

Report to ACC-15 on Anglican responses to gender based violence, following the Primates' Letter to the Churches from their meeting in Dublin, January 2011

When the Primates of the Anglican Communion met in Dublin in January 2011 they listened to accounts from the Great Lakes region of Africa and from the UK describing the prevalence of violence based on gender, most of which is perpetrated against women and girls. They went on to discuss gender based violence in their own areas and agreed that 'Our churches must accept responsibility for our own part in perpetuating oppressive attitudes towards women. In penitence and faith we must move forward in such a way that our churches truly become a living witness to our belief that both women and men are made in the image of God.'

The Primates celebrated the work already being undertaken across the Communion in raising awareness; engaging in advocacy; changing attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence; the care and reintegration into society of victims/survivors of violence; and work with perpetrators of violence, and committed themselves to strengthening Anglican mission and ministry in these areas. From their meeting, they wrote a Letter to the Churches setting out this commitment.

This report on behalf of the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion is a summary of just some of the initiatives pursued by Anglican churches since January 2011. Whilst the report is brief and can only offer a glimpse of what is happening, I hope its content will serve:

- to reassure that through God's grace and trusting in the Holy Spirit, Anglicans can make a strong and effective contribution towards ending gender based violence
- to inspire further mission and ministry that empowers women, men, girls and boys to live in right relationship with each other and with God, and
- to emphasise the urgency of building on, and extending, the work already being done.

'Gender based violence' is violence involving men and women, in which the female is usually the victim, and which is derived from unequal power relationships between men and women. Violence is directed specifically against a woman or a girl because she is a woman or a girl, or affects women and girls disproportionately. It includes, but is not limited to, physical, sexual and psychological harm, and it includes violence which is perpetrated or condoned by the community or by the State.

There is gender based violence by men and boys against men and boys which takes various forms, including the rape of men in the context of war or political aggression to humiliate and subjugate. But most gender based violence is against women and girls.

Gender based violence may be hidden and shrouded in stigma but it happens all over the world, in all our communities. Statistics only tell a fragment of the story, but here are just some. Each year, 60 million girls are sexually assaulted at or on their way to school (USAID, 2008). Every day, on average, 40 women are raped in the South Kivu Province in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (UNFPA, 2010). An estimated 600,000 children under 18 in the USA are involved in prostitution or pornography; the average age at which girls first become victims of prostitution in the USA is 12 to 14 (US Department of Justice). Statistics around human trafficking are very difficult to collect, but the UN estimates that every year 700,000 to 4 million women and children are trafficked around the world for purposes of forced prostitution, labour and other forms of exploitation. In 2010 in Pakistan 800 women were killed in the name of 'honour' (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan). According to government documentation, in 2010 there were over a million female victims of domestic abuse in England and Wales. In 2011 the British Director of Public Prosecutions advised that women aged 16 to 19 are now more at risk of domestic abuse than any other age group in the UK, so clearly this crisis is not going away.

The global cost of violence against women, and its impact on development, economies and health is incalculable. Its impact on individual human lives is also incalculable. And it is the impact on individual human lives, not numbers and statistics, which demands our attention and our urgent action.

Anglicans speaking out and raising awareness

Given the silence that has traditionally surrounded gender based violence in all our cultures, it is encouraging to see many Anglican initiatives and leaders speaking out against violence and the stigma associated with it, and advocating on behalf of victims and survivors of violence.

In February 2011 Archbishop Winston Halapua, bishop of the Diocese of Polynesia, stated publicly that he would do whatever he could to end violence against women and children in his diocese, which includes Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, and American Samoa. During a Service at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Suva, he said that the work needed to start 'with ourselves': 'We'll end the violence in our own families, and in the structures and processes of our church – and then we'll take this message further afield.' To begin the work, the Dean of Suva, the Very Revd Fereimi Cama, was commissioned with the task of rolling out 'Elimination of Violence' training throughout the Diocese of Polynesia.

During a keynote address in the same month, at the opening of a national meeting in Fiji on the elimination of violence against women, which included representatives of the Fiji Police Force, Social Welfare Department, Legal Aid Commission, Provincial Councils and, disability, faith-based and women's groups, Archbishop Halapua acknowledged that no one part of the community can eliminate violence alone, but that they needed to work together.

In March 2012, the Church in Wales held a conference with the title 'Freedom from Fear' in partnership with Welsh Women's Aid, Mothers' Union Cymru, St Michael's College Llandaff and other organisations, and supported by Welsh government funding. The aim of the conference was to raise awareness of domestic abuse and how churches can respond to it. Participants listened to the experience of a young woman survivor of abuse who reflected that while her faith was one of the reasons she was now a healed and whole person, it had also been one of the reasons she had felt unable to protect herself from her abusive husband: 'I believed I

needed to forgive him and that if I just prayed hard enough, he would stop hurting me ... It was only after I escaped the abuse that I learned God did not require me to continue being abused. I learned that Jesus stood up for women who were outcasts; they were abused and broken and yet he restored them and transformed their lives.' Training packs from the UK-based Christian alliance 'Restored' and other materials were subsequently sent out to the Church in Wales' diocesan Social Responsibility Officers and Rural Officers.

Anglicans are increasingly using the annual International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls, 25 November, to speak in their churches and in the public arena about the facts of abuse and some of the underlying issues.

Bishop William Mchombo of the Diocese of Eastern Zambia, for example, seized this opportunity in 2011 to deplore the lack of safe places for women and children and to call on his government and other stakeholders to explore inhibitors to equal relationship between men and women so that Zambia has the information it needs to develop strategies that weaken the ground of abuse. In particular he asked for programmes to address women's lack of economic independence and to increase their participation in governance and decision making.

More and more churches are participating locally in international initiatives such as the White Ribbon campaign (a movement for men and boys committed to ending violence against women and girls) and the annual Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. The Sixteen Days begin each year on 25 November – which is both International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and White Ribbon Day – and end on 10 December, Human Rights Day. Partway through the Sixteen Days, on 1 December, World AIDS Day can be seen as a reminder that HIV/AIDS and violence against women and girls are twin pandemics and cannot be approached entirely as separate phenomena.

In November 2011 the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, took the White Ribbon pledge, 'I will never commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women', and invited every Anglican in Canada to join him in wearing a white ribbon 'in the spirit of our baptismal promise "to respect the dignity of every human being"'. Archbishop Hiltz reflected that deep within the White Ribbon pledge, 'lies the sanctity of human life, beauty before God and mutual respect, one for another'.

Also in 2011 the Southern African dioceses of Cape Town, False Bay and Saldanha Bay held a joint Service at St George's cathedral in Cape Town with the theme of 'Embracing our Human Dignity'. The Service culminated in the Archbishop Thabo Makgoba and the diocesan bishops signing the White Ribbon pledge.

In the Anglican Church of Australia, the Australian Anglican Women's Network promotes the churches' participation in White Ribbon Day. With the help of the General Synod Liturgy Commission, the Network has provided worship resources for use at this time, and these have been used within the Anglican Church of Australia and across the wider Communion.

The White Ribbon campaign in some parts of the world has a public directory of 'White Ribbon ambassadors'. These are men and boys who have taken responsibility for using their influence

to affect change within their particular social and professional circles. A number of Anglican church leaders now serve as White Ribbon ambassadors, for example, Archbishop Jeffrey Driver, Bishop Michael Challen, Archdeacon Ian Palmer and Dean Phillip Saunders (among others) in the Anglican Church of Australia.

Here we must pay tribute to Aotearoa's Archdeacon Hone Kaa who died earlier this year after a long ministry as priest, advocate for children and families, campaigner against violence, and in recent years as White Ribbon ambassador. He is sadly missed and his strong legacy continues within and well beyond the Maori and church communities.

Strengthening our commitment

Statements, resolutions and strategies adopted at the structural levels of Anglican Churches have named issues of gender violence and given frameworks to their commitment to act.

In 2011, the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA) published its Strategic Plan for 2011 to 2015, setting out its 'intentions, dreams and aspirations with regard to improving the quality of life of the people and all creation on the African continent'. Among the considerations of the Strategic Plan themed 'Securing our future: Unlocking our potential', the document states that: 'The issue of empowering the vulnerable especially with regard to gender injustices in order to bring an end to all forms of gender based violence, exploitation, child trafficking and assisting displaced families and communities is crucial to our mandate'. In a section headed 'Contextual Analysis of CAPA', the Council includes its commitment to strengthen social fabric and advance social protection and justice, and reflects that '... men in Africa are challenged to assume new roles in order to enhance positive gender relations', thus acknowledging the relational nature of gender equality.

In June this year, the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church carried unanimously a motion welcoming a report of the Anti-Human Trafficking Ecumenical Group of Action of Churches Together in Scotland and urging the Scottish Parliament to take note of that report in devising any future legislation on the subject of sexual exploitation.

In July, a report from The Episcopal Church's Executive Council Committee on the Status of Women to General Convention raised, under the heading 'Statelessness', the facts of trafficking, fleeing deadly violence and the vulnerability of stateless women and children to violence. The report also named exploitation of women in the media, and in particular the sexualisation of girls, which can feed wrong expectations and thus the ground for violence. A resolution of General Convention affirmed and endorsed the Primates' January 2011 Letter to the Churches concerning gender based violence, and undertook to implement the actions set out within it. The same resolution encouraged parishes and dioceses to participate in annual awareness campaigns about gender violence, and asked The Episcopal Church's Department of Global Partnership to identify and disseminate resources about gender violence and promote their use by dioceses and parishes.

In a further resolution General Convention recommitted to protecting victims of human trafficking, particularly women and children, by 'continuing to support legislation and action

oriented to recovery and reintegration of trafficking victims into society'. The resolution commended the use and sharing of educational and other resources in the dioceses and internal provinces, to understand better how domestic and international trafficking affects their people.

- **We Will Speak Out coalition against sexual violence**

The We Will Speak Out coalition against sexual violence has its roots in a Tearfund report called 'Silent No More: The untapped potential of the church in addressing sexual violence'. This report summarised research undertaken in post-conflict situations, specifically in Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia, where sexual violence has continued unabated as a weapon of terror and humiliation. The report is honest about the churches' failure to respond adequately but also sets out recommendations about what the churches can do to speak out, to change attitudes and extend practical care.

The report was launched from Lambeth Palace in March 2011 during an event hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The event brought together representatives of a range of church and faith traditions, and agencies that have the capacity to work collaboratively in ending violence against women and girls. They listened to survivors of sexual violence. They also listened to the Archbishop of Congo, the Most Revd Henri Isingoma and his wife Mme Mugisa Isingoma, and the Archbishop of Burundi, the Most Revd Bernard Ntahoturi, each of whom spoke of the reality of their own context and described some of their work in tackling sexual violence and restoring its victims to society. They pointed out that they need the collaboration of others and would seek partnerships in undertaking the work. Mr Michel Sidibe, Executive Director of UNAIDS, also attending the event, said: 'UNAIDS will of course work with the Church ... It isn't just breaking the silence that will help us, though that is essential, we also need societal change – so the Church will be critical for us'.

Since the launch of the report and the inauguration of We Will Speak Out, the membership of the coalition has grown and now includes the Anglican Communion, Tearfund, the World Council of Churches, the World Christian Student Federation, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Christian Aid, CAFOD, Restored, and other Christian organisations.

Within the We Will Speak Out initiative, in August 2011, Archbishop Henri Isingoma hosted a two-venue conference in Goma and Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which shared the findings of Tearfund-commissioned research with other church leaders, NGOs and government ministers, and engaged participants in the development of a practical action plan to be implemented at a local and national level. In his introduction to the research, Archbishop Isingoma described how sexual violence is perpetrated by rebel combatants and governmental militias to humiliate and traumatise a community and attack the family unit. In the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo particularly, rape is not only carried out in secret or in isolated places, but in front of other family members: 'The rapist is aware that in their culture most husbands will end the marriage after their wives have been raped, and the family is broken up'. Perpetrators rape 'to demonstrate their superiority, not only to the victim but also to the Law; quite simply to say that the land belongs to them'.

The Anglican Church of Congo's Strategic Plan 2012 – 2017 reflects their determination to continue the work already begun in response to sexual violence. The 'Development and Social Transformation' section of Plan includes a commitment, within five years, to contribute towards the eradication of gender based and sexual violence in the communities of the DRC, sensitizing administrative, political, military and Church leaders on gender and sex-based violence; caring and restoring to society of victims of sexual violence; and sensitizing Christians to become involved in the eradication of sexual and gender based violence.

Also in August 2011, the Archbishop of Burundi, the Most Revd Bernard Ntahoturi, and the Archbishop of Rwanda, the Most Revd Dr Onesphore Rwaje, co-hosted a similar conference in Bujumbura bringing together representatives from their respective Churches, other faith-based organisations, and UN and other agencies. Under the themes of leadership; equipping the Church; partnerships; overcoming stigma; creating a safe environment, and behaviour change, participants discussed challenges and solutions in order to decide on some strategies for the future. The conference culminated with a march through the streets of Bujumbura to the Anglican cathedral where a service was held and a statement of commitment was signed:

We, leaders of the Churches represented and representatives of non-government organisations participating at this conference recognise that:

- *women and men are all created in the image of God*
- *we have not responded properly to the sexual violence that has damaged that image*
- *a response to sexual violence is essential in our work, in our communities and in our world.*

We therefore commit ourselves to fight against sexual violence in our specific contexts as far as we are able by:

- *breaking the silence on sexual violence*
- *raising awareness in our Churches and making our voices heard*
- *listening to and supporting survivors of sexual violence in our Churches and creating a safe environment*
- *fighting stigma and discrimination*
- *changing attitudes and behaviour that encourage sexual violence*
- *advocating for the law to be enforced and ensuring that perpetrators of such violence are punished*

The Anglican Church of Burundi is now planning to identify focal point persons in parishes whose remit will be concerned with Prevention, Protection, Provision and Partnerships. 'Prevention' will include reflection on positive masculinities and femininities and their relational nature. 'Protection' will focus on referral, with focal points being given training to understand need and processes. 'Provision' will combine community-based sheltered housing with safe and rehabilitation housing. 'Partnerships' will involve seeking collaboration across the Christian community, and with UN agencies and the Burundian government.

The We Will Speak Out coalition hopes to extend its activities to other parts of the world, wherever its members have a presence and can bring influence to bear.

- **Anglican women at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women**

The annual presence in New York of Anglican women, nominated by their Primate or provincial structure, for the meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women enables Anglican advocacy for women and girls across the world whose lives are diminished through structural injustices fostering poverty, violence, lack of education, lack of access to health care and economic resources, and high rates of maternal mortality.

The priority theme for the forthcoming meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March 2013 (UN CSW57) is 'Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls'. It is therefore very encouraging to see that a good number of Anglican Provinces have already indicated their commitment to enable a woman from their area to participate in the Anglican Communion delegation. A small working group is assisting the Anglican Office at the UN to prepare for the event and ensure that Anglican delegates are well supported and able to bring local insights to effective advocacy.

We hope that the Anglican Consultative Council, which has special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, will wish to strengthen the Anglican delegation's contribution by submitting a written statement on the CSW57 priority theme, drawing on Anglican experience and the values of our faith.

Helping to change attitudes and behaviours

The churches of the Anglican Communion are well placed to challenge how society thinks about gender-based violence and to take action to change behaviours, and we have a growing body and variety of resources to assist us. The International Anglican Women's Network has been cataloguing many of these on its website <http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/resources/documents.cfm>, and representatives of the Network will be handing out a directory of resources, with information on how to access them, during the 'Mission Across the Anglican Communion' event at the start of the meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Auckland. Resources listed include contextual Bible Studies, toolkits for community-based work to end gender based violence, handbooks and guidelines on responding to domestic violence for clergy and pastoral workers, theological and discussion materials aiming to strengthen men's roles in ending violence, and good practice case studies.

There are many examples of diocesan programmes that are making strategic and concerted efforts to change attitudes and behaviours within and beyond the church community. Here are just three examples.

The Diocese of Melbourne in the Anglican Church of Australia has set up a comprehensive 'Prevention of Violence Against Women Project'. Knowing that their clergy and lay leaders can have a powerful impact on people's attitudes and beliefs about violence, the Project has developed a wealth of resources to equip them to educate their congregations, offer courses and support groups, use the pulpit to raise concern and teach equality and respect for women and girls, and run workshops examining biblical texts which might be manipulated to justify the abuse of women and children instead of promoting non-violence and the sanctity and dignity

of every human life. Clergy and lay leaders are also encouraged to partner with existing resources in their communities.

In May 2012, the Diocese of Mara in the Anglican Church of Tanzania launched a multi-strand campaign against gender based violence and HIV/AIDS. At the launch event, the Bishop of the Diocese, the Rt Revd Hilkih Omindo Deya was joined by the Serengeti District Commissioner, other local official leaders and traditional elders from the 12 Serengeti District villages involved – all significant stake-holders. The year-long programme for women, men, girls and boys is called ‘The Serengeti: We can live without HIV/AIDS, gender based violence and female genital mutilation’. It will involve violence prevention education and awareness raising through community meetings, road shows featuring traditional dances, radio programmes, peer educators in each of the villages, posters and booklets. At the same time, women and men will be empowered through the provision of income generating projects, with widows and widowers being given priority.

The Diocese of Peru instigated a travelling project ‘La Posada de Belén’, which travelled through areas in and around the cities of Lima and Ica with the aim of empowering parents to have a more stable family life. The project encouraged parents to reflect on communication without violence between spouses and between parent and child, and the importance of increasing self-esteem of parents and children. Children too, in the context of play, were given an opportunity to talk about how to argue without hurting others.

There is much more we could do among children and youth, in our churches and in outreach to our communities, as part of the work of ending gender violence. We have opportunities to address unhelpful gender norms and attitudes before they become deeply ingrained. Our starting point must be to provide environments where our children are safe, and where girls and boys are equally included and equally valued, and learn naturally that they are equally cherished by God.

Caring for, and enabling survivors of violence

In March this year, the Anglican Alliance and the Mothers’ Union held a Eucharist in Camberwell, a district of London, England, to celebrate the achievements of women around the world. During the Service, timed to mark both International Women’s Day (8 March) and Mothering Sunday (18 March), Archbishop Rowan and Mrs Jane Williams took part in ‘circles of conversation’ and listened to some of the stories and experiences of the women present. During his sermon, Archbishop Rowan reflected on what he had heard and on Mark 5.24b-34, the account of the woman with bleeding who touched Jesus’ cloak and was told ‘Go in peace and be healed’. Archbishop Rowan drew attention to the woman’s unexpected action, her ‘stepping out when she sees a possibility of healing, and not letting go until the difference begins to be made.’ He praised the work of the Mothers’ Union in ‘giving women the courage to do what’s not expected, to go where they are not expected, and to touch those who don’t expect to be touched and embraced.’

A growing number of initiatives around the Communion see the possibility of healing and set out to strive to make the difference needed. These may involve the immediate care of women

and girls who have been abused, or ensuring that they gain access to the support services they need. They may assist women and girls to overcome social stigma and rejection by their families and community, and find their own ways to generate income and provide for themselves. Here are two examples:

The Christian Care Centre in Honiara, Solomon Islands, is run by two Anglican religious orders, the Sisters of the Church and the Sisters of Melanesia, and provides the only women's refuge in the city. Referrals come from all over the country from various organisations and the Police. The Centre provides support and accommodation for women and children of any race or religion who are victims of domestic violence. Sometimes the Centre is overcrowded with families but the Sisters offer them counselling, arrange activities, and give them a safe haven with beds and food.

The Anglican Church of Congo has established an association of women known as the Union des Femmes pour la Paix et Promotion Sociale (UFPPS) which operates in two dioceses and works in collaboration with the Mothers' Union. The broad range of UFPPS activities, all of which aim to empower women and give them back their 'espoir de vivre', includes the support of women who have been raped. Where facilities are available they may assist women to reach a health centre within 72 hours of an assault for post-exposure prophylaxis which could block transmission of HIV. They also challenge the social stigma associated with rape and take practical steps to support victims and help them reintegrate into the community, arranging meetings so that women can share their pain, providing clothing and running micro-credit schemes for those able to work. This ministry to traumatised women is faithfully pursued with minimal resources and in a context of inadequate medical facilities, insufficient trained medical staff and transport, and a weak legal system which often allows impunity for perpetrators of violence.

A series of newsletters published during 2011 by the International Anglican Family Network describe more initiatives caring for survivors of gender and home-based abuse, and working with perpetrators of abuse. See <http://iafn.anglicancommunion.org/newsletters/index.cfm>.

The work ahead

This report has scarcely touched on countless instances of work in response to gender based violence undertaken by Anglican women and men at grassroot level, often with great courage, often against prevailing cultures, and unremarked beyond the borders of the parishes and communities where the work is unfolding. Together, these initiatives, however small, will serve to build up the reign of God and reconstitute the world, and it is to these initiatives and people that we invite the Anglican Consultative Council to pay tribute.

There is still so much that the churches of the Anglican Communion can do - so much potential untapped - and we need to be persistent, creative and ambitious in our activities to raise up gender equality and end gender based violence. As we build up our response to violence and our relationships with other churches, specialist agencies and government mechanisms with common goals, we will need to share our experience more intentionally so that we can learn from one another. To underpin this work there remains the need to build on the contextual

theological, scriptural and liturgical resources available in this area to our ministers in training and to our parishes. This will give us a confidence to draw into our discipleship the ending of gender- and home-based violence, the care and restoration of its victims and survivors, and the appropriate rehabilitation of perpetrators of violence. It will help us all - men, women, girls and boys - to extend our understanding of what it is to be 'a letter from Christ ... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts'.

*Revd Terrie Robinson
Networks' Coordinator
Women's Desk Officer*