God. This is a rather rare circumstance of a woman functioning as God's mouthpiece, and this particular situation demonstrates one of the roles of a prophet: speaking truth to power. Her (God's!) message to the king is not a happy one, but it instigates significant religious reforms. Everyone believes what she says, and they respond accordingly. While the reform that ensues is described purely in religious terms, the prophets were known for articulating the intersection between religion and socio-economics. Huldah is described as a prophetess, and the wife of Shallum, who may have been the grandson of a government official. So, while she may be potentially slightly connected to the government through her husband, she does not live in the temple district or in the palace complex. So why do these officials travel to consult Huldah? Likely because she was known and trusted. Her reputation made her the logical choice, and this may well not have been the first time they visited her. Finally, while some modern readers might be surprised to find a woman consulted in such serious matters, the biblical text itself treats this as business as usual. There is no hint in the text that this was a surprising action for the king's officials to take. Huldah, in fact, stands at the end of an impressive line of women who speak of or on behalf of God in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Miriam, Rahab, Deborah, Hannah, and Abigail).

#### Reflection Activity

1. Who are the female religious leaders and women of faith in your community? What roles do they play? How might they be further engaged in promoting efforts in GESI-responsive development and humanitarian emergency response?
2. What barriers do they face as leaders? How can we address these barriers?



## FIGURE 9: DISABILITY INCLUSION AND BREAKING BARRIERS

### DISABILITY INCLUSION

#### **Jesus and the Blind Man** (Use relevant examples for different faith groups)

*As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. (John 9:1-3)*

Jesus healed many during his public ministry; his healings drew crowds, and those who needed healing pressed in around him. The chronically ill and persons with disabilities were stigmatized in the ancient world, much as they are in many contexts today. The story from John provides important perspective on such situations. Jesus' followers (and likely many others) assume that the man's blindness is the consequence of someone's sin. Jesus corrects this notion, and while he does eventually heal the man, the initial exchange is crucial: despite the mystery of a birth defect and our strong desires to understand and explain (surely in the hope of a diagnosis and successful treatment), we must resist the urge to assign blame for disability or illness to either the sufferer or their parents. Jesus removes the stigma of judgment.

Another important text comes from the gospel of Matthew:

*Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. (Matthew 26:6-7)*

Leprosy is a stigmatizing illness. Lepers were kept in colonies outside society (Luke 17) and were considered ritually unclean (Matthew 8:4). We do not know whether Simon was cured or not, but the stigmatizing label remained. And Jesus breaks the social barrier of eating with the unclean. In these two texts Jesus overturns harmful practices of exclusion.

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#### **Reflection Activity**

1. List ways in which persons with disabilities or other chronic illnesses (children and adults, female, and male) are excluded from societal affairs today, and blamed (or their family is blamed) for their conditions.
2. What role can faith leaders and communities play to include them and advance their overall well-being?

## FIGURE 10: INTERSECTIONALITY

### FAITH NARRATIVE ON INTERSECTIONALITY, SOCIAL NORMS, AND AGENCY

#### **Naomi and Ruth** (Use relevant examples for different faith groups)

*[Your grandchild] shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him. (Ruth 4:15)*

The Hebrew Bible's story of the widow Naomi and her widowed daughter-in-law Ruth underscores the significance of social norms, the power of intersectionality, and the strength of personal and collective agency—community. The story begins with a famine that forces Naomi and her family to leave home and become refugees in a foreign country (Ruth 1:1). They are thus displaced persons. There, her husband dies, and both her sons marry local women: Orpah and Ruth. But Naomi's sons also die, and she is fully bereft: without husband or son. She returns to her homeland with Ruth, who now becomes the immigrant, and who is also widowed. Ruth and Naomi thus embody multiple layers of intersectional vulnerability—and Ruth's first actions demonstrate their desperation. Ruth joins the poor who glean in the fields, picking up what the harvesters leave behind. There Ruth is spotted by the landowner Boaz, who has heard about her companionship and care for Naomi. When Ruth tells Naomi about her meeting with Boaz, Naomi celebrates their good fortune.

Naomi then "seeks some security" for Ruth, instructing her to visit Boaz during the night. The scene is a bit mysterious and seems to be intentionally vague. What we know is that Ruth is again in a vulnerable situation, asking for help from Boaz. But she receives the help she needs, and Boaz eventually marries her. The story concludes with the birth of Ruth's son, which provides hope that both she and Naomi will have family to care for them in the future.

The gender structures in the story of Naomi and Ruth contribute to their vulnerability. But the women work within the system to find their security. The story exposes the gender hierarchy and subverts it, leaving the reader with the intersectional image of a widowed grandmother with her foreign-born daughter-in-law beside her and her potentially inter-racial grandchild on her lap. The women of her community offer Naomi a final blessing which complexifies the image by focusing on the immigrant woman, Ruth.

Intersectionality can help us understand how to address GESI challenges effectively and sustainably in faith-based interventions, and in applying World Vision's Faith and Development project models. The goal is to understand and address the complex, intersecting vulnerabilities that inhibit equal and inclusive access, decision-making, and participation, and create systemic barriers that result in the lack of well-being for some. It is also to understand the personal and collective agency of those we serve, so that we can ensure their true engagement as agents in their own transformations.

# INTEGRATING GESI in Faith and Development

World Vision's faith and development approaches actively mobilize and engage with faith-based networks, institutions, congregations, and leaders to advance positive influence for sustainable development and well-being of the most vulnerable. Our faith-based programming interventions engage with people and communities of different faiths at all levels, supporting interreligious platforms of religious leaders across various countries, building their capacity, forging lasting relationships, and partnering with them.<sup>8</sup> In all of these forms of engagement, it is critical to understand how different faiths and faith leaders might be perceived by community members and each other to ensure that no harm results. This is particularly important when faith-based groups or leaders are perceived to have played an active role in conflict or in causing harm to another group within the community.

The faith and development approaches promote an increased emphasis on mobilizing and equipping faith leaders and communities. If World Vision can turn the attention of faith groups to the most marginalized in their society, they will also use their own resources to provide practical support and programs and their political and social influence to advocate for the rights of the marginalized. World Vision utilizes various faith-based models and structures to advocate for the most vulnerable and to mobilize multi-sector partnerships for transformational development.

## FIGURE 11: FAITH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT MODELS

### FRAGILE CONTEXTS AND INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENTS

Much of World Vision's work is in fragile contexts and where people of faiths other than Christianity are the majority. Fragile states are, by definition, places where government institutions are weak and unable to provide the basic services of the state. In these places, faith communities are some of the few structures and institutions that can address humanitarian and development needs. World Vision's programming in fragile states partners with faith leaders and communities to address urgent needs. We recognize that development, humanitarian emergencies, and advocacy are more than socio-economic or political activities. They involve the whole life of people and their communities, including worldviews, religious practices, and spirituality. The size and scope of World Vision's work provides the opportunity to enhance understanding among people of other faiths as well as fulfill strategic development and emergency response goals. Much of the work focuses on bringing faith leaders together to address common concerns for child well-being. World Vision serves as convener, bridge builder, technical expert, and most importantly, partner to the faith communities.

World Vision established **Faith-Based Forums in Ethiopia** as a mechanism for religious leaders to work together, and also to drive change for child rights, gender rights, domestic harmony, and peacebuilding. This was achieved through deliberate structural changes to establish faith-based forums as a mechanism to promote and facilitate religious collaboration and the renewed adoption of best-practice community development principles and practices to bring different voices together around a mutual common interest: the well-being of children. The approach relied on common understanding of the need to promote the well-being of children by religious leaders and communities across a wide spectrum, and connecting effectively to other communities, government, and multi-sectoral actors with a shared vision.<sup>9</sup>

Another example is the Interfaith Peacebuilding Partnership: As a part of its social cohesion portfolio, World Vision has participated in the Central African Republic Interfaith Peacebuilding Partnership (CIPP) project since 2015. The CIPP supports inter-religious platforms of religious leaders across the country by building their capacity and partnering with them to implement a variety of humanitarian and recovery activities.<sup>10</sup>

8 World Vision's Faith and Development

9 Kekere, K. and Newmarch, A (2016). *Faith-based forums in Ethiopia: an initiative for development cooperation*. In *Development Across Faith Boundaries*, Routledge.

10 World Vision (2017) *Interfaith partnership in emergency & development programming*

## EMPOWERED WORLDVIEW

World Vision's Empowered Worldview model is a behavior change model that seeks to address dependency mindsets and promote individual empowerment among people living in poverty. The Empowered Worldview curriculum uses Biblical principles (or other faith principles when applied in different non-Christian contexts) to engage individuals on issues of identity, self-esteem, hope, and vision for the future. It has been shown to have a positive impact on an individual's level of empowerment, increasing their ability to become agents of change within their own lives, their families, and communities.

A recent study conducted by World Vision in Malawi documented a GESI promising practice whereby across all communities where the Empowered Worldview approach had been implemented, there was evidence to suggest that livelihoods had been transformed and individuals had developed a stronger sense of personal responsibility, resilience, and agency. The Empowered Worldview had played a critical role in building more equitable gender relations and shifting mindsets and reshaping perceptions on women's and men's roles in society.<sup>11</sup> There were positive shifts in gender roles, norms, and behaviors, particularly in how society perceived women's roles in production and men's participation in domestic activities, and positive changes in gender relations within households. Some married/coupled men noted the change seen in the relationships they had with their spouses and others within their households and communities. Having compassion for one another, sharing with others, and being inclusive in decision-making were among those reflections shared by men in group discussions about most significant changes experienced because of participating in Empowered Worldview training.

## CHANNELS OF HOPE

Channels of Hope is one of World Vision's core project models used to engage faith leaders and communities as agents of change for prevention, care, and advocacy around *Gender Equality* and Gender-Based Violence; *Ebola, HIV, and Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*; Maternal, Newborn and Child Health; and *Child Protection*. Interventions also seek to address negative gender and social norms, misconceptions, and perceptions that faith leaders and communities may have, and provide them with information and knowledge they need to transform their worldviews and the thinking of others in their communities. For example, being HIV-positive continues to carry a stigma, making individuals unwilling to risk discrimination by testing and seeking treatment. World Vision's integrated approach to combating this pandemic includes the use of Channels of Hope program model.

In another case, working in collaboration with the World Health Organization, World Vision mobilized Channels of Hope trainers to equip imams, priests, pastors and health workers in Mali and Sierra Leone to teach their communities the necessary skills to protect them against the ravages of Ebola and to face the fear and stigma associated with the disease. Channels of Hope has been adapted for use in multi-faith contexts and is used in more than ninety countries. In South Sudan, the Channels of Hope for Gender program focused on changing attitudes on rape, addressing stigma, and promoting community support and protection of survivors, with funding from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. At baseline, 51% of faith leaders blamed rape victims and believed perpetrators should marry their victims as a form of settlement. After being equipped with the knowledge and resources from Channels of Hope Gender, 97% of the faith leaders rejected those beliefs and attitudes and embraced survivor-centered approaches.<sup>12</sup>

Channels of Hope has equipped 450,000 faith leaders in more than 90 countries to address multi-dimensional child well-being challenges.<sup>13</sup>

11 World Vision. (2020). THRIVE GESI Assessment in Malawi

12 [Channels of Hope Gender\\_2020\\_FINAL.pdf \(wvi.org\)](#)

13 [World Vision - Channels of Hope for Gender \(hillsong.com\)](#)

## CITIZEN VOICE AND ACTION

World Vision has engaged faith-based structures through faith leaders and community members to advance local level advocacy activities through its Citizen Voice and Action programming model. The faith leaders and communities are trained as advocates and facilitators and encouraged to participate in local level advocacy activities.<sup>14</sup>

## CHILD PARTICIPATION

Kid's Clubs function as an important bridge-builder in Senegal's multi-faith context. The values promoted through Kid's Clubs such as peace, justice, and love are shared by most religions, and form a common ground for children to come together. Due to the deep relationships forged between World Vision staff and local religious community leaders, dialogue across faith lines has not been a particular challenge. Imams have played an influential role in sensitizing Muslim community members to the purpose and function of Kid's Clubs. With the backing of Muslim community leaders alongside the local church, children of different faith backgrounds are permitted to flourish through club activities.<sup>15</sup>

## CELEBRATING FAMILIES

World Vision's programming model on celebrating families seeks to support parents and caregivers in developing nurturing environments for children. The approach provides spaces for deep self-reflection and growth in knowledge and understanding regarding family relationships, with a special focus on parent-children relationships. The workshops aim to provide participants with tools for supporting their families with love and respect, including alternatives to harsh and punitive parenting strategies. A qualitative analysis of Celebrating Families in Afghanistan and Myanmar conducted by Coventry University and World Vision identified several positive changes for families resulting from implementation of Celebrating Families.<sup>16</sup> Highlights include:

- Changes in parents and caregivers' awareness of the stages of child development and how to facilitate these through caregiving, learning and play.
- Changes to allow children to express themselves, ask questions, and make decisions such as to choose their own clothes.
- A rejection of all forms of violence against children by many parents, caregivers, and professionals. This included rejecting corporal punishment within the home, school, and Mosque, and eliminating other forms of harm that children might encounter, such as forced marriage and gender discrimination.

14 World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) advocacy accountability model - *Citizen Voice and Action Field Guide (Publication)*

15 World Vision (2015). *Implementing Spiritual Nurture of Children in a Multi-faith Context: A Case Study of Kid's Clubs in Senegal*.

16 World Vision and Coventry University (2018). *Understanding 'Celebrating Families' contribution to family wellbeing: Key Findings from Afghanistan and Myanmar*.

## Mapping Faith and Development Project Models to GESI Domains

The examples of World Vision’s faith and development models described above can be mapped to different components of the GESI domains. Here are some examples of that mapping, reflecting gaps here and there.

**FIGURE 12: MAPPING FAITH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT MODELS TO GESI DOMAINS**

	ACCESS	SYSTEMS	WELL-BEING
CHANNELS OF HOPE	Equips faith leaders with information and insight into their scriptures and faith traditions, and competency to engage with local child well-being issues and address negative gender and social norms.	The Channels of Hope process intentionally guides congregations to engage with other faith communities, congregations, local groups, stakeholders, and organizations to establish themselves as relevant actors that can contribute meaningfully within the community systems and structures on an on-going basis.	Faith leaders and communities and partners demonstrate positive changes in attitudes through collective action for social change, care for the vulnerable, prevention of violence, advocacy to address harmful attitudes, norms, values, and practices that hinder child and community development.
CELEBRATING FAMILIES	Increases knowledge and skills of parents, caregivers, and faith leaders on the importance of having a safe environment where children are loved and are free; how to address beliefs, convictions, and cultures that contribute to harmful attitudes, norms, values, and practices of raising children. Increases understanding of parents on ways to support children’s spiritual development across life stages.	Establishes local parent/caregiver support groups where common family issues in the community are identified, social norms challenged, and possible solutions are proposed.	Ensure that families, especially the most vulnerable ones, enjoy positive and loving relationships and can have hope and a vision for the future.
EMPOWERED WORLDVIEW	Identifying and training faith leaders and other community influencers, including women and youth, and equipping them with knowledge and skills such as on crop diversification and livestock production, rainwater conservation, construction of reservoirs, and irrigation.  Access to information to improve farming methods and increase incomes based on faith principles. Increased knowledge for communities to develop their own solutions to community issues such as child neglect and education.	Establishment of a network of community influencers, including faith leaders, women, and youth. These leaders then form a mentorship group structure of new members, for continuous learning and engagement.	Change in mindset as they developed a stronger understanding of their own worth based on teachings from their religious texts. Faith-based principles developed and used to transform mindsets.

The goal is to ensure interventions contribute to all the five GESI domains towards agency, empowerment, and transformation. There are a few questions that can be raised to help focus the project models toward GESI transformation, along the five GESI domains and the GESI continuum.

### Quality Design, Monitoring, Evaluation

- Has the *Toolkit for Integrating GESI in Design, Monitoring and Evaluation*<sup>17</sup> been applied?
- What are the indicators to ensure integration of GESI issues into the project/program?
- Is GESI and faith disaggregated data being collected and used to make programming decisions (sex, age, disability, faith tradition, ethnicity, and other relevant factors)?
- Has a GESI analysis been conducted (during the design phase, and implementation process) assessing key issues across the five GESI domains?
- Has an assessment been made of faith-based actors and organizations in the community their assets, and capabilities that can have positive impact?
- Does the evaluation team include women and other marginalized groups?
- Do program and project monitoring reports reflect gender and social issues and capture information on gender and inclusion-related changes including impact of intervention on GBV, gender/social relations, family relationships, women's access and control of income and resources, decision making, reproductive roles, and expressed aspirations of women and men from each of the socially different groups? (Information disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, disability, faith tradition and other relevant factors)

### GESI Budgeting

- Are GESI-focused activities and technical staff management structure given a specific budget allocation?
- Is there a budget for conducting a GESI and Faith analysis/assessment?
- Are there resources allocated for an inclusion fund to meet the additional costs for program participants? For example, a budget for accessibility inclusion and reasonable accommodations for those who require childcare, transport assistance, caregiver support, sign language interpretation or other expenses necessary for their participation.



## Diversity of engagement

- Are program activities held in accessible locations at times when all community members can participate?
- Are women and excluded groups participating in the program involved in program decisions, through leadership committees, focus groups, or participant feedback mechanisms?
- Has the program considered diversity among its staff and volunteers, and ensured those from marginalized groups (e.g., women, persons with disabilities, youth), and from different faiths, are involved? What is the strategy for identifying staff and volunteers from groups that do not normally apply for these positions?
- Are staff and volunteers aware of the principles to respect and communicate the diversity of different faith traditions and beliefs engaged in the program?
- Are the faith-leaders involved in the program representative of different faith traditions in the community?
- Are sacred texts and narratives interpreted with a GESI lens, to ensure that they are promoting equality and inclusion?
- Does the program partner with organizations that represent diverse faith groups in a given context of operation?
- Are program activities respectful of the faith traditions involved, including allowing time to break for religious observance, meeting dietary needs, and not convening meetings during days of religious obligation?
- How does the proposed means of implementation affect both females and males and households from different social, faith or other groups?

The goal of incorporating GESI into Faith and Development is to achieve sustained, transformational change at individual, household, community, and societal levels so that all persons can enjoy the fullness of life.



# GESI DOMAINS AND CONTINUUM

World Vision utilizes our GESI domains and GESI Continuum as tools for analysis of GESI-transformative programming. The GESI continuum is a tool that helps to assess the degree of GESI integration in a program. All World Vision programs should be in the realm of GESI-responsive, with an increasing growth from GESI-accommodating toward being GESI-transformative. The goal is for faith and development programs to become GESI-transformative, designed to challenge and shift harmful and discriminating gender and social norms and unequal power relations. GESI-transformative programs promote positive gender and social norms advance equality and inclusion and create an enabling environment for the most vulnerable to participate in their own development. GESI-responsiveness is a commitment to ensuring protection, building relationships, understanding intersectionality, addressing unintended consequences and potential harm, and addresses the root causes of inequality and exclusion to achieve a lasting transformation at individual, household, community, and societal levels.<sup>18</sup>

Classifying current faith-based programming along the GESI continuum is important in identifying the gaps challenges, capacity, and resource, to help design and implement strategies necessary to advance agency, empowerment, and transformation.

**FIGURE 13: WORLD VISION'S GESI CONTINUUM**

WORLD VISION'S GESI CONTINUUM			SCORE
NOT GESI-RESPONSIVE	GESI Absent	<b>Ignores gender equality and social inclusion.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no consideration of gender differences, gender inequalities, or social exclusion.</li> <li>There are discriminatory or harmful social norms and unequal power relations, or potential patterns of gender inequality or social exclusion in the design or delivery of program activities.</li> <li>There is no discussion of the gendered or inclusive dimensions of the operational environment and how this may affect intervention.</li> </ul>	0
	GESI Exploitative	<b>Reinforces gender inequality and social exclusion.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledges gender inequalities and social exclusions, works around them, adjusts and adapts to them, but does not take any action to address them.</li> <li>Reinforces harmful and discriminatory gender and social norms, behaviors, attitudes, roles, and relations.</li> <li>Uses and/or takes advantage of gender inequalities, discriminating social norms, stereotypes, structures, groupings in society to advance goals.</li> </ul>	1
GESI-RESPONSIVE	GESI Sensitive	<b>Acknowledges gender inequality and social exclusion, takes actions to reduce them but not transform them.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interventions include specific measures to reduce the impact of inequality and exclusion.</li> <li>Integrates practical needs and experiences of vulnerable groups but does not address the underlying root causes of inequality or exclusion.</li> <li>There is a "missed opportunity" to shift norms that reinforce gender inequality and social exclusion.</li> </ul>	2 (+1)
	GESI Transformative	<b>Promotes gender equality and social inclusion.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges and shifts discriminating gender and social norms, stereotypes and discriminatory practices.</li> <li>Transforms unequal power relations, gender roles, and relationships.</li> <li>Actively seeks to engage with and transform gender inequality and social exclusion.</li> <li>Promotes equal and inclusive access, decision-making, participation, systems, and well-being, with the goal to achieve sustainable change towards gender equality and social inclusion.</li> </ul>	3 (+2)
<b>TOTAL SCORE FOR GESI-TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMS</b>			<b>5</b>

18 CARE (2015). Measuring Gender-transformative Change, A Review of Literature and Promising Practices; Water for Women Fund (2021). Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Self-Assessment Tool: Facilitation Guide for WASH Project Managers, Researchers and Self-Assessment Facilitator.

The following case study analysis provides an example of how faith-based programming can be made more GESI-responsive. The scenario provides the opportunity to reflect on the opportunities and gaps in engaging faith leaders in GBV prevention, protection, and response. The goal is to improve faith-based interventions toward GESI-transformation along the five GESI domains and GESI continuum.

#### FIGURE 14: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS ON CHANNELS OF HOPE TO ADDRESS GBV

### Case Study: Reducing Gender-Based Violence in Solomon Islands

From 2011-2014, World Vision Solomon Islands piloted 'Channels of Hope for Gender' by working with church leaders to change negative local attitudes on gender-based violence (GBV), as part of its Community Vision for Change project. Through this project, World Vision aimed to reduce Gender-Based Violence in 30 communities by delivering the following outcomes:

1. Changed attitudes and behaviors in relation to the value of men and women, girls, and boys.
2. Improved linkages to support services for survivors of domestic violence.
3. Improved methods of addressing substance abuse and conflict, including domestic violence.

Catalyzing workshops were held with faith leaders and their spouses to equip them with knowledge on how to respond to GBV issues in their community and shift their own attitudes about GBV. These faith leaders formed Community Hope Action Teams (CHAT groups) to share their new knowledge and implement different strategies on how to address GBV in their communities. The CHAT groups developed concrete plans to advocate for the prevention of GBV, in collaboration with their communities. The focus was on shifting harmful norms, attitudes, beliefs, and practices, while connecting to the formal and informal community and government systems for referral of victims and psychosocial support. Community CHAT membership appeared to be strong and diverse, generally including women leaders, faith leaders, youth leaders. Interventions sought to establish a support system for survivors of violence. Both women and men were engaged in discussion around GBV, and faith messaging that condemned gender-based violence was utilized. The communication also sought to address substance abuse and related conflict. Faith narratives and content seemed to give women the language and freedom to talk about violence within their households.

#### Activity

Identify the different interventions used in this case study and map them to the GESI domains. Do you see any gaps? If so, which ones? How could a more GESI-responsive program address those gaps?

Reflect on the case study provided here along the GESI continuum. How might you rate the intervention in the case study described here: GESI Not-responsive, GESI accommodating/sensitive, or GESI transformative? Give reasons for your response.

There are a few questions to keep in mind as you work on mapping this case study to the GESI domains and continuum.

**FIGURE 15: GESI-RESPONSIVE QUESTIONS ON THE CASE STUDY TO REDUCE GBV IN SOLOMON ISLAND**

ACCESS	DECISION-MAKING	PARTICIPATION	SYSTEMS	WELL-BEING
<p>What approaches might be taken by the faith leaders to ensure that women in abusive relations, survivors of GBV, or those at risk have access to the information, knowledge, and resources they need to protect themselves and their families, and to access the workshops? How might the training program address the potential of having perpetrators in the group, who may at times be faith leaders themselves?</p>	<p>In what ways might the decision-making of the participants, particularly survivors of GBV, be assured and/or enhanced and measured?</p>	<p>What extra steps could be taken to ensure inclusive and active participation of females and males in their diversity, including members from remote and marginalized communities, youth couples, female-headed households that may not be "coupled" but facing GBV from intimate partners or other abusers?</p>	<p>What faith-based strategies should work to influence effective referral mechanisms formal/informal and psychosocial support systems and promote supportive laws and policies?</p>	<p>Are interventions survivor-centered, considering the needs, best interest, safety, and security of victims and supporting them?</p>
<p>Is the training venue accessible to all (persons with disability, elderly, youth, social status, ethnic minority, different faith/no faith, and others)?</p>	<p>What types of decision-making might they have opportunities to make, especially when the initiatives are led by religious leaders, predominantly male?</p>	<p>How can religious (biblical or other faith) messaging be used to shift cultural and social norms around GBV-related participation?</p>	<p>What unanticipated barriers might the use of the structures of religious leaders and CHATs pose in addressing GBV? How might such barriers be avoided, and these systems made to be more equal and inclusive?</p>	<p>How could the issue of abusiveness in a spousal relationship be tackled without further aggravating the situation and increasing risks for relapses of violence?</p>
<p>How can religious (biblical or other faith) messaging be used to shift cultural and social norms around GBV-related access?</p>	<p>How can religious (biblical or other faith) messaging be used to shift cultural and social norms around GBV-related decision-making?</p>		<p>How can religious (biblical or other faith) messaging be used to shift cultural and social norms around how to establish and implement GBV systems?</p>	<p>How might addressing the abusiveness result in healthy spousal relations?</p>
				<p>How could one ensure the sustainability of the change in the behavior?</p>
				<p>Does the program enhance people's sense of security related to GBV? How can such a change be measured?</p>

To be GESI-responsive, Channels of Hope interventions to reduce GBV must consider the important questions in the figure above. It is also necessary to reflect on overlapping vulnerabilities, including links between GBV and HIV, mental health, and displacement.

## GESI Promising Practice: Empowered Worldview

World Vision documented a promising practice on the faith-based model of Empowered Worldview. The promising practice focused on World Vision's economic empowerment program named THRIVE and considered GESI evidence of impact as transformational along five domains of access, participation, decision-making, systems, and well-being. The sources of evidence referenced formative research, ongoing assessments, project reports, project monitoring data, annual monitoring indicators, and the 2020 GESI analysis that included a study of the most significant change related to the Empowered Worldview approach. Evidence from the Malawi GESI assessment indicated that the Empowered Worldview component had played a critical role in building more equitable gender relations and shifting mindsets and reshaping perceptions on women's and men's roles in society. There were positive shifts in gender roles, norms, and behaviors particularly in how society perceived women's roles in economic production and men's participation in domestic activities, and positive changes in gender relations within households. Some married/coupled men noted the change seen in the relationships they had with their spouses and others within their households and communities. Having compassion for one another, sharing with others, being inclusive in decision-making were among those reflections shared by men in group discussions about most significant changes experienced because of participating in Empowered Worldview training.

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### Activity

Review the full report of the promising practice titled *Empowered Worldview: Transforming Household Gender Dynamics and Relations Through Positive Changes in Behaviour and Perceptions in Malawi*. Do you see any gaps? If so, which ones? How could a more GESI-responsive program address those gaps?

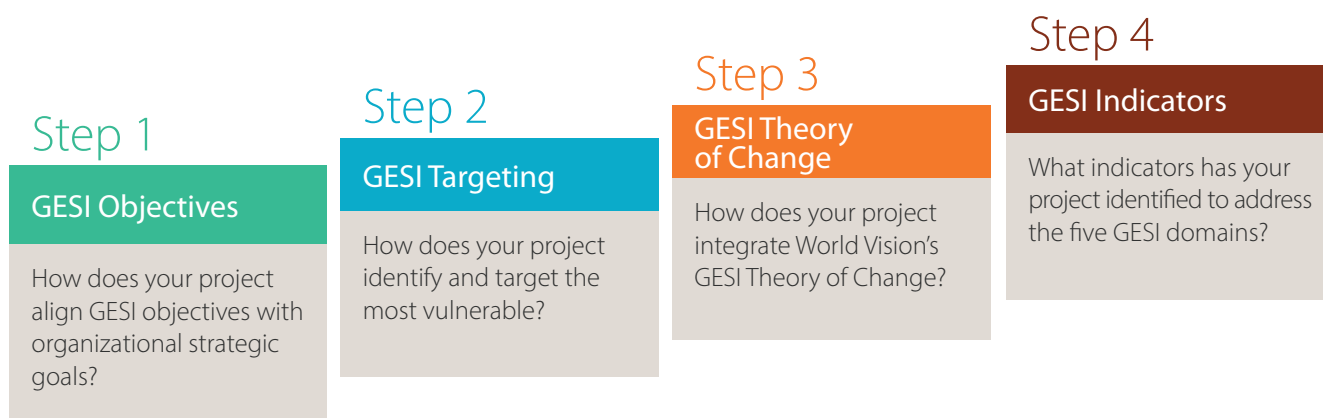


# APPLYING A GESI LENS

It is important to raise GESI-responsive questions to focus faith-based interventions in any given sector. World Vision's *Toolkit for Integrating GESI in Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation* provides clear guidance on steps to follow and how to conduct a GESI analysis for transformational program design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

The toolkit provides steps and practical ways guidance on how to incorporate a GESI lens in faith and development programs. There are four steps for applying a GESI lens.

**FIGURE 16: APPLYING A GESI LENS**



Faith and development programming approaches can promote GESI-transformation and advance World Vision's global strategy and child well-being objectives.<sup>19</sup> There is a variety of tools in the *Toolkit for Integrating GESI in Design, Monitoring and Evaluation*<sup>20</sup> that can be used to advance GESI-responsive faith and development interventions.

The **Reflection Checklist Tool** (Tool 1.3) can help staff reflect on their own biases, sources of power, barriers to achieving GESI and how to address those barriers. This tool can be utilized alongside the reflections on faith narratives already discussed earlier in this guide.

The **GESI Minimum Standards Tool** (Tool 1.2) can be used alongside the GESI continuum as a checklist to help assess how well a faith and development project and related institutional practices are integrating GESI. The checklist covers issues of policy, capacity and culture, participation and partnership, budget, data collection, analysis, indicators, do no harm, and accountability.

The toolkit includes additional tools that can be used to strengthen GESI-responsive quality assurance of faith and development programming.

19 Refer to World Vision's Global Impact Framework and Strategic Initiative 2.2 on Utilizing Evidence of Impact.

20 See World Vision's *Toolkit for Integrating GESI in Design, Monitoring and Evaluation*.

# CONDUCTING A GESI ANALYSIS

It is important to conduct GESI analysis for faith and development to help identify, understand, and address GESI gaps and opportunities. The results of a GESI analysis will help to develop a GESI-transformative program that intentionally addresses intersectional vulnerabilities and the identified root causes of inequality and exclusion. Although GESI analysis can be conducted at any time during the program cycle (proposal development, program design, implementation, and evaluations), ideally it should start at the beginning of a program and at its conceptual stage. This will ensure that GESI is integrated right from the design stage and GESI activities are integrated and budgeted for, from the very beginning.<sup>21</sup>

Applying participatory approaches in mobilizing faith-based actors and resources is critical in the process of conducting GESI analysis. It is highly recommended to include a wide range of actors, including diverse faith leaders and communities, women of faith, vulnerable groups, representatives from government institutions and civil society (such as women's and girls' groups/organizations, GESI experts, or disabled people's organizations).

GESI analysis utilizes mixed methods and collects both quantitative (e.g., through surveys desk reviews, and secondary data) and qualitative data (e.g., through focus group discussions, narratives, and interviews). World Vision's GESI approach provides a framework for the analysis, so it is important to collect information on each GESI domain for each vulnerable group. For example, collecting information from diverse individuals and groups such as women, youth, the elderly, refugees, widows, persons with disabilities, or ethnic/religious minorities can offer greater insights into GESI issues, programming gaps, potential risks or challenges, and opportunities for sustainable change.

The process described in the toolkit section 2 for conducting a GESI analysis includes helpful steps as outlined in figure 17 below.

**FIGURE 17: CONDUCTING A GESI ANALYSIS**

## Section 2 CONDUCTING A GESI ANALYSIS

- TOOL 2.1** Conducting a GESI Analysis
- Step 1 Collective Brainstorming
  - Step 2 GESI-Responsive Desk Review
  - Step 3 GESI-Responsive Primary Data Collection
  - Step 4 Analyzing and Reporting GESI-Responsive Data

# UTILIZING GESI-RESPONSIVE INDICATORS

It is important to identify GESI-responsive indicators (both quantitative and qualitative output, outcome, and impact) to ensure that faith and development programming captures evidence that reflects GESI transformational change. Please refer to the toolkit section 3 and 4, and specifically to Tool 3.3 on GESI Indicators.

**FIGURE 18: GESI INTEGRATION IN PROGRAM DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION**

## Section 3 GESI INTEGRATION IN PROGRAM DESIGN

<b>TOOL 3.1</b>	GESI Integration in Proposal Development
<b>TOOL 3.2</b>	GESI Integration in Program Design
<b>TOOL 3.3</b>	GESI Indicators
<b>TOOL 3.4</b>	GESI Integration Action Plan
<b>TOOL 3.5</b>	GESI-Responsive Budgeting

## Section 4 GESI INTEGRATION IN PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING & EVALUATION

<b>TOOL 4.1</b>	GESI Integration in Program Monitoring
<b>TOOL 4.2</b>	GESI Responsive Program Evaluation
<b>TOOL 4.3</b>	Analyzing and Reporting GESI-Responsive Data

### GESI-RESPONSIVE DISAGGREGATION

The recommendation is to always ensure all core indicators are disaggregated by sex, age, and disability, often referred to as SADD, at a minimum. Additional data disaggregation, going beyond the SADD minimum, could occur along these indicators:

- Socio-economic status
- Location — by geographic area, rural vs urban — this is important to assess overall fidelity and quality of the implementation as well as how context may impact outcomes
- Indigenous people – people who self-identify as indigenous vs those who do not
- Race
- Caste or class
- Ethnicity/ethnic group
- Religion
- Refugee or migrant status
- Disability type
- Language spoken — as a proxy for ethnic group or, for example, in training programs to compare participants who can read and write and those who cannot.



## GOING BEYOND NUMBERS

In addition to numbers, it is important to collect qualitative data on GESI, showing transformational change as experienced by participants. Qualitative indicators focus on the quality of access, decision-making, participation, systems, or well-being, going beyond sheer numbers. They also measure matters relating to beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, practices, knowledge, and perceptions.

## BASELINE DATA

It is possible to set targets for qualitative change when baseline data is available, so baselining is critical. The GESI team also encourages the use of composite (index) scores or qualitative indicators for monitoring GESI-related change over time. World Vision's programs use some of these, such as:

- Percentage of adolescents and youth with improved beliefs about conflict (Source: Conflict Resolution Scoring Index). This indicator aligns with the GESI domain of well-being and focuses on beliefs around safety and security.
- Perceptions of women and men on change in access to opportunities; Perceptions of women and men on change in access to services (Source: World Vision Women's Economic Empowerment Indicators Guidance, and Tools). These two indicators align with the GESI domain of Access.
- A man can hit his wife if she will not have sex with him (Source: The Gender Equitable Men Scale violence domain/subscale). This indicator aligns with the GESI domain of well-being and focuses on beliefs around gender-based violence.

There are two main approaches to ensure GESI-responsive indicators are incorporated into faith and development approaches. One approach is to integrate GESI in faith and development indicators.

### Activity

Review figure 18 below and reflect on how to integrate GESI-responsive indicators and enhance disaggregation. Suggest a possible impact-level indicator.

**FIGURE 18: SAMPLE FAITH AND DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS**

Thematic Area	Indicator	Results Level
Faith Partnerships for Child Well-being	Number of faith leaders trained for child well-being	Output
	Number of faith communities equipped for child well-being	Output

Another approach is to apply GESI-specific indicators to faith and development interventions. Review the GESI-specific indicators in figure 19 below that can be integrated into faith and development programming approaches.

**FIGURE 19: SAMPLE GESI INDICATORS**

GESI Domain	GESI Core Indicator	Result level
ACCESS	<p><b>Percentage of participants who reported increased/improved access/use/ownership.</b></p> <p><b>Number of participants who reported increased/improved access/use/ownership</b></p> <p>information and technology, services (e.g., health, social), assets (e.g., housing, land, cash), infrastructure (e.g., latrines, roads, schools, markets), benefits (e.g., social welfare, safety net) or opportunities (e.g., education, economic activity), skills—specifically hard (technical) — from World Vision programming</p>	Outcome/Output
DECISION- MAKING	<p><b>Percentage/number of participants who reported either independently or jointly make decisions, free from coercion</b></p> <p>(e.g., ability to make decisions in leadership and control over assets)</p>	Outcome/Output
PARTICIPATION	<p><b>Percentage/number of participants who are able to engage in/ hold responsibility in societal affairs</b></p> <p>(e.g., social/economic/political groups, committees, domestic/care work)</p>	Outcome/ Output
SYSTEMS	<p><b>Percentage/number of participants who reported existence of equal/inclusive systems</b></p>	Outcome/Output
WELL-BEING	<p><b>Percentage/number of participants reporting positive aspects of well-being (physical/emotional/psychological/spiritual/overall)</b></p> <p>(e.g., safety, security, confidence, dignity, respect, or actual program [health, well-being] outcomes)</p>	Outcome/Output



# Conclusion

Faith leaders and communities can be a powerful force in advancing gender equality and social inclusion. When engaged effectively, they can influence transformations in behaviors and take actions to address the needs of vulnerable and excluded groups and the root causes of their vulnerability.

World Vision's faith-based programming is used to support the achievement of goals in different sectors including child protection, health, education, WASH, and livelihoods. GESI reference guides for these sectors are also available. However, work with faith leaders and communities needs to be undertaken carefully.

The focus group discussions with the World Vision's Faith and Development staff revealed that strategies that make a program design inclusive are fourfold, i.e., advocacy and partnerships, capacity building programs, participatory program design approach, and religious scriptures (Figure 20). A key question to keep in mind is, what indicators can be used to achieve GESI-transformational change when utilizing these strategies?

**FIGURE 20: STRATEGIES FOR GESI-RESPONSIVE FAITH AND DEVELOPMENT APPROACH**



### Advocacy and Partnership

A faith partnership is an active cooperative relationship between World Vision and a faith community or faith-inspired organization. This may include combining resources and expertise to carry out a specific set of activities to achieve a specific, shared outcome; and supporting National Office strategic objectives, including transformed systems, structures, and worldviews.<sup>22</sup>

### Capacity Building

The process includes mapping the local faith community stakeholders, assessing where their child well-being interests lie, and building capacity of those who will lead (such as faith leaders in the Channels of Hope (COH) programming model. The CoH Catalyzing (faith leader) Workshops equip faith leaders and their spouses with knowledge and inspire them with a vision of how they are uniquely called to respond to local child well-being issues, including gender equality and social inclusion issues — through factually correct information and insight from sacred scriptures and faith traditions.<sup>23</sup>

### Participatory Approaches

As a Christian NGO, World Vision understands that faith leaders play an important role in influencing the way their communities think, and that they can be powerful community mobilizers. World Vision’s Channels of Hope methodology equips faith leaders to challenge harmful social norms and bring positive change to their communities

### Religious Texts and Narratives

Empowered World View is a faith-based enabling development approach for mobilizing and empowering individual and communities’ potentials to transform their mindset, beliefs, and behavior. The approach looks at what sacred texts from different faith groups say about gender norms or social norms related to issues like gender-based violence, female genital cutting, child marriage, HIV/AIDS, or disability. Because the approach starts from the common ground of faith and uses the language and expression of faith to build community cohesion and provide a solid basis for understanding the importance of addressing these issues, it creates the necessary support to enable communities to overcome them.

Channels of Hope for Gender methodology is an innovative approach to addressing gender inequities through facilitated discussions about gender norms and values from a faith perspective. The model also challenges faith leaders to acknowledge their own misconceptions and act upon gender injustices in their communities. When faith leaders promote principles of equality and encourage shared access to and utilization of family and community resources, this contributes to harmonious relationships within families, faith groups, and communities.

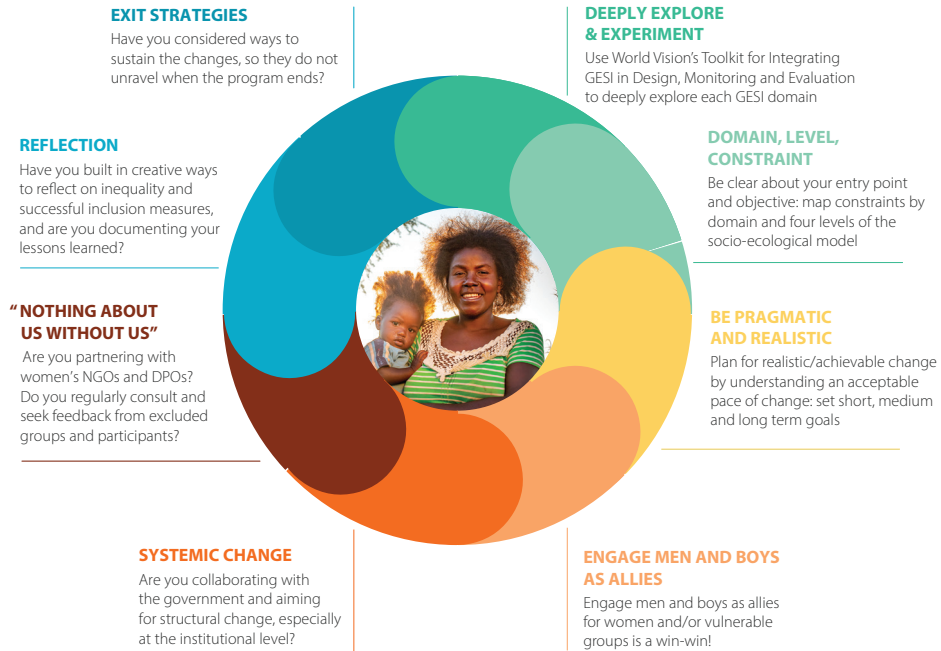
While applying these strategies, it is important to utilize the tips provided for in the GESI Transformation cycle (Figure 21).

22 For more details see World Vision (2018). *Faith partnership Framework, Engaging Different Faith Communities: For Child Well-being.*

23 For more details see World Vision (2016). *Channels of Hope. Project Model.*

FIGURE 21: GESI TRANSFORMATION AS AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS

## THE GESI TRANSFORMATION CYCLE



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The GESI approach builds on the gains made in prioritizing faith and development approaches, with the goal to achieve GESI transformative programming, assessing progress along the World Vision GESI continuum.

This guide provides key recommendations to achieve this integrated approach, building on World Vision’s toolkit for integrating GESI in design, monitoring, and evaluation.

### Apply a GESI Lens

Always apply a GESI lens to review faith teachings and practices as relevant to the sector. Harmful cultural practices and misuses of religion have at times influenced the marginalization of women, acceptance of gender-based violence and related harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, early marriage, and stigmatization of the most vulnerable, as well as conflict. By supporting GESI-related reflection on religious narratives, assets, and resources to promote gender equality and social inclusion, faith leaders can be guided to affect lasting transformation of gender and social norms that impact sector-specific outcomes.

## **Conduct GESI Analysis**

Conduct an integrated faith and development GESI analysis using the five GESI domains to review relevant faith teachings and practices along with the sector-specific GESI analysis (see sector-specific reference guides for more information). The analysis should understand how different faiths and faith leaders impact relevant sectoral and GESI outcomes and how they might be perceived by community members and each other to ensure that no harm results. The analysis should also explore differences in sectoral and GESI outcomes between faith groups and how faith-based programs can integrate with and support existing sector and GESI-focused programs. GESI analysis can be conducted at any stage of the project cycle—during the design process, baseline and as part of ongoing program implementation and evaluation.

## **Utilize GESI-transformative Evidence and Learning**

Generate and use innovative GESI evidence and data—both qualitative and quantitative—to enhance participation, access, decision-making, well-being, and systems change for vulnerable groups. Ensure that quantitative and qualitative indicators can be disaggregated by sex, age, and disability at a minimum. In faith-based programs it is also important to include disaggregation by faith group to allow an assessment of differences between faith groups. Disaggregated data can then inform continuous collaborative learning and adaptation with faith groups on ways to enhance programming and the desired GESI and sector outcomes. Develop and share GESI and faith and development promising practices. Conduct evaluations of program models to see how they integrate with sector and GESI-specific program interventions and advance equality and inclusion. Strengthen learning partnerships and engagements with peers, civil society organizations, donor agencies, governments, and academia.

## **Enhance Dialogue and Partner with Multi-sectoral Actors**

In addition to engaging faith leaders and communities from different religious traditions, it is important to seek and engage with multi-sectoral partners. Map and work with specialized partners with GESI expertise, such as disabled persons' organizations, women's rights organizations, youth organizations, girls' organizations, male engagement organizations, relevant government ministries, and specialist service providers for collaboration. GESI-responsive approaches are intentional in seeking inclusive engagement of female, youth, and other diverse faith leaders such as women of faith and the networks they have established. This is because in most communities across the world, faith leaders are mostly male. Publicize and continually apply relevant institutional policies and practices, such as safeguarding, diversity, protection, 'nothing about us without us,' and 'do no harm' principles.

## **Conduct Ongoing GESI Training and Capacity Development**

Conduct GESI training or awareness raising for religious leaders and faith communities to unpack and address norms that will affect their ability to serve vulnerable groups and to identify ways to ensure inclusive implementation. Recruit and retain faith and development staff and volunteers who have GESI capacity and/or represent vulnerable groups. Where needed, use GESI technical support for project design, implementation, and reporting. Programs should also monitor and support the capacity of faith groups to implement the relevant GESI and sector programming.

## **Budget and Fundraise for GESI**

Ensure sustained GESI budgeting and funding. For example, establishing a GESI fund can allow programs to cover additional costs to strengthen the engagement of vulnerable groups. This could include costs such as the provision of childcare, paying for caregivers to attend events, sign language interpretation, and provision of adaptive devices. It is also important to budget for GESI integrated and GESI targeted program activities. Always ensure there is a budget for conducting GESI analysis and for engaging GESI technical guidance and support.



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