

# Created in God's Image

A GENDER TRANSFORMATION TOOLKIT  
FOR WOMEN AND MEN IN CHURCHES

REVISED EDITION



NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID  
**actalliance**

This is a revised edition of the booklet *“Created in God’s Image: A tool for women and men in churches”* produced in 2008. The structure of the tool has been changed to take the form of a toolkit.

Commissioned by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA).

Private Bag X15

Postnet Suite 396

Menlo Park 0102

Pretoria

Tel: +27 12 346 7765/6489

E-mail: [gendersa@nca.no](mailto:gendersa@nca.no)

Web: <http://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/>



Written and compiled by Daniela Gennrich (PACSA Consultancy Unit, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, ([www.pacsa.org.za](http://www.pacsa.org.za))), in consultation with gender activists from Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, South Africa and Malawi.

Many thanks to Jostein Hole Kobbeltvedt, who proposed in April 2013 that a follow up study and revision of the 2007 booklet be produced; and Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah, NCA regional gender policy advisor, who provided technical support, guidance and oversight to the process.

*Created in God’s Image: A Gender Transformation Toolkit for Women and Men in Churches* published by Norwegian Church Aid is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.5 South Africa Licence. You are free to copy, print or share this work provided you give credit to the original author and publisher, and do not use the work for commercial purposes. For more information, see: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/bync/2.5/za>. Permission beyond the scope of this license please contact the NCA Pretoria office Area Representative on +27 12 3467765 or +27 12 3466489.

Cover composition: Colleen Wilkinson at d-zine hub cc

Graphics and Artwork: d-zine hub cc, South Africa

Design and layout: d-zine hub cc, South Africa

Printing: Jumbo Press cc, South Africa

Special thanks to: The poets Marge Piercy (Tool 10), Devarakshanam Betty Govinden and Bellina Mangena (Tool 9) for permission to use their poems, Jonathan Lockwood Smith, Brothers for Life, PACSA, Tawanda Makusha, CABSA and Norwegian Church Aid for their image contributions.

\* Use of images. Certain images have been sourced from the public domain or free image license libraries (mostly [www.wikimedia.org](http://www.wikimedia.org) and [pixabay.com](http://pixabay.com)). Where credit is not given to a specific image in this publication, that image is in the public domain or has been published to the public domain under Creative Commons CC0 license. (Full license details at [www.creativecommons.org](http://www.creativecommons.org).)

ISBN 978-0-620-62080-2

## Contents

Tool 1:	
Becoming inspired .....	1
Tool 2:	
Women and men in church and society: the ways we talk .....	11
Tool 3:	
Exploring how the Bible talks about women and men .....	29
Tool 4:	
How does culture influence relations between men and women in church and society? .....	53
Tool 5:	
Understanding human rights, gender equality and the Bible .....	71
Tool 6:	
How are churches responding to gender in church and society? .....	91
Tool 7:	
What can we learn from the churches' gender journeys in the five countries?.....	107
Tool 8:	
Learning from each other: the Zambian story.....	115
Tool 9:	
Women in church leadership: co-option or transformation?.....	133
Tool 10:	
Gender based violence: health, development and the Gospel .....	163
Tool 11:	
Working for change.....	185
Tool 12:	
Transformed men for a just world.....	201
Tool 13:	
Sexual Diversity: What is the Holy Spirit saying to the churches at this time? .....	239
Practical Tool 1:	
Undertaking a gender audit in your church - guidelines and template .....	303
Practical Tool 2:	
Guidelines for preparing and conducting contextual Bible studies .....	309
Practical Tool 3:	
Facilitator's guide .....	315
Practical Tool 4:	
List of useful organisations, training materials, and publications.....	329
Practical Tool 5:	
Glossary of common terms.....	335

## Acknowledgements

*"In truth, the dominated are human beings that have been forbidden to be who they are.... Whether they [are] a social group (like homosexuals), a social class [like the poor] or a particular gender (like women)."*

Paulo Freire<sup>1</sup>

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and PACSA would like to thank the following organisations and people:

This toolkit was written by Daniela Gennrich of PACSA Consultancy Unit for Norwegian Church Aid. It draws together learnings from work undertaken by gender activists and organisations in various Southern African countries since 2006. Lessons learnt from the work of the Councils of Churches in Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Lesotho (and their partners), as well as IAM (Inclusive and Affirming Ministries), and PACSA, permeate the substance of this toolkit, and give it its broad Southern African perspective.

Appreciation goes to the Gender Justice Advisor Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah and Them bani Chamane from NCA Policy Office for Southern Africa who co-edited the toolkit and provided technical support, direction, quality assurance throughout the project as well as managed the production process.

*If we were to list all those who have influenced this publication by name, these acknowledgements would go on for pages! So where people have represented organisations or past joint ventures, we have limited our acknowledgements to these.*

First and foremost, we acknowledge that this toolkit has referred to and adapted sections of a number of useful Zambian publications, and we thank the 3 Church Mother Bodies (The Zambian Church Mother Bodies [Council of Churches in Zambia [CCZ], Zambian Episcopal Conference [ZEC] and Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia [EFZ]) for your generous sharing of *The Church's Curriculum on Gender Injustice and Gender based Violence in Zambia*, and other materials developed by the Zambian churches since 2009.

It was not just the materials that have enriched this toolkit, but also your hospitality when a team visited on a study tour, and the model of your gender transformation journey in Zambia: your inclusiveness, humility and openness to push beyond your comfort zones inspired a similar tone in this toolkit. We hope it inspires those who read and use it to journey in a similar manner.

The toolkit directly builds on learnings gleaned from several gender audit and related studies and publications that broke new ground from 2006:

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation*. 1985. London: Macmillan Publishers.

- Churches' Gender Audit research studies were undertaken in South Africa, Zambia and Malawi, by PACSA, The Council of Churches in Zambia and the Malawi Council of Churches between 2006 and 2008. We are deeply indebted to the various specialists who were commissioned to undertake the work, as well as all those who contributed to the combined report published by PACSA in 2009 for NCA and its partners.
- Together, two consultants Mary Ryan and Bridget Krone, and Daniela Gennrich from PACSA, developed a small booklet which reported in simple terms on the findings of the country studies mentioned above, and included some thought-provoking sections on gender from theological, cultural and social perspectives. This booklet, *Created in God's Image: A Tool for Women and Men in Churches*, was the precursor to the current toolkit.
- In 2012, the Christian Council of Lesotho and the Zimbabwean Council of Churches undertook their own churches' gender audit studies, sharing their learnings with NCA and PACSA, and once again, all those who contributed to this work are duly acknowledged.

Special thanks are due to the small Advisory Team meeting, with representatives from organisations in Zimbabwe, Lesotho and South Africa, which redefined the parameters of the new publication in October 2013, and contributed stories and other documentation that greatly enriched this toolkit- Gabriel Manyangadze, Reverend Cheryl Bird, Yvonne Spain and Maliphaphang Amelia Nkhahle.

Some chapters in this toolkit relied on the 2013 NCA review of progress made in the five countries who had undertaken church gender audits (compiled by Daniela Gennrich). This involved a number of consultation processes with various groups and people in Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. This included the National Councils of Churches, Episcopal Conferences, Evangelical Fellowship and specific regional church bodies in the five countries. There are too many to mention, but without this input, the toolkit would have had little to say!

Thanks to Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA) for giving permission for the use and adaptation of extracts from the following publications:

- 2007. *Gender, Violence & HIV/AIDS. A PACSA Workbook for Churches & Communities*. Pietermaritzburg: PACSA Gender Desk.
- 2007. Ryan, Mary. *A Gender Audit of South African Churches*.
- 2008. Ryan Mary, *White, Seodi V-R; Chuulu, Matrine and Matala, Suzanne*.
- *Gender Audit Synthesis of Gender Related Policies in Three Southern African Countries*. PACSA, South Africa, Council of Churches in Zambia, Malawi Council of Churches, Evangelical Association of Malawi, Episcopal Conference of Malawi.
- 2008. *Asifunde: A Training Manual for Peer Educators*. Pietermaritzburg: PACSA Gender Desk.
- 2011. *Gender Based Violence: Churches and counsellors make a difference!* Pietermaritzburg: PACSA.

- 2013. PACSA and Sonke *Gender Justice*. Gennrich, Daniela (ed). *Men and Masculinities in South Africa: A three part series comprising stories, analysis and faith based resources*. Pietermaritzburg: PACSA.
- Forthcoming. *Men imagining alternative ways of being a man*. An information sheet for gender activists and men's organisations. Pietermaritzburg: PACSA.

Although the author takes full responsibility for all errors, we pay due respect to Yvonne Spain, Bridget Krone, Lebogang Matala, Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah, Rev Professor Christina Landman, Thembanani Chamane, IAM staff, Venessa Locher, Peter de Lisle, Professor Ezra Chitando, Rev Janet Trisk and Professor Jan Jans for editorial input and creative ideas in the last stages of finalising the manuscript. Many thanks also to Rev Professor Christina Landman for writing the Foreword and submitting challenging attachments to Tool 3.

Representatives of National Councils of Churches' responsible for health and gender desks also contributed feedback and comments at two FOCCISA Health Justice Network meetings. This offered essential affirmation of the value of this publication as well as offering insights to improve its usability. This revised edition also incorporates editorial suggestions made by them at the Launch of the Toolkit in September 2014.



## Foreword

This toolkit enables us to take another step towards making churches “gender competent”. Actually, it is a powerful toolkit for gender competency, and fills a gap that has existed for a long time.

Through exciting Bible studies and in-depth human rights analyses, the book empowers women to say...

**... I am.** I am a human being worthy in God's eyes. I am the person I have chosen to be. I am free. I am a thinking, playing agent in God's Kingdom. I am a caretaker in, and for, God's world.

**... I can.** I can enjoy being a woman and a body. I can love and reach out to another human being of my choice. I can demand to be treated with respect. I can celebrate being a human being with others. I can be serious, and I can be playful. I can do hope.

**... I have.** I have role models, empowering role models such as Eve, and the five wise virgins, and Mary. I have dignity. I have choices. I have access to opportunities.

This is of course also a book for men. Actually, it should be compulsory reading for all men in the faith community. Human dignity is for both men and women. Together they will affirm one another as worthy human beings in God's eyes. Together they will experience the joys of being equal bodies.

Use this toolkit. Pass it on to other women in your congregation. Form focus groups with men in your church and discuss the issues that are placed here on the table and in the public arena.

Embark on the exciting journey of travelling with other people of faith towards equity, and dignity. Leave no stone untouched to build a church that understands gender, its challenges and its pain.

This book is a worthy companion on that journey. They say that if you do not know where you are going, you can take any road to try to get there. This book sets the goals for our journey. It is the road to freedom, equity, dignity, and living life to the fullest.

Professor Christina Landman  
University of South Africa (UNISA)  
5 June 2014  
Centurion



## Contents

Tool 1:	
Becoming inspired .....	1
Tool 2:	
Women and men in church and society: the ways we talk .....	11
Tool 3:	
Exploring how the Bible talks about women and men .....	29
Tool 4:	
How does culture influence relations between men and women in church and society? .....	53
Tool 5:	
Understanding human rights, gender equality and the Bible .....	71
Tool 6:	
How are churches responding to gender in church and society? .....	91
Tool 7:	
What can we learn from the churches' gender journeys in the five countries?.....	107
Tool 8:	
Learning from each other: the Zambian story.....	115
Tool 9:	
Women in church leadership: co-option or transformation?.....	133
Tool 10:	
Gender based violence: health, development and the Gospel .....	163
Tool 11:	
Working for change.....	185
Tool 12:	
Transformed men for a just world.....	201
Tool 13:	
Sexual Diversity: What is the Holy Spirit saying to the churches at this time? .....	239
Practical Tool 1:	
Undertaking a gender audit in your church - guidelines and template .....	303
Practical Tool 2:	
Guidelines for preparing and conducting contextual Bible studies .....	309
Practical Tool 3:	
Facilitator's guide .....	315
Practical Tool 4:	
List of useful organisations, training materials, and publications.....	329
Practical Tool 5:	
Glossary of common terms.....	335

# Tool 1: Becoming inspired



---

***“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”***

Galatians 3: 28-29

---

## Tool 1 contents

Catch the vision .....	2
Who is this toolkit for? .....	4
Why should the Church work towards gender equality? .....	4
The Church's mandate to bring Good News .....	4
Gender inequality is one of many forms of discrimination .....	5
Gender inequality hampers economic and social development .....	5
Gender inequality is part of an exclusionary social system called patriarchy .....	6
How can you use this toolkit? .....	7
Foundation stones .....	8
Values .....	9
Structure .....	10

## Catch the vision



### Time to talk

Read the following story about a church that is trying “to do church differently”, and then talk about it together with others in your church:

*“The first time I sat down in this church in the main street of this small town, I knew I belonged. People looked relaxed, and small children were making little noises now and then without their mothers having to take them outside. Some were very well dressed, but others looked more like me. During the Peace, or congregational welcoming, many people came up and introduced themselves to me, even though I was not well dressed. One man invited to me to tea after the service.*

*A pregnant girl, who could not have been older than 16, stood up to read the first Bible reading in the local language and people could follow in English in their pew bibles. I wondered how she was still allowed in the church, and even to read in the service? I was told later that she and her boyfriend had met with the pastor, and were undergoing counselling to work through what had happened and how to deal with the consequences together. She had told the congregation that she was dealing*

*with it as she would any other sin, since 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Romans3:23).*

*The pastor stood up and welcomed us all. She told us that we were all children of God, and that God loves us as we are. Her sermon was on Jesus' parable about the woman who had lost her coin and would not give up looking until she had found it. The pastor told us the old lady must have been very poor, because she had very little light in her house, and people were taxed on the size of their windows. She told us that Jesus used this old poor woman to show us that God looks for us and does not give up until God finds us! Does Jesus mean that God is like a poor old woman who cannot even afford windows in her little house? And that God even cares for a lost coin like me? Wow! I want to get to know this God a bit better after all.*

*At the end of the service, different people stood up and shared notices. The women's fellowship announced that they would be having their monthly meeting about their care centre for victims of gender based violence, and my ears pricked up. Maybe I should go along there and ask for help? No – I was afraid they might judge me and force me back to my abusive husband. But the lady specifically mentioned that it was a place for victims of violence to come and get support. Maybe I will go.*

*The chairperson of the men's fellowship stood up and invited the men to their monthly friendship meeting, and the theme was about the new national Constitution and the freedoms it offered women. He said it was a chance to talk about their concerns and worries.*

*The chair of the Church Council stood up. He told us about a joint project with the women's fellowship starting for unemployed men and women to come and learn different skills. 'Hmm', I thought to myself: 'Maybe I should go there, and maybe I will find work?'*

*I became involved in the church in different ways, and am now on the Church Council. I am learning a lot, because all new Council members have been meeting weekly to learn about leadership and how democratic committees work. I had heard they do this, otherwise I would never have agreed to be nominated onto the Council. Maybe one day I will be chairperson!"*

Talk about the following questions:

- What are the main things that happen in this church that are different to other churches you know?
- Talk about each one. Do you agree with the way things are done?
  - What is good about it, and what does not work for you? Why or why not?
  - How could this church improve the way they are doing things in each case?

- What is the underlying message that this church sends out about who God is, and how Jesus relates to all people? (Refer to Bible texts if you want. See also Tool 3, pp 41-44)
- How do things work in your church, in relation to the different things mentioned above?
- What would you like to change in your church?
- What could you do to make change happen in your church?

## Who is this toolkit for?

If you want to see your church look more like the one in the story above, then read on!

It does not matter if you are a pastor, priest, chair of your church council or an ordinary member. If you want to see your church working more consciously towards win-win relationships between men and women, to both women and men in leaders using their leadership in the ways Jesus taught; and if you are also willing and open to change yourself, then this Toolkit is for you.

Even if you don't have much background in the Bible or theology, this toolkit offers a set of tools to help you to think and talk with others about gender within your church, and bring about changes for the better. It will give you the information you need to be more informed and feel more confident in this important work to enable your church to model the mind of ministry that Jesus modelled: a ministry that is inclusive, that enables everyone to recognise God's love and grace, and that allows anyone, regardless of their sex or other difference, to use their gifts freely.

## Why should the Church work towards gender equality?

### The Church's mandate to bring Good News

According to the Bible, we are called not only to preach the good news of salvation, but to share in Jesus' ministry that *"they may have life, and have it abundantly"* (John 10:10).

Throughout the Old and New Testaments we see that God sides with the poor and the marginalised, the hungry and oppressed; and is very critical of political and religious leaders that advantage some people over others. That is why the church is called to work for all forms of social and economic justice in society.

Of course this also means that we as churches have to ensure that all our internal systems, structures and relationships are just.

**Gender** – the meanings attached by a society to what it means to be a 'real' man or a 'real' woman, including:

- correct behaviours
- appropriate roles in the home, work place, church and public life
- expressions of emotions
- expressions of one's sexuality and sexual preferences.

Gender is not the same as **'sex'**, which just refers to biological differences.

The Church in many parts of Africa has a proud history of championing the cause of the poorest and most marginalised.

But who are the marginalised?

Marginalised people are those who are excluded from what is considered as important in society. Today they are largely women – young, black, poor women; and to some extent, men who are uneducated, unemployed, are not physically strong or are seen to be 'soft'.

To be true to our faith in the God who sides with the poor, the Church in Southern Africa today is being called to work towards gender justice as an essential aspect of social, economic and environmental justice.

**Some people are afraid this will mean giving all the power to women over men, or to undermine African cultural traditions.**

**But it is none of those things. We are called to be inclusive: to enable the women and the men in our churches to listen to each other better, to question underlying reasons for the problems we often have between us, including the violence between us; and to work together for healing and transformation.**

## **Gender inequality is one of many forms of discrimination**

Gender is often seen as a battle between individual men and women, but it is much more complicated than that.

In a way, gender justice issues are similar to racial, social or economic justice issues: Although they are about the individual choices we make, these are influenced by belief systems and values in broader society.

All injustice can be linked to struggles over limited resources and power struggles between groups. Our skin colour, cultural and education background, how rich or poor we are – as well as our gender - can all contribute to this conflict, and to some extent determine our status.

## **Gender inequality hampers economic and social development**

Any society that restricts economic or social leadership to only certain types of people is not using all the wealth of human resources it has available. In most countries of the world, women do not have the same rights and access to decision making power and resources as men, and so only half of the population is available to make a contribution to wider society. This makes it difficult for such a society to really prosper and develop a strong economy.

But it also makes life in general much harder for women than for men, and that is why it is a human rights and a justice issue. For example, if a woman does not get a good education, her job opportunities are limited; if she cannot get a good job, own land, or open a bank account, she cannot earn a decent livelihood. And she will always be dependent on someone else to look after her and her children.

There are health implications as well: women who are denied the right to decide when and with whom they want to have sex, are vulnerable to unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and even premature death.



Women and men working together. Rev Dr Chiropafadzo Moyo, Mrs Zwana and her husband Reverend Dr Zwana during the Zimbabwe Council of Churches Golden Jubilee celebration, Harare. *Source: Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah*

### Gender inequality is part of an exclusionary social system called patriarchy

The dignity of both men and women is undermined by patriarchy, which is a system designed to privilege the few. Patriarchy is not just about men imposing power on women. Patriarchy does not only disadvantage women through limiting their access to land, power or life choices. It also disadvantages the many men who do not fit into the norm of what it means to be a 'real man' (e.g. men who are not good sportsmen, gay, unemployed, or choose to stay at home with their children). On the other hand, there are women who find (often sexual) ways to win the favour of powerful men and gain real power themselves, but who then also misuse their power to benefit themselves only.

**Patriarchy** - the prevailing social system that asserts male dominance in all spheres of life. While all men are presumed to dominate over the women closest to them, not all men qualify to dominate over women as well as other men who do not meet the criteria for being a 'real man' (such as wealth, good looks or sporting talent).



### Time to talk

Read the following stories about two people, and answer the following questions:

- Why do you think these people are suffering? Is it because they are men or women, or because of other things in their lives?

- Talk about how they must feel. What would they have to do to bring about real change in their lives? What would need to change in society for this to be possible for them?
- How might we as the church support them?

***Jacob** has not had access to a decent education, and has only sometimes been able to get menial short term work in the informal sector. He feels like a failure as a man because he cannot provide adequately for his family, and he is treated like a child by his current employer.*

***Mary** had to give up school because she fell pregnant. She is unable to protect herself from HIV because her unfaithful husband refuses to use condoms. She has to listen to her children cry themselves to sleep from hunger every night. Mary feels threatened by men who whistle at her or make rude remarks on the street because they find her 'desirable'.*

**The Church cannot ignore the struggle for gender justice. It is not just a struggle of individual women against individual men, no more than the struggle against colonialism in Africa was a battle between individual blacks and whites. It is about struggling to realise Jesus' vision of abundant life for all.**

### **How can you use this toolkit?**

This toolkit has grown out of a booklet that came about after gender audit research projects were done in 2007 in Malawi, South Africa, and Zambia (which did another one in 2008); and in Zimbabwe and Lesotho in 2012.

In 2013, a small study was done to follow up on how the churches in these five countries have taken forward the work of transforming relations between men and women since then. The study looked at what has changed and what has not changed, what still needs to be done and what we can learn from the experiences of the churches in these countries.

Important lessons we have learnt are shared in Tools 6, 7 and 8.

The other tools in this toolkit tackle a variety of issues related to gender and the Church. The topics were chosen by ordinary church men and women in the five countries in the study, who were asked what they might find useful.

There are lots of other issues that may interest you. You are invited to use the list of useful organisations, documents and other media in the last Practical Toolkit as a starting point to find the information and support you need.

The ideas in this Toolkit can help you in the following ways:

- To help you to become a critical gender “researcher” in your own church so you can find out what aspects of the life of your church need to be changed. There are self-review questions in Tool 6 (and a full list of guiding questions in Practical Toolkit 1) for thinking about how men and women relate in your church, and what the church is doing to improve the lives of women as well as men in your church and in the community.
- To equip you with information and ideas to support your gender work and give you confidence to challenge gender discrimination in your church.
- To join with other concerned people in your own or other churches to draw up an action plan for gender work in your church.

## Foundation stones

This toolkit:

- offers useful information about gender transformation in churches in Southern Africa, and introduce some of the debates amongst leaders and ordinary people in churches in some Southern African countries;
- opens space to talk (dialogue) about gender matters in a non-dogmatic way, where everybody's opinion counts and is open for debate;
- encourages reflection on experience through stories, quotations, audit findings, and questions.

The **purpose** of this Toolkit is to help churches to bring about meaningful transformation in:

- our personal knowledge, attitudes, behaviour, and relationships that promote inequality and unjust or even violent actions;
- uncritical (and/or incorrect) Biblical interpretations and doctrinal assumptions that reproduce patriarchal norms that undermine gender equality and justice;
- policies of churches that undermine justice and the freedom Christ has promised; and
- the organisational culture and structures of the churches in Southern Africa.

The **vision** is to work together to learn to do church differently, so that we can truly become inclusive communities of hope and healing.

## Values

The basic **assumption** is that not one of us is perfect - we all are walking together on a journey towards our own healing and towards changing our own lives as much as to change our churches and societies.

Every tool contains many opportunities to stop and reflect, and for groups to have conversations and discussions about important aspects of gender equality in the Church. They can be recognised by the headings: "Time to talk"; or "What happens in your own church?"

**'Correct' answers are not provided**, because it is not possible to legislate one specific set of opinions as the only truth. This only causes divisions and confusion. Instead, information is offered as a basis for further discussion and debate. This is because we recognise that we are all on different journeys of reflection and discovery, and we all live in different situations, with different influences on us. What may be a solution for one may be a problem for another.

But this toolkit is founded in a number of **fundamental beliefs and values**:

- God created man and woman to be equal partners in ministry and grace;
- Each person is travelling on a journey into God's truth for their lives;
- Basic to everything is Jesus' call to "love others as yourself". When in doubt about what a correct course of action it, just ask if you would like to be on the receiving end of that attitude, word or action.
- Jesus has called us to join in His ministry to bring 'abundant life to all'. (John 10:10)



Source: ICASA

## Structure

This toolkit has been designed so that you can make copies of any one of the tools for use in discussion groups, bible studies or planning meetings.

Although you need not use all the chapters, or go through them in order, **it is important that you work through Tools 1 and 2 before you work with any of the other tools.** Make sure that whoever is coordinating discussions related to any of the other tools has a good understanding of the basic concepts and the different gender discourses in our churches that are introduced in Tools 1 and 2.

**The first five tools** can be used to explore gender from social, theological, cultural and human rights perspectives.

**Tools 6, 7 and 8** sum up the findings of the follow-up study to the churches' gender audits conducted in five SADC countries, and draw out the most important lessons from their journeys. These form the heart of this Toolkit. They are designed to empower concerned groups to **do-church gender audits** to understand what the concerns are in their churches. This will help make sure that their gender awareness raising and advocacy work is useful to their church.

**Tools 9 and 10** go a bit deeper into perhaps the two most urgent dynamics that need to be transformed in and by the churches: Leadership and gender based violence.

**Tool 11 and the four Practical Tools** offer practical guidelines and support for church activists to take the gender transformation agenda forward in their churches and faith based organisations. A brief **Guide for Facilitators** is also found in the back of the toolkit. **Tools 12 and 13** have been added to the second edition, by special request of the Church Councils, to deal with two special issues: involving men as an important part of the solution; and dealing with the thorny issue of sexual diversities (in some countries where it is safe to do so).

You will find a **Glossary** of the most commonly used gender terms at the end of this toolkit.

## Notes

---

---

---

---

*Please send your feedback for this tool to  
gendersa@nca.no or consultancy@pacsa.org.za*



## Tool 2: Women and men in church and society: the ways we talk



---

*“Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character,  
give him power.”*

Abraham Lincoln, US President 1809-1865

---

## Tool 2 contents

Gender discourses that make women weak.....	13
Social relations.....	15
Gender and power .....	16
What is power? .....	17
Transformation: gender discourses that make women and men strong .....	20
Negative gender discourses that resist transformation.....	24
Women integrating their identities in the face of the conflicting discourses influencing them.....	25
Conclusion .....	26
Attachment: Understanding POWER more deeply.....	26

For many years now, people have been asking questions about the way men and women relate in society. This is because there are many problems in society that are caused by problems between men and women. “Gender” is a term used to help people talk about these relationships, about how women and men are defined in different societies, and the influences that shape boys and girls into men and women that fit into the norms and values of a society or community.

This tool explores the different influences on men and women that shape how we understand our identities as men and women. These ideas are expressed in the ways we talk about men and women:

- how they should look
- how they should behave, and
- what they should be allowed to do, or what roles are acceptable for them.

The ways we talk influence meaning. How we understand ourselves and our lives can be referred to as different **discourses**. Any one person is exposed to any number of different discourses in their lives. Sometimes they agree with each other, and sometimes they conflict with each other.

**Gender discourses** have a strong influence on how women and men understand their gender identity. As they grow up, they learn about their gendered identities as men or women through the social assumptions they are taught by the adults and older children around them. Through traditional rituals and practices, they learn what is considered right and wrong. When they go to church, some of these things are reinforced by the

**Gender Discourses** – the ways people talk about men and women – how they should act, look and speak, what roles they should take on, and even how they should feel about and act in sexual relationships.

These often rely on stereotypes – grouping people together and judging them all to be the same. Individuals who do not fit a **stereotype** believed in their social group to be good can feel like they are not good enough, or even a bad person. Stereotyping also leads people to judge others unfairly before they even know them.

biblical teachings they hear, but some of them conflict with their cultural and social influences. As adults, they make certain choices as a result of how they understand these different discourses or ways of understanding the world.

Many of the discourses about what makes a 'good woman' or a 'real man' are negative, or not life-giving, especially to women and men who do not fit the norms. They can make women, (and some men) feel weak, and can limit their freedom to act, take charge of their lives and fulfil their potential as human beings. They can even fuel conflict between men and women.

Others are life-giving, because they make both women and men strong, and help them to live in harmony.

In this tool, we explore some of these gender discourses and how they influence people's everyday lives. We end with some positive life-giving discourses and talk about how we might contribute to sharing and extending more positive gender discourses as part of bringing about greater equality and justice in our churches and communities.

## Gender discourses that make women weak



### Time to talk

Talk about the negative gender discourses expressed by the characters below. They are negative because they undermine the strength of women and some are also not good for most men.



*"Men are strong,  
Women are weak!"*

- Do you agree with this opinion?
- Can you think of any other characteristics that people use when they talk about members of the opposite sex?
- Which of these ring true to you?
- Can you think of how the proverbs, songs and other messages in everyday encounters reinforce this opinion?

*"As a wife you should submit to your husband."*



- Do you agree?
- Are there other ways to manage marriage relationships?
- In your experience, what is most important in marriage?
- Have you noticed that assertive women are often called aggressive?
- Can you think of any other behaviour that people say are only for men or only for women?



*"Men should go out and work to provide for their families. Women should stay at home to care for children and maintain the home."*

- Do you agree?
- Is there anything in a woman's biology that makes it more appropriate for women to do chores like ironing or scrubbing floors?
- Is there anything in a man's biology that equips him better to work outside the home?
- In many countries, unemployment is a big problem. If a man is unable to find a job, does this make him less of a man?
- In your community or family, who decides what should be done, and who usually does the work?
- Do you think it always has to be like this? Explain.
- Can you think of households where the roles are different? How does it work for them?
- How do you think healthy households should be organised? Do you think societies should decide what roles are right or wrong for men and women?

### **'Masculinity' and 'Femininity'**

Masculinity refers to ways of being a man, and femininity refers to ways of being a woman.

Theologian Ezra Chitando, says that:

*"While being male [and female] is a biological factor, the process of expressing manhood is informed by social, cultural and religious factors".*

Or, to put it another way – we are all born male and female, but we grow up to become men or women.

*"I find it sexy if a man comes on strong. I need a man to be tough, and it's even better if he has an expensive car!"*



- Do you agree?
- How do you think such a man might react if a woman said 'no' to sex? Would she still find this sexy?
- What kind of a man would you prefer [to have, as a woman] or [to be, if you are a man]?!?

Some ways of being a man that have become widely accepted in society can be very destructive. For example, some social groupings believe a real man is aggressive, gets his way, and does not express his emotions. He also has lots of money and many women (and children). This assumption about men may be one of the reasons why violence between men and between men and women has become such a problem, and why so many children grow up without fathers.

## Social relations

To understand how gender works in society, we need to understand social relations.

**Social relations** are relationships between people that are regulated and passed down from one generation to the next through culture and tradition. These relations are often about power and how society is organised.

Social relations influence:

- What **rights** a person may have.
- What access a person may have to **resources** like money, land or jobs.
- What **roles and responsibilities** a person may have.
- How much **control** a person has over his or her **own life**.
- How much **control** a person has over the lives of **others**.

**Patriarchy** is a social system where it is normal for power to be in the hands of men: in the family and home; in society; in church and religion; in politics and in the economy.

It is not necessarily the deliberate control of individual men over individual women (although in some cases it may be). It is mostly about individuals working within a dominant world view which predetermines how much power they have in their relationships and their lives. Most societies in the world are patriarchal.



## Time to talk

*"I am a rich and powerful man, so you'll do what I tell you to do!"*



- Is it right that rich, powerful men should control what we do and say?
- Is it easy for you to get the resources you need for a comfortable life?
- Who makes the decisions in your home and community?
- What are the things in your life that you have control over?



*"History is the story of the achievements of great men!"*

- Do you agree? Whose histories are normally written down and taught to future generations? Who decides what makes 'history'?
- Do all men benefit from patriarchy? Which kinds of men benefit, and which are pushed to the margins?
- Are women's histories normally celebrated or hidden?
- How do women influence opinion in your community?

## Gender and power

Some people say that it is only in party politics and economics that there are power struggles. But the quotations we talked about earlier in this tool show that there are power struggles in all areas of life and in all relationships – even marriages. So it is important to understand how power works in society and our institutions like schools, churches and workplaces.

## What is power? <sup>2</sup>

**Power** is the ability to:

- make other people do what you want them to do.
- convince other people that the way you understand the world is 'the way the world is and should be'.
- influence the main discourses in society that affect what people think about others and even themselves.

Sometimes people use their power for the good of others (like a good parent), and sometimes they use it only to serve their own ends.

The beliefs and attitudes about women's and men's roles and privileges that dominate in a patriarchal society often find common ground with culture and religion, as they often reinforce one another.

For example, the dominant cultural belief that men should dominate in all parts of life is confirmed by many Christian traditions that teach that the husband is head of the household and that women are unfit to take up leadership positions.

The Bible is full of examples of prophets and kings who have misused their power, like God's chosen king, David<sup>3</sup>. It also has stories of people who did not want to use their power for good, because it was too hard, for example, Jonah who refused to take God's message of grace to Nineveh.

A number of stories tell of people who used their power for good, for example Pharaoh's daughter who convinced her father to let her raise the Jewish baby, Moses; and of course, Jesus, who used his power to heal and release people from the burden of sin, and challenged the unfair use of power by the religious authorities of his day.

In Matthew 20: 25-28 Jesus offers a radical view of power, suggesting it can be used to serve and be a sacrifice for those you lead.

Tool 12 looks more in depth at how men relate to power in society, and how this affects relationships and social justice. It revisits some of the Bible passages that are commonly used that are used to justify men's power over women in church and society. But it also looks with new eyes at some Bible passages in which we see a very different understanding of God's intentions for humankind.

<sup>2</sup> See the endnote to this Tool if you are interested to read more about different types of power and where power comes from.

<sup>3</sup> Tool 10 on gender based violence explores how David misused his power and became violent as he gave in to his sexual desires.

Tool 13, on the other hand, raises the uncomfortable question of sexual diversity, and how people who do not fit into heterosexual norms are disempowered and marginalised simply because of this one aspect of their identity.



## Time to talk

Read Thandi's story below, and talk about the questions that follow.

### ***Power and Manipulation***

*Thandi recently became the HR Manager in the government department where she has worked for five years. She has not had HR training or experience. She is not ashamed to admit that she has been having an affair with the married Chief Director in the department for the past six months. She says that, as a woman, you have to use whatever means you have to achieve your goals, because otherwise no one will recognise your potential.*

- How do you feel about Thandi's success?
- Do you agree with the negative gender discourse that women's only source of power is their sexuality?
- What else could she have done to obtain a higher position in her department? What positive discourses could motivate her to take a different route?
- Some people would say that this kind of use of power simply reproduces stereotypes of women as 'temptress' and reinforces some of the fears that some men have of working with women in the church? How can this kind of stereotype be overcome?

### ***Power at work, power at home: living two lives.***

*"I worked in the domestic violence section of the police station and the court at Umlazi. Every story I heard and worked through with my clients was like a slap to my face. I was a hypocrite; here I was advocating for other people's rights in their*

*relationships, when I did not have a voice in mine. I was seen as a champion to the women I worked with. I was their voice in my reports to the courts. The magistrates sought my opinion on cases and I always had an answer and a strategy to help. In my own life I was living in bondage. At work I was free; at home I was bound by my own fears and wanting to bring stability to my own children. Little did I know I was doing more damage by staying. I hated going home. I was made to feel inferior at home and yet at work I was powerful. I could not cope with work because it brought home all of my issues. I resigned and changed focus.*

*I knew I was abused but did very little to free myself until he wanted to kill me. The day I put an Order into place was the first step towards my freedom. I moved little by little to free myself. But I still struggled as a Christian, knowing that the Bible doesn't allow divorce. Until I had a meeting with my pastor. He said: "God gives us a second chance, and allows for a U-turn, especially if it's for your safety." And so God set me free to be free.*

*There is no comparison to the feeling that comes from leaving an abusive relationship. I am now free at last and can live my life the way I want to. I am now free to transfer my history to my work and to fight for others who are living in the same conditions, so they can set themselves free." Thandeka*

- What type of power is described in the first paragraph?
- What changed when she took her first steps to freedom?
- Do you agree with her pastor's advice? Explain.
  - Would this be the advice your pastor would give? Talk a bit about your experiences of the church and gender based violence.
- How is Thandeka using power now, and how has this changed her life?

#### **Thandi and Thandeka:**

- Both Thandi and Thandeka struggle with traditional patriarchal gender discourses. Compare the choices that they made (above).
- How can the church help women in these kinds of situations that would enable them to make positive life choices to access their personal power?

## Transformation: gender discourses that make women and men strong



### Time to talk

Look at this picture and think about the questions that follow:

- What is this man doing?
- Do you know a man who takes on these roles, and what is his story?
- What do other people say about him? Why?
- What do you say about him? Is what he is doing OK?
- What would help a man like this feel good about how he is living his life?
- Do you think this man has a leadership role in his workplace, in church, or his community?
- If he did, would he be a good role model for others?



**Gender justice** is when a society (or church or family) is organised in such a way that all members have equal chances to succeed, can participate fully in all aspects of life, and live dignified, fulfilled lives.

**Gender injustice** happens when women are prevented from living freely and are dominated and controlled by men. Men who do not meet the criteria for being 'real men' can also suffer gender injustice.

It is important to understand that social relations can change. Just like the relations between blacks and whites have changed in South Africa, gender-based power relations in society can also change.

*An example:* A hundred years ago, women in European countries had very few rights, but things have changed in many of those countries (though still not in all ways in all countries). In fact, in Switzerland (one of the strongest economies of the world) women only won the right to vote in 1990, when in most Southern African countries women had already won their right to vote by 1965. On the other hand, Saudi Arabian women have been promised the right to vote only in 2015 and are still fighting to be allowed to drive a car.



Women in Saudi Arabia are still campaigning to be allowed to drive. Source: women2drive (creative commons.com)

Indeed, things have changed all over the world in the last 100 years, but these changes have taken place at different rates depending on the social, cultural and religious influences in different countries.

So we can see that patriarchy and the male-dominated cultures and traditions that we experience today will not necessarily be with us forever.

**One way that we can bring about change for greater gender justice is by thinking more carefully about the kinds of gender discourses we use, and deliberately using more positive and life-giving gender discourses.**



## Time to talk

Read these stories and talk about them, using the questions that follow if you find them useful:

### ***20 years ahead of time***

*"In the southern part of Zimbabwe there is a town called Masvingo, surrounded by rural settlements. One of these villages is called Nyajena, where I was born. Over time, our family grew to 15 children: 5 girls and 10 boys (including cousins).*

*The boys learnt early on that sometimes we were supposed to do the dishes, fetch water using tins that we balanced on our heads, and also scrub floors and cook. We met with women from the village at the water point and wouldn't care less what they said. We began to understand and love our mother better. The girls were expected at times to go and milk the cows and herd the cattle for the day, and they grew closer to my father. In our large family gender roles were not defined by sex, but by the need*

*to have a well-rounded training that prepared each member of the family for life. It was as if our parents had peeped into life 20 years ahead of time.*

*Now the boys are all married, but we live in the same compound with our families. During the Christmas holidays the brothers prepare a big Christmas meal for our wives and children, all in the spirit of sharing. We demonstrate to our children that women are not to be considered as the perpetual labourers in the kitchen. In our homes, we all take turns with our wives to prepare meals and do domestic chores. It has created a bond with our wives and children. I traditionally prepare a special meal on my wife's birthday. My wife and daughter always look forward to this day."* Gabriel Sheunopa Manyangadze, Programmes Manager, Zimbabwe Council of Churches



Boys need warm and loving father figures. This boy is blessed to have his great-uncle to look up to.  
Source: S'bu Khanyile, PACSA

---

### ***Using my leadership to bring about change***

*"A woman in my congregation had been asked to participate in the serving of Holy Communion on Sunday. That Sunday the husband came early, complaining that the wife is always late, saying she keeps on going in and out of the house. When asked about his activities from the time he woke up, the man confessed that his wife woke him up telling him his water for bathing was ready. He went to bath while she went to prepare breakfast. As he was having breakfast, she was bathing the children and feeding the young ones. Then she rushed to have a bath and the man was ready waiting at the door with his Bible. The woman came out and then realised that her dress was not pressed. Meanwhile the husband was tired of waiting and walked away leaving her behind.*

*I was saddened by the lack of support and I asked him to go back home and allow her to come to church. I asked him to do whatever was remaining to be done in the preparation of the children. Then he should follow her with the children. Men and women should share home chores and help each other do God's work in the world."* Rev Jane Nyirongo, Church Minister and Moderator, Presbyterian Church in Zambia

---

- Can you relate to any of the writers' experiences?
- Do you think you would have made the same decisions as the writers?
- What do you think your own pastor would say in similar situations?
- If you are a pastor, how would you respond?
- Whether you are a church member or leader, what is it like in your own home?



## Time to talk

Read the story below and talk about the questions that follow:

### ***Supporting each other***

*"I recently met a nurse, whose name is Saviour, who told me she was a Pastor's wife. She also told me that she was studying towards a degree in Adult Literacy at the University of Zambia, as she wanted to be of better service to her husband in his ministry. I was surprised, because in my experience men often don't encourage their partners to improve their education levels.*

*When we talked further, I shared with her about a gender programme I was running - an intensive all-day training over a number of days. She did attend, and was on night duty at the same time. (God knows when she slept!) Her husband encouraged her, and continues to encourage her. He refers women from their church and community to her for help, and appreciates the contributions she is able to make to the ministry of the church."* Jacqueline Muthee-Kabalo, Norwegian Church Aid, Programme Officer, Zambia.

- How do you feel about this story?
- Do you think you would have made the same decisions as the people in this story?
- What do you think your own pastor would have said?

- If you are a pastor, how would you respond?
- How is power being used in this household? What do you imagine the consequences are for the partners, their family and the people they each work with?

## Negative gender discourses that resist transformation



### Time to talk

Are you familiar with the following arguments against working for gender equality?

Talk about them (and refer to the Tools given in brackets for more information and ideas on how to tackle them).

- Biblical arguments based on the creation story in Genesis 2 are often presented. (See Tool 3 on theology and the Bible, as well as Tool 12, which revisits the Bible again, from the point of view of creating new discourses of transformative masculinities, for a more peaceful and just world.)
- Some say that the struggle for gender equality leads to high divorce rates, domestic violence and general unhappiness in families. (See Tool 9 on gender based violence.)
- Many people in Africa argue that gender equality is a western concept. (See Tool 4 on culture and tradition, and Tool 5 on the international and Southern African protocols that commit governments to work towards achieving gender equality.)

Talk about the following questions:

- What are some other reasons people give against getting involved in the struggle for gender equality?
- How would you respond to these?
- Using the Table of Contents – where in this Toolkit do you think you might find further information to help you?

## Women integrating their identities in the face of the conflicting discourses influencing them

Rev Professor Christina Landman<sup>4</sup> refers to 4 ways that women commonly respond in an effort to integrate their identities as women:

1. Becoming 'troublesome' and demanding their rights in an oppositional way
2. Embracing their womanhood and surpassing the stigma against women's bodies
3. Becoming equal to men in "male" attributes such as rationality
4. Being "truly woman" in caring, making peace and creating warmth

She says, however that these responses do not change their status in society, and nor do they really change their social identity as women. They may even have destructive consequences for their relationships.

### ***A fifth way?***

She goes on to quote Obioma Nnaemeka (2003), who has coined the term "Nego-Feminism" as a new way of bringing about a meaningful change in the gender identity and status of women. Nnaemeka suggests working together with men in *negotiating* from an unselfish position how to find new ways of understanding each other and themselves and their positions in relationship, sharing their strengths and supporting each other's weaknesses in a way that avoids competing for power and dominance.



### **Time to talk**

*Lindy, a gender activist, and her boyfriend Pule have decided to get married. Pule's father is afraid that Lindy will overpower Pule, and undermine his God-ordained headship in the home. He tells them in no uncertain terms that he is opposed to their planned marriage. They talk about this together without taking sides, and decide that Pule will go and speak to his father in a calm way, to explain that he wants to marry a woman who can be his equal and challenge him to grow rather than someone who will just do as she is told. He goes and explains to his father that he has made this choice because he wants to grow stronger as a person. Over time, his father accepts his decision and learns to respect Lindy in a new way.*

<sup>4</sup>*Gender and Human Rights* – A presentation at FOCCISA Conference on Human Rights and Theology. Johannesburg. April 2014.

- What gender discourses have influenced Pule's father?
- What alternative discourses influence Pule and Lindy?
- Why do you think that Pule's father comes to accept Lindy over time? Do you think he also changes as a result?
- Pule and Lindy have used the fifth way mentioned by Professor Landman. Can you think of how you might have used this approach in solving gender struggles in your own relationships?
- For the fifth way to work, both men and women have to work together and be very aware of who they are, be honest and humble with each other, and committed to doing things differently. How can the church help both women and men to be able to do this, and support them in making choices that sometimes conflict with traditional church and cultural teachings?

## Conclusion

It is up to us to question the gender discourses that are destructive for individuals, our churches and wider society. And it is up to us to live our lives differently, so that we can transform our lives and those of others by our actions and our example.

### Attachment: Understanding POWER more deeply

Essentially, people in groups tend to engage in power struggles. This is because those with the most power can access the most important resources needed for survival: land, money, support, and the power to make important decisions for how society is run and what is regarded as right.

#### Where does power come from?

There are different ways that people gain power in society and in relationships.

These include physical strength and size, money and other resources, knowledge or information, social position and having a strong personality.

In a community where most people believe that men should be the heads of their households, men are given more power to decide what is good for everyone in their family, and this can give men a sense that they can do what they like. This is not so bad if they are good gentle people, but if they are unhappy or not confident as men, they can impose their power by force.

## Different types and uses of power

Power can be used in different ways, some of which are good and others not.

### Power-to

This just means the capacity to act, to do something, to shape one's life or one's world. It is a good use of power, as long as using one's power to act does not harm others.

### Power-over

Power can be used to control others or get them to serve the powerful person's needs. Powerful people do not like to share power, as they fear that they will lose out in some way. And this is why most conflicts in the world are linked to competition for this kind of power.

### Power-with

When power is shared, it becomes stronger. Two people are obviously stronger than they would be alone, and a large group of people can influence powerful decision makers. But shared power must be carefully managed to ensure that one of the power-sharers does not become too powerful and begin using their power to control the others for their own ends.

### Power-within

This is using one's inner strength, wisdom and ability to act in ways that make one stronger to cope in difficult situations or more courageous to challenge unjust uses of power. Faith can be a good source of power-within.

A relationship based on **power-over** can undermine a partner's **power-to** act, and can also crush their **power-within** as they lose self-confidence and even the strength to shape their own lives.

A relationship based on **power-with** is more like a partnership, appreciates the other's **power to** act, and strengthens both partners' **power-within**.

### Power-under

This is the use of power in destructive ways that comes out of feelings of powerlessness— usually against those one loves the most, or against one's own property. Examples include domestic violence, power struggles in community organisations or even violent demonstrations where people turn on each other or their property.



# Tool 3: Exploring how the Bible talks about women and men



---

***“When it comes to setting women free from every kind of exploitation and domination, the Gospel contains an ever relevant message which goes back to the attitude of Jesus Christ himself.”***

Pope John Paul II, in his “Letter to Women”, 1995

---

## Tool 3 contents

Introduction: Gender and patriarchy in the church.....	30
So what went wrong in the Church? .....	31
The Bible: Tool of oppression or liberation? .....	31
Promoting a more balanced theological understanding .....	32
Biblical texts that support gender discrimination.....	33
The Old Testament.....	33
New Testament Passages .....	38
Something more to think about.....	40
The Good News.....	41
Women were disciples of Jesus .....	41
Jesus respected women .....	42
Women as sex objects or 'war trophies' .....	43
Jesus took women's lives and struggles seriously.....	43
Women were among Jesus' close friends.....	44
Women were the first to proclaim the Good News .....	44
The personal image of God.....	45
Attachment: Alternative contextual readings of Scripture: three examples.....	46

## Introduction: Gender and patriarchy in the church

The Jewish and Christian religions grew out of a world where men dominated in all areas of life: politics, religion, the economy and in the home. Everyone assumed it was true that women and slaves, and even children to some extent, were less than human, and were simply possessions of men.

This is called a patriarchal society, and many societies in the world still operate on the assumption of male superiority.

The Gospel stories, however, show that Jesus defied this patriarchal view of the world:

- He spoke to women in public and risked public disgrace.
- He had women as close friends, discussed theology with them, and even trusted women with the news of his resurrection.



Katharine Jefferts-Schori, Presiding Bishop  
Diocese North Dakota, USA.  
Source: [virtueonline.com](http://virtueonline.com)

- He affirmed the courage of a woman with a menstrual disorder for breaking a taboo and coming out in public in hope of obtaining healing.
- He challenged women's traditional service role when he told Martha that Mary had the right idea when she preferred to sit and talk with him and learn from him rather than doing housework.
- He scolded his disciples when they would not let children come to him. He put children at the centre of things.
- He openly criticised authoritarian leadership; he directly challenged those who lorded it over others and taught his disciples that service, love and acceptance of everyone was how God calls us to live.

## So what went wrong in the Church?

Some say it was when Christianity became formally accepted as a state religion in the Roman Empire when Theodosius I, the successor of Constantine the Great, formally made Christianity the state religion in 380 AD.

Others say it was much earlier, when some disciples of the early church began to argue about which of the apostles to follow and a competitive spirit set in.

And still others refer to selective uses of texts in the Old Testament that describe God as an authoritarian figure who demands absolute obedience to a strict code of rules, rather than using Scriptures that demonstrate the love, grace and mercy of God, who loves all of creation equally.

## The Bible: Tool of oppression or liberation?

In the Bible there are examples of both patriarchal and liberating ideas about women. We explore some of these in this tool, and talk about more positive ways to use Scripture.

Many Christians ignore the liberating strands in our Scriptures. They tend to focus on the patriarchal ideas which support their own social or cultural views about women's inferiority. This raises questions about the way that our cultural and social prejudices affect the way that we read the Scriptures. Tools 12 and 13 specifically look into how it has been possible that the Bible has been misused to justify prejudices, and how to avoid these pitfalls. They show how we can read the Bible in ways that allow the Holy Spirit to speak into our lives and our world in fresh ways that are more consistent with the Gospel.

Patriarchal attitudes towards women have continued throughout the life of the Church all over the world. Even though women were very active in the early missionary activity of the church, they were gradually excluded from leadership positions. Reasons given were that women were sexually impure, intellectually limited and passive. Even today, some churches say that women are psychologically unsuited to be ordained. The church has also insisted that women should focus on the home because of their natural roles as caregivers, since they give birth.

Although many senior church leaders no longer accept these arguments, many of these perceptions and attitudes about women continue today. Often this is not a conscious undermining of women, but is the result of an uncritical acceptance of social assumptions about women and men.

There are still ways in which these narrow interpretations of Scripture undermine the equality and dignity of both men and women in churches. This happens:

- when women are excluded from office or leadership just because they are women;
- when churches use language in the church liturgy and official pronouncements that refers to God's people as male ('sons of God', 'all men'),
- when religious language defines God exclusively as male and does not consider the many other ways of describing God that occur in our Scriptures,
- when the church exploits women's work, e.g. when women are paid less for the work they do, and when they are expected to take on service and nurturing roles just because they are women,
- when women are sexually violated or abused by priests or ministers, or when the church does not challenge sexual abuse of women among their members or in society.



## Time to talk

- In what ways do these things happen in your church?
- What are other examples of the way patriarchy operates in your church?
- What are the signs of change in your church?

## Promoting a more balanced theological understanding

To open up the conversation about the theological foundations of gender justice, this tool explores different biblical texts and offers alternative perspectives. You will find some material that can be used to deepen your own understanding or for discussion in a group.

In Practical Tool 2 you will find a summary of an exciting method of reading the Bible called **Contextual Bible study**. If we are to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying through these ancient sacred texts, we need to think deeply about when the verses were written, for whom and why; and how they might apply in our society and in our lives today, given that our lives and perspectives are so different.

## Biblical texts that support gender discrimination

### The Old Testament

Biblical scholar, Cheryl Exum<sup>5</sup>, lists a number of ways in which women are treated in the Hebrew (Old Testament) Scriptures:

- Women are mostly described in relationships of subjugation to men: few have names, and most women are described according to their husband, son or father
- Women are often described as victims: courageous survivors' stories are omitted
- Women do not tell their own stories: men put words in their mouths
- Being silent about women's pain
- Women's sexuality is usually described in terms of the virgin, the mother or the whore, while men's sexuality is never labelled
- Women are often depicted as passive and men as active
- Women are expected to submit to authority and not to challenge it. Violence is often used to enforce this submission.
- Women are shown to operate in the home while men dominate both in public and at home, regardless of intellect, ability or choice.



### Time to talk

#### Doing your own biblical research

Look up the following passages in your Bible and try to discover how many of the comments, on Cheryl Exum's list, apply to the women in these stories:

- Michal in 1 Samuel 14 & 18 and in 2 Samuel 6
- Jephthah's daughter in Judges 11
- Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22
- Vashti in Esther 1
- The Jewish girl (servant of Naaman's wife) in 2 Kings 5:1-19
- Hagar in Genesis 16:1-16 and 21:9-21.

Can you add any other ways in which women are marginalised in these or other New Testament stories?

<sup>5</sup> *Plotted, Shot, and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Series.215; Gender, Culture, Theory, 3. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

## Lost in translation: The Creation stories in Genesis

The creation stories are basic to many other Scriptures, and have probably influenced gender relations in the church and society more than any others. So it is worth revisiting them. There are two stories of the creation of human beings (male and female) in Genesis.

### Story 1: Genesis 1:26-28 (Common English Bible version)

*<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth." <sup>27</sup> God created humanity in God's own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and be good stewards of it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground."*



## Time to talk

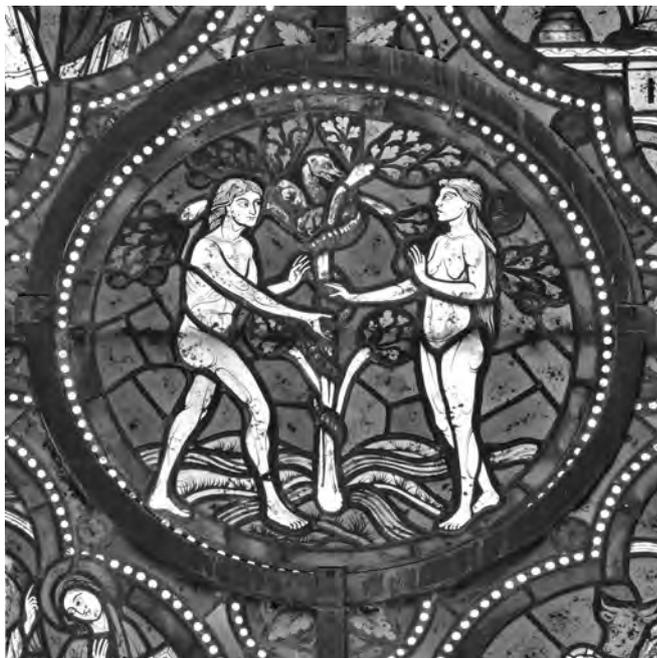
Think and talk about these accounts by reflecting on the following questions:

- What does this account tell us about the way in which men and women were created?
- If both men and women are created in God's image, how should we then see one another?
- Who, according to this account, has more authority – men or women?
- Who is responsible for reproduction and care for children?
- Who is to be the steward of the environment? How are they to treat plants, animals and the earth?

### Story 2: Genesis 2:7, 18-24 (New International Version)

*<sup>7</sup> God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. <sup>18</sup> Then God said, "It's not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." <sup>19</sup> Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the ground and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them. And whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> Now the man named all the livestock, all the birds in the sky, and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was to be found. <sup>21</sup> So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep*

sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took one of the ribs and closed up the place with flesh.<sup>22</sup> Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken from the man, and he brought her to the man.<sup>23</sup> The man said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She will be called a Woman for she was taken from a Man."<sup>24</sup> This is the reason that a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife, and they become one flesh.



Source: [Le\\_Mans\\_-\\_Cathedrale\\_St\\_Julien\\_CV\\_01en\\_wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Mans_-_Cathedrale_St_Julien_CV_01en)



## Time to talk

Both creation stories show that human beings are meant to be in relationship with each other and with God. But the way they do this is very different.

The second presents the man (Adam) as created first, and then the woman.

- How does this influence how people understand right relationships between men and women?
- Have you heard this passage preached on before, and how has it been used?
- What are some of the consequences for women (and men) in your community?

## Some notes on translation

Genesis was originally written in the Hebrew language. Because the Bible is so old and has been translated into almost every language on earth, some meanings can be lost in the process of translation. Hebrew scholar Phyllis Trible<sup>6</sup> has shown that this is what has happened to this story.

### Human or man?

The word translated as *the man* in English, was *ha-adam* in the Hebrew. This literally means “*creature of the earth*.” So it would be more accurately translated as “the human”, which is gender neutral. It is not until the end of the passage, after the second human is created, that the human recognises himself as *is* (man) and his helper as *issa* (woman).

### Rib or side?

The way the Hebrew is more accurately interpreted to mean that the one human was split into two equal sides (*tsele*).

### Helper or servant?

The word translated as *helper* in the English was used in the Hebrew for military support (Isaiah 30:5). The same word (*ezer kenegdo*) was used to describe the way in which God helps God's people (Deuteronomy 33:29). So this word means something like helping each other as equals.



## Time to talk

What does this mean for gender relations today?

Reflect on the revised version of the Genesis 2 story, below, that has inserted words more closely reflecting the Hebrew original.

- How does this change your picture of a healthy relationship between men and women?
- If the man recognises the women as his equal, strong helper in times of trouble, as in the original Hebrew meaning, how does this affect your view of gender roles in the home, in church and at work?

<sup>6</sup>Phyllis Trible 1978, 1986. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Augsburg Fortress Publishing.

- If this version of the story were used more in our churches, how would it change the churches' teachings and practices related to marriage and the roles of men and women in home, church and society? How would it affect gender relations in society?
- In what ways can you use it in your own church?

### New International Version, with Hebrew meanings inserted

<sup>7</sup> God formed the human (*ha-adam*) from the dust of the ground and breathed into the human's [*ha-adam*] nostrils the breath of life, and the human (*ha-adam*) became a living being. <sup>18</sup> Then God said, "It's not good that the human (*ha-adam*) is alone. I will make the human (*ha-adam*) a helper (*ezer kenegdo*) suitable for the human (*ha-adam*)."<sup>19</sup> Now God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the ground and all the birds of the air, and brought them to the human (*ha-adam*) to see what the human (*ha-adam*) would name them. The human (*ha-adam*) gave each living being its name. <sup>20</sup> The human (*ha-adam*) named all the livestock, all the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals. But no suitable helper (*ezer kenegdo*) for the human (*ha-adam*) was to be found. <sup>21</sup> So God caused the human (*ha-adam*) to fall into a deep and heavy sleep, and while the human (*ha-adam*) was sleeping, took one of the sides (*tsela*) and closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> Then God made a woman (*issa*) from the side he had taken and brought her to the human being. <sup>23</sup> The human (*ha-adam*) said, "This one finally is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She will be called a Woman (*issa*) because from a Man (*is*) she was taken."<sup>24</sup> This is the reason that a man (*is*) leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife, and they become one flesh.



### Time to talk

Genesis and teachings about the man as the head of the household

Read Genesis 3: 16-20, in which God goes through all the consequences of Adam and Eve's decision to eat of the fruit.

It is interesting that it is only AFTER the first humans have sinned against God and gone their own way, that:

- God declares that "your husband...will rule over you".
- Adam takes it upon himself to name the woman (Eve), thus assuming authority over her as the original human did when naming the animals.

Discuss the following questions, or any others you may have:

- Do you think it was God's original intention in creating humankind that the 'husband should rule over his wife' (vs 16)? How does knowing this affect your understanding of what might be a 'redeemed relationship' between men and women?
- How might this re-reading of Genesis 3 be helpful to the churches' work of bringing about gender justice and ending gender based violence in church and society?<sup>7</sup>

## New Testament Passages

A number of passages in the New Testament make reference to the creation story to justify or try to impose unequal power relationships and restrictive roles on men and women. We have seen above that this contradicts the original intention of the texts.<sup>8</sup>

### The role of women in the Church

There are 3 passages that are often used to argue against women in leadership roles in church.

The writer of 1 Timothy 2:11-14, who used his own patriarchal interpretation of the creation story to argue that women can only have a subordinate role in the church:

*"A woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman domineer over man; she should be quiet. For Adam was created first, and Eve afterwards; and it was not Adam who was deceived; it was the woman who, yielding to deception, fell into sin. Yet she will be saved through motherhood – if only women continue in faith, love and holiness, with a sober mind."*

The same argument can be found in other New Testament Epistles, such as 1 Corinthians 14: 34-35, which was written by Paul.



Patriarchal interpretation of sections of both the Old and New Testament argue that women can only have a subordinate role in the church. Source: PACSA

<sup>7</sup> Prof Christina Landman offers a reinterpretation of the story of Eve, when she points out that after being cast out of paradise, Eve actually restored humanity's relationship with God as the God of Grace (not of punishment) when she gave her children names reminding us of God's grace

<sup>8</sup>There are a number of reasons for this, and theologians and church historians have grappled with this question for many years. This is beyond the scope of this publication.

The following passages make the same basic point:

- Ephesians 5: 21-28 (read the whole passage in light of vs 21)
- Colossians 3:18ff
- Titus 2:4-5
- 1 Peter 3:1-7



## Time to talk

How might the earlier version of the creation story change your response to these teachings?

Academics who study the history and origins of the Bible have gone back to the ancient manuscripts from when these Scriptures were first written down. Some found that in many cases, the verses about the inferior position of women were added later, often in the margin of the original text. In other cases, one can see these were not part of the original text because later manuscripts insert the verses in different places, showing that they may have also been taken from notes in the margin of the originals.

It is important to know the history of the Bible, if one is to make sense of some of the contradictions we see in these passages, especially because they seem to directly contradict what Paul was actually living out in his ministry.

Some biblical historians point out that Paul was most likely influenced by his Jewish culture, which was very patriarchal. He wrote Galatians 3:28-29 much later, which seems to take him back to Genesis 1, which makes no reference to a distinction between male and female, but all humans were created in God's image.

There are places in Paul's letters and in Acts, which show that he worked closely with a number of women leaders in the early church. For example, in Romans 16, Paul mentions as many as nine women among the leaders he greets, who are understood to be prominent leaders in their own right: Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Junia, Tryphana, Tryphosa, Julia, Nereus' sister and Rufus' mother ('a mother to me also' in verse 13).

It is clear from the way he talks that he has worked closely with them, and respects their leadership in the church. For example, Paul says that Priscilla 'is prominent among the apostles' (vs 7), which implies she may have actually been one of the early apostles. Biblical historians have found evidence that Priscilla was literate in both Greek and Latin, and may have even written down some of Paul's letters (as he did not write his own letters but dictated them).



## Time to talk

- How would this information strengthen a lobby for women's ordination in the church?

This question about church leadership is explored in more depth in Tool 9.

- Most of the cultures where Paul ministered were very patriarchal. How might these teachings relate to the culture in which these writers lived? How do they relate to the different cultures that influence us in Africa today?
- What might this mean for how we generally interpret Scripture today?

### Something more to think about

- How do we now deal with the problematic passages in the Bible – are they authoritative for women or, indeed, for the whole Church? (What does authoritative mean<sup>9</sup>?)
- How have women dealt with this dilemma in the past?
- What, if anything, has changed and why is it important to begin to deal with passages of Scripture that seem to relegate women to the kitchen and to child care?
- Have you heard of Contextual Bible Study and do you think it might be helpful? (See more about this approach to Bible study in Practical Tool 2.)

*"I am a male and it suited me to have a God made in my image and to have a Redeemer who is like me."*

Sbu

Tool 12 tries to address some of these thorny questions.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Authoritative* basically means that "it is the Holy Spirit that helps us to confess the Bible to be the inspired Word of God. But what does this mean? Some people understand this literally and for them the Bible is 'God's Word' because God personally dictated every letter and word. Others believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the Bible to write about God's great deeds in their **own** language, culture, idiom and experiences. Therefore we can only understand the Bible, not literally, but within context. ...A very important aspect of respecting the authority of the Word of God is not to force your own preferences or prejudices into your reading of God's Word, but to take the Bible's intended nature and purpose very seriously." Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM): *"What does the Bible say about homosexuality?"* In Gennrich, D. Ed. 2013 *Men and Masculinities in South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: PACSA and Sonke Gender Justice.

## The Good News

Jesus' positive view of women is consistently evident throughout all four of the Gospels. Jesus treated women as equals and definitely not as sex objects or legal possessions. Jesus considered women worthy of being a part of his circle. This section explores some inspiring examples.

### Women were disciples of Jesus



#### Time to talk

- Can you think of examples of women disciples in the Gospels?

Complete the table below:

- Some Scripture verses are provided – read them and talk about the women and how Jesus related to them.
- Think of other Scripture verses that refer to similar women, and add the verses and names of the women into the table below.

Roles women played in Jesus' ministry	The women's names	Bible verses that tell their stories
Women followed Jesus' ministry and supported it.		
Some women simply provided hospitality.		Luke 8:1-3
Roles women played in Jesus' ministry	The women's names	Bible verses that tell their stories
Others showed a deep understanding of his ministry.		John 11:27
Some women openly demonstrated their love and respect for Jesus and His ministry.		Luke 7:36-50 Mark 14:3-9

## Jesus respected women

During the time of Jesus, the women in Jewish culture were not educated, were only seen to be saved through the faith of their husbands: in fact they were not thought to have souls at all! Men who spoke to women in public had to undergo cleansing rituals for having been defiled publicly. Women were regarded as ritually unclean during their menstrual period, and were forbidden from preparing food or going out in public.



### Time to talk

#### Jesus the first male gender activist?

Look up the following passages, which contain examples of Jesus relating publicly to women and even discussing theological ideas with women.

- Talk about any of the stories that interest you:
  - How do you think Jesus must have been received for breaking all these taboos?
  - How do you think these women must have felt?
  - How do you think the other characters in the story must have felt?
  - What do you think Jesus was trying to do?
  
- The women who anointed Jesus (Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8; Luke 7:36-50);
- The woman who had menstrual bleeding for 12 years (Luke 8: 43-48);
- Syro-Phoenician woman (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-39);
- Samaritan woman (John 4:7-12);
- Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42; John 11:20-33)

What are some of the prejudices against women in your community today, and how do you think Jesus would have handled them if he were walking your streets today? How do you think Jesus wants us to respond to these today, as his witnesses?

## Women as sex objects or 'war trophies'

Jesus challenged the attitudes held by many people towards women as sex objects. There was a Jewish practice (Deuteronomy 21:10-14) that allowed a man to take any woman captured in war as his wife. Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:28 against adultery prohibits men to lust after any women in his heart. This means he may not even think about her as a sex object, let alone take her as a sexual possession or trophy of victory in war.

## Jesus took women's lives and struggles seriously

Jesus had many interactions with women during the course of his ministry, showing that he cared deeply for the plight of women in his day. For example:

- the healing of the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11-17)
- the healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter who was possessed by demons (Matt 15:21-28; Luke 13:10-17)
- the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Matt 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39);
- Jesus' encounter with the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11).



### Time to talk

In his parables and teachings, Jesus uses symbols and imagery from women's lives, for example weddings, bread-making and childbirth showing that he was reaching out to women by using things they could relate to.

- What are some of the things that matter in women's lives today? It might be interesting, if you are in a mixed group, for the men and women to answer this question separately, and then come together to share their thoughts.
- Are these often mentioned in sermons and teachings in your church?
- How do you think it would make ordinary church women feel if sermons related to their life struggles more? How would it affect relationships between men and women, if at all?

## Women were among Jesus' close friends

Women were his friends and he remained close to his mother. Think of the three Marys – who were they, and what were their relationships to Jesus? Among other things, they were the ones who were present during Jesus' last hours, at the cross, burial and resurrection (Matt 27:55-61; 28:1-10; Mark 15:40-16:11; Luke 23:55-56; 24:1-12, 22-24; John 19:25-27; 20:1-18).

## Women were the first to proclaim the Good News

The Gospels of Mark, Luke and John record that women were the first to receive the Good News of the Risen Christ.

Both Mark and John record Mary Magdalene as the first person Jesus appeared to.

Jesus recognised that women can be witnesses and messengers of important news, which was not permitted for women then.

In Luke, we see that the disciples first refused to believe Mary (Luke 24:11), but they were proved wrong.

Mary Magdalene is now often called the first evangelist, because Jesus sent her to go and share the Good News with the disciples. (John 20:17-18).

*"I used to think that God was male: God the Father and God the Son. Then someone told me that in both the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, the Holy Spirit is in the feminine gender. I feel a bit different about the Holy Spirit knowing that. Somehow it makes me feel closer to the Holy Spirit."*  
Senza



## Time to talk

- What are some of the arguments you have heard against women becoming pastors or priests?
- How could your understanding of how Jesus related to women help you to argue more effectively for the ordination of women and more women lay leaders in your church?

## The personal image of God

The 2008 gender audit research discovered that most churches use exclusively masculine language for God, in their liturgies, Bible versions, hymns and sermons. If God is Spirit, then God cannot be limited to any human form. For human beings to relate to God, we tend to personalise God and use images that make sense to us. There is nothing wrong with doing that, as long as we do not assume that our images of God define all of who God is.

It may be helpful to use a number of different images for God to avoid becoming fixed in only one understanding of God, as this can help us to get to know God better.

It is exciting to discover that there are a number of other ways for describing God, which are found in the Scriptures. Here are some examples:

- You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you; you forgot the God who gave you birth (Deuteronomy 32:18<sup>10</sup>).
- For a long time I have held my peace, I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labour, I will gasp and pant (Isaiah 42:14).
- As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you (Isaiah 66:13).
- Like a mother, God teaches her children to walk, holds them in her arms and feeds them (Hosea 11:3-4).
- God is described as the woman who searches for the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10) to balance the shepherd who looks for the lost sheep.
- God as a baker-woman: Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21; John 6:31-35.
- God as different animals: mother bear – Hosea 13:8, 2 Kings 2:24; mother eagle – Exodus 19:4, Deuteronomy 32:11-12, Job 39:27-30; mother hen – Matthew 23:27, Luke 13:34, 2 Esdras 1:27-30; Psalm 17:8-9, Psalm 91:4.

*"I asked my little boys about their image of God. They were emphatic about God's maleness, telling me with great certainty: 'Well of course he's male – God is a boy's name!'"*

Gil

<sup>10</sup>Professor Gerald West from the University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa explains that this is an example of "how feminine images for God are used (here and elsewhere in the Bible). Though the noun, 'rock', is a masculine noun (grammatically), the images associated are female. ...The rock (probably of the wilderness wandering [in Exodus]) is the rock who provides sustenance (water) and even life itself, like a mother". (Email communication, February 2014)



## Time to talk

### God described in different ways

- Look at the above Scripture passages. Talk about the image(s) of God you have found. Which ones do you find helpful? How do they enrich your understanding of God?
- How do you imagine God?
- How does the way that you see God make you feel about your relationship with God?

## Attachment: Alternative contextual readings of Scripture: three examples

### 1. The Christian Women's Ministries (CWM) acknowledge their foremothers in the faith<sup>11</sup>

*The women in the Bible are our foremothers in the faith. At the General Congress of the Christian Women's Ministries that was held from 4 to 7 July 2013 in Port Elizabeth, we spoke about our mothers, and we were once more amazed at what we learn from them.*

*We sometimes think of Eve as a bad woman who brought humanity to a fall. However, although she sinned and was removed from paradise with Adam, we can find in Eve a remarkable woman of faith. When her children were born, she gave them names like Cain and Abel and Seth, names that originally remind us of God's grace, and not of His punishment. Thus Eve became our foremother in restoring her relationship with God ... and by proclaiming God as the God of Grace. And it is good for us women today to know God as the God who speaks with the grammar of grace.*

*Let us look at Rebecca next. And for that, let's go to Genesis 27:46. Rebecca was angry with the women her son Esau preferred, and she expressed her dissatisfaction with the words "I am now sick and tired..." Women today should take their cue from that. We too should sometimes say, "We are now sick and tired..." We are sick and tired of abuse against women and children. We are sick and tired of poverty and exclusion and a whole bunch of other things. So, let's say that with our mother Rebecca. We are now sick and tired.*

<sup>11</sup>Article written by Rev Professor Christina Landman. URCSA News, September 2013.

*Before Rebecca there was Hagar. She was an Egyptian slave given by Pharaoh to Sarah when Pharaoh wanted Sarah as his wife but found out that she was Abraham's wife. When Sarah out of jealousy let Abraham chase Hagar and her son Ismael into the desert, Hagar sat down with her son and waited to die. And then God spoke to her, and showed her the way forward, out of the desert. Then Hagar gave God a name, the true God she previously had not known. "You are God who sees me", she called God (Genesis 16:13). We women take hope and inspiration from that: Our God sees us.*

*Most important are the songs sung by women in the Bible. The women were the ones that transferred the faith from generation to generation by singing songs of faith to their children. Psalm 46 was a song sung by the women standing around the bed where a child is born. In this song God is praised as Immanuel, "God who is with us". In the four great songs assigned to women in the Bible the theme of God as Immanuel is repeated. The first is the song of Miriam in Exodus 15, when God is praised for leading the Israelites out of slavery. The second is Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2, where she praises God for giving her the long-awaited child Samuel. The third is Deborah's song of victory in Judges 5. God was with them in conquering the enemy. God is Immanuel. The fourth is of course Mary's song, the Magnificat, the great song in Luke 1:47ff which she sang after she has heard that she was going to bear the Messiah. And when the angel Gabriel told her that she must call the son Immanuel, it came as no surprise to her. Immanuel is a name given to God over the centuries by women.*

*God is with us. He protects and sustains us. This is the message the women of the CWM wants to give to the world. God will never leave us, not in birth and not even in the grave. He is Immanuel.*



## Time to talk

- What is the most important insight you gain from reading the above statement of the CWM women?
- How can you use this insight in working for gender transformation in your church?

## 2. The five young virgins who carried extra oil

Read the extract below, from a talk by Reverend Professor Christina Landman<sup>12</sup>, and then discuss the questions to engage more deeply with her alternative reading of the parable of the five young virgins: Matthew 25:1-14.

*"I often preach about the 10 young [bridesmaids, or] virgins, and especially the five wise virgins. I use the word 'virgins' because they would have been young girls if they were bridesmaids – younger than 12 and a half, because at 12 and a half years you were married. If you were 13 you were already seen as a spinster. These virgins were in a sense the most powerless people in the society of Jesus' time. They made no decisions about themselves; the father married them off and then every nine months they would give birth. That was their lives, and then they died at the average age of 26.*

*Imagine Jesus sitting with his disciples talking about virgins. When men get together, do they usually talk about virgins? No. Do they talk about wise virgins? No. And why were these virgins wise? Because they made their own decisions by deciding to take their own oil. The five other virgins that were not wise said their fathers would provide the oil. These others were buying into the patriarchal discourse [by depending on a man to help them]. The five wise virgins inherited the kingdom."*



### Time to talk

- Why do you think Jesus chose to use young girls as his subject? Do you think it would have been easy for them to make their own decisions? What point do you think he was trying to make?
- What does this say about Jesus' view of the patriarchal norms of his day, and his approach to them?

<sup>12</sup> Rev Professor Christina Landman. 2009. *Religious Discourses Supporting Patriarchy. In The Evil of Patriarchy in Church, Society and Politics*. Stellenbosch: A consultation hosted by IAM (Inclusive and Affirming Ministries)

### 3. Women who advocated for their rights to inheritance and land<sup>13</sup>.

Read Numbers 27:1-11.

Then read the sermon below, on a little-known Old Testament story.



#### Time to talk

While you are reading the story and the sermon, keep the following questions in mind and discuss them afterwards:

- What human rights do women in your community and country not have but need to obtain, in order to live full and prosperous lives?
- Talk about what lessons you can draw from this story and this sermon for the ongoing struggle for gender equality.



Virginia Muwanigwa, Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah and Cheryl Hendricks at a meeting of the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance in Malawi, 2012.

Source: Katherine Robinson

<sup>13</sup>Sermon for Women's Day, March 11 2013. Elaine Neuenfeldt; *Lutheran World Foundation – Women in Church and Society, World Communion of Reformed Churches*. [http://old.wcrc.ch/sites/default/files/Liturgy\\_0.pdf](http://old.wcrc.ch/sites/default/files/Liturgy_0.pdf)

*"Five women are named in this story. In this family, there were no men, no husbands, no brothers left, only five daughters Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders, and the entire congregation to request their rights to inherit their father's land.*

*And the request echoed among all. We can imagine that maybe the whole congregation was involved, whispering: are women allowed to speak publicly? And even to request something? What do they think? Do they want to change our traditions? It was always like this, said an old woman shaking her head!!*

*That is an audacity, screamed a man walking away.*

*But, there was a need for a discussion, after they dare to come publicly to ask for a revision of the law given by God. The five women standing before the congregation and the leaders, asked for a change in the law, because the law was discriminating, unjust. But, we can also imagine that the daughters were not alone there and what they were asking was not isolated in the life of the people walking in the wilderness.*

*The memories were still fresh with Miriam questioning the style of Moses' leadership. These women remembered how brave Miriam was asking and arguing for a shared leadership. But they also remembered how hard this was for her; they were with her, caring for her, singing and praying, while she was outside the camp, waiting for her health and skin to recover. Here again, this group of women discussed beforehand, strategised and planned. And the five took the courage to ask.*

*And the issue was brought to the table. It was not possible to ignore. The people had in the memory experiences of discussing issues: Moses sitting and listening to all those who came with conflicts, and problems....*

*A conversation took place: Moses and God discussed. And God spoke to Moses, who announced to the people: "What Zelophehad's daughters are saying is right" (Num 27:7).*

*And more... "The law must change." It is not an isolated case only for these five women. These women had the courage to struggle for the law to be changed. It was not an individual request for a personal benefit. The personal need was turned into a political and communitarian request. It was not only an act of good will with these women, but an intentional change of the structure acknowledging that this is justice for all.*

*This reflection today...challenges us to reflect. There are times when we have to struggle for laws that are discriminatory and unjust. The only thing to do is to struggle for change. There must be redoubled efforts so that processes, mechanisms and policies be set in place so that justice can be done. Good intentions alone are not enough. From this story, we learn of the need to work to*

*network and organise women as subjects of change that their voice will be heard, and advocate for channels to be established where justice and rights may flow.*

*And the story could finish here, with the right thing done, justice achieved, and all were happy. But not. It is not always like a Hollywood happy end. There is always the repercussions; the moment after the movement, when preserving what was accomplished is the most difficult challenge.*

*Further in the 36th chapter of Numbers, suddenly the male relatives of the tribe to which Zelophe had belonged wake up to what from their point of view is an omission in the new rule proposed by the women: the women must marry inside their own tribe, in order to preserve the property within the tribe! It seems that rights for women is ok, but, keep them limited. The most remarkable thing at this moment is that there is NO sign of conversation among the leaders, or between Moses and God to institute this limitation. This is directly decided without consultation. The women's reaction does not appear at all.*

*It is sad, yes, but mostly it is challenging again and again: maintaining rights and achievements is not an isolated event. It is always a process. It is always a continuing journey. Being vigilant about the accomplishments and working constantly to maintain the rights and justice is the learning from this story. And the establishment of clear and intentional structures and mechanisms in institutions and organisations is one step to sustain justice.*

*And even with clear paths, we still need to remember International Women's Day; we still need to remember the statistics and realities... and constantly pray and act for Justice for all – women and men, gender justice.*

*May the God of life, leading us for Justice and Peace, help us in wisdom! Amen"*



## Tool 4: How does culture influence relations between men and women in church and society?



---

***“Some men appeal to ‘ancestral traditions’ or ‘sacred texts’ to defend patriarchal privileges... The task lies in setting ‘gender-equitable’ norms and values within the various religions and cultures.”***

Ezra Chitando<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> In: Haddad, Beverley. 2011. *Religion and HIV and AIDS: Charting the Terrain*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu Natal Press

## Tool 4 contents

What do we mean by culture and tradition? .....	55
Culture and gender .....	55
Can cultures change? .....	55
Questioning the meaning of “our culture” .....	56
So what happened? .....	57
Socialisation and prejudice .....	59
Positive Cultural Practices .....	60
The Effects of harmful cultural practices on people’s lives .....	61
Culture and tradition can block work for improved gender justice .....	62
Sometimes cultural beliefs and biblical teachings clash .....	65
Culture, tradition and religion .....	66
Myths and stories that are handed down over generations .....	66

This tool explores some aspects of our upbringing that are influenced by our cultures and traditions that we often take for granted, without thinking about whether they are positive or have a harmful effect on men and women and gender relationships.

Some of them are positive and life-giving for both men and women. These should be maintained, and saved from getting lost in the face of change. Others are, or have become, destructive to human dignity and freedom, and contradict Jesus’ promise of abundant life to all. We need to have the courage to speak out against them as the Church.

**Cultural practices** are accepted ways of doing things in a particular group. These are often based in social assumptions or values a society places on certain things. A cultural practice can become a tradition if it is passed on from parents to children, until it becomes an acceptable practice in that culture.

This tool opens up space to explore these influences and how the church can respond.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> This tool relies heavily on: *Council of Churches in Zambia, Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia and Zambia Episcopal Conference, facilitated by Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation. 2011. The Church’s Training Manual on Gender Justice and Gender Based Violence in Zambia. Lusaka.*



## What do we mean by culture and tradition?

Sometimes we use the same words, but mean different things. So this tool looks more deeply at the definition of Culture introduced in Tool 2, and talks about how culture can influence gender relations and affect the wellbeing of both women and men.

**Culture** is made up of the social customs or accepted ways of doing things, marking special events, and distributing roles and privileges. In wider society, it includes social, political and economic practices. Cultures also include the attitudes, expectations, behaviour, religious beliefs, basic worldview, and the ritual practices of people.

**Tradition** is “the handing down or handing over of beliefs or customs from one generation to the next.” (Cheryl Bird, 2008)

**Upbringing:** Our understanding of the world usually comes to us from our parents, elders, teachers and religious leaders. This is how culture and tradition are passed on from one generation to the next.

The way societies view the world is determined by those who have the power to influence public opinion. Throughout history, this has mostly been men. As a result, the basic beliefs, traditions and cultural practices that have been passed on from generation to generation are mostly defined by men's understanding of the world.

## Culture and gender

Cultural beliefs and traditions heavily influence the social beliefs and assumptions that affect how we understand what is 'normal' right or appropriate. Often people from different cultures disagree, for example, on what is appropriate clothing for a man or woman to wear.

Think about it – Jesus never wore trousers, because he wore the traditional robes that men wore in the Middle Eastern Jewish society of his time. What do you think he might wear if he appeared in Lesotho today, or if he appeared in Zambia or Malawi?

## Can cultures change?

Think about it. Many of our ancestors walked around in animal skins, and the young women in some cultures did not even wear a top! Yet, we see few people doing these things nowadays, except perhaps on a special cultural commemoration event. This cultural practice has died out in many communities.

So cultures are not just different in different groups, but the same cultures do change over time. Traditions also die out, change or new ones develop. This depends on what a community or society values as important.



Cultures do change over time. Contemporary clothing worn with traditional accessories and hairstyle. Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

It is possible to challenge and bring about change to cultural assumptions about men and women and how they should behave and relate. It is usually those with the most power that influence what a society values most. But in modern society, anyone can decide to do things differently, if they are prepared to convince others why.

It is up to each of us to decide what kind of society we want to our children to live in, and talk to other people about what cultural practices and traditions will help preserve the values we want to hold on to. We also have to have the courage to question those that undermine some people's freedom, dignity or safety.

Even if sometimes we will end up in arguments or be judged for doing the 'wrong' thing, we can make decisions about whether we want to support those cultural practices that are not positive in our own lives and families or not.

## Questioning the meaning of “our culture”<sup>16</sup>

Some writers<sup>17</sup> have shown that in precolonial times African culture was also based in patriarchal systems, but it was very different from what many young men refer to as “our culture” today.

Women were respected, not as equals, but as complementary and essential role players in the economic system of the day. This revolved around homestead subsistence farming, the production of crafts and tools (both of which women were in charge of), and hunting and warfare (which were the priority areas for men). While overall headship remained with men, in many communities women played active leadership roles in their spheres of work, both economically and in some cases politically.

Unlike most European languages, many African languages do not have male and female pronouns, and many names are used for either male or female children. This also shows that

<sup>16</sup> This section is adapted from a PACSA Factsheet on Masculinities. Forthcoming 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Examples include: *Ufo Okeke Uzodike and Christopher Isike. 2012. Towards a Theoretical and Cultural Analysis of Dangerous Masculinities in Contemporary Africa: Can we Reinvent African Patriarchies to Curb HIV and AIDS?* In Ezra Chitando and Sophie Chirongoma (eds). 2012. *Redemptive Masculinities: Men, HIV and Religion*. Geneva: WCC Publications (pp. 31-53). Ntuthuka yaManguni Khuzwayo. 2012. *A Perspective from a Traditional Leader*. In Daniela Gennrich (ed.) 2013. *Men and Masculinities in South Africa*. Volume 2. Pietermaritzburg: PACSA and Sonke Gender Justice.

gender was less of an issue than age and seniority. For example, young men in precolonial times submitted to the leadership of older women as well as older men. Religious ceremonies in many precolonial communities and how they dressed, also put more emphasis on seniority and other markers of social status rather than on gender.

While women's fertility was highly valued, as this was important for the continued survival of tribes and communities, their bodies were not seen as objects merely for the sexual pleasure of men.

## So what happened?

The writers say that women lost their status as communities came in contact with colonial and missionary powers from Europe. This was because these foreigners imposed a different (public) economic system that devalued the economics of the homestead. They also selected certain men to benefit economically (through cash crops) and politically (through imposed chiefdoms, who would give away tribal land to enrich themselves). This introduced a new kind of patriarchy – it not only gave men greater power over women, but it also brought in a hierarchy between men based on wealth and political power. As more tribal land was lost to colonial settlements, and cattle-bartering was replaced by cash as wealth, many men were also drawn to work in the towns as labourers earning minimal wages. They often did not return for a whole year. This meant their sons grew up without proper mentoring from their fathers, and this is how many traditions became misunderstood by the younger generation of men.

Missionary teachings about sex and marriage and the inferiority of women as being unfit for leadership, had a huge influence on how African communities viewed women over time. This also entrenched a system that lost respect for women, devalued the homestead economy, and considered it right for men to control how their women lived their lives.

These writers go on to question the cultural practices that many men today say are “our culture” - especially when this is used to defend their aggressive and disrespectful practices towards women. They say it is actually a form of ‘culture’ that has been degraded by colonial interference in the social systems of African people and does not represent truly African values and norms.

### For example:

- *Ubusoka*: this concept allowed men to engage in sexual activity outside of marriage with women, but penetrative sex was not allowed. This was copied by the sons of the first generation of migrant labourers, except that they did have penetrative sex, and “this resulted in them having children all over” (Khuzwayo, p. 43).

- Elopement (*Kutzizya* in Tonga, *Kusemya* in Namwanga, *Ukuthwala* in isiZulu): this tradition was meant as a space for a young woman who objected to the man her family had chosen for her to marry. Her brothers, sisters and friends would kidnap her and take her to her chosen husband. What this has become is a licence for an (often much older) man to kidnap a girl or woman of his choice against her will. Khuzwayo (p.49) says this is a human rights abuse and is not supported by Contralesa (Congress of Traditional Leaders in South Africa).



## Time to talk

- Talk about the arguments made above. Which ones do you find convincing, and which do you disagree with?
- Discuss each of the cultural practices below, and think about whether they might have existed in this form in pre-colonial times. Decide whether you think these are harmful, because they undermine the human rights of women, give men too much power over women's bodies and women's lives, or can even harm them.
  - Wife inheritance (Tonga, Zulu, Xhosa) – 'Sexual cleansing' when a woman's partner dies. Often this involves being forced to have sex with the brother of her husband.
  - Early marriage – in some cultures it is acceptable for girls to be given in marriage by their parents before they turn 16.
  - Wife battering – is seen in some groupings as a 'sign of love', although it is unlikely that it was acceptable in traditional culture.
  - Ufisi (Chichewa) - an elderly man is asked to go secretly to a small house, where a virgin is being kept as part of her initiation and have sex with her before she 'graduates' from her seclusion.
  - Female Genital Cutting: This has various forms, ranging from removing a girl's clitoris (organ for sexual pleasure) to sewing up her vagina completely.
  - Incest - In some cultures it is acceptable for a father to have sex with his biological daughter (though in most it is taboo).
- Can you think of other practices that are referred to as "African culture" these days that degrade women, and rob men of the chance and challenge to be responsible and respectful in their relationships?
- If you are from a different culture altogether, can you share some positive and some harmful cultural practices? How do they affect the dignity of women and the relationships between men and women?

The writers challenge us to 'modernise without westernising'.

- How could you use the above insights to create a new framework of cultural beliefs that takes the best out of African precolonial culture and Western cultural ideas and rejects those that are destructive?
- How could you use these to advocate for gender transformation in your own community, church and country?
- How did Jesus relate to the traditional cultural practices of his day, and what can we learn from him?  
(E.g. Think about him breaking traditions like taboos, when eating food meant as sacrifice, his reaction to them stoning the woman caught in adultery, or the way he talked to women in public, which was seen as degrading for Jewish men).

## Socialisation and prejudice



### Time to talk

Have you ever heard any of these sorts of statements about women?

- Is a woman a person? (Lozi)
- Women have no mouth. (Beti proverb, Cameroon)
- Women have no heads. (Tonga)
- Women never reign. (Igbo)
- Whatever a man demands in a marriage must be given by a woman because the man has paid *lobola* [bride price] (Tonga, Zulu)
- What the devil does in a year, an old woman does in an hour. (Moorish)
- If you give your heart to a woman she will kill you. (Northern Nigerian)
- A man's "Yes" is a "Yes"; a woman's "Yes" is often a "No". (Tswana)
- Obedience to a woman makes one enter hell. (Moorish)
- A woman is like the milk of the young coconut, it is not pleasant except in its shell. (Swahili)
- Only a fool will take a no from a lady. (Malawi)
- An elephant eats from more than one tree. (Venda)

And from the Bible:

- "Give not your strength unto women, nor your ways to those who destroy kings." (Proverbs 31 vs 3)

Can you add any others from your culture?

- How do they make you feel?
- How do you think these kinds of sayings influence people's attitudes and relationships between men and women?
- Can you think of any sayings or songs that promote positive and healthy relationships between men and women?
- How can you use idioms, sayings and songs in your culture to raise awareness of the deep-seated prejudices that exist in your culture and society today?
- Do you think this can help people decide to do things differently? What might be some obstacles in the way?

Can you think of any idioms that put women and girls in a more positive light?

- How can you use these to instil positive attitudes in the minds of boys and girls as they grow up?

## Positive Cultural Practices

Some cultural practices are **positive** and promote mutual respect, love and/or power relations between men and women, or protect them from abuse:

### For example:

- The value of Ubuntu has led to a number of cultural practices in different Southern African cultures that are based on the understanding that I am the person I am because of the other people who are around me. Or, put in another way: I am responsible not only for myself but also for others.
  - One of the practices related to this is that every child is everyone's child. In other words, every adult has a responsibility for looking after every child in a village or community and protecting them from harm. If this were still practised, then more people would prevent child abuse or confront a perpetrator.
  - Another is the practice called *ilima* (in isiZulu) – that the whole community will come to the aid of someone in trouble, or if they are building a house, etc. If this were practised in a fresh way, it might lead to more people intervening if they witness a crime, or at least being prepared to come forward as a witness in court.
- It is taboo in some cultures for a father to beat a girl child that has reached puberty. This intends to protect her dignity and safety and limits the power of a father.
- It is taboo in most cultures for a man to have sex with his daughter or sister. This intends to prevent incest.



## Time to talk

- Can you think of other cultural practices that promote respect and/or protect women against abuse?
- Discuss whether and why you agree that the above practices contribute towards healthy gender relations.

## The Effects of harmful cultural practices on people's lives

We have seen that there are sayings, traditions and cultural practices that harm girls and women, which prevent them from becoming fully themselves, making them suppress their feelings, or forcing them to do things that they are not comfortable with or are harmful to them. Some of these effects have become even more serious in this age of HIV and AIDS.

But there are also those that harm boys and men too, even if not in exactly the same ways.



## Time to talk

- Talk about some of the harmful traditional practices in your own culture. On a large sheet of flipchart paper, draw up the following table:

Beliefs, sayings and traditional cultural practices that are not good for GIRLS AND WOMEN	Specific EFFECTs on GIRLS AND WOMEN (and gender relations in general)

Beliefs, sayings and traditional cultural practices that are not good for BOYS AND MEN	Specific EFFECTs on BOYS AND MEN (and gender relations in general)

- Talk about ways to raise awareness of the negative effects of these practices, songs and sayings.
- How can you use the positive as well as the negative beliefs, sayings and traditional cultural practices you talked about above to conscientise people to work towards more positive sayings and cultural practices that promote gender equality, justice and harmony?

### Culture and tradition can block work for improved gender justice

Sometimes, people refer to their cultures as an excuse for not wanting to become more just in their gender relations. At other times, cultural beliefs and practices make it hard for women to get help when they are in trouble. And at still other times, women experience a clash between their cultural and biblical beliefs, or between the social expectations on them and their biblical beliefs.

#### Women prevented from seeking help



### Time to talk

Read the quotation below, from a clergy wife, and talk about the questions that follow.

*“There is a traditional teaching that it’s usually the woman’s fault when there is violence in the home, and that the woman must repent.*

*But these days there is more awareness about gender based violence and saying no, although this is at variance with traditional teaching. The Zambian Mother’s Union has started talking about gender based violence, and we even attend workshops.*

*But still, very few women speak out if they are being abused personally, because they feel it will bring shame on the family or discredit their husband. So it is as if they have knowledge about gender based violence, but they still do not feel free to speak out, because of cultural and social pressures to bear it in silence.” Mrs Ruth Nwaou, Anglican Priest’s wife in Zambia*

- How can churches help women to speak out when they are victims of abuse?
- How can churches speak out against abuse in wider society?
- What theological basis is there for standing up against abuse and encouraging women to seek help?
- Do you know anyone that is in an abusive relationship but cannot speak about it? What can you do to help? What can she do? (See also Tool 9 on Gender Based Violence).

### **Traditional beliefs and practices can prevent women from exercising their ministry freely**



### **Time to talk**

Read and talk about the story below.

*“I was visited recently by a group of male lay leaders, asking me how it was possible that I had performed every Sunday for the past month! I tried to explain that I had not menstruated over any weekend, but there was visible unhappiness that I might have ‘defiled’ the Lord’s ministry!”*

Talk about this difficult subject:

- Is it acceptable for women to exercise their ordained ministry while menstruating?
- What biblical justifications (if any) are there for forbidding women from working for God while menstruating? (Be careful not to impose your cultural beliefs or the cultures of biblical times on spiritual truths.)

### Society and identity



### Time to talk

Read this story below, and answer the questions.

*"I was taught to work hard, to persevere, to bear unbearable conditions. I am a woman you see. Also the name that I was given (Sizane) means "What is the use of me?" and my second name (Dumazile) means the family was disappointed. I came to the wrong place. Nobody needed me. They all expected a boy child. So I was a disgrace." Dumazile*

- How does this story make you feel?
- When you were growing up, were you treated differently from your brothers or sisters? How did this make you feel? How do you think they felt?
- If you are a parent, do you regard and treat your girl and boy children differently? Why? How do you think this makes them feel?
- How do you think negative attitudes about male and female children affect how people treat girls? Do you think it contributes to the level of respect women have for themselves, and men have for women?
- Is it okay for a woman to accept "unbearable conditions"? Why? Or Why not?

## Sometimes cultural beliefs and biblical teachings clash

We talked in Tool 2 about the different discourses that influence gender relations. Most men and women's identities are shaped by these different discourses, or beliefs about gender.



Mrs Chisirimunhu conducting the Mpopoma Choir Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, Bulawayo during the Zimbabwe Council of Churches Golden Jubilee celebration in Harare.  
 Source: Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah



### Time to talk

Talk about the two stories below, using the questions that follow them. Spend more time on the very last question after both stories.

*Connie's husband has two girlfriends. Sometimes he even brings one of them home. She does not confront him about it and just accepts it as part of life. She says that men do that. There is a saying in Venda that "A man eats from more than one tree". She feels a bit uncomfortable in church, because the Bible says that marriage is between only one man and one woman. But she accepts that she cannot do anything about it. Sometimes she wonders if he might be HIV Positive, because he does not seem healthy lately. But, she says, "God does not want me to deny him".*

- How do you feel about Connie's situation?
- What are the different discourses or beliefs influencing her life? Are they life-giving or death-dealing?
- How would you advise her if she was your friend?

*Eunice is not feeling well. Her illness began shortly after her husband got a new girlfriend. She and her mother believe the girlfriend has put a curse on Eunice, and she visits the sangoma to ask him to sort out the girlfriend. Her church group also comes once a week to pray with her for God's healing.*

- Why do you think Eunice has got sick?
- She is trying to find a solution based on two conflicting discourses (ways of talking about women and men) in her life. What are they?
- What other discourses could influence her to find a healthy way forward, related to health as well as gender relations?
- How would you advise her if she was your friend?
  
- Do you ever find your biblical and cultural beliefs clash? How do you resolve this? How does it affect your life? Share your stories with one another.

## Culture, tradition and religion

### Myths<sup>18</sup> and stories that are handed down over generations

There are some traditional stories that are handed down between generations, which deeply affect how a society understands how the world should be. This is not just about men and women and how they should be and act, but they influence our values and our sense of what is right or wrong.

Some of the most powerful of these are myths and sacred texts about how the world came to be. We looked in Tool 3 at the Biblical creation myths that have strongly influenced the many

<sup>18</sup> The word Myth is used here to describe traditional stories that teach moral and life lessons, whether they are based on historical fact or not. Many of the sacred Scriptures of different religions are mythological.



societies that were evangelised by missionaries over generations. We look at some others together below.



## Time to talk

### Creation stories

There are many stories about creation which exist in African and other cultures.

- Do you know any? When you grew up, were you taught that these were true?
- How are these stories similar and different from the biblical accounts?
- The biblical accounts have come out of ancient Jewish tradition, which are discussed in Tool 3 and Christianity has adopted these. Do you think they are factually true? Does it matter if they are not? What is the purpose, do you think, of the creation myths in society?

Read the following two creation stories and talk about them. One is from Malawi and the other from KwaZulu Natal in South Africa.

### The Kaphirintiwa Myth of Creation

*In the beginning there was Chiuta (God) and the Earth. Chiuta lifted the sky. Below him was the earth, waterless and lifeless.*

*One day dark clouds filled up and covered the sky. Lightning flashed and claps of thunder rent the air. The sky opened and in a great shower of rain came down Chiuta, the first man and woman, and all the animals. They landed on Kaphirintiwa, a flat-topped hill in the mountains of Dzalanyama.*

*Afterwards the ground where they landed turned to rock, and footprints and the tracks of many animals can be seen to this day. The man's footprints are larger than the woman's and you can see the imprint of the hoe, a winnowing basket and a mortar. Plants and trees grew on the earth, yielding abundant food and God, the humans and the animals lived together in happiness and peace.*

*One day the man was playing with two sticks, a soft one and a hard one. He twisted them together and accidentally invented fire. Everyone warned him to stop but he would not listen. The grass-land was set alight and there was great confusion.*

*Among the animals the dog and goat ran to the man for protection, but the elephant, the lion and their companions ran away full of rage against him.*

*The chameleon escaped by climbing to the top of the tree. He called to God to follow him but Chuita answered that he was too old to climb. When the spider heard this he spun a fine thread and thus lifted God to safety.*

*So God was driven from the earth by the wickedness of the man and as he ascended he pronounced that henceforth the man and woman must die and shine forth in the heavens.*

---

## **Zulu Creation Story<sup>19</sup>**

*In the beginning, there was a large swamp called Uhlanga. One day, the Sky God, called the Great One, descended from the heavens and approached Uhlanga. "Will you marry me?" he asked the swamp.*

*"Of course," she responded. And from their union, the whole world was created. Shortly after the marriage, the Great One noticed two types of coloured reeds growing in the swamp. He picked one of each colour and announced, "From these reeds, I shall make humans!" He made one man and one woman. These two humans became the ancestors of all the people on the earth.*

*The Great One wanted to give gifts to his new humans. He thought about what they needed most. "My creations need light!" the Great One said, and he hurled the sun and moon into the sky. Still not satisfied, he cried out: "Let there be animals in the forest and birds in the sky! Let there be insects in the grasses and fish in the seas!" And as he cried out their names, these creatures came into being. Finally, he commanded, "Let there be water, so that my creations can drink! Let there be fire, so that they can cook their food!" And his words brought these things into existence, as well.*

*The Great One proudly observed the world he had created. He decided that he would give humans one more gift. He summoned Unwaba (pronounced oon-WAH-bah), the chameleon. The Great One said: "Make your way down the tree that connects heaven to earth, and deliver this message to the people: 'No living things that I have created will ever die.'" "As you command," Unwaba responded, and he began his journey to earth. However, the chameleon saw no need to hurry. "It is best that I go slowly down these branches, so that I do not fall and injure myself," he thought. "And it probably won't make a difference if I stop for a while to nibble on these delicious plants."*

---

<sup>19</sup>@Teachers' Curriculum Institute Early Humans 65

*Meanwhile, the Great One had reconsidered his final gift to the humans. He decided that he did not want life on earth to go on forever, after all. He called for Intulo the lizard, and said to him: "I have changed my mind. Go down to earth and deliver this message to the people: 'All living things that I have created will eventually die'"*

*"And go quickly, because once my word is spoken to the people, it cannot be changed!" "I shall leave at once!" assured Intulo. "I shall race to earth as fast as I can!" Intulo scurried down the tree that connects heaven to earth. Breathlessly, he called the people together and announced, "The Great One has said: 'All living things must eventually die. All people, all animals, all fish, all birds, and all insects in time will become nothing.' This is the message from the Great One."*

*Later, after Intulo delivered this message, Unwaba the chameleon finally arrived on earth. He, too, called the people together for a meeting. Unwaba proudly delivered his speech to them. "The Great One has said: 'All living things that I have created will never die'. "The people looked confused. They began to mumble among themselves. Finally, one man shyly stepped forward and said, "But just a short while ago Intulo the lizard told us that all living things will die!"*

*"Oh dear!" Unwaba said. His voice shook as he spoke. "I have arrived too late! The word of the Great One was spoken to the people, and now it cannot be changed. I am afraid that because of my tardiness, all living things will have to die! Oh, I am so sorry!"*

*Thus, the lives of all the world's creatures eventually end.*

- In which ways are these stories similar to each other, and to the Genesis stories in Genesis 1, 2 and 3 (see Tool 3)?
  - What was the earth like before creation?
  - Who was made first - man or woman?
  - Both stories explain the end of the innocence of people, or when humans no longer lived in an ideal relationship with God. In the Bible (Genesis 3), this is called 'the Fall'.
    - How did the first people live before the Fall?
    - Who initiated the Fall in each story?
    - What happened after the Fall?
  - How would this creation story have affected what Malawian people and the Zulu people would have believed about men and women, and God?



# Tool 5: Understanding human rights, gender equality and the Bible



---

*"I came that all may have life, and have life in abundance."*

John 10:10

---

## Tool 5 contents

A short history of human rights.....	72
Human rights and gender equality as a human rights issue.....	74
A short history of the development of gender equality commitments.....	74
Human rights, gender equality and the Church .....	75
International human rights and gender instruments, and Biblical Christian principles.....	76
Going Deeper:.....	81
Using the SADC Protocol to review where your church stands on gender justice and equality: .....	81
What gains have been made through these international human and gender rights instruments, and what still needs to be done? .....	87
Attachment: Overview of the international human and gender rights declarations and protocols.....	88



## Time to talk

- What is a human being?
- What are human rights?
- What is the word for human rights in your own language, and how are they understood in your culture?
- Give examples of human rights for men, women, boys and girls.

## A short history of human rights

International human rights were first agreed on by governments of many countries across the world at the United Nations (UN) after the Second World War, because they did not want to ever allow any political leader to commit the kinds of abuses that happened in that war.

These rights were written up in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which has led to other agreements and international covenants known as Protocols.

Most governments have signed commitments to uphold these rights, and have laws to ensure all citizens' basic rights are protected and these are usually domesticated in national constitutions, laws and policies.

Rights come with **responsibilities**: people have to respect the rights of others, and behave in ways that respect other people's rights.

Governments are called upon to create and uphold laws that protect the rights of all their citizens, and ensure that all State organs act in a manner that is fair and just and upholds the dignity of all people. But different governments interpret these rights slightly differently, depending on their cultural and social belief systems.

The concept of human rights is based on the belief that all people are of equal value and dignity just because they are human beings.

No person, organisation or government should prevent someone from living in dignity, choosing a way of earning a living, spending time with whom they want, and believing in what they want.

Human rights are meant for everyone equally, no matter what their race, religion, culture, nationality, age, sex, beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or intelligence.



Millennium Development Goal 3.  
Source: United Nations

The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which commit countries to work towards removing all obstacles to the development of all their citizens and address poverty, is another international agreement. Agreements like this usually contain specific targets and time frames by which the targets must be achieved. The deadline for achieving the goals of the MDGs is 2015. Many of the MDGs include ensuring equality between men and women in different aspects of life.

## Human rights and gender equality as a human rights issue

---

*"As long as women are bound by poverty and as long as they are looked down upon, human rights will lack substance."* President Nelson Mandela, at the opening of the first democratic parliament of South Africa

---



### Time to talk

- Think of the different human rights you talked about at the beginning of this session.
- In your experience, do all the people in your community and church have the same rights? Should they have?
- When you hear the term gender rights – what do you think of?
- Do you agree that there is a need to struggle for women's (and girls') rights in your own country and community? Why, or why not?

## A short history of the development of gender equality commitments

Before 1979, human rights were usually defined by men and benefited men the most. They tended to focus on the violations of rights in wider society, and ignored violations in the home.

In 1979 the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was drafted and adopted by the United Nations.<sup>20</sup> It went beyond focusing on public life, and also referred to what should or should not be allowed in the home.

In 1995 the United Nations held the first world conference which culminated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that most countries across the world have signed and committed to implement. Part of the Mission statement says that the platform for action, among other things encourages governments to achieve gender equality but provides a road map for how this could be achieved.

---

<sup>20</sup>Notes from a presentation given by Karen Stefiszyn, visiting lecturer at University of Pretoria to a meeting of South African churches in 2011.

Goal Three of the MDGs agreed on in 2000 calls for countries to work towards achieving gender equality by 2015.

However African governments felt that this did not adequately address some of the cultural and social issues and challenges peculiar to the African continent and drafted and adopted in 2005 the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa by African Union member countries.

The African Women's Protocol recognised that women in Africa do not have the same rights, access to decision making power and resources as men do. This makes it difficult for nations to really prosper and develop strong economies, but also makes life much harder for women than for men<sup>21</sup>

At sub-regional, Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries elevated the 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development to a more binding instrument, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development adopted in 2008. The SADC Gender Protocol set 28 clear targets to be achieved by Member States by 2015 in line with the MDGs. A successor framework Post-2015, for both the MDGs and SADC Gender Protocol are being negotiated with officials with the involvement of civil society. These international, regional and sub-regional instruments provide standards or yardsticks against which gender activists can call national governments to account as well as gauge their performance towards achieving gender equality.

## Human rights, gender equality and the Church



### Time to talk

- Do you think human rights and working for gender equality are important to the church? Why, or why not?
- How does your church uphold the human rights you mentioned above?
- Are there ways in which it does not uphold them equally for all its members – men and women, boys and girls? What could or should it do to change this?
- What do you think is the role of the church in relation to human rights and the ambition to achieve gender equality in society?

<sup>21</sup> This was Protocol to the broader African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. [http://www.achpr.org/english/\\_info/women\\_en.html](http://www.achpr.org/english/_info/women_en.html)

In 2013, Fr Thoman Risica, spokesperson to Pope Francis II, addressed the issue of building women's lay leadership in the church by stating:

*"Pope Francis is extremely sensitive to the fact that, in making major decisions that affect people's lives -how can we do this without consulting half the human race?"*

Jesus sums up the purpose of His life as to bring 'abundant life' to all. But abundant life is not something theoretical. It is practical and achievable - only if ALL people prosper and have social equality and dignity. To generalise from the Pope's assertion: Jesus came to bring abundant life to all, not just half the world's population.

## International human rights and gender instruments, and Biblical Christian principles

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". It is the foundation stone of all the human rights documents that have followed it.



The late Wangari Muthaai receives an award from the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights.  
[www.en\\_wikipedia.org](http://www.en_wikipedia.org)

Some church people say that the concept of human rights is secular and even counter-biblical. And yet, the very first creation story in Genesis affirms that all human beings are made in the image of God and have a basic dignity that is God-given. This certainly agrees with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

But a number of churches worldwide have engaged with these instruments over many years. They want to understand to what extent it is the church's responsibility to adopt them in their own ministries, and whether it is their responsibility to work actively to promote them in society.

For example, after much debate ever since 1970, the Lutheran World Foundation (LWF) decided in the 1990s that the Church has to take seriously and support secular (ordinary) people's efforts to protect and promote human rights. They believe that God sides with the poor and marginalised and demands justice, fairness and compassion.

This means that God calls the Church “to stand for the rights of human beings and for a better community of nations”<sup>22</sup>, because the Church is there to serve the needs of the world and not to just spiritualise its message of salvation. The Church has to work with whatever tools are available in the world, and to understand those issues that prevent some people from being able to receive Jesus’ promise of abundant life.

The other side of human rights is human *responsibilities* -to ensure that no one’s human rights are violated by our actions, and states have a responsibility to safeguard the human rights of all their citizens. Of course this is not always the case, and human rights activists and some religious leaders have spoken out against state, institutional and individuals’ actions that undermine people’s human rights.

An example of churches working together to bring about gender transformation is the Declaration published jointly in 2009 by the Council of Churches in Zambia, The Zambian Episcopal Conference and the Evangelical Fellowship in Zambia. More than that, these church Mother Bodies managed to co-sign this declaration with the national Zambian Government. This has given it much-needed credibility and made it easier to draw in different stakeholders to take it seriously.

Another example is the Interreligious Declaration signed in 2011 by the three Christian Mother Bodies as well as the other major religions. It is not clear if this has led directly to any specific church action plans, however.

The **eight principles** underlying all of the human rights and gender equality instruments are:

1. Dignity
2. Freedom
3. Equality
4. Non- Discrimination
5. Justice
6. Participation at all levels
7. Opportunity
8. Autonomy

<sup>22</sup>All the quotations in this paragraph are taken from Henriksen, Jan-Olav. 1998. *Theology and Human Rights: The work of the Lutheran World Federation*. In *Reformed World*, volume 48 number 3 (September 1998).



## Time to talk

Answer the following questions on the eight principles:

1. For each principle, identify at least two biblical texts and/or church teachings that support it, and explain how it does that. You might want to write up a table, something like the one below. Some examples have been put in to get your thinking started.

Human Rights Principle	Scriptures that support this principle
<p><b>Dignity</b></p>	<p>Genesis 1:26-28 - <i>“And God created humankind in God’s own image; in the Image of God, God created them; male and female God created them.”</i></p> <p>Humankind are both created in the image of God, and both are given responsibility to care for the earth. This passage does not give greater importance or status to either men or women.</p> <p><b>Add your own examples of Bible verses and discuss them:</b></p>
<p><b>Equality</b></p>	<p>Ephesians 5:21 - <i>“Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.”</i></p> <p>Galatians 3:26-28 - <i>“...for in Jesus Christ you are all children of God through faith, ... There is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”</i></p> <p><b>Add your own examples and discuss them:</b></p>

Human Rights Principle	Scriptures that support this principle
<p><b>Freedom</b></p>	<p>Galatians 3: <i>“You foolish Galatians! ... Did you receive the Spirit by doing works of the LAW or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?”</i></p> <p>Paul is scolding the church in Galatia for reducing religion to a set of rules, which in the end bind people and take away their freedom to worship in spirit.</p> <p><b>Add your own examples from the Bible and discuss them:</b></p>
<p><b>Non-discrimination</b></p>	<p>Gal 3:26-28 – As above.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 10:17-19 – <i>“For the Lord your God ... is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and widow, and who loves strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”</i></p> <p>Matthew 15:21-28 -Jesus is involved in a debate with a non-Jewish woman about whether Jesus’ ministry is for Jews only. He at first refuses to help her, in a way discriminating against her. But Jesus is convinced by her arguments, and does as she asks.</p> <p>The fact that he has a theological debate with a woman, or speaks in public with a woman at all (in a society where a man was seen to degrade himself if he did that) shows that he was not afraid to break social norms if they undermined someone’s dignity.</p> <p><b>Add your own examples and discuss them:</b></p>

Human Rights Principle	Scriptures that support this principle
<p><b>Justice</b></p>	<p>Numbers 27:1-11 – The daughters of Zelophe had advocated for daughters to inherit in the absence of sons. God’s response to Moses is: <i>“The daughters of Zelophe had are right....;you shall indeed... pass the inheritance of their father to them. You shall also say to the Israelites: If a man dies and has no sons, then you shall pass his inheritance onto his daughter.”</i></p> <p>John8:3-11 – The woman caught in adultery. Jesus deliberately challenges the justice of the traditional way of meting out justice to adulterous women.</p> <p><b>Add your own examples and discuss them:</b></p>
<p><b>Participation</b></p>	<p>Acts 18:18 and 26 - Priscilla was an active leader in the early church.</p> <p>John 6:10 – <i>“Make the people sit down. ... about five thousand in all”</i></p> <p><b>Add your own examples and discuss them:</b></p>
<p><b>Opportunity</b></p>	<p>John 20:17 – Mary is the first evangelist sent to spread the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection. <i>“Jesus said to Mary: Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them: ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”</i></p> <p><b>Add your own examples and discuss them:</b></p>



Human Rights Principle	Scriptures that support this principle
<b>Autonomy</b>	<p>Gen 1:28 – “<i>God blessed them and said to them [both]: ... fill the earth and subdue it...</i>”</p> <p><b>Add your own examples and discuss them:</b></p>

Use the following questions to guide your conversation further:

2. Looking at the principles that underlie the protocols, do you think referring to the principles might be a useful tool when working with churches around gender transformation?
3. If yes – think of some ideas about how you might present them theologically.
4. There are also Scriptures that seem to oppose some aspects of human rights. Can you think of any of them?
5. Talk about how you might address these issues.<sup>23</sup>

## Going Deeper:

### Using the SADC Protocol to review where your church stands on gender justice and equality:

The following table sums up the main provisions of the SADC Protocol and lists the main targets set by SADC for its members. It is taken from a presentation to churches by Gender Links in 2012<sup>24</sup>. Gender Links leads a powerful coalition of organisations that tracks country progress in

<sup>23</sup>One important Tool is an approach to Bible Study called Contextual Bible Study. You can find out more about it and look at some of their Bible studies by going to UJAMAA's website at the University of KwaZuluNatal: [www.ujamaa.ac.za](http://www.ujamaa.ac.za). You can also read more about the question of how to read the Bible when there seem to be so many contradictions in it, on PACSA's website [www.pacsa.org.za](http://www.pacsa.org.za), in *Men and Masculinities Volume 3: Practical and Theological Resources*. (You can download and print this free.)

<sup>24</sup>At a Norwegian Church Aid meeting with representatives of four national Councils of Churches to introduce the concept of a gender audit, Pretoria October 2012.

implementing the 28 targets of the SADC Gender Protocol. This is published in an annual Barometer.

The table below has been adapted to illustrate how provisions in the SADC Protocol can be used to ask ourselves questions about church policies and practices concerning the status, roles, rights and access to resources of men and women within their own structures and social teachings.

The first two columns summarise the articles and the targets to achieve them.

The right-hand column offers some ideas for the kinds of questions you can ask when finding out how your church is doing on the journey towards gender equality and justice.

Main provisions of the SADC Protocol	Specific targets to be achieved by 2015	Aspects of Churches and their ministries that relate to these targets
<b>ARTICLES 1-3: PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES</b>		
These cover definitions; general principles and objectives.	The Protocol aims to bring together existing commitments; enhance these through specific timeframes; create effective mechanisms for implementation; sharing of best practices and deepening regional integration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Does your church have a strategy and programmes that focus on improving relations between men and women and improving the lives of women, in the church and in society?</i></li> </ul>
<b>ARTICLES 4 - 11: CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL RIGHTS</b>		
This provides for all national Constitutions to support gender equality, and make sure that traditional law does too. All laws that are discriminatory to women are to be repealed. It also provides for equality in accessing justice, marriage and family rights and the rights of widows, elderly women, the girl child, women with disabilities and other socially excluded groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Enshrine gender equality and equity in their Constitutions and ensure that these are not compromised by any provisions, laws or practices.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Review, amend and or repeal all discriminatory laws.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Abolish the minority status of women, so they can own land, have bank accounts and receive inheritances.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Does your church have a gender policy?</i></li> <li>■ <i>Do your church's Constitution and doctrines promote the equality of men and women?</i></li> <li>■ <i>Are your church leaders open to reviewing these?</i></li> </ul>
<b>ARTICLES 12-13: GOVERNANCE (REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION)</b>		
This Article provides for the equal representation of women in all areas of decision-making, both public and private and suggests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Ensure that 50 percent of decision-making positions in all public and private sectors are held by women</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Are women represented at all levels of church leadership?</i></li> <li>■ <i>Does your church have:</i></li> <li>■ <i>*50% ordained women clergy;</i></li> </ul>

Main provisions of the SADC Protocol	Specific targets to be achieved by 2015	Aspects of Churches and their ministries that relate to these targets
<p>that this target be achieved through Constitutional and other legislative provisions, including affirmative action. It further stipulates that Member states should adopt specific legislative measures and other strategies, policies and programmes to ensure that women participate effectively in electoral processes and decision-making by, amongst others, building capacity, providing support and establishing and strengthening structures to enhance gender mainstreaming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Use of affirmative action measures if needed.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>*50% lay leaders at highest level?</i></li> <li>■ <i>What roles do men's and women's organisations play?</i></li> <li>■ <i>Is a Gender ministry / desk in place, with money and authority to make a difference?</i></li> </ul>
<b>ARTICLE 14: EDUCATION AND TRAINING</b>		
<p>This article provides for equal access to quality education and training for women and men, as well as their retention at all levels of education. It further provides for challenging stereotypes in education and eradicating gender based violence in educational institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Enact laws that promote equal access to and retention in all levels of formal and non-formal education.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Adopt and implement gender sensitive educational policies and programmes addressing gender stereotypes in education and gender-based violence, amongst others.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Does your church actively support women to get theological training?</i></li> </ul>
<b>ARTICLES 15-19: PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES AND EMPLOYMENT, ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT</b>		
<p>This Article provides for the equal participation of women in economic policy formulation and implementation. The article has provisions and targets on entrepreneurship, access to credit and public contracts, as well as stipulations on trade policies, equal access to property, resources and employment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Ensure equal participation by women and men in policy formulation and implementation of economic policies.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Adopt policy measures to ease the burden of the multiple roles played by women.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Adopt policies and enact laws which ensure equal access, benefits and opportunities for women and men in trade and entrepreneurship.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Review national trade and entrepreneurship policies, to make them gender responsive.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Is there a gender balance in church staff and clergy, and are their conditions of service the same?</i></li> <li>■ <i>Does your church actively support women's empowerment projects (as well as men's)?</i></li> </ul>

Main provisions of the SADC Protocol	Specific targets to be achieved by 2015	Aspects of Churches and their ministries that relate to these targets
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Introduce affirmative action measures to ensure that women benefit equally from economic opportunities.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Review all policies and laws that determine access to, control of, and benefit from, productive resources by women.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Review, amend and enact laws and policies that ensure women and men have equal access to wage employment in all sectors of the economy.</i></li> </ul>	
<b>ARTICLES 20-25: GENDER BASED VIOLENCE</b>		
<p>This article makes provision for the implementation of a variety of strategies and laws aimed at eliminating all forms of gender based violence, and trafficking.</p> <p>Also for the provision of a comprehensive package of treatment and care services for survivors of gender based violence. This includes the access to Post Exposure Prophylaxis to prevent HIV infection if the victim is HIV negative, and the establishment of special courts to address these cases.</p> <p>There are specific provisions on human trafficking. A section which provides for monitoring and evaluation sets targets and indicators for reducing gender based violence levels by half by 2015.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Enact and enforce legislation prohibiting all forms of gender-based violence.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Ensure that laws on gender based violence provide for the comprehensive testing, treatment and care of survivors of sexual assault.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Review and reform their criminal laws and procedures applicable to cases of sexual offences and gender based violence.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Enact and adopt specific legislative provisions to prevent human trafficking and provide holistic services to the victims.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Pass laws and regulations which define and prohibit sexual harassment in all spheres, and punish perpetrators of sexual harassment.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Adopt integrated approaches, including institutional cross sector structures, with the aim of reducing current levels of gender based violence by half by 2015.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>What are your church's teachings on gender equality and what constitutes gender based violence</i></li> <li>■ <i>Does your church make public pronouncements on GBV, the sexual abuse of women and girls for financial gain, and/or human trafficking in the community?</i></li> <li>■ <i>Does your church have counselling services available?</i></li> <li>■ <i>Do your church leaders confront perpetrators of GBV and/or sexual harassment, or are their times when they excuse it or cover it up?</i></li> <li>■ <i>What is your church's position on domestic violence? Do your leaders protect victims or support the rights of the head of the household?</i></li> <li>■ <i>Does your church have any programmes to support victims and survivors – eg safe houses, counselling, legal and solidarity support for court proceedings?</i></li> </ul>



Main provisions of the SADC Protocol	Specific targets to be achieved by 2015	Aspects of Churches and their ministries that relate to these targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Does your church have any rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators?</i></li> </ul>
<b>ARTICLE 26: HEALTH</b>		
<p>This article provides for the adoption and implementation of policies and programmes that address the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing of women with specific targets for reducing the maternal mortality ratio and ensuring access to quality sexual and reproductive health services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Adopt and implement laws, policies, programmes and services to enhance gender sensitive, appropriate and affordable quality health care.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Reduce the maternal mortality ratio by 75%.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Develop and implement policies and programmes to address the mental, sexual and reproductive health needs of women and men; and</i></li> <li>■ <i>Ensure the provision of hygiene and sanitary facilities and nutritional needs of women, including women in prison.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Does your church have, or support local, women's wellness and reproductive rights and support programmes?</i></li> <li>■ <i>Does your church ever advocate for women's needs to be addressed by public health providers?</i></li> <li>■ <i>What is your church's position on controversial matters like abortion, sexual identity, and homosexuality? Do they protect the human rights of women and/or homosexuals?</i></li> </ul>
<b>ARTICLE 27: HIV AND AIDS</b>		
<p>This article covers prevention, treatment care and support in relation to HIV and AIDS.</p> <p>This includes access for HIV negative rape victims to Post Exposure Prophylaxis to prevent HIV infection from an HIV positive rapist.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Develop gender sensitive strategies to prevent new infections</i></li> <li>■ <i>Ensure universal access to HIV and AIDS treatment for infected women, men, boys and girls;</i></li> <li>■ <i>Develop and implement policies and programmes to ensure the appropriate recognition, of the work carried out by care givers, the majority of whom are women; the allocation of resources and psychological support for care-givers as well as promote the involvement of men in the care and support of People Living with Aids.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Is HIV ever talked about in sermons? What is usually the main message?</i></li> <li>■ <i>Does your church have any practical HIV programmes? Do people living with HIV lead it?</i></li> <li>■ <i>How does your church work with youth? Does it promote or ban condoms? Does it understand where youth are at?</i></li> </ul>

Main provisions of the SADC Protocol	Specific targets to be achieved by 2015	Aspects of Churches and their ministries that relate to these targets
<b>ARTICLE 28: PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION</b>		
<p>This provides for the equal representation of women in conflict resolution and peace building processes as well as the integration of a gender perspective in the resolution of conflict in the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Put in place measures to ensure that women have equal representation and participation in key decision-making positions in conflict resolution and peace building processes, in accordance with UN Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>If there is conflict in your country – how are women affected by conflict, and how do you involve women in conflict resolution?</i></li> <li>■ <i>Is there conflict between women in your congregation? Why do you think this is? Does your church help them to resolve it?</i></li> </ul>
<b>ARTICLES 29 - 31: MEDIA, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION</b>		
<p>This article provides for gender to be mainstreamed in all information, communication and media policies and laws. It calls for women's equal representation in all areas and at all levels of media work and for women and men to be given equal voice through the media. The Protocol calls for increasing programmes for, by and about women and the challenging of gender stereotypes in the media.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Take measures to promote the equal representation of women in ownership of, and decision-making structures of the media, in accordance with Article 12.1 that provides for equal representation of women in decision-making positions by 2015.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Does your church use inclusive language for God's people (e.g. in sermons, pew leaflets, liturgies, hymns)? Do you have any example of a rewritten gender neutral hymn? It could be quite powerful placed alongside the original sexist one – if you can find a place for it? A Time to talk maybe?</i></li> <li>■ <i>Do your preachers ever use images of God that women can relate to (e.g. Some of Jesus' parables using more feminine images (See Tool 3)?</i></li> </ul>
<b>ARTICLES 32 - 36: IMPLEMENTATION</b>		
<p>These articles make provision for gender sensitive budgets and resource allocation; oversight of the Protocol by a Committee of Gender Ministers; development of national action plans based on the Protocol; and the collection of baseline data for monitoring and evaluation. The Protocol requires that Member states submit comprehensive reports to the Secretariat every two years indicating progress achieved in the implementation of the provisions.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Do those ministries catering for women's needs get the same budgets as others?</i></li> <li>■ <i>If you have a church gender ministry / desk</i></li> <li>■ <i>* Does it have enough budget to do its work?</i></li> <li>■ <i>*Is there someone to coordinate it?</i></li> <li>■ <i>*Is its work backed by the senior leaders in your church, so it is taken seriously?</i></li> </ul>

## What gains have been made through these international human and gender rights instruments, and what still needs to be done?<sup>25</sup>

The 2014 SADC Protocol Barometer report shows much progress has been made politically. All but 2 countries have signed the Protocol, and most have developed laws to better protect the rights of women. But still, women are subjected to extreme forms of discrimination in practice:

- Social - many women are denied their human dignity and remain in subordinate positions in their homes and their families. For example in some cultures, when a woman is widowed, she falls under the guardianship of her son whether or not he is a minor, or is forced to marry her husband's brother.
- Economic - women have also been denied the right of equality and men continue to earn more than women for the same work done. Also in many countries women cannot gain access to work which has been identified exclusively for men.<sup>26</sup> With lower earning capacities as well as the lack of contractual capacity, women are also unable to access funding, and their rights to property severely curtailed on the basis of culture and tradition. Women also conduct a lot of unpaid care work in the home.
- Political – in many countries women have been and still are denied the right to vote for or to participate in political processes that govern their lives.
- Religion – there can be no doubt that religious beliefs and precepts have been a major contributing factor and the foundation on which discrimination against women is founded.

Despite these negatives, it is encouraging that the international response has largely been positive at the highest levels of Government. This shows that things are changing, so we can celebrate that the efforts of women and activists through the centuries have begun to bear fruit.

It is now up to us as ordinary church members and leaders to translate these freedoms by drawing alongside and supporting the struggles of even the poorest and most marginalised women in our churches and communities to be protected and affirmed, and to be allowed to contribute meaningfully in church and society.



Evidence within the church shows that barriers are coming down as more women take up senior leadership positions, though we have yet to see a female archbishop. Bishop of Edmonton, Jane Alexander with the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu  
Source: [www.anglican.org](http://www.anglican.org)

<sup>25</sup>Taken from a presentation made by Dr Karen Stefiszyn to a gathering of South African churches to review progress made since the 2007 Churches' gender audits, in April 2011.

<sup>26</sup>In South Africa, this situation has changed since 1996 and in August 2007, 21 year old, Phetego Molawa, became the first Black South African Woman Pilot. (Website BBC News 16 Aug 2007) Web 28 May 2008.

One way to begin is to work through the right-hand column of the above table, and honestly ask ourselves and our leadership the questions provided. The next step is to decide what our church, and we as its members, still need to change in order to ensure all of our members, and the people we serve in our communities, enjoy the human rights that are recognised worldwide as basic to all our dignity as created in the image of God.

## **Attachment: Overview of the international human and gender rights declarations and protocols**

### **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

In its own words:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)<sup>27</sup> launched by the United Nations in 1948, is 'a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member states themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.' (Preamble)

This Declaration is not a law but is a kind of Gold Standard that guides national Constitutions and other laws in order to guarantee certain rights and freedoms as well as protection by the State. It has also led historically to a number of Covenants and Treaties between the countries in the United Nations, around civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. None of these are tied to specific targets, nor is compliance monitored. But they have led to a number of Conventions and Protocols that are tied to specific targets and commitments, which are monitored. One such agreement that became well known is the one committing signatory nations to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 though shortly this document will be reviewed by 2016.

### **International and regional gender instruments**

There are four examples of major international and regional gender instruments provided here. There are others that relate to different issues such as Human trafficking, gender based violence and HIV and AIDS (with huge gender implications) among others.

---

<sup>27</sup><http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

## **CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

CEDAW defined the violation of others on the basis of gender as:

*“...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women ... of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field [irrespective of their marital status, and on a basis of equality of men and women]<sup>28</sup>.”*

CEDAW did not make mention gender based violence, and so on 20 December 1993, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was adopted by the General Assembly of the UN, making this the first international human rights instrument aimed exclusively at violence against women.

According to the CEDAW document Article 5(a), all State Parties have taken appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of the behaviour of men and women, in order to eliminate prejudices and practices which are grounded in the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.

### **The African Protocol – Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s rights, on the Rights of Women in Africa**

The African Protocol on Women’s Rights translated the CEDAW Convention into specific commitments and time frames for African countries, as agreed by leaders of African countries. One of the reasons was based on the principle that the leaders recognised the crucial role of women in the preservation of African values based on the principles of equality, peace, freedom, dignity, justice, solidarity and democracy. The instrument also deals with harmful practices for example as a continent specific issue. This means all behaviour, attitudes and/or practices which negatively affect the fundamental rights of women and girls, such as their right to life, health, dignity, education and physical integrity.

### **The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development**

The instrument most for churches in Southern Africa is the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008). This is designed specifically for Southern African countries, and consists of specific commitments to be achieved by SADC countries by 2015. The principles apply even after 2015. What is important about this Protocol is that it combines key provisions from all gender specific international and continental Protocols including goal three of the MDGs on achieving gender equality into one document “almost a one stop shop”.

<sup>28</sup><http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>, slightly adapted.

### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

This was born out of a world conference convened by the United Nations to deliberate on gender injustices in 1995. One of the aims that the church can easily relate to under the mission statement is to remove all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace<sup>29</sup>.

### **Millennium Development Goal number 3 – Promote gender equality and empower women**

The MDGs (2000) are special in that they set the pace in setting specific targets and a timeline, 2015 for Member States to aspire for. In order to achieve this, governments especially from the Western countries, to set aside funds to work towards achieving this goal such as the MDG 3 Fund set up by the Netherlands government. Much of the donor money set up under this fund has also supported many faith based organisations who are working on gender for example.

## **Notes**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*Please send your feedback for this tool to  
gendersa@nca.no or consultancy@pacsa.org.za*

<sup>29</sup> United Nations: last accessed 20 July 2014



# Tool 6: How are churches responding to gender in church and society? <sup>30</sup>



---

***“There are some within the Church who deal with the gender issue as a matter of charity – some kindness which the church must show women. I believe that the Church must deal with the gender issue because it is fundamental to our calling as the Church which liberates and sets free....”***

Rev. Bongani Blessing Finca<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup>More details on the information in this and the next tool as a combined detailed report is available from NCA [www.kirkensnodhjelp.no](http://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no) and PACSA [www.pacsa.org.za](http://www.pacsa.org.za). It offers examples of some of the initiatives and includes more stories of change.

<sup>31</sup>From a speech delivered at the Decade conference, 1994 (*Women in God's Image*, PACSA, December 1998).

## Tool 6 contents

Background and introduction .....	92
Do your own audit research .....	93
Church governance and leadership .....	93
What has remained the same?.....	93
What has changed?.....	94
What still needs to be done? .....	94
Churches engage with gender equity.....	97
What has remained the same?.....	97
What has changed?.....	98
What still needs to be done? .....	98
Churches respond to gender in the home and society .....	99
What has remained the same?.....	99
What has changed?.....	100
What still needs to be done? .....	101
Thorny ethical issues related to sexuality and reproductive choices .....	103
What has stayed the same, and what has changed? .....	103
What still needs to be done? .....	103
Struggles and sticking points .....	105
Conclusion .....	106

## Background and introduction

In 2007-8, **gender audit studies** were done in selected churches in three Southern African countries – Malawi, South Africa and Zambia. Gender audits were done amongst churches and a number of faith based organisations (FBOs) in Lesotho and Zimbabwe in 2012<sup>32</sup>.

The audit **aimed** to get a better understanding of how far churches had progressed in achieving gender equality and use the information to talk about what further work can be done.

In 2013, a **follow-up study** was done in all five countries, to learn from members of churches about the extent to which their ideas about women, men and the gender had begun to change,

<sup>32</sup>The churches surveyed were:

- Malawi: Roman Catholic; Anglican; Baptist; CCAP Presbyterian; Living Waters.
- Zambia: Roman Catholic; Anglican; Kabwata Baptist; New Apostolic; Bread of Life; Jehovah's Witnesses.
- South Africa: Roman Catholic; Anglican; Methodist; Evangelical Lutheran; Uniting Reformed.
- Lesotho: The Anglican Church of Lesotho, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Lesotho Evangelical Church, Methodist Church of Southern Africa and the Roman Catholic Church. The Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL) also included the Student Christian Movement and itself (CCL).
- Zimbabwe: CCAP, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Zimbabwe, Anglican Diocese of Central Zimbabwe, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, Presbyterian Church of Africa.

A second audit study was done in Zambia in 2008, as the churches in Zambia had felt that the 2007 audit was not truly representative of the church landscape in Zambia at the time.

### What is a gender audit?

It is a participatory process that involves leadership, staff and members in reviewing their organisation with a gender lens. It looks at whether the needs, views and gifts of both men and women are being integrated fairly into all aspects of:

- the work of an organisation and
- its organisational structures and culture.

and to try to find out what sorts of things help to bring about positive change in churches<sup>33</sup>. The **purpose** of this was to learn from their journeys and relate them to what is happening in our own churches.

This tool sums up the main ways in which the churches and FBOs in the five countries have changed how they do things, how they talk about gender related subjects, and what sorts of activities they have introduced to work towards greater equality between men and women in their churches and in society.

It also sums up changes in the ways they are speaking into wider social issues that relate to gender, such as gender based violence, sexuality, HIV and contraception and leadership.

### Do your own audit research

This tool includes some questions to help you reflect on what happens in your own church or faith based organisation (FBO). You can use these questions to do a similar gender audit in your own church, and then use it to advocate for gender transformation in your church or FBO.

### Church governance and leadership

Overall, in 2013 more churches are debating the question of increasing the numbers of women in leadership positions than in 2007.

### What has remained the same?

- Most church pews continue to be filled by women.
- Women's organisations mostly do the service and healing tasks and men's organisations perform most or all senior leadership roles and take responsibility for spiritual authority.
- Women's and men's organisations do not work together to tackle social issues like gender based violence.

*"In our church women are involved – they clean the church, do the food, arrange the flowers and teach the children. Sometimes a woman will do a reading or say the prayers. But mostly those jobs are done by men. Women are allowed to sit on the committees but often they are very silent in the meetings."*

Busi

<sup>33</sup> The full report and the report on Zambia's journey specifically are both available from NCA [www.kirkensnodhjelp.no](http://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no) and PACSA [www.pacsa.org.za](http://www.pacsa.org.za).

- There are few women in senior minister positions in the clergy hierarchy, and very few women study theology.

## What has changed?

- In most churches in all five countries there are lobby groups advocating for greater women's participation in church leadership and/or ordination.
- More churches have begun to ordain women as clergy, and more women have been allowed into theological training.
- Some men's and women's organisations have started to tackle difficult subjects like gender based violence.
- Some women's organisations have begun women's economic empowerment and skills training projects.
- Some churches apply equal conditions of service to both men and women staff and clergy.

## What still needs to be done?

- Men's and women's organisations need to support each other's work more and share responsibilities.
- Men's and women's organisations should move away from making general statements against gender based Violence (GBV). They need to organise joint GBV activities, challenge the norms that create fertile ground for GBV, directly address abusers and create safe spaces for victims.
- Churches need to help women stop stigmatising themselves and each other, and encourage more women to stand for leadership positions. But they need to be better supported to grow into those positions.
- Clergy conditions of service need to be the same, and clergy need to be positioned on merit and not on gender.
- Many women pastors and priests feel unsupported, lonely or undermined. Senior church

*"Our denomination, Brethren in Christ, is a member of both the Council of Churches in Zambia and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia. Our church has made a big change from the time we started talking about gender and how to empower women. We have seen a lot more women taking up key leadership roles in the church; we have women pastoring congregations and others studying in various theological colleges and schools. So far, the whole process is moving on well, though we still face some challenges, because some people have not yet accepted such a change, but we thank God for the positive changes that are taking place."*

Pastor Isaac Soko

*"A few years ago when I worked as a pastoral assistant, I realised that the more I wanted to be creative, the more I was reminded of behaviour rules for women. The restrictions became so oppressive that I had to resign....I still believe that God wants me to serve as a woman in my own right and not under someone else's shadow."*

Phumzile Zondi  
*Women in God's Image*  
Journal, PACSA, Dec 1998

leaders need to educate their members to accept ordained women and support them to develop their unique ministries.

- Theological institutions need to introduce gender training across the board, as has been done in Zambia. They should not tolerate discrimination against women in the same way they do not tolerate racial discrimination.



## Time to talk

### What happens in your own church?

#### Men's and women's organisations

- What roles do the women in your church play; and the men?
- Do you have a women's organisation? What is its vision and role?
- Do you have a men's organisation? What is its vision and role?
- Do the men's and women's organisations ever work together? What issues do they work with?
- How could the women's and men's organisations be helped to see their roles and develop their respective ministries differently?

#### Leadership in practice

Examine how many men and women are active in different leadership structures in your church, and what roles they play. Are any women in senior leadership, and how do they use the power of their positions?

Think about the last church meeting you attended:

- Who spoke and who made the decisions? Who was silent? Why?

Read the following two stories, and talk about them using the questions that follow:

### Support for pastors' wives

*"Being at the monthly meeting of pastors' wives enables us to release pressure and talk about our lives. We have good friends there, because you cannot really talk to the women in the church honestly, because you are the priest's wife. The presence of*

*three gogos (grandmothers) is particularly valuable, including Rosemarie, who is a Bishop's widow, because they have been through a lot and we really lean on them. We pour out our hearts at these meetings, read Scripture and pray. The support group has been meeting monthly for 15 years, and we have built really strong friendships and support. I often feel very alone and cannot share my own problems with other women in the church – but this has built my character.” Ruth Nwaou, Clergy wife in Zambia*



Anglican women priests at the 20th anniversary of the ordination of women priests.  
Source: [www.anglicanchurchsa.org](http://www.anglicanchurchsa.org)

### Support for pastors' husbands

*“I remember the most special year in my life – as a pastor in a parish in Southern Germany. My husband...stayed at home and cared lovingly for our 3 children. I felt elated. Having it all. A deeply fulfilling job, thankful parishioners, happy children and every evening the pleasure of joining the family at the dinner table. ...*

*My husband's experience was diametrically different to mine.... He has no romantic memories of that time. Of course, my husband understood that my erratic absence was the nature of the work and beyond my control. But he became increasingly depressed and resentful.... When we returned to South Africa I had to ask my Church to release me from congregational ministry.”*

**Renate Cochrane**, *Women in God's Image*, PACSA, December 1998

- How are these two stories similar? How are they different?
- How were the difficulties of being a pastor's spouse dealt with in each situation?
- Do you know any women pastors and men pastors? What are their home and work situations like?

- How would you feel if you were a woman, or a man, in this position?
- What do you think church leaders need to do to ensure adequate support for both pastors and their wives/spouses? What would be the benefit to the church?

## Churches engage with gender equity

Overall, more churches are talking about gender and accepting the need to change. They are being influenced by their governments to talk about gender, but they mostly do not speak up publicly to declare gender injustice a sin, or admit their own involvement in undermining women. Two exciting exceptions are Zambia and Lesotho.

In Zambia, all three national Church Mother Bodies (the Council of Churches in Zambia, Zambian Episcopal Conference and Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia) declared in a joint **public statement in 2009** that gender injustice is a sin and that the Church has not been just in its treatment of women and men. This Declaration also committed all their members to work together to bring about real change in their churches and in wider society. Each Mother Body also has a practical Programme of Action. They have also developed a joint Training Curriculum that is used in workshops and formal theological training across the country and in all denominations.

The church Mother Bodies in Lesotho have gone further by participating in a wider interreligious gender Declaration, in 2011. This is similar to the Zambian one, but there is no clear evidence of how this has been taken further into any kind of plans of action.

## What has remained the same?

- Most churches still understand gender to be about women's issues only. This can make the men feel excluded, or can make gender justice seem a side issue.
- Very few churches have gender policies or gender structures and personnel, or enough funds to do the work effectively.
- Very few church leaders challenge social and cultural practices that undermine or disadvantage women.
- Religious experience and language is centred mostly around men's experiences and is taught mostly by men, although a few churches, mostly in South Africa, have begun using more inclusive language for God's people.

## What has changed?

- More churches and church Mother Bodies have developed gender policies, or are busy developing them. More churches are talking about the need for gender justice, and many are having debates about things like leadership and gender based violence.
- Language and religious experience – more churches have become sensitive about the use of the male nouns and pronouns (e.g. *He, man, sons of God*) as the norm, but very few are questioning the fact that God is assumed to be male. However, some South African churches have set up committees to revise the liturgies or language of worship to include women into the people of God and re-look at words used to describe God.

*“One woman recently came to me about her decision to leave her husband and children and walk out because she would be better off without her husband. My husband and I supported this decision because the husband had not changed his behaviour despite attempts to persuade him. It meant that we lost out on his tithe money, but we could not stand by and watch.”* Ruth Nwaou, Clergy wife, Anglican Church in Zambia

## What still needs to be done?

- Churches need to allocate staff and funding to take forward the gender justice work. Senior leaders need to support the staff, so it is taken seriously by members.
- Churches need to talk about how gender transformation will benefit both men and women. (Resources are available from EHAIA and PACSA.)
- Churches need to have the courage to question deep-seated beliefs that are leading to the suffering of both women and men in the church and badly affecting marriages and relationships. Given that churches are filled mostly with women, it does not make sense that churches give power, authority and privilege to the few men who attend.
- More churches need to grapple with the language used to describe and address God, so that all their members can relate to God freely.

### What happens in your own church?

### How deeply is gender embedded?

#### Policies and Statutes:

- Does your church have a gender policy? Does it have a gender committee or group?
- Is gender ever discussed in relation to practice and preaching?
- How much money is allocated to gender work in your church? Is it enough?
- How could you begin to introduce discussions about gender and develop a gender policy?

**Teachings and Language:**

Next time you attend a service, take note of the Scripture texts that are read, and how they are interpreted in the sermon.

- What was the theme of the text?
- How was God's image interpreted in the reading, and did the language include men and women?
- Who were the active people in the text? Did the women in the stories have names? And the men?
- Were women's experiences reflected in the Scripture or in the sermon?

**Churches respond to gender in the home and society**

While women's status in marriage has not improved overall, and domestic abuse seems to be as strong as ever, there have been some exciting initiatives in relation to speaking out about GBV and developing a more inclusive and supportive approach to HIV.

**What has remained the same?**

Many women continue to experience marriage as oppressive:

- Most churches have a theology of marriage which supports the wellbeing of both partners, as well as the purpose of procreation. However, many married women do not experience wellbeing but abuse. Men continue to be regarded as household heads regardless of their behaviour, and women are expected to be obedient and remain in abusive partnerships, sometimes because they are financially dependent.

**Gender Based Violence (GBV)**

- All churches seem to be concerned about the gender-based violence in society in general.
- Most churches see the problem as outside in society and not within the church, and most do not help individuals deal with abusive relationships.



Male and female Bishops and clergy in the Diocese of Cape Town signing a pledge to fight GBV in their churches and society

*Source: Rev Cheryl Bird*

## HIV and AIDS

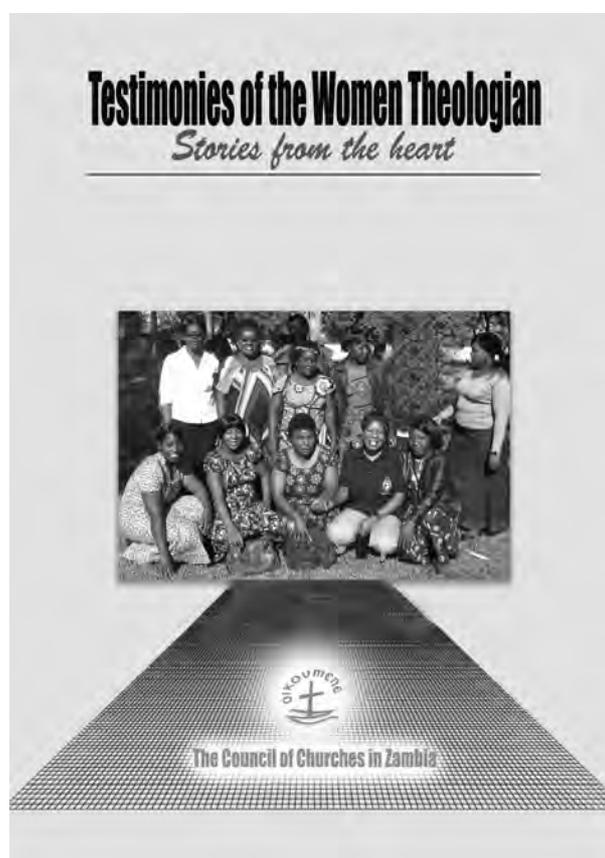
- Most churches have developed policies and structures in response to HIV and AIDS, and many talk about HIV in a way that counters stigma.
- But most do not make the connections between gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS.

## Children and youth

Some churches do now have specific programmes on HIV for children and youth, whereas others don't.

## What has changed?

- The silence about gender based violence has been broken. Many churches and ecumenical organisations speak out against it publicly through statements or pastoral letters, participate in demonstrations, run workshops on it or have policies against it. Others have programmes for victims, like safe houses or counselling.
- Some Mother Bodies and churches are taking time to listen to young people when developing programmes for youth around HIV and AIDS.
- Some churches are seeing the links between GBV and other social problems.
- Both informally and formally, some church leaders have taken a tougher line in domestic violence cases, disciplining perpetrators and even reporting cases to police.
- There is evidence of some steps to prevent gender based violence by promoting healthy relationships and families. Some churches encourage families to sit together rather than men and women sitting separately, to emphasise the importance of families worshipping together. Others openly encourage husbands to share household chores.
- The ecumenical structure in Zimbabwe offers conflict response training to clergy, with a strong emphasis on gender based violence and domestic violence.
- Many churches now have coordinated HIV programmes. A few even make the links between GBV and HIV and Aids.



Source: Council of Churches in Zambia

## What still needs to be done?

- GBV actions need to not just focus on the wider society, but also focus inside the church and how the imbalance of power between men and women becomes fertile ground for abuse.
- Public statements on GBV need to hit home, and clergy need to have the courage to confront abusers, even if it means risking losing their tithe contributions.
- Churches need to open up spaces for victims of domestic violence to ask for help, because women find it hard to go against cultural norms that expect them to be silent.
- More economic empowerment programmes for women are needed.
- There is a need for more church leaders to listen to the specific problems of youth in relation to gender.
- Church HIV programmes need to make the links between HIV and AIDS, vulnerability of women and gender based violence if they are to have real impact.



### Time to talk

Read the stories below. Talk about some that interest you.

- How you would respond in each case?
- How would others in your church respond?

*“The church is finding it difficult to deal with divorced people. When divorced in the church you become isolated.... For example if she was involved in a certain committee while married, she would be withdrawn when she is divorced. Nobody becomes interested in choosing you because they think ‘What can you say? You failed to keep a husband.’” Sarah*

*“When I was pregnant I did an HIV test. I told my husband my status and he beat me badly. My mother called the pastor. When he came, he scolded me for being unfaithful and not supporting my husband. I am not safe at home and am now staying with a friend.” Thuli*

*“When someone is dying, church people come in large numbers. But while we are alive, when we really need them, where are they?” Zandile*

*"Men, especially men who have been displaced from their families, often go to church looking for family. But what do they get if they are HIV+ or if they have multiple sexual partners? Judgement. And a sense that they don't belong there."*

Ayanda

*"To avoid conflict and going late to church, I help in bathing my two young children, iron my wife's clothes and my children's. I don't leave these things to be done by my wife. This has really helped us as a couple and family to live in peace. However, I do these things because I love and care for her. She is my closest friend, helpmate and suitable partner."* Pastor Isaac Tembo, Lusaka, Zambia

*"I recently met a nurse who told me she was a pastor's wife. She also told me that she was studying towards a degree in Adult Literacy at the University of Zambia, as she wanted to be of better service to her husband in his ministry. I was surprised, because in my experience men often don't encourage their partners to improve their education levels. Her husband refers women from their church and community to her for help, and appreciates the contributions she is able to make to the ministry of the church."* Jacqueline Mithee-Kabalo, Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia.

*"Young men are very angry. They think life is about fighting, competition, money. Thank God for last month's church youth camp. Youth that have been sexually abused told their stories. Each time they want to tell their families, they are blamed. There is one girl whose family just didn't hear her and supported the uncle who was abusing her. If you are a youth and a lady, you are the one who is wrong."* Justina Zulu, Council of Churches in Zambia

- What are your own experiences? Share them with a supportive group or person that you can trust.
- Do you know of any other positive stories of the church responding to a gender-related situation? Share it. What was the outcome of this for the people involved and your church?

### **What happens in your own church?**

#### **Marriage, Gender Based Violence, Children and Youth**

- Listen carefully to sermons and other teachings in your church about marriage, divorce, relationships, youth and the family. How are Bible texts used, and what advice is given to men and women?

- How do your church leaders relate to the youth? Do you think young people feel able to speak to their elders?
- When your church speaks out about gender based violence, listen carefully to what is said. Is the focus on society only, or also the church itself? Are people encouraged to talk to each other about GBV?
- Are there any church programmes on gender and / or HIV? Is there any support from your church for women and girls, or men and boys, experiencing gender-based violence, living with HIV? How do leaders and members in your church talk about HIV and AIDS? Is the tone about punishment and judgement, or is there a more loving approach that offers support?

## Thorny ethical issues related to sexuality and reproductive choices

There has been a greater openness to talking about HIV and embracing those infected. But some other issues related to sex and sexuality still seem to be difficult and controversial. These are condom use, contraception, abortion, teenage pregnancy, and sexual identity and orientation.

### What has stayed the same, and what has changed?

**Contraception:** In many churches, reproductive choices in rural churches are still made by men. But only the Catholic Church legislates on these matters. Churches remain divided on condoms, though some encourage their use by couples.

**Abortion:** In 4 of the 5 countries, all the churches consider abortion to be sinful, without considering the circumstances that may lead women to consider this as an option in the first place. Some South African churches are more liberal, but most churches hold strong views that abortion is taking a life.

**Teenage pregnancy:** This is still not accepted. Girls are punished for it by churches, but mostly the fathers are not. Some churches offer programmes for young mothers.

**Sexual Identity and Orientation:** This is perhaps the most difficult issue for churches. Most consider homosexuality a sin and only a few have begun to grapple with the questions being asked by wider society. The only churches that have begun to do this are in South Africa.

### What still needs to be done?

- Churches need to give more time to grapple with these thorny questions. They will not go away if they are ignored. Church members are part of the wider society and are influenced by the conversations taking place outside the church.
- Some people, especially youth, feel excluded because they are not being listened to by church leaders, and end up just leaving the church.

- If churches want to help children and young people think more deeply about sex and sexuality in their lives, they need to be prepared to talk about sex. This may best be done under guidance from a professional, and with support from parents.



## Time to talk

### Sexual orientation<sup>34</sup>

*(Read through Footnote 34 before you answer this question.)*

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu is a strong supporter of a United Nations' campaign calling for compassion for and understanding of homosexuality as fundamental to the true message of the Gospel of Love, saying he would rather go to hell than to a homophobic heaven. He said in a speech:

"I would not worship a God who is homophobic and that is how deeply I feel about this."

- What do you think he is trying to say?
- Do you agree with his point of view?
- Based on what characteristics of God do you think he is basing his argument?
- What do you believe Jesus would say to homosexuals if he were alive today? On what do you base your opinion?

### What happens in your own church?

- Find out what your church leaders, and what the ordinary women and men in your church think about:
  - Abortion
  - Using condoms to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS

<sup>34</sup>We said in the last Tool that sex is defined biologically and gender is defined by social beliefs.

Most often, people have been grouped as either male or female. But not everyone identifies themselves as either male or female. Scientific research shows that:

- About 10% of any population of most animal species, may have male and female organs or hormones. The term for this is *intersex*.
- Some people live in a body that they do not really feel comfortable in. E.g. someone may look like a man but inside, feel more like they should be a woman. This is called *transgender*.

Some people are happy in their bodies as male or female, but they are not attracted to the opposite sex (heterosexual). Instead, they are attracted to the same sex. This is called *homosexual*.

Many people believe this is a sinful choice, but others believe that people are born like this and cannot change.

- Who makes decisions about sex and contraception in their relationship, and do both partners have control over their own bodies and decisions to keep them healthy.
- How do you think it would be different if women were involved in making decisions about things that directly affect their bodies?
- What is the official position on homosexuality in your church? Do you know any homosexual people? If yes, do you know how they feel about the way the church relates to them?

Read what the women below have said.

*"Some priests forbid unmarried mothers from receiving communion or having their children baptised, and sometimes the grandmother was also punished in this way."* Julie

*"The church demands I buy floor polish and pray. The way of the cross to atone for my sin of pregnancy."* Alice

- How are unmarried mothers treated in your church?
- And unmarried fathers?
- How do you think the church should deal with teenage pregnancies?

## Struggles and sticking points

This section sums up some of the difficulties of gender transformation in churches, and highlights some of the sticking points along the way.

Sometimes women are their own worst enemies. Many women struggle with self-confidence and lack confidence in other women. They were raised to believe that men are natural leaders, and that it is their God-given duty to support and obey their partners. They also find it hard to accept new ways of doing things, because change is challenging.



Women often do not know who turn to  
Source: *Wikimedia creative commons*

On the other hand, most churches still do not offer spaces for men to talk through their concerns about gender transformation, or share with each other about their own life struggles. These spaces are vital if the struggle for gender justice is to be fought by women and men together rather than against each other.

A number of churches claim there is not enough money to concentrate on gender issues in their church, and yet there is money for other things. There are many activities that don't cost very much, like talking in a

sermon about changing the way we talk and treat each other, or ensuring that women are nominated for election into positions of leadership and supporting them to develop as leaders. Gender justice is about a mindset, not about lots of projects. It is about earnestly listening for the movements of the Holy Spirit, considering what will be best for everyone in the church, and not just one group, and how best God will be glorified.

Many gender justice subjects are talked about in churches now, such as leadership of women, ordination and gender based violence. But many of the crucial issues in society as described above are not talked about in many churches. Until they are, the church cannot move forward on them.

The audit research has shown that the process of raising issues and drawing everyone in to conversations about them takes time. It takes even more time for people to begin to change their mindsets and to begin to do things differently.

## Conclusion

This tool outlines the main findings of the 2013 research. The next tool sums up the main lessons that have been learnt in the process, which are designed to help you develop a gender audit study in your own church or amongst your member churches.

You will find some guidelines on how to design your own gender audit in Practical Toolkit 1. These are based on the questions set in the above sections headed "What happens in your own church?"



aafcap\_bg\_BW. Source: Source: Wikimedia creative commons

## Notes

---

---

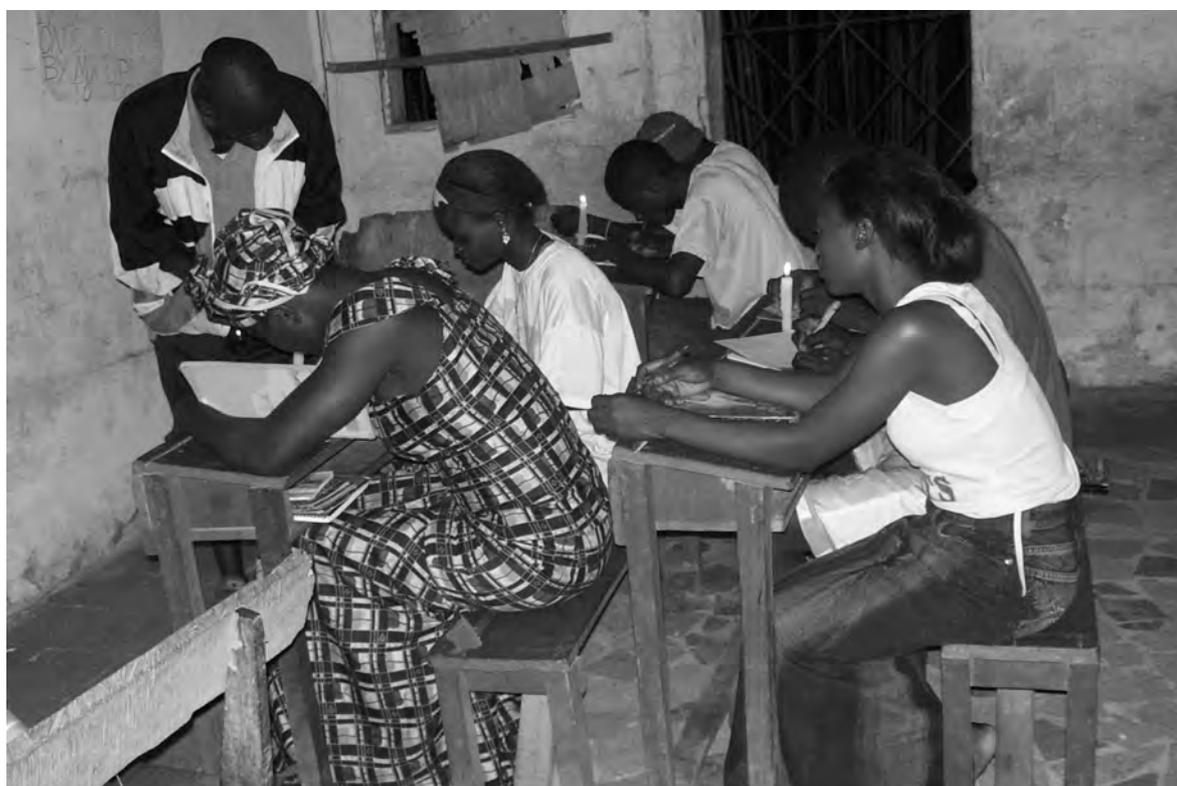
---

---

*Please send your feedback for this tool to [gendersa@nca.no](mailto:gendersa@nca.no) or [consultancy@pacsa.org.za](mailto:consultancy@pacsa.org.za)*



## Tool 7: What can we learn from the churches' gender journeys in the five countries?



---

***“In transforming society, the important task is not to take power,  
but to reinvent power.”***

Paulo Freire<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Paulo Freire 1985. *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation*. London: Macmillan.

## Tool 7 contents

Introduction and background .....	108
Leadership, Vision and Action .....	108
Structures and systems to support the change process .....	109
Building a movement for change .....	109
Taking one step at a time.....	110
Allowing God to renew our minds .....	111
Conclusion .....	114

## Introduction and background

The 2007/8 and 2012 baseline audits that were done in South Africa, Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho and Zimbabwe showed us that women were playing a very active part in church life in all these countries. It also showed that sometimes women felt that they did not have an equal role to play in the church. They felt frustrated when issues that were important to them did not seem important to the people (who were mostly men) who made decisions in their church.

Although many changes are happening in our churches, it is important for men and women to think about how to make the church a place where all people are equal in the eyes of each other, as well as in the eyes of God.

The 2013 research findings presented in Tool 6 identified the following **conditions for good progress** in the churches' journeys towards achieving gender justice.

These are useful pointers to help think through how best to improve gender justice in and amongst our churches in any country.

Often there are only a few people in a church community who think about gender, but many who agree that things are not right between men and women. This tool should help with ideas on how best to include others in understanding, challenging and changing the way that we work together as men and women in the Church.

## Leadership, Vision and Action

Processes that bring about improved gender justice need to be **led from the top**. This helps to persuade people that this is important and valuable work to do, and that their church as a whole is committed to positive change.

These leaders also need to offer a **clear vision** of what needs to change, why and how they need to change, best written up in a clear **policy** or **public statement** - so people stay focused and do not end up arguing about the same old things over and over.

This **vision** has to make it clear that the struggle for gender equality is **not about individual women and men fighting for power**. It is about **changing systems** in the church that help men and women live together in harmony without one group dominating another. This is basic to the **just world** that respects the equality and dignity of all God's people, which the church is called to struggle for.

It is important that public commitments do not remain words but translate into meaningful **actions** that really help to change the quality of life and relationships for ordinary people on the ground.

## Structures and systems to support the change process

Most successful gender justice programmes are led by a **gender coordinator**, who is supported openly by the senior leader of the church or organisation.

A Gender Desk also requires a mandate to **work closely with other ministries** to help people understand the links between gender and all other social issues. Examples of other ministries include HIV and Health, Social Justice, Empowerment, Youth, Sunday School, Marriage preparation, Environment, Counselling, etc.

MONITORING is important to make sure people don't forget to think about how women and men are affected by their church's decisions and its activities. This means **checking up** on how women and men are being treated, whether their voices are being heard equally and whether the church's activities and decisions are fair and promote harmony and life-giving relationships.

Successful gender workers are not afraid to stand up and **advocate for changes in policies and laws** if they are not just. This is because policies and laws make sure everyone abides by the changes in attitude and behaviour needed to live in just relationships where both women and men can feel free to be themselves and fulfill their potential.

## Building a movement for change

Most successful processes **include** anyone who wants to contribute positively in any way. It does not matter how small or big their action is, or whether everyone agrees with each other's specific beliefs. Of course, this does not mean that people or organisations should be dishonest, but should be clear about what they agree on and can work together around, even if they don't agree on everything.

Successful partnerships concentrate on building **trust**, so that relationships can withstand disagreements and people can still work together. This needs everyone to be open to hearing other points of view, to be patient and wait for each other, and to be humble enough to recognise everyone's contributions even if they do not fully agree with them. A faith based organisation's gender movement is likely to influence change in gender relations faster than individuals or small groups working alone.

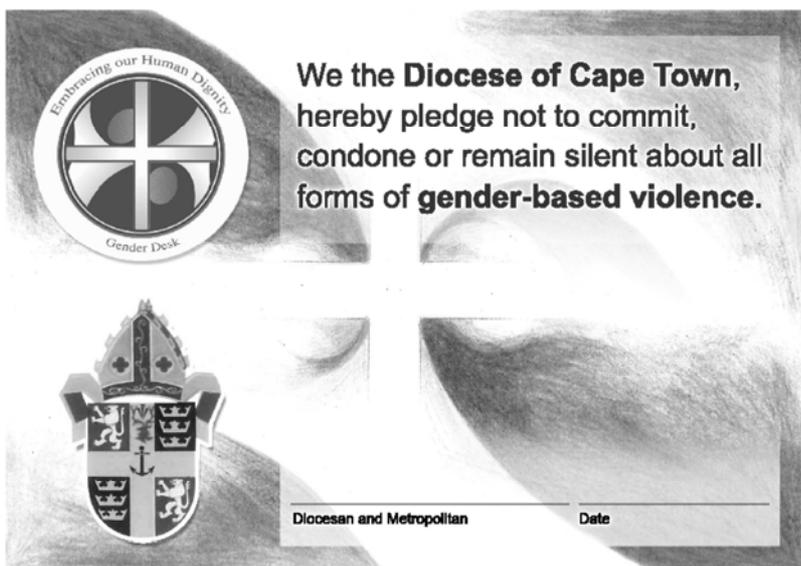
## Taking one step at a time

Most **important** is to recognise that gender transformation, like any social change, is an **ongoing process of conversion**.

This means recognising that **change begins with the personal**. It means helping people to face their personal issues and struggles, to accept that others may be at different places on their journey. It also means not pretending to believe in change without it changing the way we each live our lives. One way to make space for this is to organise groups of men and groups of women that can talk in a safe space about the issues that concern them.

It also means that we have to be organised and strategic, which involves:

- being prepared to **monitor one's own progress** instead of criticising others;
- making **practical plans** by agreeing who is to be doing what, by when, and what the results should be;
- allocating **enough people** and **money** to make sure the work can be achieved;
- making sure that **senior leadership support** the process and talk about it openly, so that people take the gender transformation process seriously, and are prepared to participate in it.



Pledge by Bishops and clergy to make their voice count in reducing gender based violence in the church and in society.  
*Source: Anglican Diocese of Cape Town*

## Allowing God to renew our minds

If possible the churches and mother bodies involved should try to **agree on a single core curriculum for training** in workshops as well as formal theological education. This makes sure that people doing the work agree on the meanings of the words used and the purpose of what they are trying to do – no matter which churches they work in. It also accepts that almost all church leaders, men and women alike, have been raised to believe social and cultural norms that denigrate the value of half of God's people, and have read the Bible through this social lens.

We need to work with our church's leaders in Christian education programmes, Baptism preparation, Confirmation, Marriage, Bible Studies, Sunday Schools, Youth Groups etc. to help them to **revise all the ministries of our churches**:

- We need to look again at the **language** we use and the **stereotypes** or harmful teachings we are simply passing on without thinking;
- And then we need to **redesign** all our programmes, little by little, based on the assumption that women and men are equal, can work best in mutual and supportive relationships, and that their sex does not pre-determine what they can and can't contribute to the church or their families.

Through this process, we can develop **a new shared language and set of assumptions about men and women** and how they relate in church and society can gradually replace any harmful beliefs, sayings and practices in their cultures and communities, and build on those that are positive.



### Time to talk

#### Case Study 1

Read the following case study shared by the Evangelical Fellowship in Zambia, and answer the questions that follow.

*“During one workshop evaluation in Lusaka we noted that, at least two participants had indicated in the evaluation form that they felt it was inappropriate for one of the female facilitators from EFZ to wear trousers in front of men of God - which she in fact had done on two occasions - and they cited this as one of the things they disliked most about the whole training. This is in spite of the fact that the said trousers were formal and roomy suits. What was even more interesting is that on a closer look at the evaluation sheets, it was clear that the two complainants were in fact women.*

*As the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia this was a learning experience and an indication that a complete change in societal mind set and attitude on gender roles was a long way to come. That despite a whole week's training and discussions around gender equality and equity, some things had not changed at all which begs the question: What would happen if a woman pastor went to conduct a service in trousers? Would anyone even give them the time of day? Does this then prove true what is widely believed that women are indeed each other's worst critics? Are men proving more receptive to the gender equity and equality message than women?*

*Another lesson learnt was that while propagating the gender equality/equity message we should as much as possible try to be non-confrontational both in speech, in the mode of dress as well as in attitude as we do not want people to miss out on the point of the gender discourse while getting distracted by petty issues like our dressing.”*

---

- What was the objection presented by some participants in the EFZ Gender training?
- What did the facilitators do with this objection? Do you agree with their reflections on what the objection might have meant?
- How will what they learnt influence their approach in the future?
  
- Have you ever been met with opposition to your gender work or opinions you have expressed about gender in your church?
- If yes - How did you understand the objections raised and what did you learn from this?
- Did it in any way shape the strategy, methodology or content you used later? Why? On reflection, did you do the right thing?
- What does this case study show you about the struggle for gender justice and transformation in your church or organisation?

## Case Study 2

The CCZ 2011 annual report offers some insight into some of the factors that influence the speed with which gender transformation is able to be achieved, despite the powerful collaborative processes at work:

*"[P]olitical, economic, social and technological dynamics are important issues which impinge on gender justice. For example [when our monitoring team met with one focal group in one of the 6 districts], it was pointed out that despite government setting up the Gender division, Chiefs and many villagers did not seem to have received the gender justice message. The rural radio reception was very poor and if anything a lot of messages ....have not addressed the economic struggles of the people. Economic empowerment in this regard has played a key role. ...[B]ecause of women not owning land and other wealth assets like cattle, this was contributing to the silence of women. The low participation of women in church and community governance has had down-up and up-down effects. The traditional perceptions on women have affected their emancipation [locally and] on the national political stage."*

- What are some of the obstacles to gender transformation mentioned by ZCC?
- How have they tried to solve them?
- What else could they do to make it more possible for the rural women to participate in the gender justice programme of CCZ?



Participants from the three Mother Bodies reviewing progress in September 2013



## Tool 8: Learning from each other: the Zambian story



---

***“Throughout the centuries, the voice of Jesus about equal value and equal respect for both women and men has been echoed by many people in the church... Sometimes they have been heard ..., sometimes they have either not been heard at all or have been silenced.”***

One Body<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup>One Body (forthcoming in 2014). *Human Dignity - Inherent in every Human Being: Towards gender equality, including young people and overcoming abuse*. <http://www.norgeskristnerad.no>

## Tool 8 contents

Where did it all start?.....	116
Milestones .....	118
What makes Zambia special?.....	120
Reasons for the success of the Zambian process .....	121
External factors that contributed to the success .....	122
Reflecting on the Journey.....	123
1. Setting a common gender justice agenda for the churches in Zambia .....	123
2. Gender conscientisation / capacity building to reduce risk of gender injustice, discrimination and violence .....	124
3: Education and inclusive spirituality. ....	125
4: Changes in leadership and governance.....	126
Summary of most important changes that have taken place.....	127
Understanding of gender .....	127
Gender policies and desks.....	127
Roles of women's and men's organisations in the Mother Bodies .....	128
Leadership and ordination.....	128
Aluta continua.....	128
Silence .....	128
Contradictions and unresolved issues.....	129
Conclusion .....	131

This tool sums up the main milestones and lessons from Zambia's remarkable gender transformation journey between 2007 and 2013. It is presented here as a good practice model, for others to learn from.

### Where did it all start?

In 2006 when Norwegian Church Aid first suggested the idea of gender audits in churches, ecumenical organisations in Zambia, Malawi and South Africa rose to the challenge.

The first Zambian audit was completed in 2007. However, the sample was not seen as representative enough, and so the Christian Council of Zambia (CCZ) undertook a second audit in 2008. The second audit presented an opportunity



Leaders of EFZ, CCZ, and the Zambia Episcopal Conference sign declaration committing member churches to working for gender justice and reducing GBV. Source: *Norwegian Church Aid* [www.kirkensnodhjelp.no](http://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no)

to directly address the concerns of its member churches. It gave the Christian Council in Zambia (CCZ) a good understanding of where its member churches stood regarding gender issues.

The recommendations from the second audit led to the adoption of an action plan in 2009.

Jesus exhorts us to “read the signs of the times” (Matthew 16:4) and act wisely. The church mother bodies in Zambia, together with NCA Zambia’s Gender Programme, read the signs of the times, and began a journey that is both inspirational and an example to the Church elsewhere in Africa.

Margaret Machila, who was NCA Zambia Programme Manager until July 2010, sums up the journey as follows:

*“What was key to our process is that as a team, we had a unity of purpose. We knew exactly what we wanted and worked towards it. We made strategic choices...While historically the time was right, which could be called ‘historical accident’, but I prefer to refer to it as “prophetic” or “divine” guidance. As one reflects back on the journey, there are clearly critical incidences that inspired us. We learnt from positive experiences. But we also learnt from what you may call ‘negatives’ and turned these around as ‘challenges’ as we looked for alternate ways of addressing various scenarios.... Oddbjorn Flem then NCA Country Representative, also created an enabling role because he allowed creativity in the process of working through partnerships.”*

In September 2013 the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA) was asked by NCA to visit Zambia and meet some of the main actors to listen to their various perspectives on the story. The impact of the gender audits is hard to quantify, and many people and other factors contributed to the milestones on this journey.

The most important outcome of the audits has been the open conversations that have taken place between church members and leaders from very different church traditions, and their visionary joint actions. Gender is now talked about quite often even among ordinary church people.

This tool tells the story in short, and tries to give a picture of how complex and difficult the journey has been.

It also draws out some lessons from the successes and struggle of the Zambian journey that might help churches and mother bodies in other countries map their own journeys.

## Milestones<sup>37 38</sup>

*"I remember the past 6 years almost as a maze of struggle and uncertainties. Being a veteran in the work, I appreciate the little gains, in the Church at a political level. This is essential – to build on the little gains."* Rev Suzanne Matale the General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Zambia

2007 – NCA study of a small sample of six national churches, commissioned by NCA South Africa in collaboration with NCA Zambia and undertaken by Women and Law in Southern Africa.

2008 – Gender audit study of 15 member churches of CCZ, commissioned by CCZ

2008-9 – Launch and presentation of the study at joint meetings of the three Mother Bodies, the Gender in Development Division (GIDD) of the Zambian Government and NCA's Gender Programme.

A Partner Representative Committee was established that developed a common position on gender for all their member churches in Zambia. It was a collaboration between Government, NGOs and churches.

2009 – Publication of a Joint Gender Document by the Church in Zambia: The Voice of the Church on Matters of Gender in Zambia: Addressing ourselves to Issues of Gender injustice and Gender Based Violence, written by the 3 main Mother Bodies in Zambia: The Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ) and the Zambian Episcopal Conference (ZEC).

The 40-page document has a biblical and theological foundation, and is based on international, regional and Zambian Human Rights and Gender rights instruments and constitutional documents, as well as on a situational analysis. It **acknowledges** that:

- *"Gender Inequality (GI) and Gender Based Violence (GBV) hinge on a violation of human rights, leading to instability in the home, community, and the nation at large"* (pg. 14)
- *"GI and GBV are widespread in Zambia, and manifest in a variety of social and cultural practices as well as economic deprivation at all levels: family, community and society at large"* (pg. 9)
- *"[I]n some cases, the Churches have been insensitive to Gender Based Violence, by either providing fertile ground for men's abuse of power within their families through some wrong interpretations of Scriptures of maintaining Structures that are insensitive to issues of gender and power imbalances"* (pg. 1)

<sup>37</sup> Details about specific steps taken internally by CCZ, ZEC and EFZ are omitted in this summary. The full report is available from PACSA (consultancy@pacsa.org.za) and NCA (gendersa@nca.no).

<sup>38</sup> It is important to acknowledge that various church bodies, including Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), had already begun conversations on Gender Based Violence, and had produced a draft booklet on GBV in 2006. However, this story begins with the 2007 NCA-funded audits, because these were done by churches in other countries then as well.

Rooted in a spirit of **repentance**, the partners **committed themselves** to:

*"promoting the attainment of gender equity and gender equality within our Church structures and the society in which we all live"* (pg. 1)

A summary of this Declaration was **signed** by the leadership of the three Mother Bodies, jointly with officials of the Zambian Government in 2009 and is displayed in the Gender Office at CCZ as a visible sign of commitment by churches in Zambia to work with the rest of society towards attaining gender justice and ending gender based violence.

2009- A multi-sectoral Gender Forum and GBV Partnership (the Citizen's Forum) was formed during this year. The Non-Governmental Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOC), a 100-member based NGO which is the umbrella body in the area of gender in Zambia, was a central actor. Rev Suzanne Matale of CCZ became its Vice Chairperson, which placed CCZ in a strategic position in the whole national gender transformation process. This Citizen Forum led the 16 Days of Activism during the year, and publicised and workshopped the Churches' Declaration in a number of forums and communities.

2010 - CCZ, EFZ distributed thousands of copies of the Declaration and gender pamphlets amongst their member churches.

2011 The publication of the Zambian Government's Institutional framework for Mainstreaming Gender in the Nation, coordinated and led by the Minister of Gender and Child Development (MGCD). This ensured that gender would be addressed and mainstreamed through a number of structures at all levels of government and civil society: Cabinet, Parliament, Gender Focal Point Persons and gender subcommittees in every line Ministry, Provincial and District Administration, and civil society partners.

2009- 11 - Joint Church Mother Bodies' development of a training curriculum for key church stakeholders (clergy, lay leaders and youth), which was launched in late 2011 and has been gradually adopted by seminaries of different churches.

2009-13 - Ongoing workshops for women, men and clergy in the churches and youth - using the basic curriculum, and a specific curriculum on GBV developed together with NCA Zambia. CCZ, EFZ and ZEC have all used the curriculum in their programmes, and some have been translated.

2010 - Formal adoption and launch of CCZ Gender Policy. EFZ Gender policy developed.

2011 - The newly elected PF-led Government created a National Ministry of Gender and Child Development to which Ms Edwidge Mutale was appointed as the first

Permanent Secretary. She was until then on the NCA staff and engaged in the gender audit process. So she was the ideal partner in Government to the churches' process.

- 2011 - 12th April. TheZambian Anti Gender Based Violence Act No.1 of 2011 came into Law.
  - Publication of stories of women theologians and clergy.
- 2011 - 12 - Joint 16 Days Campaign against violence against women and children – the 3 Mother Bodies, State, and NGO coalition: “Create peace in the home for peace in Zambia. Let’s stand together to end violence against women and children.”
- 2012 - “Women in Governance” (WIG) programme established by Zambian Episcopal Conference (ZEC).
- 2012- Formal adoption and launch of the EFZ Gender Workplace Policy and HIV Policy which includes a Child Protection Policy to ensure that the EFZ prioritises safety and life-giving relationships.
- 2012-13 - Church sector contributed to the revision of Zambian Constitution – as part of Civil Society Forum.
- 2013- CCZ embarked on a follow up gender audit of its 24 member churches to ensure that changes in the area of gender justice are monitored.
- 2013 - Ms Edwidge Mutale, who had been the church collective’s main strategic partner in the national Zambian government, was transferred to Central Province. (This poses new challenges to the church and civil society sectors to find ways to build on what has been achieved for further collaboration.)
- Sep 2013 - PACSA is commissioned by NCA to meet with the Zambian partners and capture their experiences as a Model of Good Practice.

## What makes Zambia special?

Talking about gender transformation is never easy, and in Zambia like in any country, there is still a lot of resistance. But the fact that it is being talked about, and that churches from all traditions are willing to begin to make some changes, is very exciting.

## Reasons for the success of the Zambian process

One of the most important reasons for Zambia's success is that the three Mother Bodies had a history of working together and so trusted each other to grapple with something as complex as gender. Secondly, the process was driven at the highest level of leadership amongst the three Mother Bodies, and thirdly, funding was made available for much of the groundwork (from Norwegian Church Aid).



One of the Zambian success factors has been unity of purpose.  
*Source: Council of Churches in Zambia*

The other success factors flowed from this situation:

- The vision for gender transformation as an important part of social justice and national development, meant it appealed to all stakeholders;
- Gender was defined as including women and men, and leaders from different traditions accepted that they would work in slightly different ways - so everyone felt included and that their small steps were valued; The vision was mapped out into a clear and practical implementation plan and a Declaration of shared commitment;
- The work aimed at changing policy as well as raising general awareness raising;
- The whole process was based on a joint training curriculum, which was also translated into local languages and adapted for different groups. This meant that the different church bodies had a clear shared message to communicate with their member churches. This message was built on a strong theoretical foundation that went from helping women cope better to making deeper social changes;
- Government departments, NGOs and the church mother bodies stood together and spoke with one voice, which meant more people took their message seriously;

- The process was not allowed to be held up by those who resisted it, and the leadership simply worked with those who caught the vision, which influenced others too;
- Where there was good progress monitoring, like in the EFZ programme.

Finally, those leading the process are clear that gender transformation is an ongoing journey, and so they have accepted that not everyone will go at the same pace. They have also built in progress monitoring at times, to learn from their mistakes and improve as they have been going along.

## External factors that contributed to the success

The participants at the 18th September 2013 reflective meeting on the Zambia journey agreed that perhaps a contributing factor underpinning all the others has been that culturally women have always been strong and resilient and were in the forefront of the fight for independence. Zambia is both patrilineal and matrilineal, and so women are more able to take the struggle forward with confidence.

Historically, the timing was perfect. The Zambian Government had just signed the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in 2008, and it had begun to introduce new legislation on gender based violence, which had never existed in this form before. Some key figures within the CCZ member churches took part in negotiating the instrument at national and regional level. At the same time, local government officials have supported local church activities, and have then worked well together to support victims of GBV.

There were a number of key NGOs and NGO coalitions that were engaging with Government to take up gender issues more seriously and to take up the challenge that the SADC Protocol presented. This not only ensured that the voice of the faith based sector was heard in these wider national forums, but at the same time, it brought the conversation home – and opened the way for CCZ to address these issues from a human rights and social justice perspective. A number of the churches have had longstanding involvement in social justice work, and had a clear theological basis for this. This lent a certain credibility to the gender justice discourse, and made it easier to bring it into the churches, given that church people were being exposed to it in the public space already.

Politically, Zambia is an overtly Christian country, so naturally collaboration between the government and the faith based sector is more possible – CCZ does not cooperate blindly with Government on all issues of Government, but only where government's agenda and CCZ's agenda find clear common ground, such as with respect to gender justice.

## Reflecting on the Journey

During the September 2013 follow up meeting, PACSA asked the partners to reflect on four key outcomes of their journey so far: setting a common gender justice agenda for the churches in Zambia, gender conscientisation / capacity building to reduce risk of gender injustice, discrimination and violence, education and inclusive spirituality and structural changes. These outcomes were then to be analysed in terms of the following questions:

- **What was the situation in 2007, before the first gender audit study?**
- **What is the situation in 2013?**
- **How did we get from there to here?**

### 1. Setting a common gender justice agenda for the churches in Zambia

*“Transformation has begun in earnest – before it was cosmetic. We can see real change. Numbers have been increased and leaders are engaging around gender.”*

What was the situation in 2007?	What is the situation in 2013?	How did we get there?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A history of collaboration existed and conversations were taking place possibly because the Zambian government signed the SADC Gender Protocol in 2008</li> <li>■ The Zambian government began consultations on the Gender Based Violence Bill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Joint campaigns, prayer sessions, training materials</li> <li>■ Workshops on gender, the SADC Protocol and masculinities</li> <li>■ The three Mother Bodies have recommitted themselves to the joint Gender Agenda</li> <li>■ High participation in the Gender training by both women and men</li> <li>■ The numbers of women clergy in some churches have grown radically, showing a mind shift amongst senior church leaders</li> <li>■ Churches are more open to report GBV cases and taking action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Joint Theological Declaration in 2009 precipitated by the launch of the 2008 CCZ Gender Audit</li> <li>■ 2011 Anti Gender Based Violence Act – the three Mother Bodies partnered with the Ministry of Gender and Child Development to offer training</li> <li>■ The churches made submissions on gender rights to government during the process to revise the Zambian Constitution</li> </ul>

## 2. Gender conscientisation / capacity building to reduce risk of gender injustice, discrimination and violence

What was the situation in 2007?	What is the situation in 2013?	How did we get there?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Resistance to gender transformation amongst church leadership, and women's organisations and church members.</li> <li>■ Gender' was seen as a 'women's issue'</li> <li>■ Gender – seen as a challenge to tradition and culture – a western concept and un-African</li> <li>■ Activists were sometimes too aggressive</li> <li>■ GBV was blamed on women no longer respecting their husbands because of gender equality</li> <li>■ Frequent misuse and narrow interpretation of Scriptures to support patriarchy</li> <li>■ Very little gender advocacy (only women's organisations and some NGOs)</li> <li>■ No advocacy in the church – silence on gender issues, silence and no reporting gender based violence</li> <li>■ Women were quiet and accepted the status quo</li> <li>■ No capacity building and lack of training material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Less resistance, improved understanding and a greater openness in churches to talk about gender</li> <li>■ A better understanding that it affects Zambians and is not just a Western idea</li> <li>■ Perceptions that gender is a threat to tradition/culture is still quite strong</li> <li>■ Gender is still perceived negatively by some churches, but less so (eg. some church leaders still blame the increase of GBV on women being empowered)</li> <li>■ Interpretation of Scriptures is slowly changing, though this is harder for some church traditions</li> <li>■ A lot of advocacy and openness about gender based violence in particular</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Government signed the SADC Gender Protocol, embarked on a Gender Policy and a Gender Based Violence Act, and all this opened up the conversation</li> <li>■ Creative strategies to open the conversation in churches</li> <li>■ The 2009 joint Church Gender Declaration</li> <li>■ Training materials and train-the-trainer in 2010 and shared Gender curriculum in 2011 meant there was a standardised approach for use in theological training institutions as well as informal training workshops</li> <li>■ Ongoing sensitisation in churches, grappling directly with those who were unwilling to talk about gender</li> <li>■ Inclusive language to talk about gender, so both men and women are drawn in</li> <li>■ Setting up local GBV task teams that training and lead actions locally, so gender awareness is taking root at all levels</li> </ul>

### 3: Education and inclusive spirituality.

What was the situation in 2007?	What is the situation in 2013?	How did we get there?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Catholic church reports that it has always promoted girl child education, as seen in the number of schools built over years, including the numerous primary schools which were taken away by the Government in the 1970s</li> <li>■ Pregnant teenage girls were expelled from their schools and most churches</li> <li>■ Few women attended theological education, and gender was not included in any aspect of any curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ General Education:</li> <li>■ Most churches and church schools continue to expel pregnant girls. . The Catholic church transfers them to another school</li> <li>■ There is no topic on gender in school syllabi, but the Scripture Union and Ministry of Education are working towards an agreement</li> <li>■ The teaching of Home Economics in boys' schools is slow</li> <li>■ The promotion of literacy classes has started in some churches</li> <li>■ Theological Education and Spirituality</li> <li>■ Church leaders are encouraged to allow women to go for trainings (theological and other), and some offer financial support. But it is not easy for them to be accepted</li> <li>■ Improved understanding of a definition of 'gender' from a Biblical and social perspective</li> <li>■ Some gender manuals have been translated into the vernacular</li> <li>■ Seminaries and informal sensitisation programmes in churches include activities in gender sensitisation for clergy, male and female lay leaders, couples leadership, and use of radio stations to raise gender debates and mobilise community participation in International Women's Day and 16 Days of Activism against GBV events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Government's re-entry policy, which allows girl children not to stop school because of pregnancy has forced churches to re-think their policies on pregnant teenage girls in schools and churches</li> <li>■ The 2009 Joint Declaration on Gender addresses matters of education and theological education specifically</li> <li>■ The 3 Mother Bodies address issues of theological training with their member churches</li> <li>■ The joint Gender Curriculum launched in 2011 is beginning to be used in some seminaries and is used in most informal workshops and sensitisation processes</li> </ul>

#### 4: Changes in leadership and governance

What was the situation in 2007?	What is the situation in 2013?	How did we get there?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Very few churches ordained women as pastors and priests</li> <li>■ Most senior leadership structures were either restricted to men, or no one even thought to elect women into leadership</li> <li>■ Specific Scripture texts were used to justify this</li> <li>■ Women did cooking and cleaning for the men's leadership and decision-making meetings</li> <li>■ Youth were excluded from senior leadership forums and so had no place to bring in new ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More male clergy promote women clergy and encourage the election of women to lay leadership posts</li> <li>■ EFZ reports that many churches specifically include youth in senior structures now</li> <li>■ Women have been promoted to serve Eucharist as lay leaders in the Catholic Church. However, some churches still struggle with this</li> <li>■ More women are ordained in some of the Evangelical and CCZ churches</li> <li>■ More women appointed to serve on Executive Boards of faith based bodies</li> <li>■ Increased women's participation in local gender committees</li> <li>■ Lack of funding - often gender work is absorbed into other structures, but then can be forgotten</li> <li>■ Both genders are invited to Gender workshops, to be inclusive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Structural changes have taken place in all three of the mother bodies but not in most local churches. This has served as an example to the churches, and may have influenced some to change</li> <li>■ In the mother bodies themselves, the gender desks have been changed to programmes that feed into human dignity and justice, to allow for improved gender mainstreaming</li> <li>■ All three Mother Bodies have focused on building the capacity of women to take up leadership positions in a male-dominated world, and to build further awareness of gender in their churches</li> </ul>



## Summary of most important changes that have taken place

### Understanding of gender

The joint standardised gender curriculum, which is used in both formal theological education and informal training of clergy, lay leaders and youth in the member churches by all three mother bodies, seems to have shifted the discourse in the churches. This may also have been influenced by the shift in the national discourse in Zambian society more widely.

### Gender policies and desks

CCZ has an excellent gender policy, which serves as a blueprint to govern its internal relations as well as its approach to gender in its programme work. The Catholic Archdiocese of Lusaka is in the process of preparing a gender policy. The Zambian Episcopal Conference (ZEC) has expressed a hope that ultimately, all 11 dioceses will be guided by gender policies, or a shared gender policy. At local church level in the Catholic Church, many informal gender policies have been introduced in a number of churches, and more women are members of church councils and even executive committees.

The Catholic organisation Caritas Zambia has a Gender policy for the organisation. It has also developed a discussion document on gender in the Catholic Church and its advocacy for gender justice in Zambian society.



Marching for gender justice during the signing of the Zambian Church Declaration on Gender Injustice and Gender Based Violence

Source: Norwegian Church Aid [www.kirkensnodhjelp.no](http://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no)

Some churches now have gender policies, but these were not available for study. So it is not clear how any of the Churches in Zambia have formally committed to transforming or if they have a plan of action to speak into gender justice debates in society.

### **Roles of women's and men's organisations in the Mother Bodies**

The Anglican Church in Malawi has a Gender Desk, and it works closely with the Mothers' Union to raise gender issues amongst its members.

### **Leadership and ordination**

There has been some progress in this area but there is still a long way to go. There are still churches who do not ordain women. People's attitudes to women ministers are not always positive, and they have little chance to minister in new ways. This is ironical, given that most church members are women!

Some stories from Zambian women clergy are included in Tool 9 on Leadership.

## **Aluta continua**

### **Silence**

There are still many gender issues that the church is quiet about. This seems to be because church leaders find it hard to accept the realities that people in their communities are struggling with. It is true, of course, that there are no easy answers, but there is a need for more voices to speak up and raise these issues. Sweeping them under the carpet means that the churches' ministries are limited to personal salvation and they miss the chance to serve the needs of the poor and marginalised in practical ways.

### **Abortion**

This is not debated at all in most churches, and is assumed to be a cut and dried issue. However, some churches have tried to offer support to mothers in distress to enable them to keep their babies. They thus recognise that it is not just a moral but also a pastoral matter.

### **Condoms**

There seems to be greater openness, at least for married couples where one person is HIV+. But there is still the belief that telling youth about condoms encourages them to have sex, so many youth have to go elsewhere for support.

## Sexual identities and minorities

This is not addressed at all, and where it is, all the Mother Bodies speak out against acceptance of homosexuality. CCZ says that they do not want to address this issue yet, because they worry that then churches will once again close down and refuse to address any matters related to gender.

## Gender Based Violence

This is talked about more often in churches, and churches hold community marches and make public statements condemning it. More churches seem also to be reporting that this is happening in their churches. But the sad thing is that when women are being abused, they still find it hard to tell anyone in their church, because of the cultural taboos making it hard for them to talk about it. And some people reported that they knew of men who participated in marches who continue to abuse their wives at home. So it seems to have stayed at the level of talking about GBV in general, but this talk has mostly not stopped domestic abuse or helped victims come forward.

It is not clear that this battle will ever be won without the churches being willing to go to the root cause: giving men too much power over women makes abuse more possible, and not confronting abusive cultural practices also leaves too much room for women to be abused. But it is good that GBV is covered in the joint core gender curriculum and GBV workshops.

## HIV and AIDS and gender

Good HIV programmes exist in churches, HIV and AIDS is talked about more in churches, and there is less stigma. But no one seems to be making the links between Gender based violence and HIV and AIDS, even in the core gender curriculum. This may be because Zambia's 13% HIV infection rate is not as high as in other countries. But still, if these links are not made, the battle against HIV is unlikely to be won in Zambia.

## Contradictions and unresolved issues

There is clear evidence that gender and gender based violence have become recognised as key social issues that need to be addressed across the nation, in political, civil society and religious sectors. The main strength of the process in Zambia is that the church, government and NGO sectors have been able to put aside any differences they may have about other matters, and work together as a coalition/s to address different aspects of Gender and GBV.

This offers a good practice model that is an example to other nations.

At the same time, national GBV statistics are amongst the worst in the SADC region. The SADC Gender Protocol Barometer of 2013 (pg 73, 166, 171), reports that Zambia has the lowest numbers of women in all spheres of Government. It also reports that the gender based violence

figures for 4 of the Provinces are the highest in Southern Africa.<sup>39</sup> This shows that the small gains made in shifting mindsets in Zambia are just scraping the surface, and that it is very urgent to mobilise more men and women.

As with any struggle for fundamental social change, this is a gradual process of bringing about change in social and cultural assumptions, and keeping watch that old habits and norms are continually challenged. A recent statement by Zambia's Minister of Defence brought home that there is still much work to be done. He said in public that a little bit of wife beating was acceptable, to show one's love for one's wife. In the church too, there are still many policies and doctrines that have not been transformed. The Bible continues to be misused by some people to teach gender inequality, or even pave the way for gender based violence.

Even in churches where women have been included in leadership structures or been ordained, there is still a subtle resistance in some quarters, almost as if it was a necessary evil to comply with government demands, but it is not understood as a necessary part of building the structures of the church and promoting integrated community development. One woman pastor shared:

*"I was visited recently by a group of male lay leaders, asking me how it was possible that I had performed every Sunday for the past month! I tried to explain that I had not menstruated over any weekend, but there was visible unhappiness that I might have 'defiled' the Lord's ministry!"*

This shows that attitude changes take a very long time, and the gender agenda needs to continue to be mainstreamed widely in the faith based sector.

One needs to be open and creative in challenging narrow and destructive social assumptions. One idea talked about was to re-interpret the doctrines related to Jesus redeeming blood, and to use them to challenge negative stereotyping of the shedding of women's blood.

While women are encouraged in many churches to study theology and consider ordination, being ordained also carries a stigma, particularly for young women. Many young women struggle with a sense of call to ministry, because they say they know they will never get married, because men are afraid to marry female clergy, for fear that they will not be good wives, or may undermine the authority of their husbands.

This shows that there are contradictions between the gender awareness raising work of the churches and the 'kitchen party curriculum' (the marriage advice given to young men and women), which is not yet transformed. The challenge remains how to open up spaces in the domestic realm to transform the 'kitchen curriculum'.

---

<sup>39</sup> In the four Zambian districts of Kitwe, Mansa, Kasama and Mazabuka, as many as 90% of women surveyed had experienced GBV at some point in their lives; 90% of these had experienced intimate partner violence, and 29% were raped by a stranger. *SADC Gender Protocol Barometer, 2013*. Johannesburg: Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance.



Conflicting messages also appear in the law. For example, in court a husband charged with abuse can say that he beat his wife because she provoked him, and the judge can use this to reduce his sentence. But a wife cannot use the same argument to have her sentence reduced.

Some people in the church (both men and women) dismiss the gender lobby as a group of elite women who are bent on destroying marriages. Many women stigmatise themselves as women. For example in about a radio talk show about a husband's unfaithfulness in marriage, not a single woman called in, but a number of men had many opinions about women's roles and how women should conduct themselves. One went so far as to say that the woman should not have been questioning the man, and that it was probably her attitude that was making him sleep around! No woman called in to contradict him.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ) annual reports point to specific priorities to tackle some recurring obstacles to change, which are worth adapting and adopting for local application:

- Improve capacity building for clergy and lay people to deeply explore the Scriptures in relation to gender, to go beyond superficial interpretations and draw out key gospel principles;
- Simplify and translate key gender concepts, so that they can take root in local culture and experiences;
- Continue to step up leadership training for women, and conscientisation of male leaders to step back and allow women to lead in ways that may not be the same as the men;
- Improve monitoring and evaluation, capture changes through stories and look out for unexpected signs of change.

## Conclusion

This tool has tried to sum up the main milestones in the Zambian story, and to write up the lessons that those most directly involved have learnt on the journey. There is clearly still a long way to go. There are no instant answers. But the successes cannot be over-exaggerated and need to be celebrated. Across all the churches whose members and officials who contributed their perspectives, there is clear evidence of forward movement, and the example and leadership of the 3 Mother Bodies has offered crucial leadership in all their (varied) journeys.

What makes the Zambian story unique is the willingness of many actors, from diverse doctrinal and ideological backgrounds, to work together; and the strategic approach taken by those leading the process. This has meant that the focus has been on the work itself, not on power struggles or arguments about different opinions.

Lastly, there has also been regular and honest self-reflection of the main actors, who continue to meet and monitor progress regularly (at senior and implementer levels). This has meant that they have been able to be flexible and change strategy as needed, and they have not lost focus. This all takes extraordinary leadership and vision, sacrifice and humility.



# Tool 9: Women in church leadership: co-option or transformation?<sup>41</sup>



Image courtesy Jonathan Smith / JLS Photo

---

***“Jesus said to her, Mary: ‘Go to my brothers and say to them I am ascending to my father and your father, my God and your God.’ Mary Magdelene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that he had said these things to her.”***

John 20:16-18

---

---

<sup>41</sup> This title was adopted from an article by Bishop Purity Malinga in *Women in God's Image Journal*, No 8, April 2002. PACSA Pietermaritzburg.

## Tool 9 contents

Reflection.....	134
Introduction .....	135
Women's ordination .....	137
Theological arguments .....	139
Change is challenging.....	142
Personal challenges of women ordained ministers .....	143
Social and cultural rejection of ordained women .....	144
Single women clergy.....	145
Women clergy married to clergy.....	145
Widows.....	146
Women resisting women ministers .....	147
Lay leadership .....	148
Clergy wives: the unsung ministry of service.....	149
Positive examples of journeys of change.....	150
Change in the Reformed Church in Zambia (UCZ) .....	150
Advocating for change: the need for inspiration .....	152
Women leading the way in building balanced and transformative leadership.....	154
Attachment: Women theologians in Zambia -living letter to the Church (2011) .....	159
Attachment: Joint statement by women clergy to the Provincial Standing Committee of the Anglican Church of the Province of Southern Africa .....	161

## Reflection

*"I grew up in the church from childhood and my experience has been that fathers and young men have an upper seat in the church. Men were handling the affairs of the church. They were the ones taking decisions on everything taking place, on behalf of everybody. This was like a norm for the church; no one would dare to question anything. They would preach, collect offerings, read announcements and give directions to people where to sit. I used to wish I was one of them. Women sat on one side and men on the other side. All this made me feel like the pulpit was for men only. I could not bear it any longer. I decided to leave that church as I felt there was no space for women. Now I am in a different church. I see many women in leadership positions. I feel like I have arrived where I longed to be and I feel counted in God's kingdom."* Thandi

- How does this story make you feel?
- Who handles the affairs and makes the decisions in your church?
- What would make you feel “counted in God’s kingdom”?
- Did the writer make the right decision to leave her church? What could she have done instead?

## Introduction



Bishop of Swaziland, Ellinah Wamukoya, is one of two women bishops in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. Here she is administering sacraments with Archbishop Thabo Makgoba at a Women's Day service, 2013. *Source: PACSA*

As one looks back over the years since the 1970s in South Africa, and more recently in other countries in Africa, it would seem that the Holy Spirit has been moving within the church for some time, opening up conversations about women in leadership and laying a call upon the hearts of many women to take up the challenge of ordination.

These findings came out of the 2013 follow-up study by NCA of the 2007-8 churches' gender audits conducted in Malawi, Zambia and South Africa and subsequent similar audits in 2011-2012 carried out in Zimbabwe and Lesotho.

Similar results came out of the *Pilot Study Report of Women in positions of Leadership* (2012) commissioned by NCA Pretoria. The study examined the number of women appointed to positions of power and decision making in churches and church councils. It was only a small pilot study and its findings cannot be generalised, but the trend was the same as the audits and the follow up study. It showed that women to positions of power and decision making, but the change is happening at a painstakingly slow pace. It is still mostly men who are in the positions of power and decision making at most levels.

However, there is hope. There is evidence of resistance against patriarchy and there are signs that gender consciousness is taking root within the churches that participated in the study, although this differs between churches and countries.

The vision of increasing women's leadership in churches is not just an idea of women in churches. The SADC Gender Protocol, signed by SADC country governments, set the target to achieve 50/50 women and men in all decision making processes in Government, by 2015. It is a justice and human rights issue that cuts across all religious and other institutions in any country.

So the fact that the Church also has begun to review its own leadership policies and patterns and work towards achieving equity echoes what is happening in wider society.<sup>42</sup>

This tool tries to portray, through the words of women themselves, something of the challenges and complexities of the debates around women in ordained and lay leadership, and opens spaces for deeper conversation on this issue.



## Time to talk

The testimonies of many women in lay or ordained leadership confirm the findings of the abovementioned studies: the journey is far from over.

Read the following two stories, and use the questions below to talk about them.

*"When it became apparent that I was not a temporary appointment, one of our church wardens moved to another parish. He did not feel it right that a woman should be in authority. I understood his feelings and we departed friends." Rev Nancy Charton<sup>43</sup>*

*"My story is that of an ordained female minister who finds herself working among male leaders and lay female Christians. It all started when I returned from further studies abroad. Rumours started circulating... that I [thought I] was the most educated clergywoman who did not support the male clergy. In an instant, the women stopped inviting me to their meetings; the male clergy also stopped encouraging or visiting me. Some of their comments were demeaning to all women; for instance, that men were the only ones who had the spirit, vision and peace! The congregation ... preferred a male minister ... I experienced isolation..."*

*The Bishop was advised to transfer me so that I do not destroy their church. ... Later, when the Council Meeting ended, I was found with no case to answer. .... I thank God for sending the Bishop to guide the lay leaders....*

<sup>42</sup> A theoretical basis for 50/50:

The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development signed by SADC Heads of State (Presidents) set a target of 50/50 representation of women in all decision making processes by 2015. (In 2015 new milestones will be set when the time frame expires). This is in line with the African Protocol on Women's Rights target and provides a framework for developing indicators against which progress can be measured. These and other regional and international agreements and Protocols also provide an aspiration, which churches, church councils and the rest of society can work towards in promoting an equal and equitable society. Refer to Tool 5 for more information.

<sup>43</sup> *Women in God's Image Journal* (WIGI), No 8, April 2002. Pietermaritzburg: PACSA.

*And now, living in peace, I have forgiven everyone and continue to work and visit my fellow clergy when need arises. Indeed, as single female minister, I faced so many challenges but God has always been on my side, faithful to me as a woman and sent other loved ones to console me. I love my church because I love my God whom I will continue to serve. I am a servant of everyone, rich, poor, sane, insane, and even the male clergy who usually do not support me as a co-worker.” Rev Jane Kaluba<sup>44</sup>*

- What are some of the problems these two women clergy experienced? Where did the resistance come from?
- The second story took place 10 years after the first. What has changed in that time, and what has not?
- In the second story, what do you think of the way the Bishop responded? What does it say about the role of senior leadership?
- Comment on the ways the two women responded.

## Women's ordination

This tool raises different questions about lay and ordained women and leadership in the church. It includes additional stories of women leaders, to help open up further conversations about this question that is vital for the continued life and ministry of the church in Southern Africa today.

*“Interpretation of the Bible and discernment of its application in our lives is a work of the Holy Spirit. Prejudging the outcomes of reading, assuming we know what is there, refusing to allow our eyes and hearts to be opened, is a refusal of God's Spirit.”*  
Rev Janet Trisk<sup>45</sup>



### Time to talk

Although more women have been ordained in a number of churches in various countries in Southern Africa, the situation may look better than it actually is for the women involved. Read the stories below, and talk about your own views.

<sup>44</sup> *Testimonies of the women theologian*. The Council of Churches in Zambia, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> *Men and Masculinities in South Africa*, Pietermaritzburg, PACSA, 2013

*"I looked at the paper and saw a picture of myself and in bold print was a title 'A Godless Nation'. It was a copy of the Daily News. I was taken aback and thought, "Godless Nation and me? What have I done?" ... The article was a response by a reader, Mr Worthington, to the news of my induction as Bishop in December 1999. Mr Worthington said, "Can somebody explain how this great deviation from God's Word is demonstrated in this way?" He went on to quote what the apostle Paul says about women and the church and concluded that the deviation from God's Word "started with the Anglican Church about six or seven years ago when they ordained their first woman priest and now the Methodists have gone one step further and elected a woman Bishop".*

*He went further, arguing, "If the church cannot obey God's law, then who can? Is it because the people of South Africa adopted a Godless Constitution that we have now become a Godless nation? It is now becoming clear for all to see what is happening in South Africa". I cannot describe how I felt. There were many feelings within me and there were many feelings amongst the Methodist people who read the article. Some said, "We have been saying this, it shouldn't have happened". Others said, "We need to challenge this". While some said, "You, Purity, need to challenge this". I did not, was not prepared to do so, and never have." Bishop Purity Malinga<sup>46</sup>*

*"... [H]e casually asked me what I was doing at a theological college. I explained that I had been called to ministry. "Oh, that is all right." He said. "You are not aiming for the priesthood then." I was astonished, and said, "Why should I not?" He replied: "Because the priest is the icon of Christ. A woman cannot be Christ's icon." I had no words for my feelings of rejection and dismay. It seemed that as a woman I could have no part in Christ." Rev Nancy Charton<sup>47</sup>*

- 
- Do you think it's OK for women to be ordained to church ministry?
  - Do you think it's OK for them to become bishops?

---

<sup>46</sup>(PACSA Presentation, Pietermaritzburg, August 2001)

<sup>47</sup>Women in God's Image Journal, No. 8, April 2002 - PACSA

## Theological arguments

The Bible has been used since time immemorial to justify just about any point of view, because it is really a set of many books, written at different times over the past 3 000 years, by men of different cultures and upbringings; and translated many times into different languages, again by men from different cultures and backgrounds.

This section offers a few different theological perspectives on women's ordination.



The Bible has been used in life-giving as well as oppressive ways throughout the history of the church. Source: [www.wheatridge.org](http://www.wheatridge.org)

Read through all the extracts, and then answer the questions that follow:

*"I rushed back to my room, seized my Bible in a frenzy of anxiety and turned to Genesis 1:27: "Male and female made He them, together in the image of God." I was comforted. I turned to Galatians 3:28 and was doubly reassured. I had begun to theologise for myself about the road ahead. The priesthood was not the immediate objective. But I could not and would not exclude it. I have often been grateful to my Anglo Catholic acquaintance. He had made the penny drop at last simply by stating clearly the "phallic heresy" as I came to call it." Rev Nancy Charton<sup>48</sup>*

*"Priests act in persona Christi Capitis, in the person of Christ, the Head of His Body, the Church. ...Christ, of course, was a man; but some who argue for the ordination of women insist that His sex is irrelevant, that a woman can act in the person of Christ as well as a man can. This is a misunderstanding of Catholic teaching on the differences between men and women, which the Church insists are irreducible; men and women, by their natures, are suited to different, yet complementary, roles and functions.*

*The Lord Jesus chose men (viri) to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry. The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ's return. The [Catholic] Church recognises herself to be bound by this choice made by*

<sup>48</sup> *Women in God's Image Journal*, No. 8, April 2002

*the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible.”*  
Scott P. Richert<sup>49</sup>

*“I thank God for allowing the society to have accepted me as a [minister] despite my sex as a woman, a woman created in the image of God. For my desire was and is to reveal the beauty of God regardless of the challenges. I have realised that God has commissioned me to perform this great task.”* Rev Leenorah Ng'andu<sup>50</sup>



## Time to talk

Rev Ng'andu believes that God has commissioned her to “reveal the beauty of God”.

The Anglo-Catholic priest in Nancy Charton's story and the anti-ordination lobbyist claim that a woman cannot be ordained because “the priest is the icon of Christ [and] a woman cannot be Christ's icon”.

- What do you think? Can a woman be called to represent Christ, as is one of the roles of an ordained minister?
- What would you say qualifies a person to serve Christ in the ordained ministry?<sup>51</sup>

### Women leaders in the Bible:

Read through the following biblical examples of women leaders in the Bible<sup>52</sup>. Many of them operated in cultural contexts very similar to ours, and yet they were able to achieve much in their ministries for God.

- Talk about what strikes you about their leadership, in relation to modern lay and ordained ministries.

<sup>49</sup>About.com Guide

<sup>50</sup>*Testimonies of the women theologian*. The Council of Churches in Zambia, 2011, pg11.

<sup>51</sup>The following Scriptures may be helpful: 1 Peter 2:4-5; Revelation 1: 2-6; Rev 20: 6; Romans 12: 7-8; 1 Corinthians 12: 8-10; Ephesians 4: 11-13.

<sup>52</sup>Taken from: *Gender Training Manual for the Clergy*. 2010. Zambian Churches Mother Bodies – ZEC, CCZ and EFZ.

**Deborah** (Judges 4: 4-24). Before the Israelites had kings to rule them, they were governed by Judges who served as legal and administrative officers and military commanders. Deborah served her community as both Judge and Prophet, in a patriarchal society where women were often confined to the home, Deborah's role was all the more amazing. She served her community with great wisdom, courage and distinction. Deborah was surely a charismatic leader, one who was influential in the community, attracting many followers by her strong personality and example.

**Mirriam** (Exodus 2:4,7-8). She is the elder sister of Moses, standing guard over her baby brother on the shores of the river. She comes from an outstanding family of leaders. Mirriam might be called the leader of a woman's group, as we see her in Exodus 15: 19-21 leading a group of Israelite women in victory, song and dance after crossing the Red Sea. She is a gifted woman, a poet and musician as well as a women's leader. In the Toolkit of Numbers 12: 2,6, we further discover that she, like her two brothers, was also a prophet, a messenger of God's Word.

**Junia** (Romans 16:7). St Paul himself identified both Junia and her husband as prominent among the apostles.

**Priscilla and Aquilas** (1 Corinthians 16:19). They served as leaders of the congregation together and Priscilla is mentioned first, which means that she is viewed as the most powerful of them.

**Phoebe** (Roman 16: 1, 27). Paul sent Phoebe to minister to the Corinthian church, and so she was essentially the first deaconess.



**Mary, Mother of Jesus** – her lifestyle provided spiritual leadership of faith.

**Mary Magdalene** - She was one of Jesus' closest friends, and the first person to be called by Jesus Christ to share the Good News of Jesus Resurrection.

## Change is challenging

The pilot study mentioned earlier conducted in 2012 on numbers of women in positions of lay and ordained leadership across seven Southern African countries<sup>53</sup> concludes that, while there is evidence of an increase in numbers of women lay and ordained leaders, men continue to occupy positions of strategic importance while women continue to work in supportive roles.

This means that most churches are still missing out on the many different gifts that women can offer into their leadership.

It is worth exploring together, wherever we may find ourselves, why churches are finding it difficult to make the changes.

Could it be because women are just not capable of meeting the challenges that leadership demands of them? Could the answer lie in exposing more women to training and support to lead more effectively? Or is it just not biblically correct for women to lead? Why do many men resist? Could it be that men in the churches are afraid or unwilling to share power? And why do some women not support other women's leadership? Are they jealous, or do they not trust them to do a good job?

What do you suggest needs to be done?

The rest of this tool offers stories about different kinds of women in leadership in churches to help church leaders and groups grapple with these issues and come up with their own questions and solutions that can strengthen their churches' response to the movements of the Holy Spirit.



Rev Phumzile Mabizela, Ordained minister and Director of the International Network of Religious Leaders Affected by HIV and AIDS (INERELA+) visiting the Evangelical Church of Geneva. Source: [www.cabsa.org.za](http://www.cabsa.org.za)



### Time to talk

Read the following extracts, and use the questions that follow to guide your conversation:

<sup>53</sup>Norwegian Church Aid. Report – *Pilot Study on Numbers of Women in Positions of Leadership*. November 2012

## Personal challenges of women ordained ministers

### Woman Theological Students

*"I took a course in Homiletics at third year level, which required that students practice Homiletic through preaching in the College Chapel. I was among three females in the class. The Chapel schedule left out the female members from the preaching aspect, but included them on the worship list! When I saw this, I protested and insisted that I needed to practice what I had learnt from Homiletic class by being given an opportunity to preach. The brothers protested and were outraged by this idea. The insurrection was understandable because most of them came from a background that held this view. However, I felt angry that I could be discriminated against based on my gender and not on my ability or inability to preach the good news. In my insistence, one of the brothers showed open contempt: 'I will not come to the Chapel to listen to a woman preach, if she wants to champion women's rights let her go to the Women's Lobby Group'. It hurt, but I also continued to insist that I be given the opportunity to preach in the Chapel. In [the end], I was given that opportunity." Mary Zulu (Testimonies of Zambian Women Theologians, 2011)*

#### Reflections of a woman theology student

*Who am I -  
The un-ordained  
therefore read lessons at Communal services  
The un-married  
therefore be nice to all, one of them might marry you  
The un-respecting woman  
therefore bring out the culture card  
The un-evangelical  
therefore should be prayed for  
The un-quiet  
therefore should be reminded that salvation for her is only by child-birth.  
On better days I was called.  
Rev Bellina Mangena (Later ordained, then a Canon in the Anglican Church)*

- Does your church encourage women to study theology?
- Do you know any women who have entered what were previously men-only theological institutions? How have their experiences compared to the student this story?
- What changes need to be made in theological training to enable women's full participation?

## Social and cultural rejection of ordained women

*"Mariam was ordained in 2006, She is a leader in a church in one of the villages in Lesotho. Since she began her work there as a minister she has endured pain and bitterness due to the community and the congregation not supporting her. Both women and men in her church undermined her authority and worst of all they always questioned her teachings. In funerals when she offered the service at the burial, the community elders and chiefs did not accept her. She tried to ask for some intervention from her church leadership but all was in vain.*

*She was approached by other concerned women from her congregation who advised her to step down as a pastor and give her position to one man who was authoritative in the church. Mariam refused and that also had consequences as even those women became her worst enemies. Their monthly offerings just stopped, and when Mariam asked about them these women began to spread rumours about her integrity.*

*When Mariam saw that all hell was breaking loose, she began to be assertive in church, calling the powerful group of men and women to order. She began to dialogue with the church elders after church services, reminding them that she was leading the church, and laying down her rules in the church. Her changed attitude and character surprised not only the church elders but also the congregants. They began to comply with her rules and regulations and Mariam now enjoys the fruit of her hard work as she is respected in the church." Lebohang Matale, Lesotho*

---

- How does this story make you feel?
- What do you think influenced the congregants and community elders to have such negative attitudes to Mariam's leadership?
- Why do you think the two women advised Mariam to step down and give over to a man who was 'authoritative'? Was this helpful? What does this say about the attitudes of women in the church towards women leaders?
- What can you say about the way Mariam acted to change her situation? Should women have to radically change their character in order to get respect?
- Although people began to accept Mariam's leadership, do you think their attitudes to women's leadership had actually changed?
- What other things could Mariam have done to change people's attitudes to her ministry as a woman? Was this her only choice?
- Re-tell the story, to give it an ending that shows real gender transformation.

## Single women clergy

*"It was clear to them I was a young female, unmarried and inexperienced to handle congregational matters. It was clear they wanted a male who could handle and manage a big congregation. Despite all these setbacks, on 8 January 2005, I was licensed to perform my ministry duties in that congregation under a supervisor who was a Minister."* Rev Patricia Phiri (*Stories of Women Theologians, Zambia*)

*"Clergy are not perceived as ordinary people and men might fear that clergy women might not perform the wifely duties as expected of them by culture and communities due to the unique and sometimes unpredictable activities that they perform on a daily*



*basis, i.e. burying the dead, visiting the sick etc. The fear is that they might not have time for their homes. It is also perceived that a husband of a clergy woman might also be expected to uphold the very high moral standards required of them by virtue of the positions of their wives. Finally, it may be that some men already do not want to be a 'step' behind the clergy wife in terms of status in the community."* Suzanne Matala, CEO Christian Council in Zambia

- Do you think that it is right for young women to become ordained as clergy? Why, or why not?
- Do you think that it is better for women clergy to remain unmarried, or not?
- What are some of the underlying attitudes to women clergy that come out of Suzanne Matala's explanation above? What do you propose as solutions?

## Women clergy married to clergy

*"As a married minister, it was hard to look after my family because at times, I could knock off from ministerial work very late in the night. I could report late at work due to pressure of work at home and in my husband's congregation. It has been a challenge for me to work in my congregation as a minister in charge and a minister's*

wife in the congregation of my husband. That meant at times, on Mondays, I would follow up cases where congregants did not report on Sunday. Tuesday would be a day when I would join the women for visitations." Rev Thandiwe Chipeta (Zambian Women Theologians Stories)

- How could Rev Chipeta's ministry be strengthened?

## Widows

*"I was ordained in 1991. A year after my ordination my husband passed on, leaving me with 3 children, the youngest of which was 1 ½ years old. During the whole period of his sickness, the congregation was very supportive, and some of the women even helped with the household chores. I felt I had a caring family given to me by God himself. After his death, his company gave me 3 months to find alternative accommodation. I approached the congregation leadership to search for a new home for me and my children. I was assured that they had already taken care of that issue. Yet after the 3 months, I still had no alternative, and so made another urgent request to them.*

*"The word of God is from God. If you hear a call from God, answer the call. Churches need women leadership."*  
Rev Victory Mbanjwa

*The church leaders put me in a one-roomed house without water. When I objected, I was told not to expect to be treated by them the way my husband treated me. They were not going to receive orders from a woman who was supposed to submit to her superiors. In fact, they went on to make it clear that they would not accord me the same respect as when my husband was alive, because I was now a widow.*

*I was very hurt, and went on leave to give me time to think. While I was away, the Women's Fellowship set about raising funds to pay rent on a decent house for me. I was really grateful, and yet, I doubted whether I should stay on under the kind of senior church leadership that neither respected nor supported me. After much prayer, I had the sense that God wanted me to be strong and continue in the same place.*

*I was in that congregation up to 2002. During my stay, we managed to build a four bed roomed house for the minister. But a number of people were against the plan saying*

*that we do not have to build such a big house in that area. The reasons were that that type of house is supposed to be in suburban areas and not a compound like this area. Little did people know that in a few years the President would empower sitting tenants in the council houses to buy and extend their small houses. Today when you go to that area there are very big and beautiful houses. I also helped the congregation build some classrooms and a wall boundary around the church.*

*After the completion of the house, the whole thing started again. Even though most of the funds for the house were raised by the Women's Fellowship and me personally, the elders decided that I should move out of the house because it was too big for a single woman and that they want to let it out. They would find a smaller one for me and my children. I was very disappointed with the congregation but I stood my ground not to go anywhere and asked the congregation to build another house if they want to engage in real estate business. They knew that the Presbytery would not allow them to push me around. They just started making my work difficult by not meeting deadlines, not attending meetings and that sort of thing.*

*I felt that I had done my part and had to move out of Matero. I knew that I was leaving the congregation and the community better than I had found it."*

Rev Jane M Nyirongo (Part 1)

- What social assumptions and cultural beliefs underpinned the ways the church leadership behaved? How might these be challenged in a way that is not divisive, but could turn this situation into a win-win for everyone?
- Do you know any women in Rev Nyirongo's situation? How have their experiences compared to hers?

## Women resisting women ministers

*"It is very difficult for people to accept a female minister. People look at you with different views and questions. The male congregants fail to understand and accept to be led by a woman. As if that is not enough, the woman's [organisation] Executive faces many misinterpretations from the wives of male ministers. In my case I ended up being lonely without any one to talk to, until they proved that whatever was being talked about me was a lie."* Rev Thandiwe Chipeta (*Testimonies of Zambian Women Theologians*, pg 7)

- In this story, other women contributed to Rev Chipeta's unhappiness. Why do you think they did this?
- How do women in your church relate to women clergy and other lay leaders? How might women be more supportive of other women, and what would be the outcomes?

## Lay leadership



### Time to talk

It is interesting that Pope Francis II, the new Pope in the Catholic Church, which is known as the most conservative on the ordination of women, has recognised the importance of lay women leadership. Although he has not changed his views about the ordination of women or allowing male priests to marry, he has said that more women should be represented in lay leadership roles in the Catholic Church. According to Father Thoman Risica – spokesman for the Vatican:

*“Pope Francis is extremely sensitive to the fact that, in making major decisions that affect people’s lives -how can we do this without consulting half the human race? And most of the people who are in our churches and playing very leading roles as mothers, catechists, teachers, as those transmitting the faith, is the women in the church.”*

- Why do you think he is able to say this about lay leadership, but not ordained leadership? What is the basic difference, and what do you think it means in practice?

It does seem that many churches now allow women to become lay leaders. But stories told by some women show that there is still resistance from both men and women. It is important to talk about how this problem can be addressed.

## Clergy wives: the unsung ministry of service



### Time to talk

Read the following story, and talk about it. Use the reflection questions if you find them helpful.

*"I married my husband, who was already ordained, at 23 and have been married for 16 years. I feel the pressure very acutely because I live in the church ground at the Cathedral and it is always busy. Also the congregants live far away so one is not really part of a neighbourhood. You have to forget about yourself and your own needs. My children feel the pressure too.*

*There is no training/preparation for priests' wives and it would have been more difficult had I not grown up as an Anglican. It has been easier for me to adjust than it is for some other clergy wives. My husband does not help with domestic chores, so I work in the house and in the church.*

*... The expectations of the members of the congregations are very high – we are expected to attend all meetings. If we don't attend, people ask why we are not there – do we not support what they are doing? A Priest's work is full time, but I also work as a teacher, and raise the family at the same time. And of course, there are many visitors to host as well.*

*... I live in a house, but would lose it if my husband died, and I don't know where I would live. But I definitely don't want to be a priest. One priest in the family is enough!" Mrs Ruth Nwaou*

- How many jobs does Mrs Nwaou do?
- What could her husband do to take off some of the pressure?
- What could church structures do to be more supportive of the ministries offered by clergy wives?

## Positive examples of journeys of change

Although the picture is not all rosy, as seen in the stories above, it is not all darkness either. Many churches have taken on the challenge to change fixed attitudes and to open up spaces for women to be ordained and even move into the highest decision making positions. Two examples follow here.



### Time to talk

Read through the stories that follow and talk about what strikes you about the journeys that each church has taken.

- What do you think have been some important factors in the growth to openness?
- What are some of the differences in how the women writers understand ministry in relation to a more traditional patriarchal view of ministry related to authority and status?

## Change in the Reformed Church in Zambia (UCZ)

*"I remember many small things in this maze of struggle and uncertainties. Being a veteran in the work, I appreciate the little gains, in the Church at a political level. Some have opened up to women's ordination, to involving women in decision-making in the church. Let me take the Reformed Church as an example. In the beginning they said no women - that was what the Bible said. I remember in 2002, I was asked by our General Secretary to go and address a Synod meeting about CCZ's gender programme and the need for the emancipation of women in the church. The men were inside, and the women were in the kitchen, cooking for the meeting. They allowed me to deliver my message, but when it was discussed, and I raised my hand to participate or engage with their questions, I was repeatedly bypassed. When I expressed my frustration, a neighbouring male delegate informed me that women are not permitted to speak at Synod.*

*From about 2003, the church began to change, little by little. First they allowed women to speak in Synod; then they began to encourage women to attend the seminaries and become theologians, and now they even ordain women into the ministry. I want to congratulate the Reformed Church in Zambia. This would have been unthinkable 20 years ago. In the church you just have to obey. I stood up to my*

*own church and challenged them on accountability and transparency, and was given the boot! I was sacked for standing up to leadership, because you don't do that. We have a long way to go and progress is slow, but we must lift up these wonderful examples. There is a growing number of women ministers. It is not enough, but there are many more in many churches, and they are rising up in the midst of all the resistance to women's emancipation. The younger ministers are more forthcoming. We have a lot of young gender sensitive ministers now, both male and female, and that gives us hope."* Rev Suzanne Matala, General Secretary, CCZ. The First Woman Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Zambia (PCZ): *A New Approach to Ministry*.

*"In 2004 I decided to go and work in Wales as a Mission Adviser, where I stayed for 3 years.*

*When I returned to Zambia in 2008, I was sent to a new local Church. I was received with mixed feelings because the congregation felt that they would not be able to keep me, as they thought my standards might be too high for them having just come from outside the country. But from the time that I came to this congregation to this day we have had a very good relationship.*

*Together we have challenged ourselves to be an outward looking congregation relevant to the community in which we stay. So we have strengthened the community school which was started in 2005. I just encouraged the congregation to aim at giving out the best. The mentality in this area was that a community school is for vulnerable children and because they are vulnerable they should get whatever is offered to them. The common saying is that a beggar is not a chooser, but I told them that this school will be different; that we would offer the best services in a very clean and conducive environment. Our children would be helped to have self-esteem and they would be proud to be in our school. I have been in this congregation for 5 years and people who were here in 2007 can hardly recognise the place because we have turned it to be what God intended it to be. It has not been easy, but we can say the Lord has brought us thus far.*

we had been silent for so long

speaking a language of half truths

that told us who we were and who we could become

the icons became idols ....

we are now reading the Scriptures for ourselves

sounding out the dark hollow words that rebirth us

renaming ourselves

and renaming GOD

in the stained glass we see the blood and water

we are speechless with a new silence

can we not trust Christ in faith to be faithful...?

Devarakshanam Betty Govinden, in *Women in God's Image*, Nr 8, 2002

*We have also built very strong ties with other denominations like the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church, United Church of Zambia, the Reformed Church in Zambia, Church of Christ and a number of Pentecostal Churches. I always tell my congregation that we are here not to compete with one another but complement one another. We need to encourage one another and help to bring out the best in everyone because every child of God has something special to offer to the world.*

*I was elected Moderator of Synod for our church in 2012. From the beginning, I prayed that God use me to build an inclusive community through leadership that is willing to be transformed if it is to be transforming. We are slowly getting there because we are empowering the youth and women to take up leadership roles.*

*The attitude towards me as a woman is slowly changing because trust has been built through these many years. But maybe the other reason why they are more receptive is because they can see some grey hair coming out! I am grateful to my God that He made me strong in my journey so that I could pave the way for other female leaders in our church.*

*Before my ordination, I am told that people betted on whether I would stay for more than 6 months in the church. Apparently they did not want to refuse to ordain me because it would just be a matter of time before I quit. But my Lord has always been, and continues to be, faithful." Rev Jane Nyirongo, Moderator, Presbyterian Church in Zambia.*

---

You might have noticed that this is the happy ending to Rev Nyirongo's story on page 140-141. It shows that, while acceptance of women in ministry is not easy, if they persevere, some women clergy can really be the witness needed to change conservative mindsets.

## **Advocating for change: the need for inspiration**

For women who have been waiting for a long time for their church to change, so that they can begin to fulfil what they believe to be God's call on their lives, the struggle can seem endless.

The following story offers some inspiration:



## Women's Ordination in The Anglican Church of Southern Africa: a long hard journey of discernment and change

*"In 1979, at the Provincial Synod of the then Church of the [then] Province of Southern Africa, a resolution on women's ordination was taken off the agenda without debate by the [then] Bishop Desmond Tutu.*

*In 1985 the Provincial Synod requested the Archbishop to set up a commission to deal with the ordination of women to the priesthood. When Desmond Tutu was elected Archbishop in 1986 the ordination of women priests was on his list of priorities.*

*A motion was brought Provincial Synod in June 1989. Declared a controversial motion, it needed a 2/3 majority to pass. It failed by 13 votes. There was pain on both sides of the debate. Archbishop Tutu, in pain, said, 'I am deeply convinced of the rightness of the ordination of women, especially in view of my own ministry in seeking to work for justice.'*

*The 1989 Synod asked the bishops to keep the issue under review in 'the most sensitive way'. For the next three years, the CPSA engaged in a time of study, reflection and debate. The issue gained visibility and exposure beyond the church leadership into the pews. It emerged as a major focus. This all took place in the context of the tumultuous ending months of apartheid in South Africa.*

*At the 1992 Provincial Synod, after over four hours of debate, the meeting voted 79.2% in favour of the ordination of women. The pastoral letter of the bishops put it well:*

*'Provincial Synod was soaked with the prayers of many, and all who were present were aware of this. The debate was deeply moving and free of any acrimony or scoring of points. There was an overriding sense that we were trying to listen to God through those who were speaking to Synod. There was a desire to hold on to one another in disagreement, and this was achieved by God's grace.'*" Rev Nancy Charton

In 2013, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa has 347 women priests, two of whom are Bishops. There are still some injustices in implementation, and it has taken 44 years to achieve this, but it offers an inspirational example of the Holy Spirit at work.

All the Provinces in the Anglican Church in Africa now ordain women, except for the Anglican Church in Central Africa, which Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana fall under. But the struggle continues, as told by Canon Christopher Mwawa of the Anglican Council in Malawi:



Source: flickr-photo sharing!\_files

*“The women themselves are divided on the ordination of women. Some are for it while others are not. However, during their Synod meetings in the three of the four Anglican dioceses held this year, the ordination of women was discussed and members agreed that the issue be given another thought and to that effect, at the next CPCA Synod meeting to be held in Lusaka Zambia, an agenda item on ‘ordination of women’ will be discussed.*”

*A number of young women are doing theology and possibly just waiting for the day when the Church of the Province of Central Africa will say ‘yes’ to the ordination of women.”*

Unfortunately, the motion was defeated once again in 2013, with the House of Clergy (only men) voting for and the House of Laity (including women and men) voting against the ordination of women. It is encouraging that the male clergy want to welcome women priests, but clearly, there is still work to be done amongst women, and those who feel they are called will have to wait another few years to be able to fulfil their calling.

## **Women leading the way in building balanced and transformative leadership**

Just having women in leadership positions does not mean it brings about any real change from the traditional top-down structures and unapproachability of some male leaders. The church has often been criticised for what has been called its ‘clericalism’, or the centralising of power with ordained leadership in churches, and that often male clergy are not easily approached by their members.

Bishop Purity challenges us in her article below, to consciously think through how women might offer different kinds of leadership that can help to transform the ministry of the Church into something more like the servant leadership that Jesus modelled in His earthly ministry.



## Time to talk

Read the extract from her article below, and talk about her ideas for women to take the lead in changing leadership in the churches. (You may also wish also to read the attachments: Women Theologians in Zambia: Living Letter to the Churches, 2011, and Joint Statement by Women Clergy to the Provincial Standing Committee of the Anglican Church of the Province of Southern Africa.)

There are some questions in between her paragraphs, to help you think through what she is saying.

There are other questions at the end of the article.

- While you are reading, recall some of the stories you read above of women's struggles as leaders.
- Talk about what positive things these women did to bring about change, and what else they might have done or could still do.

---

### **“What are the things that women leaders should address in an endeavour to transform their churches and society?”**

*“Firstly, I believe that women leaders need to be purposeful in **studying and doing liberating theologies** because it is from these theologies that you as a woman come to terms with who you are as a child of God. Only after coming to terms with who you are, will you be able to help other women and other people to understand who they are. Women's experiences and understandings of God have been ignored down the ages but they need to be taken seriously. Women need to do theology and **teach theology** for this to happen. We know the theologies of our churches are patriarchal and are dehumanising to women, and it is therefore important that those who are in the leadership of the church take seriously the task of doing theology.*

---

- What theological teachings exist in your church, which make it hard for women to become leaders and be taken seriously?
- See the Resources list in the last tool, to find readings that open up alternative approaches to theology.

---

*Secondly, it is important for women leaders to be purposeful in **influencing the structures of their church** and insisting on representation by women. When people begin to see women in decision making structures where they are normally excluded, they begin to realise that something has been wrong in the past. We need to make women leaders visible so that questions may be raised and these issues talked about.*

---

- Are there any women in the senior structures of your church?
- Do they have any impact? Since they have been in leadership, have you noticed any changes in decision making processes or the nature of decisions that are made? If yes, explain.
- If not, what would the need to do to make more of an impact?

---

*Thirdly, in order to bring about transformation, women leaders need to **insist on being themselves**. Women leaders do not need to imitate male leadership. I believe women have been given many gifts by God that can transform the church if they are used and put on the table. Women bring themselves and their gentleness which we sometimes lack in our churches. Sometimes gentleness is seen as weakness but in the church we have people who need to be treated gently and cared for. Women bring with them the gift of caring, the gift of loving, the gift of embracing, and many others. If we insist on being ourselves as women leaders, transformation will come about in the churches in which we work.*

---

- Do you know any women in leadership?
- How do they lead? Do they use the same top-down approaches that most of our churches traditionally have, or do they live out their leadership in a more service-oriented way?



- Bishop Purity says that if women are themselves as leaders, they will transform the very nature of ministry.
  - What do you think women clergy and leaders can bring into church leadership that can transform church leadership to become less hierarchical and more inclusive?
  - What might be some traps that women could fall into when taking up lay or ordained leadership positions, and what might prevent this?
- What can you do to support women leaders in your church?

---

*Fourthly, it is important for women leaders in the church to **continue speaking out**. I attend a number of circles and meetings where at times I am the only woman and I am often surprised at how insensitive church men are. I am surprised by how being sexist comes so naturally to so many people that I meet. It is as if they just cannot be anything else. So as a woman among them I need to keep talking and saying, 'You are being sexist', 'You are excluding me', 'I don't feel comfortable with the joke you are making'. Many men are not aware that their behaviour is offensive and if you feel that you are tired of speaking out, you are not helping the struggle for transformation. This is not a generalisation. Men hear me well- I am not saying all men are like that. But I am saying that many men are like this and will never change unless women keep saying, 'I feel excluded', 'I don't like that', 'You can do it differently'. **There are men who are prepared to listen**. We don't need to get tired of talking, of challenging sexist attitudes, jokes and traditions that are being continued in our midst, in our churches and in our church meetings.*

---

- Do you think the opinions of the women leaders are taken seriously in the church? Why?
- What do you think women leaders could do to be heard more effectively in their church?
- Should women speak out every time a sexist or patriarchal thing happens? Some people say it is wise to 'choose your battles'. What do you think are the most important things that women should speak out about, and what are other things that are less crucial? (Perhaps it might help to consider what one is wanting to achieve in the long term, to help answer this question.)

*Finally and **most importantly**, women church leaders need to insist on **educating our young people and children about sexist attitudes**. As they grow up in this environment that at least recognises the rights of women, we have a chance of changing the attitudes of children and young people in our churches. From our pulpits, wherever we do Christian education, wherever we teach in our churches, we need to focus on a **theology of equality between the sexes and on the respect for all the people of God**.” Bishop Purity Malinga (2001, PACSA Presentation, published in *Women in God’s Image Journal*, No 8, April 2002).*

---

- Do you think sermons are the right place to challenge sexist assumptions?
- What other teaching opportunities could women leaders use to educate children, youth and adults about sexist attitudes?”

Discuss further:

- What do you think of the suggestions offered? How do you think they might make a difference, in practice?
- Lastly, you might want to talk about what churches need to do to make women’s leadership a norm – for women’s leadership styles to become acceptable, and for men to be happy to submit women’s authority.



Virginia women ordained catholic priest. Source: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

## Attachment: Women theologians in Zambia -living letter to the Church (2011)

### Preamble

**Theme: “*May they be one*” (John 17: 21)**

We, the women theologians in Zambia meeting Lusaka under the auspices of the Council of Churches in Zambia from 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2011 to deeply reflect on our ministry in the body of Christ under the theme. *May They Be One*.

We shared our challenges as women in the ministry, our fears, and our inspirations for a brighter future of women ministry in Zambia and beyond. We also reflected and prayed for enhancement and effective participation of women in the total life of the body of Christ.

We affirmed the Theological Guidelines framed by the women theologians in November 2007, which we offered to the churches then for their consideration and action.

We thanked God for the space that has been created for women in the ordained ministry in some of our churches. We are glad that the space is slowly expanding and more women are joining the ministry.

We appreciated and recognised the encouragement and support we have received from our women pioneers in the ministry and a few male ministers who encouraged us and continue to encourage and support women in the ministry.

We reflected deeply on our own personal stories on our work in the church. We shared our many struggles that we face in our walk with the Lord. We recognised that it has not been an easy road for anyone of us; it is a walk that has been interspaced with numerous challenges:

- The high mountains we had to climb
- The deep valleys we had and continue to walk
- The wide and deep waters we had to swim against the tide

We agreed that in spite of all these challenges, the Lord had held our hands and led us this far and also agreed to stand firm and to stand together in believing together like James said in Chapter 1 that *The joy of the Lord is our strength*.

We drew strength from Elijah's story in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19:1-18. Even though there were times when we were afraid like Elijah was of Jezebel, just like he wanted to give up and pleaded with the Lord to take his life because he has had enough, we share with Elijah the gentle whisper of God just like the gentle voice comforted Elijah, gave him a new commission and strengthened him for his task and gave him peace.

### **Our concerns**

We are, however, concerned that

- Some of our churches in Zambia are still not open to women ordination
- The number of women ministers is still far from satisfactory, the number still remains very low
- There still are no affirmative actions enshrined in church policies to promote women's participation in decision making.
- Unfavourable structures which usually works against women ministers
- Discrimination and injustices, though subtle, continue unabated in many churches.

### **Our aspirations and desires**

- We call and urge the church in Zambia
- To continue to open doors to women theological training in order to increase the number of ordained women
- To formulate gender policies in their churches which enhance and promote women's participation in the total life of the church
- To make deliberate efforts to enhance partnership between female and male ministers in the churches
- All male ministers to partner with us in promoting development and bringing the gender equality agenda to the fore
- To pay special attention to the subtle discrimination and injustices towards female theologians
- To review structures to bring them in line with the demands of modern management or institutions which will take into account the special talents and gifting of women.

### **Our pledge to ourselves**

We, pledge

- To continue support and encourage each other and be there for each other
- To be role models to the upcoming young women theologians
- To participate in programmes which enhance positive change for the betterment of our communities
- In the era of poverty and dependency on outside donors, we pledge to work towards self-sustainability in our churches and communities
- To reinterpret and identify wealth within our own communities.

## Conclusion

We would like to conclude our living letter by appreciating the male clergy who helped to facilitate our consultation and without bias listened to our stories and encourage us all the way. With male ministers like them, we have hope.

## Attachment: Joint statement by women clergy to the Provincial Standing Committee of the Anglican Church of the Province of Southern Africa

Presented by Rev Cheryl Bird on their behalf

We  
as women  
are standing up  
we have arrived  
we have come of age  
we are fully human  
fully committed  
to living out that call  
to serving together  
with all who serve.

And we call on the Church  
to recognise this  
to be open to receiving  
all that we bring  
that only we can bring  
we call on the Church  
to meet us  
on the way  
to meet our needs for training and equipping  
for full acceptance  
for affirmation and support  
for opportunities to lead.

We call on the Church  
to elect more women bishops  
to champion women's ordination  
in all diocese  
all provinces  
to appoint more women rectors  
to provide teaching resources for parishes  
helpful theology to smooth the way  
for women priests.  
We call on the Church  
to take up the challenge  
of interrogating and resisting  
all oppressive and abusive practices  
in the name of culture and tradition  
to stand with us  
to speak out  
and keep speaking out  
against violence in all its forms.

We as women  
are standing up  
together  
we have arrived  
we have come of age  
we are fully human  
fully called  
fully committed to living out that call  
to serving together with all who serve  
to bring in the reign of God.

**Notes**

---

---

---

---

*Please send your feedback for this tool to  
gendersa@nca.no or consultancy@pacsa.org.za*



# Tool 10: Gender based violence: health, development and the Gospel



---

***“No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this outrageous thing. This kind of thing should not happen in Israel.”***

Tamar, in 2 Samuel 13:1-23

---

## Tool 10 contents

The personal costs.....	164
Why should gender based violence be a concern for churches? .....	166
Consequences of gender based violence (GBV) .....	167
Why is gender based violence a health issue? .....	168
Why is gender based violence a development issue? .....	168
Why is gender based violence (GBV) a Gospel issue? .....	169
Where does GBV happen?.....	169
Types of GBV .....	170
State, collective or public gender based violence .....	170
Individual forms of gender based violence .....	171
GBV in the Bible .....	172
Responding to gender based violence in our congregation and community.....	173
Domestic violence .....	173
Rape .....	175
What can the Church do to prevent gender based violence? .....	178
Speaking out .....	179
International and national campaigns .....	180
Optional group exercises .....	181
Closing ritual.....	184

## The personal costs



### Time to talk

Read through the story extracts and talk about the questions, below.

*“When I was younger I felt confident about myself and my own achievements. I went to college, and I got a diploma. I had a close relationship with my family and my church.*

*Then I married. From the beginning of the marriage, my husband struggled to accept that I was more educated than him. He seemed angered by my confidence and my thoughts. He soon began to abuse me emotionally and physically.*

*I asked my family for help but they said that I was now married and had to accept my husband’s authority.*

*I went to my pastor for help. He came to our home to counsel us. He told me that my husband was the head of the household, and that I should not question his actions. He said that I had made trouble for myself by thinking that I was too clever. To my husband he said nothing.*

*Not long after that my husband tried to kill me. That night I ran from my home. I ran from my church. I have never been back to either.” Catherine, Malawi (slightly adapted)*

- What are some of the consequences of the gender based violence that Catherine has been through? How do you think she is feeling?
- Her church was clearly concerned. Do you agree with the way her pastor handled it?
- What would you want the leaders of your church to do?
- What would you do?

### ***A beautiful room full of light***

*When I look at this room it brings me joy,  
happiness and my heart beats fast  
When I look at it, but then you came into that room  
You destroyed everything you made it a dark evil room  
The bed that was full of red roses is now full of red blood.  
I dare not look at that mirror I see a sad girl tears dropping down  
there is darkness  
I can feel some shadow in the dark  
a sparkling nightgown is not shiny anymore  
it's all in pieces and full of blood  
when I look at the bed again I see a body  
sleeping, a body without breath, arm without warmth,  
mouth without a smile, eyes full of tears  
in their sleep I cannot wake it up but the  
room is about to fall apart.*

***A poem for my rapist: The Fear of a Dark Room*** written by a 12 year old girl who was raped when she was 9, and whose rape case came before court, quoted in *The Witness* 11<sup>th</sup> April 2014, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

- How does this poem make you feel?
- What are the consequences of the abuses that this little girl has suffered? How do you think she is feeling?
- How do you think this will affect her in the future? Think about her self-confidence, her relationships, her hope and energy to take charge of her life and earn her own livelihood.
- Imagine this little girl was in your Sunday School:
  - Why should the church be concerned about her?
  - What would you want your church leaders to do?
  - What would you do?

## Why should gender based violence be a concern for churches?



Source: Gender Links

All forms of gender based violence are criminal acts and are against the law of the land. Any form of violence is contrary to the Law of God, and any actions that harm anyone or prevent them from living in peace and/or fulfilling their potential, has to be of concern for churches.

But churches cannot just instruct women to play their expected roles as a way to avoid violence.

The church's response needs to be prophetic and follow the example of Jesus, who did not tolerate any form of abuse by those with power.<sup>54</sup>

If we are honest as churches, we must admit that we have been slow to deal with this social ill, both in our communities and right in our own churches.

Why?

- Sometimes narrow interpretations of isolated verses in the Bible, such as those about women submitting to their husbands (e.g. Ephesians 5:22-26) are used to justify the use of force against women or a husband's use of violence to enforce 'discipline' in the home.

**Violence** is about using force to maintain power over others.

**Gender Based Violence** refers to all forms of violence towards women, men, girls and boys because of unequal power relations between genders.

**Perpetrators and victims:** Research has shown that it is mostly men or boys perpetrating violence against women or girls both in private and public spaces. Sometimes women or girls also perpetrate violence on the men or boys close to them. But it is very rare for women to be violent towards men in public, during wars, or towards men they do not know.

<sup>54</sup> See for example, Jesus' reaction when the woman was caught in adultery (John 8: 3-11). If you want to explore the Bible more, turn to Tool 3.

- Sometimes church leaders have chosen to turn a blind eye to gender based violence, because it is difficult to confront, and can break down relationships with important or wealthy members of congregations (or even their very own church leaders) for fear that they may withhold their tithes.

- Can you think of other reasons?
- Talk about gender based violence in your own church. Is it talked about? Is there support for victims and survivors? Are perpetrators dealt with? Would you be heard if you brought it up? What would it take for you to be heard?

But recently there are more voices in the church that speak up against gender based violence.

This tool aims to better equip leaders and members of the church to speak up, but also to prevent violence and to help victims of gender based violence.

## Consequences of gender based violence (GBV)

*"Violence against women is a health issue and a development issue. It also flies in the face of God-given human dignity and is therefore an urgent Gospel issue."*  
Terrie Robinson<sup>55</sup>



### Time to talk

Read through some of the points about the consequences of GBV below.

- Talk about those that interest you, and add any others you can think of.
- How can the church (and you) help victims to overcome some of these consequences and move from being a victim to becoming a strong survivor?

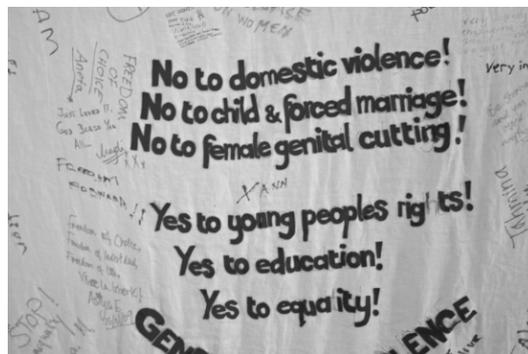
<sup>55</sup> Terrie Robinson 2012. *Anglican Communion Publication - Resource on the 16 Days Campaign*. 2013. [terrie.robinson@anglicancommunion.org](mailto:terrie.robinson@anglicancommunion.org).

## Why is gender based violence a health issue?

GBV can result in **physical injuries**, like genital and other wounds and bruises, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV; and can cause unwanted pregnancies that cause serious health risks, especially in girls and teenagers because their bodies are not ready to give birth.

But much deeper scars are caused by the **mental and emotional trauma**:

- Victims may become hysterical or go into shock. They may often panic about anything, have nightmares, hate themselves and feel shame, feel deep anger, hatred, and even guilt - as if they did something to cause the gender based violence.
- Later, victims may suffer from clinical depression, eating disorders, or abuse alcohol and drugs to escape the pain. They may feel unable to trust anyone and destroy their close relationships.
- Girls often fail at school and women lose their jobs because they can no longer concentrate and work effectively.
- Children who witness gender based violence in their homes may be deeply scarred, and end up becoming victims, or perpetrators themselves in later life.



Source: [www.wikimedia.org](http://www.wikimedia.org)

## Why is gender based violence a development issue?

- If girls drop out of school because they cannot concentrate or are pregnant as a result of rape, they will not be able to fulfil their career dreams and often end up in domestic or menial jobs, or never have the confidence to work.
- Women may be less productive in their jobs, or even lose them, because of the effects of violence or if they have to deal with ongoing abuse.
- If women have to move away from their family or community, it can be hard for them to find a job or run a business without the financial support of their network of contacts.
- Women who are injured, ill, traumatised or have unwanted pregnancies (mostly because they have contracted HIV) as a result of different forms of abuse, will obviously be unable to contribute to the livelihoods of their families and communities.
- More than that, a sick person in the house is a huge drain on financial resources, and if they need a carer, it will mean one less person able to bring in a livelihood to the home. HIV is a common result of rape, especially in countries where Post-Exposure Prophylaxis is not available.
- Finally, human trafficking is also regarded as GBV and is a modern form of slavery (with over 300 000 people trafficked worldwide every year). Apart from the massive and tragic cost to the individual's loved ones, it also drains families and communities of people who might contribute actively to the household, community and/or national economy.

## Why is gender based violence (GBV) a Gospel issue?

Anything that deprives someone of their freedom and joy in life contradicts Jesus' promise of abundant life for all. And the Gospels show that Jesus was strongly opposed to any abuse of power, especially when it harmed or marginalised the most vulnerable in society.

Nowhere in the Gospels is there any indication that Jesus had in mind different kinds of freedom for men and for women. In fact, Jesus broke many cultural and religious rules of his time in the ways he related to women, and He even chose a woman as the first evangelist to bring the Good News of His resurrection to His male disciples! (Read more in Tool 3.)

And even in the Old and New Testaments, we hear the prophets condemning social injustices, greed and oppression. (e.g. Isaiah 1, Amos 5: 11-15).

## Where does GBV happen?

It can happen anywhere – at home, in the street, at a nightclub or tavern, at a party with friends, at work, school, or even in church.

Sometimes it can be seen in public and other times it is hidden.

It is more likely to happen if a family, community, gang or group of friends accepts domination as a normal part of relationships, or there is a history of using violence to solve problems.

This enables those who are stronger physically or who have a higher status, to abuse their power and hurt or limit the freedom of others.

The social and economic pressures of living in an unequal society, like unemployment, poverty, substance abuse and peer pressure are often used to

### Types of Gender Based Violence

People often think that gender based violence is about physical beating or rape. Actually, there are many ways that a person can use their power inappropriately or inflict violence on their partner (called BATTERING).

These include:

**Physical abuse:** slapping, punching, kicking, shoving, choking, stabbing and shooting. It can lead to hospitalisation, disability or even death.

**Sexual abuse:** *any* forced sexual activity (not just intercourse), including rape. Sexual abuse often starts with degrading jokes, name-calling and unwanted touching.

**Emotional, verbal and psychological abuse:** At its mildest, it is making the partner feel useless, or just ignoring her needs and expecting her to meet his needs only.

It often involves extreme jealousy, and a need to criticise and control. It may include threats to hurt himself or the victim, her property or children, or he may terrorise her or force her to do degrading things.

**Economic abuse:** Money is used to undermine or control the partner, either spending it all or controlling every cent, even accusing her of stealing. Women's economic dependence often stops them from leaving an abusive situation.

**Spiritual violence:** A woman's faith is used to keep her from finding help, insisting that she must endure, submit, and return to her partner, or else God will punish her. This is justified by using the Bible literally or out of context.

explain why gender based violence happens. While these are terrible pressures for anyone to have to live under, these cannot be used to excuse this behaviour. Many people who experience these pressures do not end up being abusive to others.



Gender based violence hinders the ability for a woman or man to live an abundant life as God intended.  
[www.cuatla.vigo.es](http://www.cuatla.vigo.es)

## Types of GBV

### State, collective or public gender based violence

GBV does not just happen between individuals. The following can all impose violence on women, children or marginalised men (e.g. homosexuals, disabled, or those perceived to be weak):

- the policies, laws and actions of the state such as the police, army or courts; or tribal authorities.
- the schemes and acts of gangs and criminal syndicates.
- policies, regulations and actions of organisations like businesses and churches.

Examples:

- Coercion, intimidation, 'wolf-whistling' in the streets, or direct physical violence.
- Sexual violence - sexual harassment in the workplace or in the street, rape as a weapon of war, gang warfare or punishment for political dissidents or other prisoners in prison.
- Forcing children to become soldiers. Sometimes girls that are forced to join, or women that choose to join, armies that identify themselves as liberation armies have been reported to have to offer their bodies as part of their 'service'.
- Economic violence:
  - human and sexual trafficking, child pornography;
  - reserving jobs for men, paying women lower salaries than men for the same jobs;
  - excluding women from education and training opportunities.

- Cyber-violence – cyber porn and cyber bullying (circulating intimate pictures or untrue stories of people via facebook, mixit, whatsapp or related media).
- Cultural violence – cultural practices that limit a woman's decisions, 'corrective rape' of homosexual men and women, kidnapping and forced marriage, widow inheritance, 'love potions' that harm women and girls, enforcing 'dry sex', genital cutting, etc. It could also be deliberately ignoring or misinterpreting positive cultural beliefs that protect women and girls (e.g. communal parenting, ubuntu).

A little-talked about form of GBV is **street harassment**. It is widespread. It makes women feel insecure and anxious, and restricts where they feel safe to walk. Gillian Schutte calls it "a form of low-grade war on women in public...". Hawley Fogg-Davis calls it "sexual terrorism". *The Witness* newspaper, April 14, 2014.



## Time to talk

Talk about examples of State, public or collective GBV. How can it best be combatted?

## Individual forms of gender based violence

As described above, there are many ways that individuals with social or physical power can overpower and harm others. Some are quite obvious, but we sometimes do not recognise some of the more subtle forms of violence, and so do nothing to prevent it or help victims.



## Time to talk

### Recognising forms of GBV

Read the short stories below, and talk about the different kinds of abuse described.

- What types of abuse are involved? (There may be more than one.)
- Does this type of violence occur in your community?
- How does or should the church respond?
- How do you, or would you like to, respond?

1. Pule and Ingrid have 5 children. Pule owns a nice car, which he is paying off. Ingrid is pregnant again. Pule does not allow his wife to use contraception because his church says it is wrong. He does not allow her to work and gives her a small monthly allowance for the household. When it is used up, she has to ask neighbours and friends to share their food with them.
2. Godfrey believes in disciplining his family. He gives his 15 year old daughter a good hiding when she is naughty. And his wife is careful not to argue with him, especially when he is drunk, because she knows he will beat her.
3. Jacob never hits Margaret. But he shouts at her for small things and likes to get his way, and so she tries to please him all the time. She also knows to give him sex when he wants it, because he just takes her by force anyway and then it hurts her.
4. *"I once got slapped by a guy who was trying to hit on me and I wouldn't respond to his advances. The scary thing was that it was in a busy downtown area taxi rank. A lot of people saw it happen, but not one person did a thing. I just walked off crying. And when you don't return men's advances in town, you get called a whore or a bitch, just because you didn't say hello back!" Mbali*

## GBV in the Bible

There are stories of sexual and other gender based violence in the Bible. But these are hardly ever talked about in churches. Some of them involve kings and prophets of God, so the stories are difficult to talk about. But they teach us a lot, and can be powerful tools to help open up the conversation about GBV in our churches.

Some examples of what UJAMAA<sup>56</sup> calls 'texts of terror' include:

- The rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-23 (Tamar is quoted in the heading of this tool).
- The story about the host in Judges 19:9-30, who offered his own daughters to be sent out to an angry mob of men to be raped in place of his honoured male guest; and the guest who in the end sent out his own concubine (a sex slave, who also may become a companion or common law wife) to be gang raped all night, until she collapsed and died outside the door in the early morning.

---

<sup>56</sup> The term was first coined by feminist theologian Phyllis Trible in the 1970s. UJAMAA is a faith based organisation that has developed a contextual approach to studying Biblical texts, and has used this approach effectively in tackling difficult texts.



## Time to talk

### King David desires and takes Bathsheba<sup>57</sup>

Read 2 Samuel 11:2-17, and 26-27.

This story is partly about sexual abuse, because David desired Bathsheba and so took her, had sex with her and made her pregnant. But as is often the case, one sin leads to another; and to hide what he had done, he tried first to trick her husband, a soldier in David's army, and then went so far as to have him moved to the front line, where he was sure to be killed.

- Sum up what happens in the story?
- Who are the characters, and what are their roles?
- In what ways did David misuse his power?
- Who was harmed in the process, and how do you think they felt?
- Do you think God's chosen leaders still sometimes misuse their power in this way? (Do you think Bathsheba chose to betray her husband, lose him and then live with the king?)
- How do you think the religious authorities should have dealt with them? (Read 2 Samuel 12:1-14).
- What do you think a church should do if one of their leaders behaved in a similar fashion?

## Responding to gender based violence in our congregation and community<sup>58</sup>

### Domestic violence

#### How will you know if someone is in an abusive relationship?

Usually a woman in an abusive relationship is anxious, and acts fearful around her partner. It might even happen that the partner is rude to her or about her in public.

At other times, she might have bruises or wounds on her body.

<sup>57</sup> Thanks to Christian Council of Lesotho, from which this is adapted.

<sup>58</sup> Much of this Tool is adapted from PACSA 2011. *Gender Based Violence: Churches and Counsellors Make a Difference!* Pietermaritzburg. PACSA as well as *Gender, Violence and HIV/AIDS: A workbook for churches and communities*. 2007. Pietermaritzburg. PACSA. With permission.

Many people who are in abusive relationships do not see themselves as victims. Some even blame themselves. But do not wait until it becomes severe before you try to help.

### What can you do to help?

## The cycle of violence

**PHASE 1**

### Tension building phase

The batterer starts putting down or attacking his partner verbally or emotionally, or starts with threats. The woman tries to calm him and please him. The tension becomes unbearable. This stage can last between a few minutes and several months.

**PHASE 2**

### Abuse phase - explosion

Tension that built up in phase 1 erupts into violence, often serious. The man loses control. This stage can last a few minutes or a few days.

**PHASE 3**

### Calm / honeymoon / remorse stage

After the battering incident, the abuser may become extremely loving, kind and sorry, showering her with gifts or attention. He may beg for forgiveness and promise it will never happen again. He may be genuinely sorry for what he has done and cannot understand his own behaviour. He may again seem like the man she fell in love with. This can confuse the woman, and early on she may even doubt that it was abuse.

**BUT** - it is not long before the loving behaviour gives way to small battering incidents and a new cycle of violence begins. The cycle keeps turning because of denial.

### Getting out

To get out of the abusive cycle, the woman needs to understand what is happening, recognise it is not her fault, and get help. The abuser usually has to be forced to confront the consequences of his behaviour, like losing his family, before accepting help. This may never happen, even if it looks like he has changed briefly during the "honeymoon stage".

**NOTE**  
that these same forms of violence can be perpetrated by women against their men, but this is much less common.

Both the victim and the abuser tend to have low self-esteem, so it can be difficult to approach the situation. Try to be very sensitive.

**If you are asked to help in an abusive situation,** make sure you **believe** the person who is being abused and do not take sides with the stronger or more convincing person, especially if he blames her.

**Assess the danger.** Do not force the victim to go home. Only contact the abuser if the victim asks you to. Check if there are children. Ask the victim if she thinks they will be safe at home or what would be best for them. Trust the victim's judgement.

Keep a record of organisations or services who can help, and **contact** the nearest and most appropriate one. If necessary, find the victim and the children a place to stay. Do NOT tell the abusive partner where the victim is. Refer the victim and children to trauma counselling as needed.

**Later on, try to speak to the perpetrator** and encourage him to go for counselling too. (But do not try to get them to go together.) No quick salvation will do the trick. Remember, to get the church on his side, making a commitment to Jesus can be a pretence. There is often a history of trauma in the life of an abusive person that he needs to deal with, and/or he may need to find ways to develop stronger self-esteem, so he can heal himself. But healing for a perpetrator can take a very long time, and only the perpetrator can walk this journey.

It may be necessary for the victim to obtain a **court order** or **protection order**. Refer her to someone who can assist, or find out exactly what is involved and help her yourself.

**Much later**, when both have received counselling support, they may wish to reconcile. But remember the abuse cycle, and make sure this is not just the 'honeymoon phase', because the cycle is bound to begin again.

Support the different members of the family to rebuild their lives, as and when they request it.

### What NOT to do!

DO NOT try to solve the problem alone. Bring in someone qualified or refer the victim to someone you trust.

DO NOT minimise what the victim is sharing. People usually find it hard to share such things – so you can be sure the situation is bound to be worse than they say.

DO NOT tell her to submit to her partner. Victims are often blamed by their abusive partner, and you will only make her feel worse.

DO NOT side with the perpetrator. It is always safer to side with the victim, as she is the most vulnerable.

DO NOT refer couples in an abusive relationship to counselling, mediation or communication workshops. These processes assume that both partners have equal power in the relationship, which is never the case in abusive relationships. Counselling also assumes both partners will take responsibility, but in abusive relationships usually the victim is made to feel to blame. A victim is unlikely to tell the truth anyway, out of fear of being 'punished' later.

In violent homes, divorce is not what breaks up the family. The abuse has done that long before. Divorce is often the painful public acknowledgement that the relationship has been broken for a long time.

## Rape

### How will you know if someone has been raped?

A rape survivor may show physical and psychological symptoms immediately after the assault:

#### Physical:

- Genital injury
- Pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted infections and HIV
- Additional injuries may result from being struck, pushed, stabbed or shot.

## Psychological:

### *Short term responses:*

Most victims experience

- fear
- nightmares
- sleep problems
- anger
- embarrassment
- shame
- guilt

or a combination of the above. Immediately after an assault, a victim's behaviour can range

- from talkativeness, tenseness, crying and trembling
- to shock and disbelief without showing emotions, just smiling, or not moving.

### *Later responses:*

- avoidance reactions
- physical exhaustion
- never expressing emotion
- anger that may be displaced on to helpers.

## Long term effects of rape

Most rape survivors find a way to live with what has happened to them. But long term effects include what is called post-traumatic stress disorder. **Symptoms** include:

- Flashbacks
- Upsetting thoughts or images
- Avoiding situations, thoughts or feelings that cause them to remember
- Sleep difficulties
- Irritability
- Concentration problems
- Depression and withdrawal from people
- Feeling helpless and hopeless, which may lead to suicidal feelings.

## What can you do to help, and what should you NOT do?

The most important ways to help a survivor is to be an **emotional support**.

- DO NOT let the survivor believe it is their fault
- Be gentle and DO NOT overwhelm them with information
- Support whatever action they took during the rape – the most important thing is that they have survived
- If possible, DO stay with the survivor when they go to report the rape and have a medical examination. The questions and examinations can feel like another trauma, so it is vital that someone is there who cares for them and will protect them if needed.

Be sensitive not to pressurise someone who is not a Christian. The most powerful witness in a time of crisis is your compassionate presence.

But **practical help** is also really useful:

- Advise the victim / survivor to report the rape and get medical help.
- Some countries have one-stop care centres, but where these do not exist, help the survivor go to the police to lay a charge, and to a district surgeon for a medical examination and to gather evidence to support your case.
- If they are very anxious, ask the doctor for something to calm them and help them sleep
- Advise them not to wash until the medical examination is completed; ask someone to bring them fresh clothes if possible, or sometimes police have a care pack containing clothes
- If possible, try to make sure the survivor sees a trauma counsellor immediately, or make the earliest possible appointment for them.
- HIV – The threat of HIV is very real.
  - Help the survivor access a post-exposure prophylaxis pack if these are available in your country. Insist on getting one within 72 hours if these are legally available. Or take the survivor to a private doctor as soon as possible to access one if necessary and finances allow.
  - To access this, the survivor will need to take an immediate HIV test. Advise them to do this, but make sure they get proper pre- and post-test counselling. If they are already positive, make sure they get a pack of vitamins and a follow up appointment to assess treatment options.
  - ARV treatment can have unpleasant side-effects, and the survivor needs to be warned about these. They can be even worse after rape, because they are likely to feel nauseous or suffer other physical effects of the trauma already.
- As a Christian, DO NOT link HIV with sin and God's punishment, as this can play into the tendency for rape victims to blame themselves anyway.

Most important is to be a friend to the survivor, and make sure that their support system is able to be there for them if the survivor would like them to be.

**Rape is one of the most traumatic experiences a person can have**, because of all the confused emotions it causes. Like domestic violence victims, rape survivors often blame themselves. They also feel dirty and disgusted by their own bodies, which can lead to sexual problems in intimate relationships in the future. Some are overwhelmed by fear and may isolate themselves and trust no one. If people respond in ways that make light of their experience, judge them or excuse the perpetrator, this can add much to their suffering and slow their recovery.

## What can the Church do to prevent gender based violence?



### Time to talk

It is said that the best way to respond to gender based violence is to prevent it!

- Take some time to brainstorm your ideas for what your church can do, in your context, to make sure that gender based violence does not occur amongst your members.
- How can your church use its influence in your community to help prevent gender based violence?

Only look at the ideas below once you have shared your own ideas that are appropriate in your context.

Church members and leaders may consider the following in their quest to prevent gender based violence:

- Be adult role models and friends to children and youth who do not have such people in their lives.
- Teach children and youth about self-respect, and healthy sexuality. "Train a child in the way they should go, and when they are old they will not turn from it." (Proverbs 22:6)
- Speak; pray; preach about gender based violence.
- Invite speakers, organise events to address gender based violence in the church or community.
- Create safe spaces, or safe environments for the survivors to tell their stories.
- Examine the church's theology for teaching that condones oppression of women and hierarchical relationships amongst women and men.
- Examine how the church socialises girls and boys, and young women and men into stereotyped roles and promotes prejudiced attitudes.
- Learn about organisations and people to whom you can make referrals.

*Violence between women and men, boys and girls, causes permanent damage to their relationships and can sometimes even kill. It is contrary to God's plan for us, and even breaks up communities. So it is better for the church to contribute to building life-giving relationships than to try to fix problems when damage has already been done. Karen Buckenham, PACSA 1999*

## Speaking out

The Church has a responsibility to speak out against all forms of gender based violence in society. Many churches have begun to take up these issues when incidents occur in the media. But very few speak up to challenge social norms, stereotypes and attitudes that undermine the dignity of women and / or give undue power to men.



US Army T-shirt campaign against domestic violence.  
[www.en\\_wikimedia.org](http://www.en_wikimedia.org)

One statement that does go beyond superficial condemnation of GBV is the joint Zambian Church Declaration on Gender Injustice and Gender Based Violence:<sup>59</sup>

*“In some cases, churches have been insensitive to gender based violence by either creating fertile ground for men’s abuse of power within their families through counselling and preaching based on wrong interpretations of some Scriptures, or by maintaining structures, attributed to some religious traditions, that are insensitive to issues of gender and power imbalances”.*

Other church declarations and statements that have been made include the following:

- Statement from the Justice & Peace Department of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference on gender violence in South Africa. Posted on 4 March, 2013 by SACBC Justice and Peace Department.
- Joint Statement signed in 2010 by religious leaders in Lesotho on Gender Equality, including leaders of all major faith groups (and not just Christians) which makes a public commitment to *“promoting gender equality, universal love and inclusion for all, men and women, boys and girls, to ending gender based violence, human trafficking and gender injustices”*.
- A letter written by the men in the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa in 2008, confessing sexism as a sin and asking forgiveness from the women in the church, and committing themselves to mobilising men to be part of transforming gender power relations in the church.
- An Anglican Church in Southern Africa (ACSA) declaration committing a number of bishops to no longer tolerating any forms of gender based violence and injustice in their dioceses.

The question remains to what extent these public statements have led the churches to opening up safe spaces for victims of violence to come forward, talk about their pain, and find healing. It is important that our churches develop ministries to victims to help them become survivors.

<sup>59</sup> This Declaration was launched in 2009 after a process of intense discussion amongst the member churches and offices of the three main Mother Bodies: Christian Council in Zambia, Zambia Episcopal Council and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia.

Churches need also be careful to not condone any forms of domination of women or girls by the way it conducts its own affairs, as this can send a subtle message that male domination is acceptable and normal.



Men join the fight against GBV and the link with HIV.

*Brothers for Life: [www.brothersforlife.org](http://www.brothersforlife.org).*

## International and national campaigns

There are at least 3 international campaigns that help mobilise people to change their attitudes and behaviours in relation to gender based violence:

- **16 Days against violence against women and children** – every year from 25 November to 16 December. This international campaign is based on an annual theme, and governments, civil society organisations and some churches use the opportunity to host a variety of public events and awareness raising activities in their local regions. [www.16days.org](http://www.16days.org)
- **Tamar Campaign in churches** – Started by UJAMAA in South Africa. This campaign uses the 2 Samuel text of the rape of Tamar in churches in Southern Africa to raise awareness of GBV in the Bible, challenge churches to speak about GBV and create safe spaces for women and men to talk about GBV. [ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/everything/tamar1.sflb.ashx](http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/everything/tamar1.sflb.ashx)
- **Thursdays in Black** – started in Argentina in the 1970s to mourn for all the women and girls that were going missing and being raped and abused during the military dictatorship. The campaign was taken up by the World Council of Churches in 1980s, as a peaceful way of saying 'I support the human right of women to live in a world without violence, rape and fear.' The focus of the WCC campaign was a peaceful protest against rape and violence – the by-products of war and conflict. The campaign focuses on ways that individuals can challenge attitudes that cause rape and violence. Nowadays, because of high levels of GBV even in countries that are not at war, it has spread across the world, including South Africa. The campaign encourages gender activists to wear black as a gesture of mourning for all those who have suffered GBV, and to mobilise men and women to speak out against all forms of GBV. [www.thursdaysinblack.co.za](http://www.thursdaysinblack.co.za)

- The SADC Gender Protocol Barometer** – The Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance, consisting of 15 country networks and 8 theme groups, began campaigning for the SADC Protocol in 2005 and for governments to ratify and sign the Protocol (thus committing themselves to the targets as set out to be achieved by 2015). The Alliance is currently campaigning for its implementation, and monitoring the progress being made by governments and civil society. The Alliance produces an annual 'barometer' report based on extensive case studies and summits that take place in the different member countries. [www.sadcgenderprotocol.org](http://www.sadcgenderprotocol.org), [www.genderlinks.org.za](http://www.genderlinks.org.za)

All of these campaigns are rooted to a greater or lesser degree in the international conventions and protocols described in Tool 5.

## Optional group exercises

The group exercises below can arouse deep emotions amongst participants, and should only be used when the facilitator is able to handle this, or a qualified person is present to help with any counselling that might be needed.



### Time to talk

Read the following poem, and then talk about it using the questions that follow:

#### Rape

*There is no difference between being raped  
and being pushed down a flight of cement steps  
except the wounds also bleed inside.*

*There is no difference between being raped  
and being run over by a truck  
except that afterwards men ask you if you enjoyed it.*

*There is no difference between being raped  
and losing a hand in a mowing machine  
except that doctors don't want to get involved  
and police wear a knowing smirk,  
and in small towns you become a veteran whore.*

*There is no difference between being raped  
and being bitten on the ankle by a snake  
except that people ask you if your skirt was short  
and why you were out alone anyhow.*

*There is no difference between being raped  
and going head first through a windshield  
except that afterwards  
you are afraid  
not of cars but of half the human race.*  
Marge Piercy<sup>60</sup>

### Questions for Reflection

- How do you feel after reading this poem? Why do you feel this way? (Share as much as you feel comfortable to share if you are in a group.)
- The poem explores a number of social beliefs about rape.
  - List the beliefs that Marge Piercy mentions.
  - Which ones are true, and which are not? What evidence do you have that they are true? What evidence is there that they are not true?
  - What are some implications for counsellors, or what kinds of responses are helpful or not helpful when someone shares that they have been raped?
- What are some of the wounds that may “bleed inside” for a rape victim (verse 1)? One is mentioned in the last verse, but can you think of others? Are any related to the social beliefs about rape?



Thursdays in Black Campaign:  
A delegate at the International  
Conference on HIV and STIs in  
Africa (ICASA) in Geneva signs  
a pledge to fight gender based  
violence in his context.  
Source: [www.cabsa.org.za](http://www.cabsa.org.za)

Fatherhood programmes in different  
countries are communicating that being  
a devoted father is part of what it  
means to be a real man, and makes life  
worthwhile. Source: *Tawanda Makusha*



<sup>60</sup> Marge Piercy is a poet, novelist and social activist born in Detroit, USA and she now lives in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.



## Time to talk

### What does it take to be a man? A Reflective exercise for men<sup>61</sup>

Read the following story and discuss the questions given below.

#### Bongani's story:

*I grew up in apartheid South Africa where violence was an integral part of everyday life.*

*Different political parties fought with each other in verbal as well as physical abuse. As a product of such a context, I grew up believing that violence was a necessary part of life. In the home front, my father was usually drunk. Every time he was in that drunken state, he used to abuse my mother. Though, as children, we knew that what he was doing was bad, as a boy, I started believing that beating up women was necessary to the understanding of what it means to be a man. As I grew up, I started behaving likewise to girls.*

*This continued even after I got married. I would beat up my wife for whatever reason that I could find. After all, my mother used to be beaten so why my wife should be spared? However, in 2005 my wife decided to leave me because she could not take my abuse anymore. When she left, I was in utter despair. I realized that I had to do something about my life, especially about how I understood being a man in relationship to women. I joined the Men's Forum run in my community by Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA). Together with other men, we wrestled with the gender stereotypical understanding of being men and women that most of us were socialised into from very young ages.*

*Through PACSA gender workshops, we had to rethink what it means to be a man. We embarked on deconstructing such conceptions so as to be re-socialised into positive images of being man. We had to start thinking ourselves in terms of being part of the solution especially to violence against women. One of PACSA's policies is that after*

<sup>61</sup>Adapted from Dr Fulata Moyo, November 2010. In: *Created in God's Image: From Hegemony to Partnership. A Church Manual on Men as Partners: Promoting Positive Masculinities*. Edited by Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth and Philip Vinod Peacock. Switzerland: World Communion of Reformed Churches and World Council of Churches. Bongani is a member of uMphithi Men's Forum, a community partner of PACSA, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

*you get such a training, to enhance your own change, you have to embark on sharing what you have learnt with other men in your own community. The question I have been dealing with while working in my own community has been: How can I contribute to building a mutual community of men and women where there is gender justice and peace?*

In age groups (for example: 18- 30, 31- 45, 46- 56, 57 above), discuss the following questions:

- Does Bongani's story sound familiar? Discuss.
- Do you have men like Bongani in your communities?
- Who are they? What are their stories?
- What reasons do such men give for their abuse of women?
- What role did your father/uncle/older brother play in shaping your conception of masculinity?
- Did the church play any role in shaping your understanding of being a man?
- Share Biblical verses that have influenced your gender identity.
- What role are you playing in shaping the boys and young men in your life?

## Closing ritual

Make a circle and in the middle put a round container with some sand in it to act as an altar. Distribute a candle to each participant. Give an opportunity to each participant to go to the centre of the circle, light their candle and plant it in a heap of sand while saying a silent prayer of healing for someone they know who is a victim of gender based abuse. If anyone in the group is able to remember a time when they themselves have abused someone, they can also offer a silent prayer of confession. Someone in the group may want to offer a prayer of healing in closing.

## Notes

---

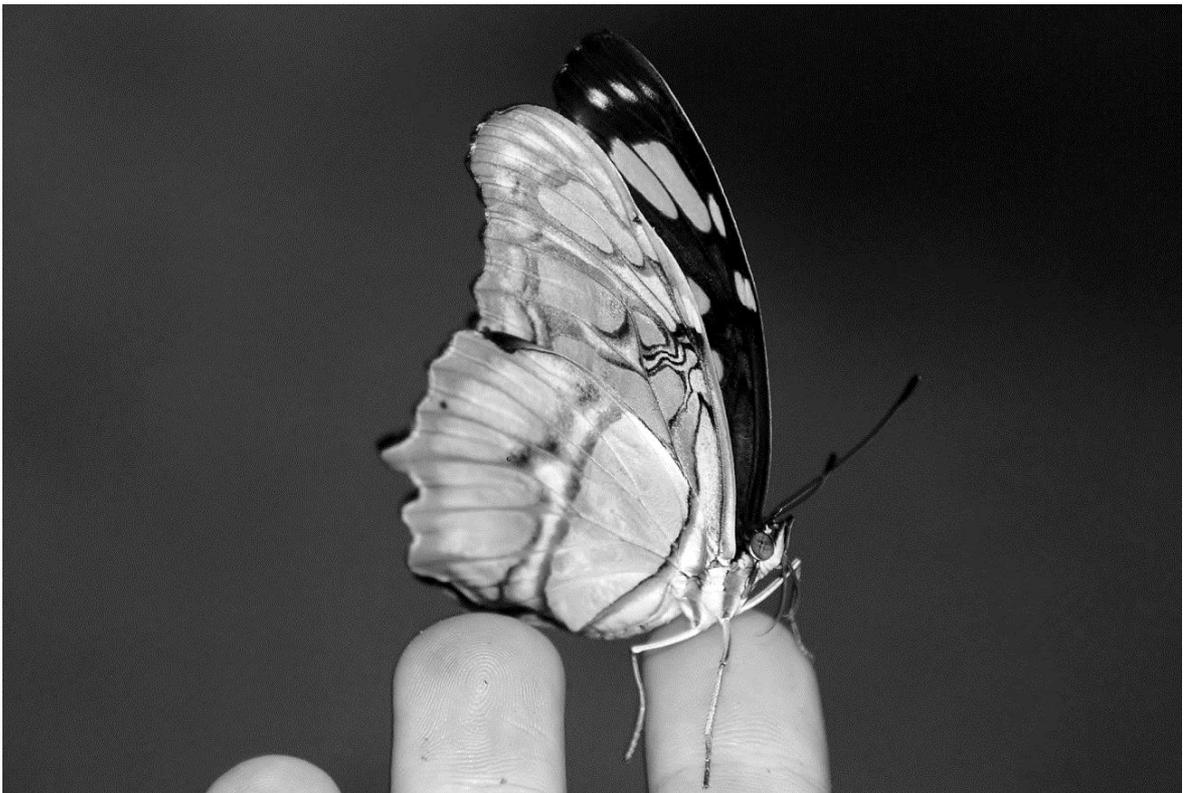
---

---

---

*Please send your feedback for this tool to  
gendersa@nca.no or consultancy@pacsa.org.za*

# Tool 11: Working for change



---

***"[If] all church departments were actively involved in the shaping of new ideals to manhood, society would be transformed in a radical way."***

Ezra Chitando

---

## Tool 11 contents

Ideas for working on ourselves .....	187
Specific ideas for getting going in your church .....	187
Steps in developing a gender transformation strategy for your congregation or organisation .....	188
How long does this take?.....	189
Step 1: Identifying suitable people and resources, and involving the best people .....	189
Step 2: Situation analysis – conducting a church gender audit .....	192
Step 3: Identifying focus areas .....	194
Step 4: Making strategic decisions .....	195
Step 5: Developing objectives and activities .....	196
Step 6: Implementing your plans .....	199
Step 7: Monitoring and evaluation .....	199
Conclusion .....	200

In this tool, you will find some ideas about working to improve the way that churches recognise and deal with issues of gender equality. It also contains guidelines on how to draw up a Gender Transformation strategy for your church or faith based organisation. You may find this useful, because it is often difficult to turn good intentions into concrete actions.

Add a short paragraph - This tool starts with some ideas for working on ourselves, because we cannot expect others to change unless we are prepared to accept that challenge too. It then goes on to some ideas for raising awareness within your church, and finally offers a step by step guide for planning your work to bring about the changes that are relevant and meaningful for your church in your specific community.



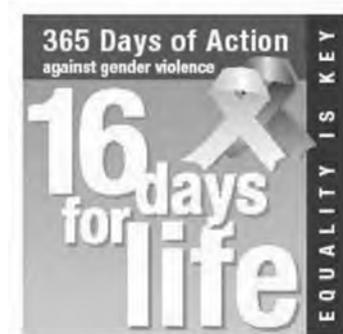
Bishop of Møre in Norway, Ingeburg Midttømme, working for change in communities during her visit to South Africa. *Source: Norwegian Church Aid*

## Ideas for working on ourselves

- ✓ Read more about gender issues. See the list below for suggestions.
- ✓ Speak to women and men you know who are gender activists.
- ✓ Talk about these ideas with trusted friends and/or family.
- ✓ Know what organisations, such as ecumenical agencies and NGOs, are working in your area. They are often great resources for information and networking.

## Specific ideas for getting going in your church

- ✓ A good place to start is by doing a gender audit in your church. Follow the questions in this Toolkit to guide your own research.
- ✓ Sometimes programmes of information and formation can help women and men make better and more informed decisions. Where would be a good place to start in your church? What resources would you need to help you? What could be your first step?
- ✓ Make contact with women and men from other churches who might be involved in gender justice.
- ✓ Do not go it alone. Find other people in your church or community who are interested in working for gender justice. Form a committee and meet regularly to plan events and share information.
- ✓ Make plans to talk with church leaders, such as pastors and council members, about gender justice with a group of activists to share information and concerns. Remember, the process of “defrosting” around these issues can often take time. Many church leaders may not be interested at first. Be patient!
- ✓ Be informed and make announcements about community events to your church, such as the 16 Days of Activism against gender based violence campaign<sup>62</sup> and World AIDS Day.
- ✓ Join the campaign – from 16 Days of Activism to 365 Days of Action against gender based violence<sup>63</sup> so that every day becomes an opportunity to act against gender based violence.
- ✓ One way to keep awareness of GBV alive year-round is to join the campaign: Thursdays in Black, and adapt it for use in your church.<sup>64</sup>
- ✓ Organise a Bible study in your church. You can use the ideas in this Toolkit, as well as the resources listed below.



Logo designed by Gender Links and is open for use by all who campaign to make every day an opportunity to work against gender violence.

Source: Gender Links

<sup>62</sup> For more information about the global campaign go to: <http://16dayscwggl.rutgers.edu/>

<sup>63</sup> For more information on examples of what has taken place in Southern Africa during the 16 Days campaign go to: <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/gender-justice-16-days-of-peace> or [www.cabsa.org.za](http://www.cabsa.org.za) for examples on work done in the religious sector.

<sup>64</sup> For tools for use in this campaign, as well as useful written, audio and video materials on gender based violence, go to [www.ThursdaysinBlack.com](http://www.ThursdaysinBlack.com) or [www.cabsa.org.za](http://www.cabsa.org.za)



- ✓ Create your own wall of remembrance. Collect stories of women in your church or whom you know who have resisted gender injustice and tried to make a difference in your church or the community. Display their photographs or write their names on large sheets of paper in a prominent place. Spend time praying for them and remembering them.

These are just some ideas to get you started, which have been gathered from men and women in different churches in the 5 countries. Each of us will know best what might work in our own context. Every small step counts!

## Steps in developing a gender transformation strategy for your congregation or organisation<sup>65</sup>

Gender transformation is never easy. As we have seen throughout this Toolkit, gender inequality has become the norm in our societies, and most churches justify the way they do things based on deeply seated attitudes and theological arguments. Cultural and religious beliefs often support each other, and make it very hard for people to do things differently without it being understood as ill-discipline or a challenge to authority.

You have to work strategically. That means you have to keep your goal always in front of you, and plan each step carefully.

To start with, you have to 'break the ice' – how do you 'defrost' the church, so that people are even willing to talk about it and take it seriously? This means thinking carefully about who has the most influence in your church, and supporting them as they introduce the gender conversation amongst others with influence in the church.

It also means thinking carefully about what can realistically be done at any time, and in what order things need to be done so that you can build a movement for change in your church.

In the end, you want to see every part of the church, and every activity, being sensitive to the need for gender equality and to build respect for all church members, regardless of their sex, or even age or economic position. But who would be most open to make a start? And would others notice it and talk about it?

And, once they are talking, how can you help them to begin to do things differently?

This tool offers some guidance for thinking through your strategy: Who you need to involve (and why), what needs to be done first, when and how to go on to the next step/s, and how to monitor if and how things are changing in your church. If you keep monitoring how it's going, you can also change your strategy along the way to stay on track.

<sup>65</sup> This Tool is based on CABSAs Churches Channels of Hope training programme: *Step in Developing a Congregational HIV and AIDS Strategy*. See [www.cabsa.org.za](http://www.cabsa.org.za) for a large database of HIV and Gender related resources for use by churches and faith based organisations.



It is very easy for the gender transformation agenda to become invisible or even forgotten, because of the force of habit and people's resistance to change.

The 7 steps outlined in this tool can help you to stay on track, to deal with challenges along the way and to celebrate your achievements in order to give you courage to keep going.



## How long does this take?

While it is important to be well prepared, you can take the first two steps at the same time. You can undertake.... your gender audit research (Step 2), while you are still consolidating your gender transformation team (Step 1). Just do not cut corners with developing your team. This could be done by working through this Toolkit together, because you do not want to send out unclear or conflicting messages to your congregation.

So give yourselves at least a month to get your team together and draw in the relevant people you want to involve. Then you could decide to work through a short section of the Toolkit at the beginning of every meeting you hold to plan or organise activities.

The time taken for your Gender audit research will vary, depending on how many people you decide you need to speak to, and how many documents you want to study. It is up to your team to decide how deep you want to go based on how much time you have. Do not try to plan too much at once, and your planning process should not take more than one or two 2-3 hour meetings.

Many people are very busy, so it is important to get a good balance between how thorough you want to be within the amount of time people can give to this work. It is better to set realistic goals and embed your work thoroughly, than to be too ambitious and then end up dropping the whole thing because it is overwhelming.

## Step 1: Identifying suitable people and resources, and involving the best people

### Picking your Gender Transformation Team

Gender injustice is not something you can tackle alone. You need to find others in your congregation who also seem to be concerned to improve relationships between men and women in your church, and who are open to doing things differently, and form a team. Also make sure they are people who can give time to this, and who are reliable and hard working.



The ideal situation would be to draw in one of the people from senior leadership, either ordained or lay. You need to make sure that you have high-level support for gender transformation. A good way is to ask one of the senior leaders to be a member of your team, even if they cannot make every meeting. As long as you make sure you send them notes of all your meetings and keep them informed, they can become a useful advocate for you.

If you know of any people in community organisations that are working on gender transformation in your community, you might even ask a person from there to join. They can help you better understand what is happening in your community, and open the way for your church (when it is ready) to be involved in the community.

### Becoming a strong team

✓ **Agree on a shared understanding of your work:**

Work through Tools 1, 2 and the Glossary of Terms in Practical Tool 5 to make sure you all understand that you mean when you use the basic concepts. Also, decide together which terms you will use and how you will use them so that they make sense to those you want to work with. Share this Toolkit with them to work through on their own as well.

Then work through Tools 6, 7 and even 8 with them, and also go through the Gender Audit Template, which is Practical Tool 1 at the end of the toolkit.

✓ **Agree on your foundational values and ways of working:**

Teams often come apart because they have not agreed on the basics. Think of the ideas below, and add any others, or things you need to agree on to build a strong team.



The Bible is your most valuable and wise resource, but it needs to be approached with respect and care. Work through the Practical Tool 2 which gives guidelines for preparing and conducting Contextual Bible Studies, to help you agree on a common approach to the Bible. There are also many women and a few men in the Bible who can be role models and examples for us. Work through Tool 3 on Theology together, and explore



your own theological understandings together. This is important, because the Bible can be used by church leadership to undermine the work of gender transformation in the church, and you need to be able to answer those who challenge you.

You need to be able to **trust** each other, as members of the team, both women and men. Safe spaces need to be created every time you undertake any activity. So you need to make some fundamental agreements on how you will work together. Here are some ideas:

Your approach needs to be **inclusive** – recognising that different people can make different kinds of contributions, and their efforts need to be valued;

- Promote **respect for difference**, based on recognising that we are in different places, and we do not all have to agree on everything;
- You will also need to make sure that your **approach** does not blame or threaten anyone, even if their views are very different from your own, so that the spaces you create in your work are safe, and people can be themselves;
- You will need to reassure participants in your team, and in every activity you undertake, that **confidentiality** will be respected, and encourage participants that it is a no-no to discuss anyone's personal contribution with anyone (even those present) afterwards.

✓ **Recognise and record the gifts each member brings**

Many people think that they need to look outside of themselves and their church to help them do the change work they plan to do. But in fact, most of the skills, knowledge and resources you need you may already have in your team!

The most important gift your team members need is a vision for life-giving gender relations. They also need an ability to reflect on their life experiences, their cultures and traditions in a wise and compassionate manner to be able to offer leadership for positive change.

They may be a teacher, community care giver or social worker, or have simple but important things to offer- a room to meet, a personality that can reach out to others easily, etc.

- Spend some time thinking about what skills and knowledge you will need.

Write down together what skills and resources each person in your team is bringing into your Gender Transformation Committee (GTC) .Write down also what other skills and knowledge you do not have between you, and decide who to approach to help (see below).



### Deciding who else you need to bring on board

If your gender transformation committee is to succeed, you need to have some good allies! Two important questions to ask yourselves as a team:

✓ **Who in your congregation has the most influence?**

You need people who can support your work, reinforce new life-giving gender discourses and be an example to others. Most important, you need the church leadership (clergy and lay leaders) to be on your side. They are the ones with the power to convince others to take gender issues seriously, to work with you, and to let you have the floor during services or meetings.

✓ **Who in your congregation has skills or access to resources they might be willing to share?**

For example:

- Are there any professionals in your congregation, like lawyers, social workers or psychologists?
- You may know of gender activists in your community, who could act as resource people to support your work in the church and your church's work in the community.
- There may be some who are good at fund-raising, or who work in companies they could help you approach to sponsor some of your work.

Make a list of these people, and decide who is going to approach them in order to draw them in. Be very clear with them about what you want from them and why. And make sure to acknowledge them and their contributions so that they know they are appreciated!

### Step 2: Situation analysis – conducting a church gender audit

This may be the most important step, because there is no point doing all sorts of activities if they do not relate to the situation in your church. You are more likely to bring about change if you know what it is that needs changing, and what deserves to be celebrated! It is important to look for strengths and achievements, as well as gaps and challenges.

**Refer to Practical Toolkit 1 for the Guidelines and Template questionnaire for a gender audit.**

Also, **read Tool 6** to give you an idea of how this tool has been used in churches in different countries.





## Understanding what we are dealing with

During this step, it is important that you focus on two things:

- how gender issues are dealt with **inside** your church congregation
- how gender issues are dealt with in the work or ministries your church has in the community **outside** your church congregation, including any public statements, projects, etc.

Sometimes these two overlap, but make sure you cover everything. The template in Practical Tool 1 covers both.

**TIP** Make sure your gender audit process will also show how people **feel** about different gender issues, so you can decide at Step 3 which issues to start with, and who to target first.

This is important, because you don't want to overwhelm people or cause resistance by being too direct.

### Perform this step thoroughly, and the other steps will follow so much easier.

- ✓ What you learn from your gender audit will guide you in deciding what to focus on, and so will help to make your work more effective.
- ✓ If each person in your task team chooses a few people to talk to, it will not be too big a job.
- ✓ If you choose to use the Template in Practical Tool 1, each person carefully records the answers you receive under each question.
- ✓ But more than that, after each interview, each person writes down what they heard, what they saw, and what they sensed about how people felt.

Decide on a **date** by when all the information will be brought to the team, and meet to bring everything together. Once everyone has got the information you need, talk about your findings, and write up a summary as a group. You may use the following table to help you write it up:

What is the congregation doing well in relation to Gender equality and gender justice in the church itself?	Difficulties / gaps / opportunities the congregation needs to work on to improve gender equality and justice in the church?



Positive perceptions of the church's gender work in the community	Needs identified in the community in relation to gender

### Step 3: Identifying focus areas

The notes you made in Step 2 should give you a good idea about what the strengths are in your congregation that you can build on, and what gaps or challenges there are to achieving gender justice.

As a team, present your results to different groups of people in your congregation, and hear their opinions. For example, lay leaders, clergy, women's organisation, men's organisation, Sunday School teachers, Administration team.

Do they agree with your findings? How do they understand gender in your church? Are they an ally or someone who you will still need time to think this through?

Write down what you learn from these meetings. Different types of people might respond differently.

This will help you think about what might be issues and groups of people your team needs to focus on to best bring about gender transformation in your church, and to best help the church become more active in contributing to gender justice in your community.

Discuss all this information thoroughly in your Gender Transformation Task Team.

✓ **Think about the following, in relation to the gender issues you have covered. Use what you have learnt from your Gender Audit process to help you answer these questions.**

- What type of person is this? (man, woman, girl, boy, ordained or lay leader, ordinary congregation member, etc.)
- What is being done?
- What is being said?

✓ **Then analyse what you observe or hear, by asking the following questions.**

What might be the motivating factors that are causing people to act or speak the way they do?



- Knowledge:** Is it that they have not been exposed to information about gender to make them think more deeply about what they are doing and why?
- Attitude:** Do they lack respect, or believe they are superior or inferior, etc?
- Social assumptions:** Could it be based on what they have learnt from their upbringing or their training? Is it related to the way they interpret the Bible? Have they been influenced by other people close to them (like their friends, fellow clergy, spouse, etc.)? Is it because of some bad experiences they might have had?
- Perception:** Could it be that they don't realise the impact of what they do on other people and themselves; or the risks they may put themselves or others under by their behaviour?
- Personal Capacity:** Or do they lack the skills, personal power or confidence to change things?

✓ **Make a list of the areas which the congregational strategy could focus on.**

Draw up a rough list together as a Gender Transformation Team.

### Step 4: Making strategic decisions

You cannot do everything at once! Although there may be many areas which you want to work on, you will need to prioritise. At first the task team may decide to focus on three or four different areas, but as you develop your goals and action plans, you may not find this very realistic. Decide – what are the most urgent or perhaps the easiest things to change in your congregation?

✓ **Go through the list you made at Step 3, and decide on their order of importance, using categories like:**

- A- Highest priority,
- B- Quite important, if there is time,
- C- Good focus, but not immediately essential.

When you have sorted out these priorities, then determine which would be the first, second and third actions which you would want to plan further.

These do not necessarily need to be both within the congregation AND within the community. Allow yourselves to be guided by the situational analysis.

You might want to start in the church itself, since it will be hard for the church to change things in the community if its own practices and teachings are not open to gender equality.



Celebrating the Zimbabwe Council of Churches Golden Jubilee 50th Anniversary, Harare.  
Source: Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah



Or you might decide that exposing your congregation or leaders to things happening in the community might challenge them to think anew about what is happening inside the church.

Write up your priority choices for the development of objectives and activities:

Gender focus areas within the congregation	A,B,C	Gender focus areas in the community	A,B,C

### Step 5: Developing objectives and activities

This is probably the most difficult step in the process, and the one people very often cut corners on.

Take each of the strategic choices you have made in Step 4 and develop an objective on what you would want to achieve. Remember an objective should be SMART: Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound!

**TIP** To set an objective, ask yourself:  
 What is the situation now, and what do I want the situation to be like after this intervention? An objective is NOT about what you plan to do – but what OUTCOME or CHANGE you want to see.



Role plays can help to surface difficult issues in a fun way. *Source: PACSA*



### The question is: What do you eventually want to achieve?

Then develop a list of all the **activities** you will implement to reach your objective.

When you plan your activities:

- ✓ Decide which activities will most effectively help you to bring about the change you want to see.
- ✓ Decide which people to begin to work with. You may want to start with those people that have power to open doors for you (e.g. clergy, church council or other leadership structures, women's and men's organisations), and then go on to ordinary members – women, men, children, youth, young adults, aged, etc.). Or you may want to get a bigger group of members together to speak with a stronger voice to those in power. It depends on the dynamics in your congregation.
- ✓ Choose gatherings where you can begin to raise issues without creating too much disruption (e.g. worship services, different meetings and leadership forums, ministries, confirmation, marriage and baptism preparation, youth work). This way, people may begin to deal with the issues as part of their normal activities.
- ✓ Do not set out to start a new project straight away! It costs money and lots of work. Start by looking for existing church projects that you can revise to include a gendered perspective, and only start something new if you are sure it is necessary.

Remember that many people are very busy, and might not have time to come for add-on workshops on gender. Rather try to find ways to integrate gender awareness raising as part of their normal meetings. Of course, you may have some special workshops, but keep these to a minimum.

This activity plan will eventually help you to put together a list of the **resources** you will need, including the **budget**.

**Do not embark on an activity if there are not the people, the interest or the money to make it a success!**

### Use the **PLANNING TOOL** below

The table only has room for one objective and a few activities related to this objective. Use a separate page for each objective. Make enough copies of the next page to enable you to develop a complete set of objectives and activities.

You may choose to tackle different issues in different ways, depending on who you are working with and which kind of church meeting you are able to use. For example, if you want to do a Bible



study on how Jesus related to women, you will have to choose a different approach or even a different text, with youth, Sunday school children or the men's organisation.

**Action Plan Template**

<b>Gender Focus / Issue:</b> What behaviour or way of relating do we want to change?				
<b>Target group:</b> Who do we want to reach?				
<b>Set the main objective:</b> Which of their behaviours or ways of doing things do we want to change, and in order to see what end result?				
Sub-objectives to tackle underlying factors: Which of the list below specifically need to change to achieve the above objective?				
*What do you want people to <b>know</b> ? *What <b>attitudes</b> do you want them to have? *What perceptions of risk or impact need to change? *What <b>social norms</b> do you want to change (or do you want people to be able to challenge)? *What <b>skills</b> do they need, and what <b>personal capacities</b> do they need to develop?				
<b>Activities</b>				
What will we do?	How will we do it?	When will we do it?	Who will do what?	What resources do we need? (people, information, venue, catering, money...)



## Step 6: Implementing your plans

After this, draw up a budget, get approval and start working!

In fact, there are quite a few things you can do without much money, as people are often willing to help voluntarily. Do not wait until you have lots of money in the bank before getting started!

## Step 7: Monitoring and evaluation

It is essential to continuously monitor whether the activities are being implemented, if they were successful and if any change is needed to make them more successful. Use your planning table as a starting point, because you will be checking what progress you have made in achieving each objective you had set in Step 5.

<b>Objective:</b> (Write the objective you developed in Step 5)		
How will we know that we have achieved the change? You may identify more than one sign of change.	Who will monitor (ask the questions or observe the change)?	On which dates will we check for progress? (E.g. At the end of a workshop, or in a month, or after a year?)

### TIPS

- Decide which person will help with monitoring each activity.
- Decide what method you will use to determine whether you have achieved your objective:
  - Will you ask questions before and after each workshop, to find out what participants have learnt?
  - Will you follow up on decisions made by leadership?
  - What other things will you do to assess if there have been any changes?
- Identify what evidence you are looking for to give you an indication as to whether you have reached your objective? For example:
  - How will you know if your male pastor is becoming more open about women in leadership? Just asking him or her may not help. But if he has started inviting women to participate in leading services, then that is a good result.



The purpose of monitoring is to learn from your mistakes or to reflect on what in the situation where you are working is making it difficult to work - and to develop a better plan. It is not to apportion blame.

Do not get discouraged if you meet many challenges! Change is hard at the best of times, and, because our social assumptions and attitudes are so deep-seated, changing mindsets about gender may be one of the most difficult things to do!

## Conclusion

The most important thing you will need to succeed is **passion** for gender equality and justice! The second most important is a **strong team** to work together.



The third is a good **strategy**, to make sure your efforts are not in vain, because you cannot afford to become discouraged.

But before we try to change others, **we need to change ourselves**. (Remember, Jesus warned that we take the log out of our own eye before we try to remove the splinter out of the eye of another! Matthew 7:3-5)

It costs nothing to choose to be a channel for change, except:

- allowing God's love to be shown by our willingness to be humble and open to what God is doing in our lives to make us more open,
- having the courage to risk 'doing church differently' (Bishop Purity Malinga, 2004), and
- relating to each other in new ways that will heal gender relationships and restore and preserve the dignity of both women and men as created equal in the image of God.

## Notes

---



---



---



---

*Please send your feedback for this tool to [gendersa@nca.no](mailto:gendersa@nca.no) or [consultancy@pacsa.org.za](mailto:consultancy@pacsa.org.za)*

# Tool 12: Transformed men for a just world



---

***"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:  
everything old has passed away;  
see, everything has become new!"  
(1 Corinthians 5:17)***

---

## Tool 12 contents

Acknowledgements .....	202
Introduction and Purpose of this Tool .....	202
Why should gender norms change in Southern Africa?.....	204
Are men and women in Southern Africa happy? .....	204
Where is the Church?.....	205
What does it mean to be a man in Southern Africa today? .....	206
Power, patriarchy, and manhood.....	209
Responses to the challenge of change: .....	213
How can the Bible help?.....	216
Pitfalls when reading the Bible: .....	218
Sometimes the Spirit pushes us out of our comfort zones.....	219
Transforming Masculinities: Returning to Scripture for guidance in today's world .....	221
Men, masculinities and sexual ethics .....	222
Male headship, authority, responsibility and leadership .....	227
Searching for role models .....	230
Why is it so hard to change, and what would help?.....	232
What can the Church do? Ubuntu and the Body of Christ.....	233
Examining our own house.....	233
Promoting transformative masculinity .....	234
Helping men explore a more authentic spirituality and way of life .....	235
Creating healing spaces.....	236
Working together towards a new society.....	237
Conclusion .....	237

## Acknowledgements

This Tool was developed in response to conversations with the FOCCISA partners in November 2014.

Early sections are based on a publication written by the author for PACSA, Pietermaritzburg: *Men imagining alternative ways of being a man* (forthcoming in 2015). Many thanks to the following for critical reading and ongoing conversations: Professor Jan Jans, Professor Ezra Chitando, and Thembanani Chamane, NCA.

## Introduction and Purpose of this Tool

This Tool specifically addresses the question of why men are often labelled as 'the problem', and also looks at their roles in building a transformed society. While men are indeed part of the problem, they are equally part of the solution.

This Tool is designed to help men in churches to think through why it is important for men to change. It opens up spaces to talk about how they feel about this, and offers some ways to help them understand manhood in society today. It revisits the Bible in a fresh way, to enable the church to speak and act more effectively in relation to questions of gender and power in the family, church and society. It ends with some ideas for men to encourage, promote and build positive and transformative masculinity in Church and society.

Let us begin with a personal reflection that cuts to the core of what we are talking about.



## Time to talk: Reflecting on our own experiences

On your own:

1. Think back on times in your life (as a child or adult) when you experienced one of the following:  
being ignored, or your voice was not heard, not being allowed to do what you felt strongly you needed to, or an experience of violence.  
Ask yourself:
  - What was happening between you and the other person/s?
  - Did you feel you had power to change the situation? Where did your power come from? Where did the power of the other/s come from? How did you feel at the time?
  - How do you feel about that memory now? Did your being a man, or woman, play any role at all?
2. Now think back on times when you were able to influence others – how they thought or what they did. Ask yourself:
  - What was happening between you and the other person/s?
  - How did you feel?
  - Where did you get the power and respect from? How did it relate to your gender, social / cultural beliefs about status and rights in your church, workplace or family, race, economic standing? Did your being a man, or woman, play any role at all?
  - How did you use the power you had?

Together with one or two others:

3. Talk about the difference between feeling powerful and when someone else has power over you.
  - Is it better to have power or not?
  - How would a relationship which is not based on one person having more power than the other look like? How would it feel for both of them?
  - Why is this kind of relationship so hard to find in the world today?
4. Think about the person who is the centre of our faith, Jesus:
  - How did Jesus relate to ordinary people in his life?
  - How did he relate to those with religious or political power? (Luke 19: 45-46; Luke 20)
  - What does this mean for us as Christians and churches today?

## Why should gender norms change in Southern Africa?

A common reaction to the call for gender justice and to work towards gender equality is that this contradicts African culture; that it has confused people and has created a lot of unhappy families.

Many men and women in Southern Africa say nothing is wrong with the way the world is. According to them, it is natural that men are heads of households, senior politicians and business leaders. In their view, the Bible says so, and our cultures are built around this order of things. They say women were created to care for children, serve men in the home, church and workplace.

### Are men and women in Southern Africa happy?<sup>66</sup>

We don't know if men and women were happier in the past, when gender inequality was not even talked about. But somewhere along the line, things seem to have gone wrong, as shown in the box opposite.

Over the past 20 years at least, many women as well as men in Southern African countries, have been saying that we need to find ways to bring about peace and justice, and put an end to the violence that is not just on the streets, but in our homes. The main social problems we see are man-made: high levels of violence in general, violence against women and children, and the rapid spread of the HIV pandemic, which now mostly affects young women. This is why addressing sexual and reproductive rights is crucial.

Globally, a number of international agreements have been made between nations to address gender inequality and violence. SADC country governments have responded to these by changing legislation, and have set up a Gender Protocol signed by all but 2 SADC countries. It sets 6 key

#### Male abuse of power has led women to being extremely vulnerable<sup>1</sup>:

- Many women's first sexual experience is against their will.
- Gender based violence is an epidemic in Southern Africa. Zambia and Lesotho recorded over 80% of women having experienced abuse in their lives in some areas. Zambia has the highest rape and domestic violence statistics, though South Africa is known as being the 'rape capital' of the world.
- Even some African UN Peacekeepers (alongside others) have recently been exposed as rapists, with the South Africans having the most cases against them.
- Over 60% of Southern Africa's people living with HIV are women, and most of these are between 15 and 24.
- More young women are using drugs, offer their bodies for sex so they can earn money to survive, or have luxuries and treats.
- Depression is very common among women of all ages.
- Human trafficking of both women and men is on the increase.

#### Although men generally benefit from male-dominated societies, they too suffer violence:

- In many cultures, boys may be half as likely to experience sexual abuse than girls; but they are twice as likely to experience physical abuse.
- Many more men than women die as a result of murder.
- Suicide rates amongst men are increasing yearly, even among African men where it used to be almost unheard of.
- Alcohol and drug abuse is almost an epidemic amongst men.

<sup>66</sup> Much of this information is taken from the SADC Gender Protocol Barometer, 2013. [www.genderlinks.org.za](http://www.genderlinks.org.za) and UNICEF's Gender and Health report [http://www.unicef.org/esaro/7310\\_Gender\\_and\\_health.html](http://www.unicef.org/esaro/7310_Gender_and_health.html).

milestones towards gender equality. All states that have signed the SADC Gender Protocol should by now (2015) have effected national laws and policies to address gender equality.

The Constitutions of South Africa and some other countries now refer to gender equality, and several SADC Governments have many programmes to try to bring that about. More than 10 of the 15 SADC countries now have gender equality legislation, and laws against sexual violence and human trafficking. More women than ever are involved in economic activity in many of the SADC countries, although less are economic decision makers. More women are political leaders, some reaching the highest political positions.

But it seems that, the more our governments and other organisations are trying to address gender inequality and empower women, the more the situation is getting worse for ordinary men and women<sup>67</sup>.

**IN SUM: We are not happy! Our societies are violent.**

**We have lost respect for each other, for our bodies, and even for life.**

*And the question on many people's lips is: If it's not working, what would work better?*

## Where is the Church?

While many in the faith communities are troubled by current levels of violence and social problems, few know how to respond in meaningful ways.

This is partly because church teachings and practices have mostly been male-dominated. Some say that this has made acceptable the kinds of abuses of power that are destroying our societies today.

Whether this is true or not, there is no doubt that the Church as a whole needs to move beyond condemning violence. It needs to make a meaningful contribution to building a new society where violence is not tolerated, and all people can live in peace and safety and live 'abundantly', as promised by Jesus (John 10:10).

There are some examples of church leaders who have begun to challenge the male order. For example, Adriaan Van Klinken<sup>68</sup>, reports a key Zambian church leader saying that *"there is a 'distortion of manhood' in society, which has led to many social [problems like] violence against women, alcoholism, men's uncontrolled sexual behaviour, and men's overall irresponsibility in [their marriages and families]. [Bishop Joshua Banda] considers this 'crisis of masculinity' as a key factor in the major socio-economic problems of Zambia, and of Africa more generally.... [He refers to things like] the HIV epidemic, the high numbers of street children, the poverty levels and failing political leadership. ....Banda feels that... 'We have to restore a vision of biblical manhood'."*

<sup>67</sup> Morell, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012) *Hegemonic Masculinity/Masculinities in South Africa: Culture, Power, and Gender Politics* (Published online) that show how in South Africa, gender inequalities go hand in hand with racial and economic inequalities. This is likely to be similar in other SADC countries.

<sup>68</sup> Adriaan Van Klinken, 2013. *The Homosexual as the Antithesis of 'Biblical Manhood? Heteronormativity and Masculinity Politics in Zambian Pentecostal Sermons*. In *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa* Vol. 17 No 2 (December 2011), referring to an interview with Bishop Joshua Banda, Lusaka: 6th November 2008.

There are many others, who in small and bigger ways, have begun to speak out, in response to the high levels of violence around them.

Churches and Christians usually turn to the Bible for answers – especially in times of change- to draw out principles for how to react to what is happening in our world. Today, we are challenged to go back to the Gospel with a new openness.

**We may ask with Bishop Banda: Is there such a thing as 'Biblical manhood'? And if so, how might it be applied in Southern Africa today?**

But we first need to ask: **What, indeed, is 'manhood'?**

The following section explores the meaning of manhood, or masculinity, more deeply. It also looks at some typical reactions to the gender equality agenda that exists in our countries today.

Then we try to find some common ground about how people study the Bible, before we search the Bible for ourselves, to try to draw out some useful lessons for our context today.

Manhood means more or less the same as masculinity: Being a man.

But in society, some ways of being a man are seen as more acceptable than others. So a man may choose to act in a certain way or risk being accused of being weak, unmanly, or feminine.

## What does it mean to be a man in Southern Africa today?<sup>69</sup>

Let us start by listening to the stories of some men, and using them to reflect on our own stories.



### Time to talk: Men telling their stories

(If it feels more comfortable, you may talk in groups of only men or only women rather than mixed groups.)

1. Read through the two stories below, and then use the following questions to talk about them:
  - These stories are quite different, but what do they have in common?
  - What were the different influences on the men as they were growing up? How did they shape them as men and as people?
  - The first one seems quite happy with the way things are. Do you think his wife and other people he relates to are also happy?
  - The last three carry heavy burdens at the end of their stories. Talk about what they could each do to move forward with their lives? What challenges would they meet?

<sup>69</sup> The stories and quotations used in this Tool have come from various sources, with permission. Some come out of workshops, community dialogues and round table discussions, where permission was granted to use people's words but not their names. This shows how hard it is for men to talk about these things, for fear of being judged or disrespected for their views.

***It is great to be a man!***

*"As the head of the household, my wife has to listen to me and serve. It is exciting, because we can go out there and be part of things. Even our training as boys to become men is fun. I remember having to kill a cow – holding it by its horns and killing it was exciting!"*

***Manhood is not easy***

*"It is harder these days [to be a man than a woman]. Traditionally, a man was made, through various strategies to build him up as a king, but these mostly don't exist anymore. So it is hard to live out those responsibilities without having had that training. It depends on the era. In the old days, maybe it was nice. But even then, that training was hard and sometimes even now in rural areas it is not properly done.*

*A man has to take responsibility and he can't pass that on to anyone else. Even God speaks to the man to guide the family. There is no way out.*

*It is hard to make decisions alone sometimes, and always has been. Sometimes decisions are painful, because as a man it is my task to uphold the tradition and culture, and there is pressure to do this right. This was so even long ago and is in the rural areas. For example, when a man has twins, one has to die and the man has to enforce that. It is very painful.*

*Today it is said that it is nice to be a man. But it is much harder to take responsibility. There are so many battles to fight. It is no longer right for a man to enforce his decisions, and life is complicated. If I marry you, I want you to treat me like a king; and I also will treat you like a queen. But there is too much competition now.*

*Sometimes, I even wish to be a woman."*

***Learning to be strong***

*"Michael Ryan describes the ...humiliation he suffered when his father called him over to where he was sitting and then abruptly grab his wrists and started squeezing them. 'The idea, he said, was to see how long I could keep standing, to see how tough I was. The first time I lasted about 3 seconds and it probably would have been less had I not been so surprised...I screeched for him to stop, which he did after I fell at his feet with my face in the rug.' To the boy it was simply an assault at the hands of someone with overwhelming power. But his father presented it as a 'lesson' in how to overcome vulnerability.: 'I was crying, my face was hot with tears, but he wasn't about to console me. He said I better get much tougher if I wanted to be a man, that as I grew up there was going to be plenty of pain, this was nothing. He told me... that he wasn't punishing me but teaching me to be strong.'" (Michael Ryan, a well-known poet, quoted in Steven Wineman. 2003. Power-Under (pg. 130))*



Source:  
Sonke Gender Justice

### ***Becoming a better man***

*"I didn't have any goats or cattle, which brought a lot of ridicule from my peers. There was constant jeering that I wasn't a real boy. Some of them said, 'There's a girl who's full of herself and doesn't want to know us; you need to be party to disciplining her.' "I made the decision to agree to it. I was given beer and I smoked. I remember that, after the act, it was reported to the whole soccer team and my friend and I were given a standing ovation. I moved away and it faded from my mind.*

*It took me 20 years to realise that I'd done something wrong. In my work in the HIV field I met unemployed women and every single week they reported violence from the men. I couldn't help but admit that this was something I had done myself.*

*I went to see my religious mentor and said, 'I have to go and apologise to my victim.' He said, 'You were only 15 years old. It's in the past, what if she reports it?' I said, 'That would be justice for her.'*

*When we met, she recognised me and was surprised. I told her, 'I realise I caused you pain 20 years ago. I understand how wrong this was and I came to apologise.' She was silent and she started crying.*

*She said, 'After you, two other men raped me. I've never told anyone that. Every time I think of it my whole body shudders. I've never really been well. Sometimes, when my husband touches me, I cringe and he wonders why.*

*She said, 'The fact that you've come 600 miles to apologise helps me believe you, and I'm grateful. Do me a favour. Teach your son not to do what you did to me.'*

*I thought I was going to leave my load behind, but when she said that, I had a new load to take with me." Dumisani Rebombo<sup>70</sup>*

- 
2. When you have finished talking about the stories, get into pairs or threes, and talk about the following:
- Think about your own life story as a man. What do you enjoy about being a man? What are the things you are struggling with? How are they different or similar to those you have read?
  - What are some things you are proud of in the way you have lived your life as a man?
  - Share your story with at least one other man (you only need to tell as much as feels safe for you). What do your stories share in common, and how are they different?
  - How does it feel to tell a bit of your own story? What would you need in order to feel safe to do this?

---

<sup>70</sup> Quoted by David Smith in The Guardian Newspaper, Wednesday 17 June 2009. Used with permission from Guardian News & Media 2009.

Ordinary men often feel accused of being bad people, because of all the social problems that are caused by men.

But the situation is complicated. While it is true that men have to take responsibility for their decisions, all human beings are the products of how they were raised. This is not just about what they were taught about how to be men, but is also about their life experiences. These are influenced by whether their home felt safe or was violent, what kind of neighbourhood they grew up in, what behaviours were encouraged or allowed, and what kind of role models they had.

*"... [U]nderlying everything, there is a deep anger behind the way some men are behaving. These men are violent and cruel, but it is not just that, it is because of this underlying anger. They are destroying things out of anger."*

So in a society where a man has to constantly prove his masculinity, and he is terrified of not being accepted as a man, being asked to use a condom or being turned down by a woman would not be seen just as small setbacks, but as challenges to his very identity as a man. This kind of man would be more likely to resort to violence or emotional abuse to get his way.

## Power, patriarchy, and manhood

In societies everywhere, there is constant competition for power, dominance and authority. Why?

**Power** gives a person access to the most valued resources as well as position. These in turn, give one the power to remain dominant and in leadership, by maintaining the status quo. Those in leadership make the rules, or influence those who do, and benefit from the privileges society bestows on those in power. So they have an interest in keeping powered inequalities the way they are.

In most societies of the world, those in power are men, and those who have the most power, are men. This is called a **patriarchy**.

**Patriarchy:** a social system which gives men power over women (and children and the environment), and gives them status, power and privilege just because they are men. It is less about individuals, as much as whole social systems and structures that define men's and women's roles, rights, responsibilities and privileges.

**But there is not just one way to be a man.** And not all ways to be a man have the same value in a society. The type of man one is, influences how one fits in, what chances one has to succeed, and whether one is elected to be a leader. This means that in the end, many men do not benefit from the social order they are living under.

Men are not only constantly in a struggle to prove their dominance over women, but also to prove their power and dominance over other men as well. Especially young men are not always sure of their masculinity, and they often compete for dominance by proving who is 'more of a man'. Stick fighting is a traditional example of this. More destructive forms include pressurising each other to have sex at a young age, or even gang warfare.

But when it comes to relationships with women, in most cases men still benefit from what is called the 'patriarchal dividend' - no matter how little power a man has in wider society amongst other men, he still has power over the woman/ women in his personal life.

### ***Forms of Masculinity (ways to be a man)***

In any society, there are at least four different types of masculinity<sup>71</sup>.

Men learn how to be a man as they grow up. The rules about what makes a 'real man' are not exactly the same in different societies, although they are quite similar between Southern African countries.

*"Traditionally, a man was made, through various strategies to build him up as a king."*

**Hegemonic or dominant masculinities:** This refers to ways of being the 'ideal man'. In most societies, a 'normal man' is a powerful, aggressive, competitive man, who is always in control and may even become violent to maintain his authority and access to the resources he needs to keep his power.

*"When we are married, I can force you to have sex with me...because I know that I will pay my money to buy you."*

People tend to respect successful sportsmen, soldiers, businessmen or politicians, because they exhibit these characteristics. This type of masculinity is promoted and even glorified in culture and tradition, religion and the arts.

The 'profit above people' approach adopted by many hegemonic men in business has led many non-hegemonic men to no longer be able to provide for their families. Being a provider goes together with household headship, and together these form the basis of manhood in hegemonic masculinities. As a result, many Southern African men are said to be experiencing a crisis of identity, which may be one of the reasons for an increase in male violence against women and children.

This can be even worse for young men. Marriage is seen as an essential part of being a real man in many African societies<sup>72</sup>. Consumerism has led to many parents demanding exorbitant amounts of *lobola* (bride price), while high unemployment is making more and more men very poor. This has led many young men into a crisis of confidence. They are deprived of the chance to prove their manhood in the traditional sense.

*"To call oneself a man it is simplest after (one is) married with children. No children and you are still a boy."*

Let us look, then, at men who 'fail to be real men' in the above sense. What choices do they have?

*"I cannot call a man who sleeps with other men a man. I don't know what he is, but he is not a real man."*

<sup>71</sup> R Connell 2005, 2014. [www.raewynconnell.net](http://www.raewynconnell.net)

<sup>72</sup> Baker, G. & Ricardo, C. 2005. Young men and the construction of masculinity in sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for HIV/AIDS, conflict and violence. *World Bank Social Development Papers: Conflict and Reconstruction*, Paper No. 26. Cited in Lovemore Togarasei. Pauline challenge to African masculinities: reading Pauline texts in the context of HIV/AIDS. *Acta theol.* vol.32 suppl.16 Bloemfontein Jan. 2012

**Subordinate Masculinities:** refers to ways of being a man that do not live up to the 'ideal man'. Subordinate men generally do not 'make it' in sports, business or politics, and may even be disadvantaged in religious or cultural institutions.

**Heterosexual:** being attracted to the opposite sex.

**Homosexual:** being attracted to the same sex.

E.g. Men who are not formally educated and cannot get work are marginalised from mainstream economic activity, and so are seen as 'lesser' men. **Homosexual** men, who do not fit into **heterosexual** stereotypes, are often excluded just because of their sexual orientation.

**Complicit Masculinities:** are lived out by men who accept the rewards of dominant masculinity and behave in dominating ways, but do not defend the patriarchal system as a whole. Such men often accept oppressive beliefs and structures as a given, but they do not force their dominance on women.

*"Come on, stop crying, be a man and go and fight back against those bullies!"*

For example, they may enjoy the benefits of 'doing business' as a man (easy access to finance, etc.), but they choose not to pay women workers lower wages than men.



Source: Sonke Gender Justice

**Marginal Masculinities:** show many of the features of dominant masculinity, often in extreme forms. But these are lived out in exploited or oppressed groups, such as the poor and unemployed, or immigrants. They feel inadequate because they are discriminated against because of their race, class or status.

Young men who are seen not to 'have what it takes' in a man's world can end up involving themselves in crime or gangs, but any groups of young men who compete with each other to prove they are more 'manly' than the others also take on these behaviours. They often take enormous risks to prove their manhood to themselves and others.

*"It's better to beat her. You get back respect if you sometimes wake her up."*



### Time to talk: What does it all mean in practice?

While most people agree that violence is not the right way to live out one's manhood, the many social influences in our lives can make it difficult to know what is the best way to be a man in today's world.

Jesus gives us a clue, when he says: *"You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns...? A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit."* (Matthew 7: 15-19)

- What do you think are the results of the different ways men are in the world today? Think about who the different kinds of men are in your society –
  - Hegemonic men – e.g. rulers or leaders in business, politics or church;
  - Complicit – men who do the bidding of leaders or rulers;
  - Subordinate – Men who don't fit in – e.g. poor, uneducated men; homosexuals
  - Marginal – Men who form in-groups and create their own new power relations.
- Think about specific men you know who might fall under each type of man, and talk about:
  - their attitudes
  - what they do, or think, is acceptable to do, and
  - how they affect those around them (men, women and children)
  - how their actions influence society as a whole.

Even being a 'successful' (hegemonic) man is not always easy, as Ezra Chitando shared at a Meeting in Pietermaritzburg in June 2014:

*"Do we as men enjoy patriarchal privilege? It is expensive to be a man. I think it's Oliver Mtukudzi who said: 'Why didn't you tell me that when I grew up to be a man the burdens would be terrible?' I agree. Because patriarchy gives me privilege but it also burdens me. I can't be myself; I'm told not to cry in public, but in private we can't stop crying once we start; the burden on me as a man is massive."*

### But the story does not end here!

### Transformative Masculinities<sup>73</sup>

As more people have been realising that it is mostly certain types of men that are the driving force behind the twin epidemics of HIV and gender based violence all over the world, the idea of transforming the acceptable norms of what makes a real man is being talked about more and more.

The World Council of Churches has started a campaign for transforming masculinities to help churches and people everywhere to 'become born again' in relation to how they understand themselves and their relationship to women and other men. The campaign is inviting men of all ages to embrace more constructive ways of being men.

*"You need to prove you are a man. So how do men prevent gender based violence when they are expected to appear as strong and masculine? How do they practise that change in their own relationships?"*

<sup>73</sup> Another term for this is 'positive masculinities' but we use the term 'transformative' to highlight that positive masculinities can serve to transform both men and through them, their churches and communities.

Some anti-gender based violence campaigns, such as 'Not in my Name'<sup>74</sup> and the Fatherhood Campaign have opened up spaces for alternative men's voices to be heard that distance them from the dominant, domineering and often violent masculinities that have often gone unchallenged by other men. As movements of men grow and more and more join them, the hope is that public opinion may also shift.



## Time to talk: Characteristic of a transformative man

- As a group, complete the list below: Transformative men:
  - Are caring and sensitive about the needs of others
  - Resolve conflict by talking about it
  - Are able to express their feelings
  - As leaders, they....
  - As partners, they....
  - As fathers, they....
  -
- Ask yourself, and then talk with one or two other people:
  - If you are a man: Where do I fit in? What kind of man would I like to be?
  - If you are a woman: What kind of man would I prefer? Why?
- (How) Do you find the concept of multiple masculinities helpful in your life?

*"When I hear of a rape, I feel like I am somehow partly responsible. I feel associated with it just because I'm a man."*

## Responses to the challenge of change:

Above we saw that men relate in different ways to what are socially defined ways to be a 'real man'. In the same way, men have not all reacted in the same way to the challenges brought by the gender equality agenda that most Southern African governments have adopted as a result of international and SADC level programmes and agreements.<sup>75</sup>

The most common reaction amongst men (worldwide) is **backlash**, against women as well as men who are working to change the prevailing social norms based on male superiority, privilege and control over resources. This response is common across all race and class groups in all countries of the world.

*"I have no clue about the Constitution but I would not allow a woman to abuse my authority, e.g., by being asked to wash dishes and cook."*

<sup>74</sup> Brandon Hamber (2009). Masculinity and Transition: Crisis or Confusion in Southern Africa? Summarised in: Gennrich, D. (ed). 2013. Men and Masculinities in Southern Africa: Volume 2 Understanding Masculinity in Southern Africa – Essays and Perspectives. Pietermaritzburg: PACSA and Sonke Gender Justice.

<sup>75</sup> See Tool 4 for a discussion of the SADC Protocol on Gender Equality and other international agreements.

Morrell (2001) has identified at least **3 different types of reactions** to the changing gender expectations of men in Southern Africa today:

*"It is better to be a prisoner than a free man who is not really free. Women are now more important than men.... Something needs to be done."*

**Defensive** men try to reassert their traditional power, through forceful or even violent means. They may refer to conservative traditions or specific verses of Scripture to re-establish their authority. They tend to blame women for the problems they have, and see themselves as victims. Some may call on men to be responsible, so that they can better fulfil their traditional roles as patriarchal men.

Men who are **Accommodating** do not react against the changes, but they just go on with business as usual.

They still uphold traditional patriarchal ideals of masculinity. They continue to teach their sons to be dominant, and maintain their leadership in the household or workplace. They may encourage individual men to change risky behaviours, or speak out against sexual violence (like many government HIV prevention campaigns), but they don't question the power inequalities that make it possible for men to abuse their power in the first place, and that makes it difficult for women to negotiate for condoms or to say 'no'.

**Responsive** men accept the changes and promote gender equality in all areas of their lives. They are not afraid to care or express their feelings, and are committed to journeying with women to find alternative ways of being men and women in a fair and democratic society.

*'Touching a girl or woman without her consent does not make you a man, it makes you a coward.'*

Slogan of anti-rape campaign

More and more men are beginning to ask the hard questions and try to find new ways to be men.

Responsive men and women try to understand how gender, race, economic and social status and ethnicity influence the way men live. For example, they understand that an unemployed man who feels bad about being unable to provide for his family may be more likely to take his frustrations out by beating his wife than a successful businessman. However, other social factors may also make a difference. For example the successful businessman who was beaten by his father as a child has a high chance of being abusive himself.

### ***Women's reactions***

Women also can respond in unhelpful ways to the gender transformation agenda. Like men, they are bombarded with conflicting messages about the way they should be and act during this time of transition to gender equality. There are at least 4 unhelpful ways<sup>76</sup> that women commonly respond:

- aggressively demanding their rights, sometimes in damaging ways,
- making sure they always look 'perfect' so they are not stigmatised as women,
- trying to imitate men to be acceptable, or
- being "truly woman" in caring, making peace and creating warmth (even when they are unhappy).

These responses don't really change the situation for women. They may even have destructive consequences for their relationships.

There are also more helpful options for women. Many women find new and authentic ways to be women. They may work together with responsive men as described above.

Of course, **these categories are not fixed**.

Sometimes even men and women who are trying to live differently and believe in gender equality, may occasionally slip back into unhelpful ways in private, or men may be influenced to engage in risky behaviours when amongst a group of friends at a party.

This is because **gender transformation is a journey**, like any process of change - for men and women, and for society as a whole.



### **Time to talk: Different responses, different approaches**

- Which of the above responses do you think is/are the most common in your community? And in your church?
- How helpful do you think it is to understand how and why different people respond in these ways? How can you use this understanding to bring about change in your community or church?
- How have you most often responded to gender equality initiatives in the past? How do you feel about them now? Do you still have questions that you feel are unresolved?

As people of faith, we may have heard conflicting teachings, and many of them use the Bible to back up their views. What does the Bible really say about the relationship between men and women?

<sup>76</sup>Rev Professor Christina Landman. Gender and Human Rights – A presentation at FOCCISA Conference on Human Rights and Theology. Johannesburg. April 2014.

## How can the Bible help?

***"Test all things; hold fast to what is good."***  
*(Thessalonians 5: 21)*

We have been reflecting on stories of how different kinds of men are trying to live out their manhood in a complex and changing world.

Quite often, men and women use the Bible to justify that men have a right to dominate women, control them and be served by them. But others use the Bible to show that this is not the right way for men to behave.

### How is this possible, when we are all using the same Bible?

The Bible does not seem to have a single, clear position on many life issues. Before we take this conversation further, it is worth going more deeply into how the Bible was written, what it is used for and how it has been misused.

**Christians believe that the Bible is our ultimate standard of faith, and that it is inspired by the Holy Spirit ("all Scripture is inspired by God..." 2 Tim 3: 16). But there are many different views on exactly what this means in practice, and how we should interpret the Bible.**

#### ***Different ways people understand the authority of The Bible***

- Some believe that God actually breathed God's Word through the men who wrote down the exact words dictated by God;
- Others say that ordinary people of faith, who were inspired by God's Spirit, interpreted the age-old stories and wisdom through their personal experiences in their cultures and societies, and wrote them down in their own language/s.

#### ***Different ways to read the Bible:***

#### **How we understand the Bible's origins influences how we approach it.**

As readers, we are influenced by the limitations of our own upbringing, experiences and the time in history in which we live - in the same way that the writers were influenced. This is why it is important to be humble when reading the Bible.

#### **How was the Bible written?**

The Bible is a collection of stories and other books.

The Bible is actually a library (literal meaning of *Biblio*) of books, written at different times in history.

Some are **historical** stories of people's journeys with God – not that different from our own stories we shared earlier.

Others offer **wisdom**, and still others (mostly in the Old Testament) offer lists of **rules** for behaviour.

The books were written down by many different people (men) who wrote in the languages of their day and were influenced by their cultural context.

But long before anything was written down, the stories, rules and words of wisdom had been passed down for generations by word of mouth.

Biblical historians have researched the origins of all the different books, and this has helped us to understand them better.

Neither the writer nor the reader can have a total grasp of the full Truth of God.

The two main ways of reading the Bible work with these limitations differently:

**Literal interpretation:** People take specific verses and apply them word for word to any situation, at all times. They believe that the words are unchanging because they are the actual 'Words of God' breathed through different writers.

**Contextual (hermeneutic) interpretation:** People believe the Bible has been inspired, but not dictated, by God. They do not read isolated verses and try to apply them directly to their lives for all times.

One model of contextual interpretation is Contextual Bible Study<sup>77</sup>. This is best done in groups rather than alone, as the insights of other participants can open up the deeper meaning of texts in relation to current social realities. It is also done prayerfully and with humility, based on the understanding that no one of us is able to see the whole Truth of God, and our understanding is influenced by our life experience and our own limited vision.

### ***The moral dynamics of Scripture<sup>78</sup> and the importance of dialogue***

One thing that can be confusing is that **the Bible often seems to contradict itself.**

This is why it is **useful to read it in community**, as we can learn from each other. For example, Jewish men were expected to be circumcised, as a sign of their faith in God. But in the New Testament, Paul says (in Galatians 6:15) that "*neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!*"

It can be helpful **when we try and discern the truth for our lives, not to argue with the Bible.**

Instead we can use the internal contradictions in the Bible to teach us. We can **allow the contradictory verses to 'argue with each other'**. Then we can reflect on why there is a difference, and test what might be appropriate in our lives and society today.

A **Contextual Bible Study** helps us to try to understand whole passages more deeply:

- in the light of the rest of the story or other related stories, letters or poetic texts (**literary context**);
- by taking time to understand the kind of society that existed at the time when the passage was written (**historical context**); and
- thinking deeply about the issues in their own society, and using whatever scientific and other knowledge they can use to help them understand what the Bible might mean now. (**today's context**).

<sup>77</sup> Contextual Bible study ([www.ujamaa.org.za](http://www.ujamaa.org.za)) is not a totally new way to approach reading the Bible, and it is not just a way to water down the Word of God. Contextual biblical interpretation has been used for a long time. It has been used for thousands of years by Jewish rabbis, to try and make sense of difficult texts in the *Torah* (Jewish Scriptures) in the light of current social realities. In Jewish tradition it was called *Midrash*. Midrash accepts that any text has multiple layers of meaning, which can be uncovered in a variety of ways. A helpful process is to allow dialogue between different perspectives to allow for a deeper understanding of the text.

<sup>78</sup> This concept was shared by Professor Jan Jans of Tilburg University in a Skype conversation, May 2015.

### **This is the way this Tool approaches the Bible.**

It looks at some Bible verses that are used to understand the dynamics of the relationship between men and women. Then it looks at other related verses, and sets up a dialogue between them. The TIME TO TALK exercises open up opportunities to do this in groups.

Our **ultimate authority is of course, Jesus**, and it is useful to test Scripture against Jesus' own teachings and actions. It is important to **read any extracts from the Bible against the background of its basic message**: the story of God's saving plan for all of humanity in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate Word of God (John 1) - the Alpha and Omega of our faith.

Some people try to use the Bible as a kind of manual for life, but it doesn't always work like that. Life can be complicated, and the world has changed drastically since biblical times. So we need to read the Bible with humility and openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### **Pitfalls when reading the Bible**

We have seen that the Bible is a complex set of books, and jumping to our own conclusions too quickly about what it is saying can be dangerous. There are at least 4 pitfalls we can fall into when reading the Bible, which can lead us to making mistakes because we are not open to learning more deeply.

These include:

1. We can be tempted to **look for rules, and then impose them on others** in a top-down way, without really understanding what the writer originally meant or listening to those on whom they impose these.

For example, some churches still insist that women have to wear hats in church. The verse in the original Greek (1 Corinthians 11:5) referred to Corinthian church women never shaving their heads, to show they were not (temple) prostitutes, who shaved their heads. Most churches no longer insist on women covering their heads, because the social dynamics are different.

2. We can hold on to **isolated verses** that we think have the quick answers we need, and then we try to **apply them to all situations and for all of time**.

For example, many wedding sermons preach on Ephesians 5:22 ("Wives, submit to your husbands") without looking at the whole passage, which is introduced by verse 5:21: "Submit, therefore, to one another out of reverence for Christ". If more marriages were based on verse 21, there would perhaps be many more happy marriages.

3. We **apply the different verses and/or rules inconsistently**

We often prefer those verses that refer to sins we are not likely to commit anyway (like homosexual practices if we are heterosexual), while ignoring those that we know we do (like judging others and speaking badly about them). We even manage to isolate a few words (like those referring to homosexuality), when it is referred to in a list that includes other sins, many of which relate to unhealthy sexual habits that are seen as acceptable today.



4. We **select those verses that justify our opinions**, and ignore others. There are many examples where this has caused a lot of pain and suffering in the church.

- Passages like 1Timothy 2:11 (“I do not permit women to teach...”) have been used by churches to block women from taking up positions as pastors and clergy. Others argue for women’s ordination by using the verses about Jesus sending Mary Magdalene to teach about the resurrection (Matthew 28:10; John 20:16-18). While some denominations still insist on all-male clergy, many churches now allow women into ordained ministry.
- Slavery was justified for many years by quoting individual verses in the Bible, like Leviticus 25:42. Even beating or raping a slave was supported using Exodus 21: 20-21; and Leviticus 19:20. Several New Testament passages were also used to justify keeping slaves (Luke 12:43-47; Luke 17: 9; Matthew 18:33; Philemon 1:16). The anti-slavery lobby could not quote verses that oppose slavery because no verses explicitly forbid it. It took many years to convince the churches of their time to change, by challenging them to go back to the Spirit of love and respect of the Gospel. Nowadays, there is no argument about this.

The above examples tell us that biblical interpretation is likely to be influenced by what is happening in the world at different times, including current social norms, new scientific knowledge and cultural transformation. The choice then, is either to become narrower and hold onto isolated verses that keep us from moving forward, or to explore more deeply, even if we are uneasy about it.

### **Sometimes the Spirit pushes us out of our comfort zones**

There is ample evidence in the Bible that people do change their minds about what God may be saying in their lives through revisiting Scripture.



### **Time to talk: Reading ‘the signs of the times’\***

Together, talk about the following examples from the Bible:

- Leviticus 11:7 and Deuteronomy 14:8 contain the instruction never to eat pork, because “it is unclean for you” (Lev.11:7).
  - Why do you think pork was regarded as unclean, whereas cow’s meat was not?
  - Do you eat pork? If not, why not, and if yes, why is it OK?<sup>79</sup>

There are other examples where the Holy Spirit has completely changed a person’s views on a principle or law that they have felt strongly about.

<sup>79</sup> Historically, this made sense, because pork could make people incredibly ill. Medical science has uncovered why this was the case: there was a small parasite that would settle in the brain and cause brain disease. Nowadays, all countries regulate how pork is processed and tested for this parasite, so pork is now quite safe to eat. In many countries, pork is eaten freely, and Christians do not regard it as sinful.

- Read Acts 10: 9- 11:18. It tells the story of how the Holy Spirit deals with Peter, changes his mind and uses him powerfully to spread the Gospel to all nations rather than just the Jews. 80 Peter was sharply criticised by the other apostles for contradicting the Law.
- Read through his argument in Chapter 11 carefully, and consider why it was so convincing.
- Another example is Paul himself. He completely changed his mind when challenged by Jesus - from being a staunch Jew that persecuted Christians, to becoming a central figure in the early Church.

\* Jesus criticises the religious leaders of his day for not being able to “*read the signs of the times*” (Matthew 16:3). In three of the Gospels (Matthew 9, Mark 2 and Luke 5), when Jesus is criticised for reinterpreting the Hebrew Scriptures for his context, he advises the religious authorities that one cannot “*sew a piece of new cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made.*” And “*new wine is poured into new wineskins*”. (Matthew 9: 16, 17b)

*When we read the Bible, it is important to **discern between teachings that were of the time** (usually linked to specific customs and outlooks of the day) **and those which are for all time** [usually representing a Gospel value or principle].*  
Bishop David Russell, 2009

This is also our challenge in using the Scriptures to guide our lives today.

One example of this in the history of the Church in Southern Africa, is the churches' views of HIV/AIDS.

When the pandemic first had Southern Africa in its grip, Christians referred to HIV as a punishment for (sexual) sins (Deuteronomy 28: 27-29), and compared it to the plagues meted out on the Egyptians in Exodus (7-12). They used Deuteronomy 7:12-15 to justify expelling people living with HIV out of their churches: “*Do not bring an abhorrent thing into your house...*”. HIV activists worldwide challenged Christians to re-look at the Bible verses that they used to justify their behaviour. Many have overcome their prejudices and remembered that the overriding message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is one of love, mercy and forgiveness. This has led to more and more churches being less judgmental and reaching out to people suffering as a result of HIV, often in partnership with their Governments. And, slowly, the epidemic is retreating in most countries.

---

<sup>80</sup> Peter believed firmly that his ministry excluded gentiles (non-Jews), but his mind was changed completely by God's intervention (Acts 10: 9-17; 27). He ended up preaching the Gospel directly to some Roman soldiers (Acts 10: 44-48). This led to the apostles' early ministry first being opened to non-Jews (Acts 11: 1-4; 17-18). Without Peter responding to the Spirit's leading him in a totally new direction, Christianity as a world religion would not exist!

## Transforming Masculinities: Returning to Scripture for guidance in today's world



### Time to talk: The Church's response to gender transformation

Many churches today are on a similar journey of discernment as they were regarding HIV in the past. They are asking questions about how to build healthier relationships between men and women in ways that respect the dignity and equal potential of both men and women in church and society. Governments are taking this issue seriously also, as gender inequality hampers development and undermines human rights.

- Is your church also on such a journey?
  - If yes, talk about aspects of the journey that your own church may be on, and think of examples of Scriptures that you might have grappled with as a church.
  - If you have not noticed that this has become an issue for your church, talk about why you think it is the case.
  - What might be some of the main challenges on this journey, and how might your church overcome them?
- How does the journey of your church influence your own journey with this question?

*"We men are the head, but you have to live up to it. We like to be the head, but we don't like to live up to the responsibility. That's our problem!"*  
Bishop Joshua H. K. Banda, Zambia

*"Men must learn to forgive and to say 'I am sorry', and not to hold grudges against women. It is OK for a man to cry if he feels like crying. The nation will be built by men who have changed."*

Tool 3 opened up some important questions about how the Bible talks about men and women. It showed that the Bible has been used to justify men's domination over women, children and the environment. But it also showed that it can equally be used to demonstrate the equal dignity of all human beings, as well as the integrity of nature.

In Tool 2 and above, we also learnt that underlying all human relationships, there is a basic **struggle for power**, and that the age-old social system of patriarchy has organised most societies under the control of men. This is also true of the Old Testament and New Testament times. So when we read these texts, we need to remember the cultures of the times.



## Time to talk: Harmful ideas about what it means to be a man

- Complete the list below of the most negative and harmful ways of being a man that you can think of:
  - Uses force and violence in relationships
  - Has sex with as many women as possible
  - Feels entitled to have sex when he feels the urge
  - Does not have a relationship with his children
  - Calls out to women in public about their bodies and how sexy they are
  - Does not recognise the human rights of women
  - Emotionally, he...
  - ....
- Are there any cultural practices that are currently being misused in your community or your country that entitle men to selfish and destructive sexual behaviours in or out of marriage?
- Are any of these practices supported by quoting particular Bible verses?

The Bible contains profound wisdom, but it has also been misused throughout history, as we saw earlier.

If we are to gain new understandings of the changes in society, we have to **use Scripture as a mirror to our current context, rather than trying to impose it like a grid into which we expect the world to fit.** We cannot “*pour new wine into old wineskins*” (Mt. 9:18).

### Men, masculinities and sexual ethics



## Time to talk: Time to talk: Masculinity, sex and marriage in the Bible

In Old Testament societies, social regulations regarding sexual behaviours were influenced mostly by the priority to have many children and so grow their nation, and males' property rights over women. Here are some examples.

Choose one or two that interest you, and talk about them using the following questions as a guide:

- Did you know that these sexual practices existed in Old Testament Jewish culture? Why do you think they were acceptable? Do you think that these are acceptable practices today?

- How have the Old Testament passages influenced current views of acceptable masculine behaviours, men's entitlements and the impunity with which aggressive and violent behaviours are treated by lawmakers?
- How have they influenced myths today about rape, and the solutions devised by some families and communities?
- Using the principle of the moral dynamics in the Bible, can you think of other verses that support this practice, or reject it? Are they in the Old or New Testament?
- What are the consequences for women, men, children and communities, of people choosing certain verses over others?

### ***Old Testament:***

#### **Polygamy - Deuteronomy 17:17, Judges 8:30, 2 Chronicles 11:23**

Some passages discourage many wives, like Deuteronomy, while others refer to it as wise (Like Judges and Chronicles).

Reading the Bible from a historical point of view, it is interesting that polygamy is mentioned very early in the Bible – the first polygamist coming into the story only seven generations after Adam (Gen. 4:19). It was allowed under Mosaic Law (Exod. 21:10; Lev. 18:18; Deut. 21:15). It could be said that the 12 tribes of Israel only came into being because Jacob had two wives and two concubines, and fathered children from each of them! Many great men in the Old Testament are said to have had multiple wives and concubines, and there is no evidence that they broke any laws.

On the other hand, see Matthew 19: 3-9 and 1 Corinthians 7:2: "*Because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband*"

#### **Adultery – Exodus 20:14**

The 7th Commandment clearly states: "*You shall not commit adultery*".

But adultery was not seen in the same way as today. Because women were generally seen as the possessions of men, adultery was seen as stealing another man's wife or betrothed. If the woman was not married, it was not seen as adultery, even if the man was married, because men in ancient Hebrew culture could marry more than one wife, and could even own concubines (sex slaves, or sexual companions).

Women who committed adultery sinned against their husbands, and were often referred to as whores or prostitutes.

But we see a progressive shift through the Bible.

In Hosea 3: 14, men are also judged for similar behaviour (and God is seen to forgive the women):

*"I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go aside with whores, and sacrifice with temple prostitutes; thus a people without understanding comes to ruin."*

There is a wonderful example of a different kind of powerful man, in Joseph, who took a principled decision against responding to the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife. [Genesis 39: 1-23]

The New Testament takes this further: See Mark 10:19, and Rom. 13:9 shows that adultery breaks the Law of love.

In Matthew 5:28, when Jesus says: *"But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart"*, he seems to refer to any woman.

But he takes this much further. Many women who suffer from **sexual harassment** and verbal abuse on the street would feel much freer if this teaching was more prominent today!

*"Biblical manhood is not just defining yourself as a sex machine." Pastor Joshua Banda, Lusaka*

**Prostitution** - Genesis 38: 13-19; Joshua 2: 1-2; Judges 16:1; Leviticus 21:14

In ancient Hebrew culture, prostitution was considered quite natural and necessary to protect the virginity of young unmarried women and the property rights of husbands. In later Jewish texts, a man was not guilty of sin for visiting a prostitute, though the prostitute herself was regarded as a sinner.

It was always rejected, however, when it was linked to temple prostitution, as it was part of idol worship.

Paul is very opposed to prostitution, but he seems to see it in the same light as adultery - 1 Cor. 6:12-20:

*"Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."*

Jesus, on the other hand, is criticised for taking prostitutes seriously (Luke 7:37-50), and dining with sinners (Luke 5:30).

**Male dominance in sexual decision-making** – Genesis 38: 16-18; Genesis 4:25

In the Old Testament, the way sex is described is always from the perspective of the man: He 'went into her', 'he lay with her', or 'he knew her'. Except in Song of Solomon, women's sexual rights or desires are not discussed at all.

A powerful man could choose whoever he wanted to sleep with, but a woman's own will was almost never asked, and women who took the sexual initiative are usually presented as adulteresses or prostitutes (e.g. Potiphar's wife).

But notice what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:3: *"The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights (i.e. in bed), and likewise the wife to her husband."*

and in 1 Corinthians 7:4 *"For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."*

**Widow inheritance** - Genesis 38: 7-10, and Deuteronomy 25:5-6. According to the Law of Levirate marriage:

*"When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. "It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel."*

However, in Jewish culture, if either the man or the woman refuses, both have to go through a ceremony releasing them from this marriage. In fact, levirate marriage is hardly practised among Jews today, and even frowned upon.

This practice is not mentioned specifically in the New Testament.

**Rape and Bride abduction**

Sexual violence, like violence in general, was quite common in Old Testament times.

According to the Mosaic Law in Deuteronomy 22: 23 -27, a woman was guilty of adultery if she was raped but did not scream, but not if she did.

Deuteronomy 28-29 proposes a remedy for rape still used in some rural areas today: *"If a man meets a virgin who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are caught in the act, the man who lay with her shall give fifty shekels of silver to the young woman's father, and she shall become his wife. Because he violated her he shall not be permitted to divorce her as long as he lives."*

The story of Tamar's rape by her brother in 2 Samuel 13 1-22 shows how such an act can be minimised in a culture in which the needs of men (for sex, power, acceptance by friends) far outweigh the needs of women. She ends up living as "a desolate woman" (vs 20)

It seems women had so little value, that Lot (in Genesis 19: 7-8) and a Levite and his host (in Judges 19: 23-26) offered their daughters and concubines (sex slaves) to a huge crowd of men who intended to rape his male guests, because hospitality between men was deemed to be more important than the women closest to them.

Judges 21: 19 tells the story of young virgins abducted as spoils of war. It is interesting, though, that the last verse of the chapter (25) says: "In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes."

The New Testament never specifically mentions rape or bride abduction. However, it is very clear that any actions that are not out of a place of love, and not for the good of the Body of Christ, are not acceptable.

### ***So where does all this leave us?***

On the face of it, the Bible does not seem to have a consistent position on all aspects of sexual ethics and acceptable masculinities. It does seem that the Old Testament supports, or does not condemn, some destructive ideas and behaviours.

**One thing this quick overview shows is that it can be dangerous to simply take verses from the Bible and claim that the Bible says so, which a literal interpretation does. A contextual reading opens up a sense of the progression of thought between the Old and New Testaments.**

### **So, how do we decide what is right?**

Paul gives us a hint as to how to approach the Old Testament: "*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial...*" (1Corinthians 6:12)

And Jesus is clear that he came, not to abolish the Law (of the Old Testament), but to fulfil it. The rest of this section explores this dynamic a little further.





## Time to talk: How do we decide what's right?

- Spend some time discussing what you think should be criteria for deciding whether a biblical interpretation is correct.
- You may want to make a list, and then number them, with 1 being the most important<sup>81</sup>.

### Male headship, authority, responsibility and leadership

In many cultures all over the world, a man who is not the head of his household is seen as not a man at all. And headship is normally defined by his ability to provide for his family.

We talked earlier about the tragic loss of identity and self-respect that many unemployed men in Southern Africa suffer because they are not able to provide for their families, and many end up resorting to violence.

This understanding of masculinity is based largely on the first few chapters of the Bible: Genesis 2 and 3.

Gender activists have correctly challenged these patriarchal ideas because of the suffering patriarchal excesses have caused women.

But the agony of many men who feel they are failures because they cannot meet this basic standard of manhood, make it even more urgent to ask ourselves if these Scriptures have been used in ways that are consistent with God's plan for humanity.

### Interpreting the Creation in society today

Let us listen to some of the different arguments for male headship in home and society based on Genesis and other Scriptures:

- Man (Adam) was created first as God's primary companion. Woman was created out of man's rib, to be his helper. Therefore, women are to submit to the leadership of their husbands. Their husbands have been given the responsibility to lead and guide them and their families by God, and so are wiser, stronger and more able to provide for the household.

This argument basically gives all power and authority to men, but also burdens them with all the responsibility. It is open to abuse, violence and destruction.

<sup>81</sup> Perhaps the most important criteria for discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying through The Bible relate to whether our interpretation:

- is based on the core values of the Gospel: love and mercy,
- does not just serve our own interests, and
- respects human dignity and leads towards greater wholeness.

■ Some churches in Southern Africa<sup>82</sup> have called on men to stop abusing their power, More churches are standing up against gender based violence and men's sexual behaviours that spread HIV. But they have **not challenged the idea of male headship**. Instead, they emphasise that this God-given role needs to be exercised with responsibility, and that men need to exercise their leadership role by following Jesus' example of servant-leadership. They do not challenge unequal gender relations because they believe these are God-given, based on Genesis 2. But they do expect men to fulfil their superior role responsibly, and with gentleness and love.

*"We men are doing a bad job. It is a very serious problem. We love the power but we don't love the responsibility. Shame on us, men."*  
Pastor Joshua Banda, Zambia

■ A third response is more radical. **Genesis 1: 26-28** is often used to show that men and women are **created equally**, both representing the image of God, and thus should be given the same dignity and respect. They were **both given authority** over all living things. If men and women are created equal, then the different roles God has given men and women according to Genesis 2 and 3 should be respected equally. Men should not dominate and women should not be seen as inferior.



## Time to talk: Genesis, gender equality and gender roles

Take time to read the above arguments through carefully, and make sure everyone in your group understands them.

- Jesus has warned that we can tell false prophets from true by judging them 'by their fruits'. Discuss each of the positions above, and talk about their consequences, for women, men and children and for society as a whole.
- Based on your conversation, which do you think would offer a more constructive teaching on the Creation in your church and society?
- What are some of the gaps, dangers and pitfalls of this perspective?

### ***Going back to the roots Genesis 1 and 2: Creation of mankind or humankind?***

**NOTE:** Tool 3 (*Exploring how the Bible talks about men and women*) examines the creation narratives more deeply, and interested readers are referred to pages 34 – 37 of this Toolkit.

In Tool 3, we re-read Genesis 1-3 using a more accurate translation of the original Hebrew for crucial words like 'Adam' (see page 37). And when we do that, it becomes clear that Genesis 1 and 2 do not actually contradict at all!

According to the original Hebrew, the first human being (*adamah*) was neither man nor woman, and the sexual differentiation only came about once this first 'creature of the earth' was

<sup>82</sup> Such as Northmead Pentecostal Church, Lusaka, mentioned by Adriaan Van Klinken (2011) in *Male Headship as Male Agency: An Alternative Understanding of a 'Patriarchal' African Pentecostal Discourse on Masculinity*. *Religion and Gender*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2011), 104-124 [www.religionandgender.org](http://www.religionandgender.org)

differentiated into two equal parts. So we see a picture of two human beings, created as equals and partners in the Image of God.

When the man (*is*) awakens, he is excited to see another person, whom he identifies as woman (*isshah*), and recognises their oneness when he cries out '*this is flesh of my flesh*'.

### What about Genesis 3, and man and woman's God-given roles?

Some writers<sup>83</sup> have pointed out that the role division only took place AFTER the fall from Grace, when Eve and Adam were banished from Eden. And it is only then, also, that Adam takes it upon himself to name Eve. They argue that God was not setting out an ideal order of being. These are the inevitable results of human beings having cut themselves off from God through their sin.



### Time to talk: Genesis and gender equality and roles

- How do you feel about the interpretation of Genesis 2 using the original Hebrew word for the original human being? (How) does this change your view of yourself as a man, or as a woman?
- Do you think it was God's intention in creating humanity that man rules over woman? When would God have said this if that were the original intention?
- How would the world be different if the world was ordered according to this new understanding? What would be better, and what do you fear might be negative consequences?

### Masculinities and the New Testament

Both Paul and Jesus refer back to Genesis 2. Let us briefly compare how they use it, taking into account the societies where they lived.

#### PAUL:

In 1 Corinthians 11:8,9, Paul referred to Genesis 2 to argue for men's superiority and authority over woman, and made very specific hierarchical rules for how women should behave in church. Some theologians argue that this letter was written early in his ministry, when he was still very influenced by his Jewish culture.

Later he wrote in Galatians (3:28): '*...there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male and female. All are one in Christ Jesus*'. This shows a big shift in his thinking: from a gender unequal view to one which goes right back to Genesis 1:27. Jan Jans (2015) sums it up like this: "*Now in terms of a 'new creation' in Christ,... all of us are no longer male and female, but first and foremost persons before Christ, [and our] sex or gender is actually irrelevant.*"

<sup>83</sup> An easy to read overview of this argument is given by Rachel Evans Read (2012). Is patriarchy really God's dream for the world? <http://rachelheldevans.com/blog/patriarchy>

## JESUS:

Jesus made it clear that the Law of love (for God, ourselves and our neighbour) is to be the main criterion for right and wrong.

In Matthew 19: 3-9, he used Genesis 2 in a completely different way. He didn't talk about male superiority. (In fact, he NEVER mentioned it!) Rather, he argued here against the cultural practice of men divorcing their wives too easily, by reminding them that they had become 'one flesh' with their wives (quoting from Gen 2:24). So he challenged the cultural view of women as possessions of men. Instead, men should take women seriously, and their wives as part of their very selves.

## Searching for role models

In the end, what matters is not our clever arguments, or who is right or wrong. What matters is how we live, and what fruits our lives produce. We have seen many negative role models in the Old Testament, as well as some positive ones like Joseph. Let us look at the lives of the two most influential role models in our faith.



## Time to talk: Paul's call to a new manhood, a new society

There is evidence in Paul's writings that he was on a journey with Christ that changed him, both as a person and as a man.

In 2 Corinthians<sup>84</sup>, Paul defends his ministry in what appear to have been bitter power struggles with other evangelists – although he shows an unwillingness to do so.

By the time he writes Galatians, his approach is very different.

Read the following extracts from Galatians. As you are reading, think of the following questions, and then go back and talk about them. Galatians 4:21; 5:1; and 13-26.

- What kinds of behaviours does he criticise? How similar are they to what is considered behaviour of a 'real man' today?
- What does he offer as 'fruit of the Spirit'?
- In vs. 23, Paul lists *self-control* as one of the fruits of the Spirit. He also warns in Gal. 5:1, that we should not use our freedom to "*submit again to a yoke of slavery*".
- What can we conclude from this about what Paul would say to men who do not control their passions and feel it is their right to have sex whenever they want to? Would Paul call them 'real men'?
- On what does he say are the negative behaviours based, and what perspective guides the 'new man' (or 'new woman')? (Gal 4: 21; 5: 13-15)?
- From what you know of Paul's ministry, how did he relate to women in the early church? (Look back at Tool 9, pages 140-141).

<sup>84</sup> 2 Corinthians 11 and 12.



## Time to talk: Jesus the transformative man

**Jesus**, our ultimate role model, said that he had “not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but to fulfil” (Matthew 5:17). In fact, he often got into trouble with the religious leaders of his day for not obeying the letter of the Law.

- Read the following passages and talk about them:
  - He spoke to women in public and allowed them to speak to him (John 4: 4-26);
  - He broke taboos about speaking to women in public (John 4: 4-26) and he even invited them to tell their stories about bleeding disorders (Luke 8: 43-48)
  - He engaged in theological discussions with women, taking their opinions seriously (Matthew 15: 21-28; Mark 7:24-39)
  - He entrusted women with the task to spread the ‘good news’ that he had to share (John 4:7-12; John 20:17)
  - He challenged the lack of respect for children in his society, and called a child to be at the centre of his teaching (Matthew 8:14)
  - He challenged the misuse of power by religious leaders directly (Matthew 23:4, and 23-24)
  - He expressed his feelings publicly, and is even recorded as weeping John 11:35; Luke 19: 41.

In all these cases, Jesus was going against the cultural practices of his day.

Some people say that those who are calling for gender equality are just giving in to today’s liberal culture.

- What were the cultural norms Jesus stood up against? What norms should we be standing up against today? Are Jesus’ norms for how we should live still counter-cultural today?

Paul sums up how Jesus lived in Philippians 2: 5-8:

*“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.”*

- What would men (and women) have to give up, to become more like Jesus? What would they gain if they did?
- What would have to change in your church, if it was built on the values and principles by which Paul and Jesus lived?

## Why is it so hard to change, and what would help?

The many benefits of being a man in a male dominated society make it very hard to give up certain privileges one has become used to. Power is hard to give up, because it comes with privileges and entitlements – whether one has it because of gender, race, social class or economic inequalities.

It can be too comfortable, men are used to being able to influence others and be served by the women in one's life. After all, who would not rather sit and watch TV or read the paper than cook supper or do household chores?!

But it is more complicated than that. Even men who want to change find it hard to become the men they would like to be, and to own the promise that they are a 'new creation' (2 Corinthians 5: 17, and Galatians 6:15)?



Men who engage in raising their children contribute in important ways to building healthy communities. Yet, in many societies, fatherhood is not valued, and many children grow up without their fathers.

*Tawanda Makusha with his baby girl Tadiwa ('we have been loved').*

*Source: Tawanda Makusha*



### Time to talk: Why is it hard for men to change?

(If it feels more comfortable, feel free to divide into groups of just women and just men.)

- What are the influences on men that make it hard to relate differently to women and other men?
- Why are these influences so powerful? (Think of your own life.)

Many men, even leaders in churches and society, have not developed a very rich inner life. Most men as they are growing up are discouraged from crying, have to be fearless and are told they should not talk about their feelings. Many men feel trapped inside.

Men are mostly rewarded for outward performance – the wealth they own, the number of people under their leadership, and their sexual success (measured by how many women and children they have). Men are constantly in competition, and are either 'winners' or 'losers.'

Even most churches seem to focus more on outward things (like belonging, doctrines, tithing, fundraising, and leadership roles) than on the inner life. In Southern Africa, when men are active in their church, they are usually in leadership, even though the majority of members are women.

**If our society is to be truly transformed, then as churches, we need to develop ministries that enable men and women to grow in an inner life that helps them discover their inner power.** We need to help each other to develop a more authentic spirituality, so that we no longer need to prove ourselves, but can freely live out our call to love as Jesus loved. More about this below.

## What can the Church do? Ubuntu and the Body of Christ

Given how hard it is for men to change and how deeply ingrained hegemonic masculinities are, the church needs to become a true community. Our understanding of the equal worth, dignity and capability of women and men to lead through service, needs to be obvious to everyone. In the same way that the Gospel and *Ubuntu* both teach us to treat everyone with the same respect we give ourselves, we also need to recognise that each of us is shaped by those around us. A whole-church approach creates the environment where transformative men and women can be nurtured and we can live out our calling as the Body of Christ in our daily lives.

### Examining our own house



#### Time to talk: Power and privileges in our churches

(If it feels more comfortable, feel free to divide into groups of just women and just men.)

- List the privileges enjoyed by men, women, boys and girls in your church.<sup>85</sup>
- How does the balance of power between men and women, old and young, in your church affect the lives of those with less power?
- How does it affect the life of your church? (See the footnote below for further ideas when you are done.)<sup>86</sup>



#### Time to talk: What does this mean for the Church, in practice?

Read the discussion below, between two people in a masculinities workshop, and then talk about it using the questions that follow:

<sup>85</sup> This exercise is based on a similar one in The Church's Training Manual on Gender Injustice and Gender-Based Violence in Zambia. 2011.

<sup>86</sup> Power is about influencing decision making about what is important in the church, what kinds of ministries are better funded, whose opinions are given more weight, and what is seen as acceptable in relationships. If both women and men are involved in decision making, and especially if young men and women are also given space, then the interests of the whole church can be met (not just the male minority). The church might work together to try to do things differently, to allow more sharing of responsibilities in the different ministries. E.g. Imagine if more women and youth participated in planning your Sunday services.

*"Where contestation comes in is that women now have an idea of taking over from men, and taking their positions. They can be equal but have different roles, because otherwise it can affect certain orders in the church"*

*"That assumes that those positions were meant for men, legitimately, and now women want to take over. But it is more like women were deprived of opportunities to be in those positions before, and are now positioning themselves to also take part."*

*"...[U]njust relationships between women and men actually undermine.. the nature and mission of the church that is called to be one." Fulata Moyo, WCC*

These two positions come from different ways of thinking – one from the side of the church, and the other based on human rights discourse.

- Together, talk about possible ways that these two positions might be able to find some understanding and move forward together? What biblical basis can you find to support your ideas?

## Promoting transformative masculinities

- First and foremost – be role models that live out the values of transformative masculinity (see pp 212-213).
- Use the pulpit and all other teaching spaces to challenge men within the faith community to uphold the values of transformative masculinity:
  - Clearly show what Jesus taught and how he lived as a man who respected women as equals and challenged the abuse of power wherever he saw it.
  - Emphasise mutual respect and love in marriage sermons. Use Jesus' interpretation of Genesis 2 in marriage (and other) sermons, as well as 1 Corinthians 13 about love, and if you use Ephesians 5, read the whole text (including vs 1, 21, 28).
  - Speak about the importance of following Jesus' example of loving and respectful ways of being a man in all the church's ministries– Sunday School, Youth group, as well as men's and women's ministries<sup>87</sup>.



"Transformed men can mobilise others to join them to transform society.  
Source: Brothers for Life

<sup>87</sup> Use Contextual Bible studies. An exciting resource is a *Contextual Bible Study Manual on Transformative Masculinity*, edited by Ezra Chitando and Nyambura J. Njoroge. 2013. Published by EHAIA, Harare. Download it in PDF at <http://thursdaysinblack.co.za/wp-content/uploads/TIB/Bible%20Studies%20and%20Worship%20Material/Transformative%20Masculinity.pdf>

- Show the parallels between the idea of neighbourliness (Good Samaritan), the Body of Christ and service as the ideal, and *Ubuntu* - the idea that our own dignity is closely tied to that of others. There is then no room for one ethic for certain people (men, the rich, etc.) and another for others (women, 'other' groups).
- Use special days like Father's Day, Children's Day, Youth Day and Mother's day to speak about transformative masculinities.
- Use inclusive language. Avoid using translations of the Bible that still use language that makes men the norm (such as "*sons of God*"). The New Revised Standard uses inclusive language like "*children of God*", for example.

*"When read in creative ways, the Bible is a powerful resource for liberation. Transformed men [and women] will ... contribute towards the transformation of families, churches, institutions, nations and the world. Together, we shall overcome sexual and gender-based violence, stigma and discrimination, sexism, homophobia and other forms of marginalisation."*

Fulata Moyo, Programme Executive, Women in Church and Society, World Council of Churches

## Helping men explore a more authentic spirituality and way of life

An important role the church can play is to understand why it is hard for men to change (as discussed earlier), and to offer a way of making sense of this that can help men, and women, churches and society, to change.

Richard Rohr<sup>88</sup>, a Franciscan priest, has some ideas about what men need if they are to live as whole people that contribute to a transformed society. He says **men need to change how they relate to power**. He describes power as something that one grows into, rather than something one just has because of externals. He described the stages of developing true inner power as follows:

An immature man often feels **powerless** and the need to prove his power. This can lead to aggression or 'becoming an operator' or 'hustler'. Such men live out of fear, and blindly obey those with power over them. Many groups of young men, as well as gangs, operate like this, and their show of power can be very destructive, to themselves and others.

One way to obtain **power is by** the people a man **associates** with, and by promoting an 'us and them' approach. We see this in churches which have a very strict rule system for who is in and who is 'of the world'.

The third and more successful way of feeling powerful is when a man owns the **symbols of power** – he is rich, has many relationships or a beautiful woman, and is a senior leader in business or in the church. Rohr says this kind of man is in 'golden handcuffs' because he is still not free. Such men put a lot of energy into keeping the things that give him this sense of power and control. (E.g. Solomon or David in the Bible.)

<sup>88</sup> Father Richard Rohr is the founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and an international author and speaker. For more information see [www.cacradicalgrace.org](http://www.cacradicalgrace.org). This section is based on: *Men and Power*. In: Gennrich D. 2013. *Men and Masculinities in South Africa. Volume 3: Faith-Based and Community Resources for change*. PACSA, Pietermaritzburg.

Unless a man experiences some sort of crisis, he is unlikely to move to more inner forms of power – the **power within** given by **knowing oneself** and embracing the weak or 'bad' bits along with the good or strong. This also involves knowing their deeper **purpose** in life (e.g. Paul and Peter in the Bible). Ultimate personal power comes from knowing one is loved by God, without having to prove anything, and so is able to just be oneself (e.g. Jesus).



## Time to talk: Time to talk: Developing an authentic spirituality

- Does Richard Rohr's analysis of men's journeys with power make sense to you?
- As a man, or a woman what are the traps in your own life that prevent you from accessing your true power within?
- How might you build this perspective into the teachings and ministries of your church? Use the list of ideas under 'promoting transformative masculinities' above to talk further about your ideas.
- What difference would it make in your church (and your family and workplace) if more men and women had a transformed relationship to power in their lives?

### Creating healing spaces

More churches today run ministries for victims of violence, but these are usually for women.

Men are also often victims of (mostly male) violence, but they have no one to talk to about it, because men are not supposed to be weak or vulnerable. Create safe spaces where men can come together to talk about things they are struggling with. They probably won't come to 'victim support' meetings, but experience shows that they do talk about these things if safe spaces are created for them<sup>89</sup>.

*"I never knew that the things I did in my marriage were harmful to my wife and kids."*

What about perpetrators? As they learn about the meaning of rape, many men come to realise that what they once assumed to be their right – to take a woman and use her sexually without her explicit consent – may have actually been rape and done her harm. But it needn't even be so extreme – just realising that they may have restricted the freedom of their partners or daughters can also be hard for men.

Talking about their feelings of guilt and finding ways to forgive themselves, deal with their anger and face their own vulnerability, can take place in such safe spaces. Once men are able to let these things go, they can become positive, transformative men, and influence others to go on similar journeys.

<sup>89</sup> Examples include Men as Partners and Men for Change, and community men's forums such as the Umphithi Men's Network ([www.pacsa.org.za](http://www.pacsa.org.za)).

Some churches and NGOs have opened up healing spaces for couples. They are then able to talk about longstanding misunderstandings, anger and fears. Sometimes this can bring such healing that couples say they are friends for the first time ever.

## Working together towards a new society

Join or start networks in your area that work together and share learning, and sometimes speak with a joint voice. Use the list of resources in Practical Tool 4 to help you find other organisations. Some national or regional organisations have branches in different countries and communities.

- Work with NGOs and other organisations to create joint safe spaces where men can meet and talk openly, and also act together as part of a growing movement of transformed men who do not tolerate violence, and grow in genuine friendship;
- Try and find, and make available, material (books, pamphlets, short movies, music, etc.) on transformative masculinities to increase awareness and open up conversations.
- Engage in outreach activities for boys and men, as well as women and girls, with messages of transformative masculinities and gender equality.

*"As bishops, we have the power and authority to call ministers together and talk through these things"*



## Time to talk: Planning

- Talk with others about your ideas for how you can work in your own church to open up conversations about transformed masculinities.
- Prepare a short plan of your **next steps**: Who will you talk to? When? How?
- Refer to Tool 11, and Practical Tools 1 and 2 to help you.

## Conclusion

In the end, each man needs to (re)make himself in response to how he understands Jesus' call to be a man. The Gold Standard for our lives has to be the values of the Gospel, summarised by Jesus in the commandment to love God, and love others as ourselves.

This might equally be a way to summarise the African value of mutual respect, *Ubuntu*.

Jan Jans (2015) puts it this way:

*"If being a Christian is living according to the Gospel – the Good News--- which includes the promise of justice and peace, then... masculinities that lead to oppression and violence [are] surely contrary to this."*<sup>90</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Jan Jans (forthcoming). *Masculinity: Why is this important to us as Christians?* Tilburg University, Netherlands.



## Tool 13: Sexual Diversity: What is the Holy Spirit saying to the churches at this time?

### FACILITATOR'S GUIDE



*"There will never come a time when people in Kenya will OK homosexuality, because we have very very strong anti-gay elements in society, and they are embedded in us."* Denis Nzioka, Kenyan LGBT activist.

### Introduction

Thank you for your commitment to taking people in your church and community on this journey. It is a difficult journey, because sexual diversity is a complex and difficult topic. Prejudice against LGBTI people runs deep in our societies, churches, and thus in our own minds and hearts. It arouses strong emotions.

This also makes it very difficult to facilitate. That is why this short Facilitator's Guide has been developed.

For a general Facilitator's Guide, and to understand the basic educational methodology used, please refer to Practical Tool 3.

### Who is the Tool designed for?

The Tool presumes that the participants are not at all familiar with LGBTI concepts or issues, although they might have some awareness of gender issues. Some groups will be open, others very closed.

The theological section caters for people with a Christian church background. But the first and last parts can be used with anyone from any background. People generally learn prejudice through their socialisation, and the church plays a big role in that for many people in Southern Africa. So working with the 8 Bible passages used to argue that homosexuality is a sin, can be useful for non-church-goers with a Christian family background too.

#### **TIP: Understanding who your participants are will help you facilitate the process better.**

So find out as much as you can about them before they come, and spend time getting to know them each when you begin.

### How is the tool structured?

This Tool has been very carefully structured. It takes people on a gradual journey in a safe (though not unchallenging) environment.

It follows the basic conscientisation and mobilisation process developed by IAM over many years. It is based on the **Wheel of Change**.

Before you begin any training process, please refer to pages 290-291, and go through the Time to Talk exercise that gives participants an overview of the process based on the Wheel of Change. Make sure you understand the mind behind it, and how it is applied in the different sections of the Tool.

This Tool moves from a '**defrosting**' stage, which helps participants to 'put down their arms', through helping them to recognise our common humanity, regardless of our background and persuasion.

Following the Wheel of Change, it then works to **open hearts and minds**, not just through giving people information, but through exposing them to real people's stories of rejection, heartbreak, confusion and finding themselves. Discovering one's sexuality is a common human journey, but it is made more difficult by prejudice and stigma. This is the largest part of this Tool. The Tool then takes seriously the link between **empowerment** to take an issue forward, and being well **networked and informed**. It ends with some ideas for how to build **change agents** in our congregations and communities, and closes with a declaration of commitment to **open doors** of churches to become inclusive.



### A little more about defrosting:

It is important to help participants relax, by using activities to help them feel that they are valued, respected as they are, and that their contribution to the process is valued. There are many types of ice breakers to this, and a facilitator needs to choose them wisely, depending on the age group and type of people in a group<sup>65</sup>.

## What are some of the challenges in sexual diversity work?

### Resistance, fear and strong emotions, and lack of awareness of bias

Every human being is influenced by their own story – their experiences, education and socialisation. We all have certain 'buttons' that, if pushed, can cause a strong reaction! When talking about sensitive issues that affect our identity, it is even more likely. This is the same for both participants and facilitators.

#### TIPS:

- Avoid going into a workshop process 'cold'. Before the workshop, have an ongoing conversation with leaders or activists in the church or community where it is to take place. Make sure that you have been invited, and that the organiser has invited participants who will engage sincerely with this issue.
- Make sure the group agrees on what will make the space safe (see pg. 248), and do not be shy to enforce (gently but firmly) the rules of engagement decided on there.
- Watch for the reactions of participants – their body language, tone of voice, raising their voice, language they use. Try to be sensitive. Don't push too hard, but also be ready for a possible explosion. Do not take anything personally!
- Be wary of direct and indirect hate speech. Protect everyone from hate speech in all its disguises, while respecting freedom of speech and the expression of differing opinions, without intent to offend.
- Remember, you have your own biases too! Be aware of your own 'buttons', and when your emotions are stirred up. Do not give in to them, but try to focus on the matter under discussion. Be aware of your own use of language. It is easy to uncritically use prejudiced language without thinking about its impact on people.

<sup>65</sup> Some websites with fun ideas are: <http://ctl.mesacc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/FunGames.pdf>; [http://insight.typepad.co.uk/40\\_icebreakers\\_for\\_small\\_groups.pdf](http://insight.typepad.co.uk/40_icebreakers_for_small_groups.pdf); <http://www.greatgroupgames.com/icebreaker-games-for-adults.htm>

- Sometimes, LGBTI people can become very emotional during this process, especially if they have never come out of the closet, or they have suffered greatly. Research information about appropriate counsellors in their area BEFORE you facilitate a process.

### **The facilitator can be stigmatised or discredited by powerful participants**

People who feel threatened can easily hunt down the messenger! So expect some participants to try to undermine you personally, instead of talking about the questions at hand. This can completely destroy a process, because it can convince people not to take the facilitator seriously.

#### **TIPS:**

- If possible, always facilitate in a team of 2 – preferably a mixed team – man/woman, a heterosexual ally and an LGBTI person. You don't need to be ordained, but it does help! Support each other.
- Be very well prepared. Study the Toolkit (especially the theological sections if you are going to meet clergy). Read more. Use the Resources section in the Tool (pp 294-297).
- Establish trust very early on. Participants need to trust your expertise, but also your integrity and sincerity as a person, and that you respect them and will not judge them nor try to convert them.

### **A defensive attitude about the Bible**

Many people have deeply engrained habits when it comes to using the Bible. They may believe that their interpretation (often learnt from someone else) is the only correct one. They can feel very threatened when someone comes with different ideas, and can resort to questioning the very foundations of that person's faith (-another way to discredit facilitator, as above). This makes it hard for a facilitator, but even harder for other participants, especially if the power relations are unequal in the group.

#### **TIP:**

Avoid arguing about isolated verses. Rather invite the group to explore why it happens that people argue about what Bible verses mean in the first place. Use pp 262-266 on ways to read the Bible, pitfalls when reading it, and examples of shifts in biblical understanding to respond to contextual changes. Then, when they are more open, it is possible to look again at the old favourite verses.

### **Criminalisation of sexual diversity in some countries**

In some countries, it is a criminal offence to even speak about sexual diversity, because of the myth that people can become influenced to become homosexual or transgender, or that it is contagious!

#### **TIPS:**

- Do an environmental scan on how the Law deals with LGBTI in a country, or statutes in a church, and set up a basic security plan. Ask your host for advice.
- Do not risk other people's lives by arriving with banned documents!
- Make sure you have been invited, and that your host and participants are fully aware of the risks involved.
- Open up space for participants to talk about their fears and anxieties, and to devise plans together.

## A useful Resource: Stages in the life of an emerging homosexual

The extract below can be useful for counselling and supporting people who are on a journey to come to terms with their sexuality if it is not heterosexual. It is useful for parents and church or school counsellors.

*"Cass (1979) has identified six stages of identity formation: confusion, comparison, tolerance, acceptance, pride, and synthesis. (It usually takes place at adolescence, but can happen at any time in a person's life.)"*

*In **Stage 1 – identity confusion** – heterosexual identity is called into question with the adolescent's increasing awareness of feelings of intimate and physical attraction towards others of the same sex: "Could I be homosexual?". S/he may become personally interested to learn more about gays and lesbian, and be less interested in the 'opposite' sex. Confusion is great and denial is usually the primary coping strategy.*

***Stage 2 – identity comparison** – A person begins to accept that homosexual feelings may be part of who they are: "I might be homosexual". Or they may try to explain away a same-gender sexual attraction as a special case (it just happens to be this one person I am attracted to and he/she happens to be the same sex). Or the person may think that "I may be bisexual" (which could mean they might also be heterosexual). "This is a phase I'm going through" may surface. At this stage, a person is trying to make sense of their same-sex attractions and their view of themselves as heterosexual. It is a way of dealing with the awareness of being different from larger society, a sense of not belonging and feeling like they must be the only one "like this."*

***Stage 3 – identity tolerance** – The person starts to admit: "I probably am homosexual." This helps dispel the confusion and turmoil of prior stages, but creates a greater distance from others. This can be especially hard for teens, who need peer approval and acceptance. The homosexual teen is forced to scrutinise every action to maintain his or her secret, and they 'mask' who they are: convincingly acting heterosexual despite grappling internally with their identity. They must constantly work at separating their private and public self. This can undermine their intimate relationships with family and friends, because the person knows they are based on untruth.*

*Positive experiences are crucial to developing a degree of self-acceptance (vs self-hatred) during this period. Contacting other gay, lesbian, and/or bisexual people becomes more pressing, to alleviate their sense of isolation and alienation, and to find a place where they feel accepted for their whole being and not just for their 'mask'.*

***Stage 4 – identity acceptance** – involves increasing contact with other gays and lesbians and developing a clearer homosexual identity. Finding other gay and lesbian teens is difficult. Those in rural areas often find the isolation nearly unbearable. Many of these young people feel a need to leave home and school and move to an urban area simply to make contact with other gay, lesbian and bisexual people.*

*Those adolescents fortunate enough to have access to support groups and/or gay social events often live a kind of dual lifestyle – being heterosexual publicly and bi- or homosexual privately. With this comes the fear of being 'discovered'. But they begin to feel better about who they are and how they fit in.*

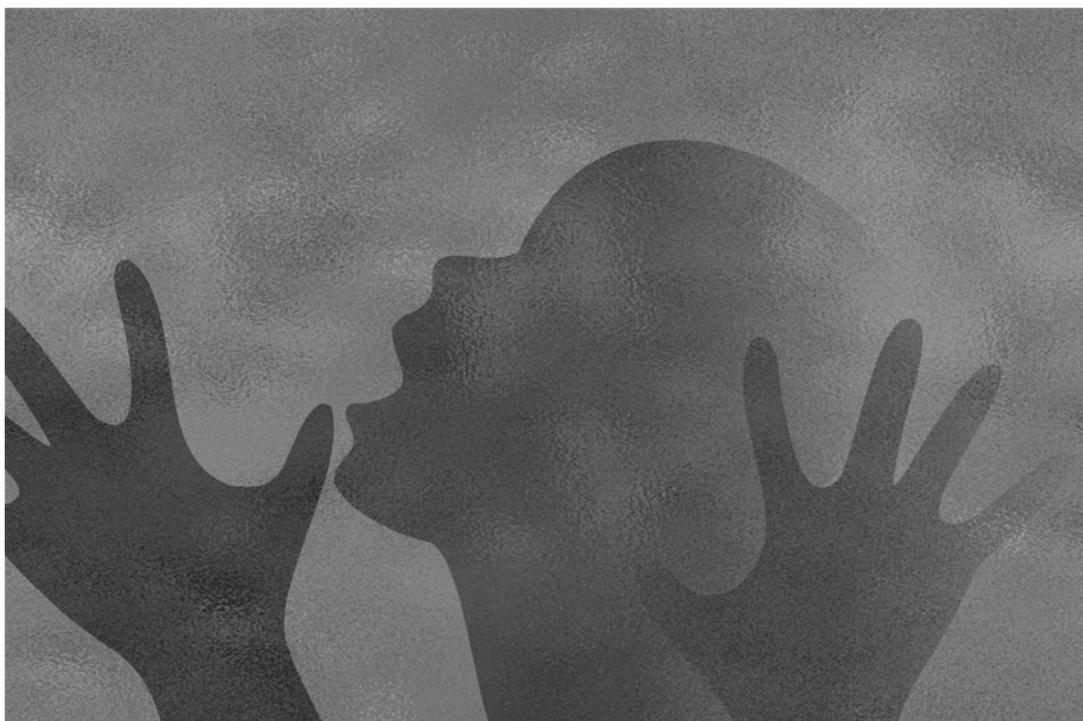
***Stage 5 – identity pride** – the individual is part of gay and lesbian subculture and begins to have less and less involvement with the heterosexual community. They have a "them and us" mentality and can devalue anything to do with heterosexuality.*

***Stage 6 – identity synthesis** – the person begins to realise that the heterosexual and homosexual worlds have a lot in common. S/he has less rigid polarising views and becomes more open to others who are not homosexual. The person has a broader view of themselves as a whole person, and defines him- or herself in a more complete way – not just in terms of sexual orientation.*

Simplified and summarised from *Exploring (Homo) Sexuality, A Quick Queer Guide*.  
Triangle Project. Journey of Hope. pp. 7-8.



# Tool 13: Sexual Diversity: What is the Holy Spirit saying to the churches at this time?



---

***“However divided we may be about this issue, there is one thing we can agree on together: we truly want to be open to hear what the Spirit is saying to us, and to obey the Lord in this as in all matters of faith and life.”***

Bishop David Russell. 2004, 2011. “The Bible and Homosexuality: What is the Spirit saying to the churches?” P.4

---

## Tool 13 contents

Foreword.....	240
Acknowledgements .....	241
Purpose of this Tool.....	241
Preparing our hearts.....	242
Listening for the stories in our lives.....	243
Listening deeply to each other's stories .....	244
We are all on a journey.....	246
Opening our Minds and Hearts .....	249
Listening deeply to stories of people with diverse sexual identities and orientations.....	249
What do sexual diversity and gender diversity mean? .....	252
How do we discern the Truth? .....	263
Is how we use the Bible consistent with the Spirit of the Gospel of Christ?.....	263
Using the Bible to guide our decisions.....	266
Using the Bible responsibly .....	271
Using the Bible responsibly to grapple with the hard questions about sexual diversity .....	272
Developing an inclusive ministry .....	280
Opening Doors: What does an inclusive, affirming faith community look like? .....	281
Reflecting on our own churches and communities .....	281
Some good news! .....	283
Empowering ourselves through networking and accessing useful resources.....	287
Becoming Change Agents: The Wheel of Change .....	289
Practical ideas for creating inclusive and affirming faith communities .....	289
Being change agents and opening doors .....	292
Conclusion .....	294
Resources .....	294
Attachment 1: Public apology of Exodus International's President .....	297
Attachment 2: Contextual Bible Study on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19).....	299

## Foreword

NCA's commitment to this project arises from its Statement of Principles *"Together for a just world"* (Chapter 2.2).

- *"All human beings are embraced by God's love, regardless of religion, culture, gender, sexual orientation, age, functional abilities, ethnicity or political persuasion."*
- Chapter 3 states: *"Human dignity is a gift from God and encompasses all humanity from the beginning to the end of life, irrespective of class, gender, religion and ethnicity. God takes a special interest in those who experience poverty, oppression or exclusion"*
- On this theological basis, NCA wants to work with its partners to realise the rights of all people in relation to gender, sexuality and reproductive health.

## Acknowledgements

This Tool was written by Daniela Gennrich (PACSA Consultancy Unit, [www.pacsa.org.za](http://www.pacsa.org.za)). Many thanks also to IAM (Inclusive and Affirming Ministries) in Cape Town, for their guidance in its development, and critical reading of the draft MS. Appreciation goes to NCA Team not only for financial support but for leadership, especially Them bani Chamane, the Gender Justice Advisor, for his role on critical inputs, direction and technical support in this production process.

## Purpose of this Tool

The Church has a long history of a pastoral ministry, caring for the sick and bringing hope and new life to millions of people over the centuries since Jesus set the ultimate example on earth.

This Tool has been prepared at the request of some churches and Christian Councils in different SADC countries. They are asking many questions about what God is saying about sexuality issues like same-sex relationships.

This is a difficult issue, and stirs up strong emotions.

In fact, globally the issue of same sex relationships has in some cases threatened to break up churches. In countries where it is illegal just to talk about it, it is even more difficult to deal with.

And yet - there are many committed Christians who do not fit into heterosexual norms and are suffering deeply because of rejection by their church, family and friends. Others have lost their faith, become depressed or even committed suicide.

**This Tool is designed to help people in churches think deeply about their attitudes and beliefs about diverse forms of sexuality.**

**It creates space to explore the 8 verses in the Bible that have been used to judge, reject and exclude people who don't fit into the accepted (heterosexual) norms.** It does so in a way that opens safe spaces for people to speak out about what they think and feel, to ask questions, and listen to different viewpoints.

But this is not just a 'free-for-all liberal watered-down Gospel'! **Together, we will try to develop criteria to help us discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to us today in a way that is consistent with the Christian understanding of a merciful God, who speaks into human history with love and compassion, and speaks against cruelty, violence and a lack of love.**

### Some important words:

**Sexuality:** Refers to how we live out who we are as sexual beings. This is influenced by how we were born as well as social and cultural influences on our lives.

**Sexual orientation:** whether one is sexually attracted to members of the opposite or the same sex. One's sexual orientation is part of the core of someone's emotional, psychological, romantic and physical nature – it is usually not just a sexual behaviour choice.

**Homosexual:** A person who is sexually attracted to members of the same sex. Men attracted to men are often called 'gay', while women attracted to women are called 'lesbian'.

**Heterosexual:** A person who is sexually attracted to members of what is known as the opposite sex.

*The actual picture is much more complex than this. Other terms are defined on pg. 253.*

It is important that we think through our sexual ethics so that we are able to respond meaningfully. The Church is called to minister to all people.

The Bible does not give a single clear directive on sexual diversity, or other matters of sexual ethics. In fact, one could use the Bible to prove either point of view. So it challenges us to re-think how we are using the Bible, to remain faithful to its message of God's redemption and inclusion of all people through Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith.

This is not just an issue – it is about people's lives, their relationships and wellbeing. It is about the fruit of our ministries.

Rather than letting it divide us, let us approach this task with humility, admitting our limitations. How do I know I am correctly interpreting God's word for us today? How do you?

You are invited to journey with others as we discern what the Spirit might be saying through God's written word to the Church in a world that is quite different from how it was over the 1 000 year history covered by the Books of the Bible.

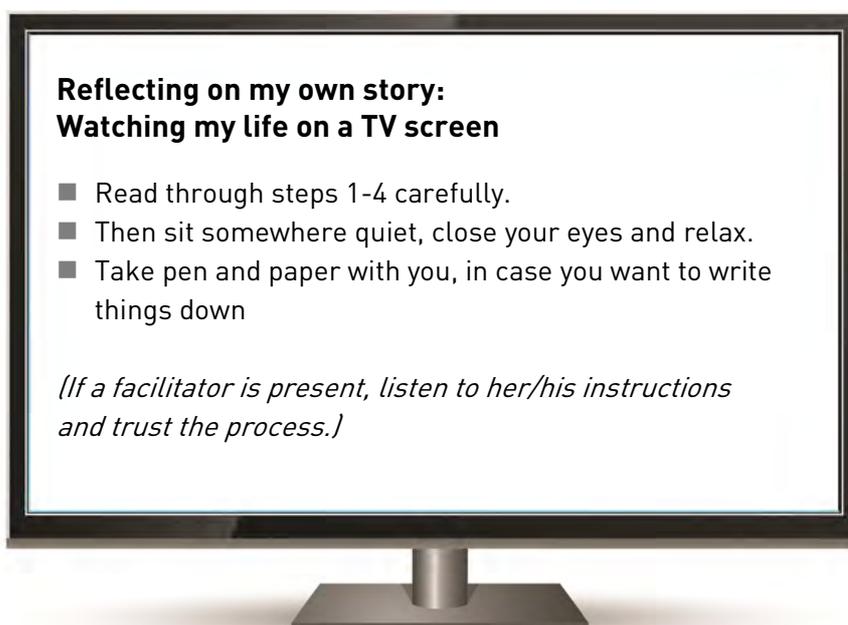
This Tool is presented in the spirit of Martin Luther, who approached difficult issues in the 1500s: *"out of love and zeal for truth, and the desire to bring it to light"*.

## Preparing our hearts

We often read in the Gospel that Jesus' mother, Mary, 'pondered in her heart' what the Angel Gabriel was telling her (Luke 1:29). She needed time and space to reflect on this new thing that God was doing -in her own life, and in human history.

This first activity will help us to open our hearts to what the Holy Spirit is saying in our lives. If you are not used to reflecting on your own – just allow yourself to relax into it, as a form of a prayer.

## Listening for the stories in our lives



Gently ponder in your heart:

1. Focus on your breathing:  
Pray -  
“Lord Jesus Christ [breathe in], have mercy on me [breathe out]”; or  
“Lord Jesus Christ [breathe in], thank you that you love me as I am [breathe out]”.
2. Now let your life story play on an imaginary TV screen – just let the images pass in front of your closed eyes:
  - Start with what people have told you about when you were a baby, then go on to what you remember from your early childhood, your teenage years, and all the way up to where you are right now.
  - Try to remember how you FELT as you play back each memory.
    - Don't stop – let the movie play
3. As soon as you come across a memory where you were in any way EXCLUDED, REJECTED, MISUNDERSTOOD OR DISRESPECTED (for any reason at all) – PRESS ‘PAUSE’, and PONDER:
  - What was happening, and how did you feel about yourself?
  - How did you feel about the other person/s?
  - What did you do?
  - How did the situation end?

*Now read through Steps 4 - 6 and continue your reflection process.*

4. In the same way, as soon as you come across a memory where you were INCLUDED OR FELT YOU BELONGED – PRESS 'PAUSE' AND PONDER:
  - What was happening, and how did you feel about yourself?
  - How did you feel about the other person/s?
  - What did you do?
  - How did the situation end?
  
5. When you have spent 5-10 minutes thinking about those 2 situations - open your eyes and slowly come back into the room.
  
6. Now - Looking back:
  - Compare the way you felt in the two experiences.
  - How have these experiences contributed to shaping who you are today?

### Listening deeply to each other's stories



### Time to talk: Listening deeply to others' stories of exclusion and inclusion

Sharing in pairs:

Take turns to answer the first two questions below.

- Talk about how you each felt when you were excluded.
- Talk about how you each felt when you were included.

Listen deeply to your partner as they are sharing something from their life story with you.

Then go on and use the next questions in a conversation to take your reflection further:

- What types of things can make a person feel excluded or included?
- How can experiences of exclusion or rejection as a child affect a person's life into adulthood?

#### What is Deep Listening?

It is when we listen deeply to another person, and we focus completely on them and what they are sharing.

We don't just listen to their words, but their feelings underlying their words.

We do not give advice or make any judgements in response, but just let them know we care, and respect what they are sharing.



## Time to talk

Share your thoughts in the bigger group:

- On what basis do people exclude others?
  - How can experiences of exclusion or rejection as a child affect a person's life into adulthood?
- AND -
- How have I personally, or a group or organisation I belong to, excluded or rejected someone?
  - What have I learnt from it, and would I do things differently now?

Then read the stories below together, and talk through the questions that follow in a small group.

### **Friendship**

*"When I was in Grade 2, my best friend was Kwabena. He was Ghanaian and I am South African. We were neighbours and loved playing together. One day at break time, one of the boys in Grade 3 that I admired invited me to come and play with him and his friends. I was so excited, and went to play with them. I asked if Kwabena could come too, but they said no. So I went anyway. I felt so proud that they had chosen me.*

*But after a few days, I felt bad because Kwabena seemed sad. I asked them again if Kwabena could play with us. They said no. They said that if I wanted to be their friend, I was not to play with Kwabena because he was makwere kwere, not South African. I felt so bad. Kwabena was my best friend! I agreed, and played with them every break for a week. But I did not sleep well and worried about him.*

*Then I decided that I did not want to be their friend if they did not like Kwabena. So I told them that I was still going to be friends with Kwabena, and that I did not want to be friends with boys who made my best friend feel bad. They said nothing. As I walked away, I felt proud that I had stood up for my friend." Ben.*

### **Still not good enough- "Papwa" Sewsunker Sewgolum: One of the top golfers ever to come out of South Africa**

*"Under pressure, the [apartheid] authorities permitted Sewgolum to play in the Natal Open in 1963 at the famous Durban Country Club, after having been satisfied that apartheid laws would not be broken. "Suitable arrangements" were made for Sewgolum to use a mini-van as a change room, and to have his meals with the black caddies.*

*Sewgolum did the 'impossible' and won the tournament, and to the eternal disgrace and shame of both the white golfing fraternity and government officials, Sewgolum was not allowed to enter the Durban country club to receive his prize.*

*A picture of a downcast Sewgolum standing in the rain being handed his trophy through an open window - while the rest of the golfers and officials were warmly ensconced in the clubhouse enjoying the post-game [party] outraged the world and [strengthened] the international movement to boycott apartheid sport." (www.sahistory.org.za/people/sewsunker-039papwa039-sewgolum)*

- How do the stories make you feel?
- In what ways are the stories similar to or different from each other?
- How are the stories similar or different from yours?
- Can you think of ways that these kinds of things are still happening in your community or country today?

## We are all on a journey

We have seen above that the story of every person's journey is different, and yet we have a lot in common. We have all experienced what it's like not to belong, to be misunderstood or rejected, for whatever reason.

Sometimes we are rejected because of what we have done. But very often it's because of things we cannot do anything about – like our skin colour, or nationality or ethnic background, a disability or the economic standing of the families we are born into. It also often has to do with whether we are men, women or we don't fit into what is seen as 'normal' about what makes a man or a woman.

## Prejudice

The main reason why people reject others is that they do not understand them, because they are different.

Most societies in the world throughout history have shown **prejudice** against people that were different from what was considered 'normal' or 'good'.

People often use the Bible to exclude or judge others. But the Gospel message of Jesus is very clear.

He says in John 12:32: *"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw **all** people to myself."* We are called not to judge - *"Judge not, that you may not be judged"* – (Matthew 7: 1-5), but to love others as we love ourselves (Matthew 22: 36-39). Love, acceptance and respect is really all people want.

Before we listen deeply to the stories of some of us who don't fit into heterosexual norms, let us spend some time reflecting on our own prejudices, and talk about what we want to learn.

## Everyone has prejudices about someone at some stage in their lives!

What matters is whether we are prepared to address these prejudices.

### What is prejudice?

- a negative judgement or feeling about a person or group without taking time to understand them.

Prejudice often leads to hurtful actions or taking decisions that disadvantage those we see as 'other'.



## Time to talk: to judge or not to judge?

Many verses in the Gospels quote Jesus expressly condemning our tendency to judge others who are different from us ((Matthew 7:1-5; Luke 6: 37-42; Luke 12: 14; John 7: 24, 25; John 8: 15).

But Jesus also said: "... *[W]hy do you not know how to interpret the present time? ...And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?*" (Luke 12: 57)

- What is the difference between judging for ourselves what is right, and judging others?
- Why do you think Jesus tells us to judge what is happening in our time, but spends so much time warning against judging others?
- What does this say about the central message of the Gospel, and how we are meant to be witnesses to it?
- What does it mean for the way we should conduct ourselves as we struggle together to understand what the Holy Spirit is saying to us at this time about sexual diversity?

### This Tool as an exploratory journey

#### Overview

The first part of this Tool is all about ***preparing our hearts*** to be open to what the Holy Spirit might be saying to us at this time.

We already began by **listening** to our own and each other's stories of rejection and exclusion, to prepare our hearts to be open to the experiences of people who do not fit into what the church considers to be 'normal' .

Part 2 helps us to ***open our hearts and minds*** to new information and perspectives.

This Tool begins with a time of **listening deeply** to the stories of people who have felt included or excluded because of their sexuality, and tries to **discern** how God would want us to respond to them. It also provides a space to listen to the **different voices and opinions** on this subject, so everyone can make up their own minds.

There is some **input** to help clear up any confusion about **terminology** and to make sense of the most important **variations** in sexual and gender identity, and sexual orientation.

It then goes on to explore some of the challenges of interpreting the few **Biblical references** that underpin most churches' teachings on homosexuality and sexual diversity.

The last part aims to **empower** us with access to further resources and **networks** that can help us live out a ministry of inclusion for all God's people.

It ends with a conversation about **what all this means for us in practice** – it provides a list of organisations and resources, and offers some ideas for action – to become change **agents** in our churches and in our lives. The idea is that we can all contribute to **opening the doors** of our churches to include all people, as they are.



## Time to talk: creating a safe space

On your own, try to answer the following questions honestly:

1. Do I have enough knowledge about homosexuality and diverse sexual and gender identities?
2. Do I really understand what it means to be gay, lesbian, transgender or intersex?
3. Have I already made up my mind about people whose sexuality is different from mine, and how does this influence the way I read the Bible?
4. Where and how did I learn about homosexuality and different forms of sexual identity?
5. Do I know enough to form a respectful and informed opinion?



## Time to talk: what do we want to learn?

Together in a small group, talk about:

- What you would like to learn from this Tool about homosexuality and diverse sexual identities?  
(If you have a facilitator, they will try to include these things as they plan your sessions.)
- What would make you feel safe enough to be honest about how you feel, what you want to know and who you are?  
For example –
  - Is it OK to interrupt each other?
  - Do you prefer to debate the issues, and see who wins, or dialogue with each other to learn about the issues together?
  - Are you happy for others to talk about what you share when you all leave this space?

### Discussion, Debate or Dialogue?

In a discussion, people usually argue their points and try to convince the other/s that they are right. In a conversation or dialogue, we listen deeply to each other's stories and ideas to learn from them. We do not try to correct them, advise them or make them see things our way.

When you agree, make a list of these and use them as the norms or rules for your group- and don't be shy to call someone to order if you feel they are not respecting these norms.

## Opening our Minds and Hearts

### Listening deeply to stories of people with diverse sexual identities and orientations

Read through the following stories together, and then talk about them, using the questions below to guide your conversation.

#### ***My Journey***

*"Growing up, I did not feel it was wrong at all to feel the way that I felt about boys I had a crush on. ...I did not 'know' that I was gay because no one had told me that I was.*

*In the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade I made a personal decision to follow Jesus and become his disciple. I was very excited and anxious to see what the journey ahead looked like. One of the first rules my church made clear to young people is NO DATING! You must be holy and separate yourself from the unclean things. ... Being the good Christian boy, I followed suit. I did not masturbate, date anyone and I certainly did not have sex. I fled from all such sexual 'impurities'. ....*

*When I got to Bible College my journey reached its peak as I met another bible scholar who ... 'struggled' with the same struggle. We would pray and fast together about our homosexual desires. ... After a while my guilt would not allow me to remain silent any longer. ... At the fear of being thrown out of Bible College, I confessed all that I have been 'wrestling' with and told the Dean of the College how I wanted to be set free from the bondage of homosexuality. I could not fight anymore. I was taken through many processes of what might be called 'reparative therapy': I attended Christian counselling sessions, I went to camps and retreats to get me 'right', I took communion, I read my Bible, I prayed, I fasted... A Christian counsellor referred me to Exodus International Ministries website ... - a Christian ex-gay organisation which claimed to have helped many LGBTI people become 'normal' again. ... All to no avail. ...I was still attracted to other men.*

*Later in my theological studies the reality dawned on me that being a gay Christian was not going to change. I scrutinised the scriptures in search of some sort of meaning for my life. I was grappling with reconciling my spirituality with my sexuality, and pondered whether I could be called to ministry and be gay at the same time?*

*I disqualified myself from ministry to others because I had felt that God hated me and had rejected me. Why was I in pursuit of a God who had rejected me, whose Church rejects me and even theological reflection about God was not inclusive of me? It was in this dry place in my spirituality that I began to find a refreshing source of life, and it was not in the scriptures.*

*"Why why why do I have to be killed for loving someone? Why why why?"*

Zanele Muholi

*On 19 June 2013 Alan Chambers, President of Exodus International Ministries<sup>91</sup> announced that the Ministry was officially shutting down. They made a public apology to all those 'sexual others' who have been hurt in the process of the 'exodus'. After that, I resolved in my heart never to turn back.*

*I am what I am by the grace of God. I have no doubt ...that I am created in God's image. I am not a defect and neither is my sexuality a hindrance to my spirituality. ...The two cannot be separated.*

*I came out to my pastors in January this year. They are convinced that I am deceived and have accepted an evil spirit, ... so I need help and deliverance. My pastors told me to go back and pray about this matter and come back to them.... After a few months in prayer, I returned to them and informed them that I still feel the same-sex attraction. My senior pastor told me never to set foot in the church ever again.*

*I have recently started discovering my calling. I work for an organisation called Inclusive and Affirming Ministries. I am working towards ordination as clergy within the Metropolitan Community Churches.*

*I am also engaged to be married to my same sex partner and we are in the process with our families to get married in the very near future." Arnold Motsau*

### **Attacked for being lesbian**

*"Noxolo Nkosana was stabbed four times while she was getting out of a car on Friday night, returning to my home in Crossroads, when two men ... approached.*

*"They called to me, but I didn't respond. Then they said: 'Hey you! F\*\*ing tomboy!' I kept quiet. When I looked back, one of them was coming for me. He stabbed me twice in the back and I fell down. While my partner was screaming, they stabbed me two more times."...*

*Her neighbours said she deserved what she got. But Mandla Zolekile, a father of 5, said that, though he would throw his child out of the house if she were a lesbian, lesbians should not be attacked. He said: 'It's a democratic country, What they choose to do with their lives is their problem.'" (The Times, 14 June 2011)*

### **No Space for Transgender Patient**

*"I had an asthma attack and was admitted to a female ward. I was comfortable with this. The next day, the nurses and doctors wanted to discharge me, saying I was in the wrong ward. Alternatively, they would place me in a separate wing of the male ward, which I didn't want. Fearing for my safety, I alerted the media, TIA and Iranti-org. My case was then reconsidered by the hospital management, and I was allowed to remain in the female ward. Most people don't complain because they are afraid and this way people are denied their right to health." Snowy Mamba<sup>92</sup>*

*"There's this man part in me. ...  
Outside there's just the  
feminine. But I could say where  
my heart is based, where my  
soul is based, there's that man  
spirit that lives in me."  
Nkunzi NKabinde,  
transgender man*

<sup>91</sup> An extract from the announcement of Exodus Ministries and Alan Chambers' apology can be found in Attachment 1.

<sup>92</sup> Outreach Officer for Transgender Intersex Africa (TIA). In *Report of Activities, Transgender Day of Remembrance 2014. Social Dialogue on Transgender Learners in the South African Education System*. 20 November 2014, Constitution Hill

**Zach Avary's story**

*"When he was 3, my son said to me "I am a girl". I assumed he was just going through a phase, and left it at that. But then...he would get upset if anyone referred to him as a boy. ... [H]e used to cry and try to cut off his penis. ... A child psychologist identified **gender identity disorder**. .... His primary school has supported the family, telling other pupils that Zach felt he was a girl trapped in a boy's body."* (Victoria Ward, quoting Zach's mother. *Happy being a girl*. The Times March 12 2012.)

*"There will never come a time when people in Kenya will come to OK homosexuality, because we have very very strong anti-gay elements in society, and they are embedded in us."*  
 Denis Nzioka Kenyan  
 LGBTI activist

**I am an African**

*"My name is Lukas Mukongo. I am a 30 year-old African gay man. I was born in a small village called Ohongo in the northern part of Namibia, Oshiwambo culture. My family are Christians of the Catholic Church.*

*I became an active church member when I was 14 years old and in school. I became a Sunday school teacher and altar boy. This was challenging because I started looking at boys and realising that I had feelings for them. In the village I lived, we had no access to information, not even radios, so I did not know what the feelings meant.*

*I always wanted to come out and tell my Priest who I am, but he kept on postponing our appointment. When I finally cornered him, he advised me not to tell anyone ... he was afraid that the community may lose their trust in me and that it could affect my responsibilities in the church. Oshiwambo culture does not allow a gay person to enter the church. My culture believes that it is un-African to be homosexual.*

*It was important for me to tell my mother that I was gay. The Priest went with me. I openly talked about it and the news spread to the rest of the community.*

*I chose to stay in the church and the church people allowed me. It was my good behaviour, leadership in church, integrity and taking part in uplifting my community that made it easy for them to accept me as gay.*

*I am an African and I ask that we stand together and work for our God."*  
 Lukas Mukongo.

There was an international outcry when this Malawian gay couple were jailed after they announced their engagement. They were sentenced to 14 years, charged with 'carnal knowledge against the order of nature'. The massive global campaign led to their release. Their relationship ended, and Tiwonge Chimbalanga, who is a transgender woman, moved to South Africa. She expected a 'safe haven', but abuses continue daily and she has not found work. She has applied to the UN to be moved to a third country. This may have been a success for LGBTI rights in Africa, but for the individuals involved, the daily struggle to find peace continues.



Source: THE NATION, 28 December 2009

### *Sipho's Longing*

*"A couple of weeks ago I was counselling a young guy who grew up in Soweto, Johannesburg. Sipho had read about our church in the gay magazine, Exit, but as he sat in my office, his deep-seated fear of a revengeful God caused him to sob uncontrollably as he told me his story. We chatted for a long time before I offered to pray with him. Sipho shared with me his intense longing to find a God who would truly understand him, and towards the end of our conversation, he looked up at me, his eyes and cheeks still wet from weeping, and asked in a hesitant, soft voice: "So what you're saying to me, Pastor, is that God loves me?"* Elise van Wyk. Miriam Dancing ... women who love women. 2009. Aqua, Simon's Town

*"I'm too churchy for the gays, but too gay for the church, so I'm often lonely."*  
Arnold Motsau



## Time to talk: listening deeply to people's stories who do not fit heterosexual norms

- How do the stories make you feel?

*Choose one or two of the stories that really had an impact on you, and talk about them using the following questions:*

- Who were the different role players – how do you think they felt and what did they do?
- What were the consequences of their actions?
- What could they have done differently, and how would this have changed the ending?
- How was the story similar or different from other stories of prejudice and exclusion?
- How is the story similar or different from yours?
- How do you think the church should relate to people who are different in their sexual identity or orientation?

## What do sexual diversity and gender diversity mean?

To try to understand this term, let us unpack three words:

- **Diversity** a range of different types of things, or people. It is the opposite of uniformity – everyone being the same. Another word for it is **variety**.
- **Sexual** refers to the obvious biological distinction between female and male – e.g. women have a vagina and breasts, men a penis.
- **Gender** is about how an individual feels about their identity – as a man, a woman, or a combination of these. UNESCO (2000, 6) defines the word gender as follows: "Gender refers to the social differences and relations between men and women which are learned, vary widely among societies and cultures, and change over time."

A common term for the different types of sexual diversity is LGBTI. It stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex.



## Time to talk: helping each other to understand the concepts

Read through the table below together, and feel free to ask questions about anything that is not clear to you. Try to think of examples in your own life or people that you know.

### LGBTI explained

Sex (Sexual identity)	Gender Identity	Sexual Orientation
<p>Refers to our sexual biological makeup, which is determined by our chromosomes (DNA), hormones and sexual organs.</p> <p><b>Female</b> – breasts and vagina</p> <p><b>Male</b> – penis and deeper voice</p> <p><b>Intersex</b> –organs of both male and female (e.g. both testicles and ovaries; or a penis and a vagina)</p> <p>All humans have different combinations of both male and female hormones: women tend to have more female hormones, while men tend to have more male hormones. Intersex people's hormone balance is less obviously towards one or other sex. This balance is not always the same in a person – sometimes a person will have a different balance. E.g. a pregnant woman will have more oestrogens during pregnancy.</p> <p>In the past in some societies, parents have decided their intersex child's sex at birth, and doctors have removed organs that do not 'fit' with the parents' preference.</p> <p>But more recently, parents are being encouraged to wait until their child is old enough to tell them whether they identify themselves as a boy or a girl before trapping their child in a body that they do not identify with (transgender).</p>	<p>Refers to how a person identifies themselves (e.g. their behaviour, dress, roles in the family or society) – more as a male or more as a female.</p> <p>Most men identify with the roles and behaviour, of biological males, and most women identify themselves with those of females.</p> <p><b>Man – male</b></p> <p><b>Woman - female</b></p> <p><b>Transgender</b> - people whose biological sexual identity does not fit comfortably with their psychological gender identity.</p> <p>E.g. Someone who is a male physically might feel and act more like a woman than a man (called a trans woman); or a biological woman may feel and act more like a man (called a trans man). Often, though not always, such a person is not happy to be seen as what their biology dictates (gender dysphoria).</p> <p>Many transgendered people take hormones of the sex they identify with, to help them feel more comfortable in their bodies. Some (if they can afford it) may have sexual re-assignment surgery, which changes their sex organs into that of the sex they identify with. Some people use the term transsexual, but this can be hurtful, and it is more respectful to call such a person whatever sex they have become: a woman or a man.</p>	<p>Refers to a person's lasting emotional, romantic, physical or sexual feelings of attraction to others.</p> <p><b>Heterosexual</b> – to what is known as the opposite sex</p> <p><b>Homosexual</b> – to the same sex (gay men, lesbian women)</p> <p><b>Bisexual</b> – to both sexes (not usually at the same time, or as strongly to both). It depends on the individual.</p> <p><b>True and false homosexuality:</b></p> <p>Someone with a homosexual orientation (who has lasting homosexual feelings and attractions) is not the same as someone who practices homosexual sex at some stage in their lives (e.g. children experimenting, prisoners, forced or exploitative homosexual sex, or homosexual raping as a Tool of war.) <i>A true homosexual's sexual orientation is part of who they are as a person, and is not just a choice they make (and can choose against later).</i></p>

There are also many non-conforming people who behave in ways that are not expected of people with their biological sex. For example, some men like to dress in a more feminine way or engage in activities that society usually expects of women. Some women like to dress in a more masculine way or engage in activities society expects of men.

In other words, there are many ways that people think about themselves and express their sexuality; not just as 'pure' woman or 'pure' man.

**Is this all just a new fashion?**

Research shows that homosexuality and gender diversity have existed throughout history and across cultures.

There is evidence that other mammals also have a small percentage of individuals who do not fit into the heterosexual norms. Some genetic and neurological research is showing that there may be biological links to gender identity and sexual orientation.

Nothing conclusive has been found yet, but there is a lot of evidence that programmes that claim to cure or rectify people who do not fit heterosexual norms, have not succeeded.

**The overwhelming majority of people claim that their sexual identity is not something they can do anything about, but is an essential part of who they are.**

Many researchers<sup>93</sup> say that no one is 'purely' male or 'purely' female. We are all a mixture of male and female hormones, and we do not all act in the way that society expects a woman or a man to behave. For example many girl children love climbing trees and running around, while many boys prefer to sit and read or play gentler games. Different societies have different norms or rules for what is OK and what is not.

Once a person crosses a boundary of what is seen as 'normal', they often find themselves judged as abnormal, 'weird' or gay, or as children- naughty.

Some people believe that homosexuality is a mental illness, but there is no scientific basis for this. The World Health Organisation declassified homosexuality as an illness or disorder in 1990, but there is still a widespread perception that there is something unnatural about it.

However, many people recognise that there is a link between the mental health of LGBTI people and how they are being treated. It is, of course, normal for anyone who is excluded, teased, raped or judged as evil to be confused and depressed! Such a person may do anything they can to change themselves just to be acceptable to those they care about – even denying who they are. And this can cause deep emotional turmoil.

**Many Africans believe homosexuality is an 'import' from the West. But a report by the Academy of Sciences of South Africa "Diversity in Human Sexuality: Implications for Policy in Africa"<sup>94</sup> shows that there are as many homosexuals (about 5%, or 1 in every 20 people) in all countries, including African countries.**

Despite all the new information available, many people still believe that being gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex is unnatural or abnormal. Some even believe that all homosexuals are

<sup>93</sup> <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-06-11-un-african-sex-myths-exploded>

<sup>94</sup> Cited in <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-06-11-un-african-sex-myths-exploded>



sex offenders or child abusers. This worldwide study shows that there is absolutely NO evidence for this, in fact most sex offenders are heterosexual. Many people hide their true identity for fear of losing their families, jobs or even being chased out of their religious group or church



## Time to talk: understanding types of sexual diversity

Read through the following short stories:

- Decide on the kind of sexual or gender diversity that is being expressed.
- Talk about what you think might have been the main challenges each person faced in their lives as they tried to come to terms with their sexuality and gender identity.

*"When I was 5 years old, I hid in our spare bathroom and tried to wee standing up.... When my mother [caught me, she looked at me with] absolute fury and disgust.... But I was a tomboy. I despised Barbie. I liked guns....[Recently] I figured out why the notion of me being a girl/woman freaked me out so much... I'm not a woman. But I'm not a man either."* (Demelza Bush. 2015. *I am genderqueer – comfortable with my identity at last*. In Mail and Guardian. April 1-16 2015, pp. 26-27)

*"[I] was inspired to embrace my truth after the December 2014 suicide of Leelah Alcorn, the ... teen whose ... gender identity was rejected by her family. For a while I dismissed the fact that I hated my body. I pretended to be content with what I was assigned, until at a certain point I broke. I went through a series of horrible breakdowns... I knew I wasn't happy, but it didn't seem fair to me that everyone else around me was. They didn't spend all their time thinking about how much they hated being categorised as a woman. ... I am no longer Mia. I never really was. And now I stand before you in my true and authentic gender identity. As Tom. I stand before you as a 13-year-old boy."* (Tom Sosnik. 2015. Taken from a post by Mamba Writer. March 18, 2015. In HEADLINES, Mambagirl News)

*"If any other group of individuals was forced to live with such fear and stigma, the international community would surely unite in condemnation."*  
Navi Pillay, UN:  
*Discrimination against LGBTIs just as irrational as racism*, in Mail & Guardian, 16 May, 2014

*"When, in August 1984, I told Henri that I was gay, he was very kind, very understanding but very un-self-revealing about his own struggle. Within a year, however, he was seeking my help with his struggle over the same issue. In this process, Henri didn't 'misbehave', nor was he 'scandalous'. He was an honest searcher who tried to operate out of a deep integrity as he explored this part of himself which terrified him."* Michael Ford 2000. *Wounded Prophet, A Portrait of Henri J M Nouwen*<sup>95</sup>, London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

<sup>95</sup> Henri Nouwen was a Catholic Priest, professor and writer, who wrote over 40 books and sold over 7 million copies. His love for God and his deep spirituality have inspired the faith walk of hundreds of thousands of Christians throughout the world. He died at the age of 64, some say of a broken heart. His last works revealed a lifelong struggle with his homosexuality, but he never broke his vow of chastity or publicly declared himself homosexual. His diary entry Fri 29<sup>th</sup> Sept 1996 (just 3 weeks before he died of a massive heart attack) read: *"There is a huge gap between my internalised homophobia (hatred of homosexuals) and my increasing conviction that homosexuality is not a curse but a blessing for our society."* Published in 1998: *Sabbatical Journey: The Diary of his final year*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

## What is 'normal' in the world and in churches?

Homosexuality is illegal in 76 countries across the globe, and punishable by death in 7.

It is illegal in 38 of Africa's 54 countries (punishable by death in 4).

*(3) **The State** may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, **sexual orientation**, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.*

*(4) **No person** may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3). National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.*

Extract from Section 9 of the South African Constitution

South Africa is the only African country whose Constitution protects the rights of sexual minorities, and yet it is the country where the concept of 'corrective rape' was coined. [Many people would ask - how can rape correct anything?]

Almost all church denominations in South Africa currently consider homosexuality to be a sin, although their responses vary. Some have begun to engage in open debates about the issue, but even those who allow gay clergy (such as the Anglican Church in Southern Africa), add that they may not practise their sexual orientation or get married.

This shows that **sexual diversity is certainly not socially accepted** in most parts of the world, and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) are unable to live or worship freely. In many cases they live in fear of arrest, verbal or physical attack, loss of employment, exclusion from their church, or even legal prosecution and/or violent death.

**And yet there are also many voices all over the world that are uniting to shout NO!**

## We cannot claim to be a civilised society and turn a blind eye to the attack and murder of gays and lesbians.

Many NGOs are working together to advocate against laws that criminalise homosexuality. And, while only a few churches are beginning to reflect deeply about what God requires of Christians at this time in human history – a number of inclusive churches have been mushrooming all over the world<sup>96</sup>. They embrace all people, regardless of their sexual identity or orientation, and help them integrate their love for God and their sexual identity and orientation.

*"We who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another."*  
(Romans 12: 5)

<sup>96</sup> E.g. The Metropolitan Community Churches, which exist all over the world. Go to [www.mccchurch.org.za/](http://www.mccchurch.org.za/) to find their branches.

## Sifting through the different voices

This section quotes from different people's opinions, and allows space for us to make up our own minds.



### Time to talk: TAXI-TAXI!



Source: [wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Taxi)

Talk about any of the comments or dialogues below that interest you.

This game helps groups to learn from each other and think through their own taken-for-granted attitudes more deeply.

- Read through each set of statements carefully, and spend some time reflecting on them:
  - How do they make you feel?
- Which of the voices makes more sense to you, and why?

#### As a group:

Pretend you are all on a journey. (You are actually - on a journey to discover God's truth for each of your lives and ministries.)

You are at a minibus taxi rank, waiting for your taxi. There are two or three going in your direction.

Decide which of the statements below you would like to talk about more (or your facilitator can decide on your behalf).

- For each set of statements, decide which one you agree or identify with most.
- When you have decided, each group of passengers has a chance to explain (without interruption or comments) which one they identify with most.
- Then spend some time talking about the points that have been raised by others, and share any further questions that may still be bothering you.

**NOTE:** This is NOT A DEBATE, and there are NO WINNERS OR LOSERS. The idea is not to try to convince others that your view is right! The idea is to listen to different points of view.

Anyone may, however, change their mind and get out of their taxi and get into one of the others.



*"Homosexuality is a choice."*

*No one chooses sexuality. I didn't choose my sexuality. If I had a chance actually I would wish to go back to my mum's womb and come out heterosexual because the harassment... is really too much."* Kasha Jacqueline



*"Who ... would choose to be lesbian or gay where we are told that being gay is ungodly? People do not choose to be born black or white... Who [would say] 'I have decided to be a lesbian from tomorrow; I have decided not to be straight any longer'? We are who we are. It is a fact of life."* Lesego Magwai



*"I love the sinner, but hate the sin. God requires me to admonish a brother that has fallen into the sin of homosexuality."* Pastor at a Pietermaritzburg Minister's Fraternal.

*"Ask me how I live. Talk to me and I will tell you, how do I relate to my God, the God you talk about so much, before you go proclaiming me as a sinner."* Victor Juliet Mukasa.



*"Homosexuality is un-African"* Jon Qwelane

*"The [main] argument that they use is that homosexuality is against the Bible. It is unchristian... [I]t's ironical because in fact what's alien is the religion that they base their argument on. That is alien to Africa. That was brought in our society... from Europe, from outside. Homosexuality, on the other hand, has always been part and parcel of our society like any other society where you find human beings."* Dr Sylvia Tamale.



*"It is just a phase!"*

*"I immediately told my mom, and she reacted extremely negatively, telling me that it was a phase, that I would never truly be a girl, that God doesn't make mistakes, that I am wrong. "If you are reading this, parents, please don't tell this to your kids. ...That won't do anything but make them hate them self. That's exactly what it did to me.... Either I live the rest of my life as a lonely man who wishes he were a woman or I live my life as a lonelier woman who hates herself. There's no winning. There's no way out."* Extract from Leelah Alcorn's suicide note, Dec. 2014.



 *"Most gays have some hurt from the past that has driven them to it. I know someone who was healed. We should pray for homosexuals to be released from this demon."* (Church member)

*"How can I be cured from being who I am?"* Anonymous 

*"God knew definitely that I would be a homosexual maybe before I was born, so I believe God likes me the way I am."* Samuel Ganafa 

*"More than anything, I am sorry that so many have interpreted this religious rejection by Christians as God's rejection. I am profoundly sorry that many have walked away from their faith and that some have chosen to end their lives."<sup>97</sup>* 

 *"People who go around defending homosexuals need to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show them if they have a hidden sin themselves."*  
Pastor at a Pietermaritzburg ministers fraternal meeting

*"I just don't believe it's a problem for God. And yet it's been made into a huge problem by the churches ... The sin of too many Christians... is that there is a huge reluctance to listen, an avoidance. And that, I think, is a sin."* Bishop David Russell. 

 *"Call me names, but gay is NOT okay ..."*  
(Jon Qwelane. 20<sup>th</sup> July 2008. Sunday Sun.)

 *"Homosexuality is abnormal."*

*"Why did God, who created the endless sky and countless living things, make me a homosexual? God loves all things He created. But what about me? What about other homosexuals? I have realised I was wrong [to think I am a mistake], and God loves me whether I am homosexual or not. Finally I found inner peace."* Anonymous 

<sup>97</sup> Alan Chambers, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2013. President of Exodus Ministries, when he closed the organisation which had spent 37 years offering 'a healing ministry' to homosexuals, with a public apology to the LGBT community.



*"Genesis 2 clearly states that God ordained that marriage is between one woman and one man."*

*"By God's grace I have met a wonderful person, Amanda. ...I have discovered that by denying my sexuality, I denied a significant part of myself, my God-given means of connecting and loving another human being. This relationship has brought us both much joy and pleasure and companionship... We are committed to being respectful, faithful, caring and trustworthy. Our desire has been to honour God and so we are celebrating our love relationship by getting married..." Ecclesia*



*"Most gays and lesbians have bad relationships with their parents. "*

*"Gogo Lizzy lived with her late granddaughter Phumeza, a lesbian, in Nyanga East. One night, their front door was kicked open and an unknown man rushed inside the house with a gun in his hand. Without saying a word he shot Phumeza and she died instantly. Gogo accepts it was the way she lived her life. Gogo Lizzy is a great supporter of LGBTI and attends all our functions including the Pride March. The person who shot Phumeza was never arrested." Bulelwa Panda*



*"Gays and lesbians should not have children, because they may also become that way." Church member*

*"There is no evidence from adoption agencies that children with homosexual parents are damaged. Love, not heterosexuality can guarantee a happy family life." Bishop David Russell, 4 January 2011, Cape Times*



*"Parents let's take care of our lesbian kids"*  
Source: IAM



## Time to talk: When we really listen

- Have you ever had a conversation with a gay, lesbian, intersex or transgender person, and listened deeply to what their lives are like? What have been your thoughts and feelings as you have listened?
- If not, how has what you have read above affected you?
- How have you felt about your own sexuality?
- How should the church respond to people who do not fit into the accepted norms?
- What are some questions you are still sitting with?

### Our thoughts and voices have consequences

Some people say that their opinions about sexual diversity are personal, and so don't do any harm.

But when different people's views come together there can be bigger consequences, for individuals as well as whole groups.

Let us look at two examples.

---

The first example comes from South Africa's history.

*In the 1990's in apartheid South Africa, a doctor called Aubrey Levin believed that homosexuality was a human perversion.*

*He ran a project for the SA Defence Force called 'The Aversion Project'. It involved taking gays and lesbians and performing shock therapy on them (now an illegal medical practice used in the past for correcting psychiatric disorders).*

*He and his team also performed forced sexual reassignment (which they called 'sex change') surgery on them, and drove them out into the streets without the hormonal treatment to support their new sexual identity -which many of them did not want anyway, as they were homosexuals and not transgender.*

*This project has been widely recognised as a massive human rights violation.*

Van Zyl, de Gruchy, Lapinsky, Lewin, Reid. 1999. The Aversion Project Human rights abuses of gays and lesbians in the SADF by health workers during the apartheid era. Cape Town. Simply Said and Done.

---

The second example comes from Uganda.

*"There's harm done by the idea that Africa is exempt from [having homosexuals amongst its population]. It allows lawmakers to treat the problems of people who are in fact their citizens and members of their communities as though they are an external threat.... [Museveni wrote in] a letter to the Ugandan Parliament: "The question at the core of the debate on homosexuality is: What do we*

do with an abnormal person? Do we kill him/her? Do we imprison him/her? Or we do contain him/her?" Sarah Wild. *Un-African' sex myths explode*. Mail and Guardian, 12th June 2015.



## Time to talk: One thought, one action, many consequences

- What kinds of consequences do you think our thoughts and actions can have (positive or negative):
  - for homosexual people in or outside of churches?
  - for the churches' witness in the world?
  - for society as a whole?

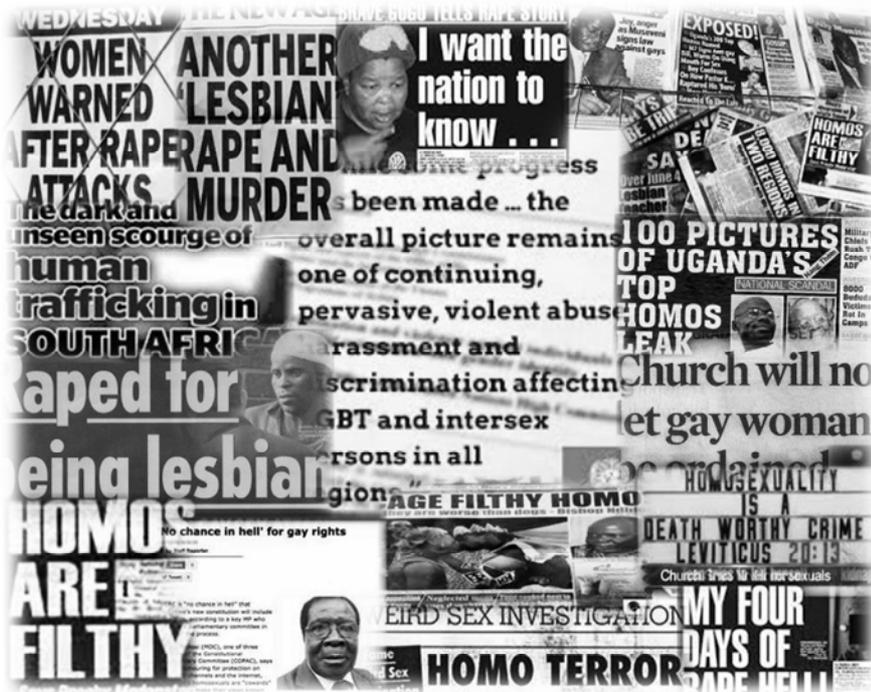
*"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"* (John 10:10)

Perhaps the important question to ask ourselves is this:

- **Is what I believe life-affirming or life-denying?**
- **Is it consistent with the Biblical recognition of the dignity of all human beings as created in the image of God?**
- **And does it contribute towards building a common humanity, a society built on Ubuntu?**



*In Nazi Germany, many homosexuals were persecuted, whether they were Jewish or not. Jewish gays had to wear the emblem above, and German gays were forced to wear a pink triangle. The pink triangle has become a mark of 'gay pride'.*



## How do we discern the Truth?

Reading all the many opinions and hearing the Bible used in a variety of ways, can be very confusing. It can even lead to some people losing their faith in God, and believing there is no such thing as 'truth'.

To take this question further, let us explore a bit more about how human beings relate to truth.



### Time to talk: What is the Truth?

Try this as a group:

Go and stand outside somewhere, and stand where you all look in the same direction.

Each person makes a circle with their thumb and forefinger, and puts it to one eye. With the other eye closed, each one should tell the others what they are seeing. Then all open both eyes and look at the whole scene. Share what you see now.

Talk about:

- Who was right about what they were seeing?
- Were the things each person saw real or not?
- Would there have been much point in arguing about who was right about what they saw?
- When you all looked at the whole picture, was it easier to agree on what you were seeing?

Have you got the whole picture?

- Once you have completed the exercise, given by the facilitator, talk about your reflection on it:
  - What is the Truth? Can anyone claim to know the whole Truth? What influences our perception of the Truth?
  - What is the value of listening to other people's insights on our own journeys to discern the Truth for our own lives, by sharing our different understandings of Scripture?
  - How does this affect your approach when working together with others to discern what the Spirit of God might be saying to each of us through the Bible and through this Tool?

## Is how we use the Bible consistent with the Spirit of the Gospel of Christ?

*"Test all things; hold fast to what is good."* (Thessalonians 5: 21)

We have been listening deeply to stories of how people of diverse sexualities have suffered rejection by the church and society as a whole.

The Bible contains over 31 173 verses. Only 8 verses have been used by people to condemn homosexuality, but 100s refer to judgement as a sin. What does that tell us?

**How was the Bible written?**

**The Bible is a collection of stories and other books.**

The Bible is actually a library (literal meaning of *Biblio*) of books, written at different times in history.

Some are historical stories of people's journeys with God – not that different from our own stories we shared earlier.

Others offer wisdom, and still others (mostly in the Old Testament) offer lists of rules for behaviour.

The books were written down by many different people (men) who wrote in the languages of their day and were influenced by their cultural context.

But long before anything was written down, the stories, rules and words of wisdom had been passed down for generations by word of mouth.

Biblical historians have researched the origins of all the different books, and this has helped us to understand them better.

The **challenge** is to also listen deeply to what the Bible is saying, and to **understand it for ourselves** rather than depending on others to interpret it for us. And for church leaders, the challenge is to recognise that people depend on you for interpreting Scripture in ways that will speak life into their lives.

We have said above that the Bible does not have a single clear position on many life issues, and only contains very few direct references to homosexual practices. People on both sides of the argument tend to quote from the Bible support their points of view.

Clergy and church people often quote the few verses in the Bible to prove that homosexuality is wrong and against God's will, and to exclude homosexuals or pray for their deliverance or healing.

On the other hand, there are clergy and church people who have quoted from the Bible to argue that homosexuality and sexual diversity should not be condemned, and that the Church should develop a more inclusive ministry.

**Let us now accept the challenge to look again at some of the Bible verses with fresh eyes in a spirit of humility.**

**Christians believe that the Bible is our ultimate standard of faith, and that it is inspired by the Holy Spirit (2Timothy3:16). But there are many different views on exactly what this means in practice, and how we should interpret the Bible.**

***Different ways people understand the authority of The Bible***

- Some believe that God actually breathed God's Word through the men who wrote down the exact words dictated by God;
- Others say that ordinary people of faith, who were inspired by God's Spirit, interpreted the age-old stories and wisdom through their personal experiences in their cultures and societies, and wrote them down in their own language/s.

Christians read the Bible for 3 reasons:

- to encounter Jesus;
- to grow in their faith, by understanding the story of God's plan for salvation in Jesus;
- to obtain guidance for daily life by understanding the values and Gospel norms that we are to live by, by God's grace.

(Bishop David Russell, 2004, 2011)

***Different ways to read the Bible:*****How we understand the Bible's origins influences how we approach it.**

As readers, we are influenced by the limitations of our own upbringing, experiences and the time in history in which we live - in the same way that the writers were influenced.

This is why it is important to be humble when reading the Bible. Neither the writer nor the reader can have a total grasp of the full Truth of God.

The two main ways of reading the Bible work with these limitations differently:

**Literal interpretation:** People take specific verses and apply them word for word to any situation, at all times. They believe that the words are unchanging because they are the actual 'Words of God' breathed through different writers.

**Contextual (hermeneutic) interpretation<sup>98</sup>:** People believe the Bible has been inspired, but not dictated, by God. They do not read isolated verses and try to apply them directly to their lives for all times.

Rather, they try to understand whole passages more deeply:

- in the light of the rest of the story or other related stories, letters or poetic texts (literary context);
- by taking time to understand the kind of society that existed at the time when the passage was written (historical context) ; and
- thinking deeply about the issues in their own society, and using whatever scientific and other knowledge they can use to help them understand what the Bible might mean in today's world (current context).

Contextual Bible study is a useful tool for contextual biblical interpretation. It is best done in groups rather than alone, as the insights of other participants can open up the deeper meaning of texts in relation to current social realities. It is also done prayerfully and with humility, based on the understanding that no one of us is able to see the whole Truth of God, and our understanding is influenced by our life experience and our own limited vision.

***The moral dynamics of Scripture<sup>99</sup> and the importance of dialogue***

One thing that can be confusing is that **the Bible often seems to contradict itself.**

This is why it is **useful to read it in community**, as we can learn from each other.

<sup>98</sup> Contextual Bible study ([www.ujamaa.org.za](http://www.ujamaa.org.za)) is a useful tool for contextual interpretation. It is not a totally new way to approach reading the Bible, and it is not just a way to water down the Word of God. A similar approach has been used for thousands of years by Jewish rabbis, to try and make sense of difficult texts in the *Torah* (Jewish Scriptures) in the light of current social realities. In Jewish tradition it was called *Midrash*. Midrash accepts that any text has multiple layers of meaning, which can be uncovered in a variety of ways. A helpful process is to allow dialogue between different perspectives to allow for a deeper understanding of the text.

<sup>99</sup> This concept was shared by Professor Jan Jans of Tilburg University in a Skype conversation, May 2015.

For example, Paul seems to contradict himself sometimes. Historians tell us that his perspectives changed as he grew as a Christian, and so his views shifted. He wrote 1 Corinthians early on, and made very specific hierarchical rules for how women should behave in church. He was still very influenced by Jewish culture then, and its beliefs in the inferiority of women. Later he wrote in Galatians (3:28): “...*there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male and female. All are one in Christ Jesus*”. This shows a big shift in his thinking.

It can be helpful when we try and discern the truth for our lives, **not to argue with the Bible**.

Instead we can use the internal contradictions in the Bible to teach us. We can **allow the contradictory verses to ‘argue with each other’**. Then we can reflect on why there is a difference, and test what might be appropriate in our lives and society today.

**This is the way this Tool approaches the Bible.** It looks at the classic Bible verses that are used to address the question of homosexuality. Then it looks at other related verses, and sets up a dialogue between them. The TIME TO TALK exercises open up opportunities to do this in groups.

Our **ultimate authority is of course, Jesus**, and it is useful to test Scripture against Jesus’ own teachings and actions.

It is important to **read any extract from the Bible against the background of its basic message:** the story of God’s saving plan for all of humanity in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate Word of God (John 1) - the Alpha and Omega of our faith.

## Using the Bible to guide our decisions

Christians use the Bible to guide our decisions. Some people try to use it as a kind of manual for life, but it doesn’t always work like that. Life can be complicated, and the world has changed drastically since Biblical times. Not to mention, the Bible actually spans over 1000 years!



### Time to talk: Can we use the Bible to give us answers to everything?

**There are many things that we take for granted today that were never mentioned in the Bible.**

How do we discern God’s guidance in our lives about those?

- Think of some things in your everyday life that would not have existed in either Old or New Testament times. Talk about them:
  - For example: Some people say that using technology - like the internet, Facebook, computer games, and even WhatsApp or Mixit - is not good for young people. They say that it can be addictive and can expose them to all sorts of negative influences.

You won't find direct answers in any isolated Bible verses, but you can discern what is right for you.

Based on your knowledge of the values and principles in Bible as a whole, what would you say is the appropriate way to deal with each of these things?

- Think about other modern things, like fast food, genetically modified (GMO) food production, or anything else not mentioned in the Bible. How can your understanding of the Spirit, Gospel values and how Jesus lived, help to guide your own life?

### ***Did homosexuality exist in Biblical times?***

**It is now accepted that the concept 'homosexuality' as an orientation, as we know it today, did not exist in either Old Testament or New Testament times.** It was assumed that everyone was heterosexual. The term 'homosexual' was first coined in the 1880s, and so is a modern concept.<sup>100</sup>

There are various opinions on the actual meanings of the words used in the original Hebrew or Greek.

The original words most likely referred to forms of **sexual behaviour practised by heterosexuals, mostly in temple prostitution for idol worship.** The **Old Testament** Israelites were to strictly keep themselves separate from any religious practices of their neighbours and keep themselves pure for God, and so temple prostitution was taboo.

Or it was **rape, used to degrade a foreigner or enemy as part of the spoils of war.** And we know today that rape is less of a sexual act, and more about a show of power.

The **New Testament** passages also referred to similar practices: male and female prostitution, idol worship, and a practice called *pederasty*. This was a practice amongst many Roman soldiers and elder men in Corinth who used some of their young male slaves sexually.

These would have infuriated Paul. He was steeped in Jewish history and culture, which strongly rejected any of these practices as idolatry and lust.

**The references now described as 'homosexuality' could not have meant committed, loving homosexual relationships as we know them today.**

<sup>100</sup> This does not mean that people who may have felt attracted to the same sex all their lives did not exist, but it does mean that the social norms at the time would have meant this would not have been talked about.

## Pitfalls when reading the Bible

We have seen that the Bible is a complex set of books, and jumping to our own conclusions too quickly about what it is saying can be dangerous. There are at least 4 pitfalls we can fall into when reading the Bible, which can lead us into making mistakes if we are not open to learning more deeply.

These include:

1. We can be tempted to **look for rules, and then impose them on others** in a top-down way, without really understanding what the writer originally meant or listening to those on whom they impose these.
  - For example, some churches still insist that women have to wear hats in church. The verse in the original Greek (1 Corinthians 11:5) referred to women never shaving their heads, as this was the mark of (temple) prostitutes in Corinth. Corinthian Church women were thus to show that they were not prostitutes or engaging in idol worship by keeping their hair long and their heads covered in church. Most churches no longer insist on women covering their heads, because the social dynamics are different.
2. We can hold on to **isolated verses** that we think have the quick answers we need, and then we try to **apply them to all situations and for all of time**.
  - For example, many wedding sermons preach on Ephesians 5:22 (“Wives, submit to your husbands”) without looking at the whole passage, which is introduced by verse 5:21: “Submit, therefore, to one another out of reverence for Christ”. If more marriages were based on verse 21, there would perhaps be many more happy marriages.
3. We **apply the different verses and/or rules inconsistently**
  - usually preferring those that refer to sins we are not likely to commit anyway (like homosexual practices if we are heterosexual), while ignoring those that we know we do (like judging others and speaking badly about them).
4. We **select those verses that justify our opinions**, and ignore others. There are many examples where this has caused a lot of pain and suffering in the church.
  - Passages like 1Timothy 2:11 (“I do not permit women to teach...”) have been used by churches to block women from taking up positions as pastors and clergy. But as we know, Jesus sent Mary Magdalene to teach about the resurrection (Matthew 28:10; John 20:16-18). While some large denominations still insist on all-male clergy, many churches now allow women into ordained ministry.
  - Slavery was, for many years, justified by quoting individual verses in the Bible, like Leviticus 25:42. Even beating or raping a slave was condoned using Exodus 21: 20-21; and Leviticus 19:20. Several New Testament passages also provided biblical justification for keeping slaves (Luke 12:43-47; Luke 17: 9; Matthew 18:33; Philemon 1:16). There are no verses in the Bible that say slavery is wrong. The anti-slavery lobby did not have an easy job convincing the churches that slavery was against God’s will, and did so by challenging them to go back to the Spirit of the Gospel, and it took many years.

*“Christian rethinking on this issue is not merely a capitulation to secular culture”*  
 Archbishop D. Gomez et al. *True Union in the Body?*  
 (An Evangelical Anglican exploration on homosexuality)

## The Holy Spirit sometimes pushes us out of our comfort zones

Sometimes a passage that made sense at a certain time in history and under specific social conditions, is no longer relevant. This challenges church leaders to re-interpret these passages to be able to make sense of current knowledge and events. The choice then, is either to become narrower and hold onto isolated verses that keep us from moving forward, or to explore more deeply, even if we are uneasy about it.

There is ample evidence in the Bible, as well as in the history of the Church, that people do change their minds about what God may be saying in their lives.



### Time to talk: Biblical examples of the Holy Spirit's leading

Together, talk about the following examples from the Bible:

- Leviticus 11:7 and Deuteronomy 14:8 contain the instruction never to eat pork, because "it is unclean for you" (Lev.11:7).
  - Why do you think pork was regarded as unclean, whereas cow's meat was not?
  - Do you eat pork? If not, why not, and if yes, why is it OK?<sup>101</sup>

There are other examples in The Bible where the Holy Spirit has completely changed a person's views on a principle or law that they have felt strongly about.

- Read Acts 10: 9- 11:18. It tells the story of how the Holy Spirit deals with Peter, changes his mind and uses him powerfully in a new kind of ministry to people he had thought God was not interested in.<sup>102</sup>
  - Peter was sharply criticised by the other apostles for contradicting the Law. Read through his argument in Chapter 11 carefully, and consider why it was so convincing.

Another example is Paul himself. He completely changed his mind when challenged by Jesus - from being a staunch Jew that persecuted and killed Christians, to becoming a central figure in the establishment and growth of the Christian Church. His influence is still profound today.

There are also more recent examples of how the Holy Spirit has moved Christians beyond familiar teachings to completely new insights, to enable God to minister to the needs of God's people at different times in history.

<sup>101</sup> Historically, this made sense, because pork could make people incredibly ill. Medical science has uncovered why this was the case: there was a small parasite that would settle in the brain and cause terrible sickness. Since then, laws exist in most if not all countries that regulate how pork is processed and tested for this parasite, so pork is now quite safe to eat. So now in many countries, pork is eaten freely.

So most Christians eat pork, and it is not regarded as sinful.

<sup>102</sup> Peter believed firmly that his ministry excluded gentiles (non-Jews), but his mind was changed completely by God's intervention (Acts 10: 9-17; 27). He ended up preaching the Gospel directly to some Roman soldiers (Acts 10: 44-48). This led to the apostles' early ministry first being opened to non-Jews (Acts 11: 1-4; 17-18). Without Peter responding to the Spirit's leading him in a totally new direction, Christianity as a world religion would not exist!



## Time to talk: The Church's journey with HIV

Read through the following summary of the churches' journeys with HIV over the past few decades, and then answer the questions that follow.

*In Jesus' day, people with any kind of illness were considered to have sinned against God and were outcasts. He openly argued against this kind of prejudice. ("Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him." John 9: 3)*

*In the past few decades, this same attitude of most caused terrible hurt to people living with HIV. It even fuelled the HIV epidemic because it pushed people living with HIV into secrecy.*

*Christians referred to HIV as a punishment for (sexual) sins (Deuteronomy 28: 27-29), and compared it to the plagues meted out on the Egyptians in Exodus (7-12). They used Deuteronomy 7:12-15 to justify expelling people living with HIV out of their churches: "Do not bring an abhorrent thing into your house..."*

*Over time, church leaders and members have become more informed about the disease, and more people (including their loved ones) have disclosed their status.*

*People have been challenged to re-look at the Bible verses that they used to justify judging HIV+ people as sinners, even excluding them from their churches. They have overcome their prejudices and realised that the overriding message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is one of love, mercy and forgiveness.*

*So over time, many Christians have managed to overcome their prejudices. Nowadays many churches openly talk about HIV and have programmes to help people living with HIV. HIV infected people are more able to be open about their status, and some even lead their churches' HIV projects. Unfortunately, because HIV is mostly sexually transmitted, some churches still struggle to embrace people living with HIV. They are still journeying towards fully embracing people with HIV.*

- What strikes you about the journey of the wider Church in Southern Africa with HIV? How did this process evolve in your own church?
- What changed Christians' perspectives about people living with HIV?
- Is it possible that churches today might be on a similar journey around the question of LGBTIs? What might be some of the main challenges on this journey, and how might we overcome them?

## Using the Bible responsibly

The Bible contains more wisdom and depth than any other literature Christians have ever read.

But the Bible has been misused throughout history. This could be because of the power of the Church, or because of the moral dynamics within the Bible itself. Sometimes it has been used to oppress others and limit their freedom, and even to justify evil. At other times it has been used to excuse our own sinfulness and avoid taking responsibility for our actions.

**It is important that we interrogate any passages deeply, in light of the literary and social contexts in which they were written, as well as what we know about our current context.**

*"It is one of the curiosities of the current debate on sexuality that adultery, which creates far more social havoc, is considered less "sinful" than homosexual activity. Perhaps this is because there are far more adulterers in our churches. Yet no one, to my knowledge, is calling for their stoning, despite the clear command of Scripture."*

[Rev Walter Wink, Fellowship of Reconciliation]

Before we go to the 'homosexuality' texts, let us briefly look at what the Bible says about sexual ethics as a whole.

There are many contradictions in the Bible regarding different aspects of human sexuality. It is worth looking at some of these, because it might help to shed some light on the passages about sexual diversity.



### Time to talk: What does the Bible say about sexual relations and morality?

Choose one or more of the following issues, and explore some of the bible verses that talk about them.

#### 1. Marriage and Abstaining from marriage (celibacy)

Read Genesis 1: 28 and 2: 24

- What do these verses say is the purpose of marriage?

Now read 1Timothy 4: 1-3.

What does this passage say about forbidding people to get married?

- Does this mean that single people and childless couples are sinning because they are going against God's standard for marriage? Does it mean that Paul and Jesus also sinned?

The Catholic Church forbids priests and nuns from getting married. They argue that this practice is biblical by referring to 1 Corinthians 7: 32 and 37.

- So what is the right thing to you? How would you decide whether to get married or not?

## 2. Adultery

- Compare Deuteronomy 22:20-22 with John 8:1-11.
- What do you notice about the way Jesus responded to the men about to stone the women caught in adultery? Did he focus on the letter of the Law or the Spirit of love underlying it?
- Matthew 5:28 warns that a man who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery! Yet, in most cultures today this is seen as a mark of a real full-blooded man. Why do you think we are lenient about this, but not about homosexuality?
- Which of the above verses most influences your understanding of God's will about faithfulness in marriage? Why?

## 3. Rape (forced sex)

- Read Deuteronomy 22: 23-29. (The New Testament does not make any direct reference to rape.)
- How have these verses (and the New Testament's silence) influenced current myths about rape, and the solutions devised by some families and communities?

Essentially, the Bible clearly does not have a consistent position on all aspects of sexual ethics. The Church has referred more to the general Spirit of the Gospel to slowly but surely change its views in light of modern understandings of issues and the need for freedom, human dignity, rights and responsibilities for both women and men.

## Using the Bible responsibly to grapple with the hard questions about sexual diversity

Let us now look at the 8 passages that mention something like homosexuality, and make up our own minds.

### The 8 texts that refer to homosexual acts

**It is important when using the Bible as a Tool to guide our decisions and how we live our lives, to ask ourselves the following three questions:**

- **What was meant at the time they were written, given the society the writer lived in?**
- **How do the verses fit into the passages of which they are part? and**
- **What might this passage mean in today's context, given what we now know about the issue?**

The 8 verses in the Bible that have been used often to judge homosexuality as an orientation (usually with the other forms of sexual diversity mixed up in this term) are the following:

#### The Law of Moses:

Leviticus 18: 22

Leviticus 20: 13

**Stories:**

Genesis 1: 27 and Genesis 2: 24

Genesis 19: 1-14; 29

**Paul's Letters:**

Romans 1: 26-27

1 Corinthians 6: 9-10

1 Timothy 1: 10

We saw in Part 1 that many Christians quote Bible verses to condemn and even exclude people who do not seem to fit into the norms they have set for a 'good' Christian, because they are not heterosexual. They stigmatise them as sinners and not worthy to be members of the Church.

*"The Church's stance on homosexuality sent a clear message of rejection to me... Seeing that my faith was very important to me and to stop the fear and pain of being rejected, I tried to conform by attending several support groups and going for counselling. I was also part of an ex-gay ministry (for recovering gay people) for several years. However none of these efforts changed my sexual orientation. In order to obey the church's teaching, I lived in denial of who I was and I settled for a life of celibacy and secrecy. ... This worsened my pain and steered me into a deep hole of [unhappiness] and depression." Ecclesia de Lange*

Some people turn all different kinds of passages into rules, but actually only some books of the Bible were written to give instructions for how God's people should live. These are the books of the Law, such as Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

They contain what is called the "Holiness Code" – rules given to the ancient Israelites to help them keep themselves from the influences of the Babylonians, Assyrians and the Canaanites, who were their nearest neighbours. These contained many rules, which became their Law. People who did not obey them were punished severely.

Many people assume that homosexuality is wrong because it is listed as one of God's Laws, and carries a severe punishment. However, recall what we learnt earlier – that Leviticus could not have been talking about homosexuality as an orientation, but rather about homosexual acts of heterosexual men as part of idol worship or male prostitution.

***The Legal passages in Leviticus*****Time to talk: Relating to the Israelites' Holiness Code today**

Re-read **Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.**

- (How) does knowing that the translations we have today might be misleading affect how you feel about homosexuality as an orientation today?

These passages do refer to homosexual acts.

- Does this mean perhaps, that homosexual people can be accepted, but not allowed to practise?
- Is this a reasonable alternative? How do you think a homosexual person would feel about this?

To decide for ourselves, let us look at some of the other Laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy:

- Talk about some of the following verses: Why do we not also take on board some other verses that also appear as commandments in the Israelites' Holiness Code?
  - Leviticus 19:27 (men should never shave their beards);
  - Deuteronomy 19:21 (show no pity when revenge is necessary);
  - Leviticus 19:19 (never plant two kinds of seeds in one field or wear two kinds of fabrics at once);
  - Leviticus 23: 3 (keep the Sabbath day on the LAST day of the week);
  - Can you think of any others that are no longer practised today? (There are many!)
- Do you think that the argument that homosexuality is a punishable sin is correct, based on Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13?



## Time to talk: How did Jesus relate to the Laws in the Holiness Code?

Jesus, our ultimate role model, **said that he had “not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but to fulfil”** (Matthew 5:17).

- Read Matthew 5.

Which laws from the Holiness Code does he refer to, when he used the words: “*you have heard it said..., but...*”. What is he actually doing? Talk about how the world he was living in may have been different from the early days of Exodus when the Laws of Moses were written. How might this have influenced His thinking?
- How is today's world different from the days of the Exodus?
- Think about the following: At that time, having many children was seen as an important part of nation building, and so procreation was an important value. Is this still as important today? What do we know about homosexuality and sexual diversity that the people then did not know about? (Refer back to the section in Part 1 on Understanding Sexual Diversity – on pg 291.)

**Jesus often got into trouble with the religious leaders of his day for not obeying the letter of the Law.**

- Read the following passages and talk about them:
  - He and his disciples were caught picking grain and eating it on a Sabbath (Luke 6:1; 12:1);
  - He spoke to women in public and allowed them to speak to him (John 4: 4-26);
  - He healed the sick on the Sabbath Day of Rest (Mt 12:2-12);
  - He challenged the religious leaders directly (Matthew 23:4, and 23-24).

**We read in the Gospels that Jesus later summed up the 10 Commandments into only 2 commandments that are based in Love and Grace:**

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”*  
(Matthew 22: 36-40)

- What can we learn from the way Jesus revisited the Laws of Moses given in the Legal books?
- What might this mean for how we use Leviticus in the homosexuality debate today?

### **Genesis 19: Sodom and Gomorrah**<sup>103</sup>

This story is used most often to show how homosexuals are condemned to destruction by God: *"Anyone who has heard of the cities of "Sodom and Gommorah (sic)" knows that they were notorious hotbeds of homosexuality."* Bob Davies, past President, Exodus International.<sup>104</sup>

Let us revisit it to see if this is really the case.



### **Time to talk: What was the Sin of Sodom?**

Read through the whole of Genesis 18 and 19.

- Did God decide to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah before or after the incident where the men of the city tried to rape the angels and then Lot? (See Gen 18:17, 20, 22 and 19:13)
- Were the men homosexual or heterosexual? How many of the city's men were involved? (See Gen 19:4 and 8).
- From your reading of the text, what do you think were the sins that made God so angry?
- Sodom's sin was referred back to in other books of the Bible. What did they say was the sin of Sodom? Read Isaiah 1: 1-17; Ezekiel 16: 49-50.
- Read Luke 10:10-12 and Matthew 10:14-15.
- What is the most important thing you have learnt from revisiting this passage?
- Rev Walter Wink says that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is actually irrelevant to the whole debate about homosexuality. Do you agree or disagree? Talk about why.

**Remember- it is OK to disagree!**

### **The New Testament Letters**

Many people quote verses like Romans 1: 26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:10, to justify condemning homosexuals and even excluding them from entering their churches.

They do seem to be quite convincing. However, we must remember again that Paul would most likely have been referring to homosexual acts for idol worship or prostitution.

*"For quite some time we've been imprisoned in a worldview that's neither honouring toward our fellow human beings, nor biblical."*  
Alan Chambers, Exodus Ministries

<sup>103</sup> Please see Attachment 2 for a full Contextual Bible Study on the Sodom and Gomorrah story.

<sup>104</sup> From the Exodus Standard, USA.

Paul talks about men acting contrary to what is 'natural' for them. This shows that he must have been talking about heterosexuals behaving differently from what they naturally do<sup>105</sup>. He did not talk at any point about homosexuality as an orientation from a young age.

During his time in Corinth and Rome, there was a homosexual practice called *pederasty* – where an older, often prominent man would 'take care' of a young boy (12-16 of age), and schooled him to become a good Greek or Roman citizen. In Rome at least, this may have included a time of military service. After the age of 16, the boys were expected to marry and raise a family.

None of the practices Paul refers to involved people of homosexual orientation or faithful, permanent relationships with people of the same sex.



## Time to talk: Reading the New Testament verses in their literary context

So what was Paul talking about in these letters?

To understand more fully, it is important to read the rest of the passage that each verse is part of.

- Read through the following passages, in which these verses are contained:
  - Roman 1: 18- 2:4
  - 1 Corinthians 6: 9-11
  - 1 Timothy 1: 9-16
- What strikes you about the three lists of sins, into which homosexual practice is included?
  - Are you guilty of any of the sins listed?
- What do the passages say are the consequences of these?
- What do all the sexual acts listed here have in common?
- How do these passages end?

*"Does God still love me?"*  
Monique.

The homosexual acts mentioned are listed amongst **long lists of other sins**. They also include sins related to unhealthy relationships, such as envy, strife, deceit (little lies), gossips, heartlessness and rebellion against parents.

And yet in our churches today - who ever heard of the gossips, who heartlessly spread slander about homosexuals being excluded from church, or a church expelling children who are cheeky and rebel against their parents?

<sup>105</sup> Some people say that, since most homosexuals are born with that orientation, it is just as unnatural for them to engage in heterosexual acts, and so they should not be forced into marriage or heterosexual acts as a 'cure'.

The purpose seems to be less about condemning certain types of sinners, and more about reminding the reader that every single one of us is actually a sinner, and thus has no right to judge others!

### **Nowhere do these texts condemn loving, respectful sexual relationships between adults in a faithful marriage relationship – whether homo- or heterosexual.**

What a wider reading of these texts shows is how dangerous it is to take out isolated verses, draw one's own conclusions as to what they mean, and create the impression that some sins are more serious than others. This is contrary to the Biblical concept that "*all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God*" (Romans 3:23).

#### ***How does Jesus use the Creation stories, and does he speak about homosexuality?***

The story of Creation is used in a number of places in the New Testament. Paul uses it in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 14) to justify his argument for women being silent in church.

Nowadays, most churches no longer insist on this. They accept that Paul was writing as a Jewish man of his time, who lived in a society where women were never exposed to Biblical (or any) education. They learnt from their mothers or later their husbands, if they had any questions. This was early in Paul's journey with Christ, and it is interesting that later he worked closely with women leaders of early church groups such as Priscilla (1 Corinthians 16:19), Junia (Romans 16:7) and Phoebe (Romans 16: 1, 27).

Jesus refers to it too, but he does so in a very different way.



### **Time to talk: Jesus, the creation and sexual diversity**

Read Matthew 19:3-6; 11-12 (read also 7-10 if you have time)

- What do you think is the main reason why Jesus is referring to these verses? What question is he answering?
- What do you think He means by "*Not everyone can accept this teaching*" and "*some are eunuchs from birth, and some .... have been made eunuchs by others*"?<sup>106</sup>

<sup>106</sup> The term 'Eunuch' is used either literally, as a man who cannot have sex because he is castrated or who is born with a defect, or for one who chooses not to have sex or marry for religious reasons – i.e. is celibate. Eunuchs were used in a king's court to look after the king's wives or concubines (women kept as sexual companions over and above a king's wives). Some historians say that sometimes a king would castrate slaves to make sure they were obedient and not too strong. (Anthony Ashford, [www.religioustolerance.org](http://www.religioustolerance.org))

Some people argue that this is evidence that Jesus is not opposed to homosexuals, but others disagree. However, it is clear that Jesus did not expect every person to marry and have children, and that he accepted that some people did not fit into the heterosexual norms of the day.

- Talk about what this might mean for how the church should relate to people who do not fit into the heterosexual norms today, but are, for example, transgender, intersex or homosexual.

## So what does all this mean for how we use the Bible?

Now that we have dug into The Bible a little more deeply, and have seen how many times different Bible verses seem to contradict each other, it can be very confusing. It can seem easier to just hold onto specific rules and expect them to hold true for all situations and all times.

**But the Word of God is more than a book. It is even bigger than the Christian sacred text, the Bible. The First chapter of John tells us that the Word of God is in fact Jesus, who spoke all of creation into being and continues, through the Holy Spirit, to dwell amongst us today.**

Many Christians have picked out the few verses from the Bible that refer to sexual acts between people of the same sex and present them as unchangeable law. As we have seen above, it is also possible to use the Bible itself to argue against narrow and over-simplified interpretations.

To sum up:

- there seems to be general agreement that certain sexual practices are NOT acceptable, whether they were allowed in Old Testament times or not; and
- there are also others that people argue ARE acceptable, even though some Bible verses say they are not.



## Time to talk: How do we choose which verses hold more weight?

Read through the following lists of sexual practices<sup>107</sup>, and see if you agree with the writer's view of whether churches today find them acceptable or not:

*Virtually all modern readers would agree with the Bible in rejecting:*

- *Incest*
- *Rape*
- *Adultery*
- *Intercourse with animals.*

<sup>107</sup> This list is adapted from Wink (www.forusa.org )

\*Bodily fluid, out of place, was most likely to have been considered as a loss of life-giving fluids and thus represented death.

*But we disagree with the Bible on most other sexual norms. The Bible condemned the following behaviours which most churches today generally allow:*

- *exogamy (marriage with non-Israelites, or outside of one's own tribe or group)*
- *celibacy (apart from celibacy as a calling – though the Catholic Church still expects this of priests and nuns)*
- *intercourse during menstruation (though this is still taboo amongst some cultures)*
- *naming sexual organs*
- *nudity (under certain conditions)*
- *masturbation (some Christians still condemn this)*
- *birth control (some Christians still forbid this)*

*And the Bible regarded semen\* and menstrual blood as unclean, which only churches steeped in very traditional rural cultures do, but most do not.*

*Likewise, the Bible permitted behaviours unacceptable to the church today:*

- *prostitution*
- *polygamy*
- *widows marrying the brothers of their husbands after their death to ensure they had sons (though widow cleansing is still practised in some traditional cultural settings)*
- *sex with slaves and concubinage (keeping multiple sexual 'companions')*
- *treatment of women as property (even though some men misuse the traditional cultural concept of the bride price / lobola as giving them the right to 'own' their wives and demand absolute obedience)*
- *very early marriage (for the girl, age 11-13, although this also has been controversial in some societies).*

**Homosexuality seems to be just one more issue that churches today have to re-visit, like all those above, and decide how to deal with it.** Our responses will, no doubt, not all be the same. We will be influenced by our socialisation and cultural influences.

When using the Bible to discern God's guidance in our lives and in the life of our church, Bishop David Russell (2009) advises us to **discern between those teachings that *were of the times*** (usually linked to specific customs and outlooks of the day) **and those which *are for all times*.**

**So we can see that different Bible verses do not all carry the same weight. But how can we know the difference?**

The best safety net, for Christians seeking to discern God's will through the Scriptures, is to ask ourselves: what is the **Spirit of the Gospel** that we are called to serve?

Paul clarified the ministry Jesus has called us to, as follows:

*"God ... [has] made us competent to be ministers of a New Covenant, not of letter [law], but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."* (2 Corinthians 3:6)

He also argued against those who were trying to impose the requirements from the 'old' Law of Moses, and sounds a solemn warning:

*"You, who are trying to be justified by Law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."* (Galatians 5: 4-6)

*"It is no small task to bring together ideals of non-discrimination and deeply entrenched religious beliefs. It's a huge struggle to marry the two, to respond in a way that is inclusive without going against the principles and the dogma of the church."* Marlow Valentine, Triangle Project. (in Vukani, Thursday July 22 2010, p14)

## Developing an inclusive ministry

In working through this Tool, we have learnt a lot about sexual diversity, and what the Bible says (and doesn't) about sexual ethics and morality.

To help us make sense of all the different voices on this subject, we have reflected on the essential values and principles that guide our faith, and tried to imagine - **what kind of church do we want our churches to be?**

*"I had to ask myself - did I leave the church, or did the church leave me?"* Arnold Motsau

This section begins with a time to share our visions of our churches, and looks at some exciting examples of approaches and ministries that are welcoming and affirming of all God's people, whatever their sexual identity or orientation.

It then goes on to explore some ideas and resources to help us empower ourselves to open up conversations about the issue in our churches and wider society.

It closes with a section that reflects on the process we have been through as we worked through the Tool, to help those who feel called to this work for inclusiveness. It ends with an exciting new development in Africa, which we are invited to join and become Change Agents in our faith communities and communities.

Perhaps the most important criteria for discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying through The Bible relate to whether our interpretation:

- is based on the core values of the Gospel: love and mercy,
- promotes goodness and holiness, and
- respects human dignity and leads towards greater wholeness.

## Opening Doors: What does an inclusive, affirming faith community look like?

Reflecting on our own churches and communities



### Time to talk: How inclusive of sexual diversity are our churches, and how inclusive do we want them to be?

- What is the situation in your country, society and community regarding sexual diversity? Are there any special issues or incidents that you would like to talk about?
- What is the position of your church on this issue? (You would know from sermons, Bible studies or your church newsletter, or our official Constitution or other statutes.)
- As far as you know - are homosexuals, transgender or intersex people able to be open about their gender identity and sexual orientation? Are they involved in leadership in any way?



Source: IAM



### Time to talk: What would I like to say to my church?

Read some of the things other people have said to their churches on the following page, and then share what you would like to say to your church.

*"The church leaders,  
I would like to tell them,  
it's not their duty to judge us"*  
Samuel Genafa, Uganda.

"We don't even have respect for who we are.  
Because we believe we are nothing. ... I have a  
friend who I cannot convince that God loves you  
as you are. She lives with her partner, but in the  
belief that she is going to hell. It breaks my heart.  
Because that's what the church did."  
Madalene Isaacks, Namibia.

"If we are looking at reconciliation and ... unity  
with all Rwandese, ... if we can forgive those that killed others,  
I mean why, why, why us who are innocent people are not given our  
peace in our country?" Naome Ruzindana, Rwanda.

"... We are not killers, we are not murderers, we are not  
molesters, we are not, you know, bad. We love deeply truly  
honestly and we should be given a chance to show that to the  
world. Do not force people into closets." Anonymous lesbian, Kenya.

*"Often the church seems welcoming though it has a selective condition of  
accepting LGBTQ people. ... [Sometimes] I would be spiritually  
motivated and uplifted but immediately after that I would be crushed when the  
pastor ... talked bad about gay people,  
which robbed me of my spiritual  
upliftment. This has chased me out of  
the church. In most cases, the church  
is not aware how it pushes people  
away and causes depression, isolation  
and spiritual hunger to many LGBTQ of  
faith, and some resort to suicide or  
drugs ... The church needs to treat all  
children of God as equal and loved."*  
Thembanani Chamane, South Africa

**"My name is Lukas Mukongo. I  
am a 30 year old African gay man.  
... My African culture believes that  
it is un-African to be homosexual.  
... I chose to stay in the church  
and the church people allowed  
me.... I am an African, and I ask  
that we stand together and work  
for our God."** Lukas Mukongo.

**"You know the Church in Nigeria is a very  
powerful Tool of change. So if the churches  
change their views about homosexuals and  
LGBT people ... and stop preaching gay  
hate and start to preach inclusion and  
tolerance and love, I believe it will go a  
long way."** Stephen Wariebi Hobobo, Nigeria.

"The anointing that I believe  
the bishops have from God  
is something that should  
allow them to use the pulpit  
as a place to talk about  
love." Fadzai Muprutsa,  
Zimbabwe.

Here is a space to write down what you would like to say to your church:

---



---



---

Share your ideas about what an inclusive and affirming church or faith community would be like.

- Would there be a separate programme for LGBTIs or would an inclusive approach be integrated into all programmes? Think about:
  - Congregational participation and inclusion (e.g. sermons, governance structures and leadership, sacraments – baptism, marriage etc., programmes for children, youth, parents, HIV+ and sick people, prayer groups)
  - Ordination/licensing of priests/ministers and lay ministers
  - Marriages/blessings of partnerships

### Some good news!

Below are some extracts of stories and documents of faith communities that are on the journey to become ministries in Africa that are welcoming and affirming of all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

This is, of course, a journey<sup>108</sup>.

Most of us have not fully arrived, no matter how long we have been travelling this road. It is a journey of transforming centuries of prejudice and stereotypes, and for some of us, it is a journey of healing from our self-stigma. It is a personal journey for each one of us, as well as being a journey for the Body of Christ as a whole.

*"If the God we worship hated homosexual people, I wouldn't worship that God."*  
Desmond Tutu.

<sup>108</sup> It can be helpful to group Southern Africa churches into 3 main types of Church responses:

- A. **Conservative Churches** (strongly opposed)
  - Most churches of all denominations in countries where homosexuality is criminalised
  - Most evangelical and Pentecostal churches
  - Conservative Protestants
  - Most African Initiated churches, like Shembe, Zionist, etc. check
- B. **Radical Christian groups** (inclusive and affirming)
  - Small denominations e.g. Metropolitan Community Churches, (See list under Resources below)
  - LGBTI-friendly lobbying networks (in all traditions): E.g. Holy Trinity LGBTI Support Group (Catholic).
- C. **Liberal - Moderate & Polarised Protestant Churches** (tolerant)
  - Roman Catholic Church
  - Most Protestant denominations e.g. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa, Anglican Church in Southern Africa, Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, Methodist Church of Southern Africa.
  - Some Pentecostal and evangelical churches, like Rhema International.

## Stories of the journeys and/or documents of some churches

### ***South Africa as a case study: An open Constitution is challenging churches, though attitudes change slowly***

There have been slow shifts in the attitudes of a number of South African churches over the past 10 years, from the fundamentalist views that condemned homosexuality outright.<sup>109</sup>

The liturgical churches whose structures cut across several SADC countries, like the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Uniting Reformed and Congregational churches, all seem to agree on the need to intensify dialogue on the issue of homosexuality, and accept that there are various different views on the issue. None have formally agreed on the ordination of homosexual clergy, and many constitutions are silent on this matter. But they have all called for a pastoral approach<sup>110</sup> - for homosexuals to be treated with respect and dignity, and inclusion. However, in practice, there are still reports of ill-treatment of homosexuals and other sexual identities, both at local and wider church level, experiencing discrimination.

There is some diversity amongst evangelical churches, although the overriding view is strongly opposed to accepting homosexuals, and stories abound of homosexuals being expelled. The top leadership of the Rhema Church, arguably the biggest in South Africa, claim all that homosexuals are welcome (though with limited conditions), although at local level, there are reports of homosexuals feeling discriminated against<sup>111</sup>.

The African Initiated churches consist of many smaller groups (like the Pentecostals). But overall, they seem to agree with their cultural attitudes, and seem to have very strong positions against homosexuality as a Western imposition. But even within those, there is evidence of some voices pleading for acceptance of homosexuals on the ground that there are many African homosexuals who feel alienated from their churches because of this position.

The fact that homosexuality is illegal in 38<sup>112</sup> African countries, and in some cases punishable by death, makes it very difficult for the country dioceses of moderate Southern African churches to openly grapple with these questions.

### ***A Church opens its doors to LGBTI people: Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Johannesburg's LGBTI Group***

*"Not only is Holy Trinity Church, which is on the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand, gay-friendly, it advertises the fact on its website under the headline "ALL are welcome here".*

---

<sup>109</sup> This is a very broad summary of the general trends in the different churches, but the overriding sense is that in the Southern African region the conversation is beginning to open up, at least at senior leadership level in South Africa. To find out what specific denominations say about homosexuality, google: "Views of different churches in Southern Africa on homosexuality" (or insert the name of the church or country you are looking for). There is much less information on this for countries other than South Africa, because of the varying legal constraints in the different countries.

<sup>110</sup> Unfortunately, most churches have not actually spelt out what a 'pastoral approach' might mean at this stage.

<sup>111</sup> Marius Oosthuizen. 2013. *The evolving role of the Rhema Movement in the South African public square*. In NGTT Deel 54 Supplementum 4, 2013; and *Rhema Church Homophobic, says Gay Man*. In Sunday World, 10 May 2015.

<sup>112</sup> Mozambique has decriminalised homosexuality as recently as May 2015. Although it was not mentioned specifically in its Penal Code, the phrase 'vices against nature' was often interpreted as referring to homosexuality. But in practice, stigma continues to thrive in all countries, regardless of their laws.

*"Through baptism gay people have the right to participate fully in the life of the church. I know many homosexuals who are valuable and active members of the church," said Father Russell Pollitt, the parish priest.*

*Five years ago, [he] was approached by a group of people wanting to start an LGBTI support group. The group now meets fortnightly and is about 25 people strong. Many are migrants and refugees living in South Africa.*

*The LGBTI group aims to provide a safe haven for the LGBTI Christian Community from all walks of life.*

*The group's co-ordinator, Dumisani Dube, said he and many others no longer feel unworthy of Catholicism. "I used to feel like it was not right being a homosexual and a Christian. Now I can pray to God and know I am his child whether I am gay or not."*

*At Holy Trinity the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) members are an integral part of the congregation.*

*The group initially faced some hostility from the congregants, but after anti-homophobic messages from the pulpit and the creation of platforms for debate and dialogue, the LGBTI congregants gradually came to be seen as nothing out of the ordinary." Faeza Ballim. Holy Trinity: This church welcomes homosexuals. Mail and Guardian. 19 April 2013*

### ***A Council of Churches with senior clergy in a rural area***

*"Bishop X is a leader and founder of one of a charismatic church in Uthungulu district. He is well known for his spirit of ecumenism. ....Together with other senior leaders he admitted that he didn't hesitate to chase homosexuals out, as his church is a place of worship.. and added that even the African culture doesn't approve of this demon.*

*We decided to create more spaces to have homosexuality discussed: dialogues, capacity building workshops, theological reflections and breakfast briefings. Bishop X participated actively, and he is no longer the same. He admits that he was wrong for discriminating, and supporting those who kicked out gays and lesbians out of their churches. He wishes to open the doors of his church for all people of God irrespective of culture, background and sexual orientation to come and worship. He serves as an ambassador of our programme, helping those he says are 'still in the darkness' to get a better understanding of what God says about loving your neighbour." Mxolisi Nyuswa, KwaZulu Regional Christian Council, South Africa*

## Churches specifically serving the LGBTI communities<sup>113</sup>

### **Metropolitan Community Church**

This network of churches began as a single church in the USA, in 1968. The movement aims to offer a spiritual home to people who belong to the LGBTI community, as well as anyone else who may have been excluded from other congregations. The MCC has been on the forefront of civil and human rights movements by addressing important issues such as racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, and other forms of oppression. Their approach combines spirituality, sexuality and justice.

They have member churches in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.

#### **I could make sense of being me**

*"The [church] was always a big part of my life. And when I came out to myself, I noticed that I was distancing myself from the church. ... I have been at the Metropolitan Community Church now for the last seven years. ... [F]or me, you know, it was a way I found a space in which I would marry my sexuality and my spirituality again and I could make sense of being me, but maintaining the importance of my spirituality in my life.... [It] has really made a difference."*  
Dale Choudree, South Africa

### **LGBTI Friendly Church Sets Up Roots in Kenya and Uganda**

*"Homophobia in Africa has increasingly been spread through use of religion with most spiritual heads [saying] that the higher powers known to mankind are against homosexuality or any other sexual nonconformity that isn't in line with the norm.*

*However, The Community Church of St Sebastian in the Spanish Canary Islands could be on its way to changing such beliefs, [after announcing that] it is setting up sister churches in both Kenya and Uganda. ... [It] is known to openly reach out to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community. ....*

*One of the Church's leaders, Rev Paul Gibson revealed ... that they were in the final stages of putting together the community based church and hoped to spread the love of God to sexual minorities who have been led to believe that being different has automatically stripped them of God's love.*

*... The church is prioritising its security and that of its to-be congregation, as the society in both countries shuns and continues to persecute sexual minorities The two East African countries are well known for their stand against LGBTI persons with Uganda having tabled a bill that sought the death penalty for anyone suspected of being gay.*

*Religious leaders across Africa have for a long time spearheaded the anti-gay campaign. ... [R]eligion being the strong Tool it is, most of the general population has been made to believe that the LGBTI lifestyle is against God's will for mankind.*

<sup>113</sup> See a fuller list in Resources, below.

*Recently, a radical antigay preacher in Uganda, Bishop David Kiganda, called for the re-tabling of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, ... and he is supported by a number of radical hate propaganda preachers.*

*While they argue that homosexuality is un-African and is behaviour adopted from the West, gay rights activists pose a [vital] question: "Christianity and most religions practised in Africa were adopted from foreigners, why then don't you condemn them and label them un-African?" ....*

*It is from incidents like these that the St Sebastian Church has chosen to set up roots in East Africa in the hope of curbing homophobia by spreading God's love, one person at a time. The Church's ... expansion drive is setting up several sister churches across Asia and hopes to expand even further in Africa." <https://www.kuchutimes.com/2015/05/lgbti-friendly-church-sets-up-roots-in-kenya-and-uganda/#comments>*

## Empowering ourselves through networking and accessing useful resources

### What are some challenges and obstacles in building inclusive and affirming ministries?

Addressing issues of LGBTI, and challenging churches (and our governments) can be extremely difficult and fraught with dangers, from being expelled from our congregation, to being sentenced to prison or death!

It is best to empower ourselves with support – whether from LGBTI networks, legal organisations for protection and support, learning from LGBTI friendly faith communities, or access to educational resources.

This section offers a starting point for this.



### Time to talk: Challenges to change, and support needed

- What challenges and obstacles would, or do, you and others face if you started a ministry for sexually diverse people in your church?  
Use the questions below to help you think this through.  
Where could you get support within your church or denomination?
- If you live in a country **where homosexuality is illegal**, how might you protect yourselves while also not just staying silent? What laws, other mechanisms or organisations exist that you could call on?
- How would or do you tackle **cultural resistance to change**, like fear of the erosion of family life?

- Do you feel ready to respond to **doctrinal arguments**? Where could you get further help to deal with this?
- Do you feel it might be useful to use information about **human rights** to help you? What further information would you need to be able to use the human rights discourse and instruments in a programme for LGBTI rights?
- What **other challenges** do or would you face, and where could you find support?

## Forming broader links to strengthen our voice and our will

Together, we have more power to bring change than if we work alone. We can learn from groups in society and in different churches that have worked for many years to bring about change.

The List of Resources at the end of this Tool offers a useful starting point.

### On 10th September 2014, the Church in Africa took a giant leap forward

Over 30 African church and civil society leaders and theologians from ten African countries gathered for a historic consultation on human sexuality, religion and equality in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Botswana, Cameroon, Lesotho, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The group agreed that they are “*committed to changing the narrative in Africa from persecution of LGBTI persons and their families to acceptance. We are committed to making change happen in faith communities, theological schools, universities and in civil society*”.

“*This consultation had several concrete goals including the creation of a special edition on human sexuality for the Journal of Theology for Southern Africa; an exchange of ideas from African faith leaders for the Reference Group on Human Sexuality of the World Council of Churches; and the development of a network of LGBTI-affirming faith leaders and scholars across the continent.*”

*On the final day of the consultation, the group met to discuss the way forward which included the drafting of a call to reflection and action for the African continent.* “Michael Adee. Director of Global Faith and Justice. [www.lgbtglobalfaith.org](http://www.lgbtglobalfaith.org). September 2014. [www.lgbtglobalfaith.org/because-you-are-therefore-i-am/](http://www.lgbtglobalfaith.org/because-you-are-therefore-i-am/)



## Time to talk: Accessing support

- Which of the networks, organisations or publications below might be useful for you? How could you use them?
- Do you know any others? Please share their details with others.
- What might be some risks of belonging to these networks in your country, community or church, and how could you minimise these risks?

## Becoming Change Agents: The Wheel of Change<sup>114</sup>

### What we think, say and do matters

We have seen above that our stereotypes and negative attitudes and words can cause great harm. At the same time, if we have the courage to SPEAK OUT against homophobia, and to act as role models in the way we relate to people who are homosexual or transgender or intersex, then we have the POWER TO CHANGE MINDSETS and bring healing.

### Practical ideas for creating inclusive and affirming faith communities



## Time to talk: What can I do?

Discuss together some of your practical ideas:

- As an individual, and
  - To help your church grow into a welcoming, friendly and sensitive community?
- Once you have discussed your ideas, read some other ideas, below.

### What can I do as an individual?

1. Continue the conversation, and continue reading and exploring on the issue. It is easy to do this by googling 'Homosexuality and the Bible' or similar phrases, and googling for information on what your church stands for. There are many websites in the Resources section below.
2. Avoid stereotyping and condemning. It is so easy to do this and very painful to anyone who is stereotyped or condemned

<sup>114</sup> This theory of change has been developed by IAM (Inclusive and Affirming Ministries) as a framework to create open minds, hearts and doors within different countries and communities.

3. Speak out against hate speech, crimes, jokes and inappropriateness.
4. Open doors by making LGBTBI friends.
5. Support LGBTBI organisations and allies, including their Gay Pride initiatives.

### **What can I do to help my church to grow into a welcoming, friendly and sensitive community?**

1. Encourage LGBTBI to participate in church activities (if you find a safe and inclusive faith community). Assist in any way you can to be welcoming to others, especially those who are near to our community.
2. If you are a preacher, use the pulpit to preach against homophobia (fear and hatred of gays and lesbians, or transgender people), and help other to understand how marginalised some individuals (and families) feel because of their (or a family member's) homosexual orientation
3. Start a support group for LGBTBI people, friends and family. (This is a creative starting point on a journey to greater integration - i.e...including LGBTBI people in congregation activities.)
4. Practice the Contextual Bible Study approach to reading the Bible. (See Practical Tool 2 of the Toolkit.)
5. Create forums for inclusive discussions and dialogues.
6. Lobby for greater inclusive practices e.g. gender neutral application forms/alternative family constructions.
7. Help educate others, especially children, so as to stop homophobic attitudes and prejudice. Young people must know that these are not Christian attitudes and therefore not acceptable. Lead by example!
8. Lobby your Church Council to put in place church policies that explicitly reject unjust discrimination and harassment of any persons, including those with a homosexual inclination. Make sure that the policy includes procedures to handle complaints.

### **Spreading the Good News: A step by step methodology to build change agents and open doors**

IAM is an organisation that has worked for many years towards building *“faith communities in Africa that are welcoming and affirming; where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people can participate fully and be strengthened... as human beings.”* (IAM's Vision Statement)

It does this through programmes that support and empower the LGBTBI community to stimulate dialogue about the issues.

An important Tool they use to make this happen is called the "Wheel of Change". Let us explore this, to help us think through how we might become agents of change and in turn help others also.



## Time to talk: building change agents in our churches and society

Recognising the steps:

- Go back to the OVERVIEW OF THIS TOOL, page 240 and 247, and talk about the STEPS that we went through in this Tool:
- STEPS 1 and 2: (Preparing our Hearts) Opening our Minds and Hearts (pg 242 and 249 – 280);
- Interim visioning: Imagining what Open Doors would look like (Developing Inclusive Ministries – pg 281)
- STEP 3: Empowering Ourselves through networking (pg 287-8);
- STEP 4: Becoming and building Change Agents (pg 288-291); and
- STEP 5: Beginning to work towards opening doors (pg 281, 292-3)

You will notice that, AFTER Step 2, we imagined what a faith community with open doors would look like, before we went on to Steps 3, 4 and finally 5.

- Why do you think this is the case? How important do you think it is to create the vision before talking about concrete steps to get there?
- **How can people within churches work to shift mindsets?**
  - For each of the Steps above, draw up a small **plan** for how you will begin to take this Step in your church or faith community. Try to make your plans very specific: who will do what, when, and where? What resources will you need for each activity, in time, people and money? (Sometimes very little money is needed, if you bring the issue into existing meetings and other spaces.)
  - Try to remain respectful of the cultural and institutional framework of your church – but do not let that silence you!

Remember, this is a gradual process, and you may spend most of your time initially on Steps 1 and 2. Allow the process to take its time. But try not to get stuck, and move forward as soon as you can with those people who are open and enthusiastic and are prepared to work hard.

Refer to resource lists for those who want to take this further and join the larger movement of churches and Christians, not only in South Africa, who are leading the prophetic voices that have begun opening up this conversation amongst the churches, and continue to listen for the Holy Spirit's guidance.

## Being change agents and opening doors



### Time to talk: being agents of change in our churches and communities

Read through the full text of the call to African leaders, below, and talk about it using the following questions:

- Which of specific clauses below do you feel directly called to in your ministry?
- What will be necessary for you to be able to respond positively to this call?
- Who will you share this Declaration with, and how can you use it to mobilise others to join you to work together as agents of change in your work and society?
- What will be your first steps?

### The KwaZulu Natal Declaration

*"We, African religious leaders, scholars, and members of civil society are highly concerned with the well-being of our beloved continent and with the demonisation and criminalisation of sexual minorities on the continent,*

*We, African religious leaders, scholars, and members of civil society met for a consultation in KwaZulu Natal on August 28-31, 2014, in response to the recent contentious debates regarding human sexuality on the continent. Recognising that we are part of the global community, we met in South Africa, a country with a constitution that recognises and protects the rights of sexual minorities,*

*Aware of the traditional leadership roles that academics, religious institutions, and churches in Africa have played in promoting social justice and human dignity,*

*Troubled by the misuse of religion to further marginalise and exclude sexual minorities from society and faith communities,*

*Noting the recommendations on human sexuality from the World Council of Churches 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly to the Central Committee, and the subsequent approval of the Terms of Reference for the Human Sexuality Reference Group to walk together in a pilgrimage of Justice and Peace from 2014-2021,*

*Observing the 275: Resolution on Protection against violence and other human rights violations against Persons on the basis of real or imputed sexual orientation and gender identity in Africa issued by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, 55<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session held in Luanda, Angola, from 28<sup>th</sup> April to 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014.*

*Acknowledging the deaths and threats of death, the violence, discrimination, that sexual minorities, women, and children face on the continent.*

*"I have come to see that it is better to be rejected for who I am than to be accepted for who I am not."*  
Ecclesia de Lange

***We call on all religious institutions, especially Christian Churches***

- *To care for the least amongst us as Christ has done,*
- *To create safe spaces for encounter with the sexual diversity within the body of Christ,*
- *To talk openly about sexual diversities and adversities in human sexuality,*
- *To break out of the vicious cycle of shame, secrecy, violence, and silence that demeans, demonises and kills,*
- *To openly condemn violence against sexual minorities.*

***We call on all African scholars and academic institutions***

- *To take full responsibility to reflect and produce credible scholarship on human sexuality,*
- *To conduct research that gives momentum to African local institutions, the Church, and indigenous knowledge and practices to further the understanding of human sexuality,*
- *To incorporate issues regarding human sexuality in the development of knowledge,*
- *To guide the public in understanding sexual diversity.*

***We call on all our governments in Africa***

- *To take seriously the mission of the state to protect all citizens, including those with disabilities, and all communities affected by, and living with HIV and AIDS,*
- *To seek legislative and social reforms that further the protection of and improvement of the livelihoods of sexual minorities,*
- *To dialogue with African local traditional, political and religious institutions to promote human dignity,*
- *To eliminate colonial sodomy laws and to oppose attempts to further criminalised sexual minorities.*

***We call on all Africans on the continent and in the diaspora***

- *To respect the human rights of all people including sexual minorities,*
- *To oppose and desist from violence directed toward sexual minorities, and to support families and communities of sexual minorities.*

***We call on the international community and partners***

- *To respect while supporting Africa's journey and processes towards a better understanding of human sexuality and socio-economic, political and religious inclusion of sexual minorities,*
- *To denounce all misleading information on issues of human sexuality.*
- *To support our commitment to produce and disseminate scholarly and general publications throughout Africa and beyond.*

*We, African religious leaders, scholars, and members of Civil Society assembled in this KwaZulu Natal consultative gathering commit to uphold these recommendations. We also commit to share this vision with all partners and Africans across the continent and the diaspora and to be inclusive in our journey toward a better understanding and respect of the diversity of human sexuality through research, advocacy, publications and consultations."*

*"The only way I will rest in peace is if one day transgender people aren't treated the way I was .... My death needs to be counted in the number of transgender people who commit suicide this year. I want someone to look at that number... and fix it. **Fix society. Please.**"* (Extract from Leelah Alcorn's (17) note, left after her suicide in Ohio on 28th December 2014)

## Conclusion

Paul sums up our predicament in 1 Corinthians 13: 12-13.

*"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."*

Since not one of us understands fully yet, let us continue to seek God's face with humility.

Let us do so with openness to learn from each other and from the pain of people in the LGBTI community, as we learn daily what it means to live out God's call to love with hope and open the doors of our faith communities to all, regardless of their sexual identity or orientation.

*"The church has waged the culture war, and it's time to put the weapons down". Alan Chambers*

## Resources

### Reading Material (books including fiction), articles, pamphlets and booklets.

- ActionAid, 2009. *Hate Crimes: The Rise of 'Corrective' Rape in South Africa*. London: Hamlyn House.  
[http://www.actionaid.org.uk/doc\\_lib/correctiveraperep\\_final.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org.uk/doc_lib/correctiveraperep_final.pdf)
- Arnfred, Signe. 2004. *Re-thinking Sexualities in Africa*. Uppsala, Sweden; Nordic Africa Institute.
- Beattie Jung, Patricia & Ralph F. Smith. 1993. *Heterosexism: an ethical challenge*. State University New York.  
[https://books.google.be/books/about/Heterosexism.html?id=mF6HbN7HGNIC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.be/books/about/Heterosexism.html?id=mF6HbN7HGNIC&redir_esc=y)).
- Cheng, P.S. 2011. Radical love. *An introduction to Queer Theology*. New York: Seabury Books.
- Di Silvo, L. 2011. "Correcting Corrective Rape: Carmichele and Developing South Africa's Affirmative obligations To Prevent Violence Against Women." *Georgetown Law Journal*, 99(5):1469-2011
- Bishop Michael Doe, 2000. *Seeking the Truth in Love- The Church and Homosexuality*. Darton Longman Todd, London.
- Epprecht, Marc. 2008. *Heterosexual Africa: the history of an idea from the age of exploration to the age of AIDS*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Eugenides, Jeffrey. 2015. *Middlesex* – A novel about being intersex
- Germond, Paul and Steve de Gruchy, eds. 1997. *Aliens in the household of God: homosexuality and Christian faith in South Africa*. Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip.
- Van Klinken, Adriaan. 2013. *The Homosexual as the Antithesis of 'Biblical Manhood'? Heteronormativity and Masculinity Politics in Zambian Pentecostal Sermons*. In *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa* Vol. 17 No 2 (December 2011), referring to an interview with Bishop Joshua Banda, Lusaka: 6th November 2008.
- Wright Knust, Jenny, 2011. *Unprotected Texts: The Bible's Surprising Contradictions about Sex and Desire*. HarperCollins.
- \_ *True Union in the Body?*- A contribution to the discussion within the Anglican Communion concerning the public blessing of same-sex unions, commissioned by Archbishop Drexel Gomez, Archbishop of the West Indies.
- \_ *Being Human – A Christian understanding of personhood illustrated with reference to power, money, sex and time*. Report of the Doctrine Committee of the General Synod of the Church of England, Church House, London, 2003. P80
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2008. *Unspoken Facts. A History of Homosexualities in Zimbabwe*: GALZ.

**Resources available from IAM (retha@iam.org.za or 021 975 8142)**

<b>DVDs</b>			
	<b>NAME</b>	<b>Short introduction</b>	<b>Language available</b>
1.	Created in the Image of God	LGBTI stories and contributions from leading theologians including Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu.	English
2.	Ter wille van ons kinders	The journeys of parents with their gay or lesbian children especially within the Dutch Reformed Church.	Afrikaans with English subtitles
3.	There comes a time...	A Methodist documentary on same-sex marriages.	English

<b>Book &amp; Booklets &amp; Manual &amp; Reports</b>			
	<b>NAME</b>	<b>Short introduction</b>	<b>Language available</b>
1.	The Bible and Homosexuality? What is the Spirit saying to the Churches?	This booklet is written by Bishop David Russell who addresses fellow Anglicans. The foreword was done by Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu	English
2.	The Bible and Homosexuality (bilingual booklet)	This booklet conveys information with regards to rules of interpretation, cautions, the core message, role of the Holy Spirit and the anti-gay Scriptures. The foreword was done by Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu	English & Afrikaans
3.	Miriam Dancing (available in Afrikaans & English)	A book written by Elise van Wyk in which 28 lesbian, bisexual and transgender women share their true life journeys with spirituality and sexuality. This initiative was also partly funded by IAM.	English & Afrikaans
4.	Journey with God	In this manual you can focus on sexuality and spirituality and work through the numerous challenges with regards to homosexuality and the Bible. From individuals to groups.	English
5.	First African Conference 2009	This report gives detailed feedback what happened at The First African Conference, where 77 participants from 13 African countries participated. You can also read the papers of the speakers.	English
6.	Patriarchal Conference 2009	The Evil of Patriarchy in Church, Society and Politics, a report on the rejection of masculine hierarchy and repression; it focuses on a new masculinity and femininity.	English
7.	Gay & Gelowig	This book was written by Pieter Oberholzer and Carel Anthonissen after a 4 year research. It reflects true life stories and touches the core issue of being gay and a believer.	Afrikaans
8.	Jubilee Report 1995 - 2009	Reflecting back on the first 10 years of IAM's existence.	English

<b>Book &amp; Booklets &amp; Manual &amp; Reports</b>			
	<b>NAME</b>	<b>Short introduction</b>	<b>Language available</b>
9.	Transgender Day of Remembrance, 2014	Report: Social dialogue on transgender learners in the South African Education system, held on 20th November 2014, at Constitution Hill.	English

<b>Leaflets</b>		
1.	IAM Brochure (English)	Information on what IAM as an organisation do and stand for.
2.	Slavery, Homosexuality and Women – texts in context (English)	Written by David Russell and reflects on Scriptures with regards to Homosexuality, Women and Slavery, bringing the issues surrounding it into context.
3.	Human Sexuality & The Bible	An informational leaflet focussing on “What is the Holy Spirit saying in our time?”
4.	Human Sexuality	An informational leaflet focussing on “Why Christians should talk about it?”

## Websites

First African gay and lesbian website: The website <http://whereloveisillegal.com/> launched on June 4<sup>th</sup> 2015 carries stories of LGBTI persons from all over the world.

Evangelicals Concerned Inc – <http://www.ecinc.org/Scriptures/clbrpg.htm>

Whosoever.Org – <http://www.whosoever.org/bible>

GayChurch.Org – [http://www.gaychurch.org/Gay\\_and\\_Christian\\_YES/](http://www.gaychurch.org/Gay_and_Christian_YES/)

GayChristians.Com – <http://www.christiangays.com/education.shtml>

Soul Force – <http://www.soulforce.org/article/homosexuality-bible>

Religious Tolerance.Org – [http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom\\_bibl.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_bibl.htm)

Gay Christian 101 – <http://www.gaychristian101.com>

Gender Diversity – <http://www.genderdiversity.org/>

## Organisations

Gay and Lesbian Network - [director@gayandlesbiankzn.org](mailto:director@gayandlesbiankzn.org). 0027 (0)33 342 6165

Durban Lesbian and Gay Organisation - [www.gaycentre.org.za](http://www.gaycentre.org.za) 0027 (0)31 312 7402

OUT LGBT Wellbeing - [neld@out.org.za](mailto:neld@out.org.za). 0027 (0)12 430 3272

Scalabrini Centre - [corey@scalabrini.org.za](mailto:corey@scalabrini.org.za) - 0027 (0)21 465 6433

Sonke Gender Justice - [Angelica@genderjustice.org.za](mailto:Angelica@genderjustice.org.za), 0027 (0)11 339 3589

Triangle Project – [www.triangle.org.za](http://www.triangle.org.za); 0027 (0)21686 1841 Helpline 0027 (0)21 712 6699 Staff

Free Gender - [freegender.wordpress.com](http://freegender.wordpress.com)

Gender Dynamix. Cape Town - [www.genderdynamix.org.za](http://www.genderdynamix.org.za). 0027 21 6335287

CABSA – [www.cabsa.org.za](http://www.cabsa.org.za). 0027 (0)11 796-6830

Health for Men - [www.health4men.co.za](http://www.health4men.co.za).

Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation – [www.desmondtutihivfoundation.org.za](http://www.desmondtutihivfoundation.org.za). 0027 (0)21 650 6966

Intersex SA – [www.intersexsa.org.za](http://www.intersexsa.org.za) . 0027 (0)21 447 3803

IAM (Inclusive and Affirming Ministries) – [www.iam.org.za](http://www.iam.org.za) . 0027 (0)21 975 8142

Other Sheep in Africa – [www.othersheep.org](http://www.othersheep.org) (Branches in different countries)

INERELA+ - [www.inerela.org](http://www.inerela.org) . 0027 (0)11 792 7029 (Branches all over Africa.)

There are **student gender diversity organisations on many campuses**. **Google:** 'gender diversity organisations at South African universities'

## Churches

### ***Gay friendly churches:***

The IAM website contains an overview summary of progress made in 4 of the liturgical churches: Anglican, Methodist, United Reformed and Dutch Reformed. [www.iam.org.za](http://www.iam.org.za)

Ark of Joy in Mpumalanga, Ark of Joy. Sibusiso Makhathini KaMasuku +27 (0)82 223 5483

Deo Gloria (Mpumalanga and Durban). Pastor Debbie Bell. [www.deogloria.org](http://www.deogloria.org) Tel. +27 (0)84 586 0843

House of grace. Pastor Sikhumbuzo Sibisi. [pastorsibisi@gmail.com](mailto:pastorsibisi@gmail.com). +27 60 601 9116

House of Prayer and Worship MCC. RevNokuthula Dhladhla. [rosebuddza@yahoo.com](mailto:rosebuddza@yahoo.com) mobile 073 183 1853 or 081 526 5890.

Metropolitan Community Churches – in Africa (Kenya, Nigeria are the newest branches)–

[www.mccchurch.org/africa-network/](http://www.mccchurch.org/africa-network/)

[www.mccchurch.org/overview/ourchurches/find-a.../africa-church-listings/](http://www.mccchurch.org/overview/ourchurches/find-a.../africa-church-listings/)

### ***Mainline churches in South Africa that are inclusive:***

Brackenfell, Cape Town DRC Congregation – Pastor Michelle Boonzaier, [mrboonzaier@mweb.co.za](mailto:mrboonzaier@mweb.co.za)

Central Methodist Church in Cape Town

Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Wits University, Braamfontein, Johannesburg. Fr Russell Pollitt SJ

St David's Anglican Church, Prestbury, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Rev Tracy Bell.

**There are probably many more churches that are open to sexual diversity. A useful resource to use to find out what churches are around your area, is:**

<http://iamgay.co.za/spiritual/gay-friendly-churches-in-your-area/>.

Alternatively, **contact your nearest Gay and Lesbian or related organisation for names of LGBTI friendly churches.**

## Attachment 1:

### Public apology of Exodus International's President

on June 19th 2013

**Background:** Based in Orlando, Florida, Exodus International was founded in 1976m and set up 260 member ministries around the U.S. and abroad. It offered to help conflicted Christians rid themselves of unwanted homosexual inclinations through counselling and prayer, infuriating gay rights activists in the process.

Alan and Leslie Chambers, married for 18 years...have been featured on most major media outlets in the world related to Alan's personal story as a Christian with same-sex attractions, their unlikely union, and his work. From 2001 to 2012 the Chambers led Exodus International, the world's largest network of ministries for people impacted by homosexuality.

On June 19, 2013, together with their core team of leaders and board of directors Chambers renounced the organisation's mission and closed it in a nearly hour-long talk at the organisation's 38th annual meeting. He co-founded *Speak Love* with two other former Exodus leaders and his wife later that year.

Their mission: *"We serve in our pluralistic culture by hosting thoughtful and safe conversations about faith, gender, and sexuality; and partnering with others to establish trust, reduce fear, and inspire hope."*

***"To Members of the LGBTQ Community:***

.....

*Never in a million years would I intentionally hurt another person. Yet, here I sit having hurt so many by failing to acknowledge the pain some affiliated with Exodus International caused, and by failing to share the whole truth about my own story. My good intentions matter very little and fail to diminish the pain and hurt others have experienced on my watch. The good that we have done at Exodus is overshadowed by all of this.*

*Friends and critics alike have said it's not enough to simply change our message or website. I agree. I cannot simply move on and pretend that I have always been the friend that I long to be today. I understand why I am distrusted and why Exodus is hated.*

*Please know that I am deeply sorry. I am sorry for the pain and hurt many of you have experienced. I am sorry that some of you spent years working through the shame and guilt you felt when your attractions didn't change. I am sorry we promoted sexual orientation change efforts and reparative theories about sexual orientation that stigmatised parents. I am sorry that there were times I didn't stand up to people publicly "on my side" who called you names like sodomite—or worse. I am sorry that I, knowing some of you so well, failed to share publicly that the gay and lesbian people I know were every bit as capable of being amazing parents as the straight people that I know. I am sorry that when I celebrated a person coming to Christ and surrendering their sexuality to Him that I callously celebrated the end of relationships that broke your heart. I am sorry that I have communicated that you and your families are less than me and mine.*

*More than anything, I am sorry that so many have interpreted this religious rejection by Christians as God's rejection. I am profoundly sorry that many have walked away from their faith and that some have chosen to end their lives. For the rest of my life I will proclaim nothing but the whole truth of the Gospel, one of grace, mercy and open invitation to all to enter into an inseverable relationship with almighty God.*

*I cannot apologise for my deeply held biblical beliefs about the boundaries I see in Scripture surrounding sex, but I will exercise my beliefs with great care and respect for those who do not share them. I cannot apologise for my beliefs about marriage. But I do not have any desire to fight you on your beliefs or the rights that you seek. My beliefs about these things will never again interfere with God's command to love my neighbour as I love myself.*

*You have never been my enemy. I am very sorry that I have been yours. I hope the changes in my own life, as well as the ones we announce tonight regarding Exodus International, will bring resolution, and show that I am serious in both my regret and my offer of friendship. I pledge that future endeavours will be focused on peace and common good.*

*Moving forward, we will serve in our pluralistic culture by hosting thoughtful and safe conversations about gender and sexuality, while partnering with others to reduce fear, inspire hope, and cultivate human flourishing."*

<http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article321695/Christian-group-Exodus-International-apologises-to-gay-community-shuts-down.html#storylink=cpy>  
<http://alanchambers.org/exodus/>

## Attachment 2: Contextual Bible Study on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19)

### Re-Reading the Story of Sodom and Gomorrah:

#### An UJAMAA Contextual Bible Study

*NOTE: Facilitators not used to the Contextual Bible Study method should read Practical Tool 2 in the Gender Transformation Toolkit for Churches, to understand the approach before leading this process.*

1. Listen to Genesis 19:1-13. This story has often been used to address the issue of homosexuality. In groups of two, share how this story been used to address the issue of homosexuality in your context.
  - Let's study the story more carefully. What is this story about?
2. This story is part of a larger story which begins in Genesis 18. The story begins with three men visiting Abraham.
  - How does Abraham receive these strangers in Genesis 18:1-8?
3. On the same day, in the evening, two of these men leave Abraham's home and journey towards Sodom (Genesis 19:1-3).
  - How does Lot receive these same strangers (who are described as both 'angels' in 19:1 and 'men' in 19:5)?
4. The men of Sodom, in contrast, do not receive the strangers/angels with hospitality. Instead, they insist on raping/'knowing' the strangers. Why do they choose to 'receive' these strangers by raping them?
5. What is Lot's status in the city of Sodom? What does his status among the men of (19:9) tell us about why the men of Sodom threaten to rape him?
6. In what situations/contexts in our societies do men rape men? Why do men rape other men?
7. Are men who rape men 'homosexuals'?

Clearly Lot recognises that these are heterosexual men, for he 'offers' his virgin daughters to them (19:8). While Lot's treatment of his daughters as his property to with as he wants is unacceptable, what it makes clear is that Lot recognises that the men of Sodom are intent of using sex to abuse and humiliate. This is a story about rape.

8. Is it important to re-read this text? If so, why?
9. It is important to recognise that this story is not read as a story about homosexuality in other biblical texts that refer to it.
  - How do other Old Testament texts characterise this story? See Isaiah 1:7-17; Ezekiel 16:49-50.
  - How does Jesus characterise this story? See Luke 10:10-12/Matthew 10:14-15.
  - What is the 'sin' of Sodom according to these texts?



# Practical Tools

---



## Practical tools contents

<b>Practical Tool 1: Undertaking a gender audit in your church - guidelines and template .....</b>	<b>303</b>
How to use this template .....	303
Example questions to guide your gender analysis.....	305
How deeply is gender embedded? .....	306
<b>Practical Tool 2: Guidelines for preparing and conducting contextual Bible studies.....</b>	<b>309</b>
Understanding the construction of a contextual Bible study .....	309
Step 1 – Choosing a theme .....	309
Step 2 – Finding a biblical text .....	310
Step 3 – Questioning and reading .....	310
Step 4 – Articulating and owning (making the Bible study our own) .....	312
Step 5 – Developing a plan of action (act).....	313
The role of the facilitator .....	313
<b>Practical Tool 3: Facilitator’s guide .....</b>	<b>315</b>
The educational approach: popular education .....	315
What is the difference between training and facilitating? .....	318
Methodology .....	319
Educational methodology: opening spaces for dialogue .....	320
Tips for good facilitation of learning in groups .....	323
<b>Practical Tool 4: List of useful organisations, training materials, and publications.....</b>	<b>329</b>
Where to get support for gender transformation work in churches.....	329
Theological networking .....	329
Ecumenical church organisations and church networks .....	329
Churches’ gender programmes or women’s ministries .....	330
Other useful organisations and networks .....	330
Training materials and toolkits .....	331
Research articles and books.....	332
<b>Practical Tool 5: Glossary of common terms .....</b>	<b>335</b>

## Practical Tool 1: Undertaking a gender audit in your church - guidelines and template

---

***“Black women have not historically stood in the pulpit, but that doesn’t undermine the fact that they built the churches and maintain the pulpits.”***

Maya Angelou (1928-2013)

This tool offers a summary overview of the self-reflection questions included in Tool 6, to form a template you can use as a starting point to do your own analysis.

### How to use this template

1. Read through all the sections and questions first.
2. Decide which issues you want to focus on, according to what you think are the most important issues in your church.
3. Many of the questions you can just answer as a task team. But you need to look for some of the answers by analysing church documents, or by talking to some of the people who could give you the answers. It is important to ask leaders as well as ordinary members in the different ministries of the church.
4. For analysing written documents:
  - a. Decide which documents you want to analyse. These might include your church’s constitution; policies; canons or statutes; constitutions of men’s, women’s or youth organisations; prayer toolkits or liturgies or orders of service for special occasions like weddings and baptism; Bible study and Sunday School materials and newsletters.
  - b. Choose the questions in this template that are relevant for analysing documents, or phrase your own that relate to the issues you have decided to focus on.
  - c. Decide who on your team would be best to analyse the documents. This obviously needs to be someone who has at least a high school education, preferably some higher education.
  - d. Keeping in mind your questions, read through the documents carefully, and then write notes to summarise the answers.

5. For interviews:

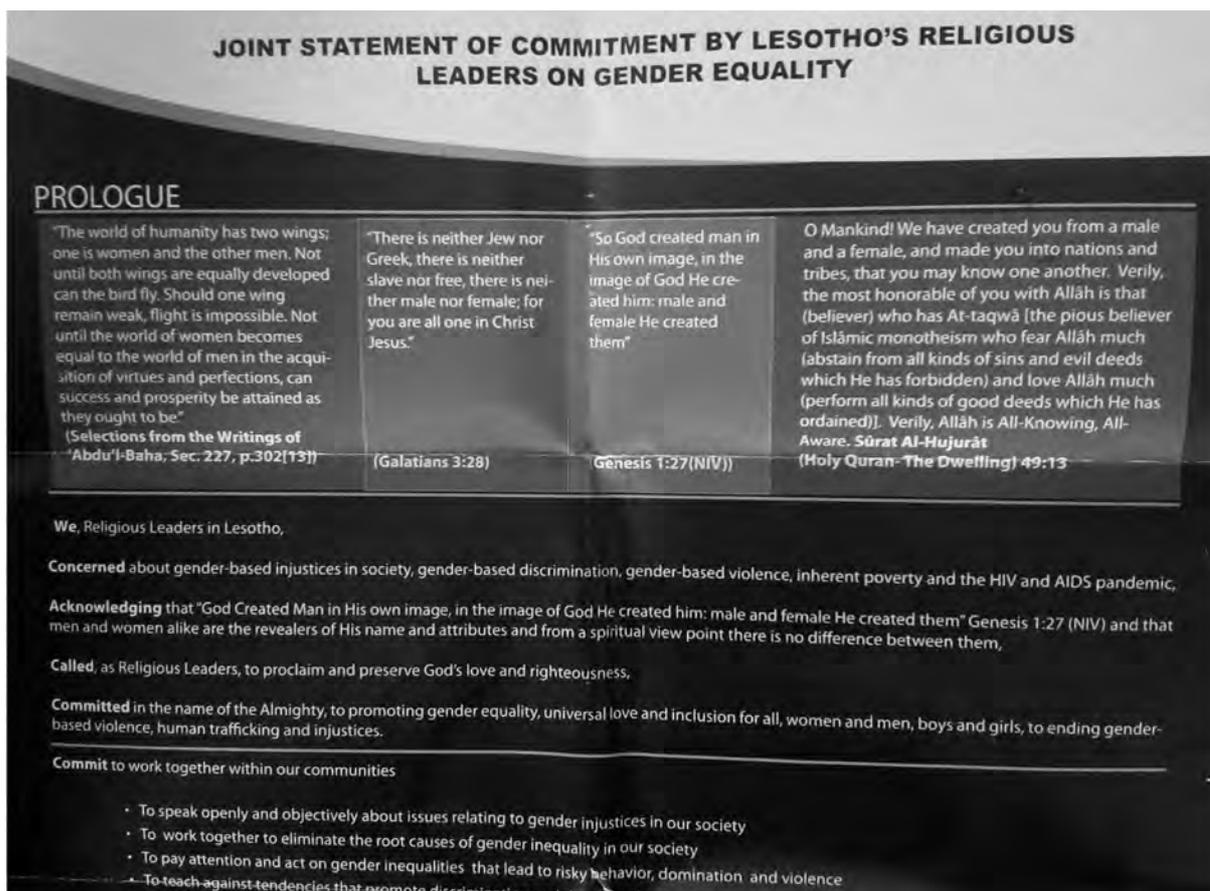
It saves time to talk to people in small groups, although some (like the pastor in charge) you might want to talk to one-to-one.

- a. Decide which groups of people you want to talk to. Decide which questions are relevant.
- b. You might want to re-phrase them to make them more appropriate for your congregation.
- c. You might also want to change some questions for different types of people, e.g. clergy, lay leaders, youth and/or teenagers, women's and men's organisations leadership, and ordinary members – women and men.
- d. Draw up the sets of questions you have decided to ask for each type of respondent.
- e. Decide who in your Gender Transformation Team would be best to speak with the different groups of people you want to speak to. Some of the questions might not be easy to answer, and it might help to think who the respondents might be more relaxed and open with.
- f. Note down the different answers given by different people in your group – record their age and gender if possible, as well as their position in the church.

6. Set a meeting date of at least 3-4 hours to do the analysis together.

- a. Bring together all your answer sheets, and go through the notes on the different questions one by one. Try to agree on the main themes that come through the answers, and talk about what strikes you.
- b. Draw together the information you learn based on the table with the 4 boxes, to give you a good summary of what is happening in your church.
- c. It might be useful to compare answers of different types of people – especially compare the answers of leaders vs ordinary members; and between women and men. This will help you to analyse whether you might need to work differently with different types of people in your church.

When you have collected up all the responses and made meaning of them by analysing them and drawing up a report of what you have observed, you will be ready to decide what are the most pressing issues in your church (Step 3), to prioritise them (Step 4) and start planning your first activities (Step 5).



Source: Christian Council of Lesotho

## Example questions to guide your gender analysis

The questions below are taken directly from the boxes in Tool 6 that ask: **What happens in your own church?**

Your analysis of gender in your church should focus on two things:

- how gender issues are dealt with *inside* your church congregation, as well as on
- the work or ministries your church has in the community *outside* your church congregation, including any public statements, projects, etc.

Sometimes these two overlap, but make sure you cover everything.

The rest of this tool simply lists the main themes identified in the gender audit research processes in the initial five participating countries, and offers ideas for the kinds of questions you can ask yourselves, to help you understand how your church is dealing with the issues at hand.

## Men's and women's organisations

- What roles do the women in your church play; and the men?
- Do you have a women's organisation? What is its vision and role?
- Do you have a men's organisation? What is its vision and role?
- Do the men's and women's organisations ever work together? What issues do they work with?
- How could the women's and men's organisations be helped to see their roles and develop their respective ministries differently?

## Leadership in practice

- Examine how many men and women are active in different leadership structures in your church, and
- What roles do the men and the women play?
- Are any women in senior leadership, and how do they use the power of their positions?
- How many in senior leadership are men, and how do they use the power of their position?
- Think about the last church meeting you attended. Who spoke and who made the decisions? Who was silent? Why?

## How deeply is gender embedded?

### Policies and statutes

- Does your church have a gender policy? Does it have a gender committee or group?
- Is gender ever discussed in relation to practice and preaching?
- How much money is allocated to gender work in your church? Is it enough?
- How could you begin to introduce discussions about gender and develop a gender policy?

### Teachings and language

- Next time you attend a service, take note of the Scripture texts that are read, and how they are interpreted in the sermon.
  - What was the theme of the text?
  - How was God's image interpreted in the reading, and did the language include men and women?
  - Who were the active people in the text? Did the women in the stories have names? And the men?
  - Were women's experiences reflected in the Scripture or in the sermon?

## Marriage, gender based violence, children and youth

- Listen carefully to sermons and other teachings in your church about marriage, divorce, relationships, youth and the family. How are Bible texts used, and what advice is given to men and women?
- How do your church leaders relate to the youth? Do you think young people feel able to speak to their elders?
- When your church speaks out about gender based violence, listen carefully to what is said. Is the focus on society only, or also the church itself? Are people encouraged to talk to each other about GBV?
- Are there any church programmes on gender and / or HIV? Is there any support from your church for women and girls, or men and boys, experiencing gender-based violence or living with HIV? How do leaders and members in your church talk about HIV and AIDS? Is the tone about punishment and judgement, or is there a more loving approach that offers support?

## Thorny issues: teen pregnancy, abortion, contraception and sexuality

Find out what your church leaders, and what the ordinary women and men in your church think about:

- Abortion
- Using condoms to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS
- Who makes decisions about sex and contraception in their relationship, and do both partners have control over their own bodies and decisions to keep them healthy.
- Do you think it would be different if women were involved in making decisions about things that directly affect their bodies?
- What is the official position on homosexuality and other sexuality matters in your church?
  - Do you know any homosexual people? If yes, do you know how they feel about the way the church relates to them?



## Practical Tool 2: Guidelines for preparing and conducting contextual Bible studies

---

### *Ujamaa Centre*

*The guidelines in this tool are selected from the manual, Doing Contextual Bible Study: A Resource Manual, compiled by Gerald West and Ujamaa Staff (October 2007). They are intended as background reading for those who intend to use the Contextual Bible Studies in Tool 3. Readers are recommended to obtain the full manual, which can be downloaded from the website: [www.ujamaa.org.za](http://www.ujamaa.org.za).*

### **Understanding the construction of a contextual Bible study**

Much of what is discussed in this Practical Tool will make more sense once you have actually participated in a Contextual Bible Study, or facilitated one. Nevertheless, some orientation to the Contextual Bible Study process is useful. In fact, it is strongly encouraged that you read through this section before using any of the studies in the next tool. There are five steps which can be identified in the construction of a contextual Bible study. But please note once again that these 'steps' are a guide rather than a set formula.

### **Step 1 – Choosing a theme**

Contextual Bible Study always begins with the reality of the local community. It is always guided by the issues or themes that a particular local community is dealing with. Groups which are already organised usually have a very good idea of the issues confronting them in their community. Newly formed groups, however, may need some assistance in coming together to do social analysis of their context. This is an important first step! Contextual Bible Study always begins with the contextual concerns of the community.

#### ***A note on choosing a theme***

Each of the studies in the Manual has a theme. Some can be used for more than one theme. When you choose a study, it is important to choose one with a theme which is relevant to the context of the study group. In fact, it is a good idea for the group to see a list of themes, and to decide for themselves which one is of the greatest concern to them and their community. (The Contents page of the Manual provides a list of themes.)

## Step 2 – Finding a biblical text

Once the theme is determined, the actual planning of the Bible study can start. A biblical text that refers to this theme, or 'speaks into' it, is needed. The Ujamaa Centre uses two approaches here. While we can and do read the texts that the group chooses, we also bring to them texts and resources with which they are less familiar. In other words, we read familiar texts in unfamiliar ways (by approaching them differently), and we read unfamiliar texts (those texts that are neglected or forgotten).

Reading familiar texts in unfamiliar ways and reading unfamiliar texts allow the group participants to engage with aspects and parts of the Bible to which they have not previously had access. In this way, the Contextual Bible Study process enables the group to establish lines of connection between their own context and community, and new discoveries within the Bible.

### *A note on finding a text*

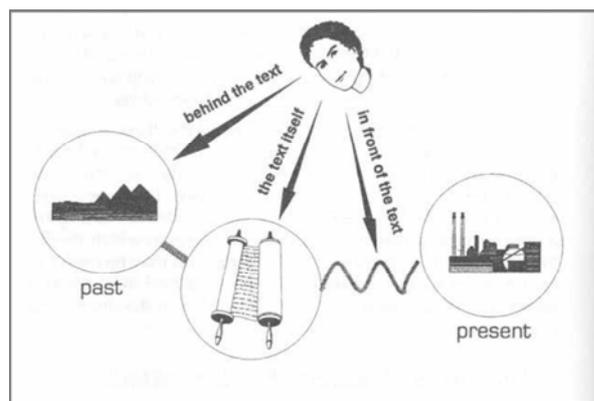
In the next tool, certain scriptural texts have been chosen and worked with during the construction of the studies. You and the group participants should feel free to make the study your own by adding and exploring other texts pertinent to the chosen theme.

## Step 3 – Questioning and reading

Once the biblical text has been chosen, the task of constructing the Bible study itself begins. To do this, two kinds of questions are typically used. The Bible study begins and ends with contextual questions which provide the framework for the study. These contextual questions are also called 'community consciousness questions', because they draw on the resources of the community. They draw on the lived experience and the embodied theologies of the participants themselves. Within this framework of contextual questions, we construct carefully formulated textual questions, which constantly force the group to engage with the biblical text. These textual questions are also called 'critical consciousness questions', because they draw on the systematic and structured resources of biblical scholarship. (The challenge for the socially engaged biblical scholar is to construct questions that open up the biblical text in such a way that it has the potential to address the context of the participants.)

The resources of biblical scholarship can be characterised as consisting of three dimensions of the text (in other words, three ways of reading the text; see the diagram below):

- ***behind the text*** (focusing on the socio-historical world that produced the text);
- ***on the text*** (focusing on the text itself as a literary composition); and
- ***in front of the text*** (focusing on the possible worlds the text projects beyond itself towards the active reader).



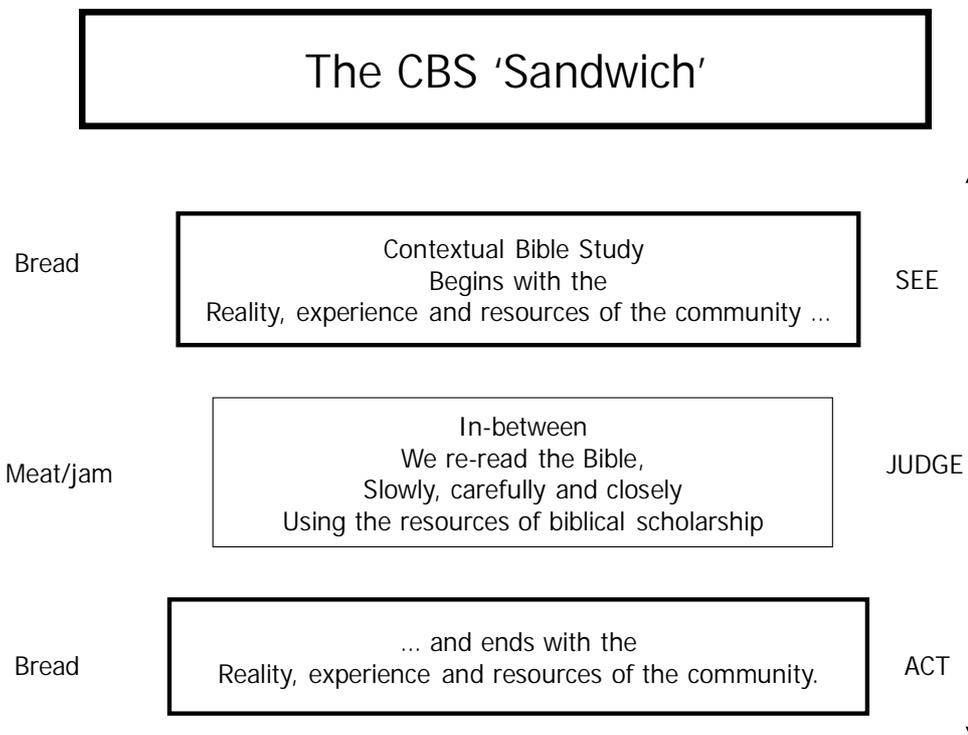
When the text is examined for the construction of a Bible study, generally these three dimensions are used in a specific way:

1. We begin with an *in front of the text* mode of reading, asking participants what they think the text is about. Here they are asked to draw on their own understandings of what the text projects towards them, or is telling them directly.
2. Then the focus moves *on to the text* itself, allowing it to 'have its own voice' among the voices of the participants. Questions which draw the readers in to a close, careful and slow reading of the text are used here.
3. Next, questions which invite the participants to probe the world *behind the text* can be used. Often these kinds of questions will be generated by a careful focus on the text (see above); but if not, the facilitator can construct a question or set of questions which explore the historical and social world from which the biblical text originates.
4. Finally, we return again to *in front of the text*, to examine what the text now projects to us as participants, only to discover that this is deeper, fuller, more meaningful or even quite different from our first reading of the biblical text!

Literary questions (point 2 above) slow down the reading process, enabling the participants to read the text more carefully and closely than they usually do. (John Riches from the Contextual Bible Study Group in Glasgow, Scotland, talks of the need to slow down the reading process, allowing readers more time with the text.) Literary questions also open up the narrative world to the reader, inviting the reader to enter and locate themselves within this world. Linked to this, socio-historical questions, whether arising from the participants or given by the facilitator (point 3 above), allow us to move back in time and space to enter the real world of biblical times in all its rich detail. Finally, having heard the voice of the text in its own world (the world *of* the text and the world *behind* the text) we allow the text to speak afresh to us in our own context (point 4).

In summary, we move from our initial engagement with the text, to the text in detail (literary and socio-historical detail) and then back to our engagement with the text, but this time having heard its voice. This process enables us to blend our voices with the voice of the biblical text and so hear God speaking a new word to us; and we then commit ourselves to God and each other in a plan of action.

It is this *combination* of contextual and textual questions that constitutes the Contextual Bible Study method. By fusing community consciousness with textual consciousness, the text speaks anew to our realities, as shown in the CBS 'Sandwich' diagram below.



It is important to note that the process of 'Seeing' begins before the Contextual Bible Study, since the theme of the Bible study comes from the social analysis of the community with whom the Bible study is being shared. Similarly, the process of 'Acting' continues long after the Contextual Bible Study is complete, for the action plan is always the action plan of the local community and so is dependent on their resources and timing.

### Step 4 – Articulating and owning (making the Bible study our own)

Once the Contextual Bible Study is used in a group, what emerges belongs to the group. The power of the Contextual Bible Study process is that it allows participants to articulate and own their own interpretation of a particular text in relation to their context. The combination of contextual and textual questions has the potential to establish lines of connection between the biblical text and the contextual theologies of the participants. (Theologies refer to how people grow to understand God and God's involvement in their lives and their involvement in the work of God in their world).

If the Bible study is a safe place for participants – a place of trust and affirmation – then they may begin to articulate their own theologies. For many marginalised people these theologies are different from the public theologies of the church. Because of this, many Christians go to one church 'by day' and another church 'by night'! Because they are made in the image and likeness of God, there is a deep yearning to have their personal theological journeys and questions engaged by the church, affirmed by the church, articulated by the church and enacted by the church. Unfortunately this seldom happens in the church, but the Contextual Bible Study process provides an opportunity for this to happen.

## Step 5 – Developing a plan of action (act)

Contextual Bible Study **always ends with action**. Each small group that participates in the Bible study must develop an **action plan**. Contextual Bible Study is not merely about interpreting the Bible; it is about allowing the Bible to equip us to change our world so that the kingdom of God may come on earth, as it is in heaven! Because the Contextual Bible Study process empowers participants to articulate and own their local contextual theologies, there is now an increased capacity to act. Provided the group remains in control of the process, action is a necessary outworking of Contextual Bible Study. Groups usually know what can and cannot be done in their local communities, but some kind of action is always possible.

Participants can plan three different types of actions: those that can be done with no additional resources; those that can be done with some additional resources; and third, those that will require substantial resources.

Contextual Bible Study should make a difference both in the lives of the participants and in the **public realm**! So participants are encouraged to plan an action that moves from the Bible study group into the public realm of the church and/or society.

### A note on developing a plan of action

Contextual Bible Study on its own cannot accomplish the move from study to action. It is a good idea, therefore, to provide participants with additional resources from non-governmental, governmental, and community-based organisations to take their plan of action forward.

## The role of the facilitator

Contextual Bible Study is a collaborative process and therefore requires a form of **leadership that enables the group to collaborate and learn from each other**. We are all familiar with dominating forms of leadership, like those used by most teachers. These styles of leadership are inappropriate for Contextual Bible Study.



## Practical Tool 3: Facilitator's guide<sup>115</sup>

This guide is designed to help readers who want to use parts of this toolkit in small groups or other educational settings within their churches and communities. It outlines our approach to education and learning and offers some guidelines for facilitating learning that are inclusive and safe, and draw on the wisdom and experience of all participants.

**TIP** Read through the whole introduction before you facilitate any sections of these tools. It gives you a good overview of the intention as well as the structure of the toolkit and the different activity types.

The approach is especially important when working with issues like gender and sexuality, which people often find threatening or difficult to talk about. But it also aims to be consistent with the inclusive, welcoming and life-changing ministry that Jesus modelled in his earthly life.

A good start is to recall your own experiences as a workshop participant:

- Try to remember a time when you sat in a workshop that was really badly facilitated. How did you feel? What do you remember from what you were supposed to have learnt? What made the facilitation bad?
- Now try to remember a time as a workshop participant when you felt alive, time flew by. What do you remember from what you were to learn in that process? What was it about the facilitation that made it so successful?
- Now, as you work through this facilitator's guide, think also about your own approach to facilitation. What would your participants say about their experience in one of your workshops? What could you do differently to make your workshops more effective and enjoyable? (Make notes in the margins of this practical tool, or on paper, to remind you.)

### The educational approach: popular education

The purpose of this toolkit is to break down stereotypes and prejudice. So our work is not neutral. It is about challenging gender inequality and injustice in church and society. We believe this is wrong and harmful, and is something that Jesus and other leaders would not support.

<sup>115</sup> Many ideas in this guide are adapted from: PACSA Gender Desk (2007) *Asifunde: A Training Manual for Peer Educators*. Pietermaritzburg: PACSA). In turn, *Asifunde* drew on the following documents:

\*Paulo Freire (1985) *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation*. London: Macmillan.

\*Liz Mackenzie (1992, 1995). *On our Feet*. Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape.

\*Anne Hope and Sally Timmel (1984,1995). *Training for Transformation*. Kleinmond, Western Cape: Training for Transformation Institute.

“Popular education” is **based on respect for the knowledge and understanding of the learner** and tries to build on it. It is a type of education which:

- Takes place within a democratic framework
- Is based on what learners are concerned about
- Poses questions and problems
- Examines unequal power relations in society
- Encourages everyone to learn and everyone to teach
- Involves high levels of participation
- Includes people's emotions, actions, intellects and creativity
- Uses a variety of activities.

Popular education follows a **cycle of stages** that:

- Begins with people's own experiences
- Moves from experience to analysis
- Moves from analysis to encouraging collective action to change oppressive systems
- Reflects on and evaluates its own progress

In Christian circles, these principles have been adapted into what has become known as the **see-judge-act** method. This involves:

- **Seeing**, and analysing one's situation and/or context
- Making a **judgement** about what is wrong and needs to be changed, and
- Deciding on (often collective) **action** to bring about the desired change.

**Paulo Freire** was a Brazilian philosopher whose ideas about popular education described above have been adapted by organisations and activists in Africa and other parts of the world. In summary, these are the key principles he put forward:

## Education is never neutral

Education can be designed to maintain an existing situation, imposing on the people the values and culture of the dominant class or group in society. Or education can be designed to liberate people, helping them to become critical, creative, free, active and responsible members of society. The first way uses education to keep things as they are, even if it they are hurting some people in society. The second way empowers ordinary people to re-think what they have been taught to enable them to bring about change for the good.

Jesus used the second kind of education. He used stories (parables), and asked probing questions, to help people reflect on their own lives and make decisions to change things for the better.

## Education should be relevant to the learners

All education and development projects should start by identifying the issues important to the participants NOW. People will act on issues which they feel strongly about. There is a close link between emotion and motivation to act.

## Education should be problem-posing

Learners should be acknowledged as thinking, creative people with the capacity for action. The facilitator aims to help them identify the aspects of society which they wish to change; to identify the problems; find the root causes of these problems; and work out practical ways to change the situation.

## Education is a mutual learning process

The challenge to build a just society is very complex. No individual knows exactly how to do it, no one has all the answers, and no one is totally ignorant. Each person has different perceptions based on her or his own experience. To discover valid solutions, everyone needs to be both a learner and a teacher.

The role of the facilitator is to set up a situation in which genuine **dialogue** can take place – a real learning community where each person shares her or his experience, and listens to and learns from others.

## Education must lead to positive action

Paulo Freire insists that for education to be meaningful, it must enable the learners to think about how things could be different and to decide on steps to make changes for the better. This might be in their own lives (e.g. making better life decisions) or social transformation (e.g. mobilising others to demonstrate outside a police station where officials have sided with a rape perpetrator or humiliated a complainant).



USAID funded Southern Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction project.  
Source: [www.wikimedia.org](http://www.wikimedia.org)

## What is the difference between *training* and *facilitating*?

There are various interpretations of what it means to “facilitate” and what it means to “train”. Sometimes they are used to mean the same thing. For the purposes of this toolkit, we define them as follows:

To ***train*** means to transfer skills or knowledge from the trainer to the trainee, which is sometimes useful and necessary, but experience in education shows that knowledge transfer on its own seldom brings about lasting change or improvement.

To ***facilitate*** means:

- To make something possible. In other words, as a facilitator you will make learning possible;
- To make it possible for people to reflect on their lives and learn new ways of thinking about their situation so that they can make valuable changes in their own lives.

### Some challenges of good facilitation

**Communication and dialogue:** All activities in this toolkit try to allow for two-way communication known as dialogue. This means that all participants and the facilitator need to be good listeners, as well as being sensitive to not talking too much or trying to convince others that only their views are right.

As facilitator, this means being humble enough to allow people to express themselves, even if you do not agree with them. The facilitator also does not have to know everything. There is a lot of knowledge and experience in every person. It is important to make it clear that you also want to learn from the others, so people feel confident to share their ideas.

**Activism and advocacy - challenging negative or destructive myths, attitudes or behaviour:** This is a difficult balancing act. We are called to respect other people’s opinions, while also helping them make informed decisions and challenge superstitions and destructive prejudices so that they can be part of transforming society for the good. This includes challenging stereotypes and prejudice related to race, gender, culture, financial position or background.

*But how to do this without imposing our viewpoint as if we know what is right for others?*

Because of cultural ideas about what topics are appropriate to discuss, the way we approach such issues is very important. Asking open questions starting with *why* opens up dialogue that can help people to think more deeply about their underlying prejudices or uncritical assumptions, and can enable them to shift their mindsets. It is not about convincing others to think like you do, but about helping them to find their own deeper truth (which may not be exactly the same as yours).

## Methodology

People learn most by being actively involved in their learning. **Avoid talking too much**; let others be active in the discussion. It is the facilitator's role to facilitate or enable a good conversation to take place – not necessarily to lead it from the front!

### The Golden Rule – Be fully prepared!

A fully prepared facilitator is confident and can allow a group dialogue to take its course, bringing it back to focus when needed. It means being able to hold a conversation, watching its direction, without interfering unless the group wander completely off the topic! There are different ways to prepare and they are all vital:

#### Workshop preparation

There is nothing worse than becoming flustered in front of participants! Most often this happens because we are not properly prepared. You need to work through a whole section, make sure you understand everything; and carefully plan how you will manage each activity in the workshop you are to facilitate, and how you can make the links between activities so that the group process is going in a clear direction. This will help you not worry too much about the exact outcome, and allow space for the group to dialogue freely, within the general direction you have set.

#### Social analysis

Part of preparation is taking time to think through what might be some of the root causes of the social issues that will come up in the session. This will help you to help the participants to analyse the root causes of their own problems as they raise them.

It is helpful for people to understand some of the deeper social dynamics that influence our lives and decisions if we are to make some changes.

For example, women may sometimes not believe they can take on leadership positions, and step back whenever elections take place in their church. It is helpful to consider the types of influences that can make women believe this, such as biblical interpretations used in their church, and how they were brought up as children. This then will help you as facilitator ask questions that will help the women in your group think through where their beliefs come from, so that they can then make a decision to look at themselves in a new way.

## Emotional preparedness

Who I am as a woman or man is closely linked to who I am as a person. Many of the issues that will be covered are difficult, and there are often no easy answers. For you to be able to hear properly what participants share and help them to probe the issues further, you will need to have faced and worked through the issues yourself, or at least have tried to understand your own response to them.

When preparing, give yourself time to think about how you **feel** about the issue under discussion, and be aware of any negative or unresolved feelings that surface. Then, when these are discussed in the group, be aware of your feelings. **Do not react without thinking.** Note your feelings, try to listen well, and go back to your feelings later. Then take time to work with those feelings, either on your own in a quiet time or with others in the group.

## Educational methodology: opening spaces for dialogue

Use a range of activities in your workshops. This is important because it keeps your learners interested and allows you to emphasise what you want to in an appropriate way. There are different ways that you could use the activity outlines called based on a “Time to talk” task in the toolkit in ways that promote genuine **DIALOGUE**.

A dialogue is not the same as a discussion. A discussion focuses on conceptual understanding. It is often competitive and may involve people trying to persuade one another. A dialogue is basically a conversation, a process of listening and sharing ideas and experiences, exploring an issue deeply and learning from one another.

This means that the way you facilitate any activity needs to open up safe spaces for dialogue to take place, and for all participants to feel confident to contribute and that their ideas are valued.

This section explains how different types of activities can be facilitated in a way that promotes dialogue.

*“[Dialogue] is a chance to explore shared beliefs as well as differences of opinion and understanding. It is a method, a tool of reflection, allowing us to shed light on sensitive issues.*

*But it is also a goal in itself, reinforcing the dignity and equality of the persons participating and the relations between us. It is a help for us to link and understand which consequences our own beliefs or opinions can have on other people's lives, as well as our own life.”*  
One Body: Human Dignity (2014)

## Reading the text

Sometimes when the toolkit offers information, you can either explain it in your own words, having read it beforehand, or you can invite the group to read important extracts together.

Reading the text together can equalise the learning, if you invite every participant to read a few sentences or a paragraph, and so you read as a group. This has the advantage of showing that the information provided belongs to the whole group, and not to the facilitator as the 'expert'. It also makes it easier for participants to disagree with or argue against what they have read honestly, if they do not have to confront you as facilitator directly. So it opens up a safe space for a critical conversation that can honestly grapple with the issues deeply.

## Plenary discussion

When appropriate, allow for free flow of discussion in plenary (the whole group together). This can take place after a shared reading of an extract, or once you introduce a topic, or when you guide the group in sharing insights after a small group exercise.

But in order to make sure the process moves forward, you will have to offer leadership to the discussion, by periodically summarising what has been talked about in groups or the plenary conversation, and inviting participants to share their views on what seems to be emerging.

Sometimes you also give input, allow participants to respond, note their points and weave them into the conversation. But all the time, the intention is to open up dialogue between all participants, to allow for collaborative learning to take place.

## Brainstorming

With this method you allow participants to respond quickly with their first thoughts about something. They give ideas spontaneously on a subject. They should not censor themselves in any way. You record what they have said and use this for further discussion or clarification at a later point, if necessary. This allows for generating ideas without judgment.

The emphasis is on getting ideas out and not on working through solutions. The importance of brainstorming is to let ideas flow freely for discussion and assessment. If participants start analysing each other's ideas or working towards solutions, gently remind them that there will be space to do that later.

## Group discussion

Groups of 4-6 discuss an issue or topic. This method is useful if you are working with a big group. This method allows for all participants to take part – particularly those who are shy and afraid to speak in big groups.

Make sure that you:

- ✓ Give clear instructions, or if you have copied the material or written them up on a flip chart, go through the instructions and questions together first.
- ✓ If you decide you need feedback to the plenary (which is often not necessary):
  - Ask the groups to make sure they have a note taker and choose the presenter beforehand
  - Ask groups to choose someone to lead the discussion
- ✓ Check up on the group from time to time and find out if people are clear about the task you have given them

**Respect confidentiality:** Often it is in these small groups that personal stories emerge, which participants may not want to have reported on to the whole group. So be clear what you would invite the presenters to report back after the group session. It might just be to draw out key learning or insights that came out of the conversation.

Sometimes it is helpful just to open up a general reflection on the small group process to everyone, to share what has struck them or a learning they want to share with the bigger group.

## Buzz groups and pairs

Another form of group work is getting participants to discuss in buzz groups of two or three people. The facilitator asks the group to speak to the person sitting next to them and discuss, in pairs, the question posed for a minute or two. Buzzing can be used in a number of ways, for example, as a warm-up activity or in the middle of a lecture, and to:

- Get more participation going
- Encourage learning from each other
- Allow people to use their mother tongue
- Stimulate people to think independently

You can use this or small groups as a way to allow for more intimate conversations to take place. The toolkit does not prescribe when you should use pairs or small groups – use your discretion.

## Responding to stories or case studies

This method uses actual stories or case studies as a starting point to talk about difficult or complex issues.

Usually, the questions that follow a story take the group from reflecting on the story to relating it to their own lives and their community. It helps participants to think deeply about their own situations without having to talk about them directly if they prefer not to. It helps them develop critical thinking skills and to gain new perspectives on concepts and issues.

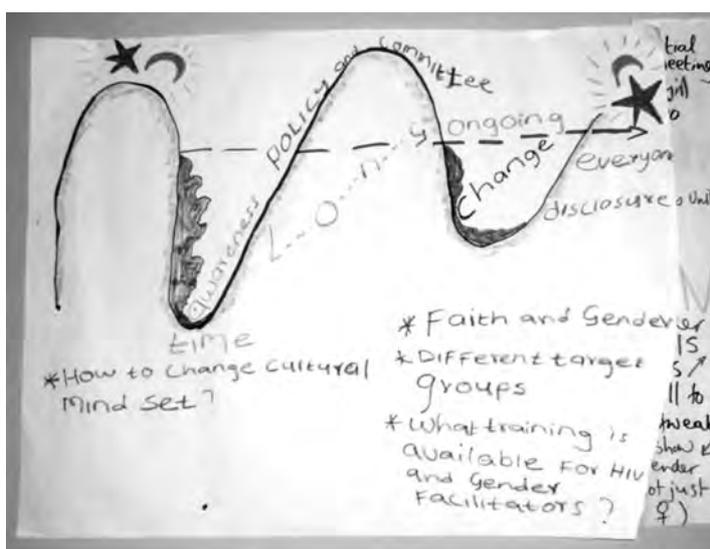
**This toolkit uses stories and case studies as the main method**, as it helps to link theory and practice, and enables participants to apply their learning directly into their lives.

## Tips for good facilitation of learning in groups

People are not empty containers that need to be fed learning and knowledge. Instead, all people have valuable experience and knowledge to share, that needs to be honoured, valued and built on.

Learning happens when a group of people explore an issue together, share their ideas, learn from each other, and in the end come to a new understanding. Each person might learn something different or consider something different to be important.

Here are some simple guidelines for how to make sure you create a learning environment that is conducive to genuine share and enjoyable learning:



Gender and HIV MS group report on poster 2012. Source: PACSA

### A lot depends on you

Whether a group is in a relaxed environment where people feel free to explore and learn together depends a lot on how you handle things.

Being well prepared is a must, so you can feel relaxed.

As a facilitator, you will be most effective when you are being your natural self and allowing your own personality to be expressed.

People get permission to be themselves from the way a facilitator behaves – through modelling. If you are stiff and formal, the group tends to be like that. If you are relaxed and expressive, the group tends to be like that too. Be conscious of the way the group is reflecting you.

## **Be a leader, not a dictator**

Remember that you are the leader in this group and that you need to act like one. This does not mean that you will dictate but rather that you keep calm and controlled so that participants feel safe in your presence but also know what the boundaries are. This will create an environment that is conducive to exploring new learning, rather than one in which everybody waits passively for you to share your wisdom.

## **Ask questions**

Being a leader also means creating spaces for others to offer answers or to take an issue further. This is what facilitation really means! You can do this by posing questions yourself, instead of feeling you need to offer answers. This will also help participants to go deeper into an issue rather than being satisfied with superficial or easy answers.

## **You do not have to have all the answers**

Relax, and see if others can help to explore new understandings of an issue before jumping in to offer your opinion. If others do not have an answer, admit you also are unsure. But commit yourself to finding out more information. Then remember to do it, and remember to report back at the next session! If you do this, participants will respect your honesty and you will show by example that it is possible to find out answers to difficult questions.

## **You do not have to compete with your participants**

You need to feel self-assured as the facilitator. If a participant wants to compete with you, do not be pressured by her or him. Just steer the workshop in the direction you need it to go. Find ways to affirm that person but make your boundaries clear. People often do this if they are insecure or feel threatened by the topic. Relax – and be yourself, and make it clear that the space belongs to everyone to learn from.

## **Keep on your toes – always be alert**

You have to be a step ahead of participants because they will be looking to you for guidance and leadership. It is important that you anticipate questions and possible challenges. Again, being well- prepared helps.

The best way to do this is to go through the entire session in your imagination while you are preparing. Make sure you have prepared in all 3 ways outlined above.



Your most important asset as a facilitator is your awareness. Be awake and present in each moment – listening, looking, sensing. Being aware of your own emotions and what is going on inside you is also important.

## **Stay clear**

This relates to being awake and present moment by moment. As a facilitator, notice when you get caught up in another person's issues. Try not to take personally any criticism or comment on ideas or beliefs expressed in the group. And remember the goal of the process, based on the section of a tool that you are working on. Bring the group back into focus when needed.

## **Develop discernment**

Make sure your eyes and ears are open all the time. In other words, do not judge a person's negative behaviour, but try to be aware of it and understand it. Judgement implies putting people in boxes. Discerning implies awareness and objectively analysing a situation.

## **Use humour**

A sense of humour is a great asset to a facilitator. The use of humour can effectively defuse some tense moments. There is nothing better than a light touch at the appropriate time.

## **Respect: it works both ways**

Establish an environment of respect from the outset. You need to show respect to participants and vice versa. Facilitation is about honouring each group member and encouraging full participation.

Remember to always approach group members as capable, aware and fully functioning people who are committed to the group purpose.

## **Avoid judging people's contributions**

Participants may express points of view that you do not agree with, perhaps even views you think are destructive. Be careful not to be judgmental. Let them have their say.

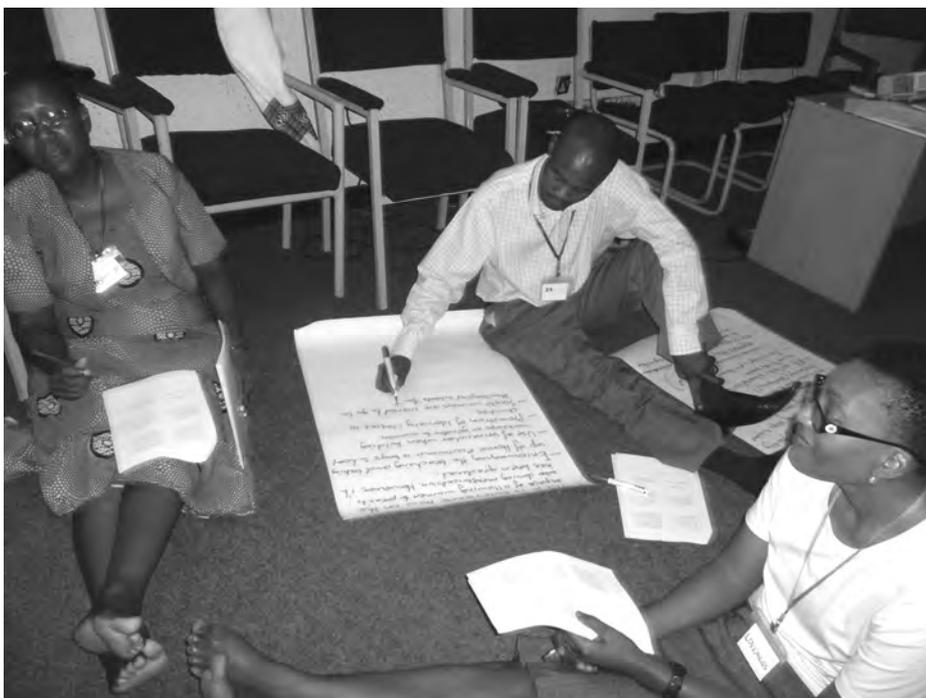
But of course, you also do not want others to absorb negative attitudes or incorrect information either.

So what can you do?

- It might be useful to ask others if they agree, and let the participants debate the issue rather than responding yourself.
- You could ask some probing questions that challenge the person to think about the issue from a different angle.
- You could offer social analysis that might help the participants understand the issue more deeply. But avoid 'lecturing' or imposing your views directly.

## Keep the group together and focused

It is your task to hold the group together and make sure that the participants are focused on the task. Do not allow any participant to disrupt the group. Watch the time. Stick to the time limits for activities as much as possible. This way you will be able to steer the group forward and complete the tasks at hand.



Group work. Source: PACSA

## Try to get low talkers to participate

Give those who are not participating a chance to do so. Encourage them, but do not force them if they are too shy.

Be aware of gender and other power dynamics, and open up spaces for the less powerful.

## Try not to let high talkers dominate

Do not stifle those who are trying to make a worthy contribution and provide leadership. Sometimes people speak because they like to receive attention. However, there are times when those who participate a lot have something valuable to offer and are simply showing a keen interest in learning. Try to strike a balance.

If someone is dominating the group, try taking them aside during a break and ask them to hold back a little. You can do this by telling them how impressed you are with their knowledge but that you feel the others may be depending too much on them. Ask for their help in making sure the others also participate. This way, they will not feel undermined.

Some facilitators use the concept of 'airtime': explain that every person in the group has the same amount of airtime (you could even decide how much time that is or how many turns to speak), and once this is used up, they have to be quiet until the next activity. This helps participants to be more selective and make more constructive contributions.

## Be adaptable

There is no single technique that will always work at a particular time for a particular group. It is a matter of choosing what to do in a particular moment, whether or not to intervene and how to intervene. You can plan ahead, but you always need to be ready to adapt to what is happening in the moment.



Cotonou-Fête nationale 1er août 1999 (4). Source: [www.wikimedia.org](http://www.wikimedia.org)



## Practical Tool 4: List of useful organisations, training materials, and publications<sup>116</sup>

---

### Where to get support for gender transformation work in churches

#### Theological networking

Circles of Concerned African Women Theologians exist in many countries in Africa.  
<http://www.thecirclecawt.org/>

#### Ecumenical church organisations and church networks

These exist at all levels, from global to district:

##### World Council of Churches (WCC)

A fellowship of 358 churches represented in most countries worldwide.

Programme for Women in Church and Society

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/women-in-church-and-society>

##### All Africa Council of Churches (AACC)

Regional fellowship of WCC partners in 38 African Countries

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/africa>

##### Fellowship of Councils of Churches in Southern Africa (FOCCISA)

##### FOCCISA Gender Justice Network

<http://home.fhjn.org>

**National Councils of Churches who are FOCCISA Health Network members** all have gender related initiatives, are in the process of establishing them, or are integrating a gender perspective in their HIV programmes:

Botswana Christian Council - [www.oikoumene.org/en/.../botswana/botswana-council-of-churches](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/.../botswana/botswana-council-of-churches)

Christian Council of Lesotho - [www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/africa/lesotho/ccl](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/africa/lesotho/ccl)

Christian Council of Malawi - <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/africa/malawi/mcc>

Christian Council of Mozambique - <http://www.ccm.co.mz>

Christian Council of Tanzania - [www.cct-tz.org](http://www.cct-tz.org)

Christian Council of Zambia - [www.ccz.org.zm/](http://www.ccz.org.zm/)

Council of Christian Churches in Angola - [www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/africa/angola/cica](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/africa/angola/cica)

Council of Churches in Namibia - [www.ccnamibia.org](http://www.ccnamibia.org)

Council of Swaziland Churches - [www.swazilandcc.org](http://www.swazilandcc.org)

National Council of Churches of Kenya - [www.ncck.org](http://www.ncck.org)

South African Council of Churches - [www.sacc.org.za](http://www.sacc.org.za)

Zimbabwe Council of Churches - [www.zcc.co.zw/](http://www.zcc.co.zw/)

---

<sup>116</sup> Resources related specifically to sexual diversity can be found at the end of Tool 13.

### **Other church networks in Africa and Southern Africa**

Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM, Roman Catholic)  
<http://secam-secam.org/>

Some national Episcopal conferences, such as the SACBC in South Africa, ZEC in Zambia and ECMMW in Malawi, have gender initiatives as part of their Justice and Peace departments.

Association of Evangelicals of Africa (AEA)

Pan African Christian Women Alliance. <http://www.aeafrika.org/commissions/pan.htm>

Some national Evangelical Alliances have gender related initiatives, such as EFZ in Zambia.

Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC). [www.oaic.org](http://www.oaic.org)

The website of this organisation is silent on gender or women's issues, but it may be worth following up.

The Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) [www.tgnp.org](http://www.tgnp.org)

### **Churches' gender programmes or women's ministries**

Check if your church has a Gender or Women's ministry, at local, district, national, regional or global level. (Many Anglican, Methodist, Reformed and Lutheran churches do.)

### **Other useful organisations and networks**

Gender Links - [www.genderlinks.org.za](http://www.genderlinks.org.za)

Norwegian Church Aid

This organisation has regional African offices which have Gender programmes.

<http://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/>

Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA) [www.pacsa.org.za](http://www.pacsa.org.za)

Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/sadc-and-gender-protocol>

Sonke Gender Justice - [www.genderjustice.org.za](http://www.genderjustice.org.za)

Ujamaa Centre - [www.ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za)

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)

Women and Law in Southern Africa [www.wlsa.org.zm](http://www.wlsa.org.zm)

Many national Parliaments have Women's and Gender Ministries, which should be possible to find on google.

## Training materials and toolkits

Aitken, Marilyn (WLTP). 2011. *Emthonjeni: a journey of discovery for young women*. Underberg, South Africa: The Grail.

CAFOD, Christian Aid and Trocaire (n.d.) *Monitoring Government Policies*. London and Ireland.  
[www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)  
[www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)  
[www.trocaire.org.uk](http://www.trocaire.org.uk)

Hope, Anne and Timmel, Sally. 1999. *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers*. Book IV. Kleinmond, South Africa: Training for Transformation Institute.

INERELA (2012). *SAVE Toolkit*. <http://inerela.org/wp/wp-content/downloads/INERELA%20SAVE%20Toolkit%20Full.pdf>

Khan, Zohra 2009. *Just Budgets: Increasing accountability and aid effectiveness through gender responsive budgeting*. One World Action.

Knutson, Lebethe et al 2004. *Called Gathered Sent: A Bible Study Guide on the Role of Men and Women in Church and Society*. Cape Town: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA)

One Body (n.d.) *AIDS and the Worshipping Community: Bible studies, liturgies and personal stories from South and North*. Oslo: The Nordic-Foccisa Church Cooperation

One Body (forthcoming in 2014). *Human Dignity - Inherent in every Human Being: Towards gender equality, including young people and overcoming abuse*.

<http://www.norgeskristnerad.no>

PACSA (Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness):

2007. *Gender, Violence & HIV/AIDS. A PACSA Workbook for Churches & Communities*. Pietermaritzburg: PACSA.

2008. *Asifunde: A Training Manual for Peer Educators*. Pietermaritzburg: PACSA

2011. *Gender Based Violence: Churches and counsellors make a difference! Pietermaritzburg: PACSA*.

<http://www.pacsa.org.za/publications>

PACSA (renamed Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action) and Sonke Gender Justice (2013). *Men and Masculinities in South Africa: A three part series comprising stories, analysis and faith based resources*. Pietermaritzburg: PACSA.

<http://www.pacsa.org.za/publications/books>

Sonke Gender Justice (2006) *One Man Can: Working with men and boys to reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS*. Johannesburg: Sonke Gender Justice.  
www.genderjustice.org.za/onemancan

Soul City (2001) *Violence against women: Training materials*. Johannesburg: Soul City, the Institute for Health and Development Communication

Veneklasen, Lisa and Miller, Valerie (n.d.) *A New Weave f Power, People and Politics: The action guide for advocacy and citizen participation*. Practical Action Publishing.

World Alliance of Reformed Churches 2003. *Created in God's Image: From Hierarchy to Partnership. A Manual for Gender Awareness and Leadership Development*. Geneva: Imprimerie Corbaz SA.

Zambian Church Mother Bodies (Council of Churches in Zambia [CCZ], Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia [EFZ], and Zambian Episcopal Conference [ZEC] facilitated by Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation) have produced various useful publications:

2009. *The Voice of the Church on Matters of Gender in Zambia: Addressing ourselves to issues of gender injustice and gender based violence*. Lusaka, Zambia

2011. *The Church's Curriculum on Gender Injustice and Gender-Based Violence in Zambia*. Lusaka, Zambia.

This curriculum is developed into 3 parallel Training Manuals:

- Gender Training Manual for the Youth*
- Gender Training Manual for Lay Leaders*
- Gender Training Manual for Clergy*

2011 - *Testimonies of the Women Theologian: Stories from the heart*. Lusaka, Council of Churches in Zambia.

## Research articles and books

Ackermann, Denise M. 1991. "Towards Our Liberation: A New Vision of Church and Ministry", in *Women Hold up Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa*, Denise Ackermann, Jonathan Draper and Emma Mashinini (eds). Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 93-105.

Affirming and Inclusive Ministries. 2009. *The Evil of Patriarchy in Church, Society and Politics*. Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Al-Zubaida, Layla, Paula Assubuji and Jochen Luckscheiter. 2012. *Women and Land Rights: Questions of Access, Ownership and Control*. Perspectives #2.13. Cape Town: Heinrich Boell Stiftung.

Chitando, Ezra and Chirongoma, Sophie. 2012. *Redemptive Masculinities*. EHAIA SERIES Geneva: World Council of Churches

- Council of Churches in Zambia. 2008. *Gender Audit of Member Churches of the Council of Churches in Zambia*. Lusaka, Zambia.
- Dube, Musa 2001. *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Freire, Paulo. 1985. *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation*. London: Macmillan.
- Gennrich, Daniela. 2013. *NCA Gender Audit Process in SADC countries: Follow-up report 2007-2013*. www.norgeskristnerad.no ; www.pacsa.org.za
- Gennrich, Daniela. 2013. *Report on the Journey of the Zambian Churches towards Gender Justice: 2007-2013*. www.norgeskristnerad.no ; www.pacsa.org.za
- Haddad, Beverley 2003. "Choosing to Remain Silent: Links between gender violence, HIV/AIDS and the South African Church", in African Women, HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities. Isabel Apawo Phiri, Beverley Haddad, Madipoane Masenya (eds). Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 149-167.
- Hinga, Teresia M., Anne Nkirote Kubai, Philomena Mwaura & Hazel Ayanga. 2008. *Women, Religion and HIV/AIDS in Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Circle of African Women Theologians and Cluster Publications.
- Kanyoro, Dube. 2004. *Grant Me Justice! HIV/AIDS & Gender Readings of the Bible*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Lowe-Morna, Colleen, K Rama, L Makamure and M Makaya-Magarangoma. 2013. *SADC Gender Protocol Barometer*. Johannesburg: Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance.
- Maxson, Natalie. Forthcoming in 2014. *Journey for Justice: The Story of Women in the WCC*. Geneva: World Council of Churches
- Morrell R. 2001a ed. *Changing Men in Southern Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.
- Neyrey J H. 2003. *Jesus, Gender and the Gospel of Matthew*. in Stephen D Moore and Janice C. Anderson. *New Testament Masculinities*. Atlanta: The Society for Biblical Literature.
- Njoroge, Dube 2001. *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Norwegian Church Aid. 2012. *Report – Pilot Study on Numbers of Women in Positions of Leadership*. Oslo, Norway: NCA. www.nca.org.za
- Phiri, Govinden, Nadar 2002. *Her-stories: hidden histories of women of faith in Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Phiri, Isabel Apawo 2000. "Domestic Violence in Christian Homes: A Durban Case Study", in Journal of Constructive Theology, vol. 6 no 2. December 2001: 85-110.
- Radford Ruether, Rosemary 1983. *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology*. London: SPCK.
- Rakoczy, Susan, ed. 2000. *Silent No Longer: The Church Responds to Sexual Violence*. Pretoria: SACBC.
- Ryan, Mary, 2006. *Behind Caring: The contribution of feminist pedagogy in preparing women for Christian ministry in South Africa*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Pretoria: Unisa.



## Practical Tool 5: Glossary of common terms

---

Sometimes we use the same words, but mean different things. This Practical Tool explains how this toolkit has used specialised words.

**Culture** is made up of the social customs or accepted ways of doing things, marking special events, and distributing roles and privileges. In wider society, it includes social, political and economic practices. Cultures also include the attitudes, expectations, behaviour, religious beliefs, basic worldview, and the ritual practices of people.

**Cultural practices** are accepted ways of doing things in a particular group. These are often based in social assumptions or values a society places on certain things. A cultural practice can become a tradition if it is passed on from parents to children, until it becomes an acceptable practice in that culture.

**Gender** – the meanings attached by a society to what it means to be a ‘real’ man or a ‘real’ woman, including:

- correct behaviours
- appropriate roles in the home, work place, church and public life
- expressions of emotions
- expressions of one’s sexuality and sexual preferences.

Gender is not the same as ‘**sex**’, which just refers to biological differences as men or women.

**Gender Based Violence (GBV)** – any act violent act between men and women that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm, whether occurring in public or private life.

**Gender justice** is when a society (or church or family) is organised in such a way that all members have equal chances to succeed, can participate fully in all aspects of life, and live dignified, fulfilled lives.

**Gender injustice** happens when women are prevented from living freely and are dominated and controlled by men. Men who do not meet the criteria for, being ‘real men’ can also suffer gender injustice.

**Gender Order** – ways in which society selects and defines which ideas about gender should regulate social behaviour.

**Gender Roles** – expected duties and responsibilities, rights and privileges of men and women/boys and girls dictated by cultural and social factors and influenced by religious, economic, and political systems.

**Gender Relations** – organised social practice that determines the relationships between men and women, whether in personal life, inter-personal interaction or a larger scale. These can be between individuals or organised in social structures. These relations are related to power, production, feelings, or symbols.

**Heterosexism** – attitudes, bias, and discrimination in favour of opposite-sex sexuality and relationships, including the assumption that everyone is heterosexual or that opposite-sex attractions and relationships are the norm and therefore superior.

**Homophobia** – fear of, discrimination and bias against gays and lesbians (men and women in same-sex relationships).

**Masculinity** – culturally defined characteristics of what it means to be a man– as understood by individuals or whole communities or societies.

**Masculinities** – concept that there is no one pattern of masculinity that is found everywhere, because different cultures and periods of history construct gender and masculinities differently.

**Patriarchy** is a social system where it is normal for power to be in the hands of men: in the family and home; in society; in church and religion; in politics and in the economy.

It is not necessarily the deliberate control of individual men over individual women (although in some cases it may be). It is mostly about individuals working within a dominant world view which predetermines how much power they have in their relationships and their lives.

Most societies in the world are patriarchal.

**Power** – This book mainly makes use of the definition of power that is mostly used in the world – i.e. – **power-over**. This refers to the ability to make other people do what you want them to do or believe what you want them to believe; this may be because of physical strength, or because of a higher position in society or an institution, or because traditional beliefs give one type of person more power over another. **Power-under** is a negative term, used to explain the destructive use of power (usually power-over) by individuals and groups who are suffering from unresolved trauma and emotional damage, which leads them to 'act out' defensively or aggressively – mostly against the people who are closest to them or powerless and not objectively a threat at all.



