

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

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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* 11th 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.⁵⁴

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.

⁵⁴ 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 Robinson⁵⁵



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?

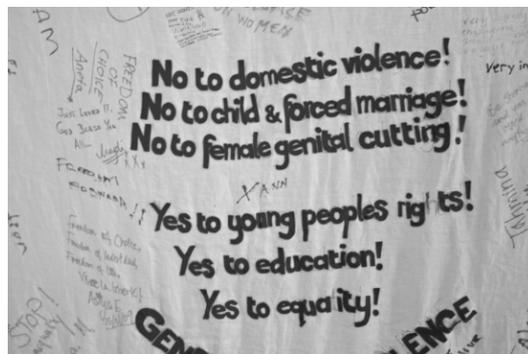
⁵⁵ Terrie Robinson 2012. *Anglican Communion Publication - Resource on the 16 Days Campaign*. 2013. terrie.robinson@anglicancommunion.org.

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

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

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 UJAMAA⁵⁶ 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.

⁵⁶ 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 Bathsheba⁵⁷

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 community⁵⁸

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.

⁵⁷ Thanks to Christian Council of Lesotho, from which this is adapted.

⁵⁸ 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.

One statement that does go beyond superficial condemnation of GBV is the joint Zambian Church Declaration on Gender Injustice and Gender Based Violence:⁵⁹

“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.

⁵⁹ 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.



US Army T-shirt campaign against domestic violence.
www.en_wikimedia.org

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.

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
- **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
- **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

- **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, 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 Piercy⁶⁰

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

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*



⁶⁰ 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 men⁶¹

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

⁶¹ 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

