



**A RESOURCE FOR PRAYER, REFLECTION AND ACTION FOR  
16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE  
FROM THE 'WE WILL SPEAK OUT' COALITION**

25 November – 10 December 2016



**WE WILL  
SPEAK OUT**   
WORKING TOGETHER TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



 Episcopal  
Relief & Development  
Healing a hurting world

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## INTRODUCTION

**The extent and severity of sexual and gender-based violence around the world is truly shocking. Sexual and gender-based violence is a global threat to the life and dignity of women and girls, men and boys. It also poses a challenge to social and economic development. However, it remains largely hidden as an issue.**

One in three women worldwide will suffer from some form of violence in her lifetime. Of these, one in five will become a survivor of rape or attempted rape. Men may also be survivors of sexual violence especially during conflict.

The church has a very significant role in speaking out against sexual violence and challenging the silence that too often surrounds issues of sex and gender inequality. It can help to change attitudes through biblical teaching and interpretation. The Bible teaches that women and men are created equal in the eyes of God and that all persons should be treated with love and respect.

The church can also respond to the needs of survivors, creating a safe and supportive environment where people can trust and support each other and regain their dignity.

This prayer guide can be used by individuals, home groups, church groups or organisations to follow the 16 Days campaign (or at any other time of year) to pray into gender-based violence issues. Here you will find stories and ideas for each of the 16 days that illustrate how Coalition partners have impacted the lives of women, men, girls and boys on highly sensitive issues such as domestic violence, child protection and sexual violence.

*Please note: In some of the following stories, names of survivors have been changed (as indicated \*)*

**This resource is for use by churches and individuals during the 16 Days of Activism. During this time the 'We Will Speak Out' Coalition aims to:**

1. Raise awareness of the work of Coalition partners, staff and churches in preventing and responding to gender-based violence
2. Motivate our staff, partners and supporters worldwide to stand up and speak out against injustice against women and girls
3. Engage with boys, adolescent males, and men to create positive images of masculinity – that respect women and treat them as equals
4. Mobilise prayer on this extremely sensitive issue globally.

## DAY ONE – 25 NOVEMBER

Contributing member: Episcopal Relief & Development with the Anglican Church of Burundi

### *Running alone, away from shame*

**In April 2015, when the crisis started in Bujumbura (Burundi), Carine\*, 38, was raped by a group of armed men in front of her husband and children. The men forced her husband and her 14-year-old son to hold her legs while they raped her one by one.**

When they had finished and gone, Carine's husband told everyone in the house not to say what has happened to anyone outside: "Otherwise they will come back and kill all of us," he said. Carine did not go to a centre where she could be assisted; the road was blocked and guarded by the "youth". She started to feel pain and to smell bad due to wounds in her private parts. She decided to take whichever antibiotic she could find because she feared to tell anyone what had happened to her. Her husband never slept with her again, fearing she may have gotten HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases. Carine said: "I could no longer look into anybody's eyes in the house; I feared to find out their feelings about me. My pain and my shame were too much. I wished my death."



Youth drama during the 16 days of activism against gender based violence  
© Episcopal Relief & Development

Her troubles kept growing and she decided to go to Nyanza Lac with the plan to take a boat to Tanzania. She went alone with hope to hide from those who knew what happened; she was still full of shame. As there were thousands of people waiting by the lake, men proposed to help her to get a place in the boat in exchange for sex. Other women told her to accept because she had no choice, with her smell of a prostitute. She felt she had no dignity anywhere in the world. She felt life had no more meaning, that there is no place to hide from shame when you have been raped. She thought that everyone already knew her situation and that she will be raped again and again. "I better jump in the lake and drown because death offers a hiding place to the oppressed like me," thought Carine.

**"My pain and my shame were too much. I wished my death."**

Carine, Bujumbura, Burundi

As she was crying silently full of bitterness, wandering in the area, she met the Pastor of the Anglican Church of Muyange, a Gender-Based Violence Team member who helped her by listening to her story and accompanying her in her pain. She is now with a group named Les Tantines, made up of rape and sexual abuse survivors. She got well prepared for an HIV test and was found positive. At the health centre, she was given medicine for the infections she got from the rape. But she is still afraid of going back to her family, even though she longs to see her children and husband.

### PRAY FOR

- Total healing and restoration for Carine, and people in similar situations, and that the church will become their place of refuge.
- People who have contracted incurable diseases and have disabilities because of rape.
- People living with HIV whose spouses are HIV negative. Pray for continued harmony in the couples.

## DAY TWO – 26 NOVEMBER

Contributing member: World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

### *NaNomi's long journey to safety*

**NaNomi, a 21-year-old woman from South Sudan, was chosen to attend training outside her country. While she was away, war broke out in her village, Yambio.**



World YWCA safe space at International AIDS Conference 2016 © YWCA

NaNomi didn't know the extent of the war and conflict and thus she proceeded to head home. She arrived in Juba but could not get a flight to Yambio. Therefore she decided to travel by road. On her way to Yambio, NaNomi was abducted by the rebels. She was assaulted, abused and raped for three days. Her family didn't know where she was. Her friends wondered and didn't know either. It was a difficult time for her family and relatives. She managed to escape and fled to Yei. On her way from Yei to Yambio, she was abducted once again, beaten and assaulted.

Learning NaNomi's situation, the General Secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) of South Sudan managed to get her on a flight to Uganda after 14 days. NaNomi reached Uganda where she was offered shelter by the YWCA of Uganda, which has an accessible and safe zone for young women and girls. It is designed to facilitate trust, confidentiality, dignity and respect.



#### **BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 11:28–30**

**"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."**

Women, young women and girls can openly share their experiences, challenges and traumas in YWCA safe spaces.

A critical challenge faced by many women, young women and girls – particularly those who have experienced something traumatic – is to find someone they can trust to share their life's experiences with and to be able to freely express their anxieties, fears and frustrations in a safe and secure environment. So, the YWCA 'safe spaces' model emphasises the importance of creating a space "where women, young women and girls can openly share their experiences, challenges and traumas, and be assured of confidentiality and support."

This important aspect is aptly captured in the above scripture whereby Jesus declares an 'open-door policy' particularly for all those who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens. Jesus promises that he will grant them rest and he offers them an assurance of confidentiality and empathy. Better still, he promises that he is more than willing to 'swap places' with them, for if they are willing to 'learn' from him, he will gently offer them his easy yoke and his lighter burden. The attributes of Jesus reflected in this scripture are integral qualities for YWCA staff, volunteers, mentors and peer counsellors as they create safe spaces for young women and girls.

#### **PRAY FOR**

- Young women's voices to be heard in the all the spaces.

## DAY THREE – 27 NOVEMBER

Contributing member: Anglican Communion

*Justice for women is justice for men too*

**The Anglican Churches advocates for gender equality. Here is a reflection by Reverend Dominic Misolo, founder of the Ekklesia Foundation for Gender Education. Based in Kenya, the foundation advocates in East Africa for gender justice and equality from a biblical perspective.**

### Discussion

1. How easy is it to recognise injustice embedded in the structures of our society?
2. Can you think of examples of how you may accept gender inequality as 'normal'?
3. Is there a temptation to use the Bible to support sexual and gender-based violence and other gender injustices in our society today?

Patriarchy is an enemy of all. It generates seeds of violence against women and girls across communities around the world. It makes innocent children suffer from what they don't understand. Patriarchy is like a hidden cancer that kills and destroys families from within and outside.

Growing up in a rural village in Bondo, Kenya, and witnessing the cruel reign of patriarchy over us as children and our parents, I hated God, who I perceived from my Sunday school lessons as the author of patriarchy. I could not understand why my father married three wives who competed for his love. I could not explain why there was frequent fighting and beating of my mother(s). I could not explain why my mother had to drop out of school aged 15 and be married as a second wife or why, as children, we lacked basic needs yet my mother gave birth to 12 children in the midst of all the struggles and uncertainty.

Later in my life, God revealed to me that the archenemy of human family is patriarchy, and not men or women. Both my parents conformed to that cruel culture. Patriarchy hands all power to one sex, locking out healthy choices for many communities around the world for any healthy relationship or meaningful development.

Recently, I was invited by a fellow Anglican priest to speak to a group of young married women and men in his church about positive masculinity and biblical equality. My opening remark: "Justice and empowerment for women are equally justice and empowerment for men" attracted smiles and cheers from the group. A man said: "Last week when our Bible study coordinator said that our next class would be on gender equality I was uneasy for I thought it would be all about how men are bad, bad and bad." Discussions on equality seemed to be about a struggle for dominant power. My initial remarks were a good start for this topic.



Rev. Dominic Misolo with primary school children in Kenya raising their hands against FGM ©EFOGE

One of the great lessons I've learnt is that in our pursuit of gender equality we need to speak and tell this truth in love. Patriarchy is still doing lots of harm to all people with its roots deeply in our religious and secular worldviews. Millions of women and girls are suffering and enslaved just because they are female.

Based on my passion and struggles to engage men in the fight against patriarchy within church circles, I want to say that equality for women and men is not and should not be portrayed as war between men and women, or a contest for power. Gender equality is about all human beings understanding and upholding the essential dignity, worth, and gifting of each other as women and men, girls and boys made in God's image.

### PRAY FOR

- The transformation of harmful gendered norms and practices in our churches and societies.
- Religious leaders and communities of faith, shaping beliefs about the worth of women and girls.

## DAY FOUR – 28 NOVEMBER

*Contributing member: Episcopal Relief & Development with Episcopal Church of Liberia Relief & Development*

*When raising awareness changes lives*

**Mr Folley, a 40-year-old community leader living in Gohn Town, Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia, used to domestically abuse his wife. He did not value her as a woman but rather saw her as his property, because her bride price was paid by him.**

Mr Folley withheld everything from his wife including money and would not help with home duties. If anything was lacking in the home, she would have to wait for him to get to it. He even refused to take her out with him because he believed women belong in the home and the man has the final say.



GBV workshop with men in Liberia © Episcopal Relief & Development

Bible and Qu'ran references that are being used to prevent or respond to GBV, especially violence against women:

1 John 4:7–13,  
Matthew 9:22,  
Philippians 4:23,  
Ephesian 5:25–29,  
1 John 3:15–17,  
1 Peter 3:7–8,  
Surah 5:11,  
Surah 48,  
Surah, 49:19,  
Surah 51:49,  
Surah 30:21–22,  
Surah 65:1–8,  
Surah 3: 1–3

His wife complained about him to the elders of the town but he would not show up when they called upon him. Stuck in the house, she became so dependent on him and could not do anything for herself without him. Because of this, she had to accept anything wrong that he did to her. Sometimes he came home late at night. If she said anything, he refused to give her money for food the next day.

This habit almost led to the death of one of their daughters. She was sick and – with no money to pay for medical care – started to convulse. Through the kind gesture of a community member the child was rushed to the hospital but the incident did not make a change; instead, the situation in the house remained as before, with the man in control. Occasionally, family and community members helped look for a solution but to no avail.

For years Mr Folley felt that he was exercising his right as a man and the head of the home, until recently. Local religious leaders in the community started creating awareness and sensitising people to gender-based violence (GBV) response and prevention – speaking out in the churches, mosques and town meetings, and settling family matters using Bible and Qu'ran references to educate on violence against women.

Learning what the Bible and Qu'ran say about treating women, Mr Folley realised that he had been violating his wife and he needed to change – to treat her with respect. He felt guilty and asked his wife for forgiveness and promised never to repeat such things but to live as one family. He also went to the community and asked for forgiveness for not listening to their advice. Since then, he has been an agent of change in the community.

## DAY FIVE – 29 NOVEMBER

Contributing member: Tearfund

### Listening

**Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) is practiced in over 30 countries worldwide: in Africa, some parts of Asia and the Middle East. It is also found in the UK among migrant communities; an estimated 137,000 women and girls live with the consequences of FGM/C in England and Wales.**

Tearfund is committed to putting survivors' voices at the centre of its response. It has been privileged in the last few months to be part of discussions with a group of 17 FGM/C survivors in London, to hear their experiences and how FGM/C has impacted their lives.

Aminata\*, 35, from Sierra Leone went through FGM/C when she was 11. She did not know the pain she had suffered all her life was linked to the FGM/C until she arrived in the UK aged 30. By then she had had four difficult childbirths, the last one resulted in the debilitating condition, obstetric fistula, and her child was stillborn.



Women support group  
© Christina Shange/  
Tearfund

“I feel that as a group we become stronger, we can also influence change back home.”

Aminata, Sierra Leone

She says: “joining this support group has been a lifesaving experience for me. I have suffered in silence for such a long time; I have not had anyone to talk to about my physical pain and the loss of my child. I look forward to coming every two weeks and talking with women who have gone through the same experience. I can be myself here: I can laugh, cry and not worry about what people would say if I say that FGM/C is bad. People think that FGM/C only happens back home. It is here in the UK – we are the evidence of it. I feel that as a group we become stronger, we can also influence change back home.”

Migrant communities often have strong ties with their home countries and can thus influence change. Tearfund is keen to journey with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence to ensure its response is in line with their needs.

#### PRAY FOR

- Physical and emotional healing for women and girls who have gone through FGM/C.
- The safety of FGM/C survivors, as speaking against ‘traditions’ can be dangerous and lead to being ostracised from their communities.
- More opportunities to create safe spaces where survivors can share their experiences, dream and hope for a better future.

## DAY SIX – 30 NOVEMBER

Contributing member: USPG

### *Bible study/reflection*

**This USPG Bible study looks at one aspect of economic migration: people travelling to look after other people's homes.**

Domestic workers increase national productivity by freeing others to do different things while they take care of the homes, and look after children, older people and people who are ill. Yet too often they are taken for granted. Too often, they are mistreated and exploited. Their work is not counted, and they are often unprotected by labour laws.

### **Take it in turns to share your thoughts on this topic**

Allow space for people to share their lack of understanding and any fears or prejudices. Our aim is not to judge one another, but to investigate our personal feelings about the issue. USPG doesn't claim to have the answers, but hopes this study will inspire and challenge Christians to engage more deeply with global issues.



#### **BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 16:1–16**

We don't know much about Hagar: how she came to be travelling with the household of Sarah and Abraham. But her story is not unusual, even today. She is a female domestic worker, living with strangers, away from her home. She is vulnerable. If things go wrong, she can't just go home. She's in the desert and law and custom are not on her side.

Hagar sometimes gets blamed for her predicament. She got pregnant for her employer and then was rude to her mistress.

In the story, God speaks to Hagar and promises to bless her and her child. She is able to speak confidently of God as "the One who sees me."

#### **Questions**

- Identify with Hagar for a while. How would you have felt about Sarah? And about Abraham? What would you have done?
- Now identify with Sarah. How was she feeling? Why did she behave the way she did?
- And how was Abraham feeling? How did his behaviour affect the situation? What would you have done?
- How might the other people in their community have been thinking? What would you have done?



## Around the world: England

*Janna\*, a Filipino worker in London, shares her story.*

I came to London from Hong Kong because my employer moved here and wanted me to take care of his wife, who is paralysed and has diabetes. They came to the UK because it was easier for them to get healthcare. But the wife was always shouting at me, so I was scared to be alone with her. And the working arrangements were very bad. I was not allowed to go out and I had no days off. I slept on the floor and was not given enough food. So I ran away. Now I share a room with another Filipino worker. I clean different houses each day; but it's hard to find full-time work because of the visa laws.

My family are in the Philippines, my home. I really miss them. I have two girls and a boy. One girl is married and the other works in the Middle East to help support the family. I send money home to pay for medicine for my husband, who has high blood pressure, and for my son's school fees. I've helped them set up a small catering business. I plan to go back when my youngest child finishes university, or earlier if the business succeeds.

When not working, I go to church, and I belong to the Filipino Domestic Workers Association, which gives me hope, knowledge and confidence. They are campaigning for legal rights for migrant domestic workers, many of whom are treated like slaves by their employers.

Most of all, I thank God for giving me strength to face the sad realities of my life and stand firm.

### Questions

- Putting yourself in the shoes of Janna, take turns to share your response to this story.
- What are the special challenges she faces as a woman?
- How might we, as a local church, reach out to migrants on our doorstep?

### PRAYER

God, our rock and our redeemer,

We pray for those forced to leave to support families

We pray for lives torn apart by absence and loss

We pray for people missing loved ones and home

We pray for chaplains, pastors and advocates in this context.

May we be willing to share ourselves with the stranger in our midst.

*Hagar speaks confidently of God as "the One who sees me."  
Are we ready to "see" those around us who need protection  
and support?*

## DAY SEVEN – 1 DECEMBER

Contributing member: Tearfund

### *Nompilo's story from South Africa*

**My name is Nompilo Gcwensa, I am a 27-year-old woman from Umlazi, Durban, South Africa. In September 2008 I was sexually abused by a man I did not know while on my way home from the library.**

This affected me a lot, as I was preparing for my exams. I failed to focus on my studies, which led to me dropping out of varsity [college]. My behaviour changed a lot, though I acted normal to hide my feelings. I rejected external help, because of the first unsympathetic support I got just after my incident. The behaviour became worse; I even lost self confidence during that period.

Five years later, staff from Tearfund South Africa came to our church to do research on survivors of sexual violence. I was one of the few who agreed to be part of it. I joined because of anger. I did not realise it was the beginning of my healing. After a few sessions, the ice of anger inside me started to melt. I started to recognise the silence and pain one suffers unintentionally. I was introduced to the healing sessions and meetings with other women. Because of the pain and having less knowledge about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) it was not easy to medley with women, because of lack of trust. As the sessions continued I started to find the power within me, and the passion to break the silence around me and my community. Going around other communities and seeing the way other women suffer and the way these sessions are held, I have gained self-confidence and I can now stand in front of a crowd and tell my story with hope and knowledge that we go through pain to testify.

I am now a champion; to me I do not see it as leading a group but the opportunity to fight the violence in our community, country and the whole world with women who have walked a journey of being abused to being the survivors we are today; walking with the strength and hope that sexual violence will end. I have just finished my studies in electrical engineering; it was not easy considering my lack of funds. But with the empowerment and support from the group and the whole survivor movement, I do not go through any day without acknowledging being alive. I have learnt that life is more about what you can achieve than the pain and hurt you go through.



Nompilo Gcwensa © Tearfund

**“I am now a champion.”**

Nompilo Gcwensa,  
South Africa

### PRAY FOR

- Survivors of sexual violence to heal and find a safe space to share their experiences.
- Continued energy for SGBV champions and the work they do in their communities.
- Silence around SGBV to be broken so that survivors can heal and live full lives.

## DAY EIGHT – 2 DECEMBER

*Contributing member: Mothers' Union*

*Reflections from Marie\**

**Having decided enough is enough and walked away head held high from an abusive relationship, the spectre of it returns from time to time through the children of that relationship and now through the death of the perpetrator.**

I feel his anger inside of me and realise it is not his anger but mine, which has never had the opportunity to be expressed, and by accepting ownership of it I reach a new level of liberation. Possessing the right to feel angry at the subjugation of my person that took place allows me to use that anger to continue to move forward with determination.

The violation of the love that was offered cannot be undone but a new love of self allows love to grow in a new place with appreciation and gratitude. Psalm 73 leaves God to deal with the perpetrator and since we are not to be outdone in mercy, I pray the God of Mercy will allow me to be at peace in this life and for him to be at peace in the next.

### PRAYER FOR PERPETRATORS OF ABUSE

Don't take part in doing those worthless things that are done in the dark. Instead, show how wrong they are. The light will show what these things are really like.



#### **Ephesians 5:11–13**

Merciful God,  
bless those working with perpetrators  
of gender-based violence.  
May they be helped to bring about  
lasting transformation of lives.

We pray for those who perpetrate abuse  
with no sense of guilt or shame.  
Bring to justice their actions;  
change their inner hearts.

Lord, break the patterns of abuse  
committed down the generations.  
Transform attitudes and behaviour  
in current and future relationships.

We pray for all to follow your example  
of treating women with equality and respect.  
We pray for the dawn of a better world  
where justice and peace may flourish. Amen

## DAY NINE – 3 DECEMBER

Contributing member: Tear Netherlands

*“As a church we should talk about sexual violence”*

**Tsongo Kunahmbire is a Baptist pastor who lives near Cantina in east Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Though sexual violence is rampant in DRC – both perpetrated by armed groups and embedded in unequal relations between men and women generally – Tsongo’s church is no longer silent about this topic.**

“It will be like the ripple effect of a stone in a pond.”

Tsongo Kunahmbire, DRC



Pastor Tsongo Kunahmbire, east DRC:  
@ Folkert Rinkema/Tear Netherlands

Tsongo shared with Tear his story about how he changed himself, and how he started to feel compelled to break the silence around sexual violence and inequality between men and women. Training on sexual violence, gender equality, and the Bible challenged him to rethink his views and his own behaviour. He recounts how he used to dominate his wife in their marriage and make all the decisions alone: on money, on sex, on household duties. God helped him change into a husband who respects his wife’s views and they now make choices together on spending, sexuality, raising their kids and household duties. “I now tell my son to respect women, which actually goes against our cultural customs,” he says.

Tsongo wants his life to showcase that God created women and men in his image, and of equal value: “What I preach now, is that we are equal, that men can actually change in this area – I also changed and can now help men to confess their sins and live differently.” Tsongo feels strongly about the need for the church to speak up against the high levels of sexual violence in the communities. He says: “People still tend to be afraid to talk about sexual violence because of the prejudice and stigma associated with it. If people know you’ve been raped, they might push you away and reject you. As church leaders, we need to tell this story and break the silence around sexual violence, both inside and outside marriage. So people in our congregation can help tell others. It will be like the ripple effect of a stone in a pond.”

### PRAY FOR

- Faith leaders and pastoral workers in DRC: for grace to respond to situations of sexual violence; for boldness to advocate against sexual violence and challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours; for compassion to accompany survivors and help tell a story of hope, restoration and acceptance, rather than stigma, rejection and brokenness.
- The youth: that the next generation will know how to grow healthy relations between men and women, boys and girls: relations that speak of peace, dignity, respect and value.

## DAY TEN – 4 DECEMBER

*Contributing member: The Lutheran World Federation*

### *Girls in and out of school*

**Education is the foundation for girls' development on their journeys toward adult life. It helps women realise their potential economically, politically and socially. But school is often not a safe place for a girl.**

For girls around the world, exercising their right to education can be full of risk. They are at risk from violence on the journey to and from school and in the classroom itself. This violence may take the form of aggressive sexual behaviour, intimidation and physical assault by boys, sexual advances by male students and teachers, corporal punishment and verbal abuse.

In most parts of the world, our religious institutions contribute hugely to education, providing schools, colleges, universities and theological seminaries. Our sacred texts and faith traditions give us stories that empower and give voice to women and girls. We have myriad opportunities to teach and embed values that recognise and promote the equal dignity of girls and boys, young women and young men.

Our schools and all our educational institutions can practice zero tolerance of sexual and gender-based violence and teach young women and men the full meaning of sexual and reproductive rights. The Lutheran World Federation believes that we can work with families and wider communities to ensure that girls can complete their education, and are safe as they travel to and from school.

Every girl has an inherent dignity as God's creation. Making sure that every girl has access to education honours that dignity. Yet in spite of promises made to children in many international conventions and national constitutions, one in five adolescents and one in eleven primary school-aged children are excluded from the classroom. Fifteen million girls are unlikely to set foot inside a classroom<sup>1</sup>. Girls who miss out on education or who leave school too soon are less likely to develop themselves and their families and communities. They are less likely to have any say in what happens to their lives and their bodies. They are more likely to live in poverty, be trafficked and prostituted, be exposed to HIV and sexually transmitted infections, be coerced into early marriage, have pregnancies at an early age, and to die or suffer serious physical injury during childbirth.

Faith leaders and the whole faith community have a vital role to play in advocating for compliance of the universal right to education and for national policy – adequately resourced – to prevent and eliminate violence against girls in school.

#### **PRAY FOR**

- Faith leaders and faith communities to advocate for equal access to education for girls and speak out and challenge gender-based violence.

**We can work with families and wider communities to ensure that girls can complete their education, and are safe.**

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics/UNICEF 2015

## DAY ELEVEN – 5 DECEMBER

Contributing member: Christian Aid

### *A refuge for women in Brazil*

**Casa Noeli dos Santos is the only church-run safe house in Brazil. It provides a refuge for women fleeing domestic violence and is run by Reverend Elineide, the devoted parish priest.**

While there are laws in Brazil to protect women, they are often not enforced, leaving women unprotected and vulnerable to further abuse. In many communities, women still do not enjoy the same rights as men.



Reverend Elineide, Coordinator of the Casa Noeli dos Santos safe house in Ariquemes, Brazil: ©Tom Price/Christian Aid

In 2011, Reverend Elineide felt the call to create a refuge for women. This stemmed from her own sister's experiences at the hands of a violent husband, who stabbed her seven times when she tried to leave him. Elineide helps women in the safe house report crimes to the police – because the police station can be a frightening place, and the officers don't always want to help. She also makes legal referrals and finds schools for children who have fled with their mothers. When the women leave the refuge, she travels with them to help them feel safe.

Inevitably, Elineide is drawn into the women's lives. When she thinks about the things they have lived through, sometimes the horror of it all threatens to overwhelm her. But Elineide has her faith to lean on, and it gives her the strength to go on.

- Casa Noeli dos Santos helps about 150 women a year who are fleeing domestic violence.
- Every 24 seconds a woman is assaulted in Brazil.
- Every two hours a woman is murdered in Brazil.

*"I'd like to turn this house into a teaching centre so it wouldn't just be a place of welcome and safety. I'd like to offer courses to train women and give them new skills and knowledge. That way, this house can become a model for others" – Reverend Elineide*

*"Without the safe house, I think I would be dead. It took me time to find the courage to do something, but now I have hope" – Fran, resident of Casa Noeli dos Santos, whose husband killed her brother and father when trying to help her escape*

#### PRAY FOR

- All those going through of domestic violence that they may find emotional and physical healing from the traumatic experiences they have had to endure.
- The safety and protection of the women and children who speak out openly about their experiences of domestic violence.
- Reverend Elineide, and others like her, to continue providing emotional and spiritual support as well as a safe haven for women and children who are fleeing domestic violence.

## DAY TWELVE – 6 DECEMBER

Contributing member: Tearfund

### *Transforming masculinities*

#### The making of a gender champion, by Tearfund's Prabu Deepan



Gender Champions training in Ngiri, Province Orientale, September 2015  
© Prabu Deepan/Tearfund

I met Bura last year, towards the end of September, in a small village called Ngiri, about 8 hours' drive from Bunia in northwest Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I clearly remember his face, when he emotionally told his peers his wife's response to a reflective exercise, when he had asked: "If there was one thing you would want me to change, what would that be?" Heavy with anger and sadness, he told the group of his wife's response: "Why are you asking this question now? We have been married for 14 years, and you have never asked me this, not even once, but why now?"

He was in tears, a broken man, bound by the same norms that prevent millions of men from expressing their feelings, communicating or being emotional. These social norms are harmful to the men themselves and others around them, sometimes expressed violently in the form of physical and or sexual violence. Bura was broken-hearted, because he has never expressed his feelings to his wife before. But this training has changed his life, helping him reflect on harmful norms and practices around gender and masculinities and creating a space to aspire for an alternative based on values of gender equality and positive masculinities.

Bura's journey of transformation is not only in his own life, but has spilled out to his home, his community, and to other couples who reach out to him and his wife for help. As a 'gender champion' he has journeyed with 30 men since October 2015, facilitating community dialogues with 10 men per cycle. Here's what he had to say about how this work is inspiring transformation (translated from French):

"Before, the situation was not good, even in my own home. Managing our household was difficult because of our disagreements. My wife and I were working separately, each in our own field. Attending the training changed our behaviour. Now, in our household we even raise goats. Physical violence has decreased in the community and has become rare. Household members are trying to work together to co-manage their household goods. People come to us with their marital problems, seeking advice, and we help them. When conflicts surface, couples avoid resorting to violence to solve their problems.

"Attending the training changed our behaviour."

Bura

"These activities have changed me, and as I raise others' awareness, this has also changed their attitudes and destructive behaviour. This pushes us to move forward in this role we play for the good of our community."

Stories like Bura's aren't rare anymore, because Tearfund is inspiring many men and women on a journey of transformation.

#### PRAY FOR

- The ongoing work in DRC to transform people's lives and relationships by using the 'Transforming masculinities' approach.
- The work being adapted to different contexts (Myanmar and Liberia): that it will be meaningful and inspire transformation.
- The continued transformation of faith leaders through this work, promoting non-harmful and equitable models for leadership.

## DAY THIRTEEN – 7 DECEMBER

*Contributing member: USPG*

### *Putting justice in local hands*

**There is a sense of expectation in the room. In a community centre in New Seemapuri, Delhi, India, four couples have gathered for a hearing before the Mahila Panchayat (women's council).**

Hearings provide an opportunity for prominent and trained members of the community to resolve local disputes – in this instance, domestic violence and marital conflict – without the need for fines, court fees or imprisonment that further impoverish families.

The room is small. There is no furniture – people sit cross-legged on mats. The walls are a plain fading-yellow, but the room is an explosion of colourful saris and colourful expressions. Justice is not hurried. Time is taken to hear and discuss cases. And there are trained counsellors on the premises to help couples find a way forward.

One couple has been married for six years. They have no children, but the wife is pregnant. The woman wears a remote expression and sounds sad and distracted as she tells the room how her husband hits her and gives her very little money to buy food and medicine. Her mother, who is also in the room, starts to weep quietly. After she has spoken, her husband has a chance to respond. He tries to talk his way out of the accusations, but the women in the room interject – they know this man from their community and know his wife is telling the truth. The facilitators ask further questions and help the couple reach a resolution: the man will stop his violence immediately and start giving his wife sufficient money for food and medicine. Furthermore – as is customary – the couple must return in 14 days so the council can confirm that the agreement has been fulfilled.

Another couple has brought their two children, aged about four and seven. They are returning to the council having first appeared 14 days earlier when, like the first couple, the husband was told to stop beating his wife. The wife is smiling and says there is now peace in the family home. The husband is sent out of the room and the wife is questioned further. She affirms that the violence has stopped. The children are also questioned and confirm that family life is much happier.

When the day's proceedings are over and the couples have gone home, there is a joyful atmosphere in the room. The women are happy that these council hearings are bringing peace to their communities.

Delhi Brotherhood Society (DBS) operates two councils, in New Seemapuri and Mandoli. They have legal accreditation, so the power to summon people to a hearing, with redress to the full judicial process. One reason for their success is that women in the community are witnesses to proceedings and then able to monitor and verify whether rulings are being upheld. The people are accountable to one another.

The councils are also an example of interfaith cooperation. While DBS is a Christian organisation, the councils are in the hands of the people – whether Hindu, Muslim or Christian. There is no discrimination according to faith. DBS council facilitator Asha Kasgar explained: "There is a mentality towards women in India which is the cause of a great deal of violence and abuse. The women are often afraid to speak out, so they suffer in silence. There are many cases of violence which would have gone unnoticed if DBS hadn't been able to intervene." Facilitator Kiran Bala added: "When DBS intervenes in a situation of injustice, it is the intervention of God."

Through USPG support DBS is empowering communities by putting justice into local hands.

#### **PRAY FOR**

- Delhi Brotherhood Society to continue to grow and reach the most vulnerable.
- Healing within families that have experienced violence.

The women are happy that these council hearings are bringing peace to their communities.

New Seemapuri, Delhi



## DAY FOURTEEN – 8 DECEMBER

Contributing member: IMA World Health

***Girl Rising* began in 2013 as a touching documentary on educating girls, and has become a global campaign that uses the power of storytelling to share the simple truth that educating girls can transform societies.**



Over 250 people attended the first screening of *Girl Rising* at a local school in Gbadolite © Crystal Stafford/IMA World Health

The film *Girl Rising* introduces girls from across the world, who tell in their own words and show by their dogged persistence that they know their intrinsic worth and potential to contribute to their communities in myriad powerful and hopeful ways. Some of the girls are survivors of gender-based violence in its immediate and personal forms. A child bride tells her story of forced marriage, for instance, though she may face retribution. All are standing up to the systemic structural violence that considers them disposable and unworthy of education.

Stronger than the obstacles they face, these girls are overcomers who challenge gender norms, where gender-based violence is rooted. As viewers, we burst with pride at their courage and spirit and cheer for the allies they discover in the process, sometimes to their (and our) surprise – teachers, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, friends. We can feel the momentum growing. Something new is emerging.

*Girl Rising* works with partners to launch high-profile campaigns – including using video and a free school curriculum – to bring visibility to the issues girls face and inspire people to bring down the barriers that hold them back. In 2016 IMA World Health partnered with *Girl Rising* to bring movie nights to villages across all 52 health zones in the Democratic Republic of Congo covered by the Access to Primary Health Care Project, known as ASSP. IMA implements ASSP with funds from the UK's Department for International Development.

Information dissemination is inherently challenging in these districts, with almost no access to modern media. The solution: trained Communications Ambassadors who travel to health centres each month and host movie nights. Ambassadors show the *Girl Rising* film in segments, overdubbed in the local language of Lingala and accompanied by ASSP original short films designed to inspire viewers to adopt healthy behaviours such as breastfeeding and sleeping under bed nets.

The campaign kicked off with a competitive training for 22 candidates from all over the pilot province, Nord-Ubangi. Candidates spent three days learning a broad range of skills, from smartphone data collection to facilitating focus groups. The group hosted its first movie night at a nearby school, where more than 250 people came from surrounding villages. After the screening, villagers begged the team to play it again. The next day, the candidates split up and hosted movie nights at four health centres surrounding Gbadolite. Villagers came from far and wide to see their first movie in decades.

Following a second competitive training, 17 Ambassadors were equipped with media kits and deployed across Nord Ubangi, hosting more than 170,000 people at movie nights during the pilot phase. Scaling up during the last quarter of 2016, 35 Ambassadors will host movie nights in all 886 ASSP project health areas. Cumulative audiences are expected to top one million.

Inspired by *Girl Rising* and informed by original ASSP life-saving health promotion messages, girls and their communities will surely rise together.

These girls are overcomers who challenge gender norms.

### PRAY FOR

- Girls around the world who bravely challenge gender norms and personal circumstances that step them realising their potential, and those who have yet to see a path to do so.
- Allies in the movement for gender equality – men, boys, educators, activists, community leaders, religious leaders – as well as the girls and women themselves.
- A world where the potential of every child is honoured and developed and girls and women take their places alongside men and boys as leaders and contributors, without threat.

## DAY FIFTEEN – 9 DECEMBER

*Contributing member: Baptist Mission Society (BMS) WorldWide*

### *Confronting taboo topics*

**Discussing and confronting the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) in your locality can be a big step for a congregation, but UK churches are doing so and seeing the benefits.**

BMS World Mission's Dignity initiative (taking a stand against GBV) encourages UK churches to engage with the theme of GBV as communities.

"During the time I have been a pastor, I have come across people who have experienced abuse from men in relationships from a whole plethora of situations, both as children and then as married adults," says a minister at a Baptist church in the UK. A member of his congregation was abused as a teenager and another has a son in prison for committing abuse.

When he preached on GBV last autumn, the response from the congregation was very positive. "It was particularly helpful for those that had experienced some kind of abuse, and a number of people came up to me afterwards and said, 'Thank you. That is a subject that does really need to be aired in the life of the church and hasn't been before'," he says.

Another church is in negotiations with their local council to start a domestic violence support group in their community. Their Sunday service used the Dignity resources, explored GBV nationally and internationally, and included the story of a domestic violence survivor who attends the church. One church member said it was one of the most talked about services at the church for years.

"That is a subject that does really need to be aired in the life of the church and hasn't been before."

Member of a UK Baptist church congregation

"It certainly made people think," says the minister. "The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with people saying it felt very spiritual, sensitively handled and courageous.

"It has enabled the church and the mission [domestic violence support group] we are doing to walk together, so the mission is not disjointed from what is happening on a Sunday," he says. "The Dignity initiative has enabled us to start the conversation around GBV."

"The statistics in respect of the abuse of women are truly alarming," said Reverend David Bird, minister of Harborne Baptist Church, Birmingham, who attended a training event run by WWSO members, BMS World Mission and Restored. "Christians interested in the pursuit of the cause of justice, which stands at the heart of God's kingly rule, cannot but take note and take action."

#### **PRAY FOR**

- The church to be a catalyst in publically denouncing all forms of SGBV against women and girls.
- The church to provide sound theologically based training for pastors and bishops to prevent scriptural misinterpretation.

## DAY SIXTEEN – 10 DECEMBER

Contributing member: CAFOD

### *Working with the Church*

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world with 74 per cent of the population living in poverty and women and young people continually excluded from decision-making processes. This, combined with a strong sense of traditional roles for women and men and their lack of confidence to express their needs and interests, means women's views are often disregarded.

In the remote Diocese of Karonga in Northern Malawi, Bishop Martin Mtumbuka is leading a project by the **Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP)** to promote the rights of women and girls. The remoteness of Karonga is highlighted by the lack of road access, schools, hospitals and state structures; and a recent survey commissioned by CCJP identified frequent violations of women and girls' rights including rape and sexual abuse of children.

Child marriage is common in both rural and urban areas in Malawi, ranking eighth of the 20 countries that are considered to have the highest rates of child marriage by the UNFPA, and nearly half of girls are married before their eighteenth birthday. Child and forced marriage are deeply entrenched in Malawi's traditions, including Karonga, yet adolescent pregnancy is stigmatised. When traditional leaders learn of a teenage pregnancy they convince the girl her only option is to marry. Bishop Martin is in contact with traditional leaders to use every means possible to deal with these issues:

*"Within the Church we appeal to their conscience and we work with young people and women's groups. But we are also working with state institutions so that if people don't listen to their conscience then the state mechanism will deal with the problem"*



Bishop Martin Mtumbuka of Karonga diocese, northern Malawi © CAFOD

Karonga CCJP is working closely with 20 traditional and religious leaders and parish justice and peace committee members; training them in human rights with a focus on women and girls and equipping them with the knowledge of what to do if their rights are violated.

*"In the Diocese of Karonga we are facing many challenges in respect to gender equality. One of the practices is where a poor family can give away their daughter to a man in exchange for food and money. The girl might be six years old yet the man still has a right of access to her as a wife. They don't give away their son, it is usually their daughter."*

## I plant my feet

Breathing precious breath  
her body stoops to pick up her wares  
Feet firmly planted in the red fertile soil  
she straightens and expertly balances her load on her head.

Her eyes raise up to the skies in praise, as her arm branches out to hold her young  
Their bodies sway in unison to their hymnal voices of praise.  
Feet no longer sunk in the hardship of poverty.

Lord we give thanks for granting what her soul could imagine  
to walk without fear of violence  
to eat well with her children and send them to school  
to receive healthcare when she and her family need it  
to work and pay her bills  
to sleep under the safety of a mosquito net  
and to share laughter with family and friends.

Lord God you ask for every person; women, men and children to live in dignity  
to fulfil their true potential on this earth  
You call on us to also firmly plant our feet  
and echo your call

Loving God, hear our Prayer

*Nana Anto-Awuakye*

If you would like further Bible studies on this topic we can suggest these passages:

- Judges 19:1–30 A Levite and his concubine.
- Mark 5:24–34 The woman who bled.
- 2 Samuel 11:1–26 David and Bathsheba.
- Psalm 139:13–16 Each of us is precious and valued by God.
- 1 John 4:7–12 God's love and our love for each other.

## CONFIDENTIAL HELPLINES

If you have been affected by any of the information above and would like to speak to someone confidentially, contact your church leader or please call:

National Domestic Violence Helpline (UK): 0808 2000 247

National Domestic Violence Hotline (USA): 800-799-7233

If you are based outside of the USA and UK, please go to [www.hotpeachpages.net](http://www.hotpeachpages.net) to find a helpline.

## WE WILL SPEAK OUT COALITION

We Will Speak Out (WWSO) is an international coalition of Christian-based NGOs, churches and organisations, supported by an alliance of technical partners and individuals who together commit themselves to see the end of gender based violence across communities around the world.

The WWSO coalition is committed to empowering women and girls, to transforming relationships between women and men, and to ensuring that the voices of survivors of sexual violence – women, girls, men and boys – are central to their work.

The following members have been involved in the publication of this resource: Rebecca Waugh (IMA World Health/US WWSO), Sabine Nkusi (Tearfund) and JenJoy Roybal (Episcopal & Development Relief/ US WWSO ).

## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Thank you for taking part in 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence 2016. We Will Speak Out Coalition would like to know what activities you participated in and how helpful you found the 16 Days Prayer Resource. Please fill in this short survey.

<http://bit.ly/Feedback16Days>

