

GENERAL SYNOD

Gender-Based Violence

A report by the Mission and Public Affairs Council

Introduction

1. Gender-based violence is one of the key issues facing all our global societies, including the churches. It crosses the boundaries of culture, faith, geography and wealth though in each context it presents its particular expressions and challenges. The United Nations in 1993 defined the term ‘gender-based violence’ as,

‘violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.’¹

2. It is frequently argued that gender-based violence not only concerns violence against women but also against men. While this is correct, and all violence against any person is unacceptable, **violence by men against women is a far more widespread phenomenon.** As the Primates expressed in their letter to the Communion in 2011,

‘We acknowledge with grief that gender based violence is a global phenomenon and that all but a very small percentage of such violence is perpetrated by men against women, with devastating effects on individuals, families and society’.

3. The motion before General Synod seeks to affirm work that is already being done and to raise awareness of the issues surrounding gender-based violence. There are two aspects of the Church of England’s current approach. The pastoral strand concerns the care of both survivors and perpetrators. For the latter this includes supporting measures to bring them to account and to work for a changed lifestyle. These are stories that can rarely be told but which are regular features of the ministry of the Church of England in situations of hidden pain with lives scarred by violence.
4. The second strand is advocacy. This ranges from resources made available for provision of emergency refuge accommodation to work in schools about personal relationships. It includes placing posters in churches making known domestic abuse helplines or taking part in the 16 Days campaign through the Mother’s Union. There is no community, among our nation’s diverse communities, that does not experience gender-based violence at some level.
5. The Motion seeks to encourage boys and men to stand against gender-based violence which is vital in changing attitudes and behaviour. There has been a marked change in how the role of boys and men is perceived. Positive male role models are necessary if violent behaviours are to be unlearned and stopped. Campaigns such as “First Man Standing” by Restored, and the White Ribbon Campaign, are seeking to resource such change.
6. At its 3 yearly meeting in October 2012 the Anglican Consultative Council passed Resolution 15:7 entitled Gender-based and Domestic Violence (Appendix A). It affirms

¹ This was the definition used in the 2011 Anglican Communion Primates Letter on gender-based violence.

what is being done and calls on all Anglican Provinces to raise awareness of the need to counter gender-based violence. It provides a focus for intensifying work on this range of issues.

Why should General Synod debate this now?

7. What are the reasons for General Synod considering this issue at this point? First, these **issues have recently been opened up in public debate**. Some high profile cases have begun to raise awareness and have caused questions to be asked about levels of violence against women and the place of women in society. Second, the **Church of England in its public and Communion-facing role could stand with other Provinces in taking action on these issues** through adoption of ACC 15:7. This motion seeks to build on the growing profile of activity on gender-based violence by the Church of England and to encourage the new directions outlined in the motion.

Theology

8. A theological understanding of the human person, beginning with the concept of humanity made in the image of God, provides the foundation for discussion of gender-based violence. The Mission Theology Advisory Group offer the following theological reflection,

‘Christians are called by God to discern and to respond to, God’s mission of love to the world, the missio Dei. That activity of God, reconciling the world to God’s own self, generates in Jesus Christ, and through the Spirit, the vision of a world in which human beings live in harmony and love towards one another, respecting each other and supporting one another. Human behaviour which exploits or injures others creates a drag on the reconciliation of the world to God’s own self (2 Corinthians 5.19).’

Being Human

9. Each human being is called by God and cherished by God. **The image of God requires us to recognise our origins in the Other and seek to be in mutually respectful and loving relationships with other people**. To violate the being of another is an offence against the image of God. There is a strong sense in which human relationship reflects something, though inadequately, of God and so to violate that image injures the Creator as well as the created.
10. We are part of a culture which dehumanises and devalues many people. Gender-based violence does not happen in a vacuum but is part of an exploitative culture in which poverty, inequality, oppression, anxiety and fear all play their part.

The Human Body

11. Human bodies are not just a collection of tissues and organs, but part of a person's wholeness of body, mind and spirit. The body is part of the way God knows us and interacts with us. God is involved in our becoming and so bodies are to be treated with respect and to be taken care of. Paul tells the people of the church at Corinth: 'do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body' (1 Corinthians 6.19-20).

12. Jesus makes it clear that evil intentions defile those who perpetrate them. (Matthew 15.18-20). Lying, deception and the attempt to exercise power over others for one's own gain, which is common behaviour by the perpetrators of gender-based violence, leads to such defilement. Christians should be concerned for the survivors of gender-based violence and also for those who act violently and whose spiritual damage to themselves also needs addressing.

The Five Marks of Mission

13. At the meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in 2012 the scope of the fourth mark of mission was extended and now reads,

*'To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation.'*²

14. This is a significant step in bringing resistance to all forms of violence into the centre of Anglican understanding of God's mission in the world. This emphasises that the presence of high levels of violence in many places is related to issues of global power and powerlessness, conflict and injustice.

15. The Five Marks of Mission present a description of integral or holistic mission joining social action and evangelism. **Holistic mission is concerned with the flourishing of God's creation and holds within it the vision of a world without violence.** Violence inhibits and scars human flourishing. Gender-based violence, in many places in the world, is part of an ongoing pattern of lack of basic resources, the presence of conflict and the ensuing powerlessness and hopelessness. Resistance to violence and advocacy on behalf of its victims and survivors is an important part of God's mission in the world today.

Statistics

16. **UN Women**³ found that according to a 2013 global review of available data, 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. However, some national violence studies show

² This amendment was finally agreed at ACC 15 in 2012

³ www.unwomen.org/endingviolenceagainstawomen/factsandfigures accessed 6 December 2013

that up to 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime from an intimate partner.

- 2 women per week in the UK are killed by her partner or former partner (2011 British Crime Survey)
- 80,000 women in the UK are raped each year and 400,000 are sexually assaulted (BCSMarital rape has been illegal in England since 1991 (in Scotland since 1982)
- The UK has a national action plan to end violence against women and girls since March 2011 <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/violence-against-women-girls/strategic-vision/>
- Female Genital Mutilation was made illegal in the UK in 2004. This included taking girls abroad for the purpose of FGM and carries a 14 year prison sentence. (Home Office 2013)
- In 2012 new criminal offences came into force for Stalking and Stalking with fear of violence, alarm or distress. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/violence-against-women-girls/stalking/>
- Female victims of intimate partner violence were found to experience **more severe violence** and control, with **more serious psychological consequences**, than did male victims; and women were much more likely to be **fearful** of their partners (Ansara et al 2010, 2011).
- 32% of women who had ever experienced domestic violence did so four or more times, compared with 11% of the (smaller number) of men who had ever experienced domestic violence; and women constituted 89% of all those who had experienced 4 or more incidents of domestic violence (Walby and Allen, 2004 and Coleman et al 2007).

What is currently happening in the Church of England?

17. **National Institutions** Violence against women was debated at the July 2004 Synod with a recommendation for the publication of pastoral guidelines which were published in 2006. Following on from this came *Promoting a Safe Church Policy for safeguarding adults in the Church of England* (GS Misc 837). Both of these publications have provided a comprehensive foundation for action in dioceses, deaneries and parishes. The House of Bishops report '*Responding Well to those who have suffered sexual abuse*' in 2011 highlighted the specific and sensitive response required for this particular form of abuse.
18. In representations to Government the following actions have taken place in **the international and domestic sphere**. Gender-based violence and in particular sexual violence has become a prevalent and terrifying feature of modern day war. All too often churches have not lived up to their mandate of advocacy for people on the margins - particularly those affected by sexual violence. It is for this reason that the Church of England and other Church based organizations launched the *We Will Speak Out Coalition* in 2012. In 2013 this Coalition worked to mobilize international support during the UK Presidency of the G8 and at the 57th UN Commission on the Status of Women.

19. As part of the Church's efforts to raise awareness of sexual violence in conflict, the Bishop of Wakefield, the Rt Revd Stephen Platten, tabled a motion for debate in the House of Lords (February 2013) on the Government's strategy to combat sexual violence in conflict and the extent to which it built on grassroots community initiatives. Other Lords Spiritual have been persistent in tabling a steady flow of written questions on the level of protection and support provided by the Government and the wider international community to those affected by sexual violence during the conflict in Syria.
20. In April 2013 the Bishop of Wakefield wrote to the Foreign Secretary welcoming the G8 Foreign Minister's commitment to increase funding to support grassroots and human rights projects addressing violence against women and girls. There is much to be done before the promises made at this year's G8 result in real changes for individuals.
21. The Mission and Public Affairs Division's Foreign Policy Advisor has been a member of the Foreign Secretary's Advisory Board on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict from its inception (July 2012). This long term engagement offers the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of Government thinking and to press the Government that in taking forward its work the underlying causes of gender-based violence are addressed.

Dioceses, Deaneries and Parishes

22. A national conference in 2008, considered good practice across a range of issues including raising awareness and promoting action amongst senior staff in dioceses and at parish and deanery level. It developed domestic violence awareness in ministerial training and sought to build partnerships with voluntary agencies and the police including interfaith partnerships. Key cross-cultural issues were also addressed. In preparation for this conference, seven dioceses reported on action that they were taking.
23. Examples of positive initiatives at diocesan and parish level include training for clergy and building liaison with local government and training local church champions. New incumbents are required to undertake training on addressing domestic violence.
24. One diocese has taken a road show highlighting domestic abuse issues to deaneries. One cathedral has trained domestic abuse awareness officers. Some parish churches have adopted the Domestic Abuse Charter and are also providing information about local and national helplines for example.
25. Church schools are inspected⁴ on the basis of Christian character and relationships promoted in the life of the school. This includes demonstration of development in personal relationships which build self-esteem and values based on mutual respect.

Anglican Mission Agencies

26. Among the Mission Agencies the Mother's Union, Church Army, Us (formerly USPG) and CMS are involved in advocacy against gender-based violence. The Bye Bye Childhood Campaign (MU), work with survivors (Church Army), funding for

⁴ Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS), Evaluation Schedule

international projects (Us) and advocacy to end female genital mutilation (CMS 28 Too Many) are specific examples.

27. For some years the Church of England has sent a representative to the **United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW)**. In 2013 Mandy Marshall, Co-Director of Restored, was the Church of England's representative as the theme was 'Preventing and Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls.'

Involving men and boys against gender-based violence

28. The growing awareness of the importance of involving men and boys in responses to gender-based violence has strengthened the public debate and has enabled this issue to be perceived as one for all humanity. The **White Ribbon Campaign** and particularly **White Ribbon Day on November 25th** is specifically focused on giving a voice to men to stand against violence against women. In 2013 the World Mission and Anglican Communion Panel under the leadership of the Bishop of Aston, the Rt Revd Andrew Watson, invited all Bishops to wear a white ribbon on 25 November 2013. Over 60 Bishops responded positively. This resulted in considerable local publicity.
29. **Restored** have launched the first global Christian based project for men entitled **First Man Standing**. Men are invited to make a pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women. They commit to being an advocate for respectful relationships between men, women and children and will stand for such relationships publicly.

The Anglican Communion

30. Provinces of the Anglican Communion have a growing involvement in advocacy against gender-based violence and practical support for survivors. This activism has been encouraged by the various resolutions from the Anglican Consultative Council together with the International Family and Women's Networks and the Women's Desk at the Anglican Communion Office. Most significant was the Letter from the Primates Meeting in 2011 which raised the profile of these issues considerably. The Anglican Alliance has women's empowerment as one of its major themes which includes development and advocacy on gender-based violence issues.

Philip Fletcher
Chair of Mission and Public Affairs
January 2014

Appendix A

Resolution 15.07: Gender-based and Domestic Violence (2012)

As part of its continuing commitment to the incorporation and realisation of Millennium Development Goal 3 ‘Promote gender equality and empower women’, as expressed in ACC resolutions 13.31 and 14.33:

1. a. welcomes the Primates’ Letter to the Churches, January 2011, concerning gender based violence;
- b. affirms that: ‘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;
- c. endorses the commitments outlined in the Letter;
2. rejoices in initiatives already in place in our Provinces, dioceses and parishes in response to gender based violence and violence within families;
3. recommends that each of the theological colleges and training schemes of the Anglican Communion ensure that curricula include at least one component designed to train all clergy and other ministers concerning:
 - a. the nature and dynamics of gendered and domestic violence;
 - b. how positive attitudes and behaviours among women, men, girls and boys can be encouraged and affirmed;
 - c. awareness of the indicators often present in situations involving trafficking of girls and boys, women and men for sexual purposes and exploitative labour;
 - d. the scriptural and theological basis underpinning the work of eliminating gender-based and domestic violence.
4.
 - a. commends the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates of the L’Eglise Anglicane du Burundi, the Province de L’Eglise Anglicane du Rwanda and the Province de L’Eglise Anglicane du Congo for taking a lead in gathering other church and faith leaders and agencies in order to discern what might be said and done together in responding to sexual violence as a weapon of war and terror;
 - b. endorses and encourages Anglican engagement worldwide with the *We Will Speak Out* coalition of churches and Christian agencies against sexual violence.

5.

- a. commends Anglican church leaders for their public commitment to the White Ribbon campaign;
- b. endorses Anglican participation in the White Ribbon Campaign and the ‘16 Days of Activism for the Elimination of Violence against Women’;
- c. encourages all Anglican churches to mark White Ribbon Day (annually, 25 November) and the ‘16 Days of Activism for the Elimination of Violence against Women’ (annually, 25 November to 10 December) in liturgy, prayer and study.

6. asks all Anglican Provinces to:

- a. encourage their churches to provide an environment where boys and girls are equally valued and equally enabled to participate in learning and activities that foster positive and respectful relationships irrespective of gender, ability, and ethnicity;
- b. develop age-appropriate Christian teaching resources to empower girls and boys to overcome gender stereotypes, and share these resources via the International Anglican Family Network and International Anglican Women’s Network.

Web Resources

www.churchofengland.org/views/marriagefamily and sexuality

www.restoredrelationships.org – Restored is a coalition of organizations committed to ending gender-based violence. Includes First Man Standing and the Restored Church Pack

www.wewillspeakout.org – a global Christian coalition working towards the ending of sexual violence.

www.mothersunion.org – The Mother’s Union

www.cms-uk.org – Church Mission Society

www.weareus.org – United Society formerly USPG

www.churcharmy.org – Church Army

www.28toomany.org – 28 Too Many focuses on issues around female genital mutilation

www.whiteribbon.org – a global coalition of men standing against violence against women.

www.iafn.org – The International Anglican Family Network – one of the Anglican Communion networks which networks on issues such as birth registration and gender-based violence among others

www.iawn.anglicancommunion.org – International Anglican Women’s Network – one of the Anglican Communion networks concerned with a wide range of women’s issues including gender-based violence