

# Leave no Woman Behind

Lessons from Christian Aid's  
programmes in Asia and  
the Middle East

August 2017



christian  
aid

**Authors:**

Manisha Majumdar and Nadia Saracini

**Acknowledgements:**

Thanks to Allan Vera, Annabelle Khin Sett Lin, Dipankar Chyau Patnaik Máiréad Collins, Petrisha Lama, Rozana Mazumdar, Sonia Wazed for case study materials, and Claire Grant, Claire Devlin, Karol Balfe, Ray Hasan, Roisin Gallagher, Sophie Efange for review; and a special thanks to all our partner organisations, particularly Nagorik Uddyog, Dynamic Action Group, Gender and Development, KAFA, Socio-Pastoral Institute, Umma fi Salaam (UFS), Community Environment, Education and Public Awareness Association for Rural Development for their contributions.

**Christian Aid is a Christian organisation that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty.**

**We work globally for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. We are part of a wider movement for social justice.**

**We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance where need is great, tackling the effects of poverty as well as its root causes.**

**[christianaid.org.uk](http://christianaid.org.uk)**

## **Contact us**

Christian Aid  
35 Lower Marsh  
Waterloo  
London  
SE1 7RL  
T: +44 (0) 20 7620 4444  
E: [info@christian-aid.org](mailto:info@christian-aid.org)  
W: [christianaid.org.uk](http://christianaid.org.uk)

Christian Aid is a key member of

**actalliance**

## Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1. Christian Aid's approach to inclusive programming</b>	<b>7</b>
Working with intersecting identities	7
Contextualising approaches to inclusion and intersectionality	8
<b>2. South Asia – multiple axes of inequality</b>	<b>10</b>
Gender and social exclusion	11
Intra-group inequalities and building solidarity	12
Inclusive programming in South Asia	12
Social exclusion in Bangladesh	13
India: links between social exclusion, economic marginalisation and violence	15
<b>3. Intersectionality in humanitarian and conflict settings</b>	<b>17</b>
Myanmar: Rights and protection for ethnic minority women	17
Lebanon: Prevention and response to gender based violence in Beqaa	18
The Philippines: identity as a source of strength	20
Nepal: inclusion and accountability in humanitarian response in Nepal	22
<b>4. Lessons learned and ways forward</b>	<b>25</b>
Tools and approaches	25
Recommendations	26

## List of Acronyms

<b>CPM</b>	civilian protection monitor
<b>DAG</b>	Dynamic Action Group
<b>GDI</b>	Gender and Development Institute
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organisation
<b>NU</b>	Nagorik Uddyog
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SPI</b>	Socio-Pastoral Institute
<b>UFS</b>	Umma fi Salaam

## Executive summary

This report is aimed at development practitioners and donors considering how to identify and address the needs of those most at risk of being left behind in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Keeping in mind the principle underlying the SDGs to 'Leave No One Behind' and Christian Aid's focus on Goal 5 to reduce gender inequality, it documents how Christian Aid's programmes are reaching out to some of the most marginalised women – women who are affected by both gender and identity-based inequality and exclusion – and how our partners are putting conditions in place for their inclusion, empowerment and equality.

Through this report, we are calling for much greater attention to socially marginalised groups, and particularly women among them, in actions towards attainment of the sustainable development goals.

The elements of Christian Aid's approaches to gender and inclusive programming are introduced, and intersectional analysis as a tool to support understanding of the barriers faced by women 'at the crossroad' of multiple axes of inequality are discussed.

Case studies from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Philippines, Myanmar and Lebanon are introduced to illustrate how women experience different forms of marginalisation and discrimination that intersect and reinforce each other in different contexts, and how Christian Aid and its partners are approaching the specific needs and vulnerabilities that result, through measures to promote women's inclusion, empowerment, dignity, protection and access to entitlements. These are divided into two sections, the first focusing on South Asia and specific issues of gender and caste identity, and the second focusing on gender and identity issues in humanitarian and conflict settings. Our focus is on our work with women who are marginalised and discriminated against, because of poverty and gender inequality on the one hand, and caste, ethnicity or migration status on the other.

Our report also identifies some common challenges emerging in our work to include the most marginalised women, such as the lack of disaggregated data, shrinking space for women's rights defenders and how violence and extreme inequalities are often structural and result from unjust political and social systems that are very difficult to change. Finally, we offer some recommendations for development practitioners, donors and policy makers, based on our learning from Christian Aid programmes in Asia and the Middle East.

Overall, this report demonstrates the importance of narratives and context for understanding intersecting issues of inequality, and the need to expand approaches and analysis towards engaging with diverse communities. It challenges us to move beyond traditional approaches that often understand inequality through a single lens, and to develop a deeper understanding of multiple axes of inequality, political and social settings, and relationships to inform our work.

## Recommendations

Summary of recommendations for addressing gender- and identity-based inequalities:

1. Build knowledge, transform mindsets and shift social norms, particularly to address intersecting forms of discrimination.
2. Incorporate analysis of gender, identity-based inequalities and power and conflict sensitivity at all points of development programme cycles.
3. Promote inclusion and participation of marginalised women, and address root causes of their vulnerability in development, humanitarian response and peace building.
4. Develop national plans, policies and legislation to better address intersecting issues faced by women and marginalised groups.
5. Gather disaggregated data to make visible context-specific axes of inequality related to gender, identity and power.
6. Collaborate to share expertise –no single agency has the capacity to address all the issues raised.
7. Promote participation of marginalised women in mechanisms to ensure SDGs are delivered for all.
8. Invest in marginalised women's leadership and capacity building for claiming human rights.
9. Promote measures to prevent and address violence against marginalised women.
10. Encourage a transformative agenda in the private sector.

## Introduction

With the ambition to see an end to poverty for all, Christian Aid has joined the call to 'Leave No One Behind' enshrined in Agenda 2030 for SDGs,<sup>1</sup> which puts equity at the heart of the development and humanitarian agenda. We have also welcomed the commitment from the UK's Department for International Development to prioritising the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, including those caught in crises and those most at risk of violence and discrimination.<sup>2</sup> This resonates with much of our work, which has a focus on addressing inequalities of gender and power.

However, identifying and reaching out to the most excluded and marginalised women and tracking their progress towards development goals are huge challenges. Our experience has taught us that women are not a homogenous group and that their poverty has many dimensions. Multiple inequalities exist among the communities with which we engage. In this report, we discuss how we are working with women facing discrimination and exclusion because of their gender and ethnic or other group identity, how these barriers intersect and reinforce each other, and some of the approaches we have found to be effective for promoting empowerment and access to rights and entitlements.

The concept of intersectional analysis is based on the work of feminist academic Kimberlé Crenshaw, who pointed out that the experiences of Black women cannot be understood by examining gender and racial discrimination and subordination separately.<sup>3</sup> Her work contributed to the recognition that gender makes a difference in how people experience identity-based issues and vice versa, and that women at the crossroads of the associated issues experience specific problems and vulnerabilities that may not be adequately addressed by policies and human rights frameworks for gender and identity issues working in parallel.<sup>4</sup> The need for more integrated approaches to gender and minority and indigenous people's rights by states, intergovernmental organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has also been highlighted.<sup>5</sup>

That the people most likely to be left behind in development are those facing intersecting inequalities is increasingly understood,<sup>6</sup> but there is limited information on the specific nature of disadvantage faced by women in marginalised groups we work with, and helpful interventions are not always documented. This report aims to make a small contribution towards filling this gap. We hope it will contribute to informing policy and development practice, so that these move away from a 'one size fits all approach' towards interventions that more effectively prioritise and empower the most marginalised, so that all people to fully enjoy their human rights and achieve development goals.

# 1. Christian Aid's approach to inclusive programming

Christian Aid's Strategic Framework, Partnership for Change, sets our out aim to 'reduce structural and gender-based inequality and create a more inclusive world, where identity – gender, ethnicity, caste, religion, class, sexual orientation – is no longer a barrier to equal treatment'.<sup>7</sup> Our corporate gender strategy, Gender Justice for All,<sup>8</sup> promotes the spirit of inclusion, and our Inclusive Programming Approach emphasises measures to ensure that everyone is treated equitably and given free and fair opportunity to participate and have influence in activities, decisions and structures which affect their life.<sup>9</sup>

These fall under four pillars:

- **Power:** Identifying and challenging **power imbalances** through thorough participatory analysis and corresponding programme design.
- **Access and participation:** Enabling **access to assistance and services in proportion to need**, without barriers, and with **inclusive and effective participation** in decision making.
- **Protection:** Ensuring safety and dignity and **preventing unintended effects of interventions that may perpetuate inequality** ('do no harm').
- **Inclusive accountability:** **Mechanisms** through which marginalised communities can measure the adequacy of interventions and policies, address concerns and complaints, and **hold duty-bearers to account**.

While recognising that we need to do more work in these areas, we offer examples of how these have been incorporated in programme approaches to address women's intersecting issues (see chapters 2 and 3).

Most of our case studies illustrate how power imbalances contribute to violence, particularly against women, and three are case studies from situations where this has been exacerbated by war. Our global strategy for Tackling Violence and Building Peace recognises that violent persecution of marginalised groups, and in particular, gender-based violence, has reached epidemic proportions in some places and is by no means exclusive to situations of war.<sup>10</sup> It commits us to tackling all aspects of violence and to addressing its root causes, to build peace, contribute to gender justice, and deliver accountability.

## Working with intersecting identities

While gender justice is our starting point, we have learned that gender transformative agendas have a limited impact if they do not take other characteristics, such as age, disability, sexual orientation, caste or ethnicity into consideration. People have multiple layered identities derived from social relations, history and power structures that create specific inequalities and vulnerabilities.

We aim to understand these unique contexts and individual experiences to help us put the conditions in place for all people to

Inclusive programming is the process of ensuring that everyone, regardless of gender, age or other dimension of diversity, is treated equitably and given a fair and free opportunity to participate and have influence in activities, decisions and structures that affect their life.

fully enjoy their human rights and be included in all phases of the relief–development continuum.

To support this, we have begun to use intersectional analysis as a tool to shape our understanding of problems and inform responses for greater equity and inclusion. This is a process of understanding how different forms of marginalisation are experienced and how they interact and reinforce each other, to reveal meaningful distinctions and similarities in different contexts. This may not always provide definitive answers to social problems, but it does create spaces for reflection and critical engagement, and can point us to new and measurable ways of engaging with issues of discrimination and exclusion.

In developing our understanding of power dynamics, intersectional analysis delivers a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between experiences of marginalisation, the impact of structural inequality, and the implications for engagement with communities, and it provides important checks by revealing how individual experiences are often divergent, even within social groups, which help us to develop more inclusive programming approaches.

This approach is helpful for both practical interventions and policy advocacy. In thinking about the interaction between two or more systems of discrimination or subordination, the idea of intersectionality captures both how this structures social hierarchies, and power inequalities, and how actions and policies often actively compound these.<sup>11</sup> Intersectional analysis can therefore help pinpoint how and where laws, policies and practices are inadequate or unhelpful. Ensuring policy and practice works for those most left behind demands an integrated approach to programmes and advocacy, and particularly points to the need to build a strong body of evidence to support policy and advocacy work, based on our experience in different contexts.

One of the lessons we have learned is the importance of contextualising approaches to inclusion and intersectionality. Our programmes in Asia and the Middle East respond to diverse challenges, so 'putting the last first' requires responses that are informed by the specific issues and barriers faced by the most vulnerable groups, and the possibilities of influencing these in different parts of the world. In the next section, we illustrate this with examples from our work, acknowledging that we are still learning, and that we have not attempted to address all aspects of gender inequality or intersectionality.

Our case studies focus on projects taking an inclusive programming approach to empowering women who belong to socially excluded groups, such as ethnic and religious minorities and women affected by caste-based discrimination.

## **Contextualising approaches to inclusion and intersectionality**

Our case studies demonstrate the need for a variety of approaches to address specific issues in diverse contexts, but there are also some common threads. These include **the importance of**

One of the key lessons we have learned is the importance of contextualising approaches to inclusion and intersectionality. Our programmes in Asia and the Middle East respond to diverse challenges, so 'putting the last first' requires responses that are informed by the specific issues and barriers faced by the most vulnerable groups, and the possibilities of influencing these in different parts of the world.



**community-led and participatory approaches** to identifying and reaching out to those who are most marginalised; 'shifting the power' to local actors through partnership; and work to strengthen networking between civil society organisations at all levels, to create platforms for the claiming of rights and entitlements, support social movements, and share expertise.

Many of our partner organisations are promoting the rights of marginalised groups and aim to open space for their participation, recognition and representation in the face of very **restrictive and often shrinking political space**. Various trends, from regulatory restrictions to violence and intimidation of rights defenders, are in evidence, and the impacts are felt disproportionately by activists and organisations working to uphold rights of women or groups facing oppression or discrimination.<sup>12</sup>

Where there is increased conservatism and fundamentalism, there are also **increased gender-specific risks of violence** against women and men who challenge traditional cultural norms and social structures, such as single women, and people who are gay, bisexual or transgender. The risk of gender-based violence, particularly against women and girls of marginalised minorities, is also greater where there is increased **conflict and militarisation**, although this can be seen as a continuation of a pattern of discrimination and violence that also happens in times of peace.<sup>13</sup>

Our case studies reveal how **violence and extreme inequalities often result from unjust political and social systems**. Addressing these will require a dramatic and difficult transformation, involving practical grassroots action as well as greater recognition of marginalised groups and the influence of marginalised women at the highest levels. We must strengthen political will and shift resources towards building peaceful and inclusive societies. This is not easy.

In many societies, socially excluded groups face strong social disapproval and lack support for their integration. Making them visible may force governments to acknowledge that their social and economic performance has not been as effective for these groups as aggregate indicators might suggest. In fragile and complex settings, and in countries with high levels of endemic violence, we must also be conscious of the need to avoid having negative impacts on a situation, to be politically aware and conflict sensitive, and to promote local capacities for peace.

There are also logistical and methodological challenges highlighted by our case studies, most notably that government **data is lacking or inadequate to evidence the exclusion of groups profiled**. In many cases, civil society organisations are working to improve their ability to collect and analyse data, but this is a challenge with limited resources and expertise.

Our case studies reveal that inequalities are often structural and result from unjust political and social systems, and that addressing these will require a dramatic and difficult transformation at both the highest and grassroots levels.

## 2. South Asia – multiple axes of inequality

South Asia is home to huge numbers of people who experience identity-based social exclusion, contributing to inequality and entrenched poverty. Identities such as caste and ethnicity and their intersectionality with class and gender inequality, are persistent barriers to fulfilling rights and achieving development goals.<sup>14</sup> Discrimination based on work and descent or caste is recognised by the UN as a form of racial discrimination.<sup>15</sup> It affects at least 210 million people in the region and is also found in other parts of the world.

Caste is a complex social hierarchy that ascribes a traditional occupation and status to endogamous groups. Dalits,<sup>16</sup> formerly known as 'untouchables', are excluded from the caste system at the bottom of the hierarchy, and are expected to do the most undignified and stigmatised jobs, often in conditions of slavery.<sup>17</sup> Limited opportunities and poor access to education (discrimination against Dalits is common in schools and academic institutions) mean Dalits face huge barriers in access to decent work even if they are able to break out of their traditional occupation.<sup>18</sup> Discrimination in employment and access to housing and many services forces some Dalits to deliberately hide their identity.

Social exclusion and marginalisation also affect the many diverse ethnic minority groups in South Asia, who are disadvantaged in multiple ways, such as living in geographically remote or conflict-affected areas, lack of education provision in community languages, or because their traditional means of livelihood are being undermined by development projects. For example, India recognises 705 Scheduled Tribes, many of whom are affected by conflict over land rights or live in militarised zones where armed opposition groups are active, and among whom women often face the worst consequences of violence and displacement, including high levels of violence, such as abduction, rape and trafficking into servitude or sexual slavery.<sup>19</sup>

People who practise a minority religion, particularly Christians in Pakistan, Muslims in India and Hindus in Bangladesh, also face discrimination, although it is also a feature of the region that these different faiths have long coexisted and there is considerable tolerance and understanding between people of different faiths. The recent increased influence of religious extremism is reported as contributing to greater persecution of people of minority faiths.<sup>20</sup>

---

**The P20 initiative<sup>21</sup> tracks the progress of the poorest people in achievement of the SDGs. The P20 has highlighted that India has more than one third of the 1.4 billion people who comprise the poorest 20% of the global population. The majority of these people face social exclusion because of who they are and the work they do. Unless this is addressed, the SDGs will not be achieved in India or South Asia, and if South Asia does not achieve the SDGs, nor will the world.**

---

## Gender and social exclusion

Socially excluded women face intersecting barriers and human rights abuses related to their gender and their identity. Dalit women especially are frequently subjected to the most extreme violations in the form of sexual violence and public humiliation, often with impunity. This is a result of their vulnerability and low status, and is often a form of social sanction against perceived transgressions from their ascribed status and role (often referred to as 'backlash violence') or to humiliate Dalit men and keep them 'in their place'. This is systematically utilised, not only to deny them opportunities, choices and freedoms, but also to publicly reinforce caste/gender hierarchies. Atrocities against women are more likely to go unreported because of the associated stigma, and also because conviction rates are low. In India for example, the conviction rate for rape against Dalit women is under 2% compared to a conviction rate of 25% in rape cases against all women in India.<sup>22</sup>

Discrimination and persecution linked to conservative social norms also adversely affect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, widows and single women.

Progressive policies and laws to promote equality and address discrimination do exist. For example, India has instituted affirmative action in public employment for women and excluded groups. All too often, however, these fail to meet the needs of the most marginalised,<sup>23</sup> and they do not necessarily address the root causes of discrimination.<sup>24</sup> Dalit women are disadvantaged in their access to entitlements made available for other women, often because of discriminatory attitudes that reinforce lack of confidence and self-esteem, or lack of access to information.

**Below:** Usha was born into a family of Dalit farm labourers in Uttar Pradesh, India, and gradually emerged as a leader within her community. She was successful in collectivising Dalit agricultural labourers to fight against the oppression of the dominant caste and negotiate for better wages. However, she also experienced adverse reactions in her community and family, which resulted in family violence and forced her to leave her marital home. This has not deterred her from her commitment to fight for oppressed communities and Dalit women, and she now leads the women's collective supported by Dynamic Action Group.



## Exclusion from protective laws in India

Even good policies can fall short in meeting the needs of marginalised groups. The Indian Prevention of Atrocities Act (PoA) 1995 provides redress mechanisms including fast-track legal process for socially excluded survivors of rights violations perpetrated by dominant groups.

Implementation of this is patchy but civil society groups are pushing hard for more effective use of the legislation.

Facing continuing prejudice and violence, many Hindu Dalits have tried to find some social acceptance by converting to Buddhism, Christianity, Sikhism or Islam. However, caste hierarchies cut across religious boundaries, so very often they continue to face caste prejudice.

Christian and Muslim Dalits are not protected by the PoA, nor do they benefit from other provisions for Dalits, such as reservations in public sector employment, so these groups face double discrimination.

Research commissioned by Christian Aid and conducted by our partner organisation the Budget Analysis Rajasthan Centre highlighted how special budget allocations for Dalit and other socially excluded communities do not adequately meet the needs of women, and how addressing this is a challenge because of lack of gender disaggregated data among these groups.<sup>25</sup>

### **Intra-group inequalities and building solidarity**

Our work with Dalit communities and organisations has taught us that the struggles of marginalised groups are not only with dominant groups, but also related to hierarchies within their own communities, which makes finding remedies more complex.

Violence against women and girls is very common in Dalit households and communities, for example. Conservative and patriarchal social norms combine with economic pressures and alcoholism among Dalit men as factors. Another common justification is a perception that the victim has stepped outside of her traditional gender role and through this has brought dishonour to the family or community. The perpetrators of violence against women in the family or community are not always men. Women also use violence, often to dominate younger women within the household.

While patriarchy is an important factor in the subordination of women within socially excluded communities, women also use identity, class and intra-household hierarchies to dominate and restrict other women. When we examine identity from a lens of intersectionality, we need to widen our perspective to see how different identities are intertwined and can impact on any intervention positively or negatively. We have found personal narratives and single-group studies to be useful in understanding social relations from the perspective of a particular group or individual, though of course within groups, and among women, there are always different viewpoints and interests.

Another important approach has been one of building solidarity and group identity. Social exclusion is a way of thinking that fragments and divides, resulting in divisions and hierarchies even among subordinated groups. This is particularly true among communities affected by caste. Solidarity building does not have to mean losing sight of the need to understand and acknowledge unique experiences and perspectives.

Linking disadvantaged groups to wider social movements can help them make their voices heard and also ensure these movements are more representative. For example, feminist movements in South Asia have been criticised for not being sufficiently inclusive of socially excluded women.<sup>26</sup>

### **Inclusive programming in South Asia**

Christian Aid works to promote inclusive societies in India, Nepal and Bangladesh. Our approaches reflect our inclusive programming framework, aiming to create the enabling conditions for equity, so that everyone, regardless of their gender, ethnicity or other identity, can make the most of opportunities to develop.<sup>27</sup>

## **Intersecting inequalities in Bangladesh**

Inequalities based on caste, religion and ethnicity often intersect. Around 20% of Dalit municipal cleaners in Dhaka belong to non-Bengali communities descended from migrants from India. Despite being Bangladeshi citizens, they lack any ancestral village in Bangladesh where they can find a welcoming place to live or alternative source of income.

Many are trapped in poverty and substandard housing in 'sweeper colonies' (a derogatory, yet widely used, term), which lack access to essential services. They are unable to find alternative housing in Dhaka because of the discrimination they face.

Although stigmatised by the nature of their work, most households ensure at least one family member retains a job as a cleaner because of their lack of alternative housing options and often for fear of losing the relative safety and acceptance they have in their communities. This can be a barrier to youth breaking out of this traditional occupation, perpetuating their exclusion through the generations.

Challenging power imbalances has been a critical element, and much of our work over many years has sought to build capacities for socially excluded groups to be agents for change, including supporting platforms for advocacy and claiming rights.

Ensuring access to entitlements for all has also been a key focus, and is being achieved through a range of strategic interventions to meet practical needs, develop employment opportunities and close the gap that exists in access to services, social safety nets and resources between socially excluded groups and wider populations. Promoting the dignity and protection of socially excluded groups by creating an enabling policy and institutional environment through advocacy for appropriate laws, policies, budgets and programmes and practices has also been a key challenge.

Finally, we know that we must create the social conditions for sustained change, for example, by creating shared spaces for people of all backgrounds to come together and critically question discriminatory beliefs and practices.

In all of this work, supporting solidarity among small and community-based organisations and national and regional movements for social justice have been key.<sup>28</sup>

## Social exclusion in Bangladesh

There are around 6.5 million Dalits in Bangladesh, belonging to several distinct groups. Many are excluded by both their caste and their ethnicity, since they are descendants of people who migrated as labourers, under colonial rule, from Hindu-dominated parts of India to what was Muslim-dominated East Bengal. Partly because of this history, little is known about them. Their invisibility to policy makers is compounded by their lack of recognition as a demographic category, disagreement about which groups should be counted as Dalits and that fact that not all individuals belonging to these groups necessarily identify as Dalits. Dalits have thus come to be known as the 'missing poor'.

Although some Bangladeshi Dalits are Muslims, many belong to Bangladesh's Hindu population, which has been increasingly marginalised and persecuted. Efforts to address Dalits' intersecting marginalisation and protect their rights have been very limited.

Bangladesh's ethnic minorities also face discrimination and disproportionate levels of poverty intersecting with marginalisation arising from their status as religious minorities (since they are primarily Buddhist, Christian or Hindu in a predominantly Muslim country). They face a constant threat of violence, often associated with land-grabbing, since most do not have formal title to their traditional homelands and are vulnerable to displacement.

Women and girls among religious and ethnic minorities in Bangladesh face intersecting challenges associated with their gender and identity, including lack of access to decent work and public services. Older women and women with disabilities are especially challenged in access to public services.

## Collaboration for anti-discrimination in Bangladesh

Civil society organisations in Bangladesh have been calling for the draft Elimination of Discrimination Act (2014) to be passed. This should protect people from discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as caste, ethnicity, race, profession, religion, gender, sexuality, disability and age.

This was perhaps the first time that CSOs have been so widely consulted by human rights and law commissions in the process of drafting a national law. The demand for the Act first came from CSOs working on Dalits' rights, but during the process, a coalition of organisations working on a range of gender and diversity issues developed.

## Dalit women in Bangladesh: overcoming the barriers

Nagorik Uddyog (NU) works with some of the most vulnerable Dalit communities, supporting Dalit organisations and platforms for claiming their rights and entitlements. In 2016, it carried out research to address the lack of data about Dalit women and inform appropriate responses. This showed how vulnerability linked to gender and caste combine as barriers to Dalit women's and girls' development.

Among the most critical barriers is the fact that Dalit girls have been left behind in progress towards universal primary education. Dalit families are very likely to prioritise boys' schooling over that of girls because of their poverty and perceptions that girls will not bring an income into the family. Instead, families often save money to pay for dowry and marriage. Concerns about girls' safety is also a common reason. Verbal or sexual abuse, threats of abduction and defamation by local people were reported as very significant constraints on Dalit girls' mobility.

School drop-out rates are high among Dalit girls who do attend, often because of the financial burden, or the prevalence of abuse and discrimination against Dalits in the education system. After a girl reaches puberty, family concerns about safety and reputation also increase. Of 500 young Dalit women surveyed, only 44% attended primary school, and one third of these girls did not complete primary school. Less than 6% finished secondary school.

Dalit women struggle to be economically independent and need education and skills. Most who work outside the home do jobs that are specific to their social group, such as cleaning or tea plantation work. In many cases access to these occupations is declining (for example, because of changing employment policies). NU found that increasingly Dalit women who are able to are leaving traditional occupations to escape the associated stigma. However, Dalit identity and traditional dress codes still restrict their entry to jobs and public spaces to some extent. NU found that among many younger Dalit women there is a greater sense of being accepted in public spheres and a desire to change their public image to minimise discrimination against them.

Among the greatest barriers reported by the women and girls surveyed were patriarchal attitudes and clan hierarchies within their own communities, including expectations that they will dress in a certain way,

will stay at home to carry out household work, and will marry within a certain group, all of which restrict their autonomy. Women are excluded from decision making in the household and in the Dalit Panchayats that govern Dalit communities and their relationships with mainstream society. A **key lesson** has been that the empowerment of Dalit women within their communities is as important as the empowerment of Dalits within the wider community.

### **Approaches for challenging power imbalances include:**

- Encouraging Dalit women's political participation, such as voting in national elections and participation in local Panchayats.
- Building social capital by training Dalit women to understand their rights and organise to defend their rights and access to entitlements.
- Promoting women's leadership in Dalit organisations.
- Building Dalit women's self-esteem to overcome the effects of stigma and discrimination.

### **Approaches for access and participation include:**

- Supporting women to become change agents in their communities. For example, Dalit women leaders can help individuals, especially other women, to access social safety net programmes.
- Providing skills development and productive assets to enable Dalit women to diversify how they earn income.
- Advocating for scholarships for girls and for affirmative action and non-discrimination in education.

**Inclusive accountability** is being promoted by mobilising government officials and MPs to fight for Dalit rights and provision for targeted entitlements for Dalits and other socially excluded groups, and by monitoring implementation of supportive national plans and policies.

### **Protection, dignity and do-no-harm approaches**

- Supporting positive, effective and meaningful interaction between Dalit women and men to address domestic violence and champion women's rights.
- Advocacy for measures such as programmes to educate boys to change attitudes to violence against women, and to stop caste-based discrimination in schools.

Particular concerns include abduction, sexual harassment, rape and intimidation of Dalit women, high rates of trafficking of Rohingya refugees, and prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence against ethnic minority women for the purpose of land grabbing and the militarisation of indigenous areas, especially in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.<sup>29</sup>

For Bangladeshi women of religious minorities, a barrier can be the existence of different personal laws, covering areas such as marriage, divorce and inheritance, which can leave them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse or prevent them inheriting property, particularly as Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world.<sup>30</sup> Women and girls from religious minorities also face economic and political marginalisation and high levels of violence in the context of intercommunal conflict.<sup>31</sup>

Civil society organisations in Bangladesh, such as our partner Nagorik Uddyog, have been working to gather data on Dalits and other socially excluded groups, focusing on access to services such as to clean water and sanitation, comparing Bangladesh's progress towards development goals against the achievement of those goals by socially excluded groups, and showing how policies fall short in meeting their needs.<sup>32</sup>

This has brought about some changes, such as the introduction of a quota system for admission of Dalit students to five universities in Dhaka, and specific funding in the national budget for housing for Dalits in urban areas. The Bangladesh Government has also addressed inclusion of minorities in its Seventh Five Year Plan for national development and the National Social Protection Strategy. However, a weak administrative capacity and a lack of political will to recognise and protect the land rights of indigenous peoples remain important barriers.

## India: links between social exclusion, economic marginalisation and violence

Caste is a form of economic organisation that enables the exploitation of workers at the bottom of the hierarchy. Its hereditary nature and stigma and discrimination associated with it are barriers to social and labour market mobility. It is also very complex, with hierarchies within hierarchies that fragment communities and undermine solidarity.

Dalits, who comprise around 17% of India's population, largely depend on dominant castes for their livelihood, contributing to their vulnerability to violence and intimidation. Affirmative action in India's public sector has improved job opportunities for Dalits and other socially excluded communities, but similar measures have yet to be widely implemented in the formal private sector or its value chains, where socially excluded groups (and many women) are concentrated in low-paid and informal employment.

The Indian state of Uttar Pradesh is home to 200 million people, of whom about 21% are Dalits.<sup>33</sup> There are 66 different 'scheduled castes' recognised in the state.<sup>34</sup> The majority of Dalits live in rural areas where agriculture is the main source of employment.

## Dalit women farmers fight for land and freedom from violence

The Dynamic Action Group (DAG) works in Uttar Pradesh to uphold the rights of Dalit communities and address intersecting gender issues faced by Dalit women.

Approaches to **access and participation** include training in agricultural production and organic techniques that can increase productivity in small and marginal landholdings, and securing Dalit women's access to land. A collective campaign involving 7,000 women has engaged local and state authorities to win land titles to small homestead plots and obtain a lease for land for collective farming, although the struggle for land titles continues.

DAG also helps to **challenge power imbalances** between Dalits and the wider population by building Dalit community unity to fight collectively to address violence and discriminatory behaviour. Among Dalit women it builds solidarity and promotes understanding of how women are affected by intersecting inequalities. This is helping Dalit women to articulate their needs and take legal recourse against domestic or societal violence where necessary.

Since this work began in Jaunpur District, Uttar Pradesh, there has been a sharp decline in both domestic and caste-based violence in the project areas. **A key lesson** has been the importance of combining measures for empowerment and voice of Dalit women with support for their economic independence.

Dalit women in the state experience an intersection of poverty, caste, patriarchy and related economic dependency, which contribute to their vulnerability to violence and exploitation.

Most Dalits traditionally do not own land, though some own small plots (often in more marginal areas). Access to land for Dalit women is even more restricted because of extreme poverty, patriarchal norms and lack of inheritance rights. In rural areas, Dalits often have little choice but to cultivate land belonging to dominant castes either as farm labourers or tenant farmers.

New jobs are emerging, but lack of education and discrimination in employment mean that Dalits' take-up of these is less than among the wider population.<sup>35</sup> Increasing numbers of Dalit men are gradually breaking out of agriculture to find alternative work, but Dalit women are less likely to have the necessary skills or personal freedom to do so. Most Dalit women depend on agriculture as poorly paid casual labourers. In the course of this work they are very vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Caste-based violence is particularly prevalent in Uttar Pradesh where 8,358 incidents of violence against Dalits were recorded in 2015.<sup>36</sup> In India as a whole there has been a trend towards an increased incidence of caste-based violence, which has been attributed to Dalit attempts to break out of 'traditional' occupations and claim their rights.<sup>37</sup>



**'I am in this movement for a reason, I cannot give up. If you are educated, no one can stop you. That is what I want for my grandchildren. I want to educate them so that they do not face the same challenges that I have faced.'**

Moni Rani Das, Vice-President of the Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement, grew up in a sweeper colony and was socially marginalised in school, eventually dropping out. Married young, she felt voiceless, but was determined to be an activist. Her ambition brought her into conflict with her family, but she is now a member of her local Dalit Panchayat.



### 3. Intersectionality in humanitarian and conflict settings

In Myanmar and the Philippines, our work has enabled women from conflict-affected communities to play an active role in tackling violence and building peace, both as individuals and members of civil society organisations that are rebuilding trust between people of different ethnicities and religions, engaging local government, documenting human rights abuses and supporting access to justice. In Nepal, our humanitarian work has emphasised access to resources and participation of disadvantaged women, and in Lebanon our work is helping to overcome intersecting challenges linked to gender inequality and refugee status.

#### Myanmar: Rights and protection for ethnic minority women

In Myanmar, indigenous women and community-based organisations are working together to uphold rights and protection in a situation of conflict, displacement and limited humanitarian access.

Gender-based violence is a problem across Myanmar but is particularly prevalent in conflict areas or militarised zones where it often goes unpunished.<sup>38</sup> Survivors have limited access to life-saving services. There have been numerous allegations of rapes carried out by security forces, but the vast majority are not reported because survivors fear repercussions if they do so. Few victims access necessary medical care – in 2016, only 50% accepted referral to healthcare providers in Rakhine State, and only 18% in Kachin State, and these figures are based on the small fraction of incidents that were reported.<sup>39</sup>

We have no data on levels of gender-based violence involving disabled women in Myanmar, but disability compounds vulnerability, as our case study highlights, and there is a widespread need for improved safety, dignity and inclusion of differently abled people in this and other conflict and humanitarian situations.

Indigenous women in Myanmar face discrimination, violence and displacement and lack of protection or effective rule of law, as well as restrictions on their freedoms of movement. Landmines and checkpoints restrict access to jobs and agricultural land as well as to health and social care services, which are already very limited. Mental health services for people who have been traumatised are very poorly developed and there are no social safety nets for people affected by chronic ill health or disability.

Our case study focuses on Kachin women, who are subordinated within Kachin society and excluded from decision making, yet with appropriate training are playing a critical role as civilian protection monitors (CPMs) in their communities, providing much-needed support and outreach in a conflict setting, and helping to empower vulnerable women to access justice and essential services.

### Civilian protection monitors in Myanmar

The Gender and Development Institute (GDI) works in conflict-affected areas of Kachin State to strengthen commitment to civilian protection among government and ethnic armed groups and ensure local voices are heard in the national peace process.

GDI's Civilian Protection Monitoring Project builds local capacities for **participation** in peace building. Civilian protection monitors (CPMs) are trained in community-led monitoring of human rights violations, first aid, paralegal skills and coordination with other CSOs for advocacy and engagement for **greater accountability** of local authorities.

CPMs respond to incidents of violence, working with other local NGOs to enable those affected to **access** support and justice.

For example, when an elderly and disabled Kachin woman was sexually assaulted by a soldier, CPMs gathered evidence for a case to be filed with local police, accessed counselling and safer housing for the survivor and arranged for healthcare from the township hospital. Coordinating with the Kachin Legal Aid Network, the military base commander was engaged about the incident and need for justice, resulting in a conviction.

The work is risky, so **'do no harm'** involves support for networking to create **'power together'**; while individual CPMs maintain a low profile.

**A key lesson** has been that local CSOs and human rights defenders can be powerful and respond quickly to emerging issues if effectively networked and supported through capacity building.

## Lebanon: Prevention and response to gender based violence in Beqaa

The Beqaa Valley, which includes some of the poorest areas of Lebanon, is now home to about half the Syrian refugees living in the country. Living as refugees away from family, community, state and support structures, along with poverty and other factors, renders refugee women and children disproportionately vulnerable to gender-based violence.

Our case study highlights how, even where protective legislation is in place, its benefits may not be felt by women from the most marginalised groups, who often face very specific and multiple barriers in accessing support and protection. Addressing this requires targeted interventions, including to raise awareness of rights and entitlements, and to promote access to justice and appropriate services.

It also illustrates how regulations governing refugees can add to the barriers faced by refugee women. In this case, regulations governing the rights to work of refugees add to women's vulnerability to gender-based violence by making their legal stay dependent on being able to work, for which a refugee needs a sponsor (generally a man), which creates an unnecessary dependency and increases women's vulnerability to sexual exploitation.

**Below:** For 14 years, Sana was married to a man who beat and abused her, and then left her alone with no support for their four children. In the first year of the war, she saw the Syrian army murdering her neighbours, her brother-in-law and his wife and children, among many others. She was shot by a sniper in both legs and confined to bed for nine months before fleeing with her children to Lebanon.



## Psychosocial support in Lebanon

KAFA is a feminist NGO working to eliminate exploitation and violence against women and girls. Its centre in the Beqaa Valley supports refugees among its clients.

In 2014, following advocacy by KAFA and others, Lebanon passed a law criminalising family violence. This should protect refugees as well as Lebanese women, but many poor Lebanese and Syrian women in the Beqaa Valley have not benefited because of several intersecting issues.

Most do not know about the law or how it applies to them. They fear they will be arrested or deported if they seek help. As the law only protects women from partners in a legally registered marriage, unmarried women and those who lost documentation in Syria are not covered.

The cost of litigation and illegal status in Lebanon (which renders it impossible to register a marriage) are also barriers.

Women unable to benefit from the law's protection are among those most likely to suffer high levels of family violence. Conservative social attitudes, poverty or traumatic experiences and associated family tensions are all factors, along with poverty and insecurity which contributes to high levels of early marriage (many parents believe married daughters will be less at risk of rape or kidnap, particularly if they had to leave Syria without a male family member). Many young married women report feeling isolated and vulnerable, and have restricted mobility and access to services. This is particularly true for those with disabilities, because they are often less able to protect themselves, more dependent on others, and less visible.

### Approaches for access to assistance and services

- Although there are challenges because of a lack of formalised camp structures for Syrian refugees, KAFA reaches out to vulnerable women, who often live in rented accommodation, unfinished buildings, sheds or informal camps.
- KAFA provides a comprehensive range of services for survivors of gender-based violence. They are assigned a social worker to manage their case, ensuring psychosocial, social, legal and medical services are provided when needed.
- KAFA provides women training in their rights as women and as refugees. This gives them opportunities to gain in strength through collaboration and by becoming trainers themselves. They have opportunities to discuss issues such as sex, early marriage and displacement, and learn about the support available.

### Approaches to challenge power imbalances

- To address gender norms, KAFA run awareness sessions and drama workshops with boys. KAFA does not work with individual men, but it is using creative approaches to issues such as child marriage. KAFA has a positive approach to psychosocial work through drama, dance and music.

## The Philippines: identity as a source of strength

Our case study from the Philippines describes challenges faced by women of a minority Muslim community in Mindanao in the southern Philippines, and the role that faith-based organisations have played in supporting their empowerment. Their situation of protracted conflict and displacement intersects with ethnic discrimination, discrimination on the basis of their religion and patriarchal social norms, yet Christian Aid partners have developed approaches that have enabled them to find strength in their identity and to become leaders in their communities, contribute to peacebuilding and challenging entrenched discrimination.

Our experience in this context has been that transforming identity-based conflict and building trust where prejudice and hatred is deeply ingrained was an important first step. Our two faith-based partners, the Socio-Pastoral Institute (SPI) and Umma fi Salaam (UFS), worked together to help Muslim and Christian communities explore their identities, respective strengths and potential to be agents for change, finding more similarities and differences. A key area of convergence in this case was the Christian concept of stewardship, similar to Khalifah in the Muslim tradition, whereby an individual's spirituality transcends formal rituals to encompass responsibility for community affairs, such as peace building and solidarity with the poor.<sup>40</sup> This helped to overcome barriers to engagement with the local authorities and the wider community.

Another critical and very practical component of this identity-building approach was to enable women to work among their community to encourage formal registration, especially of women and children, to improve access to entitlements such as public health insurance, health services, education, and government cash transfer programmes.

**Below:** In the Philippines, Edang has received training from Christian Aid partners that has enabled her to take a greater role in her community. She uses her training as a teacher to tutor her daughter at home.



## A community organiser

Edang Tanhaji belongs to the Muslim Samal community and volunteers as a local community organiser. She is one of the few women in her community to have achieved a college education, but nevertheless faced discrimination as a Muslim woman, which proved a barrier to employment as a teacher.

Having given up on a teaching career, Edang stayed at home looking after her family. At home, she released her frustrations on her family.

After participating in training from our partners SPI and UFS, Edang found a deeper faith in Allah that she says has 'cleansed her mind and spirit'. She felt more patient with her children and enjoyed tutoring them at home. She also took on a role as community leader and began offering education to help empower other women.

Edang now leads the women in the community to discuss their issues and concerns and find ways to respond. One example was a community action for registration of her neighbours, especially children and those from the Samal ethnic tribe, so that they can better access public services. Edang is now able to engage with other local leaders and government officials.

She regularly attends interfaith meetings and engages in community meetings and actions. Moreover, despite the diversity of residents in terms of religion and ethnicity in her community, she reports there is now greater community unity.

In this work, understanding of the intersecting issues faced by Muslim women, and the emphasis on supporting Muslim women as leaders within their community, gradually developed. This has been a big step-change – traditionally in these communities leadership is associated with religion and is exclusively male.

This work was not without its challenges. In this case, change at the community level in terms of women's empowerment and influence over decision making did not, as expected, simultaneously bring about change in women's status within families and households. Separate interventions were needed to engage men and address women's subordination within the family, highlighting how programmatic assumptions must be tested against the experience of marginalised individuals.

## **Nepal: inclusion and accountability in humanitarian response in Nepal**

Our work to develop more inclusive long-term development programmes is providing a basis for ensuring inclusion in humanitarian relief efforts.

When disaster strikes, women and girls tend to be disproportionately affected, particularly if they belong to socially marginalised groups such as Dalits.<sup>42</sup> For example, they may be more exposed to hazards, because they live in more marginal areas or their homes are of poor quality, or be more vulnerable because they are poor, have young children or elderly relatives to care for, or because they lack protection. Furthermore, in the context of humanitarian response to disasters, social hierarchies can be important in determining access to assistance, information and resources, unless responding agencies actively prevent this.

National disaster management plans are not always tailored to the needs of women and vulnerable groups,<sup>43</sup> nor do they necessarily provide for their meaningful participation in decision making, something that was explicitly recognised as an issue in the response to the earthquakes that struck Nepal in 2015,<sup>44</sup> and which is a barrier to inclusive accountability in aid.

NGOs can play an important role in enabling participation of the most marginalised groups and ensuring responses are shaped by a knowledge of who is in greatest need, what their specific needs are, and any identity-based issues. NGOs also need to make special efforts to be accountable to those groups in their delivery of humanitarian aid, particularly where identity-based issues mean certain groups are bypassed in aid delivery or lack access to information about available assistance, as was reportedly the case after the Nepal earthquakes.<sup>45</sup>

Christian Aid has been developing its approaches and tools for humanitarian needs assessment to better understand power dynamics, identify needs and gather disaggregated data. We have also made commitments to empowering and building the capacities

When disaster strikes, the most vulnerable groups tend to be disproportionately affected. NGO responses need to be shaped by knowledge of who they are, and their specific needs and identity-based issues. NGOs need to be accountable to those people.

of local NGOs to respond to emergencies, and to promote more accountability and inclusion in the humanitarian agenda.<sup>46</sup>

This is important, not only for emergency responses, but also to ensure more inclusive mechanisms to enable women and marginalised groups cope better with future shocks and stresses. In a recent participatory review of humanitarian interventions, a lack of independence or power alongside societal inequalities were identified by many respondents as a source of vulnerability and a barrier to resilience.

Actions identified to address this included enabling communities (and particularly women) to co-run or be actively involved in responses, linking local actors to government agencies and implementing organisations, and addressing the root causes of vulnerability, including powerlessness, by linking relief efforts to interventions for long-term resilience. There is evidence that these approaches have helped to shift power dynamics among disaster-affected communities, helping them to 'build back stronger'. Specifically, power mapping and advocacy to challenge inequalities is recommended.<sup>47</sup>

**Below:** Following the Nepal earthquakes, Narayani Shiwakoti Khadka received support from Christian Aid's partner Community Environment, Education and Public Awareness Association for Rural Development. She is a widow and had been dependent on farm labouring work for income, but a cash grant helped her establish a small business rearing chickens.

'Things might have been different if my husband was still alive,' Narayani says. 'I feel that the support from Christian Aid is a big hope for me to dream bigger and start something as there are very few people who really come to help me as I am a widow.'



## Inclusion and accountability in Nepal earthquake response

Christian Aid's earlier experience of working with Dalit groups and communities in Nepal to promote their human rights and inclusion provided a basis for incorporating inclusion approaches in our response to the 2015 earthquakes.

The Janajati (indigenous people) were particularly hard hit by the 2015 earthquakes because their homelands are hilly and cut off, and their livelihood options are very limited. Dalits and indigenous people also suffered disproportionately from damage to their homes. These groups, as well as many women, were excluded from most of the government assistance (especially shelter grants) because in order to receive this, they need land titles.

Christian Aid's response aimed to identify and target those in most urgent need and ensure accountability to aid recipients.

### Actions to overcome power inequalities

- We worked with local partners to target households who were very poor, displaced or homeless or who were socially marginalised. Households that included vulnerable members, such as people living with a disability, single women and woman-headed households were prioritised.
- We worked with community-based organisations, village and district level authorities, national networks and the Nepal Centre for Disaster Management to verify and respond to needs assessments, cross-check data to ensure no households were left out and to call for appropriate responses that addressed the pre-existing vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups, including alternatives to assessing entitlements based on land ownership.
- We created opportunities for women from socially marginalised groups to negotiate access to services and livelihood support, and to take part in groups with women from other caste groups, for joint action, which helped address their social marginalisation and strengthened solidarity.

### Actions for inclusive accountability

- Christian Aid staff provided technical assistance, through an accompanier model, to local partners to ensure quality standards in aid delivery and accountability to affected populations. This helped ensure that the globally agreed standards to which Christian Aid adheres are adopted by partners.
- We combined innovative and more conventional approaches to improve opportunities for the most marginalised people to access information, provide feedback or complain about the aid response or engage in consultations. These included gathering digital data to report on cases of exclusion in the recovery, and a 'Truth Truck' mobile studio that toured remote terrain to ask local people to step inside and tell the camera what they really thought.

**To ensure dignity and 'do no harm'**, our response actions adhered to key humanitarian principles such as impartiality and cultural sensitivity and incorporated specific actions to support women's participation and influence.

### Lessons and challenges

- Face-to-face engagement such as focus groups proved more popular means to give feedback and more effective than paper-based methods such as surveys and suggestion boxes.
- Shelter materials and cash transfers were most popular in the immediate aftermath. Some items distributed, such as washing powder, were not needed or their purpose not understood. While engagement with stakeholders at multiple levels was important, at local level word of mouth proved an important means of identifying and locating the most vulnerable households.
- Participation of affected people in decision making and in collective action for delivery of the response is critical.

## An interfaith approach to marginalisation of Muslim women in the Philippines

SPI and UFS work in Pagadian City, Mindanao to empower Muslim women as leaders in community development, to address economic poverty and powerlessness. Their approach understands identity as a source of strength, rather than of vulnerability.

Mindanao is home to the 6% of the Philippines' population who practise Islam. Most belong to indigenous tribes that have converted to Islam. Discrimination against them has roots in colonial violence and more recent organised migration to Mindanao of Christians from other parts of the country.

Mindanao has seen longstanding conflict between government forces and Muslim separatist movements, as well as conflict between tribes and clans, which has defied attempts at forging a lasting peace and perpetuated identity-based tensions.

Almost half of Pagadian's population live below the poverty threshold. Families displaced by conflict have flocked there for refuge, settling informally, often in small and overcrowded homes near the coast, which lack essential services and are very vulnerable to disasters.

Filipino Muslims are traditionally associated with more liberal Islamic traditions, but the influence of more fundamentalist thinking is now being felt.<sup>41</sup> Many religious leaders emphasise personal piety over works for justice and development as a dimension of faith. This has contributed to a lack of engagement with the wider community and institutions, compounding social marginalisation of Muslim communities. Muslim women face the intersecting issues of conservative gender norms influenced by both Islamic and tribal traditions.

The entry points for reaching out and addressing the intersecting inequalities of Muslim women in Pagadian emerged through engagement with Muslim traditional leaders in interfaith cooperation and actions for justice, rights, peace and development.

### Approaches to 'do-no-harm'

The project was developed gradually and with sensitivity to the potential to exacerbate tensions. Intra-faith reflections were as important as inter-faith outreach, particularly on issues such as attitudes to other faiths and communities, and towards women within communities.

### Challenging power imbalances

- Interfaith dialogue opened space for Muslims and indigenous peoples to work with local government, military, police and media, giving them a political voice and enabling their acceptance by the dominant Catholic society.
- Promoting greater recognition across communities of the marginalisation of Muslim women and promoting women's roles as organisers and leaders within communities.

### Approaches to meaningful access and participation

- Participatory action research to identify and collectively address issues such as land and housing tenure, essential services, disaster risk reduction, literacy and child nutrition.
- Building on practical interventions at community level, strategic advocacy at government level for changes.

### Challenges and lessons learned

- There was an assumption that as women developed as leaders and learned about their rights, their status in the family would be indirectly changed. In fact, a need for more attention to family relationships was identified and subsequently incorporated into the project.
- Trust in women's leadership at community level took time and had to be built with involvement of traditional male leaders who needed to be open to the possibilities and competencies of women as leaders.
- Interfaith acceptance also took time because of entrenched mistrust and personal losses associated with the conflict. A transformation of faith institutions and personal attitudes was needed.
- Women in the community belong to different tribal groups. There is often conflict and discrimination between these groups, adding an additional layer of complexity to the identity-based issues they face.



## 4. Lessons learned and ways forward

Addressing intersecting inequalities takes time, in-depth analysis, community-based approaches and the involvement of multiple stakeholders. In this, we have found adaptive and flexible approaches to programming important.

Christian Aid is committed to developing this area of work, and in this we learn most from the individuals and communities affected, and their organisations. We cannot speak for them, but we can enable them to claim their human rights and make their voices heard.

### Tools and approaches

Our teams in South Asia have developed two resources (see box, right) for supporting inclusion in programming and working with intersecting issues, which can be adapted to other contexts.

Some questions to support reflection on intersectionality are suggested below. These can be adapted for use in community settings and for different contexts, but are by no means definitive:

- In your programme geography – in a village/community – who holds power? Who are the powerless and the most vulnerable? What are their social identities? Within these groups- who is most vulnerable to violence? How are the different groups affected by violence?
- Among the poorest, what identities intersect and become the cause for multiple burdens for those identified social groups? What are the identity-related barriers to accessing their human rights and services meant for them?
- If your programmes are to address these issues, what strategies would you consider for addressing their practical and strategic needs?
- How would you address patriarchy and other social identities in designing a programme?
- In what ways can civil society at large address both the power inequalities between different social groups and the power of gender in policies and programmes?
- How can organisations define and review social norms around identities, including crosscutting identities?
- Does your programme give added emphasis on enhancing women's leadership among marginalised social groups?
- How can programmes work with powerful actors to help them to realise that discriminatory practices and power inequalities are self-destructive and harmful for social and economic development?

#### Key resources

- *Leaving no one behind: Social inclusion programming in South Asia*, Jayshree P Mangubhai, Belinda Bennet, Manisha Majumdar, Change Alliance, 2016, [www.changealliance.in/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CAPL-Knowledge-Product-1-Social-Inclusion.pdf](http://www.changealliance.in/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CAPL-Knowledge-Product-1-Social-Inclusion.pdf)
- *Reimagining Identities: Addressing Intersectionality in Development Programming*, Manisha Majumdar, Belinda Bennet, Jayshree P Mangubhai, Change Alliance, 2016, [www.changealliance.in/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Intersectionality.pdf](http://www.changealliance.in/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Intersectionality.pdf)

## Recommendations

Based on the content of this report, we suggest 10 key areas for action by development practitioners and governments.

- 1. Build knowledge, transform mindsets and shift social norms.** Drive an agenda that addresses beliefs and assumptions on gender and identity. Promote understanding of intersecting forms of discrimination and their compounded and specific negative impact on women and girls. Engage women and men of all ages, and people in positions of responsibility in efforts towards inclusion, equality and non-discrimination.
- 2. Incorporate analysis of gender, identity-based inequalities and power and conflict sensitivity at all points of development programme cycles.** Use participatory methods as far as possible and examine intra-group as well as inter-group inequalities as factors in oppression and violence. Put practical and strategic steps to address the specific needs of marginalised social groups at the heart of programme design. Test assumptions against the experiences of individuals and groups facing multiple and intersecting inequalities at different points in their lives, and adapt programme design accordingly.
- 3. Promote inclusion and participation of marginalised women, and address root causes of their vulnerability in development, humanitarian and peace building efforts.** Enable women from marginalised communities to understand their rights and claim entitlements, and to co-run or be actively involved in responses, linking them to government agencies and implementing organisations. Incorporate measures for addressing root causes of vulnerability, including gender inequality and powerlessness in humanitarian responses. Promote the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).<sup>48</sup>
- 4. Develop national plans, policies and legislation to better address intersecting issues faced by women and marginalised groups.** For example, ensure that women in socially excluded groups are targeted in gender-responsive budgeting and in national programmes for social protection, training, employment, health and education. Development plans should pay specific attention to identified disadvantaged groups, with adequate funds allocated in proportion to their population. Tax and fiscal policies should raise sufficient revenues for these purposes and redistribute wealth.
- 5. Gather disaggregated data to make visible context-specific axes of inequality related to gender, identity and power.** Governments should gather data that reflect national diversity and enable measurement of progress of marginalised women and men against key indicators. Ideally, data should highlight the consequences of multiple forms of discrimination. Civil society organisations can contribute by addressing data gaps or, in specific national contexts, promoting appropriate indicators to help measure the progress of marginalised groups towards development goals.<sup>49</sup>

- 6. Collaborate to share expertise and promote multi-sectoral approaches.** No single agency has the capacity to address all the issues. Collaborations between organisations with different specialisms and between different government ministries should be developed and supported. The specific issues faced by women who are refugees, displaced or vulnerable migrants can also better be addressed through cooperation between agencies in places of origin and destination.
- 7. Promote civil society participation to ensure SDGs are delivered for all.** Mechanisms for accountability on sustainable development should ensure participation of excluded groups, especially the women among them. Collaboration between civil society at national, regional levels and global levels can influence governments to commit to meaningful participation of a representative spectrum of civil society and human rights organisation in delivery and monitoring of the SDGs.
- 8. Invest in leadership and capacity building for human rights-claiming.** Women's rights organisations and women's leadership in organisations of excluded groups should be supported to engage authorities and ensure accountability and implementation of responsive policies and human rights frameworks. Their involvement in decision making should be institutionalised. Processes of empowerment should incorporate identity-building activities for visibility and recognition of socially marginalised groups to ensure their access to entitlements and interaction with wider populations.
- 9. Promote measures to prevent and address violence against marginalised women:** Measures such as gender sensitivity and non-discrimination training for police, public education campaigns, targeted provision of appropriate legal, medical and psychological assistance and compensation for survivors and affirmative action to increase participation of women from disadvantaged groups in decision making and bodies to make police, judiciary and legal professions more responsive to issues of gender and identity-based violence. Where protective policies and frameworks are in place, there is a need to monitor implementation and impact, address any gaps or shortcomings.
- 10. Encourage a transformative agenda in the private sector:** Business of all sizes have a role to play in ensuring equality and inclusion in their staffing and operations. Larger companies can develop corporate and social responsibility initiatives for inclusion and to help change attitudes and practices, such as the exploitation of marginalised women in supply chains, and to ensure their operations do not impact negatively on marginalised groups and women. Small and medium enterprises can also support inclusion and benefit sharing at community level.

## End notes

- <sup>1</sup> *Leave No One Behind – from goals to implementation*, Christian Aid, 2015, [christianaid.org.uk/images/leave-no-one-behind-report.pdf](http://christianaid.org.uk/images/leave-no-one-behind-report.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> Agenda 2030: The UK Government's approach to delivering the Global Goals for Sustainable Development - at home and around the world, DFID, 2017, [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/603500/Agenda-2030-Report4.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/603500/Agenda-2030-Report4.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color, K Crenshaw, *Stanford Law Review*, 1991, 43, pp1241-99.
- <sup>4</sup> *Gender and racial discrimination: Report of the Expert Group Meeting*, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2000.
- <sup>5</sup> *Gender, Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, Fareda Banda and Christine Chinkin, Minority Rights Group, 2004.
- <sup>6</sup> *Strengthening social justice to address intersecting inequalities post-2015*, Veronica Paz Arauco, Haris Gazdar, Paula Hevia-Pacheco, et al, 2014, [www.odi.org/publications/8909-strengthening-social-justice-address-intersecting-inequalities](http://www.odi.org/publications/8909-strengthening-social-justice-address-intersecting-inequalities)
- <sup>7</sup> *Partnership for Change*, Christian Aid, 2012, [christianaid.org.uk/images/partnership-for-change-summary.pdf](http://christianaid.org.uk/images/partnership-for-change-summary.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> *Gender Justice for All*, Christian Aid.
- <sup>9</sup> *Christian Aid and the 'Leave No One Behind' agenda*, Christian Aid, 2017, [http://programme.christianaid.org.uk/programme-policy-practice/sites/default/files/2017-02/Leave no one behind report.pdf](http://programme.christianaid.org.uk/programme-policy-practice/sites/default/files/2017-02/Leave%20no%20one%20behind%20report.pdf)
- <sup>10</sup> *Tackling Violence, Building Peace Global Strategy*, Christian Aid, 2016, [christianaid.ie/Images/TVBP\\_REPORT\\_tcm19-89720.pdf](http://christianaid.ie/Images/TVBP_REPORT_tcm19-89720.pdf)
- <sup>11</sup> See note 4, UN meeting.
- <sup>12</sup> On Shrinking Space, an Issue Briefing, TNI, 2017.
- <sup>13</sup> Statement by Ms. Dubravka šimonović, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences at the 70th session of the General Assembly, UN, 12 October 2015, [www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16631&LangID=E#sthash.bGpG0KBr.thAppORA.dpuf](http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16631&LangID=E#sthash.bGpG0KBr.thAppORA.dpuf)
- <sup>14</sup> *The Dynamics of Horizontal Inequalities*, Frances Stewart, UNDP, 2016, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/stewart\\_layout.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/stewart_layout.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> See UN Commission on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Draft Guidelines on addressing discrimination by work and descent.
- <sup>16</sup> The term Dalit means oppressed, and is used by a growing social movement of people who are fighting to overcome the discrimination and violence that prevents them enjoying equal social, economic and political rights.
- <sup>17</sup> *The enslavement of Dalit and Indigenous Communities in India, Nepal and Pakistan through debt bondage*, Anti-Slavery International, 2001.
- <sup>18</sup> *Urban Labour Market Discrimination*, S Thorat, P Attewell, FF Rizvi, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2009, [www.dalitstudies.org.in/uploads/publication/1473142555.pdf](http://www.dalitstudies.org.in/uploads/publication/1473142555.pdf)
- <sup>19</sup> *The Indigenous World 2017*, International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2017, [www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/0760\\_THE\\_INDIGENOUS\\_ORLD\\_2017\\_eb.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0760_THE_INDIGENOUS_ORLD_2017_eb.pdf)
- <sup>20</sup> See for example: Religious Persecution On the Rise: Minorities Under Threat in the Middle East, D Bandow, *Huffington Post*, 25 July 2015, [www.huffingtonpost.com/doug-bandow/religious-persecution-on\\_b\\_7870614.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/doug-bandow/religious-persecution-on_b_7870614.html)
- <sup>21</sup> *The P20 Initiative: Baseline report*, Development Initiatives, 2017, <http://devinit.org/post/p20-initiative-data-to-leave-no-one-behind/>
- <sup>22</sup> How India's Dalit women are being empowered to fight endemic sexual violence, R Gupta, *New Statesman*, 16 December 2014, [www.newstatesman.com/world-affairs/2014/12/how-india-s-dalit-women-are-being-empowered-fight-endemic-sexual-violence](http://www.newstatesman.com/world-affairs/2014/12/how-india-s-dalit-women-are-being-empowered-fight-endemic-sexual-violence)
- <sup>23</sup> For detailed discussion and data on how policies and practices fall short in meeting UN standards see: Benchmarking the Draft UN Principles and Guidelines on the Elimination of (Caste) Discrimination Based on Work and Descent: Bangladesh, India and Nepal reports, 2014, <http://asiadalitrightsforum.org/images/imageevent/1956137726india.pdf>, <http://asiadalitrightsforum.org/images/imageevent/311337486bangladesh.pdf> and <http://asiadalitrightsforum.org/images/imageevent/1819514436nepal.pdf>
- <sup>24</sup> *Anti-discrimination policies and programmes in low-and middle-income countries: Experiences in political participation, education and labour markets*, Chronic Poverty Advisory Network, p42.
- <sup>25</sup> *Delivering for women and girls: the role of gender responsive budgeting*, Christian Aid, 2016, <http://programme.christianaid.org.uk/programme-policy-practice/sites/default/files/2017-05/Gender-responsive-budgeting-study-lessons-J5352-Apr2016.pdf>
- <sup>26</sup> See for example: Indian feminism excludes Dalit women, but the tide is turning, Divyani Rattanpal, *The Quint*, 6 August 2015, [www.thequint.com/india/2015/08/06/dalit-women-are-talking-about-their-identity](http://www.thequint.com/india/2015/08/06/dalit-women-are-talking-about-their-identity)
- <sup>27</sup> *Leaving no one behind: Social inclusion programming in South Asia*, Change Alliance, 2016.
- <sup>28</sup> *Practices of Change: addressing equity and inclusion for Dalits in South Asia*, Swadhikar, Nagarik Uddyog, Samata Foundation and Christian Aid, 2015.
- <sup>29</sup> *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Bangladesh*, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 2016.
- <sup>30</sup> Gender equality, World Bank, 2017, <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/sdcatlas/SDG-05-gender-equality.html>
- <sup>31</sup> *Under Threat: the challenges facing religious minorities in Bangladesh*, MRG, 2017.
- <sup>32</sup> *Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) for Dalits in Bangladesh: Challenges and Ways Forward*, Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement, 2015, [www.bdern.org/sites/default/files/Equity%20Watch-WASHbd.pdf](http://www.bdern.org/sites/default/files/Equity%20Watch-WASHbd.pdf)
- <sup>33</sup> National Census of India 2011.
- <sup>34</sup> List of recognised castes in Uttar Pradesh, [www.socialjustice.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/Scan-0019.jpg](http://www.socialjustice.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/Scan-0019.jpg)
- <sup>35</sup> *Rural Non-Farm Employment of the Scheduled Castes – A Comparative Study*, Sukhadeo Thorat and Nidhi Sadana Sabharwal, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2006.
- <sup>36</sup> Indian National Crime Records Bureau data.
- <sup>37</sup> *Dalit Human Rights in South Asia, Regional Synthesis Report*, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2015.
- <sup>38</sup> See note 19, *The Indigenous World*, p381.
- <sup>39</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar to the HRC 34th Session March 2017.
- <sup>40</sup> *Strengthening Power from Below: stories of resilience from the Philippines*, Christian Aid, 2015.
- <sup>41</sup> See for example ISIS Touches Down in the Philippines, Tony Cartalucci, *New Eastern Outlook*, 25 May 2017, <https://journal-neo.org/2017/05/28/isis-touches-down-in-the-philippines/>
- <sup>42</sup> *Equality in Aid: Addressing Caste Discrimination in Humanitarian Response*, International Dalit Solidarity Network, 2013.
- <sup>43</sup> India's plan to tackle disasters neglects women, disabled and lower castes: aid workers, Nita Bhalla, *Reuters*, 5 June 2016, <http://in.reuters.com/article/india-national-disaster-plan-idINKCNOYU1BR>
- <sup>44</sup> Did the Humanitarian Response to the Nepal Earthquake Ensure No-one was Left Behind? A case study of the experience of marginalised groups in humanitarian action, Save the Children, 2016.
- <sup>45</sup> *Opportunity Knocks: Realising the potential of partnerships in the Nepal earthquake response*, ActionAid, CAFOD, CARE, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund, 2016.
- <sup>46</sup> See [www.charter4change.org](http://www.charter4change.org), [www.christianaid.org.uk/programme-policy-practice/what-we-do/gender-power-and-inclusion](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/programme-policy-practice/what-we-do/gender-power-and-inclusion) and [www.helpage.org/inclusion-charter](http://www.helpage.org/inclusion-charter)
- <sup>47</sup> *START DEPP: Linking Preparedness Response and Resilience in Emergency Contexts' Humanitarian Strand Final Report*, LPRR Consortium, 2016
- <sup>48</sup> *Community Resilience Building in Humanitarian Response; Insights from Crisis Survivors and First Responders*, 2017.
- <sup>48</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction

and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. See [www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/)

<sup>49</sup> *Monitoring gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Opportunities and challenges*, UN Women, 2015.







England and Wales registered charity number. 1105851 Scotland charity number. SC039150 UK company number. 5171525 Registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC101631 Company number NI059154 Republic of Ireland Charity Commission number 20014162 Company number 426928. The Christian Aid name and logo are trademarks of Christian Aid © Christian Aid