



Faith in development: Transcript

Season 2: Gender and protection

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Speakers

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Episode 1: An introduction to gender and protection (part 1)

Sabine Nkusi 0:08

Hello and welcome to season two of *Faith in development* podcast brought to you by Tearfund, a Christian relief and development agency working in over 40 countries across the world. This is a podcast of storytelling and conversation as we explore different areas of development through the lens of faith, drawing on the wealth of knowledge from the incredible people who will share their learning and knowledge with us. This season, we will be focusing on gender and protection. My name is Sabine Nkusi, and I'm the gender and protection lead at Tearfund. I have been a gender justice advocate for over 10 years with experience in leading projects addressing sexual and gender-based violence at the global level. And I'm absolutely passionate about gender equality. I will be your host for this conversation. This season, you will hear authentic, challenging and inspiring conversation that center lived experiences and reflections around gender, theology, sexual and gender-based violence and social norms and power dynamics with a view to learn from each other, reflect together and celebrate success in our journey to end sexual and gender-based violence and promote gender equality. So, to give you a bit of background, Tearfund's response to sexual and gender-based violence was born out of our response to HIV in the Great Lakes region of Africa. And that was in 2011. Women and girls in the regions were living with the silence and pain of rape, even as they were dealing with HIV status. So, Tearfund invested in research to understand this issue and explore the hopes of those affected by sexual violence. A key aspect of this research was to really unpack the potential and expectations of the church. This research was conducted across Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, and Liberia. And the findings were similar across the four countries. The extent of violence and abuse suffered by women and girls in some men and boys was staggering in every country. The church and faith groups were highlighted for the failures to speak out and address vulnerabilities of survivors of sexual violence. However, there

remained a strong desire from the survivors for the church to become a safe space for them to go to. And this very much resonated with Tearfund overall vision for the church in mobilising faith leaders to be active players in the fight against sexual and gender based violence and equip the church to respond to these issues in their communities. And that is how our journey began really, to enable the church to speak out and be that safe space people needed. Meet the needs of survivors and engage men and women on issues of gender equality. So in this first episode, you will hear from myself Solange Mbonigawa, who coordinates our global survivor movement work, Francesca quick our sexual and gender based violence interventions manager Uwezo Mbagmalelei. Then, our *Transformed Masculinities* advisor, Luke Martin, our section, Gender Based Violence Program Officer and Nina Somera, our Gender Based Violence Emergency Specialist. If you listen carefully, you will also hear Nina's dog joining the conversation. All of us are members of the Tearfund Gender and Protection Unit. I'll be back at the end of the episode to tell you what is coming up for the rest of season two. In the meantime, I hope you enjoyed this conversation.

Hi, everyone, on this very first episode, we want to introduce ourselves the team behind this work. We are part of the Gender and Protection Unit. This is a team of about seven people based all around the world. Some of us are based in the UK, others in DRC, South Africa, Kenya and the Philippines. And the purpose of this unit really is to provide technical leadership on issues of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to provide support and capacity development to our SGBV programs, but also to facilitate learning in the countries where we work or at global level. And through all of this, we try to ensure that the work that Tearfund does is work of quality, evidence-based and also innovative.

Some of you have been part of this team longer than others. And I think it'd be good for our audiences to hear how you came to be part of this work. And really, what is your motivation? So if I may start with Luke, please tell us how did you come to be part of this work? And what is your motivation?

Luke Martin 5:27

Yeah, thanks, Sabine. I think for me, I have known about Tearfund for a very long time. And so kind of seeing that general work has always been something that I've been very excited by. And for a good few years now, probably the past 10 or 15 years, gender, and kind of what God thinks about gender has been really interesting. And so in my role as a sexual and gender-based violence program officer, I guess I'm really excited that I have an opportunity to work within Tearfund with the church around the world and also other organisations to begin to see an end to gender based violence and see an increase of gender equality. And so for me, I'm really excited by the church. I've always, you know, since as long as I can remember, thought that the church can and should be at least a big part of the solution to the world's problems. And so, you know, having an opportunity to engage with the global churches is really exciting. And it's something that we do, I think quite well. And we are led by the church, as well as leading the church, and we're led by one another, to, you know, to see an end to gender based violence. So for me, yeah, that's the motivation behind it. And I'm really, yeah, I just love steam and the work that it does.

Sabine Nkusi 6:53

Thank you, thank you very much, Luke, and it is true, I think, over the years, we have seen the work that can be done in the church, especially on this issue of gender, or sexual and gender based violence. If I may come to you, Frankie, and Francesca, we have very much been doing the work in the church through our

transforming masculinity approach, isn't it? So can you tell us how you came to be part of this work yourself? And what is the motivation for this?

Francesca Quirke 7:30

So I think there's a lot of overlap with some of what you were sharing, I think, you know, if I kind of stepped back a bit, but if I look at my life, I'm really inspired by my grandmother, by my mom's side of the family, who lived all over the world, my grandmother from Trinidad, born there, and, and wherever she went, her faith, you know, encouraged her to, to get involved to volunteer to be active. And so that, I guess I grew up, I always had this perspective of, you know, global outlook and faith being something that drives us to action and to serve, and to connect with others. And my grandmother is also like a massive matriarch. She's, like, 97, this week, you know, my mom's my family, like, got a really strong women. And I grew up in a family of three girls. And there was always this sense of like, you know, girls, girls, girls, and like a real strong sense of female identity. And I grew up in the church as well. And I grew up in a church that was encouraging of women and of women in leadership. And then, as I, you know, continued my faith journey, many other people had had very different experiences, and had actually found the churches quite an oppressive space for them as women, they'd been excluded from certain aspects of church, or they weren't for members, or there were certain things that they weren't allowed to do as women within the church, and didn't make sense to me, it seemed very, like nonsensical with my understanding of who Jesus is as a person, as the way in the Bible, we see how she's interacted with women, and those who were stigmatised or marginalised. And I thought, yes, that's my understanding of who Jesus is and how he relates with women. And I want the church and I want to be part of something which is spreading that which is moving that forward, which is continuing that arc, towards equality. And I think as I read more about gender based violence, and understanding that, you know, the root issue of all these poisonous fruits is gender inequality, and a fundamental belief that some people have that men and women aren't equal and how that's upheld, through teaching or to certain understanding in the church. It made me really passionate about addressing that within the church. And that's why I love the work that we do, and are partnering with faith leaders and faith communities and trying to unpack our understanding of theology and gender equality. And that's what drew me to this team. And that's what makes me excited to be part of it every day.

Sabine Nkusi 9:53

Thank you very much, frankly, it resonates with many of us, when you talk about the sort of influence So of women in our lives, and how that sort of shapes who we become, or who we do not become and I'd like to come to you, Solange, maybe if you can just share how you of course came to do this work and, and maybe a little bit of your experience around that and kind of full a bit of the sort of line that Frankie has used as well about, you know, that sort of female influence and leadership in our lives.

Solange Mbonigawa 10:30

Wow, thank you, Sabine. And it might be difficult to follow someone's law line it especially when you talk about something that link up with your feelings and your emotion, this program before going there. In terms of my role, I'm coordinating a global movement for survivors of sexual gender based violence on its own. The title says it or why am I redefining myself with the courage to lead this global movement, it comes from the lived experience. And this lived experience. For some, it might not motivate them to do what I do now. But for me, it became a source of strength. I've seen my mom suffering, her suffering, gave me

strengths, trying to say that I don't want to jail the same journey my mom took. And I don't say she took around the gym. But she found herself in a situation where I would see tears running down to her cheek. That speaks a lot of my involvement in this role. And the motivation more came from, you know, as a woman of faith, I was still young, observing what was happening. But God knew as before we've been formed in the womb of our man. He's the one who equipped him. He's the one who gave me all what I needed to be a support for my mom. And I did it. I'm proud of that. It must end the day. That's why I'm coming up with so many women on the same line of thought, how do we stand together to help other women who are still crying? Survivors are asking, Who is there to listen to us? And I'm saying, Where are you in this line of thought you the audience who are listening to this? I faced a lot of challenges in this program. And that reminded me how my dad was sitting on all resources of the family that my mom had no access to. And that is what I've seen, even in this program, this sexual gender based violence work being underfunded, why? One will do answer to that. But I know this is a challenge of today cannot be off tomorrow. And that brings my home. That is we speak is a survivor speaking, there is hope that there is a change tomorrow. Tomorrow will be always different of today. And I'm saying this, my mom was able to put up a smile. And that is what I want for many women out there. To see them might be them crying it today, but tomorrow, smiling. Thank you.

Sabine Nkusi 14:17

Thank you so much. The power of women of survivors speaking out and will have the opportunity to hear a little bit more in the coming episodes on the workaround survivors and how it is important to give voices to survivors in ways or if I may come to you on this. Solange has talked about survivors and in Tearfund, we've always been keen to listen to the voices so that they need to become really our priorities. And one of the things that came through as we're listening it was the need to work with men and boys. The need to have alternative masculinity as well. And that is very much part of your role as the advisor on transfer masculinities. But before you maybe go into that, can you just tell us you know how you came to be part of this work? And again also, what is your motivation?

Solange Mbonigawa 15:16

Thanks, Sabine. I met great people a Tearfund while I was working for Tearfund Patna and DRC. And during this process, we implemented the program and I learned a lot from Tearfund, especially on gender. And the same time we were working on this team approach. Let me say, you know why Tearfund was working on the team approach, I took part of it through this process working on it. And I learned from this process and my motivation to be part of to work on this is after, you know, went through different work with community members, the testimonies I received, you know, showing that we have helped people in the restoration of their relationship. So this gave me more strength to say that we are doing a good job, which is helping people to restore their relationships, at house level at community level, which for me, it was a good thing. And the other thing, which is very, very keen, my motivation is seeing that my mom, and most of the men are part of those who had been violence, especially in the context you're living in, where culture norms, you know, are giving more position to men than to women, and the men are using this position to harm women. So as this approach this, this work we are doing is trying to help men to understand that we need to come back on the same level to consider women, as you know, valued as men. So this helped me and encouraged me to continue this work, especially when the change is happening in the community, when people can say about the change, we are seeing community, this is giving me more strength.

Sabine Nkusi 17:12

Thank you so much for so. And I think, you know, indeed this, his process of transforming masculinity. Again, we'll be sharing more of that in the coming episodes. On this approach. We have seen tremendous impact in the lives not only of men, but also of women. And it's not just about engaging men, but the whole community, because the whole issue around patriarchy is about men and women as well. So Nina, as the newest member of this team, I think, would you be able to share with us, you know, how you came to be part of this work and maybe linking up to some of the work that you do around gender based violence in emergencies.

Nina Somera 18:04

Okay, so my work in this sector has been informed by my own experience as a student activist, I think I'm fortunate that they came from a university, which allowed difference too, to emerge from all of us. So, which is why different identities coexist in that space. But one of my first jobs was to support Filipino migrant workers who endured gender based violence. And this is where I learned more about feminist approaches in direct support services, whether it's in psychosocial support, or in legal assistance, or even in economic assistance. But this is also where I think I saw the emergence of local women leaders who organise themselves as part of their own personnel processes. So, some of them are actually survivors of gender based violence. And some of them, you know, were not even able to see their own cases prosper in court. And yet they were able to organise themselves as community based organisations. And as the name suggests, they were also able to support their own communities, whether these are groups of women, or these are groups of constituents within the places where they were living. And they think this has been a constant fixture in the different context wherever I've worked both development and humanitarian, it is often a challenge because women's organising and leadership are not always recognised; they're not always visible. But they also see that these have been opportunities for some transformative changes in those communities. And in Tearfund, I think the Gender and Protection Unit is welcoming space for critical conversations, which I think is the first step in order for us to unmask and rethink power. Because that is the key in pursuing, you know what everything's formative changes that we would like to see in a given community.

Sabine Nkusi 20:22

Thank you so much, Nina. And, and just maybe even picking up from what you were talking about. So for myself when I don't know if this is the right way to say it, but I think maybe some people are quite born with a sense of something's wrong, and some things are right. And I remember being a young girl and are always, always, always in discussion with people, especially boys, just really challenging. Why does he say this? Why? Why is it that in community there is a party, so I am, I am from Rwanda, if there is a party? Why is it that it is only men who are allowed to speak and if a woman speaks, she cannot have the last word, it has got to be a man just really questioning some of these things, because for me, it really sounded wrong. But I was also, I guess, had the privilege of being born in a family that really valued girls and women. So my father was quite progressive in his thinking, he was always sort of supporting my mother, in any endeavours, anything that she wanted to do, was encouraging me and my sister to, to really do whatever it is that we wanted to do, if we wanted to climb trees, we could climb trees, anything that we wanted to do, we could do. So. So that was that really strong sense that, you know, women and men are equal, that we equally valued. And really, God created us at the same. So we should really benefit and enjoy the same things as our brothers. So that was quite when I was small. And I grew up with that sort of sense. But I think things sort of took a different turn, when I was quite young, in my teenage years, I came from a country that went through a war that went through a genocide. And I remember as my family and myself, we were running, and really trying to get to safety. So this is, of course, very difficult situation, you are running, and you are sort of jumping through, you know, over bodies, dead bodies, we were young children. And I remember coming across a dead body, a woman who was that, and, and seeing her lying on the floor. And seeing her. Her, her thighs sort of exposed with really clear evidence that she had been raped as a child as I was 13, around that time as a teenager. So I did not fully understand what that was, I could see that something had happened, I could see that she was dead. But I did not fully understand what that was. But I could see that

it was violence that, that there was injustice there. And I was in complete shock. And I remember really sort of praying about time, praying and seeing God if I'm able to, to be part of something. So if so, firstly, if I survive this, because the likelihood of us surviving the conflict and what was going around us, you know, that that was really, when we were not sure if we will come out of it. But I was praying to God saying, God, if I'm able to survive this, I really want to be part of something that would, that will bring an end to this violence or bring an end to this injustice. And I keep remembering about this woman.

Of course, I didn't know her. But her face is really engraved in my mind. It is a face that I will never forget. It is a face that I have carried with me for over 25 years. And it is a face that sort of motivates me every day in the work that I do. And I think it being a Tearfund and a faith based organisation where we can really engage the church to break the silence about these issues, not only in times of war, but also you know, violence happens in times of peace itself around us, especially gender based violence. So being part of an organisation that allows for that space, to engage the church to engage the faith leaders to look at scripture and what does the Bible say about equality and as all of us are created in the image of God, it's just been a wonderful thing to be part of really.

Thank you for listening in. I hope you have enjoyed hearing some of the passion and motivation behind the work of Tearfund in this area of gender equality in addressing sexual and gender based violence. Over the course of the series, we will explore our two approaches to tackling sexual and gender based violence. We will look at social norms, gender in emergencies, gender in theology, women's economic empowerment, and much more. We hope you can join us again in the next episode for part two of the conversation with the Gender and Protection unit. And in the meantime, if you want to find out more about this work, please visit learn.tearfund.org. Thank you very much for listening.

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