

FOOTSTEPS

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SEXUAL AND
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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WARNING

This edition is on the topic of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and the content may be distressing to some readers. We have included line drawings showing the different types of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) on pages 10–11. These are not intended to cause offence, but rather to help readers understand this important issue.

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FOOTSTEPS

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

This is the third and final part of our *Footsteps* series based on the biblical idea of jubilee. In the Old Testament, the jubilee year was intended for the restoration of the Israelites' relationships with God, one another and the land. In this edition, we look at a topic where restoration, justice and healing are urgently needed: sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). This is one of the most damaging and widespread problems facing the world today.

But there is hope. I recently visited a church in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) that is part of an exciting initiative aimed at preventing SGBV. The church is running Tearfund's Transforming Masculinities programme (see pages 14–15), looking at healthy ways men and women can relate to each other in the knowledge that we are all equal, made in the image of God.

The church's pastors reported that violence between couples in their congregation had decreased since the programme started. I met with a husband and wife who were full of joy at the ways their relationship had been transformed. Participants had invited their friends and neighbours to take part, and the message was spreading fast.

There is much we can do both to prevent and respond to SGBV in our communities. This edition includes inspiring ideas from Paz y Esperanza in Latin America, who are empowering women economically to make them less vulnerable to SGBV (pages 8–9). We feature practical ways of helping survivors of SGBV on their journey to healing (pages 6–7 and 16). And we look at what really works to end female genital mutilation/cutting, which we at Tearfund consider to be a type of sexual violence committed against women (pages 10–13).

I will end with some words from Sylvie, an inspiring survivor of SGBV from DRC: 'Whatever you are going through, know that God is with you. Whatever happens, do not lose hope. The suffering is not the end of our lives. There are better things that God is preparing for us. I believe in that God.'



Zoe

Zoe Murton – Editor

PS Because of the sensitive topics covered in this edition, we have not included our normal children's page.

📷 Cover shows a man in Malawi taking part in the *Silent no more* campaign against SGBV in 2012. Photo: Chris Boyd/Tearfund



by Veena O'Sullivan

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) threatens the human rights, safety and dignity of millions of affected individuals. It also has negative effects on the public health and security of the communities in which it happens.

THE PROBLEM

SGBV is violence directed against anyone based on their sex or gender, where sex refers to the biological differences between males and females and gender to society's ideas about what it means to behave as a man or woman. It includes physical, sexual, verbal and psychological violence.

SGBV affects one out of every three women around the world, while one in every 33 men suffers SGBV. It is therefore closely connected to violence against women. Unequal power relationships and differences in social standing between men and women are the main reason for SGBV.

Many people associate sexual violence with war and armed conflict. Sexual violence in conflict is a key challenge, and we need to ensure that all efforts are made to prevent this brutality. This includes bringing perpetrators to justice, and developing programmes to respond to SGBV from the outset. But while the extent of sexual violence during war and conflict is heightened, we must not forget that it happens in peacetime too – in homes, schools, places of work and the wider community. It is important to know that the majority of violence against women and girls is perpetrated by an intimate partner – someone they are or have been in a romantic relationship with.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT SGBV?

SGBV is a result of the problem and pain of broken relationships. Prevention is possible, but it requires a change in hearts, minds and behaviours.

Silence is a barrier to ending SGBV. We need to be able to speak out about it and understand that stigma and lack of support keep survivors silent, which in turn increases their vulnerability. In order to create safe communities, we need to work together across the education, health, social and justice sectors. This must include leadership at all levels. When survivors are empowered and organised, they too can be a powerful force for change.

We must also ensure that our governments stand against violence through signing up to key international laws, developing systems that support survivors and ensuring that perpetrators do not escape punishment. Laws need to be backed up by adequate processes that can bring them into practice. Our leaders themselves should be role models in the way they respect and treat women.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF FAITH COMMUNITIES?

Faith communities have a vital and urgent role to play both in the prevention of and response to SGBV. To prevent SGBV, we need to change harmful social norms – the unwritten rules that shape people's values, attitudes and behaviours. Faith groups have a considerable influence on social norms and traditional practices. They are also often the ones providing education and health services in local communities, and can actively seek ways to reach out to survivors of SGBV.

The survivors we have listened to have always asked for the church and its leadership to speak out and to provide care and compassion. Church leaders need to understand that SGBV happens

Empowering women economically can help reduce their vulnerability to SGBV. Photo: Tom Price/Tearfund



in the church, too. They should stand up for the most vulnerable, ending stigma and discrimination and championing survivors' need for support and justice.

There are many practical things that local churches (and other organisations) can do:

- Become educated about SGBV and speak about it openly in sermons and meetings, addressing harmful ideas about gender from a theological and cultural perspective.
- Provide services such as counselling and health care, or accompany survivors to access these services.
- Create safe spaces for women to speak openly about SGBV. Support groups for women can be a powerful approach.
- Encourage members of the local community to form an action group that will provide seamless support to survivors (see page 16).
- Create emergency funds to support women in crisis.
- Invest in the empowerment of women, including income generation activities, so they do not feel trapped

into living with perpetrators of SGBV for the sake of basic needs.

- Mobilise men to be champions for the rights of women and girls.
- Advocate with local authorities to make sure they too become safe spaces for survivors to find compassion, care and justice.

WHAT CAN INDIVIDUALS DO?

As individuals, it is important that we do not feel powerless to do anything about SGBV. There are many things that we can do both to prevent and respond to the problem:

- Understand that every community, whether rich or poor, is vulnerable to SGBV.
- Start with the young. Ensure you treat both boys and girls as being of equal value, giving them equal access to education and other opportunities.
- Make violence unacceptable! Let people know that you stand against violence against women and girls.
- Encourage both men and women to have ongoing discussions about mutual



It is important to involve men and boys in preventing SGBV. Photo: Cally Spittle/Tearfund

respect. Ensure people recognise that it is important to involve men and boys.

- Make sure people know where to go to seek help.

SGBV is preventable. We all have to play our part in ending it. We can start by breaking our silence, beginning conversations in our homes, places of work and worship. We need to model the change we want to see and inspire others to do the same.

Veena O'Sullivan leads Tearfund's work on SGBV and peacebuilding.

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WHAT CAUSES VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

A man may offer many excuses for hurting a woman – that he was drunk, that he lost control or that she 'deserved it'. But a man chooses to use violence because it is a way he can get what he needs or what he feels is rightfully his as a man. Power and control are key reasons for violence against women. Violent or abusive relationships often happen when one person has more power over the other.

There are many different ways that a man tries to gain power over a woman. Physical violence (beating, slapping, kicking etc) is only one of

them. Other types of violence against women include:

Emotional abuse The man insults the woman, puts her down or makes her think she is going crazy.

Sexual abuse The man makes the woman do sexual things against her will, or physically attacks the sexual parts of her body. He treats her like an object.

Controlling money The man tries to keep the woman from getting a job or making her own money. He makes her ask him for any money she needs. Or he may force her to work and then take the money she earns.

Isolation The man controls everything the woman does – who she sees and talks to, and where she goes.

Making threats The man uses a look, action or tone of voice, or makes threats, that make the woman feel afraid that he will hurt her.

Using children The man uses the children to make the woman feel guilty, or to hurt her.

Adapted from Where women have no doctor by Arlene August Burns. Visit www.hesperian.org to buy a copy or download the book free of charge.



BIBLE STUDY

THE STORY OF TAMAR

Sexual violence is not just something that happens in society today. It has happened throughout history. The story of Tamar illustrates a chain of events that leads to a devastating act: the rape of Tamar. This Bible study can be used as a tool to engage churches and communities with the issue of sexual violence, breaking the silence that often surrounds this subject.

Read 2 Samuel 13:1–22

The story of Tamar is a clear account of a planned act of sexual violence taking place in the house of David. The perpetrator, a half-brother who is full of lust towards his half-sister Tamar, admits to his passion for Tamar and is advised to create a story that would make it easy for him to have access to her.

The sexual violence that results has a severe effect on Tamar: she tears her dress and covers herself with ashes as a symbol of mourning that she has been violated. This story is a reminder that sexual violence is an abuse of human rights. Together, in partnership with all survivors of sexual violence, we need to speak out against it and stand firm. We must join hands in prayer and action for justice and restoration of broken relationships.

DISCUSSION

In small groups, share with each other what you think the Bible passage is

about. Then as a larger group, discuss the following questions:

- *Who are the characters in this story and what do we know about them?*
- *What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar?*
- *What does Tamar say and do? Why does she act in that way?*
- *What opportunities were there during this story for sexual abuse to have been avoided?*
- *Tamar spoke out against her abuse both before and after it happened. What was the response to this? What is the response to women who speak out in our culture?*

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS PASSAGE?

Amnon abused his power and authority to get what he wanted, despite the harm done to Tamar.

The silence of those involved in this story is shameful. Christians should not stay silent within our society if they know that abuse is taking place, whatever the personal cost to them.

Tamar's role in the household made her vulnerable: she could not refuse to serve or cook for this man. Young people, especially girls, are very vulnerable to sexual violence. We need to ensure they

are educated about the risks from a young age and that effective protection is provided for them within our own families and communities.

Sexual violence can take place anywhere, even in Christian homes and churches. (David was a man of God, and yet sexual violence occurred in his home.) It is important to create more awareness that survivors are NOT to blame for the violence.

PRAYER POINTS

Pray for healing of the pain and suffering caused by sexual violence (physical, mental and emotional).

Pray for the protection of girls like Tamar who are vulnerable to sexual violence.

Pray for caring and godly men and women who will speak out against sexual violence and seek to protect the most vulnerable people.

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Adapted from Hand in hand: Bible studies to transform our response to sexual violence. See Resources page for details.

by Solange Mukamana

CREATING A SURVIVOR MOVEMENT



Survivors of SGBV often keep silent about their pain. Photo: Mark Lang/Tearfund

Survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) often keep silent about their ordeal, which adds to their sense of isolation. Reasons for not speaking out may include threats from the perpetrators, fear of stigma and discrimination, and a lack of hope that anyone could help them.

Survivors face damage to every area of their lives. They may experience:

- physical health problems
- mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety
- emotional pain
- problems with sex and intimacy

- substance addiction
- failure to pursue a career (eg dropping out of school)
- family disintegration (eg in the case of rape by a relative).

Support groups allow survivors to speak about their pain in an atmosphere of acceptance, where they can begin the process of healing.

STARTING SUPPORT GROUPS

In South Africa, Tearfund and its partners began taking small groups of survivors through a programme called *Journey to*

healing. This is a three-day workshop where women have the chance to tell their stories and share their pain through creative expression. Although it is only the start of the healing process, it made a big difference to them.

But after they had spoken about their pain, then what? They needed ongoing support. We set up a place where they could meet together weekly in their communities. These follow-up groups often use a manual called *Out of the shadows, into the light*, which covers forgiveness and other topics. Forgiveness can never be forced, but we find that it is needed in order to ensure healing is taking place.

IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS

It is very hard to sustain healing without looking into other areas of individuals' lives. Many of the women were struggling to put food on their tables. We helped them form savings-and-loans groups, which allowed them to take loans to start small businesses. We also helped them learn business skills and think about how they could continue their education.

TRAINING CHAMPIONS

As more support groups formed, we realised we needed more people to help run them. We selected survivors

TIPS FOR STARTING A SUPPORT GROUP

by Adrienne Blomberg

You do not have to do it the same way that we have! But using a manual such as Journey to healing can be helpful. It is also useful to do some training in facilitation skills and pastoral care, and to have a sound knowledge of SGBV issues.

1. **Create a place of safety**, where the principles of trust and confidentiality are laid before anything else.
2. **Ensure meetings are easily accessible**. Can they be reached by public transport?
3. **Make sure you can offer ongoing support**. If you offer an initial workshop, ensure there are support groups that the women can progress to.

4. **Take a holistic approach**. Think about ways of meeting other needs the survivors may have, such as forming a savings-and-loans group.

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If you are interested in using Journey to healing or our other resources, contact Solange Mukamana at solange.mukamana@tearfund.org

WHAT NOT TO SAY TO SURVIVORS

to become what we call Champions, and trained them in social work skills, administration, conflict management, advocacy and lay counselling. They have become such strong leaders, and help to ensure the movement is sustainable.

SURVIVORS CHANGING SOCIETY

We find that each group sees the needs in its own community and comes up with an activity to help in some way. For example, in one group there were many women who had been raped at an early age while their parents were out at work. They realised that a lot of children in their community were similarly vulnerable, so they set up a homework club, preventing those children from having to be at home alone.

Tearfund won a prize at the Charity Awards 2018 for its work with survivors in South Africa. We have also started survivor movements in Burundi, Chad, DRC, Liberia, Mali, Myanmar and Nigeria. We are now planning to scale up our work and mobilise a global movement of survivors.

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Solange Mukamana works for Tearfund in South Africa. For information or advice on starting survivor support groups, please contact her on solange.mukamana@tearfund.org



Wrong words can be like knives in the heart for survivors of SGBV.

When we are talking with women who have suffered abuse, we need to be a safe person who will not judge. We should be wholeheartedly available to listen to them and support them. Wrong words can be like knives in the heart, making survivors feel even more hopeless and alone. These women need to know we are there for them.

Here are some deeply unhelpful things that are often said to survivors:

'What were you wearing?'

This question is totally irrelevant. What does it matter what she wore? Policewomen in uniform have been assaulted. The US Department of Justice has confirmed that there is no connection between clothing and sexual assault. Questions like this imply that the survivor was partly at fault, when in fact the only person to blame is the one who carried out the abuse.

'Why did you not run away or shout out?' or 'What were you doing there?'

Again, these comments suggest the survivor was somehow at fault. Abuse occurs under all circumstances. Often during an assault, the person being attacked is in a state of shock. Ask yourself: Wouldn't the person have run, shouted or avoided the place if it had been possible? How easy is it to do these things when you are vulnerable? How can you avoid a place where you receive much-needed food or pay?

'Was it really that bad?' or 'You are lucky it was not as bad as what happened to so-and-so!'

Of course it was bad. We do not need to grade it. 'Lucky' is never a word to use when it comes to abuse. What happened changed a life; we must not compare it with others' experiences.

'Why are you crying? It is over now,' or 'Just calm down.'

These words are so unhelpful. Crying shows there are still emotions, which is a healthy sign. God created us with emotions. Pain, confusion, anger and many other feelings need to be expressed in order for healing to take place. Maybe the people speaking these words cannot deal with the emotions being expressed.

'Have you forgiven him?' or 'Are you praying for him?'

As Christians, we can be hurtfully legalistic. While forgiveness is an important part of the healing process, it takes time. Never force survivors to pray for their perpetrators; instead, pray for and with the survivors. Allow them to be angry or even to wish for the perpetrator's death. The time will come when forgiveness can be given, one step at a time.

'It's all part of God's plan' or 'God disciplines those he loves'

These comments are very cruel in this context. God is a loving Father who only has good plans for us. Similar remarks may be made in Buddhist settings, such as, 'This must be your karma.' Always reassure the woman that abuse is never part of God's plan and that no one deserves it.

Let us be there for our hurting sisters with the right attitude, being non-judgemental and available. Learn from Proverbs 16:24: 'Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.'

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Adrienne Blomberg is a consultant working for Tearfund in Liberia to support survivors of SGBV.

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BREAKING THE ECONOMIC CHAINS OF SGBV

Maribel never imagined a \$30 loan would make her a slave...*

When disease struck her husband several years ago, Maribel sold their land to pay the medical debts. She then sold their cattle, and everything else they owned, looking for a cure. But it was all in vain. Her husband eventually died in their one-room house on the outskirts of La Paz, Bolivia.

With no money and desperate for work, Maribel and her daughter took a cleaning job in Potosi, a distant province. The work was a long way from their community, but the employer provided accommodation and gave Maribel a loan of \$30 for her moving expenses. After working there for just a week, Maribel realised the truth: on the wage she was receiving, she would never pay back this debt. Her employer owned her.

He became increasingly violent and abusive, paying Maribel just enough to allow her to eat and make her loan payments. When angry, her boss and his gangsters tortured her and the other female workers, burning them with cigarettes. When they were drunk, they often assaulted and raped the women. Having paid off the local police long

ago, these men had no fear of justice – and the women had nowhere to go to plead for safety.

Maribel was trapped.

Sadly, Maribel's story is not a bizarre, one-off tragedy, but a daily reality for so many women around the world. Powerlessness and crippling fear keep people such as Maribel silent – and often hidden in plain sight. Today, more than 40 million people around the world are trapped in bondage through slave labour and forced marriage. Those who are materially poor, especially women, are highly vulnerable to this kind of exploitation, which often leads to violence.

What can you do to prevent sexual and gender-based violence in your community? Below are several ideas inspired by the work of Paz y Esperanza, a human rights organisation that works alongside local governments in Latin America.

ENGAGING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

To protect them from violence, the world's poorest people need public justice

systems – police, magistrates, courts – that work for them. If there are no consequences for oppressive employers, how can women such as Maribel benefit from the hospitals, schools, wells, latrines and microfinance banks we might build? If nothing protects the poorest women from violence and slavery, how can they save and invest, climbing out of poverty? Paz y Esperanza addresses this problem at the root, equipping local citizens as well as their public justice systems.

HOSTING AWARENESS WORKSHOPS

In many rural communities, male chauvinism and violence have become an accepted reality. To challenge these norms, Paz y Esperanza hosts awareness workshops in churches and community centres. The goals are to help women to increase their resilience and improve their income to make them less vulnerable to violence.

These workshops include discussions on everything from self-esteem and communication skills to healthy approaches for disciplining children. Women are trained to speak publicly in their local community, using a megaphone to relay these messages about healthy family culture to their neighbours. Once a group of 25 empowered women has been formed, Paz y Esperanza trains and organises them to begin an advocacy or entrepreneurship project.

INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

In Peru, local governments hold an annual 'participatory budget consultation', allowing citizens to state what they want funded. In the region of Ayacucho, traditionally this consultation is dominated by men proposing plans for infrastructure and irrigation.

Several years ago, in one community, Paz y Esperanza began to work with the



📷 Girls taking part in an awareness-raising campaign aimed at reducing SGBV. The sign says, 'You are kind, you are intelligent, you are important.' Photo: Paz y Esperanza



📷 Paz y Esperanza helps female entrepreneurs develop and market their products. Photo: Paz y Esperanza

women to help them express their needs. The local women agreed that their top priorities were personal safety, work opportunities for women and ending violence against women.

Paz y Esperanza helped to register the women's group, providing them with a formal structure to represent themselves. The women elected several leaders and presented their proposal at the budget consultation. They heard words of protest from some: 'Why are those women here? They should stay quiet in the corner.' But in the end, the women's well written proposal, which was signed by the majority of the women in the community, was granted funding.

Paz y Esperanza has facilitated this process in several provinces. On many occasions, the women's participation has secured funding for entrepreneurship workshops and campaigns against violence.

CREATING WORK FOR VULNERABLE WOMEN

Along with advocating for large-scale awareness and change, Paz y Esperanza runs the *Mujeres Emprendedoras* (Women Entrepreneurs) project in the province of Chincheros. This project

aims to develop entrepreneurial skills in women with limited formal education who have suffered violence. Thanks to Paz y Esperanza's advocacy efforts, the local district municipality now holds regular food fairs, where the women gain access to the labour market, testing and improving their food and dessert products.

'Some women who have never been successful in business are now selling typical foods – mondongo, arroz con pollo or quinoa doughnuts,' says Kathia Alminagorta, a Paz y Esperanza staff member in Ayacucho. 'Little by little, the women are released from the economic dependencies that tied them to violent partners.'

Paz y Esperanza has also helped groups of women apply for start-up funding from the local government to begin small businesses. One of the most successful is a group of seven women who started a juice business called Chica Express, selling juice by the highway to passing buses and cars. Paz y Esperanza helps groups like this to put a business plan together, supporting them until they gain the confidence to sell by themselves.

SIMPLIFYING ACCESS TO CARE

Due to fear, shame and cultural pressures, in Ayacucho only two per cent of survivors actually report violence committed against them. Even once they summon the courage, rural women in particular struggle to access justice services, as they must travel great distances to get help, often on foot, in buses or in the back of trucks. Because providers are often located far from one another, women with limited money, time or understanding of the process fail to secure protection.

In response, Paz y Esperanza has helped to create CASE (*Centro de Atención Socioemocional* – the Centre for Socio-emotional Care), a centre that operates in partnership with the local government and NGOs. CASE provides space for police officers to whom women can report a crime, prosecutors who can provide a legal restraining order, and social workers who can connect women to resources for ongoing care.

PROMOTING SAVINGS AND CREDIT GROUPS

In light of the links between violence and economic struggle, Paz y Esperanza promotes savings groups, which reduce women's vulnerability to exploitation. In these financial groups, members save and lend their money to one another in a fair, safe context of friendship. These groups are particularly effective in communities that lack access to affordable savings-and-loans services, where money lenders charge as much as 180 per cent interest. Members also build 'social capital' – a deep sense of connection and relational support that protects them in difficult seasons of life.

The Chalmers Center's *Restore: Savings* curriculum is specifically designed for churches to promote savings groups among economically vulnerable people. Around the world, women in these groups report feeling freedom from shame, greater connectedness and increased resilience.

* Name has been changed to protect identity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What links between economic vulnerability and sexual and gender-based violence exist in your community?
- What steps could you and your church/organisation take to break these chains?

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For details of the Chalmers Center's Restore: Savings curriculum, please visit www.chalmers.org/savings (you will need to create a free account). Available in English, French and Spanish.

UNDERSTANDING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) describes the act of cutting, destroying or removing some or all of the external parts of the female reproductive organs.

It is estimated that more than 200 million women worldwide have undergone FGM/C, and that every year a further 3 million girls are 'cut'.

WHY AND WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

FGM/C is a harmful practice that has been taking place for more than 2,000 years. People often think FGM/C is

performed for religious reasons, but it began before any of the major faiths and is not required by any religion.

The reasons why FGM/C continues today are complex. Reasons given for practising FGM/C include:

- family/society's expectations and to maintain family honour
- tradition and/or people mistakenly thinking it is a religious requirement
- the idea that it preserves virginity and prevents promiscuity

- community/social acceptance
- the false belief that it is better for cleanliness/hygiene
- the mistaken idea that it prepares girls for womanhood and enables them to have a good marriage.

FGM/C happens mainly in 30 countries in Africa and the Middle East, in some areas in South-East Asia (including Indonesia, India, Malaysia and Pakistan) and also in particular communities settled around the world.

HOW DOES FGM/C AFFECT GIRLS AND WOMEN?

There are no health benefits to FGM/C, and it causes a great deal of harm.

IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS CAN INCLUDE...

- very severe pain, sometimes leading to fainting
- excessive bleeding, which can lead to anaemia

- life-threatening infections including tetanus and sepsis
- problems in urinating as a result of being frightened or in too much pain to go to the toilet. This can lead to serious health problems.

- damage to the urinary tract
- shock and trauma
- death, usually through severe or untreated infection or excessive bleeding.



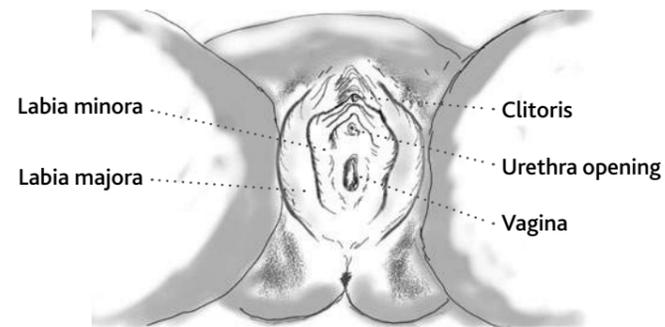
LONG-TERM EFFECTS CAN INCLUDE...

- permanent deformation of female genital parts and formation of scar tissue
- numerous complications during childbirth, including prolonged labour and excessive bleeding. This can be life-threatening to both the mother and the baby if good medical care is not available.

- problems during sexual intercourse including pain, lack of desire, dryness and difficulty in reaching orgasm
- tears between the vaginal wall and the rectum and/or the bladder, which can lead to incontinence
- labial fusion in some women – especially for type 2 and type 3 of FGM/C, where the flesh around the vagina seals over

- difficulty in urinating and menstruating, especially if infibulation (type 3) has been performed, which restricts the flow of blood and urine
- psychological impacts, including persistent fear about sexual involvement, even with a loved partner. Some survivors report flashbacks to the time of cutting.

FEMALE GENITALIA



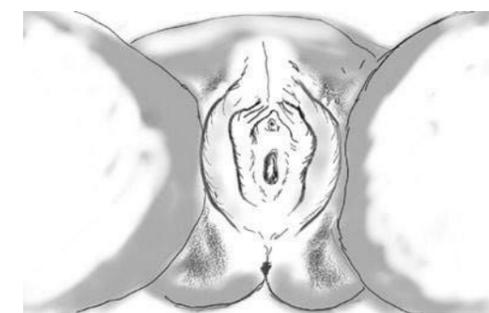
Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is an issue that urgently needs revealing and tackling.

Only through open discussion of this practice will communities gain full understanding of the risks it presents to millions of girls and women's health and well-being.

You can use these pages to help explain to people in your community about the problems caused by FGM/C. If FGM/C is not practised in your community, consider supporting organisations working to end it in communities where it is performed.

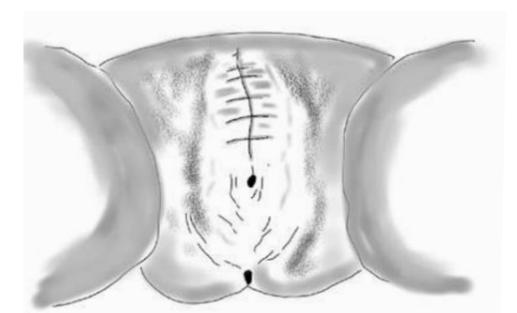
THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) HAS CLASSIFIED FGM/C INTO FOUR TYPES

TYPE 1



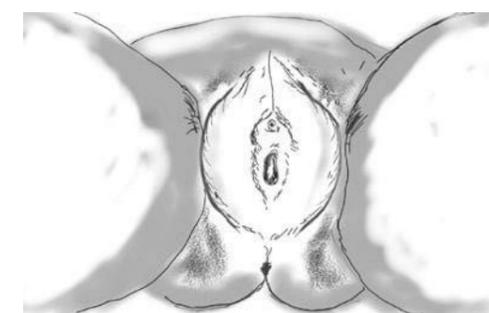
CLITORIDECTOMY: The partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals), and in very rare cases, only the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris).

TYPE 3



INFIBULATION: Narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the labia minora or labia majora, sometimes through stitching. It may or may not include the removal of the clitoris.

TYPE 2



EXCISION: The partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora (the inner two folds of skin on either side of the opening of the vagina). It may include cutting away the labia majora (the outer folds of skin).

TYPE 4

OTHER HARMFUL PROCEDURES: All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, eg pricking, piercing, cutting, scraping and cauterising.

Adapted from resources by 28 Too Many (www.28toomany.org), the World Health Organization's FGM/C fact sheet and Tearfund's toolkit Reveal, which supports communities to tackle hidden issues. See www.tearfund.org/Reveal

Illustrations: Bill Crooks/Mosaic Creative

WHAT WORKS TO END FGM/C?

A wide range of strategies have been used by different organisations to encourage people to abandon female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Often, a combination of strategies is used. But how effective are they? We explore a number of approaches below.



📷 Promoting girls' education can be an effective approach to ending FGM/C. Photo: Richard Hanson/Tearfund

ALTERNATIVE RITES OF PASSAGE

For ethnic groups where FGM/C is part of a rite of passage marking girls' progression to adulthood, one approach that has shown success is Alternative Rites of Passage (ARPs). ARPs substitute the cutting part of the ceremonies with alternative rituals. These preserve the cultural traditions but eliminate the cutting.

However, ARPs will have limited impact unless they are accompanied by education that engages the whole community in collective reflection and leads to changes in the expectations of community members. The use of ARPs is further limited by the trend for communities to cut girls at a younger age and with less ritual.

HUMAN RIGHTS/COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROGRAMMES

A rights-based approach acknowledges that FGM/C is a violation of women's and girls' rights. This approach is sometimes used alongside other strategies to address FGM/C. The different parts of this theory include:

- Those carrying out the programme adopt a non-judgemental human rights approach.
- The facilitators conduct community awareness-raising of the harm caused by FGM/C.
- The entire community makes a joint decision to abandon FGM/C.

- The community makes a public affirmation that they are abandoning FGM/C.
- News of the decision is spread to neighbouring communities.
- There must be a supportive environment that enables change to happen, including the commitment of the government.

This community dialogue approach is based on the principle of listening and questioning between different generations, aided by a facilitator. It enables participants to reflect on their values, customs, traditions and expectations and to consider whether, when, how and under what conditions change should take place. In Ethiopia this approach is termed 'community conversations' and was adopted by the government in 2004 as a national approach to ending FGM/C.

THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY MAKES A JOINT DECISION TO ABANDON FGM/C

This strategy has emerged as an important approach to eliminating FGM/C. However, when community conversations have taken place outside village communities, discussions did not lead to the necessary consensus to

change social norms, as the participants had no sense of shared ownership.

PROMOTING GIRLS' EDUCATION TO OPPOSE FGM/C

Education may be the best long-term strategy for ending FGM/C. Many NGOs engage schools with awareness-raising programmes on child rights and the dangers of FGM/C. There is a strong link between FGM/C and early marriage among some ethnic groups. Girls are cut prior to getting married and often drop out of school after being cut. The approach of promoting girls' education encourages the girls to remain in education and in some cases equips them to speak out against FGM/C.

EDUCATING FGM/C PRACTITIONERS

Educating FGM/C practitioners and helping them find alternative sources of income may be successful in supporting them to end their involvement in FGM/C. However, it does not change the social convention that creates the demand for their services. Such efforts may be helpful alongside approaches that address demand for FGM/C, but alone they do not have the elements necessary to end the practice.

EDUCATION ABOUT THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

Informing communities and individuals of the health risks associated with FGM/C has been a key part of most of the strategies for encouraging people

to abandon FGM/C. Convincing people in areas where FGM/C is very common about the health problems can be a challenge. Difficult childbirth and long recovery periods afterwards, which are often worsened by FGM/C, are frequently seen as normal. Communities may not, therefore, realise that FGM/C is contributing to these problems. Finding convincing ways to communicate this information in each context is vital.

For instance, in Tanzania, addressing the issue of *lawalawa* needs to be central to any attempt to eradicate FGM/C. *Lawalawa* is the local name given to certain infections and is wrongly thought to be cured or prevented by FGM/C. It is one of the main reported reasons for FGM/C continuing in many areas.

THE LEGAL APPROACH

This approach consists of lobbying the government to make laws against FGM/C and advocating for such laws to be enforced effectively. The legal approach is most effective when accompanied by awareness-raising and community dialogue.

There can be negative effects if laws against FGM/C are introduced before society has changed its attitudes and beliefs, or if they are not accompanied by the necessary social support. In such cases, the laws may encourage people to continue the practice secretly or cross the border to undergo FGM/C in a neighbouring country. The fear of punishment under the law may also prevent people seeking medical treatment for health complications.

MEDIA INFLUENCE

In most African countries, radio is the most common form of media used by the majority of the population. Radio can be an important tool for encouraging people to abandon FGM/C. For example, in Mali, local radio stations were used to broadcast health professionals' explanations of the medical complications of FGM/C, which resulted in an increase in women and girls seeking medical attention. Other strategies include newspaper articles, billboard posters, theatre

performances and music. Global media campaigns are also useful for opening up a platform for local advocates, such as *The Girl Generation*, a global campaign that supports the African-led movement to end FGM/C.

WORKING WITH MEN AND BOYS

Many organisations understand that changing social traditions should involve all members of a community, not just women and girls. Some programmes therefore explicitly include men and boys. In Kenya, a partnership between the sports team the Maasai Cricket Warriors, sports development charity Cricket Without Boundaries and the anti-FGM/C charity 28 Too Many uses the popular sport of cricket as a means to raise awareness of FGM/C and to empower youth to end the practice. The young men use their reputations from athletic achievement and act as champions for change in communities.

RELIGIOUS-ORIENTED APPROACHES

A religious-oriented approach involves demonstrating that FGM/C is not in agreement with the religion of a community, leading to a change of attitude and behaviour. Village elders and religious leaders should be included in community-based programmes to make sure they are engaged with the discussions. This approach has been

used in both Muslim and Christian communities in a number of countries.

HELPING GIRLS ESCAPE FGM/C

There are organisations in some countries that aim to protect children from early marriage and/or FGM/C by setting up safe houses, to give them somewhere to shelter. They can also sometimes enable the girls to continue their education or help them be reconciled with their families and rejoin their communities. On their own, however, safe houses are unlikely to have a significant impact in ending FGM/C.



DISCUSSION QUESTION

- Does FGM/C happen in your community? If so, which of these approaches (or combination of approaches) do you think would work best in your community to challenge the practice?

Adapted from materials by 28 Too Many, a charity providing research, knowledge and tools to those working to end FGM/C. It was set up by Dr Ann-Marie Wilson, a graduate of Tearfund's Inspired Individuals programme.

Web: www.28toomany.org
Email: admin@28toomany.org

📷 A cricket team in Kenya is using sport to raise awareness about FGM/C. Photo: Laura Daniels/28 Too Many





by Prabu Deepan



A group in Brazil takes part in a Transforming Masculinities activity about gender, power and status. Photo: Prabu Deepan/Tearfund

TRANSFORMING MASCULINITIES

TEARFUND'S APPROACH TO ENDING SGBV

What can we do to end sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in our homes and communities? Tearfund has developed a new faith-based approach called Transforming Masculinities to help achieve this goal.

Inequality between men and women is a driving force behind SGBV. If we are serious about ending gender inequality, we need to address people's harmful ideas about what it means to be male or female.

To date, many development programmes have focused on raising awareness of SGBV and empowering and advocating for the rights of women, girls and survivors. Yet what has been lacking is engagement with men and boys, who are the main group that carries out violence (and are sometimes

victims themselves). Also, men hold positions of power and influence in many contexts – culturally, politically and in the church. If we engage with them meaningfully, they can be great allies for promoting gender equality.

The Transforming Masculinities approach looks at the different ideas people have about what it means to be a man – in homes, relationships, communities and society in general. Sometimes society teaches men to behave in ways that are harmful to themselves and others, especially towards women and girls. Transforming Masculinities creates the space for conversations, reflections, accountability and a shared journey with other men to break the cycle of violence. It promotes positive aspects of being a man, taking Jesus as our example.

USING FAITH AND SCRIPTURES

The majority of the world's people follow a religious tradition or faith. Sometimes faith leaders (who are usually male) and certain interpretations of scriptural texts can reinforce beliefs that give men more power and value than women. These harmful interpretations allow gender inequality to continue, and are often even used to justify violence and to shame survivors of SGBV.

However, faith leaders and faith traditions can equally be powerful agents for change in addressing SGBV. The Transforming Masculinities approach engages with faith leaders, and trains 'Gender Champions', who then facilitate community dialogues.



WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

Transforming Masculinities is currently being used in eight countries, including Brazil, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar and Nigeria. So far, Tearfund has trained more than 400 faith leaders and 200 Gender Champions, and more than 3,000 people have completed community dialogues. Initial results and monitoring data show:

- significant reduction in intimate partner violence
- more conversations taking place about gender
- a reduction in gender-based violence between men and women
- faith leaders speaking out more about gender-based violence during their services
- better support for survivors
- men becoming more involved in household tasks
- improved decision-making processes within families.

We believe that Transforming Masculinities will help both to change individual behaviour and build a society free of all forms of SGBV.

.....
Prabu Deepan leads Tearfund's work on gender and masculinities.

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Email: prabu.deepan@tearfund.org*

GROUP ACTIVITY

JESUS, OUR ROLE MODEL



This Bible reflection for a small group is adapted from the *Transforming Masculinities* manual.

Read Ephesians 5:22–25

Invite participants to get into three groups. Each group should make a list of 10 to 12 characteristics of men from their community, and then 10 to 12 characteristics of Jesus Christ.

Ask each group to discuss the following and present back key points to the larger group, giving them 20 minutes to discuss and reflect:

Group 1: Look at relationships. How did Jesus interact with his family, friends, colleagues, disciples and the women who followed him?

Guiding thoughts: If men today were to be like Jesus, how would they treat women? Girls? Daughters? Sisters? Wives? Mothers? What kind of fathers/husbands would they be? (Consider Jesus washing his disciples' feet (John 13:1–17), cooking for Peter (John 21:10–14), telling Martha that paying attention to him was more important than being busy (Luke

10:38–42), weeping for his friend Lazarus (John 11:17–43) etc.)

Group 2: How did Jesus respond to those who were stigmatised by their community, such as women who were rejected and discriminated against?

Guiding thoughts: If men today were to be like Jesus, how would they respond to survivors of abuse? Would they blame the 'victims'? Would they stigmatise them? Reject them? Allow them to be abused again? (Look at how Jesus treats the Samaritan woman (John 4:4–26), the woman with an issue of blood (Luke 8:43–48), the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11), the woman who washed his feet (Luke 7:36–50) etc.)

Group 3: What kind of leader was Jesus? How did he lead? How did he teach? How did he interact with those he led?

Guiding thoughts: If men and women want to be leaders like Jesus, how should they lead? How would they lead to end sexual and gender-based violence? How would

they address gender inequality? Polygamy? Harmful practices at home, in our churches, in our community? (Focus on Jesus as the servant leader: he came to serve and not to be served; he led in humility, with love, compassion and empathy.)

IN CONCLUSION...

Make the point that we can see that Jesus was a great role model for men. Even in circumstances that were not always fair or right, he maintained self-control. He became angry but was never violent. In fact, he spoke against violence. He communicated without aggression and he was patient, meeting people at their point of need. Most importantly, he defied all social, religious and cultural norms for being a man of that time.

Ask participants to reflect on how they can promote this model in their communities, churches and homes and how they personally can model such behaviour.

COMMUNITY ACTION GROUPS



Members of Community Action Groups come together to support survivors of SGBV. Photo: CAG Mungeradji

In remote regions such as eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) often struggle to access support. They may be unaware of the services available, and facilities such as health centres may be far away. Tearfund and its partners have started Community Action Groups to help solve this problem.

Community Action Groups (CAGs) are made up of around 10–15 people who come together to help individual survivors. Members might include community leaders, health workers, faith leaders, school teachers and trusted police staff. Ideally there should be equal numbers of male and female members. Tearfund and its partners train the

members on SGBV, ways of supporting survivors and the local services available.

The group meets regularly to deal with cases of survivors from their community. Sometimes a survivor may contact the CAG herself, but often the members hear about the case through the community and offer support. The CAG forms an individual plan for each survivor. For example, they might arrange referrals to health care facilities and accompany survivors if they wish, or help the survivor's family to understand what has happened.

One CAG was particularly successful because the local army chaplain joined and played an important role in educating police and army staff. Like most CAGs set up by Tearfund in DRC,

the group is still active years after the funding for it came to an end.



DISCUSSION QUESTION

- Could you form a Community Action Group to help survivors of SGBV in your area? What resources and training would you need, and how would you publicise the group's services?

For more information on CAGs, email Elena Bezzolato, Tearfund's Programme Coordinator for SGBV in Humanitarian Response: elena.bezzolato@tearfund.org



CASE STUDY: FROM REJECTION TO NEW LIFE

My name is Ariane and I live in North Kivu, DRC. I was 14 years old when, one afternoon, I was alone at home and a man forced himself into our home and raped me. I was hurt, confused and in pain. I could not understand what had happened.*

My family reacted very badly and was ashamed of what had happened to me. Their reaction was to reject me and throw me out of our family home. Fortunately, an old relative took me in and offered me shelter. As weeks went by, people in our village started to talk and point their fingers at me. They said I was pregnant. I was 14; I did not know.

This is when the Community Action Group (CAG) met with me and took

me to the local health centre, where I received care and support. The CAG members did not stop there. They kept taking me to the health centre for check-ups, advised me and acted as mediators between my family and me.

Change did not happen overnight, but after a few weeks my family understood and accepted what they were told by the CAG members. They took me back home and supported me through my pregnancy.

The CAG members continued to support me, offering advice and encouraging me to go back to school. I did go back to school and finished my diploma, allowing me now to teach in one of the local schools.

The CAG also intervened in our church, where I was welcomed back into fellowship. It is in this very church that I met the man who is now my husband. I am now a married woman with a healthy seven-year-old son.

I can safely say that my life would not be what it is now had it not been for the Community Action Group members and their support. I want to thank them. They are my family. I will never forget them and I plan to stay in touch with each of them.

**Name has been changed to protect identity.*

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE BEEN RAPED

Being raped or sexually assaulted is a hugely traumatic experience. Below is some advice on what to do in the aftermath of such an assault. Many countries will have specific organisations, referral centres or helplines that can support survivors through the process.



1 SAFETY FIRST

Ensure your personal safety by going to a safe place.

2 PRESERVE THE EVIDENCE

There may be evidence of the attack on your body or clothing, which can be used as evidence in a court case.

If you wish, this can be collected in a medical examination. To make sure the evidence is not damaged, before you go to a medical facility:

- Do not shower or bathe.
- Do not throw away your clothes. If you change clothes, wrap them in a paper bag if possible (not a plastic bag – moisture can collect within the bag and damage the evidence).
- Do not clean your teeth or cut your nails.

3 SEEK MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

Visit the nearest hospital or medical facility.

Get treatment for any physical injuries and preventative medication for HIV and sexually transmitted infections. Emergency contraception may also be available.

4 REPORT THE RAPE

If you want to report the rape, contact the police. You can ask a friend or family member to accompany you for support. Make a note of the name of the police officer who takes your statement and the case number, so that you can follow it up afterwards.

5 SEEK EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Remember that you are not to blame for what happened, and there is no need to feel ashamed. You may wish to talk to a trusted friend or family member. When you feel ready, consider contacting a counsellor, social worker or other local support service.

**FOR SPECIALIST
SUPPORT FOR RAPE
SURVIVORS IN YOUR
AREA, CONTACT...**



PREVIOUS FOOTSTEPS

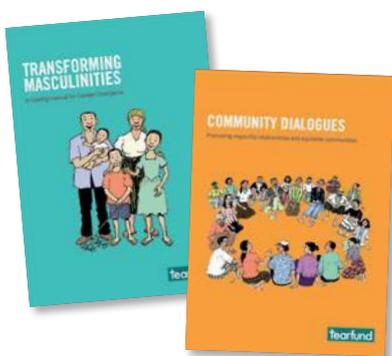
- FOOTSTEPS 98: HIV
- FOOTSTEPS 96: Human trafficking
- FOOTSTEPS 86: Stigma
- FOOTSTEPS 69: Sexual health
- FOOTSTEPS 24: Women's health issues

Visit www.tearfund.org/footsteps to download a free copy, or contact us to order paper copies.



TRANSFORMING MASCULINITIES COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

You can use the *Transforming Masculinities* guide to lead workshops with faith leaders and to train Gender Champions. It encourages participants to reflect on gender equality and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The *Community Dialogues* manual enables trained Gender Champions to facilitate community discussions on gender equality and SGBV. Both can be downloaded free of charge from www.tearfund.org/transformingmasculinities in English, French and Portuguese.



HAND IN HAND: BIBLE STUDIES TO TRANSFORM OUR RESPONSE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

A collection of 12 Bible studies about sexual violence, available in English, French and Portuguese. Contact us to order a printed copy for £6 or visit www.tearfund.org/sexualviolence to download a copy free of charge.



ENDING DOMESTIC ABUSE: A PACK FOR CHURCHES

The charity Restored has produced an information pack to enable churches to address domestic abuse more effectively. It includes guidance on how to recognise domestic abuse, ways the church can respond and theological reflections.

Available in English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Hindi, Russian and Swedish. Visit www.restoredrelationships.org/churchpack to download a free copy.



SASA! RESOURCES

SASA! resources help organisations to mobilise communities to prevent violence against women and HIV. *SASA! An activist kit for preventing violence against women and HIV* contains practical resources and activities. *SASA! Faith* is a guide adapted for religious groups. Visit www.raisingvoices.org/sasa to download these and other materials. Printed copies can also be ordered for a fee, though certain organisations may be granted a free copy. Contact info@raisingvoices.org for more information.



USEFUL WEBSITES

These websites are in English unless otherwise stated.

www.tearfund.org/sexualviolence
Tearfund's research and resources on SGBV. Website available in English, French, Portuguese or Spanish.

www.wewillspeakout.org
We Will Speak Out is a global coalition of Christian-based NGOs, churches and organisations working to see the end of sexual violence.

www.28toomany.org
28 Too Many provides tools and resources for those working against female genital mutilation/cutting. Website available in English, French and Arabic.

www.restoredrelationships.org
Restored is an international Christian charity working to transform relationships and end violence against women.

www.svri.org
The Sexual Violence Research Initiative promotes good-quality research in the area of sexual violence, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

www.hesperian.org
Visit the Hesperian website (in English or Spanish) to download or buy useful books on women's health and SGBV issues, available in various languages. Titles include *Where women have no doctor* and *Health actions for women*.

Footsteps is a magazine linking health and development workers worldwide. It is a way of encouraging Christians of all nations as they work together towards creating wholeness in their communities.

Footsteps is free of charge to grassroots development workers and church leaders. Those who are able to pay can buy a subscription by contacting the Editor. This enables us to continue providing free copies to those most in need.

Readers are invited to contribute views, articles, letters and photos.

Footsteps is also available in French as *Pas à Pas*, in Portuguese as *Passo a Passo* and in Spanish as *Paso a Paso*. It is also available in Hindi.

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📷 We Will Speak Out pledge cards.
Photo: We Will Speak Out

We Will Speak Out is a global coalition of Christian-based organisations working to end sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). It has produced this pledge for those who want to commit to ending SGBV. You can use this as an individual or with your church or organisation.

We recognise our failure to respond adequately to sexual and gender-based violence, and our role in marginalising those who have experienced its devastating consequences. We recognise that responding to SGBV is essential in our work, in our communities and in our world. We commit to addressing SGBV in our contexts to the best of our abilities, aiming to end it in all its forms, together.

And so...

We will speak out.

We will be silent no more.

We stand together in solidarity with the most vulnerable and affected.

We dedicate ourselves to finding lasting solutions, mobilising leadership at all levels.

We will promote laws that model, protect and promote justice, enable healthy relationships and challenge those that don't.

We will work to ensure these laws are enforced. We commit to take action together to see all girls, women, boys and men free from the threat and impact of SGBV across the world.

If you would like to sign the We Will Speak Out pledge online, please visit www.wewillspokeout.org/pledge



KNOTTY PROBLEM

Question: My church has always supported female genital mutilation/cutting, but I have heard that it is damaging for women. Does the Bible say anything about this?

Answer: God created the human body and female sexuality and declared them both good (Genesis 1; Song of Songs). Our bodies are fearfully and wonderfully made; they were created to show God's glory (Psalm 139). To abuse the body and to destroy the ability to appreciate one of God's gifts is an insult to his creation.

It says in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: 'The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife' (1 Corinthians 7:4). This does not mean that a husband has control over his wife's body, but rather that the sexual organs

that women were created with have a key role in a sexual relationship and in reproduction. So these organs should be given honour and respect, to the glory of God. Damaging these organs is wrong. Rather, we are to protect our bodies.

Jesus said that the most important commandments are: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength' and 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:30-31). Romans 13:10 says that 'Love does no harm to a neighbour'. FGM/C is an extremely harmful practice that has no place in God's kingdom.

Adapted from material on FGM/C in Tearfund's toolkit Reveal: Tools to support community transformation. See www.tearfund.org/Reveal

Do you have a knotty problem you would like the Footsteps community to help with? Write to us at the address below.

Please write to: The Editor, Footsteps, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, UK

✉ publications@tearfund.org www.facebook.com/tearfundlearn www.twitter.com/tearfundlearn



INTERVIEW

USING MY ORDEAL TO BRING HOPE

Wangu Kanja is a survivor of sexual violence who set up the Wangu Kanja Foundation in Kenya in 2005.

Please tell us about your organisation and what it does.

The Wangu Kanja Foundation works towards addressing sexual violence: prevention, protection and response. But our broader vision is to have a society that is safe and free from any sort of violence.

Have you seen any changes in the way sexual violence is dealt with in Kenya since you began your work?

We have created awareness around sexual violence, so that more people are reporting their cases. But that does not mean we have put an end to it yet.

One of the big challenges is stigma and discrimination. Survivors face a lot of stigma from their family and community, making them less likely to speak out. The process of reporting a case is also quite complicated: you have to present yourself to the hospital, to the police station, and then, when the police have investigated your case, to the judiciary. We need to make this process easier and less stressful for survivors.

How can we break down stigma against survivors?

We need to start having open conversations at all levels of society about sexual violence. It is still seen as a private issue. We have to help people understand that if one person is affected, everyone else is affected, directly or indirectly.

We must also shift the blame from the victim to the perpetrator. The first question most people ask is, 'How were you dressed?' or 'Did you provoke them?' People need to recognise that it is never the survivor's fault. Sexual violence can happen to anyone at any time, however cautious you have been.

How do you raise awareness of sexual violence?

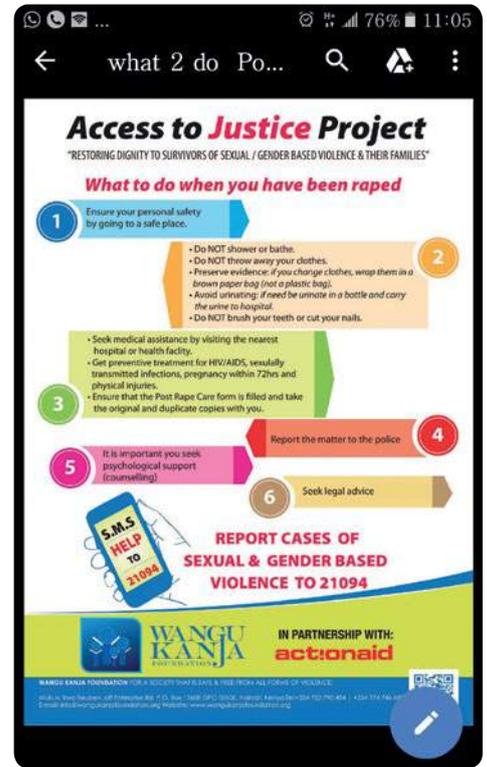
We hold community dialogues, use community radio stations and meet with political leaders to talk about sexual violence. We also have an SMS helpline where we send messages to people's phones about how to report sexual violence and receive care and support.

When someone contacts the SMS helpline, a trained worker will call them back and explore their needs. If the person needs medical help, we will link them up with a medical consultation. If they need help reporting a crime at the police station, we will find an appropriate person nearby to accompany them. We also have a community paralegal who helps survivors go through the court process.

In addition, we have set up a national Survivors of Sexual Violence Network. This is made up of 47 networks around the country, so that each county has survivors speaking out about the issues that affect them.

What sort of changes is the network of survivors calling for?

We want to make sure the government provides specific budgets for services to prevent and respond to sexual violence.



This includes providing counselling, shelters, medical assistance and a gender crimes unit for the proper investigation, documentation and prosecution of crimes. Government departments are now having conversations with us about how best to address sexual violence.

What advice would you give to survivors of sexual violence who want to help other survivors?

You can use your experience to help other people, but make sure you go through a proper healing process first, such as counselling, art therapy or dance therapy. Otherwise, when you start hearing the stories of other survivors, you may be traumatised all over again. Healing is a process and takes time, but it is possible.

Wangu Kanja is a graduate of Tearfund's Inspired Individuals programme and the founder and Executive Director of the Wangu Kanja Foundation.

*Web: www.wangukanjafoundation.org
Email: wangukanja@gmail.com*

If you are in Kenya and need help regarding SGBV, you can contact Wangu's SMS helpline by texting HELP to 21094.