

**Call for Papers – IAMS Sydney 2020**

**Paper Abstract prepared for the Study Group on Interreligious Studies and Mission**

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**Title of Paper**

**Developing a multi-faith approach to address the protection of children from violence and abuse: A case study from Nepal**

In Asia, engaging across different faith communities may be deemed potentially divisive, even explosive. Thus, practitioners of community development tend to avoid engaging with multi faith perspectives and faith leaders. However, given the pervasive influence of faith in Asian life, it would also suggest that faith leaders command leverage with a grassroots religious base that will allow them to address and resolve with effect pressing communal concerns.

The hypothesis that religious leaders have significant influence in communal concerns was tested in a project in Nepal. The project was conceived as a shared multi-faith platform to tackle the root causes of violence against children. In drawing Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian leaders from each of their bounded and isolated religious spaces onto this shared platform located in public space, it was hoped it could be a combined front that would not be ignored and may be magnified to address practices that entrench violence against vulnerable children in the community. Central to the success of the project was the need to build trust and construct a shared theological base to protect children of any faith in their community.

This paper seeks to describe the project in its rationale, conception and its evolution. The paper wants to use the project as a case study to assess the effectiveness from a practitioner viewpoint for how religious leaders and structures can make a significant contribution as advocates and mobilisers on behalf of the vulnerable in their communities.