



Faith in development: Transcript

Season 2: Gender and protection

Summary keywords

women, norms, church, gender-based violence, survivors, gender, gender equality, violence, faith, community, work, sexual, support, drc, men, lived, people, motivation, mom, conversation

Speakers

Sabine Nkusi, Nina Somera, Emily Kabuga

Episode 7: Including communities in gender protection

Sabine Nkusi 0:03

Hello, welcome back to season two of the *Faith in development* podcast, brought to you by Tearfund. My name is Sabine Nkusi. In today's episode, my colleague Nina Somera, Tearfund's gender-based violence and emergency specialist is in conversation with Emily Kabuga, a gender-based violence (GBV) expert currently working for Save the Children in South Sudan. In the conversation, they discuss Emily's experience as a humanitarian worker in different contexts, including support to survivors of gender-based violence during emergencies, as well as women in leadership and participation. I really hope you enjoy the conversation.

Nina Somera 0:12

Hello, everyone, welcome to another conversation on gender and protection. We are happy to have with us Emily Kabuga. In Kenya, she worked with the Danish Refugee Council, undertaking case management in refugee and IDP (Internally displaced people) camps. She also worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, where she worked to facilitate resources for SGBV programming, and performed a lot of coordination work. She was also with Save the Children focusing on gender-based violence vis-à-vis child protection. At the moment, Emily is in South Sudan, still working on GBV prevention and response and women's participation in peacebuilding. Welcome to this podcast, Emily.

Emily Kabuga 1:46

Thank you very much, Nina.

Nina Somera 1:49

You've been in that field for so many years. So, it would be great if you can describe your journey as a humanitarian worker, particularly your commitment to gender and protection.

Emily Kabuga 1:55

I started this journey in 2013. I joined when I was working with children in child protection and GBV. And through this, through my journey, I can say that I have found my purpose in terms of strengthening the structures to ensure a zero-tolerance of gender-based violence, and to ensure that structures are not only strengthened at the community level, but this will also have an effect on the collective responsibility when it comes to women protection, and peacebuilding. And through this, my desire is to see all women have their safe spaces, to see women empowered, to see women protected when it comes to issues of gender-based violence, and women being given opportunities. And women are allowed to make decisions, because, in most of the locations that I've worked in, there are very strong patriarchal systems that prevent women in terms of making decisions. That is one of the sources of gender-based violence now that they're not allowed to make decisions and their concerns are not considered. That becomes one issue of gender-based violence.

Sabine Nkusi 3:28

Thank you so much. Emily, you've worked with refugees and Internally displaced people, and these people have been driven out of their homes because of conflict. In your experience, what makes gender-based violence prevalent during conflict, especially if those conflicts intersect with other crises?

Emily Kabuga 3:59

Looking at gender-based violence during conflict, there are different aspects to look at. Number one, I know women are more susceptible to gender-based violence even when it comes to conflict. This is because they are looked at as the sympathisers of conflicts, and they use women. Some are used as sexual slaves. Others are abused sexually so that they can get favor if they're moving from one location to another. Others are used as bait. If you need the service, we have to give this and that now brings in the issues of sexual exploitation and abuse, which is not talked about more, but during the crisis that is what happens. Then, of course, during a crisis, there is this issue of because a woman is running away from a crisis, and she's looking for someone to rescue her, they find themselves in marriages that are not according to what they want. But, they want to be in that structure for them to be protected. So they get married, what we can call, quote, unquote, 'a forced marriage', and because they still want to be under the gender structure of our

patriarchal system to be protected, they persevere and remain in those abusive marriages, which exacerbates the prevalence of gender-based violence. Then again, when it comes to services, women during a crisis or during emergencies, there's a high prevalence of gender-based violence, because of the services that women are looking into. And again, we are still talking about being in a crisis, there are issues of traditional beliefs and practices that are not left behind. For instance, if a woman left a certain country or certain section, or they're moving for protection, if they were married to a certain family, and if the husband did not move with them, they have to continue in that arrangement. So this exacerbates the issue of gender-based violence, during a crisis. I've talked about the traditional beliefs and practices, which, even when in crisis, even if they are refugees, IDPs, these practices are not dropped off. And now women who are fleeing their locations of their countries, they become more susceptible to issues of gender-based violence, where they're on the move, they call it on the move, or when they are in their different setups, may it be IDPs may be refugees.

Nina Somera 6:50

How would you assess the interventions of international NGOs and their effectiveness?

Emily Kabuga 7:01

One thing that needs to be considered, which may be lacking, is conflict-sensitive programming. Because most of the time, when there are crises, the desire of every organisation is to rescue or respond to the needs of the ground. And sometimes when organisations rush to do this, they leave gaps. Because we are talking of communities that have had narratives and communities that have had the way they do things. And now we come in as organisations, and we want to deal with these issues of gender-based violence. And you're not looking at the narrative that has been there before. So you find that sometimes we use a lot of resources, year in, year out, and you're not able to reach the level of addressing the root causes of gender-based violence. And I'm saying this, because when you look at internally displaced persons, the refugees, they're all coming from different locations, different traditional beliefs, and practices, and different religious beliefs. There is a way that they do things. So, sometimes we miss out on listening to the way they do things. And we do what we know can work best for them. And through that assumption, it becomes very challenging for us to reach the root causes. And when I'm saying this, I am aware that we have quite a lot of resources in the communities. And we always say that it is easy for us to bring in our resources, but we are not considering the resources that the communities have. So it will be important for us to think about the resources that are available so that we build on that instead of us bringing in our resources and our ideas without considering in depth what is required by any given community. And through now having the conflict-sensitive programming we'll be able to bring it in not only when we're responding to issues of SGBV. Once we sit down with the community and look at the narrative that has been there, we can identify the resources that we have on the ground, we build on that. And through that, we are able to come up with a durable solution for handling this. But it's easy for us to give an example, and I'm aware that we'll have the Menstrual Management Day coming up soon. But I'm aware that sometimes we bring in our thoughts, our ideas, which is not the idea of the community. And at the end of it, we have wasted resources, which you could have used together with the communities to come up with a structure

that will help us in addressing issues of SGBV.

Nina Somera 10:13

Thank you so much, Emily. In the many places and many contexts that you've been and where you've worked on GBV, consistently, what are the most common forms of GBV that you have encountered where you serve?

Emily Kabuga 10:33

Almost all forms of gender based violence are experienced. But, the most prevalent is intimate partner violence, then we have emotional abuse, then we have the harmful cultural traditional practices. And when you talk about harmful cultural traditional practices, this one builds up to other forms of gender based violence. For instance, when you talk about intimate partner violence, in most contexts that I have worked in, the reason where women are subjected to issues of gender based violence, the intimate partner violence is related to maybe the marriage. And we talk about marriage, where in most of the locations that I've worked there are issues of dowry and the way it is paid here is through cows or cash. So, when a woman is unable to deliver their domestic chores, they are punished based on the issue that this is the way they were paid. So, there is no way that they are not able to perform. Then, when you talk about the harmful traditional practices, we are talking about early marriage and forced marriage, which is very prevalent in most of the locations that I've worked in. Looking at these women, they don't have a choice who is marrying them. The community makes the decision on who is marrying them, depending on the wealth of any given man. This becomes a challenge, because if a woman runs away, they're not able to run away. They'll run away, and they will be sent back to the man they've been forced to get married to. In the recent past, it's been very sad, because we've had instances whereby we are losing women to domestic violence, when they are punished and physically abused by their partners based on being accused of being unfaithful. This has now increased the number of unwanted pregnancies, whether they have been sexually abused. Let me add to the list that sexual abuse in the areas that I've worked in is also very prevalent, but it is rarely talked about, especially where I am at. As much as we've been raising awareness, we've been encouraging women to talk about it, they don't talk about it, because if it falls under the ears of the community leaders, women are punished for that. They really try to cover, but we do it indirectly to make sure that even if they're exposed to sexual issues of sexual violence, at least they're able to access the services that are available to make sure that they don't get sexually transmitted illnesses and even unwanted pregnancies. I've talked about physical violence, I've talked about emotional violence. In most of the communities that I have worked in, women are subjected to disciplinary meetings by their community leaders. If they are caught in what I could say, 'an act ', or something that is not acceptable in the community. Through that, the community is a sort of punishment, but through that abuse, women suffer a lot through that, and they are not able to handle that. For instance, if a woman gets a child from someone else, which is perceived that if they do not get with their husband, the woman is forced to give the child back to the suspected father, which leads again to emotional abuse because you can imagine a woman having to give away their children because they're not wanted in that family. That becomes very difficult for women. Some punishments subject women to a lot of pain, not forgetting that these women may have come from the Civil War. They're

coming from a place with a crisis. They're coming from conflict. And now they are not allowed time to process pain. So, at the end of it all, this leads to post traumatic stress disorder. Mostly it is not noted until when a woman or a girl continues with the cycle of abuse and violence, they are not able to handle themselves. Sometimes they have cases of suicide. The cycle continues like that. Those are some forms of GPV that are prevalent, even others are prevalent, but I'm just talking about those that are very high in the areas that are operated in.

Nina Somera 15:42

That must be quite a lot. When you were handling all those cases in the different places that you've been. The next question that they have is related to your work, particularly in promoting women's participation in leadership and peacebuilding. How would you describe the potentials and capacity of women's groups, whether these women's groups are formal or informal, in organising and mobilising themselves, so that they can address gender-based violence, noting that these women's groups are also made up of individuals who are themselves affected by crisis, especially conflict?

Emily Kabuga 16:36

Of course, it's a desire for everybody who is working under GBV prevention and response. Because, our desire is to see that women are empowered. Our desire is to see that there is zero tolerance to GBV. There have been a lot of resources that have been put into empowering women in protection and peacebuilding. But looking at it, there's still a gap that needs to be addressed. Reason being, we are dealing with a patriarchal system. We are dealing with deep-rooted systems that were made without the consultation of women. And even now, when you look at the decision making, most of the time women are not considered at the level of decision making. And something else that puts women at a disadvantage is literacy levels. You find that most of the women in most of the locations that I've worked in, their literacy levels are very low. When it comes to responding to some cases, they are challenged based on that, because they have not been exposed. The only places I've been exposed to are in their homes, taking care of the children, and of course, domestic chores and that. It becomes very challenging for us to empower women, though there are fewer of them that are willing to be empowered. It becomes a challenge if the structures are not accepted. For instance, most of the leadership, overall leadership you find in a camp, you'll find that it is a man in most of the positions. For instance, in a church, it's a man. When you go to other religions, if you go to Muslims, most of the sheiks are men. It becomes very difficult for women to penetrate through. There have been efforts and women are willing and women are coming up. Women are taking positions of leadership, but they cannot make decisions without consulting men. That is where we're saying that we cannot engage women and leave out men. By doing things, by engaging women without engaging men, we still have a gap, because men need to come in and understand where the women are coming from and understand that yes, women have potential. Most women, for instance, if someone is given a position, for instance, in government positions or any other leadership position and relationship role, they cannot abandon their domestic chores and their roles to go and attend to most of these meetings. Sometimes you hear women saying that oh, you see, that's why we don't bring in women because they don't have time. We cannot

blame these on women because there are other roles that they cannot abandon for them to be able to attend to this. There have been efforts as far as I have said in terms of engaging women in peacebuilding and protection, but there are gaps because we need to bring in resources to engage men. When I talk about engaging men, not engaging men at the surface. It is sitting with men. For instance, in some of the trainings I conduct, you can look at the agenda box and see what a man does, and what a woman does in a day. The box is almost empty for men and for women, it's overflowing. When you're conducting such training, we challenge men, for them to at least be able to empty some of these chores that are on the women's box and bring it to their side, which is challenging again, because women have been taught that this is their role. It becomes very challenging for men to come in. So, it is possible to empower women. But we cannot empower women without capacity building men and raising awareness for men on how we can support this. But that said, we have seen women coming up, we have women who are holding positions of leadership. Even at the refugee camp with the IDPs we have women that are doing very well. The women groups are doing very well in terms of promoting protection and peacebuilding. And through that, most women are joining them, but what we still need to work on is engaging men, not to feel as though they come in and work with them, but to appreciate what women are doing and supporting them at their level.

Nina Somera 21:15

What do you think will make the programs around engaging voice, effective? Particularly, how can we make these accountable to women and girls?

Emily Kabuga 21:30

In terms of having men and boys on board for prevention response, we need to think of programs that are not only done in a training setup, but they are replicated at homes, and they are replicated everywhere else that we go. For instance, when you talk about chores, we know the amount of time that women spend in care work. These care workers or domestic work is what really prevents women from taking part in most of the activities. That is one. The other thing is education. There is still, in some locations, the prevalence of boys going to school, because girls at a certain age, they're supposed to be married off. For instance, in the current location, at 15 years old a girl is supposed to be married. For them, they don't consider being in school after 15. That is their culture, that is what they know. So even then at 15, they're prepared. Then another thing that we need to look at is the way we respond to this, because it is engaging and mentoring them on accountable practices. It is not enough if you don't have follow up, it is not enough, if you don't have men who are following up on men and boys to make sure that they are accountable. And they are committed to this. It's very easy for us to come up with programs, maybe one year or two year programs that will have this group of men or youth that we are training them to be accountable. It's easy to say that. But how practical is this? These are some of the things that we need to consider and to think about deeply. Because if we come and train them, and there is no follow up, it does not bear any fruit. It does not really support women, it does not come in for the benefit of women and still benefits men, because they are aware what they're supposed to be doing and they don't do it. So it will be helpful when you're in your organisation to be thinking about getting men and boys to think of follow up and making men accountable.

How are they accountable for this? Do they come back and have a discussion? Do they have a place where they have owned it? This is what you're doing in terms of supporting women? And are they fair, and mentoring other men? I mean, these are some of the things that we need to look at. And it should not only be on paper, it should be followed up to ensure that you're holding men accountable. And holding men accountable doesn't mean that if someone is a perpetrator of GBV that they are arrested. Of course that is one way of holding men accountable, but you're talking of really making them put on the shoes of women, being empathetic and walking the journey with women. Through this, women will be able to come out and actually relate with men at a level with no fear, no traditional practices, not as the opposite gender, but as a co-worker, or in terms of peacebuilding and protection.

Nina Somera 25:06

Thank you so much, Emily for that very substantive critique on engaging voice. We're already reaching the end of our conversation. One last question from me, then I'll also ask you later if you have other thoughts that you want to impart. What makes you hopeful about the possibility of addressing, if not completely eliminating gender-based violence, especially in emergencies?

Emily Kabuga 25:40

Thank you, Nina. What makes me hopeful? Very many things make me hopeful, but what stands out is a willingness for the community to be challenged. The responsiveness and the receptiveness of the communities. We always say, when we think about traditional practices and beliefs, it is not very far from the religious beliefs and practice. We are not actually able to differentiate between what is acceptable when it comes to religious beliefs and what is acceptable when it comes to traditional beliefs and practices. This is because the traditional beliefs and practices are something that the

community has always been doing, and they know the same thing when it comes to religious beliefs. And they are both intertwined. But what gives me hope, is that there is willingness for instance, where I am currently working. It has been very difficult for us to gain a hearing of women with the opposite sex. Now, what gives me hope is that there is willingness in the community if we manage to identify the resources that we have. And again, there is hope, if we get to identify other deep-rooted concerns or issues that bring about the issues of gender-based violence. Through this, we can see that we are able to come up with a structure, a sustainable structure in the community, that they are able to address issues of gender based violence and empowering women. I know this is very challenging, it looks complicated, but I do believe that it is possible, yes, to get the community to become responsible, we're able to challenge the patriarchal systems, and then through this, eventually, we'll be able to change the existing narratives.

Nina Somera 27:49

Any other thoughts that you want to share with us or any final word?

Emily Kabuga 27:58

Well, I don't have other thoughts. But maybe, as I have described, the issues of gender-based violence are complicated. It requires time and resources. When I talk of resources, I am talking about the communities that we are responding to. The major gaps that we have, of course, we cannot do without financial resources. But what we need most are the communities that we are working with. And through this, once we get to identify the resources on the ground, that is the only way we can overcome the issues of gender-based violence. I am a believer that even if we were to change one person, eventually in the future, this will replicate, and we'll have positive feedback. So my thought is that we need to look more at the resources that we have on the ground for us to be able to challenge the systems and come up with sustainable plans for response and prevention. Thank you.

Nina Somera 29:18

Thank you so much, Emily, we really appreciate the time that you shared with us. And more importantly, the substantive thoughts that you shared with us out of your reflection from the many years that you've spent, particularly on GBV prevention and response. We wish you all the best. We know that you're still working in a very volatile context, and you will continue to do so. So, all the best for you and thank you once again.

Emily Kabuga 29:50

Thank you very much for having me and I wish you the very best too.

Sabine Nkusi 30:03

Thank you for listening. I hope you have enjoyed the conversation between Nina and Emily. Please join us again in our next episode. And if you want to know more about our work or catch up on previous episodes of the *Faith in development* podcast, please visit learn.tearfund.org. See you next time.

Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, United Kingdom.
☎ +44 (0)20 3906 3906 ✉ publications@tearfund.org learn.tearfund.org

Registered office: Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, United Kingdom.
Registered in England: 994339. A company limited by guarantee. Registered Charity No. 265464
(England & Wales) Registered Charity No. SC037624 (Scotland)

