

UNDERSTANDING RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISMS FOR ACTIVISTS

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rape
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hatred
anti-choice
regressive
persecution
anti-women
marginalization
absolutist
moral superiority
social control
dehumanizing

stifle
harm
fear

UNDERSTANDING **RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISMS** FOR ACTIVISTS

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The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is an international feminist, membership organization committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's human rights. AWID's mission is to strengthen the voice, impact, and influence of women's rights advocates, organizations, and movements internationally to effectively advance the rights of women.

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UNDERSTANDING
**FUNDAMENTAL RELIGIOUS
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OTHER AWID PUBLICATIONS

Religion, Culture and Tradition: Strengthening Efforts to Eradicate Violence against Women (2013);

Not as Simple as ABC: Christian Fundamentalisms and HIV and AIDS Responses in Africa (2012);

Feminists on the Frontline: Case Studies of Resisting and Challenging Fundamentalisms (2010);

Shared Insights: Women's Rights Activists Define Religious Fundamentalisms (2008);

Religious Fundamentalisms on the Rise: A Case for Action (2008); and

Exposed!: Ten Myths about Religious Fundamentalisms (2008).

**Note that throughout this publication all data drawn from AWID's other publications are not cited. Only in cases where information is drawn from sources not authored by AWID or in partnership with AWID are citations included.*

For any feedback, suggestions or questions relating to this publication, please contact cf@awid.org.

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This resource manual is an initiative of AWID, the Association for Women's Rights in Development. It is primarily based on the AWID publication, *Towards a Future without Fundamentalisms: Analyzing Religious Fundamentalist Strategies and Feminist Responses* by Cassandra Balchin, as well as other AWID publications on religious fundamentalisms and women's rights (see box on the previous page). All of AWID's research in this publication is based on the insights and experiences of hundreds of women's rights activists and allies who participated in a detailed global survey conducted by AWID (drawing more than 1,600 responses in Arabic, English, French and Spanish and covering more than 100 countries); over 80 in-depth interviews with individual activists from 2007-2012; 19 case studies on feminist strategies to counter religious fundamentalisms; and numerous in-person consultations both at AWID convenings and in spaces where AWID presented aspects of the research.

Parts of this manual also draw on material from *Los Fundamentalismos en Movimiento*, a manual produced by Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir (CDD, Catholics for the Right to Decide) México in collaboration with CDD Argentina, authored by José Manuel Morán Faúndes and María Angélica Peñas Defago and edited by Juan Marco Vaggione, also based on the AWID publication cited above and adapted in Spanish for use in Latin America.

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Manager, Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms

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PREFACE

GETTING STARTED

Who is this manual for?

This manual is designed for activists, networks and organizations confronting religious fundamentalist opposition to their rights-based work. Your work may focus on women's rights, LGBTQI rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, equality in family laws or citizenship rights, violence against women, land rights, sex workers' rights or other fields of activism, or may include practitioners in the fields of international development or humanitarian aid, among other areas of specialization.

Addressing the growth of religious fundamentalisms at regional and global levels requires a deeper understanding of religious fundamentalisms: what they are, what impacts they have, and how fundamentalist movements work and grow. This deeper understanding can help strengthen feminist and other rights-based activism to confront and challenge fundamentalist attacks on human rights.

AWID has prepared this manual based on the experiences and analysis of hundreds of women's rights activists in diverse regions of the world, with the aim of offering an accessible resource to inform and support advocacy, strategies and dialogue on the issue of religious fundamentalisms. The manual is divided into four chapters that build on each other, but these can also be used separately if appropriate.

CHAPTER 1 describes the main shared characteristics of religious fundamentalisms as defined by women's rights activists, and provides a brief historical perspective, as well as reflections and challenges regarding the term.

CHAPTER 2 provides an outline of some of the main sociocultural, economic and political factors that may enable the rise of religious fundamentalisms.

CHAPTER 3 focuses on some key religious fundamentalist strategies, including their arguments and messaging.

CHAPTER 4 identifies some of the strategies that feminist and other rights-based activists and movements are using to resist religious fundamentalisms.

CHAPTER 5 suggests a series of group activities for use in workshops, and ends with a selection of web links and video resources relating to religious fundamentalisms and rights-base efforts to challenge them.

This manual is intended to be a living document that is adapted and updated. Religious fundamentalisms are a complex and evolving phenomenon. This means that there are always new and diverse issues arising with respect to religious fundamentalisms and rights. There are also many ways in which fundamentalisms work, grow and adapt; these are also the subject of much debate and discussion and cannot be covered completely within this brief manual.

Moreover, while AWID's research shows that religious fundamentalisms have many characteristics and aims in common, the ways that fundamentalist movements work and grow and the ways they are being challenged by rights-based movements also have specifically local characteristics. Throughout this manual, you will find diverse examples of fundamentalist and rights-based strategies, and you will probably think of many more examples from your own experiences and observations as you read through the publication. The hope is that this manual will serve as a useful resource for you to engage in this important issue and further your understandings and strategies.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT ARE RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISMS?



A Brief History: Where does the term “religious fundamentalism” come from?

The term “fundamentalism” has its origins in the early 20th century in the United States, after the publication in 1910 of a series of books written by Protestant theologians called “The Fundamentals”. These texts promote a faith based on a literal reading of the scriptures that leaves no room for questioning or challenging their content. They reject any effort to interpret the Bible based on its historical and cultural contexts. The idea of “fundamentalism” became more well-known due to a famous trial in the U.S. state of Tennessee in 1925. In the case, high school teacher John Scopes was tried for teaching Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution to his students, contrary to the theory of divine creation as taught in the Bible.

Although originally linked with U.S. Protestants who called themselves “fundamentalists” in the early 20th century, other movements arose around the world that shared similar characteristics of a belief in literalism and an infallible reading of religion. Some examples are: the Hindu *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* founded in India in 1925, the Jewish *World Agudath Israel* in Poland in 1912, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928, and the Catholic *Opus Dei* in Spain in 1928. In the 1940s, there followed a second explosion of fundamentalist organizations, among them the *Legionarios de Cristo* founded in Mexico in 1941 and *Jamaat-e-Islami* established the same year in India.

Many of these groups still exist today, and from the last quarter of the 20th century, many new religious fundamentalist groups have emerged. Groups referred to as religious fundamentalists may not call themselves fundamentalist, however. Furthermore, there are important questions to consider regarding terminology, some of which are raised later in this section.

Religious fundamentalisms exist across regions and religions

Religious fundamentalisms can be found across different regions and in a wide range of faiths, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, and more. For example: in contemporary debates in the United States, the term “religious fundamentalism” is often applied to certain Muslim or Christian groups; in Latin America it is frequently used for the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and groups related to it, as well as for some conservative Protestant and evangelical churches that are growing across many parts of the region; in Sub-Saharan Africa, the dominant fundamentalist groups generally come from Protestant, evangelical and charismatic Christian groups as well as Muslim ones; in the Middle East and North Africa, the main fundamentalist groups come from Muslim and Jewish traditions; in South Asia, major fundamentalist strains arise from the Hindu and Muslim faiths, though there is great religious diversity and many religious minorities in the region. Today, the term “religious fundamentalism” covers a wide range of religious expressions, serving as a kind of umbrella term for many fundamentalist strains from across the world’s regions and religions.

Religious fundamentalisms are *not* the same as religion

It is important not to confuse religion with religious fundamentalisms. In all religions and cultures, there is always a range of different interpretations; a plurality of ideas, practices and beliefs; and the possibility of transformation, evolution and change. Religion has been a source of enormous social and political inspiration for progressive and rights-affirming movements, working on the promotion of economic and civil rights, advocating against the death penalty, peace movements, and feminist efforts to reform laws and practices. Some examples can be found in the Catholic *liberation theology* movement¹, or among Muslim or Jewish feminist theologians, scholars and activists such as those from Sisters in Islam based in Malaysia, or the Israeli organization Women of the Wall.

Some organizations have specifically been created to promote civil religious dissent and provide alternative views to those held by mainstream and fundamentalist followers of the same faith. The Musawah global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim



family promotes equal rights using Islamic teachings, universal human rights, national constitutional guarantees of equality, and the realities of people's lives. For example, a number of Muslim organizations have served or continue to serve the goal of promoting the rights of LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex) people in Islam. Al-Fatiha in the U.S. was one example, The Inner Circle in South Africa and Imaan in the U.K. are others. CEGLA–Cristianas y Cristianos GLTB de Argentina (LGBT Christians of Argentina) advocates within the Christian Evangelical faith and the Metropolitan Community Churches around the world provide LGBT-affirming spaces from a Christian ecumenical perspective. Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir and Catholics for Choice, networks that advocate for sexual and reproductive rights and question the patriarchal positions of the Vatican hierarchy, are active in Latin America, the USA, and Europe.²

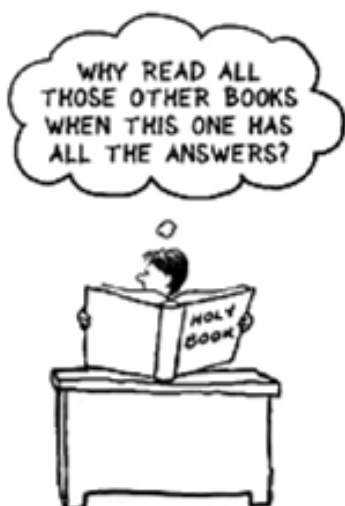
Belonging to a certain religion does not mean agreeing fully with the positions or agendas of religious fundamentalist strains of that religion, or even agreeing with most religious leaders of that same faith. Religious fundamentalisms should not be understood as essential to certain religions or the essence of all religions, but as an ideological position of some institutions and individuals identifying with any given religion. It is important to remember that anti-rights movements exist within all religions, in every region of the world, and are just one tendency within these religions. In many ways they in fact contradict the fundamental spirit and essence of many faiths and religions, which is love, compassion, inner reflection, and to do right by others.

What are the main characteristics of religious fundamentalisms?

There is no *typical* fundamentalist. Fundamentalists may operate locally or globally, through religious or secular organizations, as individuals or through institutions. It is also a term that is used in a variety of ways, hence making it difficult to agree on a single definition. However, there are some common characteristics that help to identify fundamentalist actors or ideas, as understood by women's rights activists in AWID's research. Below are six characteristics AWID has identified, based on the most common terms and features that survey respondents provided:

1. Absolutist, intolerant and coercive

Religious fundamentalists are absolutist in their ideas, believing that there is only one way to see and relate to the world. Absolutist positions are treated as objective truths, without any critical questioning or room for challenge or



debate since they draw on a singular *Truth* believed to be divinely sanctioned through scriptures and/or by religious authorities. This monopoly over *the Truth*, claimed by religious fundamentalists, makes dialogue with such groups difficult and sometimes even impossible. They tend to be dogmatic and intolerant of diversity and plurality (both within their own religion, as well as toward other religions or non-religious people). Moreover, religious fundamentalist forces often seek to impose their worldviews on others through laws, customary practices, or at times by intimidation and the use of violence.

2. Following a literal reading of scriptures or the will of a religious authority or hierarchy

Religious fundamentalists are often characterized by a vision based on a literal adherence to the sacred text (the Torah, Bible, Quran, etc.), or based on a religious authority or hierarchy (for example, the figure of the Pope in Catholicism, whose will is considered *infallible* within the Catholic hierarchy³). That is, the justification for fundamentalist ideas is based on a reading of the sacred text or the will of a religious authority that follows literal readings of the text and does not permit contextual interpretation.

3. Anti-women's rights and patriarchal

The control of women's bodies and sexuality is a key defining characteristic of fundamentalisms. Often, the pressure put on women's rights is the first warning sign that fundamentalisms are on the rise or taking hold in a significant way. Religious fundamentalists oppose advances in women's rights and greater autonomy for women, or any expression of sexuality that is not heterosexual, monogamous, and within the institution of marriage. (Legitimate sexuality even for married couples is limited to sex for the sole purpose of reproduction according to some fundamentalist views, for example, in some strains of Catholic or Christian fundamentalisms.) According to the logic of fundamentalisms, this order is designed by God and must be respected and maintained as the only morally correct way of ordering human relationships.

While religions can be patriarchal, fundamentalisms radicalize the defence of patriarchy and heteronormativity⁴, and in a sense normalize the inequalities that exist within these ways of structuring the world, giving them divine justification and so making them harder to challenge. Fundamentalisms make it a political goal not only to gain power as a pressure group and to impose their beliefs within particular communities, but also on society in general through legislation and public policy. In some instances, fundamentalist forces try to achieve this goal by becoming ruling

parties of the government (as seen recently in the post-Arab spring contexts across the Middle East and North Africa, namely in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya) or by establishing theocratic states such as Saudi Arabia or Iran.

WHAT RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISMS MEAN FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In the responses to an AWID online survey, women's rights activists from around the world gave more than 600 examples of the negative impacts that religious fundamentalisms have on rights. When these responses were grouped together in categories, the top five negative impacts were as follows:

1. Limiting health rights and reduced reproductive rights;
2. Less autonomy for women in general;
3. Increased violence against women;
4. Restrictions on sexual rights and freedoms; and
5. Less rights for women in the public sphere.

4. Anti-human rights and freedoms

Together with being anti-women's rights, some see religious fundamentalisms at their core as being anti-human rights and freedoms. This speaks not only to the tendency to repress women, but a range of other groups including ethnic, religious and sexual minorities since fundamentalisms are by nature exclusionary movements that try to narrow the space in which people live and function⁵. At times, fundamentalists may argue that international human rights standards are foreign or colonial or a western/northern imposition. On the other hand, while functioning in ways that deny or undermine human rights, fundamentalisms also use human rights discourses themselves. However, fundamentalist groups generally manipulate human rights concepts such as parental rights, the right to life, religious freedom, freedom of conscience or expression and more, in ways antithetical to the intention of human rights law to protect the rights of the weakest against those with more power. They may also present themselves as a persecuted minority in the interests of advancing revisionist readings of international human rights norms.

5. Adherence to a pure tradition

Religious fundamentalisms often emphasize *purity* or *authenticity* in religion, as well as emphasizing *culture* and *tradition*; all of which they seek to define in narrow ways, leaving no space for diversity, questioning or the

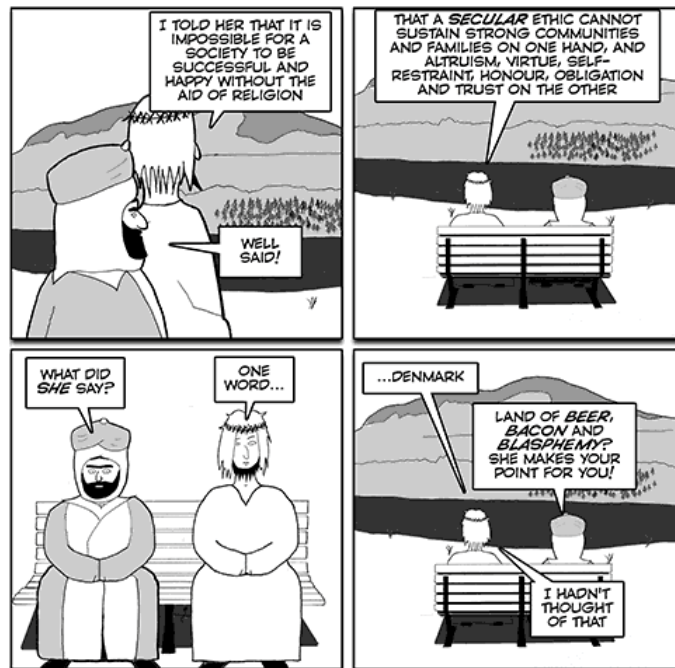
understanding that these are dynamic and evolving processes. Fundamentalist movements can be characterized, to some extent, by an *idealized* view of religion, culture, tradition, or nation that is threatened by the changes brought about by modernity, and an assumption that this idealized past was better. However, far from representing an ideal past, these ideas are often invented and exported across contexts, and these ideas are also often oppressive and unrepresentative of the aspirations, needs or interests of most people.

6. Religious fundamentalisms use religion to gain power

For many, the use of religion to gain power is the defining characteristic of religious fundamentalisms, whether that is power in the formal political sphere, or power that secures economic gain or influence in social and private spheres.

This connection to the political sphere varies depending on the context, for example, asserting indirect influence on lawmakers through parallel legal systems and informal or customary legal mechanisms, or by gaining direct state power. Also, not all fundamentalist groups engage in formal politics. Some in fact try to separate themselves as far from politics as possible, for example, the Mormon Fundamentalist Church of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) or Haredi communities in some parts of the USA or Israel. However, these groups still use religion to assert control and power within communities and over those around them. Some states, using their commitment to freedom of religion or using tradition as justification, may also exempt these groups from certain laws and grant them privileges such as lower taxes or tax exemptions, donations, exceptions from military service requirements, or other benefits.

It is important to note that the influence of religion in politics is not always fundamentalist. Religion has inspired many progressive political movements around the world, for example, the civil rights movement in the United States led by Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., or the liberation theology movement in Latin America. Therefore, simply defining religious fundamentalisms as political religion is not enough to highlight the anti-rights positioning of fundamentalist movements.

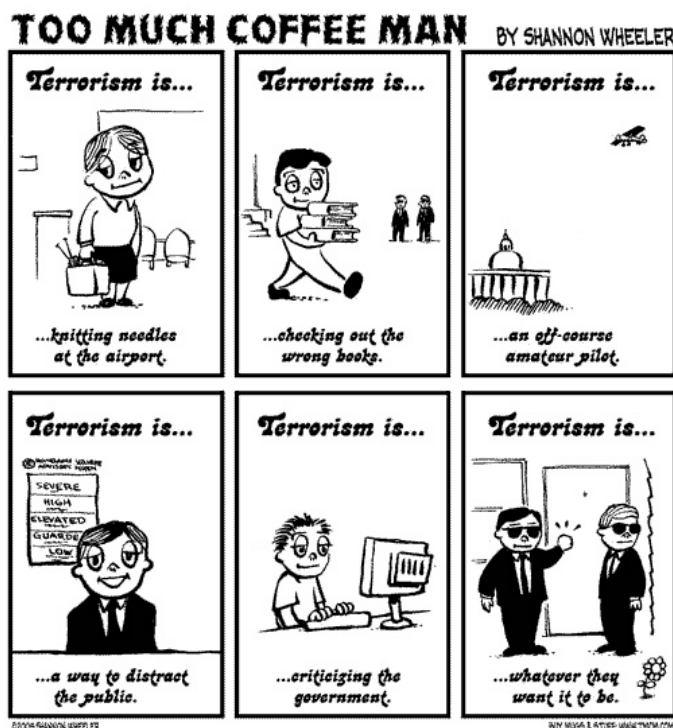


Challenges and considerations when using the term religious fundamentalisms

The term *fundamentalisms* is a contested one, and not all activists are comfortable with it. Some complications with the term have to do with the way it has been used to dehumanize, stereotype and target particular communities. This concern was heightened in the context of the so-called Global War on Terror, during which the targeting and racial profiling of Muslim populations grew in many contexts. Furthermore, for states, the concept of counter-terrorism and arguments about national security are convenient for targeting minorities or dissenters or justifying violations of the civil and political rights of their own citizens and of other people, particularly in nations labelled security threats.

Some activists express concern that the label of *fundamentalist* itself may dehumanize and ‘otherize’ people who hold such positions, and using the term may make dialogue and efforts to understand each other even more difficult.

Another concern is that the term is jargonistic or not clearly understood by everyone, nor is it relevant in all contexts. For some activists, it makes more sense and is more precise to use local terms common in their contexts (for example, the religious right, clerico-fascism, Hindutva or Hindu nationalism, Haredism, ultra-orthodox Judaism, Islamism or political Islam, and many more).



Other people, while agreeing on the need to refer to a common phenomenon, use alternative terms such as *extremisms*, *conservatism*, *integritism*, *regressive religious political forces*, *essentialism*, etc. However, AWID’s research made clear that fundamentalisms was a term that was commonly understood by activists and one that could easily be applied across a great diversity of religious and regional contexts, as well as in a global context. This feature has become particularly relevant since fundamentalist actors from different religious contexts have become increasingly active in international spaces (for example, United Nations conferences), building

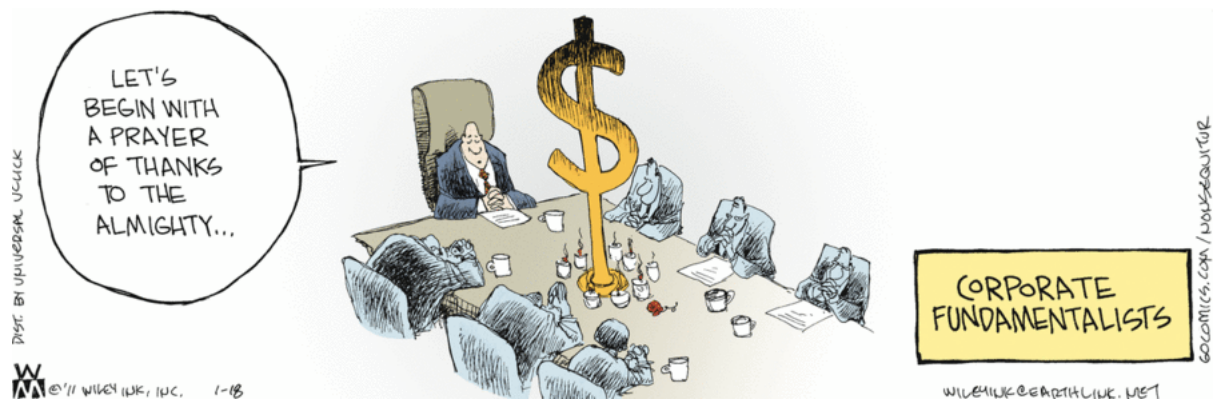
their own institutions and alliances to develop joint strategies and advance common positions.

Some ways of addressing the problems associated with the term religious fundamentalisms are provided below:

- In place of a single definition that aims to capture all expressions of religious fundamentalisms, conceptualize the term as one that captures similar features or characteristics which they all share (similar to what has been done in Marty E. Martin's research⁶ and applied in AWID's research as well). The task then is to identify what their common characteristics are and how they may block advances in women's, LGBTQI, and human rights more broadly.
- Use alternative local terms such as the Christian Right, ultra-orthodox Judaism, Islamism, etc., depending on what terms are most widely used and understood in the context.
- Apply the term religious fundamentalisms in a critical way, acknowledging it is contested, and with reference to some of the diverse religions where fundamentalisms are rising. This will avoid falling into the trap of stereotyping it as a term that applies only to one religion in particular. Also, try to be clear that the *fundamentals* that fundamentalists seek to defend are not necessarily shared by the entire religious community.
- Instead of focussing on the semantic definitions of fundamentalisms (that is, on what they *are*) focus on the pragmatic definitions of fundamentalisms (or, what they *do*). A pragmatic way of defining fundamentalisms would use alternative terms such as *anti-choice*, *anti-rights*, or *opposition* groups, in order to speak about religious groups whose agendas oppose the advancement of sexual and reproductive health rights or other aspects of human rights (that is, keep the focus on what impacts religious fundamentalisms have). This can also help to avoid otherizing *individuals or organizations* as fundamentalists and blocking possibilities for dialogue and engagement when such engagement may be strategic.

"I'm part of a movement of trying to delink it from Islamic fundamentalism, so for me what's been the most useful thing is to use the word "fundamentalisms" and say it applies as much to Christian fundamentalism in the United States and Hindu fundamentalism in India as to Muslim fundamentalism in Iran. That helps me show that the others are not better, particularly because the Hindu fundamentalists like nothing better than to argue that they are not fundamentalist, it's just these barbaric Muslims who are fundamentalists. [It can be used] to argue that they're all part of the same problem."

PRAGNA PATEL, United Kingdom



Different types of fundamentalism(s)

Even though the term *fundamentalism* has a religious origin, it is now used to refer to other phenomena beyond the sphere of religion. It is quite common to see the terms *economic*, *cultural* or *national fundamentalism*, which share some common features with religious fundamentalisms due to their high degree of absolutism, their opposition to pluralism, and the belief that they represent a singular and unquestionable truth.

Economic fundamentalism, for instance, may refer to the idea that the free market is a singular and superior system, through which the attempt to impose a global neoliberal order is justified. This fundamentalism is characterized by an unquestioning faith that the invisible hand of the market always provides the best results and that a minimum of state intervention and regulation of markets is ideal, regardless of the consequences this may have on the lives of individuals or the environment.

It is quite common for different forms of fundamentalisms to converge and cooperate, supporting each other in their agendas or ideologies. Thus, some may refer to *fundamentalisms* in the plural not only to show that there are many religions with fundamentalist tendencies, but also many different types of fundamentalisms.

Recap: Myths about Religious Fundamentalisms

Resisting and challenging religious fundamentalisms often requires you as activists to make visible and question certain popularly held ideas or myths about who and what these groups are and how they work. On the next page are some commonly-held myths about religious fundamentalisms, according to AWID's research, and some ways that you can counter and expose these myths.

ABOUT THE MYTH	CHALLENGING THE MYTH
<p>1 Fundamentalisms are about the fundamentals of religion</p> <p>Fundamentalists may claim they are only promoting the fundamental teachings of their religion. This myth gives them an aura of legitimacy and suggests that all <i>good</i> and <i>true</i> believers should follow the fundamentalist viewpoint. Therefore, those who resist religious fundamentalisms are not regarded as <i>true believers</i> and are accused of being anti-religion.</p> <p>This myth may also be held by many people who see little difference between religion and religious fundamentalisms.</p>	<p>Religious fundamentalisms are about power</p> <p>Central to the fundamentalist project is their struggle for economic, political, cultural and social power. Often conflicts that are more about resources are cloaked as religious, or the power of religion is used to oppress and control.</p> <p>Religious fundamentalisms are not the same as religion</p> <p>Being religious and being a religious fundamentalist are two different things. What distinguishes religious fundamentalists is extreme positions, combined with the belief that they are divinely mandated to impose on others what they hold to be <i>a singular Truth</i>. In fact, many rights activists who have strong religious identities take principled positions against religious fundamentalisms because they are inspired by what they see as core religious messages of justice, equality and peace.</p> <p>Religious fundamentalists do not represent the <i>true</i> religion</p> <p>Far from being the <i>true</i> representatives of their religions or beliefs, fundamentalists have distorted these faiths, and put forward views that are antithetical to core values of love and acceptance found across religions, in many instances even promoting violence, discrimination and hatred. Therefore, many have argued that religious fundamentalists are in reality <i>anti-religious</i>.</p>

ABOUT THE MYTH	CHALLENGING THE MYTH
<p>2 Religious fundamentalisms are only about politics</p> <p>For some, the central aspect of religious fundamentalisms is that religion is used to capture political power. But it is important to ask what kind of politics is being promoted by such a use of religion, and whether it aims to advance or restrict people's human rights. Since, for example, the liberation theology movement in Latin America also had political aims, defining religious fundamentalisms as "political religion" does not sufficiently highlight the rights-violating nature of them.</p> <p>We also need to recognize that fundamentalist aspirations often go far beyond the political sphere, envisioning a complete reordering of society. An overemphasis on the political nature of fundamentalisms could mean we overlook the place of religion in religious fundamentalisms, and other spheres that they are trying to influence or control.</p>	<p>Religious fundamentalists seek political as well as social control</p> <p>Fundamentalists go beyond the borders of politics, envisioning a complete reordering of society. When we see them as being more than just about politics, it becomes possible to develop responses to some of their successful social strategies. Some social strategies that fundamentalists often use include creating emotional communities and providing a sense of belonging, engaging in service delivery and charity.</p> <p>Religion is still central to religious fundamentalisms</p> <p>Although religious fundamentalisms are a political phenomenon, we need to recognize the central role that religion plays in mobilizing and securing power and maintaining control. This includes the use of religious symbols, religious texts and radicalized and patriarchal religious interpretations. Engaging with the central role of religion in fundamentalisms can help progressive forces to reclaim this space from fundamentalists. It can allow a deeper and more critical examination of the radicalization of the patriarchal aspects of religion within fundamentalisms and how to respond to this regressive trend.</p>

ABOUT THE MYTH	CHALLENGING THE MYTH
<p>3 Religious fundamentalisms should be treated like any other political force</p> <p>Some governments and multilateral agencies consider certain religious fundamentalist groups as being a normal part of the political process and democratic spaces. But when religious fundamentalist forces are accepted as ‘just another political force’ or when religion is used to gain power and legitimacy, the entire political space becomes more conservative.</p> <p>In this climate, activists fighting for human rights (whether they are women’s rights, LGBTQI rights, environmental rights, or others) can find themselves being criticized for not collaborating and working together with fundamentalist groups. Thus, progressive forces may lose legitimacy, and be discredited as <i>extremist, intolerant or marginal</i>.</p>	<p>Religious fundamentalists are not representative of their religious communities</p> <p>Even though religious fundamentalists position themselves as true and authentic representatives of their religious communities, the fact is that the radical and patriarchal version of religion that they support does not correspond with the plural nature and diverse aspirations of their faith communities.</p> <p>Religious fundamentalists claim to <i>speak on behalf of God</i></p> <p>Given the power and privilege religion still has, <i>speaking on behalf of God</i> can carry great influence and weight, and is very difficult to challenge. Religious fundamentalisms can be distinguished from other political forces because they use the social, economic, cultural and metaphysical power of religion in order to promote and naturalize inequalities and discrimination.</p> <p>Religious fundamentalists are against democracy and pluralism</p> <p>Although religious fundamentalist forces may appear to be democratic or may enter power through a democratic process, generally they are not open to dialogue or compromise. Rather, they tend to advocate for intolerant positions that deny or limit rights, imposing their positions and visions on everyone through undemocratic means (including the use of violence).</p>

ABOUT THE MYTH	CHALLENGING THE MYTH
<p>4 Religious fundamentalists are just backwards extremists</p> <p>Religious fundamentalisms are often considered the product of <i>archaic texts</i>, <i>traditional beliefs</i> or <i>ancient myths</i>. Many people think of modernity and religious fundamentalism as two completely opposite forces. This myth often transforms religious fundamentalists into a stereotype to be mocked and not taken seriously, rather than seeing them as a socio-political force that is sophisticated, flexible, and requires a strategic response.</p>	<p>Religious fundamentalisms are completely modern!</p> <p>All religious fundamentalisms share a critique of modernity. At the same time, they are highly selective about rejecting modernity since they are globalized forces that work internationally, that support neoliberal economic discourses, and that use technologies that are essential elements of the modern world. No matter how much they may refer to <i>tradition</i> or to a <i>glorious past</i>, religious fundamentalisms are very much a part of the modern world. Therefore, some suggest that religious fundamentalisms are against modernity (especially the idea of secularism and more progressive social and cultural ideas), but are in many instances not against modernization (the adoption of contemporary aspects of daily life, such as media, technology, etc.).</p>
<p>5 Religious fundamentalisms are only a problem in certain religions and regions of the world</p> <p>In some contexts, religious fundamentalisms are not seen as being part of the local landscape but rather something that exists somewhere else, in someone else's religion or community, or in some other far away context. For example, the Global War on Terror in particular has popularized the idea that religious fundamentalism refers to Muslim fundamentalism. The result is the demonization of one religion, and by extension, all followers of that religion labelled as fundamentalists. In the Latin American and Caribbean context, it is common to see the Catholic hierarchy as the only source of fundamentalist ideas. But these perceptions may ignore the growing influence of Evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic fundamentalisms.</p>	<p>Fundamentalisms exist in all regions and all religions</p> <p>Fundamentalist tendencies can be observed within all major world religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Catholicism and other sects of Christianity, Islam or Sikhism). Fundamentalist tendencies can also be found in local religious traditions and ethno-religious movements such as the Mungiki of Kenya, Bundu dia Kongo and Kimbaguistas in Congo, the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé, Mexican indigenous Tepehuán, and Nepalese shamanism. Fundamentalism is not the monopoly of any one religion or region.</p>

ABOUT THE MYTH	CHALLENGING THE MYTH
<p>6 Religious fundamentalisms promote clean politics and honesty</p> <p>The idea that religious fundamentalisms promote clean politics and honesty appears to make them different from other social and political forces. This claim is central to their legitimacy. When they enter politics, they represent themselves as being upright, incorruptible, transparent and above nepotism and dishonesty. In response to what they see as declining standards in public and private morality, they claim that religion must inform public morality. They centre on regulating the behaviour of women and sexual minorities in particular, often committing rights violations while at the same time drawing attention away from critical rights issues such as LGBTQI rights violations, labour rights abuses and economic inequalities, the sexual abuse of children or other issues, depending on the context.</p>	<p>Religious fundamentalist groups are responsible for grave human rights violations</p> <p>There are many examples of religious fundamentalist groups, including those in formal political power, that promote and engage in grave human rights violations. These may include killings, sexual and other types of assaults and violations, corruption and other criminal or unethical practices. The self-proclaimed moral superiority of fundamentalist politicians must be challenged. Examples of abuse, corruption or other human rights violations can be found in all regions.</p>

ABOUT THE MYTH	CHALLENGING THE MYTH
<p>7 Religious fundamentalisms defend the poor and oppressed</p> <p>With some slight variations according to context, religious fundamentalist forces generally say they are for justice, for the poor and oppressed, or against capitalism and globalization. In today's world, where many state institutions are failing to provide communities with what they need and with a growing gap between the rich and poor, raising the slogan of justice is a powerful way of gaining support for fundamentalist movements.</p>	<p>Religious fundamentalisms do not seek ways to eliminate poverty, and promote discrimination against marginalized people</p> <p>While some religious fundamentalist groups may offer charity, they often undermine the economic security of impoverished people. Not only because they encourage passive acceptance of the economic structures people are living in, but also because they require financial contributions from their communities, a key source of their funding in many contexts. In fact, for many fundamentalist groups, poverty and the increasing gap between rich and poor provide opportunities for recruitment as those groups may be able to offer a means for survival in contexts that leave many people with few or no other options. Many fundamentalist decrees tend to disproportionately affect those living in poverty or key policies for poverty eradication (for example, anti-abortion legislation or decrees against the education of girls). Fundamentalists have also sidelined more progressive movements for social and economic justice within religion, and activists offer many examples of links between religious fundamentalists, business interests and neoliberalism.</p>

ABOUT THE MYTH	CHALLENGING THE MYTH
<p>8 Religious fundamentalisms stand for family values and the dignity of life</p> <p>Religious fundamentalist movements often claim to stand for family values, and describe themselves as <i>pro-life</i>. Campaigning on platforms they label <i>pro-family</i> or emphasizing the <i>traditional family</i> is a common characteristic of fundamentalist rhetoric. They claim to stand for the protection and dignity of the person, defending the natural family against destabilizing factors such as moral degeneration or economic instability and the rights of parents or the pre-born child.</p>	<p>Religious fundamentalists promote a narrow idea of the family and what it means to be <i>pro-life</i></p> <p>Religious fundamentalisms promote a dominant, male-centered, patriarchal and heteronormative model of family. According to a substantial majority of women's rights activists in AWID's survey (85%), presenting rigid gender roles within the family as <i>natural</i> is an important religious fundamentalist strategy, across regions and religions. Fundamentalists also use the term <i>complementarity</i> to describe <i>natural</i> gender roles.</p> <p>Public policy based on such a narrow definition of the family, by definition, discriminates against families that do not fit this idealized model.</p> <p>Similarly, the religious fundamentalist view of <i>pro-life</i> is very selective, contradictory and actually <i>anti-life</i>. In this view, women's lives put at risk from unsafe pregnancies do not matter. Nor do the lives of young girls who have suffered sexual abuse or early marriage. By some estimates, approximately 60,000 women die each year from unsafe abortion, often due to poverty or lack of services (not only due to the lack of abortion services, but also because of the success of religious fundamentalist campaigning against sexuality education, reproductive services, and access to contraception).</p>

ABOUT THE MYTH	CHALLENGING THE MYTH
<p>9 Religious fundamentalisms defend our traditional ways and authentic identities</p> <p>Religious fundamentalists go to great efforts to represent themselves as “the only true church”, “true Islam”, “correct Buddhist practice”, etc. In many contexts, religious fundamentalists also claim to be the true guardians of local culture, arguing that following their principles is the way to resist domination by <i>foreign</i> or <i>alien</i> forces.</p>	<p>Religious fundamentalisms reinvent and reinterpret tradition</p> <p>The traditions that religious fundamentalisms claim to protect and preserve are often only selective elements of a broader, more pluralistic historical tradition, reconstructions or distortions of tradition, or in some cases, completely new creations. Where societies and cultures were historically diverse, religious fundamentalisms often seek to introduce monolithic ideas about religion, denying or destroying rich cultural heritage in the process. Religious fundamentalists may promote themselves as representative of an <i>authentic</i> local culture, but often they introduce and impose a homogenized, rigid, singular and often foreign culture and attempt to globalize this culture through different regions in the world.</p>

ABOUT THE MYTH	CHALLENGING THE MYTH
<p>10 Religious fundamentalisms are invincible</p> <p>It is true that the influence of religious fundamentalists cannot be dismissed. But some women's rights activists, including those who have lived under religious fundamentalist regimes or spent their activist lives focusing on the phenomenon, warn against overstating the impact. They point out that exaggerating the impact can give religious fundamentalisms greater credit, legitimacy or power than they deserve. A balanced view of the strengths and weaknesses of religious fundamentalisms and recognizing the larger context in which social and political forces operate allows more effective strategies to resist and challenge religious fundamentalisms.</p>	<p>Are religious fundamentalisms really so successful?</p> <p>Religious fundamentalist projects are not, in fact, as successful as they would like us to believe. Some activists take the vehemence and intensity of fundamentalisms as a sign of the failure of their ideology. Some women's rights activists also argue that in certain contexts, taking a longer-term perspective and recognizing the acceptance of same-sex marriage or legalized abortion or gender equality, for example, suggests that fundamentalist ideologies have already been rejected.</p> <p>The experiences of women's rights activists also show that religious fundamentalisms in various contexts have not always been successful. This is partly due to factors not necessarily within fundamentalists' control, because they do not reflect the hopes, aspirations and experiences of most people, and partly because they also face strong opposition. For instance, emphasizing the importance of the <i>traditional</i> family (with women remaining in the home) ignores basic economic realities that necessitate women's participation in wage-earning work.</p> <p>Among the interviewees who participated in AWID's research, those who had lived under religious fundamentalist regimes pointed to the inability of religious fundamentalists to deliver on the promises they make, as well as the exposure of their hypocrisy once they achieve power, as critical weaknesses that often lead to their downfall.</p>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTED GUIDELINES:

The discussion questions included at the end of each chapter aim to ground our understandings of religious fundamentalisms in the impacts they have on our lives, and help situate religious fundamentalisms as one key part of the opposition to rights-based work that many activists are confronting in their day-to-day work.

Suggested General Guidelines for Group Discussions:

For the purposes of group discussions, it is important to keep in mind that some topics may be very personal and people in the room may hold very different points of view. Thus, it is recommended that facilitators and participants either brainstorm some ground rules for respectful and sensitive dialogue, or that the following ground rules be suggested and adapted as the participants and facilitators decide together:

- “One Person, One Mic”: No interrupting. One person will speak at a time.
- Be respectful: Agreeing as a group to be respectful of each other’s feelings, and our own, and to be respectful of all cultures, races, sexual orientations, gender identities, religions, class backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives when speaking – especially when other people’s views or attitudes may be directly opposite to our own. Also, agree to challenge people who make hurtful comments.
- Speak in “I” statements: Agree not to tell others what to do or think as if it is a command. Instead, describe personal experiences.
- Guarantee confidentiality: agreeing not to repeat personal things people say during a group meeting to others.
- Recognize our own and others’ privilege : When entering a space and speaking, being aware of advantages participants may have based on race, age, experience, sex, gender, abilities, class, etc. is important to creating respectful dialogue.
- “Step up and step back”: If we usually don’t talk much, we will challenge ourselves to speak more. If we find ourselves talking more than others, we will speak less.
- Self-care and group care: Don’t make assumptions about anyone’s history or personal experiences. If the content of the discussion is

triggering (for example, a discussion on VAW may be difficult or raise painful memories for a participant who has experienced abuse), allow each other to take of yourselves first. As a group, don't judge anyone who needs to step out either for a few minutes or for the remainder of the meeting.

Discussion Questions:

What main impacts have religious fundamentalisms had on women's rights, LGBTQI rights or minority rights in your context? Do you feel that the influence and impacts of religious fundamentalisms are growing? If so, in which areas is this happening?

What are the key issues of *morality* or *moral decline* that fundamentalist leaders focus on in your context? And what moral issues do you feel fundamentalist movements are ignoring? Are fundamentalist positions on *morality* causing harm, or diverting attention away from issues of social justice and human rights? What role do religious fundamentalisms play in perpetuating and reinforcing patriarchy and the continuation (or escalation) of violence against women and LGBTQI people in societies?

In your context, how have different religious institutions responded to the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity? What role has the state played in this response? How have the rights, debates, and activism of LGBTQI people been impacted as a result?

Thinking about your context, are there pluralistic customs or local traditions that have been eroded by religious fundamentalists? Do religious fundamentalist actors tie religious identity to ethnic, national, cultural, linguistic or other elements of identity? Are there new practices introduced by religious fundamentalists to *correct* local religious practice?

In the context where you live and work, who do you think the main fundamentalist actors are? Which or how many of the six characteristics above apply to them (see pp. 11-14), or do they demonstrate different characteristics? Do they have relationships with formal political structures, or do religious institutions generally get any special incentives or treatment by the government?

- 1 Liberation theology is a movement within Catholicism that interpreted the teachings of Jesus Christ as lessons toward liberation from unjust economic, political and social conditions. The movement mainly developed in Latin America, as a moral response to poverty and injustice.
- 2 Websites of the organizations mentioned in this section (where available):
<http://www.sistersinislam.org.my/>
<http://www.musawah.org/>
<http://www.imaan.org.uk/>
<http://www.theinnercircle.org.za/>
<http://cegla-argentina.blogspot.com/>
<http://mccchurch.org/>
<http://www.catolicasporelderechoadecidir.net/>
<http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/>
- 3 In the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the idea of *papal infallibility* arose in the 19th century under Pope Pius IX. Many believe it arose as a consequence of the internal and external context of the Catholic Church at that time, in which the hierarchy felt the need to reinforce the authority of the Pope. Thus, it is argued, the papacy imposed this idea as a way to strengthen the Vatican's authority and silence dissent.
- 4 The Global Report on the Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders defines heteronormativity as the normalization of "reproductive sex and heterosexual relationships, and marginaliz[ation] or otherwise mark[ing] as 'abnormal' non-normative sexualities, identities and gender roles." Kaavya Asoka. WHRD-International Coalition, 2012. *Global Report on the Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders*, p. 2, http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/pdf/WHRD_IC_Global%20Report_2012.pdf.
- 5 Rights & Democracy (International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development). *Fundamentalisms and Human Rights*, p. 9, May 2005. <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/E84-12-2005E.pdf>.
- 6 Martin E. Marty. "What is Fundamentalism? Theological Perspectives," *Concilium*, June 1992/3, pp. 3-13.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT FACTORS HELP RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISMS GROW?



Is it possible to know the causes of religious fundamentalisms?

Religious fundamentalisms arise due to a number of factors, depending on the political, cultural and historical context. They are very complex movements, and it is not possible to establish a simple linear cause and effect. Instead, using the information shared by women's rights activists who participated in AWID's research, this manual briefly outlines the major factors that help religious fundamentalisms grow, or dynamics that religious fundamentalisms can take advantage of to grow their movements. No single factor can explain how or why fundamentalisms arise, and the importance of each factor is different depending on the context and historical moment. Still, all the factors presented below are identified as being present across different regions and religions. This demonstrates that even though religious fundamentalisms have local or contextual differences, they do follow some underlying patterns that women's rights activists recognize.

Consider the importance or relevance of each of the factors presented on the next page in your own context and region.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Poverty and inequality

Women's rights activists found one of the most significant economic factors driving religious fundamentalisms to be national poverty. In some places, joining fundamentalist movements can be a strategy for survival, even if it is only for a very small material benefit. In other cases, absolute poverty leaves women with very few alternatives or choices. This is not to say that because someone lives in poverty, she or he will necessarily be attracted to fundamentalist ideas, or that the rise of fundamentalisms can be explained simply by economic conditions. For example, the grinding poverty experienced in parts of South Asia wasn't actually identified as a major contributing factor to the rise of religious fundamentalisms in that region. Also, poverty is only one part of the picture and equally, if not more important, is the growing gap between rich and poor (that is, the idea of *relative* poverty), which leads to a sense of injustice. Often, religious fundamentalist groups use messages that draw out these feelings of injustice, while presenting themselves as those who provide hope for a better future.

Role of service provision

The effects of the neoliberal economic model, including policies imposed by international financial institutions in contexts of debt crises around the globe, have undermined states' ability to provide an economic and social safety net for citizens. Neoliberal privatization has encouraged the selling or contracting of public services to private companies (including religious institutions of all kinds) to fill in the gaps as the state's role has been reduced in social and economic areas. In some contexts, for example in Northern Pakistan, Southern Lebanon and Haiti, militant organizations or missionary groups also provide material support. This may be a monthly stipend as a means of recruiting followers, or some form of informal employment for family members and an assurance of economic recompense if their members die in the service of their ideology. Sometimes the aid is linked to disaster relief, and groups organizing emergency responses may provide housing or other forms of material support after crises like earthquakes or floods¹, or during post-conflict reconstruction or in refugee crises. The situation varies in different contexts, but undoubtedly these factors have helped some fundamentalist groups grow their influence, visibility, reach and legitimacy through providing services in key areas such as food, healthcare, housing, and education.

Speaking of the privatization of state services in the UK, one activist noted, for example, that "the privatization agenda is giving religion a space because

the state then wants to offload its functions onto religious institutions. Who has the capacity and resources? Religious institutions! When we have women who have no recourse to public funds, who is it who can give them shelter and food? The *gurdwara* [Sikh temple]! ... This is problematic for women.” (Pragna Patel, United Kingdom)

Religious fundamentalisms supporting neoliberalism

Growing national poverty, the increasing gap between rich and poor, and the failure of state services are all connected to neoliberal economic policies, increasing privatization and globalized capital. The capacity of religious institutions to assert influence and power depends to a great extent on controlling the necessary funds to do so. For instance, profits from oil and gas have allowed particular resource-rich states in the Persian or Arabian Gulf region to fund the promotion of Wahhabi² ideas throughout the world. One journalist notes that: “[t]here is plenty of evidence pointing to the fact that Saudi money is financing various Salafist groups”; and others make links between the Salafi movements in Mali and North Africa with exported versions of Saudi Wahhabism, financed by the great resource wealth generated after the oil crises in the 1970s.³

“If the resources of Nigeria were being used more efficiently and effectively and social amenities were available, I have a strong feeling religion would not play such a strong role”

ASMA’U JODA, Nigeria

“Aside from direct violence, one of the weapons used by the Sangh Parivar [in Gujarat State] to break the strength of the Muslim community was economic boycott, a form of ‘slow genocide’.”

TRUPTI SHAH, India

There are other examples as well. The government of the small oil-rich Gulf state of Qatar is a key financial supporter for many manifestations of the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, in Tunisia and Egypt, as well as for armed Islamist groups in Libya and Syria.⁴ Investments using land and gold acquired over centuries have allowed the Vatican to ensure its financial security. “It is impossible to calculate the wealth of the Roman Catholic Church. There is no doubt, however, that between the church’s priceless art, land, gold and investments across the globe, it is one of the wealthiest institutions on earth.”⁵

The neoliberal structure is also perpetuated by the ideas promoted by religious fundamentalists. For example, the prosperity gospel⁶ preached in some Pentecostal and evangelical churches teaches that wealth and material gain, instead of being linked to structural inequalities, are linked to virtue and giving donations to the church. Similarly, the Religious Right in the United States has supported the neoliberal agenda of a diminished role of the state in social as well as economic arenas, contributing to a weakened social safety net and a tax structure which favours the rich. Hindu fundamentalist forces in India’s Gujarat state have benefited from neoliberal policies which were friendly to business, while manipulating and deepening

communal differences which serve as a false diversion from livelihood issues.

NEOLIBERAL POLICY AND PRIVATIZATION AND THE ENTRY OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISMS IN PUBLIC SPACES

In the years leading up to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian state made increasing concessions to fundamentalists, such that Christian Coptic groups have “become a state within a state”, and the Muslim Brotherhood, even if it was not given political space by the state under Mubarak, nevertheless “has been allowed social and economic spaces within society by the state.” (Azza Soliman, Egypt)

POLITICAL FACTORS

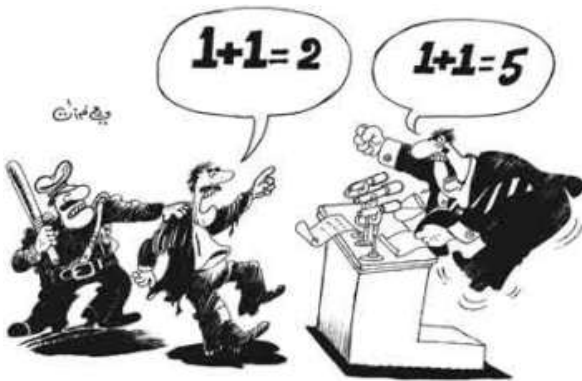
Authoritarianism, militarism and the absence of political alternatives

Authoritarianism, both secular or in the form of theocratic states, is a significant factor in the rise of religious fundamentalisms. In an environment where human rights are violated, civil society is repressed and progressive political alternatives are crushed, fundamentalisms of all kinds tend to thrive. The fall of authoritarian regimes may also be seen as a very opportune moment by fundamentalist religious groups interested in entering the political sphere. These groups tend to be among the most visible or organized social and political forces, and have often gained popular support in opposition to secular authoritarian rule.

AUTHORITARIANISM AND MOMENTS OF TRANSITION

In moments of political transition away from an authoritarian system, religious fundamentalist forces find opportunities. “[The] political transformation in Central and Eastern Europe and collapse of [the Soviet Union] left a free space. In Poland, it was the Catholic Church that immediately jumped in and took over the ideological side of the society. In Russia, it was the Orthodox Church.” (Wanda Nowicka, Poland)

For example in West Africa, according to the head of the Centre for Security Strategy in the Sahel and the Sahara, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, “there is a combination of bad governance, poverty, insecurity as well as several



internal and external factors [that contribute to extremist violence]... The Sahel has provided an ideal ground for extremist violence to take root and spread beyond national borders". The West African region has a troubled history and has experienced a series of coups (at times leading to civil wars) since the first post-independence coup in Togo in 1963.⁷ As some activists point out, "fundamentalist projects thrive where democracy is denied; where human rights are denied; where people are denied the right to participate

in decision-making. If [they are] gaining ground, it is because there is no democratic world order," (Farida Shaheed, Pakistan).

The toxic mix of militarism and fundamentalism has influenced women's rights, minority rights and human rights more generally in countless global contexts, including Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Israel, and others. In such settings, state-sponsored militarism and fundamentalisms often cooperate to justify the spread of violence and terror. Non-state actors have also manipulated religion to justify violence and the dehumanizing of the other, as with groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria or the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. Militarist, ethno-nationalist and fundamentalist rhetoric often come together and cooperate, drawing on arguments about external threats or internal enemies, emphasizing the need to defend communal identity. This *defence*, however, often includes aggression and the fueling of violence through armed conflict.

MOBILIZING MOTHERHOOD

In contexts where religious fundamentalisms and militarism cooperate to fuel armed conflict or communal violence, women — as mothers — are expected to keep producing and raising children, to both perpetuate the community and provide foot-soldiers to defend it. This type of discourse has been documented by such groups as Women in Black, a network that has stood against militarism, ethno-nationalism, and religious fundamentalism (or clerico-fascism, in their own terms) in the communalized context of the Balkans. Women in Black's work includes an analysis of how ethno-nationalist rhetoric in the former-Yugoslavia involved the Serbian Orthodox Church in supporting militarism and ethnic cleansing, while at the same time portraying women as mothers and breeders, important for mobilizing believers to produce more Serbian babies to fight a declining Serb birthrate, or so-called *white plague*.

The use of religion by the state and other political forces

In many parts of the world, religion carries significant power and privileges in social and political spheres. Therefore, it is common for states and other political forces to use religion to gain or consolidate political and social power, control, and legitimacy. Opposition politicians and armed movements have used religion in their efforts to gain State power. At times, the promotion of conservative and fundamentalist forms of religion by political forces has been opportunistic, even by left-leaning or so-called progressive governments. For example, in Nicaragua the newly elected government of Daniel Ortega banned abortion absolutely in return for the Catholic Church supporting his campaign. In other instances, however, powerful states fuel religious fundamentalisms outside of their own borders by exporting fundamentalist ideologies, such as President George W. Bush administration's policies being tied to the flow of development aid to organizations working in the Global South.



WHEN *RIGHT* AND *LEFT* MAY NOT BE HELPFUL TERMS

In Britain, the anti-war and anti-racist Respect alliance brought together members of the Socialist Workers Party and the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami. This enabled the latter to gain seats on London councils for the first time. As one women's rights activist observes, "[f]rom Right to Left, all are part of the fundamentalist game." (Marieme Hélie-Lucas, Algeria/France)

Secular parties from across the political spectrum and across diverse global contexts have cooperated with religious groups and marginal religious parties when it is in their political interest, and this has at times given extreme parties disproportionate voice and influence in coalition settings. In the South Asian context, "[i]n their headlong rush for power... mainstream political parties are actively seeking to be [the] bedfellows [of fundamentalist parties]." (Sara Hossein, Bangladesh)

Absence of rights-based religious alternatives

Progressive and rights-based interpretations and tendencies within religion have been sidelined and weakened by the growing power of fundamentalisms. This has been the case in Latin America with the liberation theology movement within Catholicism that interpreted the teachings of Jesus Christ as lessons toward liberation from unjust economic, political and social conditions. The movement was systematically targeted and decimated by the Vatican and military regimes where the Catholic hierarchy had allied with dictatorships and military juntas. In other cases, progressive, rights-based religious interpretations are too weak or marginalized to influence powerful fundamentalist movements or actors. Progressive religious movements may also lack a gender perspective, and may not support the needs of women or LGBTQI people in challenging religious fundamentalist ideas.

USING RELIGION FOR POLITICAL ENDS

In Eastern Europe “it can be said that women’s rights have been ‘sacrificed’ to maintain the good relations of a new state regime with the Catholic Church.” (women’s rights activist, Poland)

“In the last years of Suharto’s regime, he used Islam to keep his legitimacy—he established para-statal on Islam, with the state bureaucracy co-opting intellectuals, and this allowed more space for discussing things on the basis of Islam.” (women’s rights activist, Indonesia)

As conservative and opportunistic forces engaged with or used religion for political goals, “[t]he Left in the U.S. bought into the idea of secularization and [that] we didn’t need to engage with religion. So the religious-progressives were not supported to balance out the more extreme tendencies... and the Christian Right were able to subsume that vacuum.” (women’s rights activist, USA)

In Latin America, liberation theology was attacked by right-wing military regimes and internally by former Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The persecution was such that by the 1980s the liberation theology movement had lost considerable ground to Catholic conservatives in many places.

SOCIAL FACTORS

Loss of certainty and belonging

One trend that many women's rights activists have observed is that, in an increasingly complex and globalized world, there is a growing lack of social cohesion, or rupture in social relationships. These kinds of experiences can awaken a deep need for certainty and belonging in people and many people find that a religious community can fulfill this need. Religious fundamentalisms build their messages on an idea of *certainty*, promoting what is familiar, what has always been the way. As part of offering this sense of comfort and community, religious fundamentalists offer refuge against *the unknown*.

OFFERING CERTAINTY

This is also a part of the broader way in which fundamentalists offer simple messages and solutions to life's problems. "Many of our societies are going through massive change and with change comes uncertainty. The fundamentalists offer a clear message in black and white. This becomes very appealing, as opposed to the many options that liberals and democrats offer. When someone comes along in religious garb and gives you this 'one, true message', you don't have to think any more. It makes life easier for those who yearn for certainty in life." (Zainah Anwar, Malaysia)

"Their power comes from their ability to simplify a very complex reality and make it comprehensible to ordinary mortals: the Good and the Bad; Believers (blessed with all virtues) and non-believers (demonized)." (Rabea Naciri, Morocco)

Globalization, migration and the rise in identity politics

The sense of alienation experienced with globalization and the vast socio-economic changes taking place around the world can lead people to withdraw into narrow and rigid ideas of community along national, ethnic or religious lines. Religious fundamentalist movements often seek to emphasize religious identity above people's many different identities as well. Identity politics means favouring or emphasizing just one part of our multiple identities (ethnic, cultural, class, sexual, etc.) above all others.

The process of migration has created a fertile ground for the growth of

identity politics and for exporting or importing extremisms, for example, in places with large migrant populations such as parts of Europe or the Arabian/Persian Gulf. Using one dimension of identity as a defensive response or to assert communal pride can be a way of responding to racism and social exclusion in contexts where there are significant migrant populations and high levels of social inequality. Communal identities also become more rigid through the influence of fundamentalisms, promoting singular views of religious, cultural or traditional identities as the *only* authentic or true interpretation, and often regulating what it means to be a *good* Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, etc.



Advances in women's rights and sexual diversity (including sexual orientation and gender identity)

Greater autonomy for women and their growing engagement in the labour market, women's empowerment in decisions about family planning, and the recognition of diverse sexual expressions and family forms among other trends represent major social and cultural changes. These advances have fueled religious fundamentalisms, which respond

with backlash against such changes and some religious groups have reacted over recent decades based on absolutist and extreme positions. Religious fundamentalists generally see these social and cultural changes as going against their narrow ideas of gender roles and sexuality that are drawn from their literal or narrow readings of religious texts.

A GLOBAL BACKLASH

In the 1990s, UN conferences for the first time clearly stressed that "women's rights are human rights", agreeing on basic standards for sexual and reproductive health and rights, and emphasizing women's rights and autonomy in all spheres of life (respectively, Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, 1993; Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, 1994; Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995). These advances for women's human rights and autonomy at the international level inspired a backlash at both international and national levels. Since then, religious fundamentalist actors have constantly tried to undermine and reverse the gains made in international human rights standards.

DO EQUAL MARRIAGE RIGHTS EQUAL SOCIAL SUICIDE?

Legal reforms in parts of Latin America have recognized the right of same-sex couples to marry. These reforms have also caused a reaction from religious fundamentalist groups. After the legal recognition of same-sex marriage in Mexico City, the Cardinal of Mexico City, Norberto Rivera Carrera, stated that “the Church considers it an aberration to equate unions between same-sex couples with marriage.” In public hearings in Argentina during the debate on same-sex marriage, lawyer Jorge Scala, speaking for a Catholic fundamentalist NGO, said “[h]omosexuality is extremely antisocial behaviour; so antisocial as to threaten the very survival of Argentina. Today it is a statistically irrelevant behaviour (no more than 2% of the population), so it may be reasonable to tolerate it privately. It is another thing to promote it publicly, and from early childhood. That is unjust and irrational, and follows a policy of social suicide.”⁸ Scala has been very involved in cases against the legalization of abortion and the distribution of emergency contraception nationally and internationally.



Self-perpetuating nature of fundamentalisms

Religious fundamentalist movements are self-perpetuating in nature; fundamentalisms in one religion fuel fundamentalisms in another, and war and conflict can both be a cause and a result of growing fundamentalisms, for example, in the so-called Global War on Terror. Often, policies and practices can help fundamentalist points of view become naturalized for the next generation, and such ideas are then more likely to be perpetuated and reproduced. The education system can also play a key role in this process, whether it is through private religious schools, or through a public education system that includes fundamentalist ideas in the curriculum. Sometimes, fundamentalist groups or those with fundamentalist views may try to engage in spaces like local school boards, ethics boards in hospitals, or other areas of civic life, so that they can influence policy decisions. Like many other movements, religious fundamentalists want to continue to grow their following. This connects with their opposition to family planning, recruitment of youth and their encouragement of large families.

Growth of religiosity

Recent decades have been marked by a strong presence of religion throughout all regions of the world, contrary to the theories predicting widespread secularization throughout the twentieth century. Religion is not the same as religious fundamentalisms (as noted in Section I), however, dominant interpretations of religions have traditionally reflected patriarchal structures and have therefore been discriminatory towards women and minorities in particular. Moreover, given the social and political power assigned to religion, growing religiosity can serve to open the door to fundamentalist movements that seek to use religion as a way to gain political and social control. This leads some activists to question whether this growth in religiosity is itself a contributing factor to the rise of religious fundamentalisms. One could also question whether it is working the other way around. That is, is the rise and power of religious fundamentalisms fuelling a rise in religiosity in many contexts?

Discussion Questions

Are there services such as healthcare, education, or food provision, managed by religious institutions in your context? Were these services formerly provided by the state, or have religious institutions long held this position? From what you have heard or seen, does this affect the quality or content of the services that are provided? How so?

Are there examples you can think of in your context where neoliberal and religious fundamentalist forces work in cooperation? Do religious leaders in your context use social justice language? Does this kind of language or rhetoric, when used by religious fundamentalists, fit with what they actually do or the policies they support?

What political forces use religion in your context? Is it common for political parties to ally with religious institutions, or for religious leaders to endorse candidates or try to influence voting in those contexts with formal elections? Is there a social or a legal requirement that leaders belong to a particular religion or is there a formal state religion?

Is religion taught in the public school system? Is it one particular religion or interpretation of religion that is taught? Are there private religious schools in your context? If so, do they receive any state support or subsidies? Are there any subjects that are not taught, or where information is controlled or biased because of religious authorities? Are parents or the state regulating sexual education or other activities for school-going children, especially girls? Are progressive religious figures presenting alternative and rights-affirming views of religion in your context? If so, what response do they receive from religious institutions, media, government or society at large? Are particular religious institutions or religious or community figures considered the representatives of religious communities by the government, by media or by other actors? If so, what are the consequences of this assumption?

Are progressive religious figures presenting alternative and rights-affirming views of religion in your context? If so, what response do they receive from religious institutions, media, government or society at large? Are particular religious institutions or religious or community figures considered to be representatives of religious communities by the government, media or other actors? If so, what are the consequences of this assumption?

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CHAPTER 3

RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALIST STRATEGIES, TACTICS AND MESSAGING



So what are some of the strategies and arguments that religious fundamentalist movements use to increase their power and influence? As with the factors that help religious fundamentalisms arise and grow, the strategies that fundamentalists use are also complex, nuanced and interconnected. We will attempt to give a broad overview of these strategies here. Many of the examples presented here are drawn from the experiences of activists who participated in AWID's research but are by no means exhaustive or comprehensive. The material is meant to provide background and insights while inspiring further discussion of other strategies, tactics and discourses or messaging used by religious fundamentalist movements, especially those that are more context-specific.

This section is divided into three parts, and closes with a chart that compares the top five religious fundamentalist strategies identified by women's rights activists, divided by global regions.

1. Common Religious Fundamentalist Messaging
2. How Religious Fundamentalists Build their Movements
3. How Religious Fundamentalists Enter into Public and Political Arenas

1. Common Religious Fundamentalist Messaging

Common religious fundamentalist discourses that are used across regions and religions can be grouped into the following categories:

- Emphasizing the *traditional family*, morality and fixed gender roles
- Speaking from the position of the *one true religion*, moral superiority, and cultural authenticity
- Playing upon people's hopes and fears
- Adopting human rights and scientific language
- Using effective communication, emotive and divisive language, double discourses and misinformation

Emphasizing *the traditional family*, morality and fixed gender roles

Fundamentalists generally view the family as a key mechanism for controlling society through women's sexuality, and enforcing their roles as reproducers and socializers. While many societies and cultures view the family as important, the fundamentalist worldview only accepts one legitimate form of family, and positions it above all others. This *God-given, natural or traditional family* is, according to fundamentalist discourses, necessarily patriarchal, male-headed and heteronormative. According to this vision, the ideal family is: grounded in heterosexual marriage and (in many but not all fundamentalist discourses) solely for the purpose of reproduction, led by the dominant husband/father and nurtured by the passive wife/mother (or wives, in some cases). Any other model of family is considered immoral, unnatural and against God's plan. So, in fundamentalist discourses, it is very common to hear references to *family values*, protecting *traditional* marriage, women as *wives* or *mothers* and *protecting children*.

Many have also argued that this patriarchal family ideal also contains within it the seeds of authoritarianism and dictatorship. That is, the ideal of the *traditional family* serves as a kind of training ground where obedience to a male authority figure is learned. Understood in another way, this idealized traditional family serves as a form of authoritarian rule in microcosm, a miniature of a state or institutional model. Thus, the powerful psychological appeal of submission to charismatic male leadership voicing reassuring messages cannot be denied, particularly as obedience to or reverence of patriarchal authority figures has been a widespread part of socialization and education across global contexts.

The religious fundamentalist emphasis on the *traditional* or *natural* family is combined with the idea that fixed, rigid and discriminatory gender roles are also *natural* and *God-given*, rejecting anyone who does not fit into this normative model. This could be women-headed families, people who are divorced or separated or choose not to marry, couples living together outside of marriage, or same-sex couples and their families, as just some examples.

In the current global context of massive social change, globalization and neoliberal economic policies where traditional ideas of masculinity are threatened, fundamentalists play upon the sense of powerlessness that these changes have caused in some men. Therefore, the model of male dominance and female submission in the family is a powerful discourse and image for fundamentalists. Activists from diverse contexts give examples of fundamentalist discourses that tell women they should, for example, accept their fates when they are in violent or abusive familial situations, and stay at home and fulfil their wifely and motherly duties regardless of the abuse they are experiencing.

THE *GOOD* WIFE

The emphasis on the *traditional*, *God-given* family rests on narrow gender roles, primarily placing the responsibility for maintaining that *natural* family on women, no matter what the cost.

In Thailand, one activist reported that fundamentalist Buddhist monks say: “When your husband beats you, [it is] because [in a] previous life you did something to him, so you better not do anything bad; you have to accept the karma.” (Ouyporn Khuankaew, Thailand)

Another activist gave this example of fundamentalist pressure to accept abusive situations: “Women are being told to stay in abusive marriages because God wills it so. Women are told that no matter that a man is HIV positive, a woman should not use a condom. They married for better or worse.” (Hope Chigudu, Zimbabwe/Uganda)

With respect to changing gender roles and the effects this has, one activist notes, “[In a context where] women have money and go to work now, and men feel completely powerless, there is often some kind of exchange relationship: [the fundamentalists say to the men] ‘We will make you feel good at home; you can control your environment, your women, your children,’ and then people will be willing to accept all the changes in society [that fundamentalists want to introduce].” Nira Yuval-Davis, United Kingdom/Israel

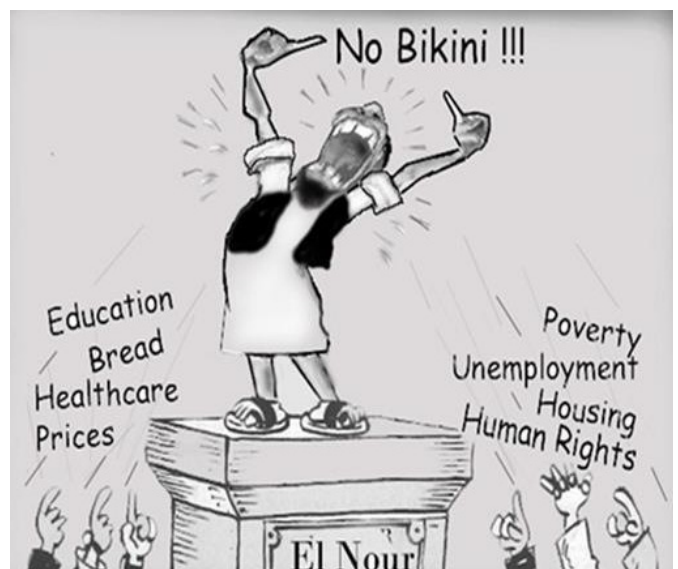
Across regions of the world, fundamentalists blame social problems on a general *decline in morality*, and *disintegration of society*, by which they often mean the conduct of women and LGBTQI people. Fundamentalists position themselves as the defenders of morality, the ones who are trying to restore *godliness*, *decency* and *goodness* to the world. But at the same time, they take attention away from serious and important social justice issues and are often responsible, directly and indirectly, for serious violations of human rights themselves.

The Catholic Church’s position against *moral relativism*, is an example of such a focus. This position was strongly defended by Pope Benedict XVI. In the modern world, the idea that there is only one morality, or one single objective and universal way of recognizing what is good or bad, is deeply problematic. Every person, community and society establishes its own values, based on frameworks through which we make sense of the world. It is clear that these values shift and change over time. Consider how positions on slavery or child/early marriage have changed over time. Similarly, within any society there is no singular moral vision. Rather, there are different

visions that vary, oppose each other, and are constantly negotiated. In spite of this reality, the Catholic Church argues that morality is very clearly and simply defined by religion, and fixed for all time. As the former pope stated, “[w]e are moving toward a dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one’s own ego and one’s own desires.”¹ Thus, the concept of *moral relativism* is used by the Catholic hierarchy as a way to delegitimize moral expressions that do not conform to their worldview. In other words, instead of assuming that morality varies across time and location, and establishing a dialogue with different perspectives, the Catholic hierarchy has chosen the opposite approach. Rejecting moral pluralism allows the Church to delegitimize and diminish perspectives that question their positions on reproductive rights, sexuality and other issues.

More common than the Catholic Church’s insistence on moral hegemony, other fundamentalist views support relativist arguments that claim that culture, tradition and religion may be legitimate reasons for human rights violations. For example, some governments try to block advances in human rights at the international or national level or excuse the fact that they are failing in their international obligations by arguing that some rights do not apply in their contexts. The thinking is that human rights are not a universal concept, and the issue of rights is defined differently in different societies. By this line of thinking, state sovereignty and cultural authenticity are more important than the concept of human rights. But of course such a view comes at the cost of those discriminated against, often women, girls, minorities and other marginalized groups. A relativist view also denies the diversity of the roots of human rights and its adaption in multiple regional and national frameworks like the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.²

The discussion about relativism or universality of human rights is a complex one. Activists may take very different positions on this issue. One thing that is clear, however, is that religious and other fundamentalist forces do view the sphere of international human rights law as very important, and invest in trying to influence those systems. Women’s rights, feminist activists and their allies are increasingly forced to deal with attempts to roll back rights at the United Nations and in the international human rights system, in addition to having to challenge religious fundamentalisms in their national and local contexts.



WHOSE MORALITY?

According to a 2013 report by Human Rights Watch, some 600 Afghan women and girls are in prison for committing so-called “moral crimes”³. These are often cases where a girl or woman was arrested by the police after trying to escape from a forced marriage, from other forms of violence, or because she was suspected of committing *zina* (sex outside marriage). While criminalizing women, the real moral crimes that lead to poverty, violence and inequality, or that lead to impunity for corruption or rape or violence against women go unaddressed.

The Anti-Homosexuality Bill, also known as Bahati’s bill, was first introduced in the Ugandan parliament in October 2009. The bill was finally passed into law by President Yoweri Museveni in February 2014, after several previous attempts that failed due to local and international pressures. Fundamentalist political leaders and Christian ministers both within Uganda and in the United States have lobbied for years to see the bill passed. The bill criminalizes people suspected of being homosexual and, among other extreme measures, may carry life imprisonment as a penalty, as well as criminalizing those who do not “report on” suspected homosexuals. The bill would also impact freedoms of assembly and speech for not only LGBTQI persons but everyone. Many analysts believe that Bahati’s bill was a convenient way to draw attention away from the human rights abuses of the Museveni government at home and in the DRC, from rising fuel and food prices, and from the military’s assassination of at least nine people protesting cost of living increases. Immediately after the bill was last revived and then finally passed, persecution and the spreading of hate against those considered to be LGBTQI has become more widespread.⁴



In another example, the Vatican claims its positions are based on the respect and sanctity of human life, however this includes severe restrictions on sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Catholic hierarchy’s active campaigning on such a rigid and uncompromising position against sexual and reproductive health and rights has led to the deaths of approximately 80,000 women forced to access unsafe abortions every year⁵. The Catholic Church has dedicated enormous resources towards lobbying against comprehensive sexuality education, condom use and safe, legal and accessible abortion. Far from protecting human life, these policies lead to more violence and death every year, especially for those living in poverty. Over the years, both Hindu and Muslim fundamentalist groups have

taken to protesting Valentine's Day as a Western holiday that promotes immorality because young people are encouraged to express their love for each other. The moral policing that fundamentalist religious groups engage in when protesting Valentine's Day results in rhetorical or verbal, and sometimes physical, violence.

Speaking from the position of the *one true religion*, moral superiority, and cultural authenticity

Fundamentalists claim to speak from the position of divine authority. This means that anyone who challenges them is put in the position of attacking religion or being against God. This messaging is combined with a firm belief that there is only *one true religion*, and fundamentalists are the rightful keepers of that *true religion*.

SPEAKING FOR GOD

The religious fundamentalist strategy of speaking for God has a powerful impact in the political sphere, placing anyone who opposes fundamentalist positions on the side of evil (for example, framing anyone who is pro-choice as *against* life or on the side of death). "Speaking with the support of God is something very different from speaking without it. God is an important source of legitimacy. They are speaking from the Good and for God. It puts you on the side of sin and the Devil." (Susana Chiarotti, Argentina)

Cultural authenticity

The idea of one true religion involves destroying or erasing local cultural histories and reinventing tradition (see Chapter 2). In anti-LGBTQI campaigns in Africa, for example, the issue of gay rights is positioned as un-African and un-Christian, ignoring the colonial history of Christianity in the region, and further ignoring the conservative social and legal norms that colonization brought, such as the criminalization of sodomy. Across diverse Muslim contexts, an Arabized version of Islam is idealized as the true and authentic way to be a *good* Muslim. This is largely fueled by Wahabbi, Salafi and other extremist interpretations of Islam spread by oil-rich states like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, often in cooperation with western governments. This support of extremist groups and the spread of narrow and regressive interpretations of Islam, has led to the denial of rich local traditions and the destruction of important historical sites. For example, sufi7 shrines or

holy sites from other religious traditions in places as diverse as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Mali and Saudi Arabia have been destroyed. In some contexts, fundamentalist groups may also attack relationships between castes or across ethnic or religious communities. Fundamentalists carry out such attacks on individuals or on sites of symbolic importance in the name of purifying and protecting the religion. Indeed, fundamentalist hostility towards diverse local traditions or the mixing of traditions and cultures has a long history. For example, the colonial project included religious and cultural conversion in many instances, erasing existing religious, cultural and linguistic heritages across many colonized lands.

Playing upon People's Hopes and Fears

Religious fundamentalist discourses effectively focus on the objects of people's most basic hopes and fears, including life and death. Some Pentecostal churches, for example, offer the positive promise of wealth, and preach a prosperity theology that tells worshippers the more they reap, the more they will sow, extracting offerings from their congregations. The fear of death, judgment and a harsh reckoning for going against fundamentalist norms is also a common and powerful discourse used for social control. The fear of the *other* is also mobilized, becoming a powerful tool for gaining support and attacking opposition. The growth of fundamentalisms is almost always accompanied by the growth of other kinds of divisions in society, including communalism, sectarianism, xenophobia and racism.

US AGAINST THEM

In India, the religious *Other* is portrayed as a threat in Hindu fundamentalist messaging, raising people's fears of being overrun by an inferior Muslim minority. The fundamentalist "*vo panch aur hum do*" (they are five and we are two) slogan stereotypes all Muslims as polygamists claiming that this leads to a higher fertility rate for Muslims.

In Serbia, Orthodox fundamentalists complain of a "white plague", preaching that the fertility rate of Serbian Orthodox people is too low compared to Roma, Albanian and Bosniak people; this is "meant to produce fear of an eventual subjugation or extinction of the Serb people in Serbia" (Stasa Zajovic, Serbia).

In the so-called Global War on Terror, all parties involved justified violence through the use of racist imagery and the concept of a "clash of civilizations" between two essentialized, narrow and simplistic ideas of east and west, often explicitly based on claims of religious-moral superiority.

Adopting human rights and scientific language

In every region, women's rights activists point out fundamentalist co-opting and selective use of human rights language. For example, granting "rights to the unborn", which places the foetus above the life of a woman who is pregnant and has no basis in international human rights instruments. This kind of distortion of human rights language can also be seen in the names of fundamentalist organizations like C-FAM (Catholic Family and Human Rights institute) which actively lobby against sexual and reproductive rights and equality rights at the UN.

Arguments calling on *morality*, *religion*, *culture* and *tradition* are used by fundamentalist forces from diverse parts of the world to block progress in the sphere of international law. Introduction of language of State sovereignty, tradition and culture taking precedence over international human rights commitments have sought to undermine the very basis of official UN-level agreements and documents.

There is a concerted effort at the international level to grant rights to religions as though they were individuals. There have been repeated efforts made on behalf of the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) to pass resolutions against the defamation of religions. The non-binding Resolution on Combating Defamation of Religions⁸ passed in 2010 received a great deal of criticism for conflicting with the right to freedom of expression. Such an attempt to defend religions from criticism also has the impact of justifying national or local blasphemy laws which are routinely used to violate human rights, for example, to justify censorship or to attack minorities.

Religious fundamentalist campaigning aimed at the international human rights system includes continued efforts led by Russia since the late 2000s to introduce the idea of *traditional values* as a way of promoting human rights.⁹ But the reports and resolutions that Russia promoted at the Human Rights Council take an uncritical approach to the idea of tradition, without acknowledging that some aspects of tradition may be harmful and justify violating rights. This approach also denies that concepts of tradition and culture are changing, fluid, and not easily defined, and any attempts to define them will necessarily reproduce and reinforce existing power relationships. Most worryingly, this attempt seeks to diminish the effectiveness and enforcement of all international human rights agreements not based on these so-called *traditional values*.

Similarly, in 2013 Egypt attempted to introduce a "Protection of the Family" resolution at the Human Rights Council which proposed language on the traditional family as a subject in need of human rights protections. This

was in exclusion of any broad and diverse understanding of families and the protection of the human rights of individual members of those families. The resolution was withdrawn, mainly due to the lobbying of rights-based groups which led to State support for the resolution diminishing, but it will likely be reintroduced in the future.

Fundamentalist forces also form tactical alliances, locally, regionally and internationally. At the global level, increasing cooperation between Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox and Muslim actors has resulted in increased power to remove or prevent more progressive language or to introduce regressive ideas.

RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALIST LOBBYING AT THE UN

The effects of religious fundamentalist lobbying were felt at the 2012 UN Commission on the Status of Women which, for the first time in its 56-year history, closed with no Agreed Conclusions document. This was celebrated as a *pro-family victory* by many fundamentalist groups, since pressure from the Vatican, the OIC, some members of the African Group, and CARICOM (Caribbean Community and Common Market) on key points of language prevented agreements. Some of the key points that fundamentalist groups lobbied on were: to remove the word *traditional* from the phrase “harmful traditional practices”; to change “early and forced marriages” to “child marriage” (which could effectively lower the age of marriage to onset of puberty for girls in many Muslim-majority countries); and to replace “gender equality” with the phrase “equality between men and women” to deny the existence of gender diversity. Conservative blocs also pushed to advance “parental rights” as a way to deny youth the right to comprehensive sexuality education and to deny the recognition of sexual and reproductive health rights as integral elements of human rights.

These efforts are all part of a larger global trend of diverse fundamentalist movements arguing that religion itself is under attack, and that religious people are persecuted by having to recognize the rights of all individuals to be free from discrimination. The fundamentalist response is generally to try and deny or roll back such rights where local or national laws already recognize them, or manipulate human rights concepts (for example, conscientious objection or the right to life) in order to deny certain rights to others.

DENYING RIGHTS IN THE NAME OF RIGHTS

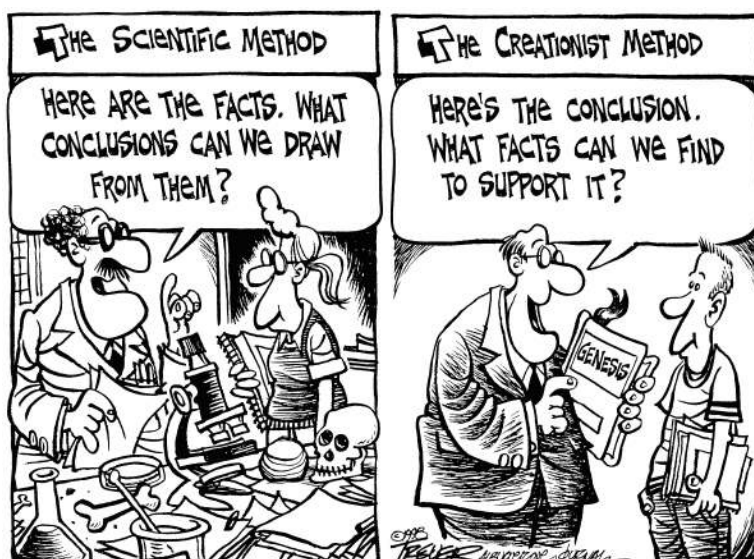
Inserting the right to life from conception directly in the constitution is another tactic used to restrict sexual and reproductive health rights. For example, in 2011, Hungary enacted a new Constitution stating that “[t]he life of a foetus will be protected from conception.” (Art. 2). This article opened the door to restrictions on abortion rights, emergency contraception and assisted reproductive technologies, making fertilized eggs into legal subjects deserving protection. Sure enough, the following year the government opposed the introduction of emergency contraception pills in Hungary.¹⁰

Conscientious objection clauses or religious refusals are another way in which some people’s rights may be limited or denied. In many contexts, medical practitioners may legally refuse to provide certain reproductive health services based on the argument that it would go against their conscience, but this may effectively deny a service that is a right by law.

Science or pseudo-science?

In addition to using human rights language (generally with purposes that deny human rights), religious fundamentalist movements tend to selectively apply scientific knowledge, present pseudo-science or old and discredited arguments as scientific fact, and try to provide scientific backing for their ideas. Some denials of scientific facts by religious institutions are famous in certain contexts, for example, the Catholic Church’s historical persecution of scientists and banning of books.

In current times, many fundamentalist movements support and disseminate information about a so-called *post-abortion syndrome* (a condition that has never been scientifically proven, and which bears a remarkable similarity to post-partum depression, as some women’s rights activists have noted). They also spread other kinds of misinformation about harmful effects that abortion or birth control may have. Some religious fundamentalist groups have also been known to



establish clinics where sexual health services are supposed to be offered, but where clients are given false data. Similarly, misinformation about the harmful effects of birth control, or rumours of hidden foreign agendas behind family planning or even vaccination programs have also been spread by fundamentalist groups in diverse contexts.

Another widespread example is the use of discredited and harmful *conversion therapy* or *reparative therapy* programs. These are various kinds of so-called therapies that promise to cure LGBTQI people of same-sex desires, even though there is ever-growing recognition that same-sex attraction is not an illness or psychological disorder and cannot be cured, and also a growing recognition that such therapies are harmful and damaging.¹¹ These programs are often offered or supported by religious institutions.

Using effective communication, emotive and divisive language, double discourses and misinformation

Just as it is important to examine the ideas that fundamentalist promote, it is also necessary to understand the ways in which these ideas are packaged and communicated. Fundamentalist movements often use emotive language, double discourses or misinformation, and deliver their messages through effective vehicles (including mass media such as radio, satellite TV, and new media). One example of emotive and inflammatory messaging is the misleading article “The UN May Recognize Sex Rights for Ten-Year Old Children”. Here, the authors present the right to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) as an effort to push children into sexual activity, rather than acknowledging that CSE aims to empower children by understanding how their bodies work so they can make safe and informed decisions or speak out when their rights are violated.¹² Similarly, fundamentalist groups in various contexts have been known to set up abortion hotlines which may even appear to be secular, but which spread misinformation and try to persuade clients not to seek an abortion.

The use of emotive language, such as accusations of neocolonialism, imperialism and human rights as a foreign imposition on the Global South, is also common, cynically playing upon North/South divisions and tensions to deny rights. Double discourses are another characteristic of some fundamentalist communications, for example, saying one thing and doing another (e.g., emphasizing morality while misusing public funds or engaging in or covering up sexual abuse or presenting yourself as moderate and secular for one audience, and at the same time saying and doing the opposite with fundamentalist supporters). In both kinds of situations, what is clear is that fundamentalist messages cannot necessarily be taken literally.

SPREADING THE WORD

Religious fundamentalists make extensive use of modern technology (e.g., internet, cable television, satellite technology) to spread their messages. Remembering Myth #3 that fundamentalists are just backwards extremists (see Chapter 2), the survey research clearly shows that this myth does not apply to fundamentalist movements. “Modern technology — the Internet is very much used by the Ultra-Orthodox community — is an important factor today in Israel and the Diaspora that is nurturing the growth of Jewish fundamentalisms.” (Debbie Weissman, Israel)

The use of mass media in particular is a very effective and broad-reaching tool. The control of mass media was a central element in promoting ethno-religious nationalisms among Serbian Orthodox and Croatian Catholic populations in the former Yugoslavia and in Mexico, popular television personalities were used in media campaigns against the decriminalization of abortion.

In Gujarat state in India, Hindu fundamentalist movements target lower income women through radio programs, and in Central Asia, Muslim fundamentalists attract followers by distributing cassettes. Transnational mass media plays an important part as well ³/₄ in Fiji, the Christian station Radio Light is partly funded through international connections and most of its airtime is filled with Evangelical content from overseas.

Some observers have noted that the Qatar-based Al Jazeera news channel had a critical role in publicizing mass uprisings during the Arab Springs when national media outlets were still under the control of authoritarian regimes. At the same time, they point out that the station has also effectively given a platform to Muslim fundamentalist forces, allowing them to reach massive audiences across the Middle East and North Africa and around the world.

2. How Religious Fundamentalists Build their Movements

Recruitment tactics

Fundamentalist movements target different populations, depending on what is strategic in their context. So, for example, in the Middle East and North Africa, where there is a very high youth population, fundamentalist

recruitment tends to focus on the young. Prosperity gospel is used by Evangelical churches to attract people seeking upward mobility or those living in poverty in contexts such as Africa. Evangelical movements in parts of Latin America tend to recruit from impoverished communities including those with high indigenous populations, and Hindu fundamentalists in India tend to focus on mass mobilization. The Catholic institution Opus Dei seeks to recruit and gain allies among influential and powerful elites and intellectuals in Latin America.

In spite of the variations, however, there is a general focus on youth across all regions. This makes sense because any movement that seeks to continue and grow needs to attract and groom new members. According to AWID's research, beyond religious institutions, the most important sites for recruiting followers are schools, colleges and universities. Tactics to influence youth may include influencing the curriculum of study in the mainstream school system, or it may also include creating parallel education systems where fundamentalist ideals are taught and perpetuated. Youth recruitment can also involve such activities as running camps and leadership programs for children and youth, or providing scholarships for marginalized youth.

Creating emotional communities

Fundamentalists also work to create emotional communities, to meet the very basic human need for a sense of belonging and community. Women's rights activists point out the emotional power of large-scale mobilizations such as those held by Hindu or Evangelical fundamentalist groups. They also point out that youth and women are particular targets for recruitment and that the creation of emotional communities and a sense of belonging are essential vehicles for attracting and mobilizing these target groups.

The Vatican-sponsored World Youth Day (WYD) is one example of a mass-scale event where the Church has recognized the importance of building emotional communities and fosters an atmosphere of solidarity and celebration. Initiated by Pope John Paul II, the first WYD was celebrated at the Vatican in 1986, and an international WYD is now held every two to three years in a different part of the world each time. The World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in July 2013 drew more than three million participants from around the globe.¹⁴ In fact, some activists also argue that religious fundamentalist movements have learned from progressive rights-based movements: "fundamentalist groups, whether from Evangelical churches or Catholic churches, are using the same tactics as so-called alternative groups to attract youth. They promote parties for youth, organize marches with famous artists and open courses specifically for youth with modern songs and ideas" (Ana Adeve, Brazil).

Provision of services and charity

An important aspect of movement-building is engaging in charity work and providing services. This allows fundamentalist groups to increase their visibility, legitimacy and influence in key areas such as health and education. But, as noted earlier, several activists pointed out that religious fundamentalist groups often deliver charity or services with the specific goal of gaining support and legitimacy, and to recruit followers, without any effort to try and address the root causes of poverty, inequality and marginalization. For instance, after the earthquake that hit Haiti in 2010, Pentecostal Christian groups used their existing networks to reach isolated communities. This may have made them a good option as partners for disaster and humanitarian relief work in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, but there are longer-term social and political impacts to mainstream international NGOs and donors providing these groups with resources and recognition, and these implications must be seriously considered.

Resources and funding

Religious fundamentalist movements are able to mobilize substantial resources and some religious institutions are incredibly wealthy landowners. For example, the Vatican hierarchy owns over EU 9 billion worth of assets in property in Italy alone.¹⁵ Moreover, because of the privileged role of religion in many societies, religious institutions may be exempt from paying taxes or may receive special subsidies. In many religious institutions, paying membership dues or tithes may also be framed as a religious duty. Apart from donations from individual followers, money coming from international religious organizations is also an important source of income. Governments such as the United States, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran and the Vatican are seen as vital to the funding of fundamentalist groups, charities and advocacy organizations in other countries. One-third of the activists AWID surveyed said that fundamentalists in their contexts have also benefited from international development or disaster relief aid.

RESOURCES USED TO FUEL FUNDAMENTALISMS

There are many so-called “faith-based” organizations and charities working in the development and disaster relief fields. While it is important to remember the distinction between religion and religious fundamentalisms, and to recall that some organizations do work from a rights-based perspective, clearly organizations with fundamentalist leanings can gain a great deal of influence when they are providing support and services to vulnerable populations.

In 2010, when many parts of Pakistan were hit by a devastating flood, the fundamentalist Jamaat ad-Dawa claimed to have a network of 2,000 members mobilizing in flood relief efforts. When people feel the state is absent in the wake of such a crisis, fundamentalist groups can benefit greatly from stepping in to provide support for affected populations.¹⁶

The governments of President Reagan and George W. Bush in the United States promoted the Global Gag Rule or the ABC (Abstinence, be faithful, use a condom) mandating that all non-governmental organizations receiving funding from the US government do not provide or promote abortion services. The ABC approach adopted by PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS) under President Bush required any group receiving U.S. funding to promote abstinence as the primary way to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS. These policies had devastating impacts far beyond the denial of safe abortion services. They effectively cut off all reproductive services, affecting the lives of women living in poverty or in marginalized areas in particular, increasing child and maternal deaths, and forcing many clinics to lay off staff or close altogether. Ironically, far from reducing abortions they also led to more unwanted pregnancies and reduced access to information and resources necessary for engaging in safer sex and to avoid the spread of HIV.¹⁷

Use of violence and intimidation

Fundamentalists can use physical, sexual or verbal violence to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation in order to discourage challenge. Violence, including rape or threats of rape, out-casting, defamation and threats (including religious decrees) are often used as a corrective measure, to stop people from speaking out and challenging fundamentalist ideas. In particular, these tactics may be used against women and those people who do not conform to gender and sexual norms, to coerce them back into traditional roles.

Many of the activists surveyed by AWID mentioned they have witnessed or been subjected to psychological, verbal or physical violence, including: being labelled a *bad* woman/Christian/Muslim/Hindu/etc. or an unbeliever; being called a foreign agent or collaborator; being accused of lesbianism (used as an insult); being threatened with violence; facing intimidation of friends, relatives, employers, clients, etc.; being cast out from the community; being defamed; facing destruction of equipment or theft from the workplace; and

being subjected to sexual violence. Sometimes law or policy is used to attack activism, for instance, in order to attack infrastructure by delegitimizing and defunding a women's rights organization. Using legal sanctions against women's rights activists or groups is a way of smearing or attacking their reputations, discouraging or threatening them from doing their work, or distracting their attention and resources away from their primary work.

At other times, when women are subjected to violence, fundamentalist rhetoric or actions may blame women for not remaining in their traditional roles, or for the way they dress. Such was the case after a brutal gang rape in New Delhi, India, in December 2012, after which a religious leader, Asaram Bapu, blamed the victim of the attack (the woman later died of her injuries). Similar statements have been made by prominent leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church, and attacks against women (including even cases like one involving an 8-year-old schoolgirl, which made international headlines) who do not cover up sufficiently according to Ultra-Orthodox Jewish standards have been documented in Israel, just to name a few examples.¹⁸

Ultimately, the way religious fundamentalist violence works clearly shows how the control of women's bodies is central to fundamentalist strategies. Women play two key roles as reproducers of the community (who should be responsible for raising the next generation), and as symbols of family, community and religious *honour*. Thus, religious fundamentalists seek to control women's mobility, dress, behaviour, sexuality, and reproductive rights, and women who do not conform to norms are at particular risk of targeting by fundamentalist forces.

VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION TO SILENCE OPPOSITION

According to AWID's research, the following are the top ten groups of people targeted with physical or verbal violence by religious fundamentalists:

1. Human rights activists
2. Women in general
3. LGBTQI people and groups
4. People who do not match the religious fundamentalists' expected norms
5. Intellectuals/journalists
6. Members of another religion
7. Secular people or atheists



8. Members of same religion with other political opinions
9. Popular artists and media personalities
10. Ethnic or racial minorities

As noted above, people targeted by fundamentalist violence face diverse kinds of intimidation and attacks. Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) face heightened risks because of their work on women's rights and on issues and work that frequently challenge cultural, religious and traditional norms.

In 1993, a group of women demanding the reform of the Moroccan family code were attacked by fundamentalists who published the women's names and denounced them as "debauched women" in certain mosques, saying that the campaigners were leading a plot against Morocco's Islamic identity and that society should be "purged of such enemies" (women's rights activist, Morocco).

In 2010, the Malaysian Assembly of Mosque Youth tried to stop the organization Sisters In Islam (SIS) from using the word Islam in its name. They argued that it was a women's rights organization and not a Muslim organization and should only be allowed to use its legally registered name (SIS Forum Malaysia). SIS won the case in the end, but this is one example where fundamentalists have tried to use the law to prevent women's rights organizations from working or to divert their attention and resources away from their work.

In northern Pakistan, gunmen from the TTP (Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan) attempted to assassinate Malala Yousufzai, an activist for girls' right to education. The attack took place in October 2012, while Malala was on a bus returning home from school, and two of her classmates were also injured. Fortunately Malala survived the attack, but one purpose of the attack was clear: to commit a high-profile murder *as an example*, to intimidate and terrorize girls and their families so that daughters would be pulled out of school.

But violence and intimidation is not necessarily directed at activists specifically, for example in the case of Dr. George Tiller, a prominent doctor in the U.S. In 2009, Dr. Tiller was medical director at one of only three U.S. clinics that provided late-term abortions. He was targeted by anti-choice militant activists for years, with verbal threats to himself and his family, regular protests outside his clinic and home, and attempted murders. He was assassinated in May of 2009 while at a church service, and the clinic was ultimately closed.¹⁹



3. How Religious Fundamentalists Enter into Public and Political Arenas

One key way fundamentalists spread their influence is through entering and engaging in public and political arenas. Fundamentalist groups and actors generally position themselves as legitimate players in democratic spaces despite the fact that they are ironically, essentially undemocratic.

Fundamentalists are often unrepresentative of the majority although they may position themselves to be mainstream. They are generally supportive of discriminatory laws, policies and norms that they present as divinely inspired, and work to impose their ideals on *all* regardless of individual beliefs. Engaging in the political sphere guarantees an avenue by which laws and policies, inspired by fundamentalist ideology, can be introduced or reinforced, having an impact on all of society, non-believers or believers alike (including believers who follow different ways of thinking). Moreover, once fundamentalist forces succeed in passing such laws or policies, there is little room for debate or challenge.

Participation through Political Parties

Fundamentalists seek to participate directly in mainstream politics, often starting at the local level to gain support. The Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan and Bangladesh, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Palestine, and the Shiv Sena or Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India are some examples of parties explicitly defined as religious and who espouse extremist views. Sometimes, political parties even when self-defined as secular may be influenced by the fundamentalist views of their leaders, or claim to be moderate or even secular, but their actions speak otherwise. For example, Tunisia's En-Nahda party has tried to assure Tunisians it is moderate, and has worked in coalition with secular parties, yet their behaviour indicates otherwise. Thus, Tunisian feminists have been fighting against a provision in the draft constitution which would have introduced "complementarity" of men's and women's roles (instead of equality).²⁰

In much of the Middle East and North Africa, most religious fundamentalist groups drew legitimacy from their opposition to authoritarian rulers. Dramatic shifts have occurred in the region since 2010-2011, and groups such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood have been able to take advantage of their organization, infrastructure and popular appeal. Even though they became Egypt's first elected governing party after 2011, the Brotherhood continued to present itself as the best alternative to the previous dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak that was popularly forced out of power.

As a part of religious fundamentalist penetration into public and political spaces, such groups generally try to undermine the secularity of the state wherever there is a separation between Church and State (as is the case in most of Eastern Europe and Latin America). Fundamentalists are supporting regressive laws or voting against progressive ones through formal entry into politics such as in Brazil, where Evangelical and Catholic fundamentalist members of parliament often cooperate with each other on issues like abortion or LGBTQI rights. In Africa, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians are also very engaged in the political sphere. Also, it is important to recall that even when there is a left-wing government in power, this does not safeguard women's rights, as both Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic introduced abortion bans under left-leaning governments that made concessions to the Catholic Church in exchange for the Church's support.

Lobbying to Influence Public Policies

There are many ways in which fundamentalist politicians or movements and leaders lobbying politicians and influencing voters can try to change public policies. One example is to privilege religion or religiously-inspired ideas into the constitution. Examples would include countries that have the Roman Catholic Church occupying a formal or informal political position of power, or states where Muslim laws occupy a privileged constitutional status in the legal system. Some states may have a formal state religion (as in Zambia, which is constitutionally a Christian state, or Malta which is officially Catholic, or Greece which is officially Greek Orthodox), or Sharia may be named a formal source of law (as in Egypt, Indonesia or Pakistan), and often the application of this privileged constitutional status is then left open to patriarchal religious and legal institutions, compounding the damage.

However, secular constitutions in and of themselves are not a guarantee against fundamentalist influence in public policy. For example, despite Nicaragua being formally secular, it is in fact more influenced by religious fundamentalist ideology (due to its relations with the Catholic Church) than Costa Rica, which in Article 75 of its Constitution identifies Roman Catholicism as the religion of the state.

Fundamentalist forces also form tactical alliances, locally, regionally and internationally, for example, attempting to remove or prevent more progressive language or introduce regressive ideas in international agreements and declarations. Increasing cooperation between Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox and Muslim actors has resulted in many states influenced by such ideals supporting Traditional Values or the Defamation of Religions resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council.

FUNDAMENTALISTS UNDERMINING SECULARITY

In 2010 in formally secular Brazil, then-candidate for President Dilma Rousseff faced great public pressure from Catholic and Evangelical Christian forces who were concerned about her previous progressive statements on a number of social issues. Bending to the pressure, Rousseff and her party's leadership held a closed-door meeting with Evangelical Congressional leaders, and afterward she publicly affirmed that she would not support legalization of abortion or same-sex marriage.²¹

For over 60 years, the debate between secular and religious Zionists in Israel over the question of secularity of the state has prevented the drafting of a constitution. To this day, the Orthodox Rabbinical courts continue to have exclusive jurisdiction over divorce for all Jews. Application of Orthodox religious laws in matters of personal status means that women cannot obtain a divorce without the court's approval, and that couples where one partner is not Jewish must leave Israel to obtain a civil marriage.

In many Muslim countries, previously secular constitutions or secular political environments have been "Islamized" since the late 1970s. Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan were secular states at independence from colonialism but have since adopted Islam as the official state religion; and in 2007 Madagascar dropped the word *laïc* (roughly translated as secular) from its constitution. In Indonesia, in contrast to the early post-Independence rejection of a state religion, Muslim fundamentalist institutions have increasingly inserted laws in accordance to an extreme interpretation of Sharia at the local and provincial levels.

Key Arguments Used by Religious Fundamentalists to Oppose Sexual and Reproductive Rights

ARGUMENT	WHAT THE ARGUMENT SAYS	SOME COUNTER ARGUMENTS AND COUNTER-POSITIONS
Life begins at conception	Life begins at the moment of conception and any attack against a zygote, embryo or foetus is an attack on the life of a human being. The right to unconditional protection of human life from the moment of conception must be upheld. This affirmation is based upon the language of several legal instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the American Convention on Human Rights.	<p>International human rights agreements do not explicitly define biological conception as the moment beyond which the protection of life is guaranteed. In a report released in 2011, Anand Grover, Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, also clearly called for the decriminalization of abortion.²² The report emphasizes that access to the highest possible standard of health includes access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services.</p> <p>Article 4(1) of the American Convention on Human Rights, which establishes that life shall be protected, “in general, from the moment of conception”, leaves room for interpretations that break with the principle of absolute protection of life from conception. This was expressly stated by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in the case known as “Baby Boy”, and reiterated in the case of Beatriz in 2013 when the IACHR ordered El Salvador to permit a life-saving abortion to a woman carrying a foetus that was anencephalic (without a brain).²³</p> <p>The Commission in charge of drafting the Convention on the Rights of the Child, when writing the Preamble of the document, expressly rejected the inclusion of the notion that life begins at conception within the scope of any of its provisions. On several occasions, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has signalled to States Parties who do not permit abortion in the case of rape or risk to the life or health of women and girls to reform their legal norms to incorporate this provision.</p>

ARGUMENT	WHAT THE ARGUMENT SAYS	SOME COUNTER ARGUMENTS AND COUNTER-POSITIONS
<i>continued</i>	<i>continued</i>	<p>Supervisory committees of international and regional human rights treaties understand that the right to life entails, among other things, a state's obligation to create and guarantee adequate conditions of life and to ensure that human beings do not die of avoidable causes. The right to life is to be understood as the right not to die of causes related to pregnancy or childbirth or of gender-based violence; the right to an adequate standard of living; and the right to enjoy a fulfilling sex life.</p> <p>International committees on human rights have declared that obstructing access to safe abortions and the criminalization of abortion are a violation of the right to live a life free of torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment.</p>
Methods of contraception are not completely effective at preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections	<p>Methods of contraception are not completely effective at preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Therefore, health services should only promote abstinence and natural contraceptive methods that are completely effective, such as the Billings Method (the only form of contraception permitted by the Catholic Church is the Billings Method, in women identify when they are fertile and when they are infertile during each menstrual cycle).</p>	<p>No method of contraception is 100% effective at preventing pregnancy. Much of the time, contraceptives fail because they are not utilized correctly and a solution is to improve the dissemination of information regarding their correct use.</p> <p>Birth control pills and condoms, if used regularly, are more than 85% effective. If used correctly, they are more than 98% effective. In addition, a combination of contraceptive methods is often prescribed in order to increase their effectiveness (for example, pills + condoms). Contraceptives such as the IUD, which don't require repeated use, are more than 99% effective at preventing pregnancy.</p> <p>The effectiveness rate of the Billings Method is lower than that of other contraceptives.</p> <p>Condoms are similarly effective at preventing sexually transmitted infections such as HIV as they are at preventing pregnancy.</p>

ARGUMENT	WHAT THE ARGUMENT SAYS	SOME COUNTER ARGUMENTS AND COUNTER-POSITIONS
Emergency contraception is abortion	<p>Emergency contraception is abortion, as it prevents a fertilized egg from implanting itself in the uterine wall.</p> <p>Thus, its use should be prohibited. By impeding the implantation of a fertilized egg, emergency contraception acts like an abortifacient, and violates the right to life from the moment of conception.</p>	<p>Emergency contraception acts in two ways: 1) it prevents spermatozoa from reaching the egg so that they can fertilize it, and 2) it slows down the process of ovulation, which also helps to prevent fertilization.</p> <p>Emergency contraception does not prevent a fertilized egg from implanting itself in the uterus, as several studies have demonstrated. This information has been backed by scientific organizations such as the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (IFGO).</p> <p>Hypothetically, if emergency contraception were to prevent the implantation of the fertilized egg in the uterus, this could not be considered a termination of pregnancy (abortion), as the World Health Organization (WHO) considers pregnancy to begin at the moment of implantation.</p> <p>In 2011 the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations, Anand Grover, stated that refusing access to emergency contraception violated the rights to sexual and reproductive health, equality and a life free of violence, and furthermore contributed to the perpetuation of gendered stereotypes about women and girls.²⁴</p>
A large number of women who have undergone an abortion suffer from “post-abortion syndrome”	<p>A large number of women who have undergone an abortion suffer from “post-abortion syndrome”, characterized by an array of symptoms, including psychological disorders, distress, remorse, anger and guilt. Abortion should therefore be prohibited on the grounds of women’s mental health.</p>	<p>There is no scientific evidence to confirm the existence of a post-abortion syndrome.</p> <p>In 2009 a team of scientists from the United States and Canada revised the most recent studies that had been published on the topic, and came to the conclusion that those who had confirmed the existence of a post-abortion syndrome presented serious methodological problems in their analysis.</p> <p>To force a woman to carry a risky or unwanted pregnancy to term generates negative psychological consequences and can lead to depression and other mental disorders.</p>

ARGUMENT	WHAT THE ARGUMENT SAYS	SOME COUNTER ARGUMENTS AND COUNTER-POSITIONS
<p>Social practices such as abortion and homosexuality can lead to the extinction of the human species. The promotion of abortion is being used to decimate certain populations, especially those who are living in poverty, or from the global South.</p>	<p>Current social practices are leading to the extinction of the human species, thus it is necessary to promote the conception and birth of more human beings. In many parts of the world, such as Europe, mortality rates are exceeding birth rates, and regions such as Latin America are moving in this direction. We should oppose practices and technologies that separate sexuality from reproduction, such as abortion, the use of contraceptives, and homosexuality.</p> <p>Efforts to expand access to abortion are no more than “imperialism” and a cover for racist eugenics (efforts to <i>improve</i> genetic qualities of human beings) with the aim of reducing the populations of Africa and Latin America and of migrant populations serving as a form of “genocide against poor people”.</p>	<p>Access to comprehensive health, including sexual and reproductive health is a human right of all populations. A rights-based approach, including the right to sexual autonomy and reproductive decision-making, needs to be at the centre of policy-making.</p> <p>There are no human populations that have become extinct as a result of changes in their sexual or reproductive behaviours, so this argument does not hold any empirical or historical validity.</p> <p>Although the rate of mortality has surpassed that of fertility in Europe and Latin America, this does not hold true globally and the human population continues to increase due in part to longer life expectancies.</p>

ARGUMENT	WHAT THE ARGUMENT SAYS	SOME COUNTER ARGUMENTS AND COUNTER-POSITIONS
Sex education violates the right to freedom of conscience and parental rights	Sex education violates the right to freedom of conscience and parental rights. The right of parents to choose the manner in which their children are educated is more important than the responsibility of the state to provide public health information and sex education.	<p>The Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on the Right to Education, Vernor Muñoz Villalobos, stated in 2010 that: “The modern State, as a democratic construct, must ensure that all its citizens receive a good education and must not allow religious institutions to set patterns of education or conduct that are claimed to apply not only to their followers but to all citizens, whether or not they belong to the religion in question.”²⁵</p> <p>The same UN Rapporteur also declared that “Although fathers and mothers are free to choose the type of education their sons and daughters will have, this authority may never run counter to the rights of children and adolescents, in accordance with the primacy of the principle of the best interests of the child ... Particularly in the case of sexual education, people have the right to receive high-quality scientific information that is unprejudiced and age-appropriate, so as to foster full development and prevent possible physical and psychological abuse.”²⁶</p> <p>The CEDAW Committee in 1999, in its General Recommendation No. 24, mentions the obligation of States parties to guarantee access to sexual and reproductive health information for women and girls as an essential part of the right to health.²⁷</p> <p>The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights declared in 2000, as part of its General Comment No. 14 (The right to the highest attainable standard of health), that “[t]he realization of women’s right to health requires the removal of all barriers interfering with access to health services, education and information, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health.”²⁸</p>

ARGUMENT	WHAT THE ARGUMENT SAYS	SOME COUNTER ARGUMENTS AND COUNTER-POSITIONS
Homosexuality is the product of a traumatic psychological experience	Homosexuality is the result of a traumatic psychological experience (an absent father, an over-protective mother, an episode of violence or sexual abuse during infancy, etc.). Homosexuality is therefore a kind of illness. The psychological disorders associated with homosexuality are linked with a series of risky behaviours. The state should not support unions between individuals who are sick and will not contribute to the good of society, nor should it accept adoptions by such individuals, as this puts the psychiatric health of children in danger.	<p>Homosexuality was removed from the category of diseases by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1973 and by the WHO in 1990.</p> <p>Organizations in the scientific sphere, such as the APA, have published documents supporting same-sex marriage and adoption.</p> <p>Studies that associate homosexuality with risky behaviours such as suicide attempts and drug use are extremely skewed, and don't take into consideration the fact that some of the health issues LGBTQI people suffer can be attributed to the oppression they experience due to living in a heteronormative and patriarchal context.</p>

ARGUMENT	WHAT THE ARGUMENT SAYS	SOME COUNTER ARGUMENTS AND COUNTER-POSITIONS
<p>To eradicate domestic violence it is necessary to reinforce policies that strengthen and uphold the traditional family</p>	<p>To end domestic violence it is necessary to reinforce policies that strengthen and uphold the traditional family. According to this argument, violence is not just directed at women but also at “unborn children” through the use of contraception and abortion. Therefore, it is necessary to reinforce the role of the woman in the domestic sphere. In this thinking, the traditional family is the natural protection from violence against women.</p>	<p>The idea that the emancipation of women from the domestic sphere contributes to an increase in chances for them to be subjected to violent situations ignores the fact that a large proportion of gender-based violence occurs within the home, and renders situations of domestic abuse and marital rape invisible.</p> <p>Radhika Coomaraswamy, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and its Causes and Consequences, stated in 2002 that: “Violence against women in the family in the name of culture is often sanctioned by dominant ideologies and structures within societies. These ideologies and structures emerged in a different era, but continue to dominate public opinion and individual lifestyles, thus preventing the eradication of practices that are harmful to women.”²⁹</p> <p>Challenging the notion of the traditional family has been stressed earlier by this Rapporteur in regards to addressing violence against women: “Increasingly, women’s human rights defenders are coming under attack for, among other things, challenging traditional notions of the family... in order to ensure that women’s human rights are protected in both public and private life, the acceptance of non-traditional family forms is necessary. It is essential to recognize the potential for and work to prevent violence against women and the oppression of women within all family forms.”³⁰</p> <p>The CEDAW Committee, in its General Comments No. 11, declares that “Traditional attitudes by which women are regarded as subordinate to men or as having stereotyped roles, perpetuate widespread practices involving violence or coercion, such as family violence and abuse, forced marriage, dowry deaths, acid attacks and female circumcision. Such prejudices and practices may justify gender-based violence as a form of protection or control of women. The effect of such violence on the physical and mental integrity of women is to deprive them the equal enjoyment, exercise and knowledge of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”³¹</p>

Discussion Questions:

What specific messaging about the family and gender roles is used by religious fundamentalists in your experience and context? Are the areas of women's rights, or discourses of morality and tradition used politically or to gain or maintain power by fundamentalists?

Are non-traditional families accepted in your context, and if not, what role do fundamentalisms play in perpetuating discrimination? How traditional is the traditional family, in your experience? That is, among your friends, family and colleagues, how common is the "traditional" family, with a male-headed breadwinner who supports the household? Is the trend of more people living together outside of marriage or remaining unmarried growing in your context? What kinds of problems can arise when policies are formulated assuming a family structure that is not the norm or does not apply to everybody (for example, if social policies do not recognize the existence of families headed by single parents)?

In your context, how do fundamentalist claims of speaking for/on behalf of God impact human rights? Are the sanctions, judgements and opinions of fundamentalists openly challenged? What are the implications for those who challenge or question these claims made by fundamentalist leaders?

Is religion promoted as a feature of national identity in your context? Is there an *other* – a religious, ethnic or minority community that fundamentalists or political leaders preach against or promote fear of? If so, what are some of the consequences of this rhetoric? Are these minorities presented as a threat by political leaders too?

Are there clauses on conscientious objection, religious refusal or right to life from conception used in your context? Do you think that doctors or pharmacists, health professionals, and civil servants who are against abortion, emergency contraception or same-sex marriage should be able to refuse services? Are they simply exercising their freedom of conscience? What about the extension of conscientious objection or religious refusals to other areas such as comprehensive sexuality education? Is conscientious objection or religious refusal about imposing one's beliefs on others, a fundamentalist strategy to deny rights, or an individual right and personal decision?

What are the main forms of communication that you see fundamentalist forces using in your context? What has been the trend in terms of the use and popularity of new technologies including social media, texting, etc. by extremist groups in your context? Do you see any examples of language,

messages which incite divisions and misinformation and double discourse? What impacts do these have on rights and the reinforcing of patriarchal societal notions?

What are religious fundamentalist's main sources of funding in your context? Do they benefit from individual donations, international funds, state subsidies/tax exemptions, development aid, etc.? What role does each of these funding sources play in enabling these groups to spread fundamentalist ideology? Are religious organizations engaged in development work or charitable services or disaster relief in your context? If so, would you consider some of these to be fundamentalist? Does this seem to be a way to gain followers or spread fundamentalist ideas?

In your context, are religious fundamentalists likely to engage in verbal or physical violence or other kinds of intimidation? If so, what are some examples? Is there a pattern in terms of the types of groups targeted? What are some of the ways in which people have been targeted or intimidated by religious fundamentalists?

Are religious fundamentalists actively engaged in politics in your context? If so, through what means (through political parties, religious leaders influencing public debate, directly through the constitution and laws, or by other means?) What impact has this engagement had on rights?

Are fundamentalist religious institutions or parallel institutions involved in informal or formal settlement or counselling of family/community disputes? Do the codes, rules, regulations and verdicts of these institutions comply with the formal law or international human rights standards? How has the state responded to parallel structures of mediation? What is the outcome and impact on society and the rights of women and other minority groups?

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CHAPTER 4

STRATEGIES TO COUNTER RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISMS



Local contexts inform the strategies that feminists, women's rights, LGBTQI rights, and other rights activists use to oppose the rise and impact of religious fundamentalisms. These strategies are often layered, creative, and courageous. This chapter focuses mainly on the analysis and experiences of women's rights activists who participated in AWID's research, and is just a sampling of possible strategies.

Sharing examples of women's resistance and opposition to religious fundamentalisms serves to inspire analysis and strategizing across contexts to help strengthen collective resistance. It also helps to demonstrate that, despite their strength, religious fundamentalisms are not invincible and they can and are being effectively challenged. Across the globe, there are many locally-rooted efforts to advance women's rights and human rights specifically, and pluralism and democracy more generally. And although much remains to be done, social change and advances in rights are possible and do happen in spite of the strength of fundamentalist movements. In the last decade, for example, a number of countries have decriminalized same-sex behaviour or recognized same-sex unions, liberalized abortion laws, and strengthened legal equality between genders.

The categorizations in this section are simply used for ease of presentation, since the strategies that activists employ are diverse yet interconnected. In practice, there aren't clear lines that neatly divide activists' strategies; rather, we use them in combinations.

Sections

1. Strengthening feminist movements and building alliances
2. Building knowledge of religious fundamentalist actors and agendas
3. Raising public awareness
4. Advocating for legal or policy changes
5. Strengthening secularity
6. Promoting pluralism, universal human rights and democratic values
7. Building solidarity internally and offering alternative emotional communities
8. Developing and reclaiming feminist interpretations of religion

1. Strengthening feminist movements and building alliances

A majority of the women's rights activists who participated in AWID's research highlighted the importance of alliance-building, and working together to strengthen collective capacity to respond to religious fundamentalisms. The Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) international solidarity network, the Catholics for Choice/Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir networks, the Musawah global campaign for equality and justice in the Muslim family, the Girls Not Brides global partnership, and AWID's Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms thematic priority are all examples of cross-regional initiatives that respond to this need.

Considering the bigger global picture is important for strengthening advocacy that works toward a common goal, but strategies also need to be contextual and respond to local dynamics. Understanding religious fundamentalisms as a global issue affecting every religion and region, and recognizing the similar ways in which these movements operate to undermine rights is an important first step towards building solidarity. Women's rights activists also highlight the importance of working with broader rights-based movements in order to ensure that they are not politically isolated and can collectively have a stronger impact. Thus, building alliances and movements may cross both geographic boundaries as well as cross sectors of rights-based work. The other rights-based sectors that women's rights activists mention most frequently include human rights and development organizations and trade and sex-workers' unions.

Building movements across issues

Critical to building movements is growing abroad popular mass base. This provides support for the changes advocated for, increases the legitimacy and visibility of women's rights movements, and provides safety in numbers. As part of this, alliances must be built with other groups, not only for the purpose of strengthening the capacity of women's rights movements to challenge fundamentalisms, but also to recognize the fact that fundamentalisms' impacts cut across lines of sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, class, and other identity markers.

One example of such collaboration occurred in 2007 in Pakistan, where students from fundamentalist-dominated *madrasas* in Islamabad attacked music and video shops, burning CDs and videos as part of a campaign of *moral policing* to end corruption and impose their own narrow interpretation of Sharia law. The Joint Action Committee for People's Rights, a coalition of over 30 NGOs formed in 1990 focusing on tolerance, human rights, and women's rights¹, "went to the affected groups, e.g. the traders, video shops, the musicians... for the first time in our lives, and they came on board. You had very strange partners at the demonstration on the Al-Hafsa madrasa saying 'no to fundamentalism', 'no to mullah-raj [rule by clerics]'." (Farida Shaheed, Pakistan).

Similarly in India in 2009, the work of a diverse coalition led to the case where the Delhi High Court ruled that Section 377 of the colonial-era Criminal Code making "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" an offence was unconstitutional.² Though convictions were rare, the law was used to harass HIV and AIDS prevention activists, sex workers, men who have sex with men, and other LGBTQI groups.³ After years of campaigning by diverse progressive actors, beginning with advocacy by ABVA (AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan/ Anti-AIDS Discrimination Campaign) the cause was taken up in 2001 by the Naz Foundation Trust, an HIV and AIDS and sexual health organization, supported by prominent Indian human rights NGO the Lawyers Collective. A Voices Against 377 coalition was also formed⁴ —including children's rights, women's rights, sexuality rights, human rights, and other groups, prominent writers, directors, journalists and public figures⁵ —to generate public pressure. The collective mobilization of a variety of civil society actors, and a sustained legal strategy, finally led the Delhi High Court to strike down Section 377⁶. The Supreme Court of India overturned the Delhi High Court decision in December 2013, ruling that it was a matter for parliament, not the judiciary. Though the Supreme Court's decision was a grave disappointment for activists in India and around the globe, advocates for social justice have noted changes in social attitudes since the original Delhi High Court decision and have vowed to continue the struggle to decriminalize consensual same-sex relations.⁷

Building movements across generations

In addition to strengthening feminist movements and building solidarity and alliances across social movements, the need for cross-generational movement-building must not be underestimated. The renewal and continuity of women's movements depends on working with younger women in ways that engage and value their concerns, interests and knowledge. "Younger activists should play a key role in devising strategies to work with and appeal to their peers, but their contribution should not be characterized as simply bringing in the fun, energetic and creative activism. Effective dialogue between generations recognizes that individuals of different ages have varied experiences, perspectives, analysis and ideas, and that building on this diversity strengthens our strategies" (Sanushka Mudaliar, Australia/China).

HIGHLIGHTING SOME OF THE WORK LED BY YOUNG WOMEN

While there is a clear need to reach across generations to build and sustain women's movements, young women are also active agents of change and resistance themselves. Examples of initiatives founded or led by young women are included throughout this Chapter, but some specific ones are highlighted below.

- The Hollaback movement targets street harassment, as one of the most common and normalized forms of cultural violence against women. Started in the U.S. in 2005, it has grown into a network of 200 leaders (75% under the age of 30), in 62 cities, 25 countries, working in 12 languages. It has also inspired numerous other projects around the world which also use internet, satellite and mobile technology to track and publicize incidents of street harassment, offer solidarity and share strategies.⁸
- Jovens Feministas de Sao Paulo (Young Feminists of Sao Paulo) is a Brazilian feminist collective of young women aged 18-29. The collective seeks to reflect the concerns and demands of young people, focusing on women's empowerment and sexual and reproductive health.
- Aware Girls is a young women's membership organization in Pakistan, open to 12-29 year-olds. Among other activities, Aware Girls promotes dialogue on the effects of Islamization and radicalization, raises awareness about sexual health, and seeks to empower young women to be agents of social change.
- Shura Yabafazi (Consultation of Women) is an organization focusing and advocating on women's equality rights in Muslim family laws, and was founded by a group of young feminists in South Africa.



Some of the publicity produced for the Pink Chaddi campaign building up to Valentine's Day 2009, to protest the kind of Hindu fundamentalist moral policing that violently targets women

In 2009 members of the right-wing Hindu group Sri Ram Sena (Army of Lord Rama) attacked women and men in a bar in the Indian city of Mangalore, accusing them of immorality and going against Indian culture. After the attack, the group declared they would target unmarried couples seen in public places on Valentine's Day. In response, a group of young women formed the Consortium of Pub-Going, Loose and Forward Women. Using social media to gain support, within a week they had over 40,000

members join their Facebook page. Among other actions they invited their supporters to send pink underwear (*chaddis* means underwear, and is also a term used to make fun of Sri Ram Sena members because of the shorts they wear) to Pramod Muthalik, head of the parent organization of Sri Ram Sena.⁹ The group also urged members to fill the pubs on Valentine's Day in defiance of Hindu fundamentalist moral policing and to show solidarity with those who were attacked. The strategy contributed to the immediate short-term result of Muthalik and 140 Sri Ram Sena members being taken into preventive police custody just before Valentine's Day that year,¹⁰ and also raised media attention around the globe, generating public discussion and debate on issues of moral policing, harassment, and violence within India.

2. Building knowledge of religious fundamentalist actors and agendas

Women's rights activists are also responding to the need for building knowledge on the issue of religious fundamentalisms and women's rights (and human rights more broadly). This involves the key step of documenting and deepening our understandings of the impacts and strategies of religious fundamentalist agendas and actors, using this both to inform feminist counter-strategizing and to build a broader response by sharing information on impacts with a wider audience. It also includes documenting women's lived realities, vital as a strategy for countering fundamentalist visions and claims about people's lives. It is also critically important for the basic purpose of unmasking fundamentalist movements, particularly where they engage in double discourse, or appear to play a positive role when in reality they engage in unethical or corrupt activities, or where they manipulate or distort facts to discredit or undermine opposition and spread misinformation. Building a greater understanding of religious fundamentalisms is, therefore,

vital to more effective responses. As one women's rights activist from India expressed: "for a long time, people have just dismissed some of these [religious fundamentalist] groups as fringe extremists and not really seen them until they've become powerful enough to have an impact."

Building knowledge and analysis on the workings and impact of religious fundamentalisms can also help clarify some important questions. What are some regional or context-specific variations of the factors that lead to the growth of fundamentalisms? Can we understand more about the appeal of fundamentalisms for certain groups of people? What are some of the connections between fundamentalisms and, for example, economics or the environment, that would help us build better alliances?



TALKING ABOUT LIVED REALITIES

As part of its work to promote sexual and reproductive health rights, the U.S.-based organization Catholics for Choice (CFC) periodically conducts opinion surveys of Catholics. Prior to the November 2012 U.S. Presidential elections, a CFC press release stated that "a new poll of 1,000 self-identified Catholic likely voters shows that, despite the best efforts of the bishops, they are least concerned about abortion and gay marriage. Catholic voters are most concerned about jobs, public education and healthcare."¹¹ This work of CFC serves both the purpose of assessing how far the positions of the religious hierarchy are from the views of average Catholics, as well as publicizing the great difference that exists between the two.

Another example of knowledge-building is the research work conducted by the Musawah campaign for equality in the Muslim family. Musawah's knowledge-building initiative on the issue of male *qiwama* (authority) and *wilaya* (guardianship) is based on participatory research on women's real life experiences, conducted by researchers in 12 countries, as well as research on the legal and social aspects of these concepts.

Through this project, Musawah interrogates the assumptions that the male head of the family supports his wife and dependents and shows how these assumptions do not fit with the realities of many Muslim women's lives, leading to inequality and injustice.¹²

Sometimes this kind of strategy can be applied in very simple ways. In 2008, Ipas Brazil released a brief video as part of its "Think about it" campaign to challenge individual opinions on the country's restrictive abortion laws. In the 30 second video clip, people on the street are asked three questions: whether they are for or against abortion, whether they know anyone who has ever had an abortion, and whether they think that person should be arrested for doing so. The reactions of the people questioned show how even those who morally oppose abortion on a personal level may not be able to support legislation that criminalizes women for having abortions when they stop and think about the practical impact of such laws on the people they know.¹³

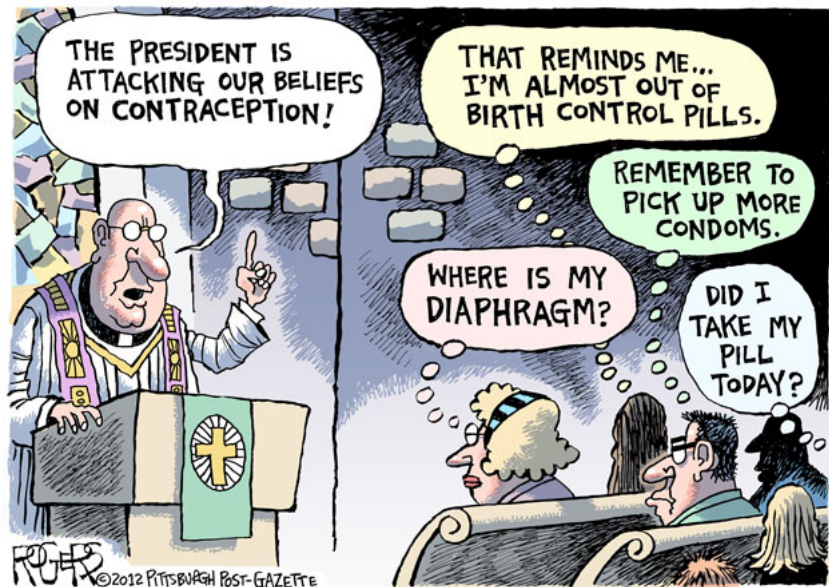
Opposition Monitoring

Opposition monitoring can also serve to expose religious fundamentalist agendas to the public, to better inform strategies, as well as to expand women's rights and human rights in the legislative sphere.

PROMSEX, an organization in Peru, has conducted extensive research on fundamentalist forces active in Latin America through its Observatory on Anti-Rights Groups. The work began with a focus on Peru, but this was broadened as researchers became more aware of the extent of cross-border connections between fundamentalist groups. The Observatory shares its research on opposition group activities and structures, and their discourses and lobbying on issues relating to sexual and reproductive health rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, sexuality education, and other spheres. Information is shared with allies across Latin America and beyond through their website, publications, presentations and a regular newsletter.

Opposition watching can also involve monitoring the voting records and positions taken by parliamentarians, as CFEMEA (Centro Feminista de Estudos e Assessoria) in Brazil has done in order to inform allies and lobby the government on issues relating to sexual and reproductive health rights. This involves tracking of parliamentarians and right-wing groups promoting Catholic fundamentalist agendas as well as Evangelical fundamentalist agendas, since the growth of Evangelical churches in the country has been followed by the rise of an Evangelical Christian conservative bloc in Brazil's government.

Political Research Associates in the United States produces investigative research and analysis on right-wing organizing to support social justice advocates and defend human rights. The right-wing groups they focus on run the entire spectrum of the U.S. right, including secular, religious, economic and other right-wing groups. Their investigative research into the export of homophobia by Christian right groups in the U.S. to countries in Africa is one such example, and their work has helped shed light on the anti-rights activities of certain Christian fundamentalist leaders, informing further strategies and actions in response.¹⁴



3. Raising public awareness

Building knowledge and analysis, and monitoring (and, when strategic, exposing) the way that fundamentalist actors and organizations operate, grow and increase their influence, supports and informs activism and counter-strategies. It is also connected to raising awareness and public consciousness about the impacts these movements are having on women's rights and human rights more generally. This awareness-raising can take more conventional forms, such as writing and publishing, working with mainstream and alternative media, engaging in public campaigns such as demonstrations, sit-ins, or petitions. It may also take some innovative forms, using creative formats to communicate ideas in accessible ways that can reach mass audiences. Some examples of different ways that activists and allies raise awareness and consciousness of how religious fundamentalisms impact women's and human rights are briefly provided here.

In Iran, the One Million Signatures Campaign started in 2006 at a time when space for civil society was closing rapidly and organizations were not allowed to organize formally, so the campaign used a horizontal network rather than registering as an organization. The campaign sought to raise public awareness and demand changes to discriminatory laws. Activists approached people in public spaces to discuss the negative social impacts of legal discrimination against women. They asked those who agreed to sign a petition to the parliament calling for laws to be brought in line with

international human rights standards, including changes in civil and penal codes and in family laws. Campaigners were not able to collect one million signatures due to targeting and arrests by the state, and after the contested 2009 elections, the campaign (like other social movements) became largely inactive. Despite the intimidation, the campaign did manage to change discourses, bringing national attention to the critical need to ensure citizens' equality. The campaign contributed to legal changes including a regulation that insurance companies pay equal compensation for men and women accident victims, women being able to pass on nationality to children (with some restrictions), and widows' right to inherit land from deceased husbands. In part, through the efforts of the campaign, one of the main demands being echoed by women across Iran's ideological spectrum is the need for legal reform, and the demand has been picked up by more moderate politicians. The religious establishment and conservative groups, however, are pushing back by denying reforms and trying to reverse women's social gains, showing that an extreme minority can counter the demands of the majority. Iranian women continue to push for legal reform and equality through various programs.¹⁵

In Turkey, feminist activists responded strongly against pro-natalist statements by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of the Islamist AKP (Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party), who encourages all women to have at least three and ideally five children.¹⁶ In spring 2012, the Prime Minister stated that a Bill would be introduced to reduce abortion from 10 weeks to 4 weeks (which would be an effective ban). Women's rights activists and their allies came together and took to the streets across the country to raise awareness and media attention and lobby the government. They spread the word with the help of local and international allies, circulating petitions and engaging in other advocacy actions. The online news outlet Bianet.org began the "My Body, My Decision" campaign to raise awareness, setting up a Facebook page and blog asking people from across Turkey and around the world to submit photos carrying pro-choice solidarity messages.¹⁷ The public pressure from within and solidarity from outside the country led the AKP government to not table the bill.

In Lithuania, the Center for Equality Advancement (CEA) held creative public protests against the discriminatory National Family Policy Concept Bill, attracting wide media coverage. They held tongue-in-cheek marriage ceremonies, collected children's toys and distributed Mother's Day postcards in which they explained how the simple definition of the family in the bill would discriminate against and further marginalize those who fell outside that definition, for example, households headed by single women. While

they were not able to stop the Bill from becoming law, the CEA did manage to attract public attention, raise awareness and encourage debate around the issue.

Sometimes awareness campaigns to change widespread harmful practices or beliefs must be long and sustained. The work of GAMCOTRAP (Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children) to eliminate the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is one example. In a context where the prevalence rate of FGM is extremely high (78% of women between 15 and 49), GAMCOTRAP engages in policy advocacy, media campaigns and trainings, and most importantly, works directly with local communities. The latter involves training programs for the general public, for doctors and journalists, and for religious leaders and circumcisers (women who perform FGM). Through these trainings, GAMCOTRAP works to convince these target groups that FGM seriously harms girls' health and that there is no religious requirement or basis for the practice. Central to GAMCOTRAP's strategy is the "Drop the Knife" campaign which began in 2007 with a group of 18 circumcisers publically denouncing FGM and swearing they would work to stop it in their communities. In 2009 they convinced 60 circumcisers to pledge to stop FGM.¹⁸

CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

One innovative way that activists put forward alternative narratives and ideas is by using creative means like music or television or new media (such as cartoons or social soap operas). This can help reach new and broader audiences, show different points of view, and expand public debate.

Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir (CDD) Mexico was inspired by the Adventures of Salwa, a series of short cartoons against sexual harassment produced by the Adventures of Salwa campaign, an initiative supported by the feminist network Nasawiya in Lebanon. CDD produced its own cartoon series called Catolicadas which first aired online in early 2012. The series revolves around two main characters, a progressive nun named Sister Juana and a very traditional priest named Father Beto. In each brief episode, their interactions use humour and simple storylines to show how the Church hierarchy's positions on issues such as abortion, same-sex relationships, or women's authority in the Church clash with the realities of people's lives and general public opinion. Each episode presents different perspectives, drawing on sources like CDD's public opinion polling, church history, women's

scholarship and alternative interpretations, and principles of love and tolerance that are common across religions. The series attracted over 1 million views on the Catolicadas YouTube channel in less than one year and is now broadcast on a mainstream television channel, generating widespread public discussion.¹⁹

The controversial musical protest by punk rock collective Pussy Riot in February 2012 made headlines around the world. The collective's song lyrics talk about feminism, LGBTQI rights, Russian President Vladimir Putin and the ties between the state and the Orthodox Church. They stage guerrilla performances which they film and post as music videos. During one such performance in a Moscow cathedral, the band sang a "punk prayer" pleading with the Virgin Mary to "drive Putin away" as he was preparing for a third term in office.²⁰ In the much-publicized trial that followed, three band members were charged with "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred" and sentenced to two years in prison. The case succeeded, however, in gaining international attention and inspiring discussion around the increasingly close relationship between the Kremlin and the Orthodox Church hierarchy at a time when the Russian state is furthering an agenda of restricting LGBTQI rights, sexual and reproductive health rights, freedom of assembly and expression, and other rights in the name of defending and promoting *traditional values*.

4. Advocating for legal or policy changes

Using the legal system to advocate for reforms and seek accountability for human rights violations can overturn discriminatory laws and raise public awareness. This may include lobbying for legislative change, or litigation at local or national levels (or beyond, where appeals to regional or international courts are possible). Taking a case to court or lobbying to change or to prevent a regressive law may not always be successful. It can still raise public awareness around an issue, however, such as the earlier unsuccessful attempts to strike down Section 377 of the Indian Criminal Code (the Supreme Court has since overturned the Delhi High Court's decision, however, the lower court's decision still marked the greatest legal progress made on the issue since India's independence).²¹ Women's rights activists around the world use various ways to influence law and policy to promote and defend women's human rights.

At times, an extreme rights violation can ignite public debate on the need for legal reform and accountability of public institutions. The death of Savita

Halappanavar in Ireland in October 2012 is one example. Seventeen weeks into her pregnancy, Savita began to suffer a miscarriage and then developed an infection and died four days later. Doctors had refused to perform an abortion because a foetal heartbeat was still apparent. This case highlighted the inconsistencies in Ireland's laws, which constitutionally equate the right to life of the foetus with the life of a woman, and where the court's guidance requires that doctors must determine the point where continuing a pregnancy is a threat to the pregnant woman's life. The case focused international attention on Ireland's longstanding and extremely restrictive abortion laws, again raising the issue on the government's agenda and inspiring small steps toward legal reform.²²

USING LEGAL STRATEGIES TO INFLUENCE CHANGE

At the international level, in September 2012 the U.S.-based Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) and the Survivors' Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) filed a case with the International Criminal Court (ICC). The case is to investigate and prosecute the Pope and several senior Vatican officials for crimes against humanity for their role in covering up systematic sexual abuse by Catholic clergy. The move seeks to bring accountability for the Vatican's systematic cover-up and denial of widespread sexual abuse around the world. Key to the case was the collection of over 20,000 pages of documents confirming the abuse and cover-up by officials in various countries and a public awareness campaign. The campaign included a tour of 12 European cities to collect further evidence, ending in Rome where the documents and case were also submitted to the Vatican. This international legal strategy is critical considering that, *in the U.S. alone*, church authorities have admitted that nearly 6,000 priests stand accused of sexually abusing children over the past few decades.²³

In Argentina, a country with strict abortion laws, rape survivors have faced many barriers to accessing legal abortions. When a Supreme Court ruling granting abortion rights to a 15-year-old girl raped by her stepfather was appealed, the Association for Civil Rights in Argentina (ADC, Asociación por los Derechos Civiles) and the CEDES (Center for the Study of State and Society's Public Health) responded by submitting amicus briefs²⁴ from different local and international women's rights and human rights organizations. This joint effort was successful, and in March 2012, the Supreme Court ruled that abortion in the case of rape was legal and accessible to women without the need of a judge's authorization. The decision also called on the government to produce a protocol for the provision of safe abortion.

5. Strengthening secularity

In certain regions, feminist resistance to religious fundamentalisms has mainly been expressed as a struggle to strengthen and promote the separation of religion from the state. Advocating for this separation (what may be termed as secularity or as *laïcité* in different contexts, with some differences in meaning) in public policy and within society more generally is considered to be an important step in challenging fundamentalisms. In countries where the state is formally secular, local women's rights activists have used this legal fact to call the state to account for policies that insert fundamentalist views in the public education system, in health policies that restrict reproductive rights, or that deny equality to LGBTQI people, to mention a few.

Although it is true for all strategies, this one in particular requires an understanding of the context, since the concept of secularity and the separation of church and state may have a longer history or legal standing in some places, and may be more challenging in others, where secularity may get reduced to and equated with atheism or westernization by religious fundamentalist opposition. In some experiences, the use of the term *secularity* itself is so problematic that activists may prefer to avoid using it altogether. “We use the term ‘civil’ because ‘secular’ — it’s like a bomb!” (Manal Abdel Halim, Sudan). Thus, as with many strategies and tactics, it is both a local and a personal decision for activists to decide how to use the idea or terminology of secularism.

Even in contexts where secularism may be considered a foreign or controversial concept (for example in many Muslim societies), there is a growing argument that the best protection for religion is in fact secularism. “The argument is that the moment the state takes hold of Sharia, it is no longer sacred and then it becomes like any other law” (Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Iran/Canada). Some scholars believe that secularism is, in fact, the only means for ensuring the survival of Islam, since it does not allow religion to be defined in the most extreme possible ways; ways that not only deny a rich history of internal diversity, but that could also condemn the religion to stagnation and eventual irrelevance. “There are after all probably millions of Muslims who are completely secular but completely believing, practicing Muslims. They just don’t think that laws should be imposed on the basis of religion” (Farida Shaheed, Pakistan).

As noted, secularity may be seen by some as necessary for a society that protects everyone's individual rights and beliefs. However, there is no guarantee that fundamentalist ideas will not influence the state, even if

it is secular, such as in Turkey or Nicaragua, where the state is formally secular. Furthermore, supporting secularism may also leave activists open to attacks or being labelled as agents of the west or atheists. This may be addressed by using a combination of strategies sometimes. In Iran for instance, the Stop Stoning Forever Campaign that aimed to end the use of stoning to punish sex outside marriage, used multiple options to further their goal. “The Campaign’s approach towards this question was clear from the beginning: after long discussions, the activists reached the conclusion that the Campaign’s dominant discourse should always be secular but that it would encourage clerics and the religious elites to prove that stoning is not rooted in the Quran. You could say the Campaign preferred one option but did not exclude the other. This strategy was the result of years of experience of women’s struggle in a fundamentalist context” (Shadi Sadr, Iran/UK). The awareness-raising and legal strategies of activists working in local contexts such as Nigeria or Iran to fight the practice of stoning is echoed by an international Stop Stoning Women Now global campaign, launched by Women Living Under Muslim Laws and a broad partnership of local and international organizations to push for states’ accountability to their international human rights obligations. The campaign advocates for a UN resolution against stoning using a global petition and awareness-raising actions, as a step toward the ultimate goal of banning stoning in countries where the penalty exists in law, as well as criminalizing those who engage in the practice where stoning is carried out extra-judicially.²⁵

STRENGTHENING PLURALISM AND SECULARISM

The strategy of promoting secularism involves protecting existing rights and ensuring the state upholds the principle of secularity in practice. For example, since 2007, CDD-Mexico (along with many other actors) has been calling for an amendment to reinforce Mexico’s existing secular Constitution by making churches abide by the law, stopping the state from granting privileges to any particular religion, and making public officials fulfill their human rights obligations. The amendment to the Constitution, which added the word *laico* (roughly translating as secular) to the description of the Mexican State, was passed on February 10th 2010 with 363 votes in support, only one against, and eight abstentions.

In Argentina, the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Accessible Abortion aims to both expand sexual and reproductive health rights and strengthen secularity and democracy, making the connection between a state that represents all of its citizens and the pluralism that

must be recognized if basic human rights to health and to freedom of belief and expression are truly respected.

In Uruguay, for abortion rights and same-sex marriage/civil unions movements, “one of the main strategies is to establish a discourse about democracy, that legislators ‘represent’ the citizens who voted for them and the secular nature of the state” (Lucy Garrido, Uruguay). Thus, the interests and rights of LGBTIQ citizens (for one example) are equal to those of all other citizens for each elected representative, regardless of that representative’s personal views on issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity.

DIFFERING DEFINITIONS OF SECULARISM

It is important to remember that there is no one simple or perfect definition of secularity, and the concept is applied in different ways in different contexts. In the case of India, for example, since independence the government’s policy of secularism was defined as equal respect for all religions, rather than separation of religion and state. “The main sacrifice of this definition was women’s rights in the family. Major aspects of women’s lives, such as marriage, divorce, maintenance, custody of children, guardianship and adoption, and property and inheritance rights were to be governed by the personal laws (civil codes) of different religious communities. The demand for a Uniform Civil Code was brushed aside in favour of the right of religious communities to practice their own traditions with respect to personal status. Thus, women were viewed primarily as members of their communities, not as citizens of independent India, and were left by the State to struggle with the fundamentalist forces of their respective communities.” (Trupti Shah, India)

6. Promoting pluralism, universal human rights, and democratic values

For many women’s rights activists, the most effective way to target fundamentalist intolerance towards others is to promote and protect pluralism and diversity, human rights, and democratic values in society in general. As noted in Chapter 2, fundamentalisms tend to thrive in contexts where human rights are violated and civil society and political alternatives are repressed. Practically speaking, this strategy relates both to the process

of building alliances across movements, and to the promotion of positive progressive ideas that challenge the growth of fundamentalisms.

In India, for example, Sahiyar (a women's organization that is part of India's autonomous women's movement), in cooperation with other women's groups and progressive organizations like the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL-SA), responded to the Gujarat Genocide of 2002. They supported women who were targeted in a systematic campaign of violence and rape, and built solidarity between communities to counter the xenophobic ultra-nationalist discourses of Hindu fundamentalist forces fuelling the violence against Muslim minorities. This involved establishing peace committees, holding demonstrations, creating strategies to hold the police accountable, engaging in relief and rehabilitation work with survivors of communal attacks, and participating in documentation and reporting of the communal violence that also ensured the inclusion of a feminist analysis in the process.

The feminist collective Nasawiya in Lebanon not only focuses on issues relating to women's rights, but also advocates against racism and the communal-based political system, and for migrant workers' rights, labour rights, and other issues from a feminist perspective. This is an especially important aspect of the group's advocacy approach, since Lebanon's constitution recognizes 18 religions and sects, and the country has a political party system that closely follows sectarian divisions. The country also has a high proportion of migrant domestic workers. Nasawiya's areas of focus demonstrate the close links between women's human rights and broader issues social justice and equality.²⁶

7. Building solidarity internally and offering alternative emotional communities

Religious fundamentalisms' impacts have begun to be identified and documented, demonstrating the negative effects that fundamentalisms have on rights. But religious fundamentalist messaging continues to have a powerful attraction for many, including women. Fundamentalisms respond to the basic human need for hope, and for a sense of belonging and community. This appeal highlights the importance of building alternative emotional communities. Just as fundamentalist movements respond to basic human needs for belonging and community, so do some feminist communities.

One way in which feminist movements do so is by focusing on personal approaches and individual solidarity. This can involve small-scale approaches

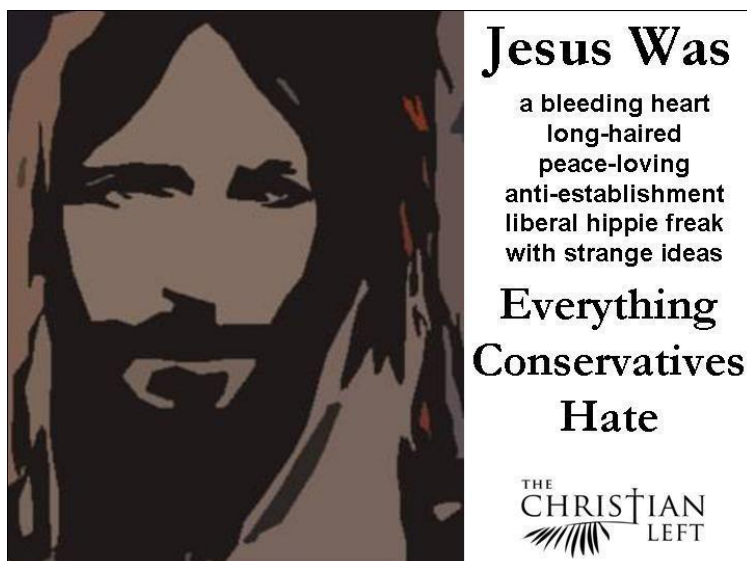
that are based on existing relationships, or one-on-one conversations to discuss and debate the ideas of individual rights and freedoms. At the group level, networks can provide members with a sense of community, building on collective knowledge, assets and networks to support one another. One means by which communities are built is virtually, and in fact, many LGBTQI, LBTQ, and queer networks originally developed in the relative anonymity of the internet and then slowly grew as trust and relationships were built (some examples are: Aswat in Palestine, Helem in Lebanon, Boys of Bangladesh, and Institut Pelangi Perempuan in Indonesia). The issue of anonymity or safety continues to be important, even as such online networks develop into face-to-face meetings and activism.

8. Developing and reclaiming feminist interpretations of religions

Alternative interpretations of religion are being used to counter the longstanding male monopoly on religious interpretation and to reclaim more progressive interpretations that have been ignored. Promoting feminist and rights-based readings of religious texts to further the overall goal of equality can be a powerful strategy in many contexts.

There are examples of religious initiatives all over the world that support women's rights and the full range of human rights. Women's rights activists give several reasons for engaging with religion. In many contexts, whether formally secular or not, religion holds enormous institutional and political power to inform public policy. Religion is also a significant part of many people's lives, and an important social reality. Therefore, some women's rights activists consider that speaking from an informed and rights-affirming

position within religion can be a powerful strategy to challenge, reclaim and reform religion, and this in turn can encourage critical thinking and debate, gain public support and impact public policy.



RIGHTS-AFFIRMING INTERPRETATIONS OF RELIGION

In the views of women's rights activists who work on internal reform strategies, feminist interpretations and reinterpretations are a powerful tool for advancing equality. One participant in AWID's research said this of fundamentalist interpretations: "One of the ways to take away some of their power is by empowering other people in the community also to be knowledgeable and to develop alternatives... Judaism is broad enough for us to be able to find a way to be authentically committed Jews and also human beings who care about each other" (Debbie Weissman, Israel).

In the U.S., the youth wing of the LGBTQI rights organization Souforce organizes an Equality Ride bus trip every summer, to a series of conservative and religious universities with discriminatory policies against LGBTQI students. Members of the Souforce LGBTQI organization are given various kinds of trainings, including "how to neutralize the biblical texts traditionally used to condemn LGBT people" (Haven Herrin, USA). This involves learning about positive and rights-affirming interpretations of such key biblical passages as the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Through their engagement with the campus communities they offer a sense of solidarity to LGBTQI students, self-expression within a religious framework, and challenge student and faculty members to consider the impacts of discrimination of LGBTQI people.

Zainah Anwar, a founding member of the Musawah global campaign for equality in the Muslim family, notes that "religion is in the public space... is our reality. If we don't engage with religion, it remains in the hand of the oppressors. We need to break the monopoly of the *Ulema* [religious scholars]... When religion is used as a source of law and public policy, then everyone has a right to engage with religion" (Zainah Anwar, Malaysia). Thus, Musawah engages in research and knowledge-building to offer both factual information and progressive interpretations on such critical issues as inheritance rights, polygamy, or guardianship.

Some activists argue that feminist movements' lack of engagement may have weakened this line of challenge to fundamentalist ideas, however. "Religious progressives could have become a compelling counterbalance to religious conservatives and fundamentalists had they been better supported by the feminist community and better organized internally" (Jennifer Butler, United States).

Limitations to feminist interpretations of religious text as a strategy

It has been a challenge to introduce feminist interpretations of religious texts into mainstream debates, within religious institutions as well as in society at large. Such interpretations have come up against unequal power structures in society. Especially since fundamentalisms work to radicalize patriarchy and support the concentration of religious authority in the hands of male religious elites, feminist theologians may not be given the space or have the legitimacy or credibility to challenge fundamentalist or mainstream interpretations and practices. In many cases, religious institutional hierarchies have failed to acknowledge the authority of women to reinterpret religion, and have firmly challenged this as un-Catholic or un-Islamic.

Some women's rights activists contend that all religions themselves are essentially patriarchal and so this strategy will always confront limitations in the ways that religions can be interpreted to advance equality. Therefore, they feel that any engagement with religion further reinforces or gives more power to religious fundamentalists and is counter-productive in the long term. Nevertheless, progressive religious interpretations are an important part of internal reform strategies for feminist activists across diverse contexts, and do help many reconcile their belief in religion with their feminism.

In Closing

As noted, the strategies mentioned in this chapter are not at all comprehensive, and they are mobilized in combination with other methods of active resistance and challenge used by many social movements (some of these are well-known and widely used methods, such as protests, sit-ins, letter-writing campaigns or petitions). Rather, this section provides a sampling of key strategies used by diverse women's rights activists in their efforts to challenge religious fundamentalisms, without claiming to cover all possible strategies. There are many more traditional as well as new and innovative strategies used by feminists, women's rights activists, LGBTQI activists, and other social movements that can be adapted, shared, or applied to diverse contexts with the intent of building solidarity and advancing the goal of equality, and hopefully you will be reminded of other inspiring examples from your contexts that you can share with others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have you seen examples of women's rights activists and other progressive activists in your context building alliances to confront fundamentalist projects? If so, what were the different kinds of groups involved in the alliance, and what issue brought them together? How did they mobilize and what were the lessons learned? What are some of the barriers and challenges to building solidarity and alliances? Do you see alliance-building as an effective means to challenge religious fundamentalisms? Why or why not?

Are you aware of young women-led initiatives addressing religious fundamentalisms or their impacts in your context? Do you feel that young women have a different way of working than more established women's rights organizations? If so, how does it seem that young women's ways of organizing are different, or what innovative strategies or tactics do you see young women using?

According to the constitution, is your political context formally secular, or is there an official state religion? If so, what is the impact of this distinction? Is promoting secularism and pluralism a strategic or effective way of organizing challenges to religious fundamentalisms in your context? Why or why not? Do secularists get equated with non-believers or atheists? Is secularity framed as a western or foreign idea in your context? Do you think this framing makes sense, or do you think it is a simplification? Do you think there is a concerted fundamentalist strategy to undermine efforts to promote secularity?

How effective do you think the strategy of alternative building emotional communities is for challenging fundamentalisms? Can you think of good examples of this from your context? Are there people in your personal networks who hold fundamentalist ideas? Can you think of ways that you challenge fundamentalist ideas on an individual level, in your personal relationships?

Are you aware of feminist activists or scholars researching and reinterpreting religious texts in your context? If so, are their voices heard in public debates and are they given legitimacy or representation within religious institutions? Have they been able to influence debates on public policy and law or mainstream religious views or practices? What are the challenges in mainstreaming these interpretations? Is there a divide between feminists working from a secular and those working from a religious perspective in your context, or do they complement each other?

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CHAPTER 5

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR WORKSHOP GROUPS USING THIS MANUAL



Understanding Religious Fundamentalisms for Activists is a resource that intends to open up dialogue and discussion on what religious fundamentalisms look like in different contexts, across religions and regions. We believe that better quality, structured discussions deepen our capacity to devise more effective strategies.

This final section contains a number of suggested exercises and group activities that may be used to share the analyses and experiences of readers and/or workshop participants regarding how religious fundamentalisms work, and how feminists and allied movements are responding to counter religious fundamentalisms.

The discussion questions included throughout this resource, and the activities and discussion topics suggested in this chapter, aim to ground understandings of religious fundamentalisms within the impacts that they have on our lives, and help situate religious fundamentalisms as one key part of the opposition to rights-based work that many activists are confronting in their day-to-day work.

NOTES FOR FACILITATORS

The activities suggested in this chapter are just that, suggestions. Feel free to use and adapt those activities that you think will be most useful for the workshop you are conducting; it is not required that you use them all.

Before planning any group-work and discussion, facilitators are encouraged to review and share the guidelines suggested in Chapter 1. There are also some helpful exercises provided in the [CREA Achieving Transformative Feminist Leadership toolkit \(Module 1\)](#) for managing tensions, anger, painful feelings, etc. These include the emotional freedom technique, tai chi, roaring like a lion, breathing exercises and more. Feel free to download the toolkit and use the exercises from

Module 1 to help manage the emotions that the discussions in this manual might raise in individuals or the group.

The activities in this chapter that call for small group work may indicate a suggested number of participants for each break-out group, but this will need to be adapted depending on the number of participants in a workshop. When an activity is best suited to homogeneous groups where participants are from the same or similar contexts, this will be indicated in the instructions. Otherwise, try numbering off the participants (e.g., 1 to 4 if you want four breakout groups) to form more diverse or randomized groups. For all small group work, remember to ask each group to assign a note-taker and a reporter (this may be the same person or two different people, depending on the size of the groups) if it is necessary for the activity.

Approximate time required for an activity is not included, since this will vary a great deal depending on the size of the workshop and hence the number of groups. It is recommended that plenty of time be set aside for any activities you choose to use, factoring in that you will be giving instructions, groups will then be working together to brainstorm the activity or respond to discussion questions, and then possibly also presenting in plenary, and may also be taking questions or having further discussions.

A helpful tip when giving instructions to a group is to ask participants for a volunteer to repeat back the instructions, to ensure that people understand. So try asking, “What were the instructions again; could somebody briefly summarize them for us, please?”

Be sure to have all your materials prepared and ready, including any flipcharts, handouts, screen projections, videos, etc. that are necessary for facilitators to set up the activity, as well as all the materials the workshop participants may require.

For facilitators, it is helpful to keep circulating during group-work activities to assess whether more or less time is needed for an activity, or to see if there are any barriers or confusion in any of the groups. Go from group to group to quietly listen in and see that the activity is understood and participants are engaging, or prompt gently when you see that a group is having difficulty, but try not to spend too much time or talk too much in a particular group, in case it stifles the group’s discussion.

Finally, if you have any thoughts, suggestions or other feedback on any part of this resource, please write to the Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms team at cf@awid.org.

CHAPTER 1 ACTIVITIES

What Are Religious Fundamentalisms?

ACTIVITY 1

Objective: To generate discussion related to the different understandings of religious fundamentalisms among participants, illustrating some of the diversity of possible perceptions.

Materials: A flipchart and marker (or this activity can be done verbally).

Time: *A reminder to the facilitator(s) that the time to set aside for each activity must be estimated according to the size of the workshop.*

Methodology: In plenary, ask the participants to say the first words that come to their minds when they hear the term “religious fundamentalisms”. Remind them that there is no judgement and not to think too much about the answer; they should just say the first words that they associate with the term.

Discuss the words and phrases shared by participants, relating them to the characteristics of religious fundamentalisms, and some of the debates and discussions on the use of the terminology outlined in Chapter 1.

ACTIVITY 2

Objective: For participants to discuss and engage with some of the defining characteristics of religious fundamentalisms.

Materials: Flipchart paper, markers, pens and notepaper, description of the groups’ tasks on a handout or projected on a screen or written out on a flipchart page that is posted at the front of the room.

Methodology: Divide the participants into groups of 3 to 5 (numbers to be adjusted depending on the size of the workshop). Give the groups a set amount of time to complete the following tasks:

- Brainstorm a list of elements that characterize religious fundamentalisms.
- Try to develop and agree on a short definition of religious fundamentalisms, and write it on a sheet of flipchart paper.

Write the group’s definition and the list of characteristics on the flipchart to share. At the end of the time allotted for group work, come back in plenary. Ask each group’s reporter to present the highlights of the discussion from her/his group and share their definition, and then list some characteristics of religious fundamentalisms that her/his group discussed.

Ask participants to note the similarities and differences between the definitions. If they were not already covered, introduce some of the characteristics described on pages 11-14 of this manual and ask participants whether or not they agree that these are reflective of religious fundamentalisms. Try to conclude the activity with a list of main characteristics of religious fundamentalisms on which participants generally agree.

ACTIVITY 3

Objective: This activity focuses on developing participants' own definitions, building not only on the outcomes of Activity 2 but also on participants' own experiences and a few existing definitions.

Materials: Flipchart paper and markers, pens and note paper, tape/adhesive or flipchart stands.

Methodology:

Part I: Present the definitions of religious fundamentalisms below to the group in plenary (these should be written out on flipchart paper in advance and posted in three different corners of the room). Ask for three volunteers to read each statement out loud, and then ask participants to walk over to the definition they feel they agree the most with.

1. Dogmatic thinking and action that defends certain religious positions as unique, true and unchangeable (Roxana Vazquez Sotelo, Peru)
2. The use of religion (and often, ethnicity and culture as well) to gain and mobilize political power (WLUML, Women Living Under Muslim Laws)
3. Any set of norms or dictates that restrict the freedom of thought, movement, work, marital status, sexual orientation, political participation and education, on the basis of 'divine law' (Survey respondent, Israel)

(You may also choose to post a fourth flipchart sheet that says "create your own" for any participants who might disagree with all the definitions provided.)

Part II: Break out into three groups according to favoured definition. Give the small groups 15 minutes (depending on the size of the group, time limits may need to be adjusted) to discuss the following questions. Group work questions can be given out as handouts, posted at the front of the room on flipchart paper or projected on the screen:

- Why did your group choose this definition?
- What else would the group add to reflect key characteristics of religious fundamentalisms?

The reporter from each group should report back in plenary, highlighting areas of agreement and disagreement within the group regarding the chosen definition of religious fundamentalisms.

CHAPTER 2 ACTIVITIES

What factors help religious
fundamentalisms grow?

ACTIVITY 1

Objective: For participants to discuss what factors they believe lead to a growth of religious fundamentalisms.

Materials: Flipcharts (number depends on the number of break-out groups), Post-It notes in three different colours, pens.

Methodology: Divide the workshop into groups based on geography (if the group is all from the same context, just number off participants to divide them into groups of 4 to 6, depending on the size of the workshop.) Each group is given a flipchart and Post-It notes in three colours. Each group brainstorms the key factors that they believe contribute to the growth of religious fundamentalisms in their contexts and write them on Post-It notes with one colour assigned for each of the following categories: political, economic, and social.

In the last five minutes of the breakout, each group sticks their Post-It notes onto a chart with the three headings: political, economic, and social written across the top. In plenary, each group presents the key contributing factors that they perceive to be helping fundamentalisms grow in that context. If the workshop participants come from diverse contexts, ask how the relative balance of causes is different across contexts. If participants are from the same local or regional context, ask why the different groups have different relative balances of causes (if they are significantly different).

ACTIVITY 2¹

Objective: To reflect on how religious fundamentalisms affect how we live in and experience our bodies, gender and sexuality.

Materials: Two extra-large flipchart pages and two colours of markers.

Methodology: Ask for two volunteers; one volunteer to draw the outline of a woman's body on one sheet of paper, and another to draw the outline of a man's body on the second sheet of paper. (If you cannot find large flipchart paper, one option is to tape or staple together four sheets of regular flipchart paper.)

¹ This activity is adapted from the Fahamu Movement Building Boot Camp <http://fahamu.org/mbbc/>. The original activity, "Mapping Power on Our Bodies", is available here: http://fahamu.org/mbbc/?page_id=727.

The two images should be stuck on the wall next to one another so that everyone can see them. Start with the image of the woman and points to each body part (the head, the lips, the hands, the heart, the reproductive/sexual organs, the feet) and ask participants: Who does this belong to? Who should it belong to? And who controls this part in practice? Some questions that can be explored are as follows:

What are the forms of power and control affecting how individuals experience their bodies and what role does religious fundamentalisms play in this? What parts of the body are more contested than others in terms of decision-making and control? How is this different for men's bodies and for women's bodies? If a woman breaks a particular social norm around the body (e.g., having an affair, having sex with someone of the same gender, marrying outside of ones the religious community, making independent reproductive choices, asserting equal rights in the family, taking up a role traditionally performed by the opposite sex), what happens to her? And what happens if a man breaks social norms?

The facilitator writes participants' responses on the outlines of the bodies, and relates them to the different institutions and discourses that shape bodily experience, including:

- Social and cultural norms
- The family
- Religious authorities
- Laws and policies
- The economy

On the basis of responses, lead a discussion in plenary around the power and control of our bodies and their relationship to religious fundamentalisms. Here are some suggested discussion questions which facilitators can use or adapt:

- How do religious fundamentalisms impact how we experience our bodies and sexuality?
- How do religious fundamentalisms influence how gender is understood or defined?
- How do social and cultural norms, the family, and law and policy relate to religious fundamentalisms and their influence on our perceptions and experiences of our bodies?

ACTIVITY 3

Objective: For participants to have an open discussion on how religious fundamentalisms manifest in and impact people's everyday lives.

Arrange for a film screening and discussion. Preparation will require borrowing, downloading, or purchasing a copy of the film planned for this activity. A list of possible films to screen is provided here, but you may have other ideas that are more relevant to the context of the workshop as well.

Some suggested general questions for discussion are provided below the list of possible films to screen, but it is recommended that facilitators draft some questions specific to the selected film to prompt discussion after the screening.

Suggestions for films:

A JIHAD FOR LOVE: documentary about sexual minorities from diverse Muslim contexts

BOMBAY: film about an interfaith marriage between a Hindu and Muslim couple in India

CALL ME KUCHU: documentary about the introduction of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda, featuring slain activist David Kato

EL CRIMEN DEL PADRE AMARO (FATHER AMARO'S CRIME): film about clerical celibacy and abortion in a small town in Mexico

FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO: documentary about homosexuality in a Christian context in the USA

JESUS CAMP: documentary about education and indoctrination of youth in Christian contexts in the USA

PRAY THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL: documentary about religion and the peace movement in Liberia

PRIEST: film about a gay priest's crisis of faith when he learns of a case of sexual abuse in his Liverpool parish

TREMBLING BEFORE G-D: documentary about sexual minorities from Haredi Jewish contexts

WATER: film about child marriage and widowhood rituals in a Hindu context

Suggested general discussion questions:

- What scenes stood out for you in this film and why?
- What was the role that religion played in the film?

- Did you perceive any characters or agendas/ideas in the film as *fundamentalist* in nature? Why or why not?
- Do you think the film contained an accurate representation of different kinds of religious expression, fundamentalist or not?
- For those who follow fundamentalist views in this film, what do you believe are their motivations; what leads them to hold or support those perspectives?
- What was the nature of the challenge and resistance against fundamentalist ideas (if any) depicted in the film?
- Did this film change any of your previously held ideas or perceptions about religious fundamentalisms and how people may come to follow fundamentalist ideas? Did it inspire and motivate you in your activism? If so, how?

ACTIVITY 4

Objective: For participants to break down and critically examine some of the common religious fundamentalist agendas, arguments, and strategies impacting their contexts.

Form groups of 4-6 people (depending on the size/regional diversity of the workshop), trying to keep together people from the same regions or local contexts.

On a chart, each group fills in the following table (some examples of possible fundamentalist agendas and their impacts are provided below):

FUNDAMENTALIST AGENDA	ACTORS	ACTIONS	ARGUMENTS
For example: 1. Restrictions to accessing sexual and reproductive rights			
2. Promoting or maintaining inequality in family laws			
3. Criminalization of same-sex behaviour			

Each small group should start by developing a list of “fundamentalist agendas” – what they see as the main objectives of religious fundamentalist policies or actions in their contexts. One point should go in each row. Next, for each fundamentalist agenda or objective, the group should complete the chart by:

- naming the fundamentalist actors promoting that agenda (in column 2),
- naming the specific actions or strategies used by the actors (in column 3), and
- naming some of the arguments, secular and/or religious, used to promote that agenda (in column 4).

A completed example is provided below.

FUNDAMENTALIST AGENDA	ACTORS	ACTIONS	ARGUMENTS
Restrictions to accessing sexual and reproductive rights (in Latin America)	1. ONG Pro-Vida (NGO “Pro-Life”) 2. The Catholic Church	1. Presenting a legal injunction to prevent the implementation of a protocol for legal abortion 2. Producing and airing a radio advertisement against abortion	1. “Abortion violates the right to life” 2. “The woman who aborts will immediately be excommunicated for going against the teachings of Jesus Christ.”

At the end of the activity, each group posts up its chart. Participants are then given a set amount of time to move around the room and review the final charts produced by other groups.

Back in plenary, ask participants the following discussion questions:

- What stood out to you from the different charts?
- What did the different religious fundamentalist arguments and actions have in common?
- Can this be a helpful exercise to use when strategizing on a particular issue, or responding to fundamentalist attacks on rights?

CHAPTER 3 ACTIVITIES

Religious Fundamentalist Strategies

ACTIVITY 1²

Objective: To encourage participants to reflect on their own beliefs and ideas regarding the growth of religious fundamentalisms, and the implications that those beliefs have on rights, as well as on advocating for change/activism.

Materials: One copy of the statements and discussion questions below for the facilitator(s) to read out.

Methodology: Create space in the room and mark out an imaginary line from one end of the room to the other. This will be the ‘continuum of opinion’. Identify one end of the line as ‘Strongly agree’, and the other as ‘Strongly disagree’. Identify the middle of the line as ‘Don’t know/Not sure’. (These three phrases can also be printed on three sheets of paper and taped to the wall or floor.)

The facilitator reads through the statements below and participants move to the place along the imaginary line that best reflects what they believe.

To encourage dialogue, the facilitator can choose to pause after each question and ask one or two people why they chose to stand where they are. This should include people who are unsure, as well as people on either extreme of the ‘continuum of opinion’.

When all the statements have been read, gather in plenary and discuss participants’ experiences and questions raised by the exercise. During the reflection process, point out that all of us hold political views about the nature of religious fundamentalisms, as well as effective resistance strategies.

Statements for the exercise

- There is nothing new about the types of religious fundamentalisms that we are seeing today; religion has always been used to assert power and control.
- To effectively challenge religious fundamentalisms we need to address one of the main root causes in their growth; that is, economic inequalities.

² This activity is adapted from the Fahamu Movement Building Boot Camp <http://fahamu.org/mbbc/>. The original activity, “Where I stand”, is available here: http://fahamu.org/mbbc/?page_id=749.

- Religious fundamentalisms are essentially a backlash to progress in women's equality, autonomy and sexual rights. In our resistance to them we should not think of religious fundamentalisms as more successful than rights-based movements.
- If there was a true separation of religion and State we would be able to neutralize religious fundamentalisms.
- To effectively challenge religious fundamentalisms we also need feminist responses within a religious framework and engagement with religious authorities.
- Changing the law is the best way to achieve freedom for women and LGBTQI people in contexts where religious fundamentalisms are impacting negatively on rights.

Discussion questions

- On which statements did most of the group agree or disagree? What positions were people least sure about, generally?
- Did the exercise make you realize any contradictions in your own beliefs about religious fundamentalisms?

ACTIVITY 2³

Objective: To analyze how concepts like *culture*, *religion*, or *tradition* are used to rationalize positions on sexuality, gender roles, reproduction, and the family.

Materials: Copies of Hope Chigudu's "Abortion: A conversation with a taxi driver" (depending on time, you may wish to distribute the story to participants at least a day or more before the activity as pre-reading); notepaper, and pens.

3 Part I of this activity is adapted from the Fahamu Movement Building Boot Camp <http://www.fahamu.org/about-mbbc>. The full exercise, "Abortion – A conversation with a taxi driver" is available here: http://fahamu.org/mbbc/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Concepts_Exercises_Culture_ConversationTaxiDriver_1.pdf. Required resource: Chigudu, Hope. 2011. "Abortion: a conversation with a taxi driver" in *African Sexualities: A Reader*, Sylvia Tamale. Oxford, Dakar: Pambazuka Press, pp. 368-373 http://fahamu.org/mbbc/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Chigudu-conversation-withTaxidriver_368-373.pdf.

Part I

Methodology: Ask for volunteers to read excerpts from the story out loud to the group if there is sufficient time; otherwise, plan ahead to distribute the story to participants ahead of time as required pre-reading. Discuss the story in plenary, encouraging participants to share how the story relates to conversations they have had about sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexual orientation or gender identity, or other controversial issues.

Discussion questions:

1. Go through the narrative and trace the different arguments that the taxi driver uses to defend his point regarding abortion as a sin. What arguments does he start with? What arguments does he use to respond to critique and questioning? How do these arguments develop over the course of the conversation?
2. How does the taxi driver use the concept of “culture”? How does this relate to his interpretation of “religion”, and gender?
3. How do concepts of gender inform the taxi driver’s interpretation of what are appropriate and inappropriate practices in his culture? Regarding sexual practices, are the norms that he applies to women the same as those that he applies to men?
4. Who does the taxi driver claim to speak on behalf of when making claims regarding culture and religion?

Part II

Methodology: In pairs of two or in groups of 3 or 4, depending on the size of the workshop, choose one of the topics below (or another topic that the group agrees on), and write a short dialogue between a taxi driver and passenger (or two other characters, e.g., a shopkeeper and customer, a hairdresser and client, two people sitting in a bus or a waiting room, etc.), where the two sides of the argument are portrayed.

- Same-sex practice, non-normativity, same-sex marriage, or same-sex adoption
- Family planning, small family size
- Girls’ education, early or underage marriage
- Female Genital Cutting
- Widowhood practices, exclusion

- Family laws and equality in marriage, divorce, custody, guardianship, inheritance
- Women in the public sphere
- *(Participants may wish to propose additional topics here as well.)*

At the end of the group work period, each group will present its dialogue to the others in form of role play.

ACTIVITY 3

Objective: To analyze how religions may be or have been used to delay or deny progress or social change in the past, and how current social changes are mobilized and used in fundamentalist rhetoric.

Materials: Handouts of relevant quotes, discussion of questions, notepaper and pens.

Part I

Methodology: Ask a participant to read the quote below out loud. In plenary, discuss what other similar positions participants may know about, where religious fundamentalist rhetoric denies or lobbies against social or technological advances or other changes. What are the impacts of such fundamentalist positions on society?

“If God had designated that his intelligent creatures should travel at the frightful speed of 15 miles per hour, he would have foretold it through his holy prophets... It is a device of satan to lead immortal souls to hell.” – Local Board of Education on Railroads, 1830, USA, debate on the use of railroads for transportation.

Part II:

Methodology: Divide participants into groups of 4 to 6 (depending on the size of the workshop), trying to keep people from the same regions or local contexts together. Participants review the provided quotes (it is recommended that these be circulated to participants as handouts).

Each group assigns a recorder and reporter, and discusses these questions:

- In the context where you live and work, do fundamentalist groups have the tendency to blame natural disasters, accidents, or other negative

events on issues related to morality, with a specific focus on the sexual behaviour of women and minorities?

- What sorts of misinformation and/or rumours are most common? And what impact have these had on women's rights or minority rights?
- How often do you hear these kinds of arguments? Do people tend to believe them? How are they best countered?

"Rabbi Noson Leiter of Torah Jews for Decency is blaming Hurricane Sandy on gays and lesbians, calling it "divine justice" for New York's new marriage equality law. Torah Jews for Decency campaigned against marriage equality in New York and New Jersey, worked with Liberty Counsel and New Yorkers for Constitutional Freedoms in an unsuccessful lawsuit to overturn New York's marriage law, and has joined with various other Religious Right groups on anti-gay campaigns.

Yesterday, Leiter appeared on Crosstalk, the flagship program of Vic Eliason's Voice of Christian Youth America, alongside Neil DiCarlo, a candidate for New York State Senate, to discuss New York's legalization of same-sex marriage.

Leiter asserted that the "the Great Flood in the time of Noah was triggered by the recognition of same-gender marriages," adding that there are similar "messages in this particular storm for us." "The Lord will not bring another flood to destroy the entire world but He could punish particular areas with a flood, and if we look at the same-gender marriage recognition movement that's occurring, that certainly is a message for us to learn," he said."⁴

4 Brian Tashman, "Right Wing Rabbi Blames Hurricane Sandy on Gays, Marriage Equality." Right Wing Watch, 31 Oct. 2012. <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/religious-right-rabbi-blames-hurricane-sandy-gays-marriage-equality>.

“In the Philippines a Roman Catholic bishop is suggesting a typhoon that killed hundreds of people earlier this week is a message from God demonstrating divine opposition to health care legislation that would grant women some basic reproductive rights.

On Thursday, Dec. 6, Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo claimed that typhoon Pablo, which killed more than 300 people last week, was a warning from God against passing the reproductive health bill currently under consideration by the Philippine House of Representatives.

Speaking in Filipino on the Catholic-run Radio Veritas, Bishop Pabillo suggested the tragic natural disaster responsible for so much death, destruction and misery, was actually the ‘Lord’ ‘trying to send a message.’”⁵

“Famous American televangelist Pat Robertson raised eyebrows when he said on today’s episode of the 700 Club that the deadly Haitian earthquake that is believed to have killed thousands of people is God’s vengeance for a “pact” Haitians swore to the Devil. Robertson said Haitians have been cursed because they made a “deal” with the Devil to free themselves from the French. He said even after the French were gone, the Island of Haiti has been cursed by “one thing after the other.””⁶

5 “Bishop: Deadly Typhoon Means God Opposes Reproductive Rights,” Examiner, 6 Dec. 2012, <http://www.examiner.com/article/bishop-deadly-typhoon-means-god-opposes-reproductive-rights>.

6 Yuliya Talmazan, “Pat Robertson On Haiti: Earthquake Punishment For Pact With Devil.” NowPublic, 13 Jan. 2010. <http://www.nowpublic.com/world/pat-robertson-haiti-earthquake-punishment-pact-devil-2556010.html>.

“Surely, this is one of the reasons for the Earthquake” – *comment on Why Earthquakes Come discussion page on www.pakquake.com resource; the poster’s original comment is followed by a brief BBC news entry:*

“A gay couple have become the first to get ‘married’ in Pakistan, according to reports from the region. Witnesses said a 42-year-old Afghan refugee held a marriage ceremony with a local tribesman of 16 in the remote Khyber region bordering Afghanistan.

Gay marriage is not legal in conservative Muslim Pakistan.

On hearing of the wedding, a tribal council told the pair to leave the area or be killed for breaking religious and tribal “values and ethics”.

A local Urdu-language newspaper said the elder man, named as Liaquat Ali, had taken a local boy called Markeen as “his male bride”.

The paper said the boy’s impoverished parents accepted INR 40,000, (GBP 380) for their son’s hand in marriage.

“The marriage was held amid usual pomp and show associated with a tribal wedding,” it said.

Malik Waris Khan, a prominent local politician and former federal minister, confirmed to AFP that the marriage had taken place...”⁷

Back in plenary, the reporter from each group will present highlights of her/his group’s discussions.

7 “First ‘Gay’ Marriage in Pakistan” discussion page on Pakistan Earthquake 2005. Web resource <http://www.pakquake.com/first-gay-marriage-in-pakistan.html>; “First ‘Gay’ Marriage in Pakistan,” BBC, 5 Oct. 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4313210.stm.

CHAPTER 4 ACTIVITIES: Feminist Strategies

ACTIVITY 1

Objective: To discuss religious fundamentalist arguments against gender equality and women's autonomy in particular spheres, and share possible counter-arguments.

Materials: The suggested episodes (see below), either downloaded in advance or played live on-screen if there is high-speed internet in the workshop venue; handouts with discussion questions.

Methodology: View the videos of episodes 6 and 8 of the series *Catolicadas*, produced by CDD-Mexico. (Note that this series is available online in Spanish with English subtitles)

- Episode 6: THE FOUR EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES
- Episode 8: THAT'S CLASSIC!

After viewing the videos, divide participants into groups of 3 to 5 (depending on the size of the workshop) and discuss the following questions:

1. What are the religious arguments in favour of the right to decide that Sister Juana presented to Father Beto. What other arguments, religious or secular, can be used to advance women's sexual and bodily rights and choice?
2. How can fundamentalist promotion of the *traditional* family as the *natural* and *only* kind of family be challenged? How can the rights of non-normative families (women-headed households, same-sex couples/parents, etc.) be defended?

At the end of the activity, each group's reporter presents the highlights of her/his group's discussions in plenary.

Alternatively, show selected episodes of the *Adventures of Salwa* series, produced by Nasawiya in Lebanon. Three suggested episodes are:

- Episode: SALWA AT UNIVERSITY
- Episode: SALWA AT THE CORNICHE
- Episode: MAMA SALWA

After viewing the videos, divide participants into groups of 3 to 5 (depending on the size of the workshop) and discuss the following questions:

1. What are some of the religious arguments you have heard that favour restricting women's access to or mobility in the public sphere or in the

workplace? What religious arguments are used to justify violence against women?

2. How are women's rights activists responding to sexual harassment and violence? What are some of the strategies you have seen being used to empower and support survivors of harassment and assault?

At the end of the activity, each group's reporter presents the highlights of her/his group's discussions in plenary.

ACTIVITY 2

Objective: To analyze the strengths and weaknesses of previous campaign experiences, and build on these experiences in order to inform future strategies and activism.

Materials: Flipchart paper and markers, four colours of Post-It notes, handouts with questions for group work, and pre-reading (handed out or e-mailed to participants as required reading well in advance of the workshop).

Methodology: Participants should be sent case studies of feminist strategies from diverse regions as required pre-reading, chosen from the AWID publication *Feminists on the Frontline: Case Studies of Resisting and Challenging Fundamentalisms*. You may wish to select five or six case studies from the full collection, depending on the size of the workshop, and focusing on the issues or geographic contexts or fields of activism that would be of most interest to the profile of the workshop participants.⁸ (It is suggested that each participant be assigned a case study, but participants may be given a free choice as well. Note that a free choice of which case study to review may impact group work however, if only one or two participants select a particular case study.)

On the day of the activity, instruct participants to split into groups according to the case studies they chose. In groups, address the following questions:

- How would you summarize this case study in one paragraph (maximum 4-5 sentences)?
- After drafting the paragraph together, discuss the strategy or campaign

8 AWID, *Feminists on the Frontline: Case Studies of Resisting and Challenging Fundamentalisms*. Toronto: 2011. <http://awid.org/Library/Feminists-on-the-Frontline-Case-Studies-of-Resisting-and-Challenging-Fundamentalisms>.

using a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), making notes of your points on coloured Post-It notes (one colour for each of the four categories, e.g., yellow Post-Its for strengths, green for opportunities, etc.). Group and stick your Post-Its on to the following table drawn on your group's flipchart:

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
WEAKNESSES	THREATS

- Think about how this strategy or campaign could be adapted to your own context. Consider the debates and discussions taking place now in your local context (e.g., legalization or decriminalization of abortion, access to sexual and reproductive health services, comprehensive sexuality education, legal status of emergency contraception, criminalization of same-sex activity, civil unions or same-sex marriage, etc.).
- Do you think this strategy or campaign would be more effective if it is implemented by a network or alliance rather than just one organization or group? If the answer is yes, how feasible do you think establishing such a network or alliance is? What advantages or strengths do you see in such a network or alliance? Which organizations or actors are essential to have as members of such a network, and how could you motivate them to participate?

In plenary again, the reporter for each group presents the brief summary of the case study and the highlights of the group's SWOT analysis.

ACTIVITY 3

Objective: To brainstorm possible counter-discourses that challenge common arguments used by religious fundamentalists to justify inequalities, and imagine how these could be disseminated using mass media.

Materials: Whatever is at hand! Suggestions for resources you can use: video, pictures (using mobile phone camera, the internet, etc.), skits or

dialogues, posters, markers and chart paper. Be creative!

Methodology: In groups of 4 to 6 (depending on the size of the workshop) discuss common arguments relating to one of the topics below (or another topic that the group agrees on). These should be common arguments used by religious fundamentalists. Once you have agreed on an argument, design an advertisement to counter that position.

- Sexuality education
- Abortion
- Sexual diversity
- Birth control
- Girls' education
- Dress codes/gender segregation
- Equal marriage/divorce rights and family laws
- Pluralism, tolerance, harmony
- Women's political participation
- The group may also agree on another topic

Decide what medium of communication will be used to transmit the group's message (e.g., TV advertisement, radio spot, poster on public transit, social networking campaign, etc.).

At the end of the activity, present your advertisement in plenary. After the presentations, discuss the following questions:

- Which messages did you find most effective, and why?
- For those messages that could be strengthened, how do you feel they could be made stronger?
- Are there messages that were developed today that you think activists could use in your specific context?

Further links and resources:

Provided on the following pages are the websites of a sampling of organizations or networks addressing the issue of religious fundamentalisms in some way—many of which contain publications and other useful information—and to a selection of video resources that relate to religious fundamentalisms and their impacts. These videos may be useful as energizers or to view in breaks during presentations or workshops, or for illustrating the impacts of religious fundamentalisms or highlighting strategies used by or against those forces.

WEBSITES:

- ARC International (project-driven organization designed to foster the development of international linkages and a strategic international LGBT human rights agenda), <http://arc-international.net/>
- ARROW Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (regional organization working to advance women's health, affirmative sexuality and rights, and empower women through information and knowledge, engagement, advocacy and mobilization), www.arrow.org
- Association for Women's Rights in Development, Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms program homepage (global research-advocacy program conducting innovative research to contribute to greater strategic thinking, dialogue and advocacy on religious fundamentalisms by women's rights groups and allies), <http://awid.org/Our-Initiatives/Resisting-and-Challenging-Religious-Fundamentalisms>
- Catholics for Choice (U.WWS.-based Catholic organization that supports women's moral and legal right to follow their conscience in matters of sexuality and reproductive health), www.catholicsforchoice.org
- Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir Mexico (organization working for the wellbeing and health of women and youth through promoting and defending human rights, social justice and democracy), www.catolicasmexico.org (CDD-Mexico is also part of the Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir Latin American Network, <http://catolicasporelderechoadecidir.net>)
- Center for Constitutional Rights (U.S. non-profit legal and educational organization dedicated to advancing and protecting the rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, committed to the creative use of law as a positive force for social change), www.ccrjustice.org
- Centre for Secular Space (independent virtual think tank conducting research and advocacy to strengthen secular voices, oppose fundamentalist movements, and promote universality in human rights), www.centreforsecularspace.org
- Coalition of African Lesbians (formation of more than 30 organizations in 19 countries in Africa committed to advancing justice for lesbian and bisexual women and transdiverse people), www.cal.org.za
- Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (international

solidarity network of 37 groups across 15 countries striving to promote sexual, bodily and reproductive rights as human rights in Muslim societies), www.csbronline.org

- Girls Not Brides (global partnership of more than 300 civil society organizations from over 50 countries working to address child marriage), www.girlsnotbrides.org
- Global Interfaith Network on Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (network of individuals and organizations engaged with faith and spirituality, committed to using their beliefs and traditions to ensure that the views, values and rights of people of all sexes, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions are recognized, respected and valued), www.calem.eu/test/index-1.html
- Imaan (UK-based LGBTQI Muslim support group), www.imaan.org.uk
- International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice (local, spiritual-based feminist organization working to support grassroots women's activism in Thailand and the Asian region), www.womenforpeaceandjustice.org
- Kolech-Religious Women's Forum (Orthodox Jewish feminist organization based in Israel), www.kolech.com/english
- Meem (Lebanese LGBTQ women's support group also active in other parts of the Arab world), www.meemgroup.org
- Metropolitan Community Churches (LGBT-affirming rights-based network of churches with congregations in 40 countries around the world), <http://mccchurch.org/>
- Musawah (global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family), www.musawah.org
- Muslims for Progressive Values, MPVUSA (inclusive community rooted in traditional Quranic ideals of human dignity and social justice, welcoming all who are interested in discussing, promoting and working for the implementation of progressive values and inclusive and tolerant understandings of Islam), <http://mpvusa.org>
- Political Research Associates (social justice think tank producing investigative research and analysis on the U.S. Right—secular, religious, economic, and xenophobic, including its influence both domestically and overseas—to support social justice advocates and defend human rights), www.politicalresearch.org

- Sikh Feminist Research Institute (research network seeking to meet the need to evolve Sikh feminist thought by drawing on the egalitarian messages inherent within *Sikhi* and reconnecting with a feminism that long pre-dates the western paradigm), www.sikhfeministresearch.org
- Survivors' Network of those Abused by Priests (independent, confidential network of survivors of institutional/clerical sexual abuse and their supporters, SNAP has more than 10,000 members and support groups in over 60 cities across the U.S. and the world), www.snapnetwork.org
- Soulforce (U.S.-based organization committed to relentless nonviolent resistance to bring freedom to LGBTQ people from religious and political oppression), www.soulforce.org
- Southern Poverty Law Center (U.S.-based organization dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society using litigation, education, and other forms of advocacy), www.splcenter.org
- The Inner Circle (organization based in Cape Town, South Africa, working internationally to empower and raise consciousness amongst Muslims and assist sexually diverse Muslims to reconcile Islam with their sexuality), <http://theinnercircle.org.za>
- Violence is not our Culture Campaign (global network of organizations and individuals committed to ending all forms of discrimination and violence against women justified in the name of culture or religion), www.violenceisnotourculture.org
- Women Living Under Muslim Laws (international solidarity network providing information, support and a collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam), www.wluml.org
- Women's Ordination Conference (world's largest organization working for the ordination of women as priests, deacons, and bishops into an inclusive and accountable Catholic Church), www.womensordination.org
- Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (network that supports and protects women human rights defenders worldwide in their defence of human rights.), www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org

VIDEOS:

- *Adventures of Salwa* cartoon series against sexual harassment commissioned by Nasawiya in Lebanon (series in Arabic, but with very little language; mostly visual) www.youtube.com/user/adventuresofsalwa
- *AWID Forum 2012 Opening plenary video*, produced by AWID for 2012 Forum, Istanbul, Turkey (00:03:46) www.youtube.com/watch?v=b892qoyjSjY
- *Catolicadas* cartoon series by Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir México Channel (5 seasons, most of the videos have an English subtitle option, one special episode for the Papal visit with Portuguese subtitles) www.youtube.com/channel/UCrJMqvmYoOoO3EVCjiIZi3Q
- *Habla Con Dios* (Talk to God) video about the telephone booth to God project by Articulación Feminista Marcosur (00:05:10, Spanish with English subtitles), www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-zal7GCKTo
- *Libertyville Abortion Demonstration* video of impromptu interviews with anti-abortion demonstrators in Libertyville, USA, produced by Northbrook Peace Committee (00:06:49, English), www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uk6t_tdOkwo
- *Love Thy Neighbour protest* called by Zagreb Pride in Croatia, the video of the first protest ever held outside Zagreb's main cathedral contains interviews with protesters and documents the counter-protest, 12 Jan. 2013 (00:07:15, Croatian with English subtitles), www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUkorAoCTJc
- *No Woman, No Drive*, Comedian Hisham Fageeh's song responding to a Saudi Arabian scholar's *fatwa* (religious opinion) about health risks of women driving (00:04:15, lyrics in English, subtitled in Arabic and English) www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZMbTFNp4wI
- *Put Yourself in Her Shoes* UN Women public service announcement against sexual harassment (00:01:15, Arabic with English subtitles) www.youtube.com/watch?v=jePvXFz4XDc&feature=share
- *Sexual and reproductive health and rights—deconstructing the myths* educational video by The Greens/European Free Alliance (00:02:55, English, with Catalan, French, German, Spanish subtitle options) www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndX7zT4_KRs

- *The Holy See at the United Nations: Church or State?* video by Catholics for Choice, produced as part of the See Change campaign to end the Holy See's Permanent Observer Status at the UN (00:03:04) www.catholicsforchoice.org/campaigns/SeeChangeCampaign.asp
- *Think about it* Ipas Brazil campaign video about criminalization of abortion (00:00:32, available in [Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#), and with [English subtitles](#)) www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iHsi8K17do
- *Your voice is fundamental against religious fundamentalisms* energizer video produced by Articulación Feminista Marcosur, in collaboration with Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir-México and AWID (00:01:38, available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish), www.youtube.com/watch?v=GM8GP3Le5Oo

