

SCENARIO

Children and FORB – rights and responsibilities



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Five years ago, a religious minority community established a faith-based organisation. The minority is vulnerable to discrimination, harassment and at times violence, but there is legislation guaranteeing their right to freedom of religion or belief. These legal rights include the right to run charitable organisations and faith-based schools.

Amongst other things, the organisation runs a shelter for street children in the local town and a school in a rural area where there are no other educational providers of any quality. A few of the children in the shelter are orphans, but most have run away from difficult home circumstances. The shelter makes efforts to rehabilitate families where possible although this is difficult. These institutions serve the whole community. The children in their care are aged between 3 and 16 years old.

Following a local authority inspection, it has come to public attention that both the shelter and the school require children from the majority tradition to participate in daily prayer and in confessional religious education according to the minority tradition. The organisation is being accused of aggressively evangelising/converting vulnerable majority children. Anger is growing and there is a risk of violence towards the wider minority community.