

## i. Introducing Religious Fundamentalism

The world is less than 500 days away from the targeted day to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), eight goals and 18 targets set by the United Nations and governments to tackle some of the worst problems that have impeded developing nations. While there has been much debate on the suitability of these targets since they were first launched in 2000 after the Millennium Summit, the culmination of this process in 2015 and the Post-2015 Development Agenda are opportunities to reflect and call for greater attention to the issues that the MDGs strived to address. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)<sup>1[1][1]</sup> are critical to achieving the MDGs, in developing the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and in general ensuring a world that is just, equitable and inclusive, and where the marginalised, including women and girls, are empowered. Even before the MDG process in 2000, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)<sup>2[2][2]</sup> in 1994, which resulted in the Programme of Action (PoA), and the Fourth World Conference on Women<sup>3[3][3]</sup> in 1995, which resulted in the Beijing Platform for Action, advocated the essentiality of these needs and rights internationally, regionally and nationally.

SRHR has to be prioritised in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, while comprehensively addressing universal access to SRHR, beyond considering family planning, and ensuring youth access to SRHR. Further, SRHR should be embodied in relevant goals and targets, such as gender, health, education, environment and others, because not doing so will limit the achievements expected from these broader areas. An analysis of the problems in these areas shows how integrally inter-linked they are to SRHR. While there are the obvious health benefits, i.e., healthier and longer lives, ensuring SRHR can support education of girls who are prevented from attending or completing school – preventing early/forced marriage helps reduce dropouts, violence inhibits access, and be a source of information. There are economic gains at the household, community and country levels because of a health and productive workforce and ensure contributions of women to the economy. Access to SRHR can save lives of women and children, while integration of SRHR into dealing with major disease such as HIV and AIDS can reduce the impact on populations. SRHR and gender equality are inextricably linked; inequality and power over women, their bodies, and their sexuality endangers health throughout the lifecycle.<sup>4[4][4]</sup>

The context in which SRHR is ensured is also critical to consider. In doing so, the challenge posed by religious fundamentalism, which has been growing in many parts of the world over the past decades is important. This brief will provide an overview of what this means in the context of achieving SRHR for marginalised groups, particularly women, so as to inform

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<sup>1[1][1]</sup> Thanenthiran S., Racherla S.J.M., and Jahanath S. (2013)  
[http://www.arrow.org.my/publications/ICPD+20/ICPD+20\\_ARROW\\_AP.pdf](http://www.arrow.org.my/publications/ICPD+20/ICPD+20_ARROW_AP.pdf)

<sup>2[2][2]</sup> Please see <https://www.unfpa.org/public/icpd>

<sup>3[3][3]</sup> Please see <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

<sup>4[4][4]</sup> Universal Access Project 2014. Briefing Cards: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

[https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/genun/pages/122/attachments/original/1407607969/SRHR\\_Briefing\\_Cards\\_FINAL.pdf?14076079](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/genun/pages/122/attachments/original/1407607969/SRHR_Briefing_Cards_FINAL.pdf?14076079)

global processes striving to meet these needs and achieve these rights, including the ICPD beyond 2014 review and post-2015 development processes.

The term 'religious fundamentalism' has connotations of regression and backwardness and has been used in debates, Islamic militancy<sup>5[5][5]</sup>, Protestant ideology, anti-Americanism and fanaticism.<sup>6[6][6]</sup> The use of the term in this brief does not signify one religion but to illustrate how the political (mis)use of religion limits rights, including SRHR, of women and marginalised groups. Religious fundamentalists impose their worldviews and apply religious law to all aspects of life. Religious fundamentalism misuses religion for political power, and selects specific aspects of modernity as going against religious identity, and rejecting others. It is associated with conservative authoritarian policies.<sup>7[7][7]</sup> Religious right ideologies use discourses of religion and culture to maintain and extend power over the public and private domains.<sup>8[8][8]</sup> Women are often considered the custodians of family norms and honour and religion is used to control them in direct and indirect ways, and as a result, their bodies and sexualities, as well as freedom of movement, reproduction, and dress, become sites of religious control.<sup>9[9][9]</sup> Extreme interpretations of religion have also singled out people with alternative sexuality, often criminalising their very existence.

## ii. The Influences of Religious Fundamentalisms on SRHR

Fundamentalist thinking and action declares basic human rights as being anti-religion. For instance, the education of girls is considered threatening to religion, and violence is used to spread fear and prevent girls from accessing schools by actions from burning schools to prohibiting school attendance. Within the family, girls have lower status over boys, and women have lower status than their husbands. This discrimination extends into and is perpetuated by society. <sup>10[10][10]</sup> Due to the lack of data, this section will provide some insight into how women's SRHR have been undermined by religious beliefs and practices in some countries. It raises examples of control over state laws (case of the Philippines and Malaysia), and how state actions can be curtailed (thorough the example of Pakistan). Other examples provide insights into how women's and girl's lives itself are affected by religious fundamentalisms.

### The Influence of Religious Fundamentalism on States

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<sup>5[5][5]</sup> Kasim, Z. M. 2008. Religious Fundamentalisms in Muslim Societies: The Impact of the Religious Right on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. In ARROW (Ed.) *Surfacing: Selected Papers on Religious Fundamentalisms and Their Impact on Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights* (pp 39-48). Kuala Lumpur: ARROW. [http://arrow.org.my/images/publications/arrowsurfacing\\_4web.pdf](http://arrow.org.my/images/publications/arrowsurfacing_4web.pdf)

<sup>6[6][6]</sup> Danguilan, M. 2008. Keeping the Faith: Overcoming Religious Fundamentalisms. *ARROWs for Change*, 14(1&2): 1-3. <http://arrow.org.my/publications/AFC/v14n1&2.pdf> and Armstrong. K. (2000) *Battle for God*. Ballantine Books. Random House Publication

<sup>7[7][7]</sup> Danguilan, M. 2008. Keeping the Faith: Overcoming Religious Fundamentalisms. *ARROWs for Change*, 14(1&2): 1-3. <http://arrow.org.my/publications/AFC/v14n1&2.pdf> and Armstrong. K. (2000) *Battle for God*. Ballantine Books. Random House Publication

<sup>8[8][8]</sup> Kasim, Z. M. 2008. Religious Fundamentalisms in Muslim Societies: The Impact of the Religious Right on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. In ARROW (Ed.) *Surfacing: Selected Papers on Religious Fundamentalisms and Their Impact on Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights* (pp 39-48). Kuala Lumpur: ARROW. [http://arrow.org.my/images/publications/arrowsurfacing\\_4web.pdf](http://arrow.org.my/images/publications/arrowsurfacing_4web.pdf)

<sup>9[9][9]</sup> Iqbal, S. 2008. Growing Fundamentalisms: A Grave Apprehension for Women's Rights in Pakistan. *ARROWs for Change*, 14(1&2): 8-9. <http://arrow.org.my/publications/AFC/v14n1&2.pdf>

<sup>10[10][10]</sup> Iqbal. S., Growing Fundamentalisms:A Grave Apprehension for Women's Rights in Pakistan in ARROW (2008). Keeping the faith: Overcoming religious fundamentalism. *ARROWs for Change*, 14(1&2): 8-9. <http://arrow.org.my/publications/AFC/v14n1&2.pdf>

Organised religion is considered an essential part of modern life, and continues to play a strong role in local and international affairs.<sup>11</sup> In predominantly Catholic Philippines, the Catholic hierarchy continues to exploit its significant influence with the government and anti-choice leaders have been free to impose their religious beliefs on their citizenry. The City of Manila, for example, banned contraceptive services in 2000. Local research revealed that the Manila contraceptive ban drove families into extreme poverty, jeopardised women's health and strained family relationships.

Furthermore, the link between demographics and religions cannot be discounted. The need to propagate by majority populations of a particular religious identity can be observed across majority religion countries including Hindu extremists in India and Buddhist extremists in Sri Lanka and Myanmar. In Pakistan, fundamentalists launched campaigns against contraceptives, prohibiting women in the conservative northern region from seeing male doctors.

## Using Religion to Gain Greater Power in the Political Arena

Legislation can also be used to curb rights on the basis that certain practices go against religion, thereby placing religion over and above the rights of people and leading to the politicisation of religion for greater political power. In Malaysia, the politicisation of Islam and "Islamisation race" of both the Islamist party (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia or PAS) and the ruling National Front coalition (UMNO) have led to enforcement of rules, laws and policies that are "deeply influenced or inspired by the ideology of Islamic conservatism," including wearing of the *tudong* in offices and schools, segregation of the sexes and moral policing (especially of women and youth). This has resulted in Malaysian non-Muslim women enjoying far greater rights than Muslim Malaysians on matters as varied as consent for marriage, distribution of property, polygamy, and divorce. There were proposals to have the *shyariah* law replace civil law for non-Muslims (2007) and for *khalwat* (being in close

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<sup>11</sup> Karen Armstrong points out that the realms of secularism and faith were more clear-cut as we progressed into the 20th century. This changed in the 1970s when fundamentalists began to successfully rebel against secularism and as such governments can no longer ignore religion. See Armstrong, K. (2000) *Battle for God*. Ballantine Books. Random House Publication

<sup>12</sup> Catholics for Choice. 2008. *Truth and Consequence: A Look behind the Vatican's Ban on Contraception*. Washington, DC USA: Catholics for Choice. 28pp. Tel 202-986-6093; Fax 202-332-7995. Available at: [www.catholicsforchoice.org/topics/reform/documents/TruthConsequencesFINAL.pdf](http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/topics/reform/documents/TruthConsequencesFINAL.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Aguilin-Pangalangan, Elizabeth. 2008. "Catholic religious conservatism and fundamentalism in the Philippines and their disparate impact on women." IN ARROW. 2008. *Surfacing: Selected Papers on Religious Fundamentalisms and Their Impact on Women's Sexuality, Health and Rights*. Kuala Lumpur: ARROW.

<sup>14</sup> Centre for Reproductive Rights, LIKHAAN and REPROCEN

<sup>15</sup> Thanenthiran S., Racherla S.J.M., and Jahanath S. (2013). *Reclaiming and Redefining Rights: ICPD + 20: Status of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Asia Pacific*. ARROW [http://www.arrow.org.my/publications/ICPD+20/ICPD+20\\_ARROW\\_AP.pdf](http://www.arrow.org.my/publications/ICPD+20/ICPD+20_ARROW_AP.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Danguilan, M. 2008. *Keeping the Faith: Overcoming Religious Fundamentalisms*. *ARROWs for Change*, 14(1&2) <http://arrow.org.my/publications/AFC/v14n1&2.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Kasim, Zaitun Mohamad. 2006. "Sexuality under attack: The political discourse on sexuality in Malaysia." *Women in Action*, No. 1. pp.44-55.

<sup>18</sup> Sisters In Islam. "Malaysian women: The great divide." IN *Baraza: A Sisters in Islam Bulletin*, Vol. 1 No. 2 2006. p.18.

proximity to a person of the opposite sex who is not a relation) to be applied for non-Muslims found with Muslims (2008).<sup>19</sup>[19][19]

## **The Impact of Extreme Interpretations of Religion on People**

Religion, culture and tradition play a role in perpetuating early and child marriage. Girls are discriminated against, valued less and have less importance outside roles of wives and mothers, often considered a financial burden. The dominance of patriarchal norms surrounding marriage has girls considered as objects to be “protected” and exchanged as commodities, rather than as bearers of rights. Girls are valued primarily for their virginity and reproductive capacity and hence their sexuality and chastity has to be protected. Her virginity determines her worth and family honour. A woman’s/girl’s fertility is thus considered appropriate for regulation by families, religious institutions, and governmental authorities. Her reproductive capacity is not regarded as an individual right but an obligation to ensure the continuity of families, clans, and social groups.<sup>20</sup>[20][20] Legislation to control the spread of child marriage and stipulating the minimum age of marriage can go a long way to protect girls. It also gives those fighting for these rights a basis to advocate and ensure implementation in order to protect the rights of girls.

Contraception offers women a choice and control over her body, the very things that religion stands to control as is evident from this example. Health data shows that access and use of contraception is diverse across women in the region, depending on their level of education, economic conditions, and regions.<sup>21</sup>[21][21] Religious views influences contraceptive availability and use in many ways; the perception that contraceptives are equivalent to abortion, one is going against Gods will and what God gives, seen as having racist and financial motives, and promotes sexual activity all stem from religion.

### **Case Studies on the Linkages between Religious Fundamentalism and SRHR**

**The Philippines:** The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012, also known as the Reproductive Health Law in the Philippines, guarantees universal access to methods of contraception, fertility control, sexual education, and maternal care. The passing

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<sup>19</sup>[19][19] Kuga Thas, Angela. 2008, August 20. “Sexual rights in Malaysia.” Presentation at the *Sexuality Institute 2008, Panel with Malaysian Activists: Sexual Rights and Politics in Malaysia*. Cyberjaya, Malaysia.

<sup>20</sup>[20][20] Centre for Reproductive Rights, *Child Marriage in South Asia: International and constitutional legal standards and jurisprudence for promoting accountability and change*.

[http://reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/ChildMarriage\\_BriefingPaper\\_Web.pdf](http://reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/ChildMarriage_BriefingPaper_Web.pdf)

<sup>21</sup>[21][21] Thanenthiran S., Racherla S.J.M., and Jahanath S. (2013). *Reclaiming and Redefining Rights: ICPD + 20: Status of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Asia Pacific*. ARROW [http://www.arrow.org.my/publications/ICPD+20/ICPD+20\\_ARROW\\_AP.pdf](http://www.arrow.org.my/publications/ICPD+20/ICPD+20_ARROW_AP.pdf)

of the legislation was controversial with both opposition and support by experts, academics, religious institutions and politicians while it was in legislature. The Supreme Court delayed implementation because of these challenges in 2013 but in 2014, upheld it albeit striking down eight provisions partially or in full. The Law would enable easier access to family planning such as contraception and sterilisation, providing universal access through government funding. The Law was opposed by the Catholic Church, which has a stronghold on public and moral life, and illustrating the limited separation of church and state in the country. The Catholic hierarchy also used the strategy of ensuring that the bill was regarded inaccurately as an “abortion bill”.<sup>22</sup><sup>[22]</sup><sup>[22]</sup> Its influence caused the continuous delays in passing the Law and the Supreme Court delays for more than a year. Many advocates of the Law fear the law will be useless until its implementing rules and regulations are fully enforced.

**Pakistan:** Increasing Islamic fundamentalism or ‘Talibanisation’ has developed unchecked due to State leniency and inaction, citing that hindrances are experienced mostly due to local customs and other cultural practices.<sup>23</sup><sup>[23]</sup><sup>[23]</sup> <sup>24</sup><sup>[24]</sup><sup>[24]</sup> Child marriage, which has the highest concentration in South Asia, is useful to illustrate these points. In April 2014 in Pakistan, the Sindh Assembly, taking the lead over other provinces, unanimously passed the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2013 prohibiting marriage of children below 18 years; a historical achievement in the provincial assembly.<sup>25</sup><sup>[25]</sup><sup>[25]</sup> The law bans child marriages with legislation. The new law states that “Whoever, being a male above 18 years of age, contracts a child marriage shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment...” The law has punitive conditions for whoever performs, conducts, directs, brings about or in any way facilitates any child marriage with rigorous imprisonment of three years, unless he can prove that he had reason to believe that the marriage was not a child marriage. While clearly the passing of such laws requires the commitment and support of state officials, the implementation of such laws is as critical to have impact. Additionally, knowledge of the existence of such laws is another critical factor for success.

**Tunisia:** The revolution in Tunisia in 2011 involved women and men, old and young, rural and urban, all standing up against a dictatorship. Despite parliamentary elections, the country was in serious difficulties with a weak economy and governance structure. The post revolution period saw women also facing a backlash from conservative Islamic forces. As a new constitution was being debated in 2012, the influence of these conservative forces on laws and policies and the influence of applying Sharia law were being questioned. Leading this charge was the Salafi youth movement whose demand was a Sharia-based constitution, which was denounced by the leading party. Women’s bodies became the centre of attack and insult, they were barred from education facilities, and faced attacks on a women led human rights march. Despite extremist Islamists’ agenda to marginalise women, proposals for regressive policies against women, such as proposals to adopt polygamy, reduce the legal age of marriage, customary marriages without legal documents, have been alarming. The passing of the new constitution earlier this year aims to increase equality between men and women, declares health as a human rights, and is a democracy with civil laws.

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<sup>22</sup><sup>[22]</sup><sup>[22]</sup> Austria, Carolina. 2008, July 25. “The Catholic church’s abortion trump card.” Available at [www.rhrealitycheck.org/blog/2008/07/22/the-catholic-church%E2%80%99s-abortion-trump-card](http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/blog/2008/07/22/the-catholic-church%E2%80%99s-abortion-trump-card)

<sup>23</sup><sup>[23]</sup><sup>[23]</sup> Shirkat Gah. 2007. Talibanisation and Poor Governance: Undermining CEDAW in Pakistan; Second Shadow Report. Lahore, Pakistan: Shirkat Gah. 41p.

<sup>24</sup><sup>[24]</sup><sup>[24]</sup> Hamdani, Insha. 2006. “Providing safe, clandestine abortion services in Pakistan.” In *ARROWs For Change* Vol. 12 No. 3 2006, pp. 4-5.

<sup>25</sup><sup>[25]</sup><sup>[25]</sup> Chandio. M. R. 2014. Sindh Assembly passes bill declaring marriage below 18 punishable by law. Published on 28 April 2014. <http://www.balochistanexpressquetta.com/2014/04/28/sindh-assembly-passes-bill-declaring-marriage-below-18-punishable-by-law/>

26[26][26] It refers to Personal Status Code of 1959, which included the right to divorce, to marriage by mutual consent and also the banning of polygamy.27[27][27] Tunisia remains a country to watch closely, as it grapples with emerging forces of extremism as well as attempts to implement its new constitution that is heralded as one to bring about equality of women and men.

### iii. Key policy directions and priority actions

#### Priority Actions for Member States

- Ensure that a human rights approach to development is adopted that ensures transformational change, builds on women's realities and strengthens women's human right.28[28][28]
- Eliminate laws and policies that prevent access to sexual and reproductive health services and information and punish women, such as abortion.29[29][29]
- Acknowledge that religious fundamentalism persists and devise ways to counter fundamentalist forces including creating conducive environments that promotes debate and opportunities to strategies against such forces including civil society and faith-based organisations, have sanctions for the politicisation of religion by officials etc.
- Remove legal and policy barriers based on political, religious and cultural conservatism and make available universal access to SRHR services for all.
- When developing policy actions, avoid using narrow interpretations of women's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Policies should be informed by international obligations and conventions and not hamper the realisation of universal SRHR.
- Inform government officials to consider the influence of religious fundamentalism on women, girls and marginalised populations, recognise the impacts of religious fundamentalism on rights, and develop approaches that are not influenced by their values and perceptions.
- Recognise that women and marginalised groups are not homogenous entities but have multiple and overlapping identities and as a result they may experience religious fundamentalisms in different ways. It is crucial that this experience informs policy processes.
- Create spaces for organising and for voicing alternative opinions over the long term and ensure the inclusion of civil society organisations, especially women's rights organisations, as well as faith-based groups, in such spaces. Faith-based groups should not be engaging amongst themselves only but also be integrated in discourses that are

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26[26][26] ICAN 2012. What the Women Say: The End of the Beginning: Tunisia's Revolution and Fighting for the Future. Brief 2: April 2012 <http://web.mit.edu/cis/pdf/What%20the%20Women%20Say%20-%20Tunisia,%20April%202012.pdf>

27[27][27] UNWOMEN. Tunisia's new Constitution: a breakthrough for women's rights

<http://www.unwomen.org/lo/news/stories/2014/2/tunisia-new-constitution#sthash.3SZQZjQF.dpuf>

28[28][28] Post 2015 Women's Coaliton. Feminist Response and Recommendations: Proposed goals and targets on sustainable development for the post 2015 development agenda [http://www.post2015women.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Post2015WC\\_FeministResponseRecommendations\\_06242014.pdf](http://www.post2015women.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Post2015WC_FeministResponseRecommendations_06242014.pdf)

29[29][29] Post 2015 Women's Coaliton. Feminist Response and Recommendations: Proposed goals and targets on sustainable development for the post 2015 development agenda [http://www.post2015women.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Post2015WC\\_FeministResponseRecommendations\\_06242014.pdf](http://www.post2015women.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Post2015WC_FeministResponseRecommendations_06242014.pdf)

promoting progressive interpretations of religion and women's role and SRHR issues together with it.

### Priority Actions for Civil Society Organisations

- Document and analyse the impacts of religious fundamentalism on women in developing strategies to address religious fundamentalisms.<sup>30</sup>[30][30]
- Create advocacy strategies and approaches to combat religious fundamentalisms that are more nuanced, sophisticated and strategic, while documenting effective strategies.
- Advocacy has to be evidence-based raising how religion can influence women's lives and SRHR and how progressive standings can improve these conditions.
- Creating networks and building alliances are critical. These networks have to include the voices from the grassroots and involve women themselves as agents of change.
- The participation of men in this process cannot be stressed enough, where they are encouraged to speak out on issues of women's concern and advocate for change.<sup>31</sup>[31][31]
- Fundamentalist movements are adapting more effective strategies and counter strategies are required that use progressive interpretations of women's role and rights. Further, right-wing groups have a presence in international democratic and development spaces, and have devised their own messages that have to be countered.
- The focus on secularism also ties in well with the notion of accountability. Elected representatives of the people can be held accountable to their actions, as in there is a process and institutions available to raise accountability issues.
- Ensuring there are progressive interpretations of religion, developing counter arguments to address fundamentalism and creating safe spaces for women to learn and debate about religion. This knowledge empowers women and challenges those who want monopoly over religion.<sup>32</sup>[32][32]

### Key Definitions

**Fundamentalist movements** are political movements with religious, ethnic, and/or nationalist imperatives. They construct a single version of a collective identity as the only true, authentic and valid one, and use it to impose their power and authority over 'their' constituency (which varies from a particular community to most, if not all, of humanity). They usually claim to be the representatives of authentic tradition, and they speak against the corrupting influence of modernity and 'the West' (which non-westerners tend to regard as the same thing). However, fundamentalists are far from being pre-modern. In order to promote their project, they use all modern technological means available, from the media to weaponry. They can use holy texts and be linked with specific charismatic leaderships; they

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<sup>30</sup>[30][30] The growing body of work by ARROW, the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Sisters in Islam (SIS), Women against Fundamentalism, and Women Living under Muslim Laws (WLUML) are encouraging.

<sup>31</sup>[31][31] Danguilan, M. 2008. Keeping the Faith: Overcoming Religious Fundamentalisms. *ARROWS for Change*, 14(1&2) <http://arrow.org.my/publications/AFC/v14n1&2.pdf>

<sup>32</sup>[32][32] Danguilan, M. 2008. Keeping the Faith: Overcoming Religious Fundamentalisms. *ARROWS for Change*, 14(1&2) <http://arrow.org.my/publications/AFC/v14n1&2.pdf>

can appear as a form of traditional orthodoxy or, as a revivalist radical phenomenon fighting against traditional corrupt leaderships.<sup>33</sup>[33][33]

**Religious extremism** is “rigid interpretations of religion that are forced upon others using social or economic coercion, laws, intolerance, or violence. It is accompanied by non-fluid definitions of culture, religion, nationalism, ethnicity or sect, which move citizens into exclusionary, patriarchal and intolerant communities.”<sup>34</sup>[34][34]

**Religious fundamentalisms** is “the use of religion (sometimes in conjunction with ethnicity, culture and nationality) by certain political and religious leaders, institutions and parties to legitimise as divine—and thereby render unchallengeable—authoritarian political power and to essentialise social control. This has particular negative consequences for women’s rights.<sup>35</sup>[35][35] Religious fundamentalisms are “political movements of the extreme right...manipulate religion...in order to achieve their political aims.”<sup>36</sup>[36][36]

**Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)** comprises *reproductive health*, which is the ability to have a responsible, satisfying and safe sex life, having the capability to reproduce if, when and how one chooses. This includes the right to be informed, having access to and choice of using contraception, and to appropriate maternal health care services that safeguards the mother and gives her the chance of having a health infant (World Health Organisation); *reproductive rights* are human rights recognised in the national laws and international human rights and consensus documents that gives the opportunity for couples’ and individuals’ to have the desired number of children when they want to, access to adequate information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of SRH. It encompasses making reproduction decisions free of discrimination, coercion and violence, as expressed in human rights documents (International Conference on Population and Development); *sexual health* requires sexual health care to enhance life and personal relations, counselling and care related to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases (adapted from the United Nations); and *sexual rights* uphold human rights as stated in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus documents and include rights of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, to the highest attainable standard of health in relation to sexuality, including access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services; access to and availability of information on sexuality, sexuality education; respect for bodily integrity; choice of partner; sexual activity; consensual sexual relations and marriage; decision to have/not to have children; and pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life (WHO working definition).<sup>37</sup>[37][37]

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<sup>33</sup>[33][33] Imam, A.; Yuval-Davis, N. 2004. “Introduction.” pp. ix-xviii. IN *Warning Signs of Fundamentalisms*. Nottingham, UK: Women Living Under Muslim Laws. 182p. Available at: <http://www.wluml.org/english/pubs/pdf/wsf/introduction.pdf>

<sup>34</sup>[34][34] ICAN and AWID (2014). *Extremism as Mainstream: Implications for Women, Development & Security in the MENA/Asia Region*. Brief 11 Spring 2014. Pp.2

<sup>35</sup>[35][35] AWID working definition; “Resisting and Challenging Fundamentalisms” presentation, 15 November 2007

<sup>36</sup>[36][36] Bennoune, K. (2013). *Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here: Untold Stories from the Fight Against Muslim Fundamentalism*. NY: W.W. Norton & Co.

<sup>37</sup>[37][37] Thanenthiran S., Racherla S.J.M., and Jahanath S. (2013) pp.24  
[http://www.arrow.org.my/publications/ICPD+20/ICPD+20\\_ARROW\\_AP.pdf](http://www.arrow.org.my/publications/ICPD+20/ICPD+20_ARROW_AP.pdf)



**Universal Access to SRHR** is the availability of SRHR and the ability of the population to gain access to SRHR. When Universal Access is limiting, there is often a need for SRHR that is not been fulfilled. For instance, use of family planning services is not widespread, which could be an indication of the inability to access such services, the lack of information etc. It also gives significance to the allocation of resources by government to make SRHR available to the population, especially the marginalised.<sup>38</sup><sup>[38]</sup><sup>[38]</sup>