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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provide dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

IMPACT OF RELIGION ON INTERNATIONAL AID **WHILE SECURING GENDER JUSTICE**

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Introduction

The intersection of religion, international aid, and gender justice represents a critical yet often under-analyzed area in global development discourse. Understanding the key concepts is essential to grasp the complexity of how these elements influence each other.

Religion refers to a system of beliefs, values, and practices centered around spiritual understandings of life, the universe, and human purpose. It often shapes cultural norms, laws, and social behavior. In many parts of the world, religion is not a private matter but a public force that significantly influences political and development agendas. Religious institutions frequently act as mediators of social services and can hold considerable moral authority over communities.

International aid comprises the financial, material, and technical support provided by international actors—such as governments, multilateral organizations, or NGOs—to foster development, respond to crises, and promote human rights in lower-income countries. It is delivered through both secular and religious channels. Faith-based organizations (FBOs) play a key role in aid distribution, often leveraging religious networks and community trust to provide education, healthcare, and humanitarian relief.

Gender justice goes beyond formal equality between men and women. It refers to a state of fairness where people of all genders enjoy equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. It includes the dismantling of systemic inequalities and the empowerment of marginalized gender identities. Gender justice also involves challenging deep-rooted cultural and religious norms that perpetuate discrimination or violence based on gender.

While religion can be a powerful force for compassion, charity, and social cohesion, it can also perpetuate patriarchal norms that conflict with gender justice goals. Conversely, religious leaders and organizations can be important allies in advocating for gender equity when engaged thoughtfully. International aid actors often face the challenge of respecting religious contexts while promoting human rights and gender justice.

Understanding how these concepts relate helps frame the core argument of this study: religion is neither inherently supportive nor obstructive to gender justice. Instead, its impact depends on interpretations, power dynamics, and the broader socio-political context in which aid is delivered.

Rationale and Research Questions

The global development landscape is increasingly recognizing the significance of religion in shaping societal values and influencing aid delivery mechanisms. In regions where religious beliefs and institutions hold considerable power, international aid interventions—particularly those aimed at promoting gender justice—must grapple with complex cultural and theological realities. While international aid agencies often adopt secular frameworks grounded in universal human rights, these frameworks sometimes clash with local religious norms and gender ideologies.

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) serve as both partners and powerholders in aid delivery. On one hand, they can enable access to communities, especially in contexts where trust in secular institutions is low. On the other hand, they may reinforce gender hierarchies through traditional or conservative interpretations of religious texts. Thus, the role of religion is not fixed; it can act as both a catalyst for and barrier to gender justice, depending on how it is interpreted and operationalized in the aid context.

Despite this dual role, scholarly literature and policy analysis often marginalize the nuanced relationship between religion and gender justice within international aid. This research addresses this gap by critically examining how religious ideologies, actors, and institutions influence efforts to achieve gender justice through international aid programs.¹

¹ Ganzevoort, van den Berg & van der Woud. Ook bij Racisme en Corona moet je naar religie kijken. Cordaid, accessed Through: <https://www.cordaid.org/nl/nieuws/ook-bij-racisme-en-corona-moet-je-naar-religie-kijken/>. / Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2020/percent/all/>.

Key Research Questions

1. How do religious beliefs and institutions influence the formulation and implementation of gender-focused international aid initiatives?
2. What role do faith-based organizations play in promoting or hindering gender justice within aid-receiving communities?
3. How do international donors and development agencies navigate religious values and gender equality in culturally sensitive environments?
4. What strategies or models exist to reconcile religious beliefs with gender justice in the delivery of aid?

Methodology and Scope

This research adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach to explore the complex interplay between religion, international aid, and gender justice. The methodology combines conceptual analysis, empirical case studies, and critical engagement with policy documents.

1. **Literature Review:** A critical review of academic literature, policy papers, and religious texts will be conducted to map the theoretical and historical foundations of religion's role in development and gender discourse.
2. **Case Studies:** Comparative case studies from selected regions (e.g., Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East) will be used to analyze how religious norms shape gender-related aid outcomes. These case studies will include both successful and challenged initiatives.
3. **Document Analysis:** Analysis of international aid agency reports, gender strategy documents, and religious organization publications to understand institutional approaches and discourses.
4. **Stakeholder Perspectives (optional, if applicable):** Interviews or existing qualitative data from faith leaders, aid workers, and community members will help contextualize lived experiences and perceptions.

Evolution of Faith-Based Aid

Faith-based aid has a long and complex history, evolving from early missionary activities to the establishment of globally recognized faith-based organizations that play a prominent role in contemporary humanitarian and development work. The evolution reflects broader shifts in political ideologies, international relations, and the growing recognition of the role of religion

in public life.²

1. Pre-Colonial and Early Religious Philanthropy

Before formalized international aid systems existed, religious institutions were central providers of social welfare in many societies.³ Temples, churches, mosques, and monasteries offered education, health care, and support for the poor, rooted in scriptural calls for charity and compassion. These early forms of aid were deeply embedded in community life and motivated by religious duty, such as zakat in Islam, tzedakah in Judaism, and Christian acts of mercy.

2. Missionary Work and Colonial Expansion

During the colonial era, religion and empire were tightly interwoven. Christian missionary movements, particularly from Europe and North America, expanded alongside colonial conquest. Missionaries provided education, medical care, and famine relief, but often with the goal of conversion and cultural assimilation. While some missionaries advocated for indigenous rights and gender inclusion, others reinforced colonial hierarchies and patriarchal norms.

Missionary schools and hospitals became precursors to modern FBOs, and their legacy—both positive and problematic—continues to shape the reception of faith-based aid today.⁴

3. Post-World War II: Institutionalization of Aid

After World War II, the international aid system became formalized through institutions like the United Nations and the Bretton Woods organizations. At the same time, major faith-based charities (e.g., Catholic Relief Services, Islamic Relief, World Vision) began to institutionalize their work, expanding globally and adopting more professional development models. These organizations combined theological values with technical expertise, positioning themselves as both spiritual and humanitarian actors.

The Cold War period saw Western FBOs increasingly involved in ideological battles, using aid as a tool to promote democratic or capitalist values in opposition to communism. This era also saw the emergence of national religious charities in the Global South, operating within local

² Hayward, S. and Marshall, K. (2015). *Women, Religion and Peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen*. Washinton, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

³ Ibid

⁴ Hayward, S. and Marshall, K. (2015). *Women, Religion and Peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen*. Washinton, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

contexts but often reliant on foreign funding.

4. 1980s–1990s: Rise of Religious Pluralism and Development Partnerships

The 1980s and 1990s marked a shift in development thinking, with recognition that state-centered, top-down approaches often failed to produce lasting change. NGOs—including FBOs—gained prominence for their grassroots engagement. The rise of religious pluralism in aid also became evident, with Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and interfaith organizations increasingly participating in international development.

Donors began to engage more openly with religious actors, recognizing their cultural legitimacy and local access. At the same time, critiques emerged about the risk of proselytization, the reinforcement of conservative gender norms, and the challenges of accountability in faith-based operations.

5. Post-2000: Faith and Development in the Era of the SDGs

With the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and later the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), religion regained visibility as a key development partner. Institutions like the World Bank and UN agencies initiated dialogue with religious communities, acknowledging their ability to mobilize moral authority and community action, particularly around gender, health, and education.⁵

Faith-based aid became more professionalized, yet tensions remained around the balance between religious identity and universal rights, especially in matters concerning women's rights, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and reproductive health.

Colonial Legacies and Missionary Work

The entanglement of religion and colonialism significantly shaped the foundation of international aid, particularly through missionary activities. During the colonial era, Christian missionaries often accompanied European imperial expansion into Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These missionaries established schools, clinics, and orphanages, offering services that were sometimes the only form of social support available in colonized regions. While they contributed to literacy, healthcare, and basic welfare, their efforts were not free from cultural and ideological implications. Aid was frequently tied to conversion, and indigenous traditions were often suppressed in favor of Western, Christian norms. Gender roles were also reshaped

⁵ Fabra-Mata, J., & Jalal, M. (2018). Female Religious Actors as Peace Agents in Afghanistan. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 13(2), 76-90.

during this period; missionaries introduced new, often more restrictive, models of femininity and domesticity aligned with their religious doctrines. Though some missionaries genuinely sought to empower local populations, the overarching narrative was one of cultural superiority and paternalism, which left a complex legacy. This historical backdrop continues to influence perceptions of faith-based aid today, particularly in formerly colonized societies that remain cautious about foreign religious involvement.⁶

Transition to Modern Religious NGOs

In the post-colonial era, especially after World War II, faith-based aid began to shift from its missionary roots to more formal, institutionalized forms. As the global humanitarian system evolved, religious organizations transformed into structured non-governmental organizations (NGOs), aligning their missions with professional standards of development practice. Organizations such as Catholic Relief Services, Islamic Relief Worldwide, and World Vision emerged as influential actors on the international stage. These modern faith-based NGOs retained their religious identity but began to emphasize non-proselytizing, inclusive approaches to aid. They positioned themselves as both morally driven and technically competent, capable of delivering aid in crisis settings, implementing long-term development programs, and advocating for justice at the policy level. While their religious ethos continued to shape their values and motivations—often stressing compassion, dignity, and service—their operations increasingly mirrored those of secular NGOs. This transition allowed them to engage with multilateral donors and governments while maintaining community credibility rooted in faith. However, the balance between faith-based principles and universal development goals, particularly regarding gender equality and human rights, remains a point of negotiation and occasional tension.

Theological Interpretations of Gender

Theological interpretations of gender vary widely across religious traditions and denominations, yet many are rooted in historical contexts that reinforce binary gender roles and hierarchies. In Abrahamic faiths such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, sacred texts are often cited to justify distinct roles for men and women, frequently assigning leadership and public authority to men while emphasizing domestic or nurturing roles for women. Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, too, contain diverse interpretations that both uphold and challenge

⁶ Ibid

patriarchal norms. These gendered readings are not fixed; rather, they are shaped by centuries of interpretation by predominantly male religious scholars and leaders. In many cases, literal or conservative readings of texts have been used to justify the exclusion of women from religious leadership, limited mobility, and restricted access to education and property. However, theology is inherently interpretive, and different communities may arrive at dramatically different conclusions about gender depending on cultural context, political pressures, and contemporary social values.⁷

Patriarchy and Religious Authority

Religious institutions have historically been major enforcers of patriarchal systems, using divine authority to legitimize male dominance in both private and public life. Patriarchy within religious contexts is not only reflected in theological doctrine but also embedded in the organizational structures of many religious bodies.⁸ Leadership roles in mosques, churches, temples, and synagogues have traditionally been reserved for men, reinforcing a gender hierarchy that mirrors broader societal norms. This concentration of religious authority in male hands often translates into control over community norms, family structures, and even national policy in theocracies or religiously-influenced states. Furthermore, religious justifications are frequently invoked to oppose gender equality legislation, reproductive rights, and protections for LGBTQ+ communities. Such dynamics contribute to the perception of religion as inherently resistant to gender justice. However, it is essential to distinguish between religion as belief and religion as institution, as the latter often reflects the biases of human power structures more than the core ethical principles of the faith itself.

Progressive Religious Voices and Reform

Despite institutionalized patriarchy, religion is not monolithic, and many progressive⁹ religious voices have emerged to challenge traditional gender norms. Feminist theologians, queer theologians, and reformist religious leaders are reinterpreting sacred texts through inclusive and justice-oriented lenses. In Christianity, feminist theologians like Rosemary Radford

⁷ https://www.cordaid.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Policy-Paper_Religion-and-WPS-Agenda-Sept-2020.pdf

⁸ Ibid

⁹ In this paper, the terms ‘progressive’, ‘moderate’ and ‘conservative’ are used when talking about different religious scholars and other religious actors, and their vision on gender norms and women’s roles. The distinction between these terms is made based on the specific context of the specific case. Because the contexts of the case studies differ, different terms might be applicable. Specifically in the context of Afghanistan, the term progressive might be problematic, and therefore the term moderate is chosen to indicate a (more) positive attitude towards the position of women within society, derived from religious beliefs.

Ruether and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza have reexamined the Bible to highlight women's historical roles and question patriarchal interpretations. In Islam, scholars such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas advocate for gender-equitable readings of the Qur'an, arguing that the original spiritual message supports justice for all, including women. Similar reformist movements are visible in Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, where activists and religious thinkers are working to reclaim religious identity while advancing gender justice. These efforts often face resistance from traditionalist factions but are gaining traction in academic, community, and interfaith spaces. Importantly, they demonstrate that religious belief can be compatible with feminist ideals, and that religion, when reinterpreted, can be a powerful force for social transformation rather than oppression.

Roles and Influence of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs)

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) are significant actors in humanitarian and development sectors worldwide. Rooted in religious values and traditions, these organizations often operate in contexts where government presence is limited, and community trust is essential. FBOs play a multifaceted role: they provide emergency relief, implement long-term development programs, offer health and education services, and engage in advocacy for marginalized populations. Their moral credibility and close ties to local religious communities give them unique access and influence, especially in culturally conservative environments. Additionally, FBOs are often able to mobilize resources—both financial and human—through faith-based solidarity and global religious networks. However, their religious affiliation also shapes the scope and approach of their aid. While some FBOs are explicitly inclusive and rights-based, others may limit their support based on religious identity, exclude particular groups, or promote gender roles aligned with traditional doctrine. Despite these challenges, FBOs are increasingly recognized by multilateral donors and development agencies as valuable partners capable of contextualizing aid and fostering sustainable change.

Case Studies of Religious Aid Actors

Examining specific case studies provides insight into the varied impact of religious aid actors. One notable example is World Vision International, a Christian humanitarian organization that operates in nearly 100 countries. World Vision integrates its faith-inspired mission with child protection, gender empowerment, and poverty alleviation programs. While it avoids proselytization in its official work, it continues to face scrutiny around LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

Similarly, Islamic Relief Worldwide, one of the largest Muslim humanitarian agencies, provides critical services in conflict zones such as Syria and Yemen. It actively incorporates Islamic values of compassion (rahma) and justice (adl) into its programming, while also confronting internal debates on gender norms and leadership roles. In India, SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association), though not religious in operation, often partners with local Hindu and Muslim groups to gain community trust and promote economic empowerment among women. These cases illustrate that religious identity can both empower aid delivery and introduce tensions—especially when navigating issues like gender justice and minority rights. The success of such actors often depends on their ability to balance faith commitments with the ethical and inclusive standards expected in international humanitarianism.¹⁰

Gender-Sensitive vs. Gender-Blind Aid

One of the most critical distinctions in humanitarian work is between gender-sensitive and gender-blind approaches. Gender-blind aid assumes that aid impacts men and women equally, ignoring the deeply ingrained structural inequalities that shape access, participation, and outcomes. This often leads to the reinforcement of patriarchal norms and the exclusion of women and gender minorities from decision-making and benefits. In contrast, gender-sensitive aid actively analyzes the different needs, roles, and experiences of individuals based on gender. It seeks to promote empowerment, challenge discrimination, and ensure equitable participation. Among FBOs, approaches to gender vary widely. Some adopt gender-sensitive frameworks in alignment with international standards, offering programs that support women's education, reproductive health, or leadership. Others remain gender-blind—either due to theological constraints, cultural sensitivities, or internal organizational policies. The tension lies in aligning faith-based motivations with global norms on gender justice. Increasingly, donor agencies are encouraging or requiring FBOs to integrate gender analysis into their programming, recognizing that sustainable aid must address the root causes of inequality—including those reinforced by traditional gender roles.

Successes in Gender Justice Through Religious Advocacy

Despite often being viewed as a barrier to gender equality, religion can also serve as a powerful catalyst for gender justice. Across faith traditions, numerous religious leaders, organizations, and grassroots movements have used theological principles to advocate for the dignity, rights,

¹⁰ https://www.humanrights.dk/files/media/document/Brief_no4_03%20FINAL-a.pdf

and empowerment of women and marginalized genders. In Islam, scholars like Amina Wadud and organizations such as Musawah have emphasized gender justice as intrinsic to Qur'anic values. Christian groups such as the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians have reinterpreted scripture to support women's leadership and challenge oppressive interpretations. In Buddhism and Hinduism, reformers have drawn on spiritual teachings about compassion and non-violence to confront gender-based violence and caste-based gender discrimination. In many regions, faith-based women's networks have successfully mobilized communities against female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage, and gender-based violence by appealing to religious values of care, justice, and human dignity. These examples show that religion, when interpreted progressively, can provide the moral language and institutional platforms needed to foster gender transformation.¹¹

Resistance to Gender Equity on Religious Grounds

Conversely, religion is also frequently invoked to resist or undermine gender equity, particularly when gender justice initiatives are perceived as threats to tradition or divine law. Religious conservatives often argue that efforts to promote women's rights or LGBTQ+ inclusion violate sacred texts, disrupt social harmony, or impose Western values. In some Islamic contexts, interpretations of sharia law are used to justify male guardianship, polygamy, and unequal inheritance rights. In Christian-majority settings, resistance to reproductive rights and gender diversity is often rooted in specific biblical interpretations. Hindu nationalist ideologies have at times reinforced gender roles that idealize female subservience as a cultural virtue. This resistance is not limited to theology but is also a political tool, as religious authority is leveraged to maintain power structures and suppress reformist voices. Often, patriarchal values are conflated with religious doctrine, making it difficult to challenge gender injustice without being accused of attacking the faith itself. Such resistance reveals the tension between sacred tradition and evolving human rights frameworks.

Intersections of Culture, Tradition, and Belief

Religion does not exist in a vacuum; it is deeply intertwined with culture, tradition, and local norms. In many communities, it is difficult to distinguish where religion ends and cultural practices begin. For instance, practices like honor-based violence, female genital mutilation, or child marriage are often justified on religious grounds, even when they are more accurately

¹¹ https://www.humanrights.dk/files/media/document/Brief_no4_03%20FINAL-a.pdf

rooted in cultural customs. Conversely, cultural shifts in education, media, and economic participation can influence how religious beliefs are interpreted and practiced. The intersection of culture and religion becomes particularly significant in development work, where efforts to promote gender justice must navigate not only religious texts but also embedded traditions, power relations, and community identity. These intersections can be sites of both friction and innovation. Context-sensitive approaches that recognize the fluidity of belief and culture have shown promise—particularly when they engage religious leaders and communities in dialogue that emphasizes shared values like dignity, justice, and care. Ultimately, addressing gender injustice in religious contexts requires a nuanced understanding of how faith, tradition, and social change interact.

Strategies for Inclusive Aid Practices

Negotiating gender justice in faith-based contexts requires strategies that both respect religious values and promote equitable, inclusive outcomes. One of the most effective strategies involves contextualizing aid—that is, designing gender justice programs that are sensitive to the local religious and cultural landscape. This means engaging with religious leaders and community gatekeepers to co-create solutions that align with both human rights principles and religious teachings. For example, programs that aim to combat gender-based violence in predominantly Christian or Muslim regions might frame their advocacy around the religious imperatives of compassion, justice, and human dignity, rather than approaching the issue from a purely secular or legalistic standpoint. Another key strategy is the capacity building of religious leaders themselves, helping them interpret sacred texts through a gender-equitable lens and empowering them to serve as agents of change within their communities. Partnerships between secular development organizations and FBOs are also critical, as they can bring together technical expertise on gender justice with the religious legitimacy and community trust that faith-based organizations often possess. Additionally, community-led programming, where women and marginalized groups are included in decision-making processes, is essential for ensuring that aid efforts reflect local needs and realities.¹²

Dialogues Between Secular and Religious Stakeholders

The intersection of secular and religious perspectives on gender justice often leads to tension, but it also opens up opportunities for meaningful dialogue and collaboration. While secular

¹² https://jliflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Religion_and_Gender_Equality_UNWOMEN.pdf

organizations focus on rights-based frameworks, international standards, and universal gender equality, religious actors bring their own moral and ethical frameworks to the table, grounded in faith, scripture, and community values. Successful dialogues require mutual respect, active listening, and a willingness to engage with different worldviews. One approach is building common ground around shared values such as human dignity, equality, and social justice, which are present in many religious traditions, even if their practical application diverges. Secular stakeholders might frame gender justice as an issue of universal human rights, while religious groups could emphasize the inherent dignity of all individuals as a divine mandate. Building relationships between secular and religious actors is particularly critical in contexts where religious institutions hold significant power, such as in many parts of Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Facilitating these dialogues involves not just negotiating the political dimensions of gender justice but also addressing underlying theological debates and exploring how religious texts and traditions can be interpreted in ways that align with contemporary gender equality goals.

Empowering Women Within Faith Traditions

Empowering women within faith traditions requires navigating both the constraints and opportunities presented by religion. In many communities, women's roles and voices are limited by patriarchal religious interpretations, but there is also a rich history of women's agency within these same faith traditions. Empowerment can take many forms: from fostering religious education for women and girls, to encouraging women to take on leadership roles within religious communities, to advocating for reinterpretations of sacred texts that support gender equality. For example, in Islam, women such as Amina Wadud have reinterpreted the Qur'an to promote gender justice, arguing that gender inequality in Islamic law is a result of historical interpretations rather than the original divine message. In Christianity, women's theological leadership is gaining ground, with female pastors and theologians challenging traditional gender hierarchies. Faith-based initiatives focused on women's economic empowerment, such as those offered by Catholic Relief Services or Islamic Relief, can also help women access resources and opportunities for self-sufficiency, all while engaging with religious communities that may have previously restricted their public roles. Crucially, religious women's networks often serve as key spaces for advocacy and reform. These networks use both spiritual teachings and grassroots activism to challenge discriminatory practices, advocate for women's rights, and ensure that women's voices are central to faith-based development initiatives. By working within religious frameworks and supporting

women's leadership, gender justice can be achieved in a way that is both transformative and respectful of religious identities.¹³

Conclusion

This exploration of the role of religion in shaping gender justice within international aid has illuminated the complex and often contradictory relationship between faith, humanitarian action, and gender equality. Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) have played a pivotal role in the global aid sector, offering essential services such as healthcare, education, and disaster relief, while drawing on religious principles to guide their actions. While many FBOs have contributed significantly to advancing gender justice—through the empowerment of women, gender-sensitive aid programs, and the reinterpretation of religious texts—religion has also served as a constraint in certain contexts. In some regions, patriarchal interpretations of sacred texts have reinforced traditional gender roles, limiting women's rights and restricting gender equality. The resistance to gender equity on religious grounds highlights the challenges faced by advocates of gender justice, especially when traditional religious authorities hold significant influence over social and political structures. However, the progressive voices within various religious traditions are challenging these norms and offering alternative interpretations that align with global gender justice standards.

The Intersections of culture, tradition, and religious belief have proven to be both obstacles and opportunities in negotiating gender justice in faith-based contexts. While deeply ingrained cultural and religious norms often shape gender roles, these same traditions can provide the moral authority and community support needed to drive change. The dialogue between secular and religious stakeholders, although challenging, remains crucial for fostering inclusive and sustainable development programs that respect both human rights and religious sensibilities.

The Way Forward for Aid, Religion, and Gender Equality

The way forward for gender justice in international aid lies in building more inclusive, context-sensitive approaches that engage religious actors in meaningful dialogue and reform. FBOs must continue to evolve, adapting their approaches to align with international gender justice standards while respecting the religious and cultural contexts in which they operate. Key strategies include strengthening collaborations between secular and religious actors, fostering

¹³ https://jliflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Religion_and_Gender_Equality_UNWOMEN.pdf

gender-sensitive religious education, and supporting progressive religious leaders who advocate for gender equality within their faith communities.

Moreover, community-led advocacy, where women and marginalized groups play a central role, is essential in ensuring that aid programs are both effective and culturally appropriate. The intersectional nature of gender justice means that religious, cultural, and political factors must be carefully navigated to promote both local ownership and long-term change. Religious interpretations that champion human dignity, equality, and justice should be amplified, while patriarchal readings of sacred texts need to be critically examined and reformed.

Ultimately, the path to achieving gender equality in faith-based aid contexts requires open, ongoing dialogue, respectful engagement with religious and cultural differences, and a commitment to reinterpreting religious doctrines in ways that promote the full participation and rights of women and marginalized genders. With collaborative efforts, the faith sector can become a powerful ally in the global fight for gender justice, ensuring that religion serves as a force for empowerment rather than oppression.

