

International Anglican Family Network International Anglican Women's Network



A joint newsletter during the 16 Days of Activism
against Gender-based Violence, November 2020

A Shadow Pandemic

How Anglicans are responding to the increase in domestic
abuse and gender-based violence in the time of COVID-19



A Shadow Pandemic

Editorial



By Mandy Marshall, Director for Gender Justice at the Anglican Communion Office

‘How is what we are doing affecting relationships?’ This question is a key driver in analysing how well we are progressing on the road to ensuring human flourishing for all of us. Are we contributing to the enhancement and development of our family, friends, colleagues, parishioners and community members with our actions and words? Or do we diminish the light in them by what we say and do? Do we even contribute to almost snuffing out that light? Psalm 139 reminds us that we are created by God and wonderfully made. Each one of us is a gift to the world, made in the image of God. In the whole history of the universe there will only ever be one of you. We are that unique. It is devastating then to realise how much pain and destruction are caused to so many women and some men around the world due to gender-based violence (GBV).

For this newsletter, the International Anglican Family Network and the International Anglican Women’s Network decided to join together and look at responses to GBV around the Communion. With one in three women experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse, and with domestic abuse increasing everywhere, this is the shadow pandemic during COVID-19. The stories are encouraging and show different responses, from a structured diocesan response in Melbourne, Australia, to the story of vermicompost and economic empowerment in Bangladesh. These are very different responses to GBV and they are effective, action-orientated and appropriate in their context. I hope they encourage you to act and make a difference where you can with what you have available. We can learn a great deal from one another around the Communion.

The focus on GBV is timely as we lead into the 16 Days of Activism. This annual global campaign highlights work around the world to end GBV and also the work yet to be done. The 16 Days run from 25 November to Human Rights day on 10 December. This year I have arranged a series of panel events and webinars featuring some amazing individuals working to end GBV. Do join in. Details can be found on page 12.

It is a real privilege to write as the Director for Gender Justice. I took up the role in April this year during lockdown in the UK. I have yet to meet most of my colleagues face to face or sit at my desk in the office. In my first few months, working from home, I wrote a resource on ‘Domestic Abuse and COVID-19: How Churches can respond’. This is now available in many languages at <https://bit.ly/34L7ZJU>. Do download it, read it and ensure that your church leaders have a copy.

We know that domestic abuse happens in churches too but is often shrouded in silence, shame and stigma. We need to bring the light of Christ into these dark places and show love, compassion and kindness to survivors of abuse. The fourth Mark of Mission calls us to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation. We cannot wait for someone else to make a stand against violence; we all have a responsibility to do this, working together to bring about a transformed world.

My vision is to see all our churches be a safe space for everyone. No longer will we remain silent or turn a blind eye. No longer will we justify GBV with our scriptures or think it is none of our business. We, as a global Communion and as Christians, make a stand and say this is our business, this is our church. All GBV is wrong and must stop. Will you join me on this journey together? Do get in touch via mandy.marshall@anglicancommunion.org. Know that I will be cheering you on!

International Anglican Family Network (IAFN)

IAFN celebrates 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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International Anglican Women’s Network (IAWN)

We are a bold and prophetic voice for all women throughout the Anglican Communion, working to uphold the God-given dignity of women and girls, to eradicate gender-based inequality and violence, and to promote just relationships among all people.

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Front cover photo: ‘Say No to Violence’ workshop, Lahore, Diocese of Raiwind

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When home is not a safe haven

By Hana Kirreh, an Arab Christian Palestinian woman born in Bethlehem who now lives in Jerusalem where she is a member of the Arabic-speaking congregation at St George's cathedral.

As in the West Bank and the whole world, COVID-19 spread in East Jerusalem. From early March, the Ministry of Health prevented gatherings, meetings and working from job sites and people were asked to confine themselves at home.

Due to the difficult situation and restrictions of movement, the awareness-raising and economic empowerment workshops that I usually conduct or coordinate for women in East Jerusalem have been frozen for safety reasons. Being under lockdown for more than 55 days at the very beginning of the pandemic was not easy. The lockdown has been renewed again in East Jerusalem since the last week of September, with tougher regulations and restrictions. What makes things worse is that many breadwinners have lost their jobs, which has worsened an already dire economic situation, or income has been minimized.



Running a workshop before COVID-19 lockdown

The lockdown has further repercussions on the Jerusalemite women as I believe it has on many women across the world who might share similar realities and abuse. Many women live in very difficult housing conditions, in small and crowded homes with no terraces or gardens. Staying home 24/7 has caused psychological problems and trauma for the little children, which increases the burden on women. Living under Israeli occupation and forced to endure its various consequences make it a very unique reality for Palestinian women.

The lockdown has two sharp edges: the fear of the virus and the occupation. In Jerusalem's case, violence is social, economic and political, which adds to the injustice practised against both women and men. But we can obviously notice that violence is oriented towards vulnerable women because of their gender.

Following up with my group of women I have learnt lots about their suffering and hardship, which includes sexual, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse, in addition to the economic deprivation caused by the pandemic. One woman said, "Due to lockdown I am in depression, distress and isolation. I am not sure how long this will last and how I could go back to my normal life." She mentioned that the workshops

and meetings have changed her life for the better and now everything has changed.

Others were scared to talk because there is no privacy at home. Talking about her suffering can be rewarded by violence against her. One woman wasn't able to talk but she succeeded in sending WhatsApp messages to describe her daily life suffering under lockdown.

In spite of all these difficult images of hardship and violence, some of the women said that lockdown is providing an opportunity to have their families together since, in normal life, getting together so much wasn't possible.

To provide basic help to these women I was able to connect some of them with counselling and psychological support centres in East Jerusalem. When lockdown is over, these women and their children need to be provided with face to face counselling in order to overcome long term consequences on their mental health. A lot of work has to be done in order to help women survive and become strong and courageous to confront domestic violence wisely and strongly.

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Using the media to break taboo

By Abigail Saidi, Mothers' Union (MU), Uganda

In Uganda we have been delivering radio shows and TV programmes to raise awareness of GBV and specifically the rise in cases as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the GBV programme was implemented across all regions of Uganda, several unreported cases begun to emerge. This is because there is a cultural practice of keeping cases of violence silent, since it is taboo to mention anything or report anyone who is a perpetrator. This is one of the cultural practices being dealt with through this programme, with the aim of having more cases reported and also to increase awareness of violence against women and children in communities. A deliberate effort has been made, through the radio shows, to build confidence in people to report any form of violence to local authorities.



After some radio talk shows, the MU Community Development Coordinator of West Buganda Diocese heard of a pastor who had trafficked some girls into his house. As a result of listening to the shows, someone felt able to come forward and report what they had heard about the pastor. The pastor was

found to be hiding 25 girls below 18 years, violating their rights by not giving them food and also having sexual relations with them. He deceived their parents by telling them that he was taking them to good schools after lockdown in Kampala. When the MU found out, we were able to collaborate with police officers who arrested the pastor and returned the children to their parents. Because we are rooted in the community, we are now able to support the families to overcome this trauma through counselling and psychosocial support.

People have now started to appreciate the importance of reporting cases of violence. Breaking some cultural norms that promote violence against children and women, requires continuous efforts through radio sessions and community dialogues to curb the situation.

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Diaconal action as GBV increases

The Revd Bianca Daebis is an auxiliary minister at the Anglican Parish of the Good Shepherd in Salvador Bahia, Brazil. She is also founder-director of the Interdisciplinary Group for Gender and Education (GIGE) in the Dom Pedro Segundo University Centre in Salvador-Bahia. Here, she describes a range of measures that have been taken in response to rising levels of gender-based violence (GBV).

The Women of the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil have developed specific actions in the area of prevention and combating of the violence against women and girls that has intensified over the last decade.

In 2011, Casa Noeli dos Santos was inaugurated in Ariquemes, Roraima, which welcomes women in situations of violence and their children until they are able to re-establish themselves socially without danger of imminent death. (Read more about Casa Noeli on page 7.)

We created and published a primer on 'Preventing and Combating Gender-based Violence against Women', in three languages (Portuguese, English and Spanish), which had the support of the *Serviço Anglicana de Diaconia* (SADD). This was launched in all dioceses and the missionary district.

Videos were made on 'Preventing and Combating Gender-based Violence against Women' to meet the needs of women in situations of violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ordained and lay women from all areas of the world participated in these. The videos were edited in low resolution so that they could be easily loaded onto the cell phones of the most impoverished and remote women in Brazil.

We promoted four symposiums on 'Gender, Religion and Diversity' involving religious leaders, leaders of social movements and academic representatives that took place in the city of Salvador-Bahia, and also held a symposium on 'Gender, Human Rights and Sexuality' in São Paulo in 2016, where we launched a magazine with the same title.

In 2019 we translated into Portuguese the book by the American theologian Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 'The Bible for Women', which is a milestone in studies of gender and feminist theology.

A group of ordained and lay women come together to share the word and pray together every 15 days through a virtual platform in order to intercede for the issues that afflict them.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have participated in ecumenical, political and humanitarian actions with women from other groups, such as 'Get your Fundamentalisms out of the Way - For the Life of Women' and in the collection and delivery of baskets of goods for women, mainly single mothers in the margins of Salvador and other Brazilian cities.



We launched the 'Empower your Sister' website, which is a virtual space dedicated to welcoming, informing and making visible the actions of women of faith, inside and outside the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil, with the objective of empowering them to achieve gender equity, as well as prevent and confront gender violence, mainly, religious violence and domestic violence practised against women and girls. Website: <https://www.empoderesuairma.com>

Men as advocates and victims

Putting men in the picture in Zambia

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are becoming more and more apparent in Zambia. The reports of sexual and gender-based violence including child marriages have escalated. Most communities in Zambia are grappling with the effects of the pandemic whilst sinking further into poverty. In these financially-fragile homes, increases in child labour and the sexual exploitation and abuse of women and girls are likely unless prevented.

Women and girls have been trapped in their homes with their abusers and are isolated from sexual and reproductive health services and resources. Lockdowns have led to temporary shut-downs of schools and other safe spaces for girls, and blocked access to mentorship programmes. Girls have been exposed to a greater risk of GBV, child marriages, unintended pregnancies, and HIV infections.

Working towards gender equality by empowering women and engaging men is fundamental to achieving a host of development outcomes, including reducing poverty, improving health and addressing other population concerns. Men's and boys' relationships with women and girls can support or impede improved health and development outcomes. So the Council of Churches in Zambia has been actively engaging men and boys in the fight against GBV.



The council trained 10 men in four districts as advocates against GBV in their communities. The men were also trained in paralegal matters so that they can report all forms of sexual and gender-based violence in their communities. Despite the lockdowns, the men have been actively sensitizing their communities using local radio stations.

Men and boys can also be victims of GBV. One of the Network of trained men, the Revd Terras, was able to help a male victim of GBV. Because of COVID-19, Mr Tembo (name changed) lost his job and that was the beginning of problems in his home. They started having economic challenges which led to everyday disputes in the house. One day they had a dispute and Mr Tembo's wife poured boiling water on him.

Rev Terras reported the matter to the Victim Support unit which quickly took action and the wife was arrested. The couple has now been undergoing counselling facilitated by Men's Networks members.

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'Dinner Church' raises awareness

The Revd Canon Helen Van Koevering is Rector of St Raphael's Episcopal Church in Kentucky, USA. Her church is responding to the increase in domestic abuse during the pandemic.

In October 2019, the governor of Kentucky spoke of the 'epidemic proportions' of domestic abuse around the state, with intimate partner violence as a factor in 46 per cent of cases of child abuse and neglect. Now, during these last several months of COVID-19, domestic violence shelters are reporting increased intensity of abuse as a result of isolation, unemployment and stress. Hotlines are reporting a 9 per cent increase in contact volume compared to the same period in 2019, with 10 per cent of callers citing the effects of COVID-19 as a condition of their experience.

The need for public awareness and support for victims is vital.

When the mission committee of St Raphael's Episcopal Church planned our programme for 2020, we had not counted on what was to unfold in 2020. For two years, we had held monthly 'Dinner Churches' for an average of 45 people to gather for a celebration of the Eucharist over tables laden with potluck offerings, and share in conversation around issues related to justice – conversations not always possible in the coffee hour between Sunday services.

We had decided to have a theme of 'Healing for Vulnerable Families' in a series of five Dinner Church meals, and highlight five local organisations that focused support on women and children in recovery from addiction, sex trafficking, poverty, incarceration, and seeking legal support. They all held GBV as a common denominator. Our purpose was to raise up survivors' voices, increase awareness amongst those who attended Dinner Church, and consider our Christian and church community response.

Then the COVID-19 restrictions hit. And our planning turned to the development of a series of online Dinner Church themed interviews and theological reflections with each of those organisations. And, much like the fish and the loaves blessed by Jesus, the numbers that engaged multiplied to an average of 150 each evening.



Technology combined with hearts passionate for justice, mission and vulnerable women and children enabled greater reach, awareness and support. It also led to the organisations making videos which they now use as they seek to continue serving survivors of violence remotely.

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A recording of Dinner Church session is at <https://youtu.be/RmslJzZFaWQ>

'Say No to Violence' workshop

Amal Sarah lives in Lahore, Pakistan and works as a volunteer in the Women Development & Service Society (WDSS), Diocese of Raiwind, Church of Pakistan. She studies at Forman Christian College (a Chartered University), pursuing her M.Phil degree in Environmental Sciences. She writes:

As part of WDSS ministry, working for the uplift of society, capacity building, health awareness and emphasising the social issues of society, a one-day workshop on Domestic Abuse Awareness was organised for 30 September 2020. The theme of workshop was 'Say No to Violence' - a step towards preventing domestic abuse and violence. Eighty-nine people from the local community, including students, congregation members from three parishes in the diocese, and trainees in midwifery and community psychiatric nursing trainees from the WDSS Rehabilitation Centre participated.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, a surge in domestic abuse has been observed, and rape cases of women and children increased in Pakistan. So we gathered the local community at one platform to raise awareness among them. Sessions on domestic abuse, violence against women, and men and child

abuse/rape cases were conducted by WDSS staff and a volunteer team. The factors that have led these abuses to increase and deteriorate the smooth fabric of society were emphasised. Participants were grouped for activities and they were asked to propose solutions as to how we can, as individuals, church and society, play a key role in preventing various forms of abuses occurring in the Pakistani society. In one of the group activities, various biblical verses were shared with the participants regarding domestic abuse and they were given an opportunity to reflect upon and relate the biblical references to the current scenario in society. The entire workshop was interactive and has been a safe space,



where not only the problems were focused upon, but it was also aimed at moving towards solutions to at least take a small step in creating an aura of peace and harmony.

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Partnership for restoration

From the Ven Dr Lyndon Drake, Archdeacon of Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland) and chair of Te Whare Ruruahau o Meri, the Social Service Agency of the Maori Anglican Church in the Auckland Episcopal Region.

Aotearoa/New Zealand is famous for its natural beauty. Less well-known is that it is also remarkable for its high rates of child poverty and family harm, including GBV.

In my ministry in Auckland/Tāmaki Makaurau, I not only read about the statistics. I see the effects on people's lives in my daily ministry.

The Anglican Church in our country has made a significant effort to recognise differences in ministry practice between Māori (the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand) and other ethnic/cultural groups. My own ministry context is primarily among Māori. Māori are more affected by family harm than other groups in society. Many people I know and care for in my parishes have been harmed by, or are perpetrators of, family harm.

Within our Māori Anglican setting, our social work agency is called *Te Whare Ruruahau o Meri* ('The Shelter House of Mary'). As the name suggests, it was established with a particular recognition of the harm inflicted through gender-

based violence. In recent years, the Whare has often adopted the broader term, 'family harm', to recognise that gender-based violence is the most prominent component of a range of similar harmful behaviours in family groups.

In the last year, the Whare worked closely with over 3,000 *whānau* (families) on the basis of referrals. Families are generally referred to the Whare by a part of the criminal justice system. Incidents of family harm have increased in recent months, influenced by the economic impact of COVID-19 and the related lockdowns. Many Māori families are vulnerable to external pressures, because of the legacy of colonisation and systemic racism.

One of the key aspects of the Whare's work is that we are able to avoid paternalistic approaches, because as Māori we control the form and content of the assistance that vulnerable families need.

As a consequence, our work and funding have grown rapidly in the last two years, as our distinctively Māori approach has produced excellent results as we intervene in extremely challenging circumstances. The Whare's work has resulted in large numbers of children and vulnerable adults being protected from further harm.

A challenge of working largely on the basis of referrals is that the Whare often had its first contact with a household some considerable time after the risk of harm was evident. For example, many gender-based incidents are first brought to outside attention by a police callout. It could take some time for other parts of the government, such as the Justice Department, to become aware of the police incident report and decide that a referral to the Whare was appropriate.

In the last few months, we have been part of an extremely effective partnership across a number of different agencies, and in particular with the police. The local police force made an agreement with the Whare and other agencies to lease a building together. The top floor houses police personnel who deal with family harm in the south Auckland area. The ground floor houses Te Whare Ruruahau o Meri and other agencies. The building has been named *Te Taanga Manawa* by our bishop, a name which refers to the heart of the people the agencies assist, and the heart of God towards humanity.



New Zealand Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, opens Te Taanga Manawa

When a family harm incident comes to the attention of the police, the Whare's social workers can be referred immediately, and there is a considerably higher likelihood of an early, positive intervention. The police have become agents of redemption, not merely retribution.

We are able to continue to have a distinctively Christian voice in our social action. This is partly because spirituality is recognised as a valid component of wellbeing in the model of health and social practice used in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Te Whare Tapa Whā* ('the house with four walls'), derived from Māori approaches to personal and communal wellbeing, has spirituality as one of its four 'walls'. Without intruding on personal beliefs, there is a certain level of normality for spiritual involvement.

At the same time, the Māori competency that Te Whare Ruruahau o Meri brings is highly effective in practice, and distinguishes our work from that of some secular agencies.

These two deeply valuable long-term aspects of Te Whare Ruruahau's contribution to society have found fresh expression in our multi-agency partnership at Te Taanga Manawa. I believe we have been fortunate to find an unusually fruitful approach to restorative care of those affected by and perpetrating family harm, and of cooperation with the police, government agencies, and other non-government agencies, to reflect the Christian ambition to bring restoration to a broken world.

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Recovering an 'esprit de vie'

Marthe Vira, based in Kinshasa, is the Mothers' Union Provincial Community Development Coordinator in the Province of the Anglican Church of the Congo. She describes how three sisters have been supported following violence against them.

Adele, Celeste and Estelle (names changed) are sisters. Before the COVID-19 pandemic came, they were able to pay rent in their area. They used to go to the markets as peddlers selling their fish and spices. One day, Celeste's husband asked his sisters-in-law to please give him 100 dollars and said he would repay them with interest of 20 dollars. They accepted to do so.

Now, during the lockdown period, the man became unable to reimburse the amount. When the sisters went to the man to ask for their money, he took them to a secluded place where there were few people and, with a group of criminally delinquent young men and boys (called here in Kinshasa 'KULUNA'), started attacking them. They left them without clothes and wounded.

The man also went to the sisters' house, and robbed these three women of all their property. The women were in distress, crying every day, with no hope of life or 'esprit de vie'. But when we started our project concerned with GBV, a gender champion trained in seeking out survivors took them to our office. She counselled them, prayed for them and gave them materials to support them. The sisters are now

recovering their *esprit de vie* and they have re-started their activities.

The women thank God for all the work that the Mothers' Union of Kinshasa diocese is doing through the Mothers' Union provincial department in collaboration with Mary Sumner House in the UK, to help survivors of GBV during this hard period of COVID-19.

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A shelter to meet need

Among the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission are 'To respond to human need by loving service' and 'To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation'. These inform the practice developed in the municipality of Ariquemes - RO in the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil (IEAB) missionary district (comprising the states of Rondônia, Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul), through the diaconal work of the Noeli dos Santos shelter for women in situations of domestic abuse.

Casa Noeli was set up as a response to local need, where women who were experiencing violence at home had nowhere safe to go. An appropriate place was needed to meet this need and so the parish of Santíssima Trindade, represented by their priest, Revd Elineide Ferreira Oliveira, stepped up to the challenge. They mobilised locally and created a legal entity so that all the necessary documentation for a philanthropic body could be made official.



Work has been now been carried out for nine years to combat violence against women, and today the project has local, state, national and international recognition as a reference work in combating all types of violence against women.

Women are offered a safe place, keeping their address confidential, and have access to services through public agencies which are entry points in the care of women in situations of violence. At Casa Noeli, care is offered, 100 per cent free of charge, for a period of one to 90 days, including psychosocial care. Referrals are made to competent bodies as needed, such as health, education, the judiciary, the labour market and professional courses, to ensure that the women welcomed by Casa Noeli leave as empowered as possible and thus have the strength to overcome the violence they have suffered.

Casa Noeli, which is the only such initiative in the entire Jamari Valley comprising the municipality of Ariqueles and nine other municipalities, has served this entire region, fostering new public policies and improving those that already exist.

The house is maintained by the legal entity *Associação Anglicana Desmond Tutu*, which receives donations from local and international partners through the *Serviço Anglicana de Diaconia* (SADD). Other resources come from municipal funds through cooperation with the public administration. These partnerships are very important to keep Casa Noeli in full operation, given that there are many expenses to maintain.

Women are welcomed with their children and provided with personal hygiene products, food and medicines, in addition to donated clothes, because many arrive only with the clothes they are wearing, and other support.

The IEAB has stood out in the struggle against violence against women, being a reference for other churches that have also been awakened to the need to face and address this issue that has been manifesting itself in society with increasing intensity. Domestic abuse is a public health problem that affects all levels of social classes, races, creeds and ethnicities.

Religious leaders have sought to incorporate into their ministries actions that foster the debate and tackle this urgent topic which must be faced by the whole community. And it is in this way of affirming our faith that, as a church, we continue placing ourselves as a prophetic voice and putting into practice the gospel of God preached in our church buildings. We give voice to those who have been silenced and guarantee dignity and rights to those who have been made invisible and vulnerable. We do this in the certainty that together we can change this reality that affects all of us as Christians.

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Compost and dignity

This story from the Church of Bangladesh describes how the economic empowerment of a wife helped to reduce pressures on a couple and led to a more harmonious relationship.

Kalabati and her husband Stephan live in Rajshahi district, Bangladesh. They have no land of their own. Stephan cultivates land on a short-term lease from a landlord and the family lives hand to mouth. They have two sons who attend primary school.

The family had no peace. Poverty intensified because of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and they quarrelled with each other. Kalabati faced mental and physical cruelty. Though she worked hard for the family, she could not earn cash to contribute to family income.

In October 2016, Kalabati joined the Gandharaja Development Group of Shalom, a development wing of the Church of Bangladesh. As a member, she is given training on various issues, including vermicompost training. She now prepares vermi fertilizer (using worms in the decomposition of organic waste) with financial help from Shalom.

During the COVID-19 lockdown this year, Kalabati has cultivated patal (pointed gourds) using vermi fertilizer in nine decimals of land, producing a very good yield. So far, she has sold 12 thousand Takas of patal from her kitchen garden. The crop can be sold for one more month and there is high demand for it in the local market. The price is good because the vegetable is delicious and nutritious. People ask, how come there is such a beautiful harvest? Then Kalabati says, "It is the earthworm manure magic!" She tells us with a smile, "We can save some of the income from the land and spend it on the family. I can use the money for our children's smooth education. I am also able to fulfill some of my own desires. If two people earn in the family, there is peace."



Cultivating patal, grown on land fertilised with vermicompost

Income generation has increased the respect and dignity of women, so we are very grateful to Shalom. Domestic violence has been reduced through small scale economic activities. The neighboring people are learning from the family how to live in peace and to reduce poverty, keeping in mind climate change and the environment by reducing chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

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Building a diocese free of violence

By Daniela Gennrich, Anglican Church of Southern Africa

The Gender Ministry began in the Diocese of Natal in 2017 when I was appointed Lay Canon for Gender and Gender-based Violence by the visionary Bishop Dino Gabriel. At the time he admitted to me that "I know nothing, but I know that this is God's call on the Diocese. I'm relying on you to teach me".

We began with a questionnaire to all stakeholders, but it did not yield much. The Bishop called four Clergy Forums on Gender and GBV in 2017 to 2019. Most were heated - but the conversation had started.

The youth in one archdeaconry challenged diocesan leadership to explain why the world was not a safer place under our watch. They led a Sunday in Black Campaign in 2018.

In early 2018, I raised my discomfort that we had been speaking about GBV as if it was 'out there' without considering our own internal integrity. Bishop Dino was very decisive. He called a press conference, where he declared that the Diocese

had a zero tolerance policy against any form of sexual or other misconduct. He invited survivors to report to him. Some did, and we investigated cases using the Anglican Church of Southern Africa's 'Pastoral Standards'. Some processes were completed and justice was served; others became messy and remain incomplete during an extended interregnum in our diocese.

Meanwhile, some archdeacons helped to take the conversation to parish level, and I met with some potential parish teams.

After Bishop Dino's untimely resignation, the gender work paused for a while. Archdeacon Forbes Maupa was appointed Bishop's Emissary to assist me in holding the gender ministry.

Then came COVID-19 and the lockdown. A number of clergy told of their struggles to assist families from a distance.

In early June, a Mothers' Union (MU) member and clergy wife allegedly committed suicide in desperation after years of suffering marital abuse. With support from the diocesan MU leadership, I called a meeting of clergy wives, other women and some Gender Ministry team members. We listened to their experiences, brainstormed possible ways forward, and drew up specific proposals for practical actions, which were then approved by Chapter. But then, the husband was murdered. We went back to the drawing board. The MU and Anglican Women's Fellowship leaders collaborated to address the many needs of the children.

I was asked to pause the work again. In July we released an invitation for volunteers to be part of building a future diocese without violence. We now have a team of over 30 clergy, spouses, Chapter members, youth and parishioners.

Different teams are leading the following concrete activities:

- The drafting of a Diocesan Statement on gender equality, justice and GBV, which introduces the complaints email address: safechurch@anglicansa.org.za. The Statement is rooted in the Provincial Safe and Inclusive Church Charter.
- The making of a video showing that GBV is not 'out there' but close to home, with a social media campaign based on the video to open the conversation and point people to the Gender Ministry and to Safe and Inclusive Church.
- A Men's Ministry team is offering weekly WhatsApp-based Contextual Bible Studies for men addressing issues of gender inequality and GBV, and organised a first Virtual Men's March via Zoom.
- A Women's Contextual Bible Study group is facilitating two studies with female clergy and ordinands, and is planning a series of accessible Bible studies for other women, to help them reclaim parts of the Bible that affirm their dignity, call and leadership, based on African feminist theology.
- Gender is not just about *content* but *also process*: A series of confidential online counselling spaces for small groups of clergy singles and couples aims to support them in dealing with the stresses of COVID-19 and other major stressors in the Diocese.
- I am an active member of the Provincial Safe and Inclusive Churches team. We continue to encourage people to report incidents of sexual misconduct and have begun exploring some preventive strategies.

- The leadership of the Diocesan Women's Organisations are planning GBV and Safe Church workshops for their members.
- We are exploring the use of technology to establish an online information service and possible helpline.

Most exciting is that the new Gender Ministry team is so diverse, and that more and more activities are emerging from ground-level up as a few parishes are opening up conversation about GBV. For example, a GBV webinar series is being led by the Anglican Women's Fellowship in one parish, others have hosted GBV-focused services, and some have Declarations of Inclusivity.

We have many stories to tell and many lessons to share. This is difficult and challenging terrain! The Vicar General and Chapter are fully supportive. But there has been resistance and push-back at times. Sometimes we don't hear each other well as team members, and we have to find each other again. We are nowhere near where we believe God wants us to be. But we have agreed to journey together, with all our blind spots and foibles, and in the midst of multiple other stresses under COVID-19.

I have learnt that an enabling ministry is needed, which accepts that we are all on a journey, affirms each person's role, and opens spaces for all ideas with potential to be tried out, but also one that calls us all to be accountable within a clear framework of guiding values and principles drawn from Scripture and experience.

Contact: Daniela Gennrich, coordinator@wwsosa.org.za.

Daniela is also coordinator for the We Will Speak Out coalition South Africa <http://www.wwsosa.org.za>

Legal assistance and counselling

The Delhi Brotherhood Society (DBS) was established in 1973 by the Brotherhood of the Ascended Christ Monastery in Delhi, India. It aims to serve the poor and oppressed, regardless of caste, creed or ethnicity, and works particularly among the elderly, women and youth of deprived communities to advance their social and economic development through education, shelter, skills training, legal intervention and partnership.

In the following two examples of DBS supported legal intervention and assistance, the names of all persons have been changed.

College student Hemani met Aruj at an event. They became friends and started seeing each other. Aruj used to ask Hemani to come to different places to meet him. After several meetings, he started being intimate to her physically. When she refused, he said that he wanted to marry her and that this physical intimacy was normal before marriage. This continued for almost a year and finally, when Hemani realised that he was not going to marry her, she stopped meeting him. She also came to know later that Aruj was married and had a wife and small child. He had behaved similarly with some other young women. Aruj insisted that Hemani should meet him for one last time to solve all that what was there between them. He then raped her. Hemani then called the DBS helpline and after a while met a DBS volunteer.

Members of the Mahila Panchayat (an informal women's town council concerned with crisis intervention and legal aid at community level) run by the DBS, became involved and, assisted by police and advocates, made a complaint. Hemani underwent a medical and a First Information Report was filed. Now the case is in court and proceedings are going on.



A case being discussed at the Mahila Panchayat: Women's Empowerment Programme, DBS

The members of the Panchayat do regular follow up and support Hemani with all the paperwork and other needs.

Janya's husband was not good to her so, after nine years of marriage, she returned to live with her mother with her two small children. While she was living with her mother, her husband used to visit her and, after a few days, would disagree with and beat Janya before going off. Janya continued living with her mother and two daughters.

One day Janya left her seven-year-old daughter Urmi alone in the house while she worked as a maid in nearby houses. Her mother was visiting the doctor with the older daughter. When Janya returned home, she saw that Urmi was crying with excruciating pain in her lower abdomen. She was also bleeding. Janya rushed the child to the nearby hospital where she was seen by a doctor. Once back home, Janya asked Urmi what had happened. She said that a neighbouring boy had taken her to buy chocolates and then took her to a far off place and raped her. When she screamed, he told her to shut up otherwise he would kill her and leave her there. Urmi promised him that she wouldn't tell anyone and he brought her back home.

Urmi's condition became worse and the bleeding was not stopping despite medical treatment. Janya called her relative who lived in Delhi, who happened to know a DBS counsellor. She asked Janya to bring the child immediately to Delhi. Once there, Urmi was taken to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, with which the DBS Women Helpline collaborates. She was treated there for internal damage and infection. The case was filed and is now in court.

Meanwhile, Urmi is better now and living with her mother. She is undergoing counselling and will be enrolled in school when it opens.

Contact: Fr Solomon George, delhibrotherhood@gmail.com
Delhi Brotherhood Society: <https://www.delhibrotherhood.org>

The importance of sharing stories

The Revd Moumita Biswas of the Church of North India writes about two initiatives in Asia responding to GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic: a webinar and a festival.

In September this year, 36 women church leaders participated in a webinar 'Women Shaping Peace Together'. The women shared their stories of challenge, hope and resilience, and discussed how they are working to end GBV during this pandemic.

The webinar was organised by the 'Food Speaks Herstory of Love and Hope Network'. This network has created a forum where Asian women church leaders can share strategies, create awareness, express solidarity, comfort each other in pain, nurture each other's spirituality of love and justice, and to strengthen networking to end GBV and address issues of food security and climate justice.

During the webinar we learned very much from each other. For example, the Women Fellowship leaders in Bangladesh are helping garment factory workers (mostly women) at the brink of starvation and providing food and relief materials including masks and personal protection equipment.

Women church leaders in Pakistan are addressing issues of domestic violence and empowering each other to break the silence, with online Bible studies and through supporting one another in times of trauma and pain.

Women church leaders in Nepal are working in communities to empower families to stop forced child marriage which has increased during the pandemic. The Girl Child is regarded as a burden in South Asia.

In Sri Lanka, where women form the backbone of the economy, the Anglican Diocese of Colombo Board of Social Responsibility has prioritised relief to women and children who are the most vulnerable in this time of crisis. They are also focusing on building stronger, self-reliant, and sustainable families and supporting women's entrepreneurship efforts.

During the pandemic, recurring cyclones in India and Bangladesh resulting from climate change have destroyed people's livelihoods and the natural habitat. The women shared stories about church initiatives to build sustainable communities and churches, plant trees, restore livelihoods and empower rural people to develop 'nutri gardens' or kitchen gardens, and grow vegetables to sustain families.

During the webinar, the women church leaders also discussed strategies to promote the 16 Days of Activism and, after hearing about the Gender Justice Peace Festival currently being observed by some local congregations in Lahore in the Diocese of Raiwind, Church of Pakistan, they will aim to initiate a similar festival in other churches and countries.

Alyssa Saleem is the initiator of the Gender Justice Peace Festival in Lahore, running 1 October to 10 December. According to festival information, "October is very important for us to engage in various campaigns and initiatives to end GBV and promote gender justice. In October we observe Domestic Violence Awareness and Breast Cancer month, the world



The Light of Christ: A flame was lit at the start of the webinar

commemorates the UN International Day of the Girl Child, and the 16 Days of Activism are in November. So we are initiating various forms of advocacy to promote gender justice.”

As in many parts of the world, GBV has increased in Pakistan during the pandemic. A locust attack a few months ago has triggered poverty, hunger, starvation and domestic violence. Women, girls and children are the most vulnerable.

St Peter's Church in Lahore organised an awareness workshop for youth in October on the theme 'Paint it Purple for a Purpose', as the colour purple is used in the ending domestic violence campaign. Fifty youth, male and female, participated. The methodology used was poster-drawing, followed by discussion, contextual reflection and contextualising the Bible.

Story telling is an important methodology to break the silence. The Women Fellowship of St Esther Memorial Church held a potluck party for women in October. Women church leaders aged 24 to 60 attended. Women were invited to share stories about how they are coping with the pandemic and violence they are facing in their homes. They shared their food and love for one another and reflected on the story of the rape of Tamar by her stepbrother Amnon, who misused his power and authority (2 Samuel 13). The women leaders contextualised the story. They discussed strategies to create awareness among family members and protect girls, women and children in their families and communities.

Contact: Revd Moumita Biswas, moumita.iawn@gmail.com
Food Speaks Herstory of Love and Hope Network, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/642836063000842>

Committed diocesan support

By Robyn Andréo-Boosey, Program Manager, Preventing Violence against Women Program, Diocese of Melbourne

At the heart of what unites us in our Christian faith is Jesus' ultimate expression of love in action. Throughout his life, Jesus was moved to action by his love for people who were suffering

and marginalised, restoring them to wholeness and challenging the injustice that robbed them of their God-given dignity. In 2018, as a reflection of its deep commitment to tackling the problem of violence against women, the Diocese of Melbourne, Australia, established the Preventing Violence Against Women Program and appointed a Program Manager.

Run in partnership with local Anglican welfare agencies, Anglicare Victoria, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Relationship Matters, the Program aims to support and equip church leaders and communities to respond to and prevent violence against women.

Our vision is an Australia where women and girls can live free from violence and the fear of violence—a bold vision staked upon the knowledge that God is working among us to bring healing, restoration and justice in our lives and across our communities.

Ordained and lay leaders need to be well-equipped to respond to people experiencing violence. Church leaders are often among the first people informed about situations of violence against women within their church. The program therefore seeks to equip the diocese and church leaders to respond by:

- providing training on recognising the signs of violence, responding to a disclosure, and referring people to professional support services. We are working towards integrating this into the core training provided by theological colleges for future leaders in the Church
- developing diocesan policy, procedures and guidelines about how to respond to family violence and support people experiencing it
- establishing a Family Safety Champion role in parishes to work alongside clergy. The Champion is a trained lay leader who becomes a go-to person for people to speak to about family violence. They know how to support people appropriately and refer them to professional services
- helping churches identify and connect with their local family violence services so they know where to get professional advice and where to refer people for support
- creating church resources such as anti-violence posters with helpline information.

Supporting people experiencing violence is critical. However, our action should not stop there. We need to take steps to prevent the injustice of violence before it starts. Preventing violence against women is about culture change, and looking



beyond the circumstances of individual cases to understand the broader social enablers that underpin and drive such high levels of violence against women. As Christians, and together as the Church, we are compelled by Christ's love to shift this culture. Church leaders can help to shape people's beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, and have opportunities to make a positive impact in the wider community, such as through playgroups, youth activities and marriage preparation. So we seek to equip the diocese and church leaders to help prevent violence against women by providing:

- training on the social enablers that underpin and drive high levels of violence against women, and how to address them
- mentoring/coaching for church leaders to give them space to reflect on their learning and how to put it into practice in their parish
- peer support spaces for leaders to share ideas and resources
- teaching resources to teach God's plan for equality in parishes, including in Bible study groups, as well as youth and children's ministry
- church self-assessment tools to help parishes to reflect on their practices and culture and identify any areas where they might unintentionally be giving unhelpful or harmful messages about the equal value of men and women.

Loving our neighbour means acknowledging that violence and abuse are not OK and doing all we can to address this injustice and model a different, Christ-like way.

Contact: Robyn Andréo-Boosey,
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16 Days: Please join us on-line

You are warmly invited to take part in four international panel events and three interactive webinars during the 16 Days of Activism, organised by Mandy Marshall, Director for Gender Justice at the Anglican Communion Office.

For more details and links, see <https://bit.ly/34L7ZJU> and keep in touch on social media:

@AnglicansEndGBV @AnglicanWorld @AnglicanUN
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/IntAngWomen>
<https://www.facebook.com/AnglicanFamilies>

All times given below are GMT/UTC

The panel events

1. Addressing Gender Based Violence around the Anglican Communion—Wednesday 25 November 11.30am
2. Engaging Men in ending GBV—Friday 27 November 2.00pm
3. Theology and Prayer: How our theology engages us and motivates us to act—Wednesday 2 December 12.30pm
4. Advocacy and Gender Justice—Thursday 10 December (Human Rights Day) 2.00pm

The webinars on domestic violence

Choose the time which best suits you:

1. Thursday 26 November 06.30am
2. Friday 27 November 10.30am
3. Monday 30 November 7.00pm



Living, loving Lord Jesus,

We remember you as the defender and Saviour of women who suffered violence and shame, the One who spoke on their behalf restoring dignity and safety. We remember you listening to children others wanted to silence and shoo away.

And we bring to you now those in our communities who live in fear of people close to them who use violence in all sorts of ways to control and have power over them.

We are sorry for the ways the Church has at times enabled violence and silenced so many people, for when we have looked the other way, supported the perpetrator, sent people back to places of great un-safety.

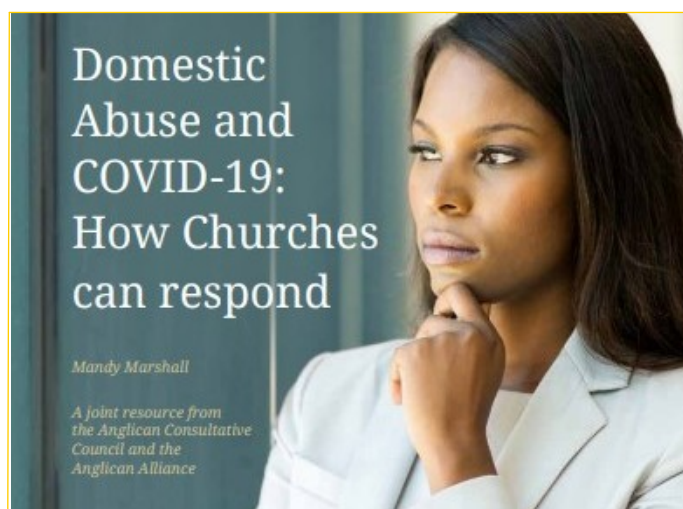
Lord Jesus, give us ears to hear. Help us to pay attention, to create cultures of safety, of truth telling, of vigilant grace.

We pray this for our church, and for the Church everywhere. Amen.

Kirsten Campbell, Diocese of Melbourne, Australia



Some resources to help us



Download this Anglican resource at <https://bit.ly/34L7ZJU> or email mandy.marshall@anglicancommunion.org

'No More 1 in 3'

The Mothers' Union has produced a new bundle of resources for the 16 Days of Activism 2020, and a pack for their first ever Global Day of Action on 5 December. Download at <https://bit.ly/2IU38h9>. The Mothers' Union All-Ireland has produced a 16 Days Prayer Diary for use particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has revealed a 'shadow pandemic' of domestic abuse. In Ireland, Women's Aid has seen a 43 per cent increase in calls to their helplines since March 2020. Download the Prayer Diary at www.mothersunion.ie.