

# CHANNELS OF HOPE

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Igniting a movement to transform communities





## WHY CHANNELS OF HOPE?

Faith leaders are often among the most influential members in a community. Their beliefs and values can inspire entire communities to care for and love one another. Without proper information and insight, the misunderstandings of faith leaders can inadvertently promote stigma and discrimination.

Channels of Hope trains and equips faith leaders and other community members to break down walls between faiths and in their own communities to respond to serious issues and promote the well-being of all in the community—especially the most vulnerable.

## WHAT IS CHANNELS OF HOPE?

Channels of Hope (CoH) is the way World Vision mobilises community leaders—especially faith leaders-- to respond to core issues affecting their communities—such as HIV and AIDS, maternal and child health, gender equity and gender-based violence, and child protection.

Channels of Hope is more than just training or education. It is life transformation. Training is designed to move the heart, inform the mind and motivate a sustained and effective response to significant issues.

Faith leaders trained by CoH become active participants in their communities and are committed to identify and support the most vulnerable in their communities. They mobilise their own congregations and seek to strengthen existing community structures. If community support structures do not exist, these leaders often mobilise and launch community coalitions, also known as Community Care Coalitions or Community Child-focused Coalitions (CCCs), which are groups of community volunteers committed to identify and support the most vulnerable children and adults in their communities.

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*“Channels of Hope is the most effective resource in the World Vision Partnership for mobilising churches to work for the well-being of children. Furthermore, it knits people of all faiths together in a common determination to build communities in which children will flourish. As CoH adds more training in addition to the vital focus on HIV/AIDS, it is providing us with a broad spectrum of ways church and faith leaders can put their beliefs into practice and tangibly demonstrate their love for God and their neighbours.”*

*– Tim Dearborn (Partnership Leader, Christian Commitments)*

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## STORIES OF HOPE

### Sheikh Hassan Omari, Kenya

Sheikh Hassan Omari is a Muslim faith leader in Kenya. He works with the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, a network of all Muslims in Kenya.

He took part in one of the first Channels of Hope workshops for other-faith leaders. Hassan had lost family members and close friends to AIDS, but he couldn't talk about such a taboo subject in his faith community. After attending the Channels of Hope workshop, he committed his life to the fight against HIV and AIDS.

His quest was abnormal and even distasteful to other Muslim faith leaders—at least at first. As in the Christian faith, in the Muslim faith, AIDS is a highly stigmatised disease, often believed to be a punishment for sexual sin.

His main objective was to educate others—especially sheikhs and imams—that HIV is spread through other means than illicit sexual behaviour. Through a national radio programme, he spoke out about HIV and AIDS from a Muslim perspective.

As a result of his efforts, many HIV-positive Muslims have disclosed their status and come forward to receive support. Many Muslim women are reaching out to care for people infected and affected by HIV.

## COH AND CHILD WELL-BEING

World Vision aspires to contribute to overall child well-being, specifically:

- Children enjoy good health.
- Children are educated for life.
- Children experience the love of God and neighbour.
- Children are cared for, protected and participating.

Channels of Hope contributes to all four of these aspirations in direct, tangible ways. People trained by Channels of Hope mobilise community members to identify orphans and vulnerable children in the community and assure they have what they need to have a full and healthy life.

## HISTORY OF COH

Channels of Hope was developed over a number of years by the Christian AIDS Bureau for Southern Africa (CABSA) to respond specifically to the devastating impact of HIV and

*“Over my 26 years with WV I've seen nothing as powerful in building bridges of trust and effective cooperation between Muslims and Christians. CoH helps Imams, pastors, priests and other Muslim and Christian leaders in mixed faith communities to unite to work together for their common good. It is a catalyst that creates working relationships so faith leaders can address other threats to the well-being of children and their communities.”*

Dave Robinson (Director, Islamic Contexts)

AIDS in communities in the global South. World Vision adopted the model in 2004 to galvanise its own response to HIV and AIDS. Through CoH and CCCs, World Vision has helped to mobilise more than 70,000 community volunteers in Africa alone to care for and support orphans and vulnerable children and other marginalised people who need extra support to have fullness of life.

Since its launch as a core project model with World Vision, CoH has transformed lives in churches and communities. Based on key tenets from scripture, it confronts common misunderstandings and questions, and participants cannot help but learn to identify with others who are directly affected by these issues. With that understanding, faith leaders are moved to a compassionate response.



## COH CURRICULA

Training of Channels of Hope facilitators last 8-10 days. The basic structure of training includes the following steps:

- Connecting the heart
- Educating the mind
- Equipping for action

These CoH facilitators are then prepared and equipped to run 2-5 day workshops in their communities. From these workshops, participants form Congregational/Community Hope Action Teams (CHATs) to develop action plans to respond at the local level.



World Vision has developed CoH curricula in two areas, with two more in development:

**HIV and AIDS:** World Vision’s HIV and AIDS strategy focuses on building the capacity of communities to prevent the spread of HIV, and care and advocacy for people living with HIV as well as orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs). *Channels of Hope for HIV* mobilises the infrastructure, organisational capacity, pool of current and potential volunteers, and unmatched moral authority of local churches and faith-based organisations towards positive action on HIV and AIDS. Once they have been mobilised, World Vision works with churches and faith-based organisations to coordinate and equip sustainable, community-based HIV and AIDS projects with an emphasis on reaching OVCs in need of care and support.

The Channels of Hope project model is not only effective for faith leaders, but has been used effectively with various target groups such as teachers, community leaders and youth. The CoH curriculum can be used without the faith-specific content.

*“CoH for Gender is an excellent and effective tool for engaging church leaders and community members to discuss and take action to change negative social norms that are barriers to child well-being and sustainable development. The tool is a powerful way to address the root cause of injustice and poverty and transform the hearts of the people.”*

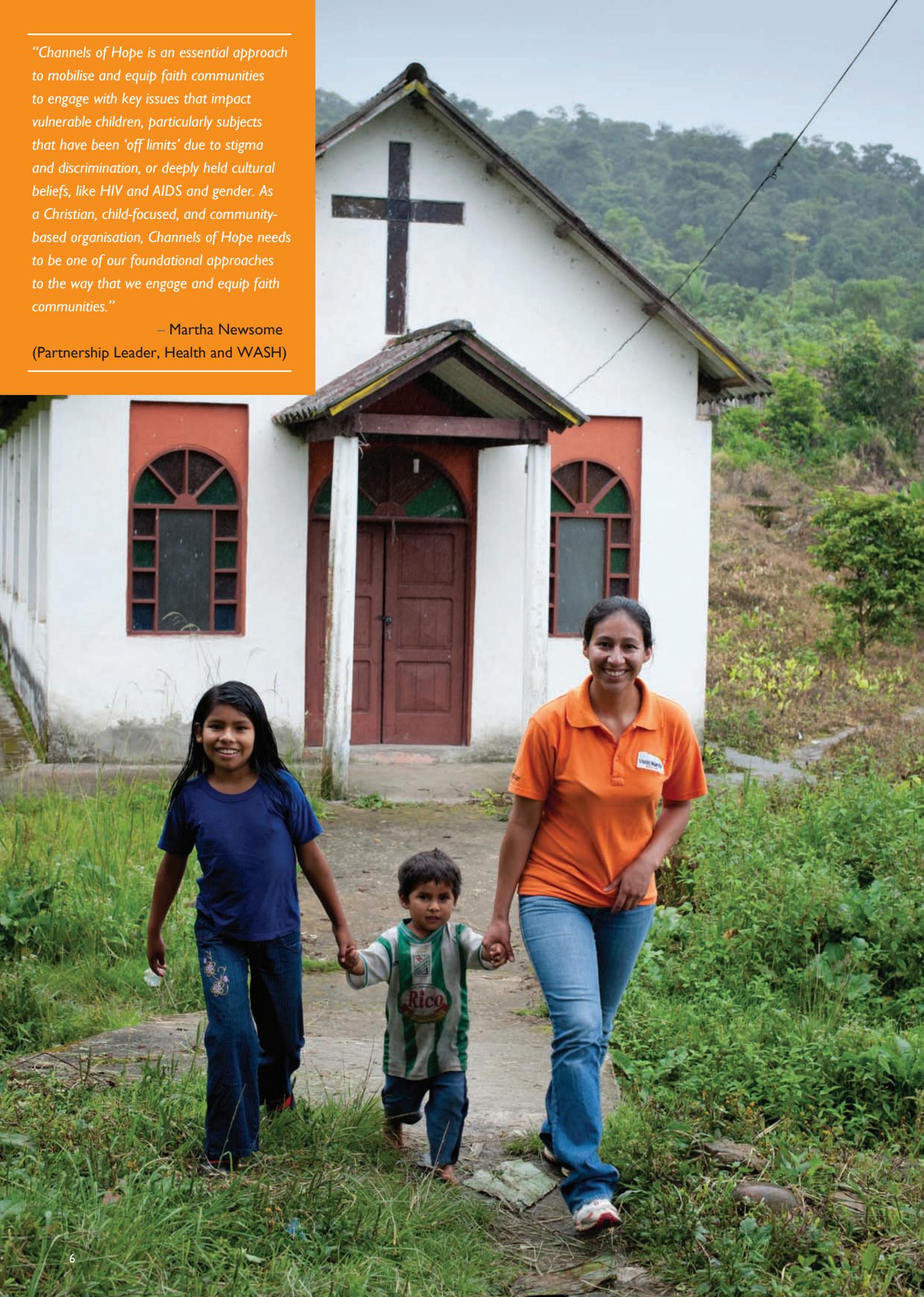
– Fatuma Hashi (Director, Gender and Development)

**Gender:** *Channels of Hope for Gender* is an innovative approach to exploring gender from a biblical perspective. Participants are invited to dialogue on biblical theology, culture and gender with the view of transforming values systems, norms and behaviours which tend to negatively impact male and female relations both domestically and publicly. This model has been piloted with culturally and theologically diverse church and community leaders in Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. The approach is becoming a preferred community mobilisation tool, not only for gender issues and to address gender-based violence, but also for Child Protection, and Advocacy and Justice for Children. CoH for Gender is currently being used as one of the developmental tools in four ADPs in South Africa and Malawi, and has also been integrated into an action-learning framework for gender-based violence response in the Solomon Islands.

**Maternal and child health:** As a child-focused organisation, World Vision is committed to promoting child health—especially in the critical first two years of life. Since the health of the mother is closely connected with that of the child, World Vision prioritises maternal and child health (MCH). *Channels of Hope for MCH* is being developed in recognition that the involvement of the local faith community helps ensure continuity of prevention, protection and care programmes in a community. They especially help by facilitating and supporting individual behavioural change for community-led prevention, addressing issues and stigma surrounding MCH, supporting new parents and

*“Channels of Hope is an essential approach to mobilise and equip faith communities to engage with key issues that impact vulnerable children, particularly subjects that have been ‘off limits’ due to stigma and discrimination, or deeply held cultural beliefs, like HIV and AIDS and gender. As a Christian, child-focused, and community-based organisation, Channels of Hope needs to be one of our foundational approaches to the way that we engage and equip faith communities.”*

*– Martha Newsome  
(Partnership Leader, Health and WASH)*



encouraging family-based life-saving care and treatment for the most vulnerable. During the programme, participants undergo a series of activities to educate them about MCH issues. They are equipped with scientific knowledge and grapple with biblical principles and scripture to help move them from judgment and discrimination toward unconditional love. Once mobilised, World Vision works with congregations to facilitate and equip sustainable, community-based MCH interventions, advocacy and care activities.

**Child protection:** Many children are exposed to abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence, some of which also make them more vulnerable for HIV infection. Some children are trafficked or sexually exploited, but many more are victims of domestic violence or suffer physical punishments at home and in schools and communities. Many of these issues, such as corporal punishment or child labour, are deeply rooted in values and beliefs of communities. In many cases the Church and faith communities might be blind to these issues, may themselves be participants in it, or may know about it but not feel the need or ability to address them. *CoH for Child Protection* is now being developed (to be launched in FY12) to help the faith community understand the importance of child protection. It uses biblical principles and scientific facts to address erroneous cultural beliefs that threaten children. The goal is to change hearts and beliefs about how children should be protected, and to empower these participants to go into their communities and effect change for better child protection.

## COH WITH OTHER FAITHS



Faith communities are often distinguished by what divides them. Channels of Hope has a unique role to help bring faith communities together to respond to issues of common concern.

CoH began by uniting diverse Christian faith communities, building understanding and partnership between various Christian traditions, from Catholics and Protestants, to Orthodox and Evangelical. In the past three years, World Vision partnered with Muslim scholars to develop additions and adaptations to the CoH (for HIV) curriculum for Muslim faith leaders, using key passages from the Qur'an to demonstrate the Islamic faith's stance on issues like HIV and AIDS. Since this development, it is now possible for Christian and Muslim CoH facilitators to work together during workshops in their communities – leading participants to an increased understanding of core issues while building bridges and creating opportunities for joint action for the better of their own communities. **This video** highlights World Vision's work with other faith communities through CoH ([www.youtube.com/worldvisionusa](http://www.youtube.com/worldvisionusa), search "Channels of Hope.")

## RESULTS OF COH

Research in two countries (Uganda and Zambia) to test the effectiveness of Channels of Hope demonstrated that Channels of Hope training led to significant increases in knowledge about HIV and AIDS, and willingness to be tested for HIV. It also led to a decrease in stigma toward HIV. This video tells specific stories of two faith leaders whose lives were transformed through Channels of Hope: <http://vimeo.com/13087530>.



## STORIES OF HOPE

### Rajnish Jacob, India

Rev. Rajnish Jacob was the pastor of an Assembly of God church in India. To pastor Rajnish, people living with HIV and AIDS were living under God's curse. "I had always believed that they are suffering because of their adultery and sinful life, and to minister to a sex worker was one of the most undesirable things," he explains.

He was invited to take part in Channels of Hope training. After the three days of training, a keen interest grew in him to learn more about HIV and AIDS and people living with it. He was taken to visit people infected and affected by HIV.

"I was shaken by the fact that I and the Church had totally ignored the call of God to serve communities such as this. I became restless and troubled," he said.

After coming back from the training, Pastor Rajnish Jacob immediately began to respond to the need of the community he once thought was cursed by God, giving birth to a whole new ministry. He started working with his church and partnering with World Vision to care for people in Bhojpura, a village of Rajnut community, which is a community of sex workers by tradition.

They helped people with school tuition, recreational activities, health and hygiene, and counselling

# About World Vision

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, World Vision serves alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people. World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender. Specifically, we focus on:

## TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

Because poverty has both local and global causes, World Vision works within communities and across geographical areas to help individuals and groups improve the well-being of children and overcome poverty.

## RESPONDING TO DISASTERS

World Vision is globally positioned to help with immediate needs like food, water and shelter when disaster strikes and to help communities to recover and to prevent future catastrophes.

## SEEKING GLOBAL CHANGE

World Vision engages institutions, donors and the general public to address the global problems that perpetuate poverty. Advocacy staff empower communities to speak up for their rights, locally and globally.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT WORLDVISION'S HEALTH WORK?

[hope@wvi.org](mailto:hope@wvi.org)

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## WHERE WORLDVISION WORKS

CoH is active in 59 of the countries where World Vision works.

