



IAFN

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Families Under Pressure: How Can Churches Respond?

**Learning, Reflections and Stories from the IAFN Regional
Consultation for Central Africa, October 2018**

International Anglican Family Network

celebrating the God-given potential of the family as a source of thriving relationships,
identity, belonging, discipleship and reconciliation

Families under pressure: How can churches respond?

Editorial

By Bishop David Rossdale, IAFN Chair

From the story of Cain killing Abel in Genesis 4 through to Matthew's account of Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus migrating to Egypt as refugees, the Bible witnesses to families being under pressure throughout human history.

Whilst it is tempting to see 'the family' as a static institution, in reality 'the family' is a dynamic network of relationships which are constantly being moulded and remoulded. In this way, pressures on the family are internal and external. Internal pressures emerge as personality, age, experience and the expectations of successive generations affect that network of relationships which are at the heart of all families. External pressures emerge as factors such as economics, politics, culture and the onward march of technology impinge on how families develop and nurture their members.

Whilst families have always been under pressure and have subtly changed in response, at times the pressure has been so intense as to cause a rapid erosion of previous patterns of relationship and expectation. The recent IAFN consultation in Lusaka on 'Families under Pressure', highlighted a significant fault-line within the dynamic of the family. That 'fault-line' comes from the rapid growth of information and communication technology (ICT), which now pervades every aspect of life - bringing many benefits and blessing, as well as challenge.

A significant challenge for the family is that ICT brings a disruption to the power balances between generations. It is most often the younger members of a family who are comfortable with technology and are empowered by it, whilst those born before computers must learn how to adapt and may lack empathy with ICT. In this sense, there is a power inversion going on within the family, where age no longer brings wisdom as to how to cope with the external pressures

of modernity, but rather it brings the fear of ignorance and loss of control. One consequence of this 'power inversion' is the expectation amongst the young that, not only should they be taken seriously as the ones who understand the technology that drives so much of life, but also that because of this understanding their opinion matters – within the family, within society and within the church.

Older generations might decry ICT and see it as the source of much that is wrong within family and society. Yet the story of God, as revealed in scripture, is a story of 'power inversion'. In Genesis 2 we read of God, the source of all power, walking in the garden looking for Adam and Eve. God asks, "Where are you?" And ever since, God, the source of all power, has been seeking to recover what was lost – the divine mission of reconciliation.

In Philippians 2, Paul sums up God's willingness to set aside power in the incarnation in this thirst for reconciliation: Christ Jesus "...emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness, and being found in human form, he humbled himself".

In responding to pressures on the family in our age, it is tempting to look to past expressions of family and the power dynamics within them, and to try to recover them. However, as Christians we perhaps need to draw on how God seeks to mould and remould our relationship with him as a guide in strengthening the family in our age. In the power of the Holy Spirit we see how God expresses Love by empowering us. God's love comes with a humility to celebrate the potential given us when we were made in the image of God and to nurture each of us as members of God's family so that all might flourish.

An inversion of power enables family members to work in partnership in finding the future. It also allows the family to become an expression of the Kingdom of God, where an inversion of power is the essence of God's love.

International Anglican Family Network (IAFN)

IAFN networks across the Anglican Communion to celebrate the God-given potential of the family as a source of thriving relationships, identity, belonging, discipleship and reconciliation. Out of this celebration IAFN is an advocate for the family in the face of behaviours which diminish this potential, sharing stories of hope, promoting family care and sustaining the family as the cradle for human dignity.

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Front cover photo: Consultation participants outside the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Lusaka, Zambia. *Photo credit:* Revd Canon John Kafwanka

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A Transformational Journey: The story of the consultation

By the Revd Angela Morrison, IAFN Coordinator

In October 2018, the International Anglican Family Network (IAFN) and the Church of the Province of Central Africa (CPCA) joined in hosting a consultation called 'Families under Pressure: How can churches respond?' Thirty participants from the four countries of the Province (Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe) took part, supported by local speakers and an IAFN/CPCA consultation planning team.

The reflections and stories in this newsletter show that it was a time of sharing, learning and inspiration for all participants.

So how did the consultation emerge? In 2016 the Anglican Consultative Council met in Lusaka (ACC16). Discussions around young people and family life at that meeting led the



Participants in the consultation's Youth Day at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Lusaka

IAFN management committee members, some of whom had represented the Network at ACC16, to raise the possibility of the next consultation taking place in the Church of the Province of Central Africa. This would build on the legacy of ACC16 and explore family resilience in a context where local cultures have traditionally valued the identity of the family over that of the individual.

How could churches help families to cope with pressures practically and spiritually? How could Christians query the norms and practices of their culture and preserve the values of community and generosity? How could churches minister to multiple generations in the same context, and what tools could they offer to families in the midst of change? How could people reflect on the different hierarchies of value found in different parts of their culture? Where was change offering new opportunities to be embraced?

With a clear sense of excitement around the possibilities, the decision was taken to write to the Primate of the Province, the Most Revd Albert Chama, to ask for his blessing on the proposed consultation.

Once the Primate and the Bishop of Lusaka, the Rt Revd David Njovu had confirmed their enthusiastic support, Lusaka was confirmed as the venue. A joint planning team was formed comprising Canon Robert Sihubwa, Provincial Youth Coordinator for the Church of the Province of Central Africa; Victoria Mwewa, Diocese of Lusaka; Bishop David Rossdale, IAFN Chair; Revd Angela Morrison, IAFN Coordinator, Revd Canon Terrie Robinson, Director for Women in Church & Society and Revd Canon John Kafwanka, Director for Mission at the Anglican Communion Office in London.

A short paper was drafted and discussed, setting out the theme, aims and outcomes. Our hope was that the consultation would enable participants to discover more about the building blocks of family resilience in respect of the pressures of urban and rural living – including the value of faith and the church as a space for connection and belonging – and that it would affirm them in their ministries and

Consultation conclusions

The participants in the IAFN consultation for Central Africa, 'Families Under Pressure: How can churches respond?', identified three significant conclusions from their time together:

- **The need for an inclusive approach to supporting those families who may be fragile and in need:** We need to bring about awareness and encourage our churches to see and respond to the pressures around and upon families.
- **The need to have Family Advocates at every level of church life:** 'Family' is both precious in itself and also as a dynamic resource for unfolding the Gospel, and should be restored to our mission narratives.
- **The need to embrace young people and the advances of technology in the life of the church:** Empowering the youth empowers the church. Rather than expecting young people to take forward what their elders have established and maintained, they need to be acknowledged as potential agents of mission and positive change, and their contributions recognised within the church. This includes their status as 'digital natives', that is, people who have been born in the technological era, and their ability to lead into the future.

These conclusions will form the substance of a draft resolution that IAFN will take to the next meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Hong Kong in May 2019 (ACC17).

strengthen and equip them for their work. A further objective was that the theological material and examples of good practice gathered during the consultation would later be offered as a resource to the broader Anglican Communion.

It was a joy to see the consultation move from hopes and dreams to the rich event that took place, with one woman and one man from each of CPCA's 15 dioceses bringing their experiences of working at grassroot level with families and sharing in five days of consultation framed with worship, song, and biblical and theological reflection.

My nomination was a great privilege! The experience was eye opening. Yes, 'the Family' is under threat but can survive through awareness and creation of an enabling environment starting at family level, to the wider Family, that is, the church and community. I thank God for the opportunity well spent.

Angelina Ambali, Diocese of Eastern Zambia

With additional input from local invited experts, the participants explored a range of topics: changing economic demands on the family; parenting in an era of working parents; lone parenting; child-headed families; exploring and responding to increased divorce rates; young people in the family; and, families in the era of technology.

These last two topics were at the centre of a special Youth Day at the Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Lusaka, where the consultation was joined by 26 young people invited from the parishes of the Diocese of Lusaka. As participants listened to one another speaking about the pressures experienced by adults and youth, it became clear that the global technological revolution has presented unique challenges and opportunities for families, for the church as family, and for mission.

This became a recurring theme during the remaining days of the consultation and the understanding shifted from seeing ICT as the enemy to embracing respectful use of technology and recognising the expertise of youth in this field.

A visit to the House of Moses for orphaned and abandoned infants helped to consolidate some of the conversation around the fragility of families, especially where struggling individuals and families are excluded and ostracized.

The enthusiasm of the participants for networking was a key feature of the consultation. Connections developed quickly among them and they decided to form a provincial network and set up a WhatsApp group which has enabled them to continue sharing news and information.

We pray that the sharing, learning and conclusions of the consultation will inform and inspire the wider Communion and the families and family ministries at its heart.

The IAFN consultation offered us a great opportunity to understand and appreciate that a family is broader than the nuclear family and that we all have responsibility to help shape it. The discussions and presentations helped me in particular to do self evaluation of my attitude towards the youth, our children, the widows, the poor. Now indeed I want to reach out to the family of God.

Adrina F Mchiela, Diocese of Lake Malawi

Transformed as a father

By Fr Jack Chipeneti, Diocese of Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Growing up in Highfield, the second oldest high density suburb in Harare where kids are exposed to drugs, prostitution, domestic violence and child abuse, made me realize how cruel people can be in this world. I grew up in a community which was patriarchal, where a man could have more than one wife and have more than ten kids whom he could not take good care of, and in a community where a man could do whatever he wants without any questions asked. I grew up in a community where women were treated as men's property and it was normal. In this kind of environment thus was I raised, but later I became a Priest. I have been a Priest for 13 years. I married and have been blessed with three kids. Due to the way I was raised, I thought giving kids a tough time was the only way they could respect me as their father. I must say, I was too strict to my kids.

Before I went to Zambia for the IAFN Consultation, I couldn't crack a joke with my kids or listen to them for I thought they were too young to understand me and I was too old to understand them. The consultation changed my way of thinking. My kids are now my best friends. I had no time with my kids—most of my time was spent with friends and congregants. For the past years I believe I have been a good Priest to all the congregations I have served but to my kids, I don't know whether they could say I have been a good father. It's a personal feeling that I did not do my best to be regarded as a role model.



Fr Jack Chipeneti with his family

One thing I know now and which I'm proud of is that there is visible transformation in my life as a father which has brought excitement in the family. You can easily see that my wife and kids are now very happy. Actually we are enjoying ourselves. Before this life-changing IAFN consultation, I thought my duty as a father was to put food on the table, pay fees and the rest was for my wife to make sure that the kids were well taken care of.

During the IAFN consultation, one of the facilitators from Zambia, Judith Mwila, touched my heart when she discussed lone parents and single parenting. Judith highlighted the

challenges faced by lone parents and challenges faced by kids raised by lone parents, and that's when I realized how much I should cherish the family that God has blessed me with. Judith stated that single parents can be traumatized because of the questions they are asked by their children, such as (when they are divorced), 'who caused the divorce?'. At times this will stress the parent for they cannot explain everything to the children. Judith said divorce most of the time harms the children more than the parents and this has caused a lot of kids to be on the streets.

During the consultation we participants were taken to the House of Moses, an orphanage in Lusaka, and that is where I personally faced the reality that there are a lot of children who are in need of parental love. This made me think of coming up with a lone parents' support group which involves both men and women who are lone parents. Also, I want to encourage couples to try to find ways of solving their problems rather than rushing to file divorce papers. Such a decision is life changing for the children. I believe the devil knows that if he wants to destroy the church, he has to destroy families first. We need to pray together as families and as the church in order to win this battle.

At the consultation, I learnt the following concerning family:

- The family is an interactional system whose component parts have constantly shifting boundaries and varying degrees of resistance to change.
- Families must fulfil a variety of functions for each member, both collectively and individually, if each member is to grow and develop.
- Families pass through developmental and non-developmental changes that produce varying amounts of stress affecting all members.

We discovered that each family has its own pressures and challenges. In order for the church to make a difference, I would like to encourage priests to come up with programmes that promote unity, peace and love in families. I would also want to propose that we introduce Anglican National Family Conferences where we can focus on family issues like the effects of technology on parenting. During these conferences, even Sunday School children should be represented.

We need to love our spouses and children for they are special gifts from God to us. As fathers, we need to be present physically, spending quality time with family, not just putting food on the table, paying rent and fees. We need to bring up our children in the teachings of the Lord and not badger and shame them until they hate their fathers. Fathers, please do not let your kids feel as if they have a lone parent whilst you are still there. Family is precious: it is a gift from God for us to value.

Meeting the youth challenged us and told us things we hadn't noticed. They said, 'you don't pay attention to us; you want us to live like you but we are us.' We have said 'your time will come'. We haven't allowed them to participate. But now we have discussed how they can minister to us. My approach will be different now.

Bishop of Upper Shire, Malawi, Rt Revd Alinafe Kalemba, CPCA's episcopal representative during the IAFN consultation

Redeemed by Grace

By Canon Milford Mazula and Grace Muponda, Diocese of Harare, Zimbabwe

We had a marvellous experience at the IAFN consultation in Lusaka, Zambia. The consultation was centred on the well-being of families and more so, the church, communities and nations as bigger pictures of the family. The consultation proffered a platform on which we shared our numerous and diverse family experiences from across the Province. We had proficient presentations coming from various personnel whose experiences with families are indeed a fountain of wisdom.

In many ways, our eyes were opened, perceptions changed and understanding enriched.

Be that as it may, we were also overwhelmed to realise, as the representatives of the Diocese of Harare, that among some of the issues raised and discussed, we were already taking the lead as initiatives were being implemented in our Diocese some years back. Without mentioning them all, we will mention one guild called 'Redeemed by Grace'. The guild comprises our female youths who are now parents but not married and do not fit anymore in the youth guild, and yet they cannot be in the Mothers' Union guild. This guild has been in existence in the Diocese of Harare for about four years. It was brought to existence by the church as a response to the challenges that the church was experiencing, in that it was not effectively ministering to some of its members.

The name Redeemed by Grace is only for now a working name while members of the guild search for a name they may feel best for their guild. This guild, like St Agnes' guild, operates under the tutelage of the Mothers' Union guild. Like any other guild, it has its own leadership. There is also another guild falling under the Mothers' Union; it is called the Widows and Single Mothers Association (WSMA). The difference from Redeemed by Grace is that those in WSMA are senior parents and some are of advanced ages.



Redeemed by Grace: Extending church ministry and response

The Redeemed by Grace guild is an active group with a wide range of activities throughout the year. They hold their conferences, to which they invite speakers on various subjects most of which are meant to empower guild members with life skills for bringing up their children without resorting to fornication to survive. As a result of such training and encouragement, some members of Redeemed by Grace are furthering their education in universities and colleges, while some are already graduates.

The Redeemed by Grace guild has two Mother-advisors (a clergy wife and a lay person) and a chaplain. Because of the guild in our diocese, we now notice that this age group is no longer missing in the church. They are flocking together with the rest of the congregation. They participate in the church in various forms - in leadership, as sides-persons and in many committees. For such reasons, they have also realized their worth in God's church and the entire diocese embraces them without any condition as part of the diocesan family.

Besides, we want to acknowledge with utmost and heartfelt honesty the wealth of information that we received during the IAFN consultation. We had two especially touching experiences. We had an interaction with the youths in Zambia, hearing their side of the story and exchanging with them our expectations as adults from the youths. We also had an experience with the little children at the House of Moses.

The two experiences were so moving that it became so glaring to us that the church needs to improve its responsiveness. While it is very much appreciated that the church is doing something for the communities, the feeling is that it has the potential to do more and maintain its status as the role model in our communities. As representatives of the various dioceses, we also unanimously agreed that as the church we need to embrace modern technology to keep the youths in the church. Going forward, we also agree to involve youths in church leadership so that they begin to feel being part of the family.

A House for Moses

By the Revd Canon Robert Sihubwa, CPCA Youth Coordinator and member of the consultation planning group

The House of Moses opened in 2000 for orphaned and abandoned infants. Holistic care aims to meet the children's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. With ongoing assessments and the attention of qualified staff, the House of Moses babies not only survive but thrive in this nurturing environment while awaiting family placement.

The concept of the house was motivated when a baby boy was left at a doorstep in a paper box. This baby was taken in and named Moses after the baby Moses of the Bible who survived in a reed basket and who, after being taken care of and nurtured, became a major leader in biblical history. From the rescue of the little boy in a box, the concept of creating a 'House for Moses' emerged.

The main aim of the House of Moses is to rescue abandoned children and vulnerable infants below the age of two years. At

the time the concept was put together, there was an increased number of babies being abandoned after birth in the communities. Others born pre-maturely would be abandoned at the hospital by their mothers. Some of the causes of the abandonments include lack of resources to look after the baby and unplanned pregnancies, and others were down to irresponsibility. Most of these babies would be healthy but without a home where they could be nurtured and grow.



Consultation participants outside the House of Moses, Lusaka

The House of Moses was therefore envisioned to close this gap and provide a transit home for the babies. The home cannot fully replicate the environment of a loving family so steps are taken to locate, empower and equip parents so that they are able to be reunited with their child, or to find adoptive or foster families.

The home has been able to house babies as little as 1.2 kilograms in weight and yet they thrive and grow into strong children. Some of the earliest infants to be rescued are now young adults and are pursuing different paths of life as productive citizens. Following the laws of the Nation, the home has facilitated both local and international adoptions working through the Government Department of Social Welfare.

The House of Moses is run by the Christian Alliance for Children in Zambia and is supported by well-wishers, families, institutions, foundations and individuals. Further details at www.childreneverywhere.org.

Family pressures: a youth perspective

Mphangela Mwale is a young person in the Diocese of Lusaka, Zambia. She attended the consultation's Youth Day at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Lusaka. Here she is interviewed by IAFN Coordinator, Revd Angela Morrison:

Angela: Tell me about family pressures and the church.

Mphangela: We live in a global village. What affects the world out there affects the ordinary person in any community. Family is seen as one of many institutions in society alongside

health, education and religion. It is part of the larger, natural and fundamental unit of any society. Every individual in a community is a member of the family. The degree to which a family can move as a unit to deal with their own problems can maximize the potential of its members, therefore functioning of the family should be of central concern to the church. Crisis is inevitable in any family. Severe illness, early marriages, divorce cases and remarriage, and a lack of financial literacy are some of the many crisis situations that cause pressure on the family.

What is it like to be a young person in a family facing a crisis situation?

Being a young person in a family facing a crisis situation is not easy. Young people are regarded as too inexperienced and immature to make meaningful contributions in a crisis and as such decisions and possible solutions are left entirely to the elders in the family. In most cases young people are not even allowed to be part of these 'crisis resolution sit downs' even when the crisis directly involves them. For example, when a young woman becomes pregnant they are not allowed to be present during the meeting with the family of the young man who fathered the child.

How do children and young people in crisis situations that leave the family broken feel about their futures?

Children and young people in these situations feel uncertain about their futures. The lack of a proper upbringing in most instances makes it hard to inculcate good moral values, and children learn from school, peers, television and internet. In some cases where the man was the sole provider, once a divorce takes place the sponsorship gets cut off leaving the children with no financial support. This in turn affects the children and young people's futures negatively as most tend to drop out of school. Some tend to keep bad company and pick up bad vices such as selling in the streets, drug abuse and prostitution. These quick fix ways of escaping the harsh reality affects their future development, but they don't feel like any help is available to them.

You mentioned remarriage. How do children and young people feel supported in the creation of blended families? In your experience, is the church helping the children to adjust?

As a result of remarriage complex family relationships are often created. Step families may go through stress in the initial stages due to rivalries among the children and hostilities towards step parents. Young people feel supported when they are being treated as part of the family, when they have equal rights as the rest of the children in the house, and if they all have equal share in terms of education, clothing and provision of incentives. The church is not helping as such situations are regarded as family matters and are left for family members to sort out. The church only offers help when approached by the affected family. Only then do they intervene.

What about young people who have experienced violence in their families? How do they feel about their futures? Can they learn to do things differently? What would help them?

They tend to feel that their life is meaningless and lose hope for the future. Yes, they can certainly learn to move past the terrible experience by getting help from community support



Director for Mission Canon John Kafwanka (centre) with some of the youth participants at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Lusaka

groups and the church. Prayers and counselling would help the violence victims to heal, forgive and move on in life.

What is the church doing to support young women who become pregnant and young men who father children?

Zambia has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the Southern African Development Community region. The reasons for early pregnancy include low use of contraceptives among sexually active teenagers, ignorance/lack of education, unemployment and poverty. Teenage pregnancy has serious consequences such as failure to complete school, poverty, high birth rate, etc.

The church offers counselling and pastoral care. The young people are welcome and the peer relationships tend to be very supportive, but the church environment is not welcoming enough. There is so much criticism and segregation of young people who become pregnant and father children from members of the church. Young people tend to stay away from church in order to not be looked down on.

In your opinion, how are young people received when they seek spiritual guidance and help from church leaders for difficulties with their parents and families?

They are received well and helped through prayers and biblical counsel. The church often provides counselling and biblical guidance to whole families that are struggling, not just the adults.

Also, many churches provide free education which not only caters for its members but for the community at large. However, this education is limited to a certain level. During conferences, sessions on sensitization of gender-based violence, human rights and drug abuse are held but are not covered in depth and the information tends to be limited to the participants only.

The church should however, provide guidance on how to deal with family pressures by providing a platform for ongoing, in-depth, sensitization programmes for its members and the community at large. This sensitization should cater for all ages, because these pressures affect all age groups. It should also engage experts to help its members on issues to do with



Mphangela Mwale, far right, with other youth participants

financial literacy, entrepreneurship programmes, and so on. Another way the church can help families is through youth empowerment by providing scholarships to tertiary education and training of women in survival skills.

Can you say more about 'survival skills' for women? And what do you think the church should and could provide?

Survival skills such as catering, financial literacy and entrepreneurship, tailoring, arts and crafts will equip women with the necessary skills to develop and make a decent living and meaningful contributions for themselves and their children financially. The church could provide a venue for skills training, help with dissemination of information in order to reach out to the community. It could also identify vulnerable young people in the community with potential and offer assistance.

Loving care for street children

By Canon Judith Shilemuna, Mothers' Union Provincial President for Central Africa, and congregation member at St Michael's & All Angels Cathedral in Northern Diocese, Zambia.

I have been a member of Mothers' Union for 36 years and married to Ron for 46 years. We have two sons, three daughters, and ten grandchildren.

My interest in working with children on the street started way back in 1990 when I was working on the campus of the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation as Director for the Young Women's Christian Association. I left my employment to work and help the children on the street and the under-privileged people in our community.

I started feeding children on the street twice a week at the same church, preparing and cooking food using the church premises and kitchen facilities with personal utensils. I also taught them the basics of education and the word of God on the church premises. Since the church did not have facilities, I would take the children to my house using personal transport so that they could bath themselves and change their clothes.

One day when they were at my home bathing they turned the bathroom into a 'jumping castle', jumping in and out of the bathtub. They left the bathroom with water running and

water spread throughout the house. The floor was flooded, damaging the wooden tiles!

Another time, I was very sick at home and one of the street children called Patrick got injured badly by other children on the street. They brought him to my home. He was in bad shape. His intestines were protruding and held by a cloth put around the waist by his friends. I forgot about my sickness and rushed him to the hospital. The hospital doctors were on strike and not working. I made plenty of noise until one doctor came and rushed the boy into the theatre. The boy survived. After that incident that doctor volunteered to attend to the children whenever they were sick.

The number of children on the street in Zambia two years ago was estimated at between 37,000 and 38,000. The numbers continue growing. This is a sad story considering this number was much less in the early 1990s.

When I first started working with and for children on the street, the government did not have any intervention programme to reduce the numbers or to help them with education. Most children on the street did not have parents. They lost them to HIV /AIDS. Also, due to harsh economic conditions, some parents did not have work and were hence not able to pay for school or clothe them properly.

In Matthew 18.1-6, Jesus puts a child among his disciples and says they should become like children to enter the kingdom of heaven. He says, "Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea", and in Matthew 19.13-15, Jesus blesses little children.

The second objective of the Mothers' Union talks about bringing up the children in safe homes and the protection of children. I have worked to sensitize communities about gender-based violence, human trafficking, forced labour and early child marriages.

The Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child noticed the work I was doing with the children on the street. I was elected to lead the District Welfare Assistance Committee in Kitwe. I led it for ten years as a chairperson. The committee distributes food, clothes, school fees, hospital fees and also social cash transfers. This is where persons, including children who are physically challenged, get money from the government so that they are empowered. Together we have helped more than 100 children to go back to school by finding sponsors to pay for school fees and more than 50 children get bursaries for university.

When my husband retired from formal employment, I thought of finding a way to continue with the project financially by picking up empty mineral plastic water bottles, washing and filling them with chlorine-treated water, cooling or freezing them and then selling them. I would also sell empty bottles to other vendors who use them for packing paraffin. At the moment, I have an order to supply tons of plastic bottles to a plastic recycling company. Through this I am also helping to keep the environment clean.

Don't forget the boy child

Bridget Sayers teaches Visual Art, Ndebele and Drama at Gifford Boys' High School in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She is currently planning a drama festival exploring the theme of 'Families under Pressure' with her enthusiastic students.

The place of the boy and man in society is changing at a frenetic pace and many are still struggling to live with the realities of the changing landscape. It was tradition that the boy child was taught how to transit to a full grown-up man. The same applied to the girl child, who was guided in the transition from a girl to a woman based on expected behaviours and gender roles. Our grandparents, parents and other elders did all these. Yet now things have radically changed as society has fragmented due to various pressures and forces. An arising question is: when did the boy child become a silent victim of culture and society?

In my experience of teaching boys aged 13 to 18 years, I have had the chance to see how the boy child has a very silent cry. Enforced by the old Ndebele adage that says *inyembezi zendoda ziphelela esifubeni*, meaning 'a man's emotions should not be displayed but kept in his chest', the boy child has to conform to the cultural dictates. Society has failed to open its eyes and see that boys have problems - they cannot open up to share their problems unless they have been found wanting or compromised by circumstances.

Stories arise of how boys also have 'sugar mommies' who approach them for the same selfish acts which we view as bad in society. The same reason a female child would have a 'sugar daddy' for survival exists amongst our boy children but has been forgotten about or rather ignored. The family is implicated in this scenario as it usually plays a leading role in sweeping it under the carpet. The most painful part is that the 'sugar mommies' are sometimes the boy's mother's best friends, or family friends whom the family trusts. In the same vein, maids sometimes abuse the boys. When the child chooses to open up, the parents do not believe them, leaving the same abuse to continue to the detriment of the boy child.

Empowering one gender must never be synonymous with stifling the other. We must come to our senses; we need functional men and women for a functional society.

The Anglican Guild of St Barnabas supports boys aged 8 to 18, training them in life skills that enhance confidence and build morale. In the meetings they have open discussions where the



eMagaqeni camping near Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

boys are encouraged to speak out and share their challenges and experiences.

Their chaplain, Revd Bhekinkosi Sibanda, shared his thoughts: "Boys are grouped together so that they are able to open up without influence from parents or girls as there are some things they cannot talk about in front of other people. They have shared experiences freely and openly especially when they go out to resort places like Matopo or eMagaqeni outside the town of Bulawayo. They do foot drills, an exercise they believe disciplines the mind."

Maxwell Kapoka, aged 18, said: "As boys, we are socialised to think that we should be firm and strong and that men do not cry as that is considered as weakness. Thus we encounter many problems that really break us into a thousand pieces but we are afraid to talk about them. Hence many boys find solace in drugs and other unethical activities just to solve their problems.

"I think to build better responsible gentlemen the society should really pay attention to boys who encounter problems and get rid of the ideology that boys who talk about their problems are weak. If boys were to open up it will be really easy to guide and advise them on how to conquer whatever situation or phase they are going through.

"I think the society in general is neglecting the boy child and focusing only on the girl child. There are no organisations that concentrate on the boy child but there are many that concentrate on the girl child. It's like the society has believed that the girl child is the only one that is vulnerable. Why don't we pay attention to boys and see if they really are not vulnerable?"

Sailas Matsika, aged 16, said: "As boys we face different social problems that the society is ignoring. At schools, subjects like Food and Nutrition and Textile Technology are being done by girls only which raises questions as to who said boys cannot cook and weave? At universities the girl child is favoured and they are lenient with girls in terms of enrolment. In programmes like Medicine a girl is accepted with 14 points but for the boy they are strictly requiring 15 points. This is so unfair to the boy child.

"We ought to have a change in our society, to treat children fairly and promote gender equality in a proper manner."

Planning for the future

By Nancy Mkata, Diocese of Upper Shire, Malawi

I enjoyed attending the IAFN consultation in Lusaka. It was a fruitful training. When I came back to Malawi, I firstly reported to my bishop in the Diocese of Upper Shire, thereafter I reported to my parish priest, Fr Major Richard Maida, about the consultation.

Through the diocesan office we planned to meet the clergy and their spouses for a briefing during January 2019. After conducting the meeting with my priest, I had the chance of meeting seven families of the church executive members within the parish. We found that families under pressure in our parish were mainly those of army officers and soldiers

who have opportunities of going in other countries within Africa for peace-keeping, mainly in DRC. After the mission they got allowances which are causing pressure in some families.

We found that families are under pressure on financial issues which affect the wife and children. Men like taking beer which causes financial problems in their families: they may spend more time in pubs and bottle stores and less time is spent with their families. They spend a lot of money there, ending up bankrupt which causes violence in most families. That is for both those who have much or too little money.

We had a good time where we discussed how to overcome these challenges in order to bring peace in these families.

Another challenge is that most men are resistant to attending church services. Some men are busy with normal duties that are a genuine reason, but most men are just very lazy and they don't like to come to church. When they have been visited, their response is 'will change, you see us this week' but there is no change in the end. This is affecting their families very much because the wives now decide to follow the same way, saying 'I'm in this church just because I followed my husband, yet he did not want to come to church. How can I force myself to attend the church yet the owner is not willing to?' It is very sad that they followed their husbands, not Jesus. We have a very big task to talk to these families to lessen these pressures.

I had also a chance to meet some youths and they came up with their concerns that they are not given the chance to have youth rallies or gatherings at parish level. They are not given the chance to take part in preaching regularly, and we as parents do not recognise our Sunday School children as they do not have shelters in some out-stations so they are not cared for.

The youths said that they get bored with the way our prayers are conducted in the church - they said it is an old fashion system. Indeed, the youth are so used to technology now. We may see that when it is time for singing and choirs; they sing and dance when using musical instruments but during Lent time you may find that most youths are not around just because instruments are not used.

I have just started conducting these meetings but we have planned how to meet different families at parish, archdeaconry and diocesan level. We have planned to conduct these family gatherings at parish level for our youths, Mothers' Union and Daughters of the King. Then we will proceed to archdeaconry and diocesan level. We shall be discussing issues concerning pressures in our families in all areas during these meetings, like single parent and child-headed families, and financial issues, just to mention some. I hope God will help us to overcome these family pressures.

The good news is that our Sunday School children had a tour where they visited some entertainment places just to motivate them during this Christmas season. We have planned to construct Sunday School shelters in the out-stations to accommodate our children. Even we have planned to give chances to Sunday school and youths to lead prayers once a month in this year 2019.

Unemployment and the young

Youth unemployment remains a key challenge in Zambia. Youth make up almost two-thirds of the country's working-age population and almost one quarter of them are unemployed according to World Bank data. Kelvin Lenge, a young person in the Diocese of Lusaka, Zambia reflects on how churches can respond to the spiritual and practical needs of young people and families affected by unemployment.

In Zambia the church has really been helpful to families under pressure but I still think they need to do more. I am not going to speak on behalf of all churches but my church because I am close to it and I understand most of the happenings at the church, being the youth chairperson for over three years.

The main reason why Zambian families are going through different pressures is that many people are not employed. The church helps families under pressure by giving the elderly people money monthly to feed their families. But not all families are given that money—some are not given anything at all—so they suffer and miss church because they cannot afford transport.

I think the church should be empowering families with knowledge on how to raise that money. What people need is a job or a business with a good business plan that can last long and help them sustain a good living. Importantly, they mostly help aged people but not youth, which makes the youth run away from the church, leaving the church with only elderly people.

I feel the church belongs to younger people because they are the future of the church. If young people in the church are empowered by the church, they can become more committed and more participative in church programmes. Many youths run away from our churches to participate in other programmes where they are helped with schooling or empowered with business capital or jobs.

If we as Anglicans can adapt to the needs of youths, it can be a good way of keeping them and calling for more young people in church.

From 'hand out' to 'hand up'

By the Ven Canon Katete Jackson Jones, Archdeacon of Lusaka Diocese, Zambia, and Priest at the churches in Kaunda Square Anglican Parish, Lusaka



We are currently running a community school at St Matthias in Ng'ombe, one of the slums or high-density-and-low-income areas of Lusaka. People there love their God.

We undertake our community outreach through the provision of direct education to orphans and vulnerable children. We mean to empower the future generation to move away from the poverty-stricken brackets to self sustaining levels for their families, moving them 'from handout by giving them a hand up'.

We also embarked on a withdrawal of girls from, and prevention of child marriages in Chama District where we assist the East Diocese with rural evangelism and church planting. We are building a girls' boarding school to provide shelter and education as a means of securing the futures of these girls.

We have stories of girls aged 13 to 15 given into marriage, who have had children. Since they are child-mothers, they face deep challenges of how to care for their babies. Some babies die of malnutrition. Others are suffocated by the mothers sleeping over their babies. Some pregnant girls suffer from fistula during labour and are accused of double promiscuity and witchcraft but their bodies are not fully grown enough to give birth. This is a serious matter where we must raise awareness as well as providing direct education to the girls.

Please remember us in your prayers that by the grace of God our future generation might be saved and safe from such abuses and poverty.

'Love one another' in our context

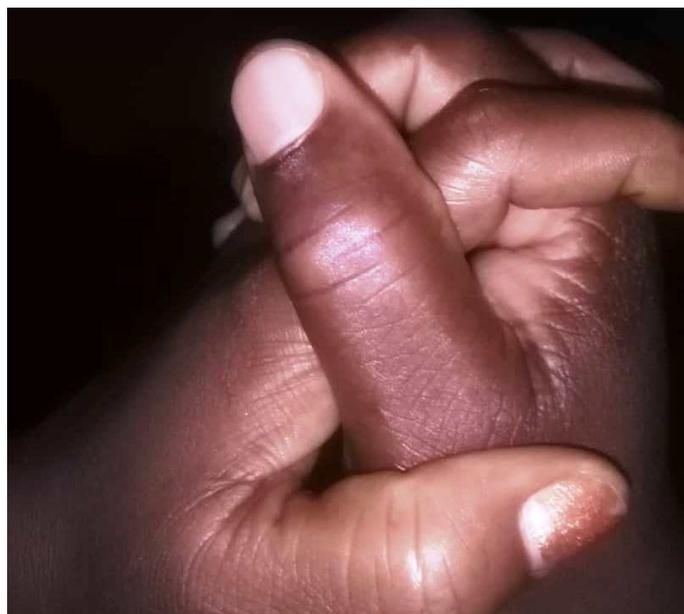
By Precious Chikore, Diocese of Manicaland, Zimbabwe

As churches, communities and as father, mother, children and other members, we are meant to be a big family. We were created to live and love each other, seeing everything with godly minds. That is when we have the relationship which has love, peace and unity.

In fact, the IAFN consultation we had in October 2018 was an eye opener. It opened our thinking towards family and helped us a lot. As Anglicans in our churches we have hard subjects to deal with. But if we consult God first they become a little easier. God's guidance is needed always - we need to understand each other as we are and let God be our guide.

For example, we can understand that we are different in everything (our thinking, how to handle situations, etc) like our fingers on both hands. Those hands with different sizes of fingers are able to handle everything, some of them amazing, through our Saviour who created those hands knowingly. So we were created in different situations for a purpose.

God so loved us but we don't know how to love each other. 1 John 4.7-11 tells us about this love: "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."



Precious Chikore: We are different in everything like our fingers on both hands ... but we can work together

To overcome even the pressures we have as churches, communities and all, we can only manage this by having this love. Especially for lone parents, child-headed families and our youths. Some of these lone parents are talented—we must not look down on them but work together as our hands do. When we have love, we will be able to listen and understand how they feel under their pressures and we can help.

Helping is giving ideas, giving and sharing as a family of God; having instruments in our churches to entertain and bring our youths together with us in our churches; listening to what they say; guiding them where they need guidance. Why? Because our churches nowadays are having elderly people alone because they don't accept change—this change that youths now have an upper hand with this 'google.com' thing.* May the good Lord help us to accept that and be together as a big family of God.

If you read the Bible and listen to what the Word is telling us, you will realise that there were so many different characters – different people with different experiences who made a big difference. This shows us how to be today. Let us love, share, give and unite in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit who lives and reigns forever. All this will bring us together as one. We will open closed doors for our youths for their future.

** During the Youth Day of the IAFN consultation, participants acknowledged that young people born into an age of information and communication technology routinely have an expertise in this area which many older people struggle with. By the end of the Youth Day, they were referring to themselves either as 'google.coms' or 'BBCs' (Born Before Computers).*

Welcoming orphans into family

By Pinky July, Diocese of Central Zimbabwe

In the Diocese of Central Zimbabwe there are many family projects in various parishes. I am going to write about St Matthew's Mtapa which has partnered with a local orphanage



IAFN consultation: A pause in proceedings. Time to dance and praise God...

in the parish area. They have made an arrangement with the authorities at the orphanage that parishioners will take the children into their homes over the weekend to allow them to have a home environment. The families bring them to church every Sunday. Through this programme the children are now part and parcel of St Matthew's parish.

This process has created bonding between the children and the families they go to during the weekends. Some families have extended the orphans' stay in their homes in that they take them during school holidays. They have become part of their families.

One family has adopted one of the children as their own in terms of providing for his upkeep. They are paying for Davis' school fees and make sure that every holiday he comes and stays with them. He is now in the Lower Sixth at school and will finish his A-levels next year. Over and above his educational needs they also take care of his medical needs, clothes and any other personal needs.

This family was inspired by their own son Leon who used to play with Davis whenever he came to church. The two boys developed a very good friendship that resulted in Leon asking his parents to take care of Davis. The parents, inspired by the friendship, accepted their son's proposal and they have enjoyed the company of Davis in their family.

This is not the only family that is taking care of orphans from the orphanage in that way. Some are assisting up to the levels they can. The Parish of St Matthew's has also done a wonderful job in adopting one child from the orphanage. The church started to pay school fees for this child and currently he is doing his law degree at the local Midlands State University where he is in his last year.

All the orphans in this programme take part in the young people activities held at St Matthew's. We give glory to God Almighty for this life-changing experience of which the church of God is part. The church can do a lot in ensuring that family unity is maintained regardless of the challenges the world is facing.

Pastor Lawrence Temfwe RIP

In February 2019 we sadly learned of the death of Revd Lawrence Temfwe, Zambia, who had made an important and much appreciated contribution to the IAFN consultation for Central Africa, including during the Youth Day. He reminded us that in a loving family there are no 'no-go' areas in communication between parents and children, and that, when parents have not been good role models, our churches can fill that gap, becoming like family to children who need mentorship: "We need to make sure we give these children time and space. We need to invest in them and help them to be heroes in a way that is appropriate for them, and in due course be able to make heroes of others."



May God grant him a safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at last.

IAFN: Our Consultations

IAFN consultations provide opportunities for mutual learning, inspiration, and lifting up the family as a source of thriving relationships, identity, belonging, discipleship and reconciliation.

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