



## Christian Conference of Asia Webinar Series

# Impact of Growing Religious Extremism on Women in Asia

## Concept Note

Most Asian countries, in recent times have experienced different forms of religious extremism. The growing trend of religious extremism intensifies intolerance and conflicts, which bear a deep impact on the lives and rights of women. Almost every major religion justifies intolerance, oppression, and violence against women. Asia is home to all of the world's major religions and all of them coexisted in Asia for centuries. However, the situation of religious minorities in Asia in recent times has become increasingly complex, as such communities are subject to oppression and violation of rights. The denial of the rights of religious minorities in Asia includes limited access to education and employment opportunities, which leads to the perpetuation of poverty. When such acts take the form of intimidation and violence, they have threatening implications for religious minorities, for civil society, and human rights in general, and especially for women and other vulnerable groups within minorities.

A common feature among extremist ideologies is a strong tendency towards patriarchy. Women from minority religious or ethnic groups are more vulnerable to violence and face enormous challenges ranging from right to life, access to education, and access to justice. In Asia, women from minority groups have been victims of physical violence, sexual abuses, and rape, abduction, forced conversions and forced marriages as well as murder. The targeting of minority women is not accidental or 'collateral damage'; it is deliberate, tactical, and strategic. In many cases, religious extremists have warped religious identities, mixing religious and non-indigenous cultural practices in an attempt to control women's bodies and status. However, Asian women are persistent in raising their voices and challenging the spread of such criminal acts as well as deliberate attempts. Despite the threats they face and the closure of public space available to them, women's activism for basic rights continues locally, nationally, and globally.

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) has been a constant and firm advocate of upholding women's rights and dignity and express serious concerns over growing violence against women and girls from religious and ethnic minorities in Asia. The CCA calls upon its constituencies and civil society organisations to join hands and voices against these gross violations of human rights and women's rights. The CCA also promotes and advocates peaceful and harmonious living-together of different religious and ethnic groups in the region.

In order to highlight and address some of these issues, the CCA will hold a webinar on 15 December 2020 focusing on the theme, *Impact of Growing Religious Extremism on Women in Asia*.

The webinar will aim to:

- Analyse the causes of growing religious intolerance and extremism and its deep socio-economic impacts on the status of women in different countries in Asia;

- Deliberate on the growing trend of violence against women and girls from religious and ethnic minorities and find ways to combat such inhuman and cruel acts; and,
- Strategise for collective action of all sections in society, including churches and FBOs, to advocate for protection of women from marginalised groups.