

VIOLENCE AND THE FAMILY

EDITORIAL

The International Anglican Family Network is a well established network of the Anglican Communion. Through its newsletters, which have been published regularly for 12 years, it links together many thousands of Anglican Christians involved in family ministries across the world.

The range of topics covered in the newsletters – street children, fathers and families, HIV/AIDS, children and war – demonstrates the many areas of family problems where the Anglican Communion has been active in responding to people in need.

Michaelmas 2003

During these 12 years IAFN has always been a virtual network linked by the Newsletter. However, through a generous grant, the first Consultation since the inception of the Network was recently held in Kenya. It was held in Africa because Christians from that continent had been some of the most enthusiastic contributors to the Network. The topic of "Violence and the Family" was chosen because it was a theme which had recurred in the newsletters. We recognised that violence and the family was a worldwide issue but we felt that our African sisters and brothers would have particular insights into these problems.

32 people attended the Consultation,

representing 17 African countries and a wide range of professions – the ordained ministry, Mothers' Union trainers and workers, teaching, social work, nursing, counselling and administration. The Consultation was chaired by Archdeacon Taimalelagi Matalavea, the Anglican Communion's Observer at the United Nations and her co-facilitator was Dr. David Gitari, former Archbishop of Kenya.

Over the seven days of the Consultation the delegates considered three aspects of violence and the family:

- Violence between couples
- Violence against children
- Violence from the wider world.

In each case they drew on their experience and that of their fellow-Christians in their home country to set out the nature of the problem and then made practical recommendations on tackling it in their Consultation report.

Some of the recommendations are specific to Africa and demonstrate how Anglicans there are being courageous in opposing traditional practices such as bride price, female genital mutilation and the abuse of widows, as well as taking the lead in tackling new problems such as the AIDs pandemic and being active in promoting conflict resolution and peace-making activities.

But many of the recommendations are relevant to all parts of the Anglican Communion.

Violence against women is endemic across the world and the report calls on the Church to break the silence that surrounds all forms of violence.

Marriages are under pressure everywhere. The delegates identified the pressures which are common in Africa, and every Province needs to identify the pressure points in its own culture and see how the Church can respond.

Child abuse is also a worldwide problem. The report calls for action to help children speak out and receive counselling and support. But it also calls for the Church to be active in educating children on personal safety, in empowering parents to recognise and tackle abuse and in making the Church itself a place that welcomes and values children.

The report speaks with particular authority on violence from the wider world. The recommendations on working for reconciliation, caring for refugees and speaking out against oppression are based on the direct experiences of the delegates themselves.

But they also have a message specifically for the wider Church.

Many countries in Africa are brutally handicapped in their struggle for development by terrorism, drug trafficking, their burden of debt, the dumping of waste and by trade policies

which favour the developed world. They call on the Church worldwide to make its members aware of this and to lobby their governments to fight against these evils.

This newsletter is based on material from the Nairobi Consultation and sets out some recommendations of the final

report.* It also gives perspectives from other countries on the three themes of the conference – illustrating further the international nature of the problems. The delegates from Africa drew up their report after many hours of careful work rooted in their own direct experiences of injustice and violence. They left the Conference determined to work for a more just society and their prayer was that their report might stir the rest of the Church to respond with energy and compassion to families affected by violence. We hope that this newsletter will be a further stimulus to such action.

*Copies of the Consultation Report can be obtained from the Network office.

SOME QUOTES FROM DELEGATES

“In my culture, traditional rulers come to the rescue of the victims. Now the Church has to come in.” (Zambia)

“A further recommendation of the Nairobi Consultation should be that the Church should listen to women.” Walter Khotso Makhulu, Archbishop Emeritus of Central Africa and Chair of the IAFN Management Committee.

VIOLENCE BETWEEN COUPLES

Consultation Report

Violence between couples (mostly, though not always, by the man against the woman) can be physical, sexual or psychological. Violent acts are intentional and are about force and control.

Some of the causes of violence between couples are common to most cultures – alcoholism, drug abuse, extra-marital affairs, HIV/AIDS, poor communication, women’s

growing economic independence, poverty, violent upbringing, jealousy, possessiveness.

Others are specific to countries in Africa – bride price, cultural practices, the shame of infertility, female genital mutilation. Linked to these are cultural practices which particularly affect widows – sexual cleansing and inheritance of the widow by her late husband’s family, labelling as a witch, exclusion from normal life as well as property-grabbing.

Finally, there are some causes which are specific to the Christian Church. Pre-marital counselling often focuses on the woman’s role in the marriage so that the man does not understand his responsibilities. Misuse of the Bible to support male domination is also a problem. One delegate commented that men read Ephesians 5:22 “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord” but overlook the previous verse “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”.

UGANDA

Uganda ranks highest on incidences of domestic violence in the world. It is a major public health problem. A new domestic bill sought to address the culturally-sanctioned gender practices responsible for much of the violence in the home, including the outlawing of polygamy. The bill was, however, withdrawn after much protest from Moslems, who claimed that it violated Islamic provisions permitting men to marry four wives. It is now undergoing “further work”.

Domestic violence is classified under common assault, which requires the victim to prove grievous injury. Common assault is a criminal offence but does not provide effective remedy for domestic

violence. This is partly because it is not only physical but can also be psychological; therefore using physical means to determine its occurrence misses the point. Culture and tradition have relegated domestic violence to the private domain – it is considered not only normal but also a private matter.

Domestic violence is generally viewed as occurring within the family household setting. Most African households consist of extended families, household workers, and kinship through polygamous marriages e.g. co-wives, step children, in-laws either living in the same household or separate houses. Findings suggest that 67.6% of victims are wives, 54.1% are children, 16.2% are men and 18.9% are

servants or relatives.

Some causes of domestic violence

- **Poverty.** Since poverty is the outstanding cause of domestic violence, efforts focused at raising levels of standards of living of the most affected persons would probably play a big role in reducing such violence. Millions of women become entrapped in violent homes because of limited social and economic opportunities.
- **Strife for equality.** Cultural attitudes regard women not as male counterparts, but as subordinates who must obey their husbands. Any attempt by women to assert themselves is seen as a threat to the existing power relations and must be

suppressed through physical violence or psychological means.

- **Bride price.** Most cultures in Uganda demand that bride price be paid to male relatives of the women, where women are exchanged for cattle, money, meat, sugar and salt. Although these gifts are supposed to be tokens of appreciation to the woman's parents, often they have been regarded as a price for the woman. So bride price compounds the problem, as it is often interpreted as wife purchase, which gives males unlimited

BOTSWANA

Violence against women and the girl child is a problem in Botswana. A recent study conducted by the Women's Affairs Department on the socio-economic impacts of violence against women shows that three out of every five suffered some kind of emotional, psychological and physical abuse even while they were still young.

Some reasons why men batter (beat) women

- **Poor self-esteem.** Most of the batterers have extremely low self-esteem. They may give the appearance of being self-confident but below the surface they have a terrible inferiority complex.
- **Feeling of dependency and jealousy.** Most batterers are pathetically dependent on the women in their lives. To keep control and prevent anyone from helping the spouse, the batterer tries desperately to isolate her from family, friends and potential employers.
- **Verbal abuse.** This type of abuse does not show evidence like bruises of physical battering. Verbal abuse can be painful and recovery can take much longer. For the verbally-abused person there is no witness to her bad experience and no one can understand it the way she does. While the abuser may seem a nice person, verbal abuse is damaging to the spirit

powers to do what they wish.

- **Religious differences.** Another factor that contributes to the increase of domestic violence is religious beliefs. Most religions lay a great deal of emphasis on the sanctity of marriage. For instance divorce is not allowed in the Christian Church and this keeps devout women in bondage in abusive relationships.
- **Politics.** Numerous women in Uganda have suffered violence inflicted upon them within their families because of differing political beliefs. This was especially evident during the

last Presidential Elections where women were beaten, divorced and even murdered because they refused to vote for the candidates of their husbands' preferences.

- **Drunkenness.** Drunkenness appears to be an excuse men use to batter their wives. It has been argued that men become drunk in order to perform the act of abuse, so that later they are not held responsible for their actions.

– it takes away joy and vitality.

When interviewed by social workers, some perpetrators said they always enjoyed sex through a struggle. Some say it is a form of revenge for when women have hurt them; some take revenge for HIV/AIDS reasons. Some victims use a phrase from the Bible that they vowed before the altar that "in sickness and in health, until death do them part," so they must stay in an abusive relationship – they say that God does not like divorce.

As social workers, we believe that a lot should be done to eliminate violence from a cultural standpoint. Public meetings (kgotla) disclosed that some cultures believe that a woman who also obeys her husband deserves to be disciplined and that problems experienced in the home should be kept private.

NIGERIA

SOME WAYS FORWARD

Fathers' fellowship

Issues have been raised at the Consultation. Violence in all forms has been exposed and X-rayed. Recommendations have been made.

What remains is the strategy for disseminating information to our various churches, especially to the men.

It is widely known that men find it very difficult to meet in conference, but some years ago, some Church leaders instituted the Fathers' Fellowship. This group has matured into a formidable one that is seriously challenging the Mothers' Union in their output. They are contributing very much to the spiritual and physical growth of the family. Hand in hand with the Mothers' Union, they are working hard to uphold the good health of our nuclear family as well as that of our macro-family – the Church.

The Fathers' Fellowship, properly informed, will spread the good news of cessation of all forms of violence in our families as it concerns them as stakeholders in the family.

The co-ordinators of Sunday School, and the youth organisations such as Girls' Guild, Boy Scouts and Anglican Youth Fellowship will take care of the teeming virile youth of the Province.

Thus we shall have gone a long way to reach everyone with our message of non-violence in our ranks as a family of God.

UGANDA

SOME WAYS FORWARD

Festive days

In Uganda, it is difficult for husbands and wives to have time of sharing with one another. Both men and women are always busy in the garden. Besides, women shoulder household responsibilities, collecting firewood and in some cases travelling up to five kilometres or more to fetch water. They also have to prepare meals for the family. By evening, the couples are tired and have little time for communicating with each other.

Mary's Day is celebrated every year on March 25th in Uganda. A tradition has been developed in many churches of making this a festive and memorable day. Mothers' Union members usually participate in the service in which new members are enrolled. After the service, the women take their husbands out for lunch, followed by discussion sessions. This gives them the opportunity to share life and to enjoy each other's company. Topics discussed include:

- Ingredients of marriage
- How to handle in-laws
- How to handle finances
- How to write a will.

Guest speakers are often invited to lead the discussions. Participants are then divided into small groups to explore the topics in depth. These sessions are often quite enriching. The highlight of the day is usually the presentation of gifts by the women to their husbands. The gifts range from a handkerchief to a shirt and sometimes more expensive items such as a suit.

Likewise, St Peter's Day is often celebrated in June. This is another festive occasion. Men take their wives out for lunch followed by discussion and presentation of gifts to the wives.

This kind of sharing helps to bring couples closer to each other and to strengthen marital ties. Marriages that are weak or stale are stabilised and relationships deepened. Each year, the Mothers' Union and Fathers' Union members look forward to St Mary's and St Peter's day with excitement.

The Mothers' Union needs to continue exploring new opportunities where couples can come together from time to time to celebrate the joy of marriage and renew ties. We also need to extend this kind of experience to our children.

MALAWI

SOME WAYS FORWARD

T.A.K.A.O micro-credit project –

T.A.K.A.O is an abbreviation for "Thandizani Amayi Kuti Adzithandize Okha" Literally translated, this means "help the women to help themselves".

The idea of the project came when seeing, over several years, how women were suffering economically. I felt the need to awaken and sensitise my fellow women to participate in family economics as opposed to staying idle – just relying on the husband to provide all economic sustainability. Hence they end up in difficult situations when their husbands leave them.

"A woman is a man's helper and not a parasite."

TAKAO micro-credit project was aimed at empowering Christian and non-Christian women economically in order for them to take a role in supporting their husbands in running the family's economic affairs. Initially the project started with five women, including myself, sewing babies' and children's clothing. Later on, we agreed that each member has to make a contribution of twenty malawi kwacha (20 pence) per month.

After collecting the contributions, we could lend out the money to an individual member to start a small business (mainly selling vegetables) which in turn could return the borrowed money to the group with a small interest for another member to benefit. As part of our fund-raising, some of us would go to gather river sand used in building houses to sell to local building contractors. We were also doing Bible study and carried out discussions on health issues, food security and home improvement.

The group soon began to expand. By the grace of God, and with the help of some Church leaders, we were introduced to some donors who gave assistance. Now the group has 250 members. Most

members are engaged in the business of buying and selling vegetables, rice, maize, beans, second-hand clothes. We also constructed some locally produced ovens, which are used in baking scones. Some members make briquettes from recycled paper as an alternative to firewood. Others are looking after orphans and rearing goats to provide milk for them.

Since the project started, we have seen some improvement in the welfare of most members, as some are managing to pay school fees for their children and assisting their husband in running the affairs of the family. Our government, through the Ministry of Gender and Community Services, invited us to display our activities at our country's Independence Day celebrations. This stimulated the morale of our members. If funds permit us, we are planning to establish a Training

Centre where we could train women and children in different kind of skills.

I finally encourage my fellow women and women leaders not to sit idle. They should come together, have the courage to think very hard and start small activities themselves. Always start small, but with patience and hope, God shall provide.

PRESS CUTTINGS

A Silent Church.

"Women have been raped and infected with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS and the Church leaders have not protested to the devilish regime about such human rights violations. Children have been shot dead and beaten up and injured by the brutal repressive forces but the Church leaders have not taken any notice of that". (Zimbabwe)

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Church should work at all levels to break the silence on violence between couples (including rape within marriage) and violence against children, widows and the elderly. Programmes addressing violence must be directed at both sexes.
2. The Church must care for those who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS while continuing to encourage faithfulness in marriage. It should encourage HIV testing and openness about HIV status with the use of condoms within marriage for those already affected. It should offer pastoral care and support for those infected and affected as well as discouraging stigmatisation.
3. High priority should be given to pre-marital counselling and marriage enrichment seminars. They should aim to promote mutual agreement between partners on family budgeting, family planning and the making of wills, etc.
4. As Christians we need to develop a more appropriate interpretation of the Bible, especially with regard to the roles of husband and wife within the home, the Church and the wider community. We also need to challenge cultural practices that dehumanise people. These include female genital mutilation, bride price and polygamy.
5. Men and women can only take greater control of their lives when the silence is broken on family violence and human rights. Church and civic leaders need to make this a priority.
6. The prophetic role of the Church should include lobbying governments and NGOs, and using existing organisations to improve legal and social systems which serve to control and reduce family violence.

PERSPECTIVES FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

UNITED KINGDOM

Domestic violence is extremely common in the UK. It accounts for nearly a quarter of all recorded violent crime, with two incidents being reported to the police every minute, and has the highest repeat rate of any violent crime. Statistics show that women are physically abused between 30 and 35 times before they report it, and on average two women are killed a week by a partner or ex-partner.

However, family violence is not just about women victims of their partners. Whilst predominantly perpetrated by men against women, one in six men will suffer it at some point in their lives. One recent study has suggested that children are present in around two-thirds of households that experience violence, and child abuse itself is now widely recognised as a tragic reality. However, it is not until relatively recently that elder abuse has also been acknowledged to be a growing problem.

Apart from the obvious physical risks, the emotional damage caused by repeated violence can be profound in its long-term effects. It can contribute to loss of confidence, depression, mental health problems, and low school attainment by children. Domestic violence is also a major cause of homelessness.

Those of us who haven't been through it can barely imagine the stress and trauma.. But why does it happen? Some of it can be traced back to attitudes – research shows that one in five young men and one in ten young women think that violence towards a partner is acceptable in some situations. Dysfunctional relationships where emotional immaturity, the need to control others, or inability to manage anger, all create a context in which violence can erupt. For some, generations of family violence have left their mark with the same vicious cycle being repeated again and again. Unemployment contributing to loss of self-esteem and financial worries can be a trigger. Often in situations of repeated violence the perpetrator is addicted to alcohol or drugs.

Parts of the country where there are high ratios of social and economic deprivation, such as outer urban estates or inner city neighbourhoods, are more likely to see worrying statistics because of the concentration of unemployment, low income households, poor housing, and physical and mental health problems.

Notably, some churches are taking action about this. The "Living Waters Satisfies" project in South East London supports women experiencing domestic violence by helping them develop employment skills to greater financial independence. The Young Women's Social Inclusion Project in Cornwall offers pregnant women and young mothers from abusive backgrounds the chance to learn budgeting and other life skills, whilst being part of a peer-support network.

Maybe as Christians in this country we need to open our eyes and acknowledge what a widespread problem violence in the family is. And even more, maybe we need to risk getting involved in the pain and the mess of it all to make a difference in Jesus' name...

Good News Family Care, a Christian Charity, was established in 1994 by a group of Christians who felt a burden to show God's love in action and to provide a "safety net" for families experiencing difficulties.

At Charis House, in Derbyshire, Good News Family Care provides supported accommodation for up to nine women and their families. Many of the women and children who stay with us are the victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, or emotional and mental, including constant criticism, telling their partner that they are useless, ugly, worthless, or humiliating them; threatening to kill their partner or harm the children, intimidation and bullying.

An abused woman usually experiences serious difficulties in extricating herself from her situation. Her coping strategies may include

drinking or drug-taking. She may suffer from depression which also increases her difficulties of getting out of her situation. The woman rarely wants to break up the relationship, particularly when there are children involved – she wants the man to change. She has to come to terms with the fact that she is the one who must act. By the time she seeks help, she will probably have spent a long time, perhaps years, trying to make the relationship work. She may have left home and returned many times. It isn't unusual for a woman to come to Charis House several times, only to return to their partner.

Whatever the circumstances, we aim to provide an appropriate level of support in a caring, non-judgmental atmosphere. Our desire is to show the love of Jesus, in a practical way, to all with whom we come into contact at Charis House. Through the struggles and hardships of daily life, some people have come to faith, others have moved on, but our prayer is that God's love will bring new hope, joy and peace into hurting lives.

SOUTH AMERICA

In modern urban life, with high unemployment, great poverty and the breakdown of social structures, violence is commonplace. The Anglican Diocese of Pelotas is confronted daily with this reality in its social work among the poor. Of course, violence is not limited to this group of the population – it occurs in all levels of society and shows its face in many different ways: break-ins, child neglect, cruelty to animals, alcohol abuse, unjust wages, wife beating, etc. Violence is a result, rather than a cause of, widespread problems. In Pelotas, we have opted for a holistic approach to these problems. Rather than focus on “just” the violence, we work with families from the poorest areas on different levels. In offering a variety of services and activities to those involved, we seek to show in a practical way that God cares, to restore human dignity and build responsible citizenship.

One of the programmes we run is a school for mothers, attending one afternoon a week, offering short studies and worship, craftwork and cookery classes, candle making and other income-generating skills. A psychologist works on self-esteem, child-raising, assertiveness and other personal issues; a social worker helps them with all their documentation, explains their rights and refers the women, if necessary, to public services or to a NGO like GAMP/JUS – a volunteer group of female lawyers, dedicated to legally assisting women in abusive situations.

It is wonderful to see the change in the participating women over time: they have grown in self-confidence and even in care

for their appearance. Several are applying skills they have learned in our programme and are earning money; some have benefited through counselling for themselves and their children and have plucked up courage to confront an abusive situation. The literacy classes, linked to this programme, are very empowering. One student said she felt she was a human being now that she was able to read and write.

On another programme, we get teenagers from troubled families, again from poor suburbs. Through music, art, dance and evangelism, we offer ways to these young people to spend their time constructively and redirect their energies. The capoeira classes are very popular: apart from culture and tradition, they teach the children self-control and non-violent reactions. Parents and the local

community have commented favourably on the difference in the children's behaviour after a few months.

As a church we cannot directly treat the causes of violence, but we can help change people's reactions to them – they don't have to continue being victims for ever. The easiest groups to work with are women and children, the men are the hardest to reach. We haven't come up with a programme yet that will address them and their needs. We are interested in hearing from other churches and groups as to what they have achieved in this area!

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In the Melanesian context, family includes father's relatives, mother's relatives and the extended family of clans and tribes. Violence within the family may be caused or provoked by TV programmes, employment conditions – like the father being employed but no housing provided so he lives with other family relatives (wantoks) – unemployment, illiteracy, poor living conditions.

Such violence can cause marriage break-up, single parents, death of the mother and other evils. In contrast, sometimes marriage break-up may prevent one parent from being murdered or experience lifelong health defects and suffering.

Some of the measures now being taken to address this issue:-

- The PNG national Government has passed a law that wife-beating is a crime and should be dealt with by the law.
- It also passed the HIV/AIDS Management and Prevention Bill to address humiliation of any sort against families

infected and affected with HIV/AIDS.

- A 2001 report by PNG Institute of National Affairs on Family and Sexual Violence indicated that about 3000 abused children were reported to the authorities between 1995-2000 throughout the country. A report by the Family Violence and Action Committee to address family violence and child abuse in PNG, focuses on legal reforms, services for the victims and community response. It needs to be given high priority.
- Most of the main-line churches have family/women groups that directly address the issue or from which information can be obtained. The Anglican Church has the Mothers' Union (MU) which is concerned with Christian family life and has existed for over 50 years. However, it needs clear vision and goals, with more support to set up self-sustaining projects to help families whose life has met with adversity and to promote conditions in

society favourable to stable family life and protection of children.

- PNG has for the first time a centre for abused children and battered women all in one building. This is the initiative of the Port Moresby City Mission to provide a temporary home for children and women.

There is much to be done to set up projects to assist families living with violence. Most families do not come out and admit the environment they live in because of humiliation, culture, fear of their lives, illiteracy and maybe that there are few organisations that actually have projects to help remedy these family issues. More research is needed as to what is actually being achieved.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

houses may also become victims by getting injured while trying to defend their mothers.

Due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, a great number of people are dying, leaving their children very young. Orphans end up exposed to conditions that are not conducive to their welfare. Some are pulled out of school too, especially girls, to babysit and take care of their old caregivers and guardian. Extended family members are reluctant to assist, either out of lack of capacity or because they are not prepared to help. Property-grabbing is very common; parents are advised to make wills so there can be no problem after death. The will can also state the guardian of the minor children.

GHANA

Some examples of violence against children are:

- Violent methods of correcting children eg beating with a cane or hand
- Permanent injuries eg cutting of ears, burning of back with hot metals or electric iron
- Child dumping by desperate mothers
- Child neglect by irresponsible parents
- Neglected orphans
- Traumatized children who are truant from home.

In Ghana, apart from the normal legal system, there has been established a Commission on Human Rights and Administration of Justice (CHRAJ) to investigate complaints of fundamental rights and freedom, injustice, corruption and the abuse of power. There is also the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Police (WAJU) which investigates and prosecutes cases of violence against women and children.

UGANDA

Children make up over 50% of the population of Uganda today. They are one of the most marginalised groups in Ugandan society. The popular image of the harmonious African community where people have unlimited time for family members and cherish children as a

precious blessing, is far from the reality nowadays. The pressures of modernisation mean that all too many children see very little of their parents, who are both working hard to make ends meet. Often they are brought up instead by housekeepers who may share very few of the parents' values. The HIV/AIDS crisis and the guerilla war in the north of the country have produced many orphans and single parent families. Crime is on the increase, and child abuse is rife. Whereas in the past, teachers were seen as exemplary role models, statistics reveal that many engage in child abuse. Some children turn to life on the streets as an escape from their many problems, but may quickly find themselves caught up in a spiral of drugs, crime and prison.

SOME WAYS FORWARD

Uganda is widely known as a "Christian" country. So what is the Church doing in response to the crisis among children? A brief visit to a typical Ugandan church tends to confirm the gloomy picture. Many children are simply left at home on Sundays while adults go to church. For those children who do attend, few activities are provided for them and there is little sense of the importance of nurturing children in the faith so that they can grow up as Christians and responsible members of society.

But let's take a closer look at what's really happening. The "typical" Ugandan church isn't the only side to the story. God has been at work to establish the beginnings of a children's ministry for the whole of the Church of Uganda. The seeds of this project were sown by CMS mission partners, and in the past year the Archbishop of Uganda, realizing the importance of this ministry, has set up an independent Unit for Children's Ministry.

The Unit works with children aged three to fifteen. We partner with other organisations and churches to fulfil our call to build a holistic ministry for children which nurtures them and brings them up to know God's love, providing a strong future foundation for the Ugandan church and nation.

This vision is beginning to be implemented in various ways. There is an urgent need for adults who are committed to working with children and understand their needs, so training is one of the Unit's priorities. Teams of Trainers of Trainers (TOT) are being formed, whose task is to train other workers in children's ministry at provincial, diocesan and archdeaconry

Consultation Report

It is a sad fact that violence against children is a worldwide phenomenon, with reports of abuse by parents and relatives, in schools, in institutions and in the churches. For example, children can be burnt deliberately or chained up for disobeying their parents. Added to this is the evidence of vulnerable children being lured or abducted into slave labour and prostitution. It seems that no country is immune from these problems.

In Africa there are other hazards which face children. Abduction to be child soldiers and injury from landmines are two effects of civil war on children. Cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (which in itself is violence against the female body) and crude forms of circumcision can expose children to infection and HIV/AIDS, and children can be used as objects of sexual pleasure by adults.

One effect of civil war and the AIDS pandemic has been that children find themselves heading a household because both parents have died.

The serious effect of all this is that children may not fulfil their potential and they may be drawn into substance abuse and delinquent behaviour. The lack of self-esteem arising from the abuse affects their adult relationships and can mean that the abuse is perpetuated and passed on to the next generation.

BOTSWANA

In cases where children have been raped by their fathers and uncles, when trying to disclose this, they are met with hostility, disbelief and ridicule. Children in violent

levels. A particular focus of the training sessions is learning how to enable children to develop their own skills. Trainers learn how to encourage good health and hygiene habits in children, how to develop awareness and care for the environment, how to develop literacy skills, and how to train children to witness their faith to friends and family members.

Parents are also in desperate need of training. They need support in bringing up their children in a society which is changing with dizzying speed. Traditional family structures and practices are disintegrating in the face of the breakneck pace of modernisation. The Unit seeks to pass on parenting skills to adults. Parents need help with how to bring up children in a loving manner, listening to them and counselling them, building awareness in them of today's society and how to respond to the many influences and dangers they are exposed to. The Unit raises awareness of the responsibilities parents have for children's spiritual development, and how to fulfil these by taking children to church, praying with them, talking with

them about God, telling stories and playing.

The Children's Ministry Unit not only trains others to educate and care for children, but also interacts directly with them through the establishment of children's groups at a village level. These groups, led by trained adults, aim to foster mutual support and friendships between children. The Unit also works in schools, discussing topics such as AIDS and educating children about basic rights and expectations such as the right to education, to life within a family context, the right to know God, and to grow in their faith.

Another focus of the Unit is the creation of written materials for children's use, which help to develop children's reading skills as well as contributing to their spiritual development. In future the Unit aims to start producing children's health books.

Our efforts to reach war-torn areas have been hindered by many obstacles. But the ministry has started seeing fruits in different areas. In May, when the team visited children in the remand home in Kampala, we were amazed at children's

response. Musa, aged 14, who was detained after killing his brother said, "If I had heard what you have said before, I should not have killed him".

ZIMBABWE

Diocese of Manicaland Project: Girls' College

At our last synod in 2002, a resolution was passed to establish a girls' college for A level only in order to address the imbalance in education that has existed for a long time, whereby the girl child continues to be disadvantaged.

Many girls reach Ordinary levels and pass well, but have difficulty in finding places for Advanced levels in boarding schools, both church and government schools, which give preference to boys. Girls end up in day schools, especially those in rural areas which are mostly inferior schools. Also the girls may have to rent rooms close to the school, which often makes them open to abuse.

Hence the decision to open a girls' college to prepare girls for leadership positions in society, with a strong emphasis on building self-esteem and awareness of women's issues.

The preparatory committee for the college has prepared a proposal and fundraising has already begun within our diocese before we look for outside donors. The town council where the school is to be established has granted land for the school, and a ground-breaking ceremony will take place soon.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is an alarming increase in violence against and abuse of children. The Church can no longer keep silent and is challenged to encourage children to speak out when they have been violated, to offer support and counselling to the victims and to deal with the perpetrators.
2. Ministry to children in the Church needs to be fully recognised and properly funded.
3. The Church must commit itself to preventive measures relating to violence against children. These include parenting workshops, empowering parents to recognise signs of child abuse and to deal with them, educational programmes for children in church groups and providing activities which make children feel welcome and part of the Church.
4. Special attention has to be given to girls who suffer more in situations of violence. Girl child education must be a priority in diocesan schools and colleges.
5. Parents should take full responsibility for the upbringing of their children and not abdicate their responsibility to teachers. The Church should encourage and empower parents to take on the responsibility of sex education for their children.
6. The Church must challenge cultural practices that dehumanise children, such as child sacrifice, sexual abuse of children for cleansing purposes enhanced by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, unhealthy initiation practices and marrying young girls to older men.
7. The Church in Africa must speak out against child abduction, child labour and child soldiers and lobby governments to implement the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
8. The Church should lobby governments on media policies that enhance positive family values. At the same time the responsibility for restricting children's access to the media should be emphasised in parenting programmes.
9. Due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic the number of orphans and child-headed households is increasing rapidly. The Church should promote community-based programmes for AIDS orphans rather than creating more orphanages.

PERSPECTIVES
FROM OTHER
COUNTRIES

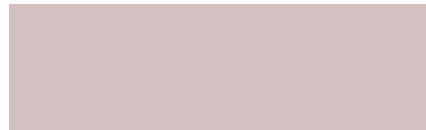
CANADA

At the initial consultation of the Family and Community Network held in Singapore in 1987, Anglican delegates from every Province of the Communion described family violence as a serious problem. **Spousal abuse** was understood to be widespread, and had no cultural or geographic boundaries. **Child abuse**, however, was seen as a more horrific problem, and perceived by our sisters and brothers in the developing world as being endemic to the more affluent West, who long since had devalued children and family life. In particular, child sexual abuse, and the presence of child pornography (subsequently more extreme with the advent of the World Wide Web) was perceived to be a sign of the decadence of capitalism.

In the fifteen years since that Consultation, the plight of child soldiers, child labourers, and child sex trade workers have increasingly come to the public eye. In 2000, Canada hosted the UN Conference on Children of War, and signed the Declaration banning child soldiers. Canada has also introduced legislation which will allow our Government to prosecute paedophiles accused of using children in the sex trade at home and abroad. Numerous warnings are publicised for parents to beware of, and to monitor, their children's use of the Internet, and the dangers of predators contacting children and youth through "chat lines". In Canada, there are several social services and laws that have been developed for both prevention of, and healing from, abuse within families and communities. The safety of children is mandated by law, and Children's Aid Societies implement child protection laws and often give support to vulnerable families to help prevent child abuse. For seniors there is a government Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse. Anglicans have taken a supportive stance on several of these issues, and our Church has been among those who have advocated for just laws to address all aspects of violence against women and children.

In 1990 the Toronto Diocese developed one of the first Sexual Misconduct Policies for the Church in the wake of child sexual abuse scandals in churches in other parts of the country. This policy highlighted our Christian calling to be a healing and restorative community, and became an inspiration for other dioceses and denominations to follow suit. Likewise, the Anglican Church has consistently raised the issue of spousal abuse and promoted a position of zero

tolerance for violence within the family. It is now more common to pray for any who are victims of violence or abuse in their homes, and to preach about non-violence in the family, and to teach through ministries for children and youth, and in marriage preparation and enrichment that our calling in Christ is to model relationships of equality, respect and dignity within our homes. Teaching concrete skills such as anger management, conflict resolution, and good listening skills, as well as helping children learn not to bully others nor to be silent when abuse occurs, is part of helping the next generation to become peacemakers at home and in the world.



SARAH

My name is Sarah I am but three
My eyes are swollen I cannot see,
I must be stupid I must be bad
What else could make my daddy so mad?

I wish I were better, I wish I were ugly,
Then maybe my mummy would still want to hug me.
I can't speak at all, I can't do a wrong
Or else I'm locked up all the day long.
When I awake I am all alone
the house is dark, my folks aren't home.
When mummy does come I'll try to be nice
So maybe I'll get just one whipping tonight.
Don't make a sound I just heard a car!
My daddy's back from Charlie's Bar.
I hear him curse – my name he calls,
I press myself against the walls;
I try to hide from his evil eye
I'm so afraid I'm starting to cry.

He finds me weeping, he shouts ugly words,
He says it's my fault he suffers at work.

He slaps me and hits me and yells at me more,
I finally get free and run for the door.
He's already locked it and I start to bawl,
He takes me and throws me against the hard wall.
I fall to the floor with my bones nearly broken,
My daddy continues with more bad words spoken.
"I'm sorry" I scream but it's now much too late
His face has been twisted – unimaginable hate.
The hurt and the pain again and again
Oh! please, God have mercy! Oh please let it end.
And finally it stops as he heads for the door,
While I lay there motionless sprawled on the floor.
My name is Sarah and I am but three
Tonight my daddy murdered me.

This poem was published in a Mothers' Union magazine in Australia and a few members protested at its publication. But one (who grew up with an alcohol - dependent parent) was moved to write:

"Sarah touched some still tender, though healed, scars from my own childhood and I need to acknowledge that, and move on emotionally. I could then truly concentrate on what the child Sarah was saying in the poem about today's society, family life, alcohol dependence and physical and emotional abuse of the weak and vulnerable by the powerful. The sad fact is that many children today are victims of substance-dependent and violent parents. This is the society in which we live. It is unhelpful to pretend that this is not so."



VIOLENCE FROM THE WIDER WORLD

Consultation Report

In the African setting violence from the wider world is bound to include terrorism, civil wars and political unrest which radically disrupt family life and lead to displacement as refugees, loss of life and property, and traumatised people.

However, the Consultation also identified economic, environmental and social violence as important. Economic violence is seen as the effects of the debt crisis for developing countries and inappropriate structural

adjustment programmes as well as the effects of globalisation which destroys local industries and uses people as cheap labour to increase the profits of wealthy international companies. Environmental violence covered deforestation, the promotion of genetically modified seeds and products, growing air pollution, the dumping of nuclear weapons and the testing of experimental drugs in developing countries. Social violence included sexual harassment, unemployment, poor working conditions, verbal abuse and intimidation.

The Consultation pointed to violence in the Church where religion has been used to silence people. Denial of the ordination of women, hypocrisy, covering up of abuse, and clergy/Bishops' wives automatically taking leadership positions and acting in a domineering fashion were seen as examples where the Church perpetuates violence.

Equally it was clear that in some places the Church has been outspoken in supporting the displaced and in working to fight injustice.

AN ALL-AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Many African countries find themselves caught up in violence without understanding the root cause. Natural resources like minerals have often turned to be a curse and are the basis of civil wars and political unrest in many countries such as Sierra Leone, D.R. Congo and Angola. The developed world, bent on exploiting and benefiting from such resources, have had a hand in such wars. The consequences have been loss of lives and displacement of people. Fleeing families have been separated.

Young boys have been recruited as child soldiers. The same boys have turned against their own communities committing human rights violations, such as rape and murder. Still fresh in our

minds is Sierra Leone. The wars have given rise to the spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS, and favoured an outbreak of waterborne diseases like cholera and malaria.

Terrorism too has had a profound effect on families. Some African countries like Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda have borne the brunt of terrorism where suicide bombers have unleashed attacks aimed at Western interests. Some families lost their sole breadwinners. The negative consequences are enormous as sometimes, with such loss, children are forced out of school because fees cannot be paid. This perpetuates the circle of illiteracy and poverty in Africa.

Unfavourable economic conditions

brought by Structural Adjustment Programmes, by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, together with globalisation, have destined many to be below the poverty line.

With many men feeling the frustration of the world, there has been an upsurge in domestic violence. A large number have lost their traditional role as breadwinners causing them to be frustrated; hence their violent nature that has led to broken homes and divorce.

Drug abuse has been on the increase. There appears to be ready market for drug dealers here who work in cahoots with some prominent people, including politicians. Drug-taking breeds more violence in societies and has serious repercussions on families. The youth are mostly affected as they drop out of school to get easy money from drugs and they end up becoming drug peddlers and armed robbers.

Another concern is the proliferation of small arms in most African countries. This has led to widespread violence on civilians by robbers. The civil wars in many countries have led to many people crossing borders with such arms into neighbouring countries. It is easy for the youth to access these illicit arms, turning them into gangsters.

RWANDA

Rwanda is a country where people lived together peacefully for centuries. They speak one language, have the same culture and inter-marry. Time came when this strong united people was divided into ethnic groups. This was followed by

successive civil wars. People of one ethnic group were killed, others fled the country, those who remained in the country were taught to believe that they are bad people, do not belong to this country and must be killed. Plans to kill them were made and it

was put into practice in the genocide of 1994 and what happened was a rampage of horror with people being killed in the most horrific ways. Some were buried alive; women were brutally raped and many died. Those who got pregnant were

VIOLENCE FROM THE WIDER WORLD

And children born to parents of different ethnic groups suffer rejection from relatives.

SOME WAYS FORWARD

Both the Church and the Government are working hard to see that the divided people are reconciled and become one strong nation as it used to be in the past.

The Church is preaching “God’s unconditional love, repentance and forgiveness”. It has a programme called “Breaking the walls that divide us”. The perpetrators are repenting of their sins and facing the survivors for forgiveness. Most of the survivors have forgiven in return.

The Government has taught peace and reconciliation in many current programmes. People are taught to look at their common enemy: poverty, ignorance etc. Rwanda’s leadership has done its best and we hope for a bright future.

left to suffer alone. Children who were not killed saw all these evils done to their parents by people they knew (relatives, neighbours or leaders).

All these wars and genocide left many orphans and widows and unwanted children who turned to the streets, as well as many disabled people. There were many victims of HIV/AIDS. Survivors were traumatised, both children and old, and

some were harassed by those who killed their family members because they fear that when “Gacaca Courts” begin, they will witness against them. They are forced to move from one place to another looking for safety. Women who married into different ethnic groups are condemned by both families (their own and those of their husbands). They are blamed for the death of their partners and blamed for betraying their own families.

ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe has witnessed a steep increase in violence, intolerance and lawlessness permeating all facets of life. This is accompanied by a serious economic decline and widespread corruption impacting negatively on family life in a number of ways:

- Increasing unemployment is robbing families of their breadwinners with some resorting to scavenging for survival.
- High inflation rates with an ever rising cost of living have resulted in a very high percentage of families living below the poverty line.
- There is a general increase in wife

beating, torture and rape, especially of very young children.

- Young people after finishing school have little hope for gainful employment and become easy victims of political indoctrination or turn to crime.
- Due to high medical fees and lack of drugs, the child mortality rate has increased, and those infected with HIV/AIDS succumb faster to the virus.
- The number of orphans and child-led households is rising by the day, with some of them ending up on the streets of the bigger cities.
- The traditional social net of the

extended family has been seriously affected.

- Polarisation and political patronage have divided families along the political divide.
- Even food distribution to drought stricken areas is carried out along political party lines causing some people to depend on wild fruits or die of hunger.

SOME WAYS FORWARD

- Our cathedral offered relief assistance and shelter (by providing tents in the cathedral grounds during the rainy season without adequate sanitation) to 50 displaced people

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Church must have a particular concern for marginalised groups and the issues that affect them. Church training programmes should include issues such as human rights, civic education and good governance.
2. The alarming increase in the number of people living below the poverty line means the Church must seriously engage in poverty alleviation programmes.
3. The Church has a particular role to play in promoting conflict resolution and peace-building activities such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions.
4. The Church should ensure that refugees and displaced people live in humane conditions and are re-settled or repatriated where this is possible.
5. Faced with corruption at all levels in society, the Church must be exemplary in the following areas:
 - a. Demonstrating servant leadership especially with vulnerable groups,
 - b. Providing financially for all church workers - clergy and lay
 - c. Democratic structures which prevent institutional violence and corruption
 - d. Resolving disputes in an open manner
6. The Church world-wide is challenged to lobby governments on the evils of the arms trade, the debt crisis, the dumping of waste, the supply of expired drugs and harmful items that destroy local agriculture and industries in developing countries.
7. The Church’s prophetic role is to challenge any form of injustice. These include unfair land distribution, unjust economic policies, oppressive laws and discrimination against minorities.
8. In the face of the fast-spreading Islamisation of Africa, the Church needs to encourage inter-faith dialogue as well as to promote an atmosphere of tolerance and peaceful co-existence.
9. Christians are to be stewards of God’s creation. This calls for the Church to advocate for programmes that ensure a sustainable environment.
10. Programmes of moral regeneration should be introduced to restore a culture of ubuntu (humanness towards others – openness, acceptance, sharing).

before they could be re-located. A child was born in the tents!

- Before the beginning of the last rainy season, the Mothers' Union, with a donation from Mary Sumner House, London, distributed seeds to 1300 households of the most vulnerable families in the drought-stricken areas of our diocese.
- When Manicaland was hit by a cyclone and many families lost their homes and harvests, the Diocese established an Anglican Care Relief Fund to assist the victims. This Fund is now a permanent feature although the funds have dwindled.
- During election time our churches were declared sanctuary zones offering shelter to anyone in danger.
- The Diocese recently opened its first lay training centre at St. Augustine's Mission (the oldest Anglican mission station in Zimbabwe). The centre puts a strong emphasis on advocacy issues as an integral part of all its training courses.
- The Mothers' Union has created a widows' revolving fund which assists widows' groups (widows make up more than 50% of MU members) to start income-generating projects after undergoing training in basic business skills. The intention is to empower them economically and enable them to fend for their children.

PERSPECTIVES FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

NORTHERN IRELAND

For over thirty years Belfast has been known as "bomb city" and Northern Ireland a place of sectarian violence. But other places suffer greater levels of violence. What makes us different is our level of fear. We divide people: "them" and "us". They are to blame. We are the victims. Politics, religion and culture all mark people out as "one of us" or one of the "other sort". A superficial sense of normality is preserved by an unwritten rule, "whatever you say, say nothing". That means don't talk about politics or religion with those you don't know. The

very problems we need to understand and resolve, we are unable to talk about together.

People no longer wish to live in "mixed" areas where it is felt you are at greater risk. Because of the increased segregation the myths about "the others" continue to grow and remain unchallenged. In the area where I am parish minister, almost 90% of young people have said they have never had a serious conversation with a person from the other community. The lack of any relationship means communities resort to violence all too easily.

Corrymeela is an ecumenical Christian community committed to reconciliation in Northern Ireland. It has 200 members, Roman Catholics as well as Protestants, who support each other as they live out their commitment to reconciliation in their homes, churches and work-places. The Corrymeela Residential Centre in Ballycastle brings together groups of Catholics and Protestants, often from areas of the worst violence, to live together in community for a few days. As they get to know one another, trust grows. The aim of our Centre is "to create a safe space where people can share their stories".

Two classes of 16-year-olds from Catholic and Protestant schools came to Corrymeela. After getting to know one another and enjoying it, they were divided into small groups of eight, with four Catholics and four Protestants in each group. The groups agreed to listen to one another with respect. The topic was 'How the troubles have affected my life'. After a pause, one girl was courageous enough to say that her father was killed by paramilitaries because he was a member of the police. No one would say such a thing in mixed company normally.

But the group listened. And one by one began to tell their own stories. Of the eight young people, six told stories of their bereavement through sectarian violence. Three were Protestants, three were Catholics. At the end of the session, they fell into each other's arms and wept, Catholics comforting Protestants and Protestants comforting Catholics. They remained real friends after their visit. They had learnt that it is possible to cross barriers of hate, with love.

More information about Corrymeela is available on their website <http://www.corrymeela.org>

PRAYER

O God, the Father of all, we commend to your ceaseless compassion all those whose lives are overshadowed by violence and cruelty. Awaken in us your living charity that we may not rest while children cry from the fear of abuse and go un comforted for lack of love. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen

IAFN International Anglican Family Network

IAFN Office, PO Box 54,
Minehead, Somerset TA24 7WD
ENGLAND

Tel/Fax: (+44) (0) 1643 841 500
E-mail: mail@iafn.net

Visit the Family Network website: www.iafn.net

The views of individual contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the International Anglican Family Network.