

# MASCULINITIES, FAITH AND ENDING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

## BURUNDI SUMMARY REPORT

Tearfund is a Christian relief and development agency building a global network of local churches to help eradicate poverty.

Tearfund has 10 years' experience working through church-based partners in the response to sexual violence.

Tearfund is a founding member of We Will Speak Out, a coalition of faith-based groups, international aid agencies and individuals committed to see the end of SV in communities worldwide.



www.wewillspeakout.org

Tearfund would like to acknowledge the Province of the Anglican Church of Burundi, who helped facilitate this research.



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This summary report is based on research commissioned by Tearfund's HIV and SV Unit and conducted by Technical Advisor Prabu Deepan.

For the full report visit:  
www.tearfund.org/sexualviolence

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### TRANSFORMING MASCULINITIES

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is one of the most frequent forms of violence worldwide.

It is estimated that one in every three women or girls will experience violence in their lifetime<sup>1</sup> – commonly at the hands of someone they know.

Globally, this affects 1 billion people.

Tearfund believes that this is one of the most damaging problems within societies across the world.

It has been working for more than ten years on the issue.

To date, many government and civil society development programmes have focused on raising awareness of the issue and empowering and advocating for the rights of women, girls and SGBV survivors.

Yet what has been lacking is engagement with men and boys, who are the main perpetrators of violence, and sometimes they are victims themselves.

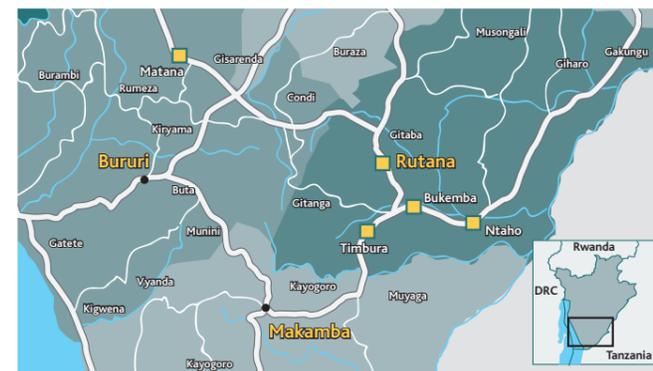
Rather than excluding them from strategies to end SGBV, Tearfund calls on the church and other agencies to work with men and boys as part of the solution – to re-envision manhood in order to break the cycle.

If we are to uproot SGBV, it is imperative that we understand the broader dynamics of gender and triggers of violence.

We need to examine male identities and roles, address their experiences of becoming a man, their experiences of trauma and violence within the family and their vulnerabilities in an evolving social environment.

We must examine aspects of the harmful historical and traditional values, behaviours and knowledge that have influenced society and allowed SGBV to breed within communities. This will serve both genders and is a crucial component of intervention programming if we are to succeed in ending SGBV.

#### Community parishes who participated in the study



### RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Tearfund partners and the local church started working together to prevent sexual violence (SV) in post-conflict communities around the Great Lakes Region and Liberia, where there is silence and stigma around rape and violence against women.

Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world and is still emerging from a 12-year ethnic-based civil conflict. Many women and girls have experienced SGBV, but there is a lack of reliable data on its prevalence.

Yet the majority of Burundians profess the Christian faith and the church is at the heart of the community.

Against this bleak backdrop SGBV has taken root in cultural, religious and societal thinking, influencing the behaviour, attitudes and practices of men and women in harmful ways.

For three years, Tearfund has been working with the local church to address the issue. We are committed to being a catalyst in ending all forms of SGBV against women and girls, and acknowledge the positive role men and boys can play in restoring society and redeeming manhood.

During August and September 2013 Tearfund commissioned a study about men, faith and masculinities within five Anglican Church parishes: Rutana, Matana, Ntaho, Bukemba and Timbura.

A total of 414 people (219 men and 195 women) were interviewed through 12 group surveys and 20 focus-group discussions.

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to ascertain the social attitudes, practices and behaviours and biblical understanding of men and women.

#### Study objectives

- To make available a baseline study of existing attitudes, knowledge and practices of men and women around the following themes: male identity, gender roles, manhood, gender relations and SGBV.
- To further understand the context where acts of violence occur and why.
- To provide a safe space for men and boys to articulate their own experiences of violence.
- To design effective programmes to engage men and boys in the response to end SGBV.
- To challenge and equip the church to promote equitable, caring, non-violent relationships and positive masculinities.

<sup>1</sup> Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence (2013) WHO



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## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Despite the research results showing the challenging attitudes upheld by both men and women, there was a collective will to change.

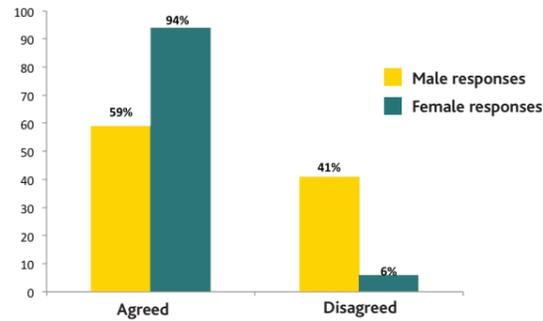
Most participants were not defensive about their beliefs and expressed a need to change, even when justifying actions that were harmful to their lives. This creates a unique opportunity for the church to work within communities to transform social norms and influence culture for good.

Here are the key research findings.

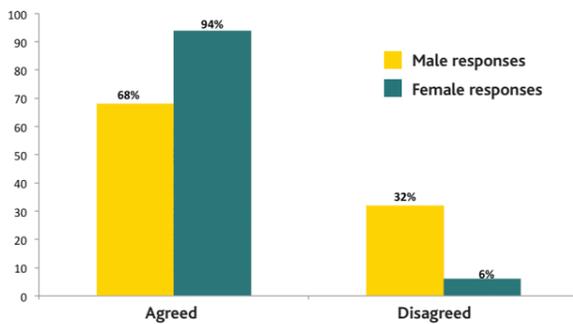
### Gendered roles and attitudes

1. Men and women held strong attitudes on gendered roles, which informed their work, roles and responsibilities within the home and society.
2. Men and boys expressed frustration when they were unable to fulfil the expectations of their families.
3. More than two thirds of women thought a husband should provide economically for the family.
4. A large percentage of men and women thought that a woman's primary role was cooking and taking care of the home.
5. The majority of women felt it was a mother's responsibility to care for the children. But this restricted men in their caregiving role and prevented children from having positive relationships with fathers.
6. Men and women linked their roles to the creation story in the Bible. They believed that the scriptures taught that a woman was inferior or unequal to a man, especially within marital relationships.

### Changing nappies, giving kids a bath and feeding the kids are the mother's responsibility



### A woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family.



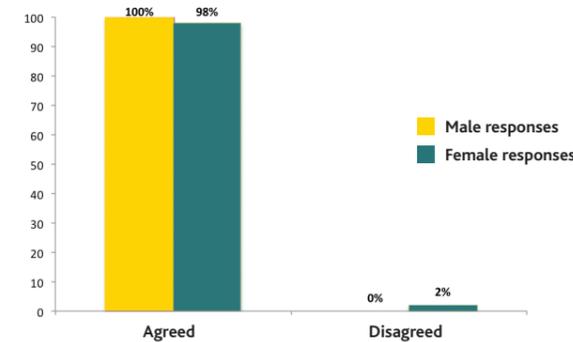
Tearfund believes that the church should always be a place where social norms and attitudes can be challenged if they are causing harm

The Bible teaches that all humans should be treated with love and respect and that men and women are created equal in the eyes of God

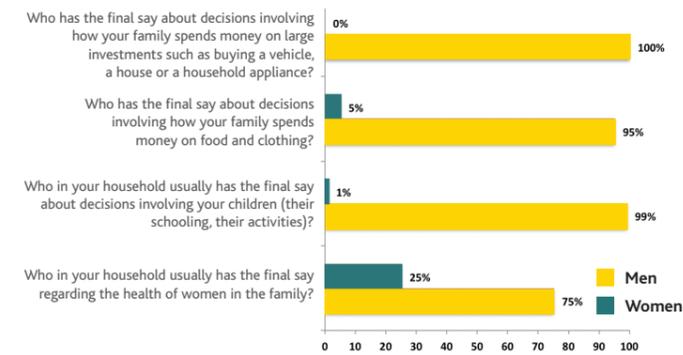
### Decision-making and domestic duties

1. Almost 100 per cent of both men and women agreed that a woman should obey her husband.
2. Almost two thirds of men stated that the man should have the final say in all family matters.
3. Women expressed concerns and fears about their husbands abusing alcohol, engaging in extramarital relationships, polygamy and transactional sex, which were corrupting family relationships and impacting finances.
4. Decision making and control were linked to a skewed or partial understanding of scripture, many citing only part of Ephesians 5:23: 'For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church', and failing to read the entirety of the scripture which goes on to command man to respect his wife.
5. Attributes expressed in relation to 'headship' were of dominance, control and power and violence.
6. Men articulated that the economic power within the home was shifting due to male unemployment, and that women copied the controlling model of headship.

### I think that a woman should obey her husband



### Responses to questions on current decision-making practices



### Violence, manhood and SGBV

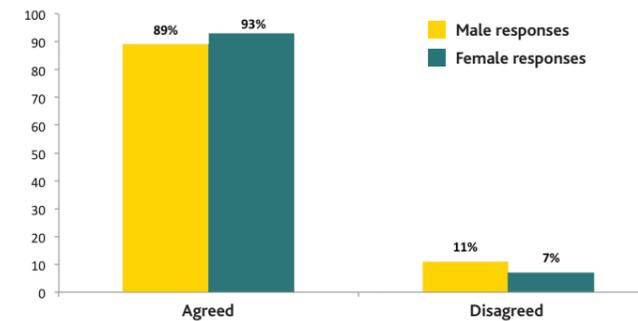
1. 97 per cent of men and 95 per cent of women said it is manly to defend the honour of the family, even by violent means.
2. Men expressed the need to discipline their wives when they did something dishonourable or wrong. They linked this to biblical manhood and said that it was important to show this in front of children and the community to maintain respect and control.
3. 89 per cent of men and 93 per cent of women said that if a victim didn't physically fight back, it wasn't rape.
4. Women thought that a woman cannot be raped by her husband as they believed her body belonged to him according to the scriptures.



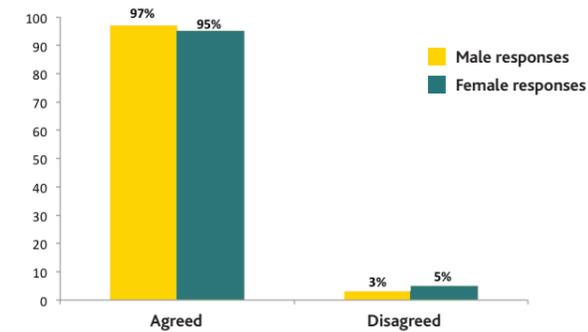
Local pastors and men in the church are challenging harmful attitudes and behaviours regarding gender roles after training. Photo: David Deakin/Tearfund.

5. A skewed belief that women were inferior, and men were entitled to women as they were created as 'helpers', seemed to contribute to harmful practices which lead to different forms of SGBV.
6. A culture of shame and stigma was associated with SGBV and participants focused on the behaviour of the victim rather than the perpetrator – 77 per cent of men and 95 per cent of women were in agreement with the statement: "some women ask to be raped by the way they dress and behave".

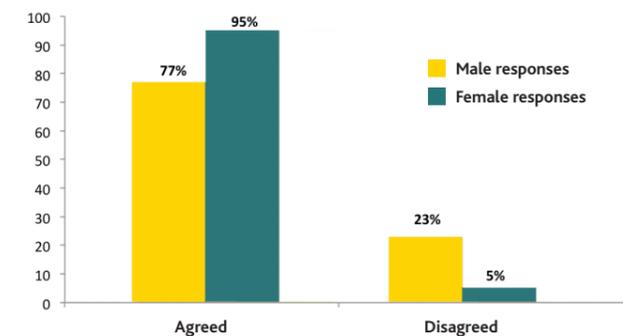
### I think that if a woman doesn't physically fight back, it's not rape



### It is manly to defend the honor of your family even by violent means



### I think that some women ask to be raped by the way they dress and behave



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

With the majority of Burundians professing the Christian faith, the church has the power to break the negative cycle of SGBV that has permeated society and culture.

It is clear that the church has some urgent work to do to restore a correct biblical understanding of manhood and equality in all relationships. It must make up for lost time and change the skewed biblical understanding which may have contributed to exacerbating violence.

For a full list of recommendations for the way forward, please see Chapter Six of the research report.

### Building awareness

It is crucial that the church engages with other organisations, such as civil society groups, non-governmental organisations, other faith-based groups and government service providers, to educate men, women and children on the different types of SGBV that can occur, and to promote the laws, policies and services that are available to survivors.

### Education and training

There is a desperate need for sound theologically-based education and training for church leaders and congregation members, which will have a positive impact on society. The following areas urgently need addressing:

- equality and equitable relationships, particularly within the story of creation and New Testament teachings
- fair and fulfilling roles in sex, marriage and family relationships
- the need to redeem an understanding of manhood and masculinity, through promoting Christlike equitable role models
- a transformed understanding of what it means to be the head of the household and promoting relationships of mutual respect and value between husband and wife

### Safe spaces

Churches, community-based groups and state-run projects need to create safe spaces for men and boys, and SGBV survivors, to share ongoing vulnerabilities and heal from their own traumatic experiences of violence. This will facilitate a space for transformative masculinities and bring an end to stigmatisation.

### Leadership

The church needs to denounce violence in all forms and publicly reject the norm that is attributing 'manliness' to violence. We need to invest in leaders who live and demonstrate equitable attitudes, based on the character, teachings and life of Christ. This will promote equitable, non-dominating, non-violent relationships at all levels.

### Mentorship

There need to be programmes for young people on positive masculinities, and pre- and post-marriage counselling for couples, which focus on positive aspects of relationships and family well-being.

### Inaccessible areas

The church is the only institution accessible to people in remote areas, and it is imperative that the church works in partnership with local and national administrative and judicial bodies to respond to incidents of SGBV and promote an understanding of all of the above.

### Partnerships

It is important that non-faith-based organisations (non-FBOs) acknowledge that there is scope and willpower to change from within the church, and find common ground to work together to end SGBV.

Churches and non-FBOs need to form coalitions and collaborate with other key organisations on advocacy efforts to influence national policy and practices.