

## BEYOND THE 16<sup>TH</sup> DAY: MOVING FORWARD TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



A report from Mothers' Union's conference,  
25<sup>th</sup> November 2015, London



16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM



Join Mothers' Union  
to help end  
gender-based  
violence

25 November  
- 10 December 2015

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>SESSION 1:</b><br>VAWG in an online world: dealing with a new tool for abuse                                | <i>Chair:</i> <b>Bev Jullien</b> , Chief Executive, Mothers' Union<br><b>Laura Higgins</b> , Online Safety Operations Manager, South West Grid for Learning<br><b>Detective Constable Steve Watkins</b> , Northamptonshire Police<br><b>Jenny Hopkins</b> , Chief Crown Prosecutor, Crown Prosecution Service |
| <b>SESSION 2:</b><br>Violence against women and girls in the UK  | <i>Chair:</i> <b>Polly Neate</b> , Chief Executive, Women's Aid<br><b>Dr Christine Barter</b> , Senior Research Fellow, University of Bristol<br><b>Joe Hayman</b> , Chief Executive, PSHE Association<br><b>Gjori Langeland</b> , Senior Manager, Domestic Violence Intervention Project                     |
| <b>KEYNOTE SPEECH</b>  | <b>Nkosazana Maqoma</b> , Mothers' Union South Africa   |
| <b>SESSION 3:</b><br>Tackling violence against women and girls across the world: our collective responsibility | <i>Chair:</i> <b>Rachel Aston</b> , Social Policy Manager, Mothers' Union<br><b>Mandy Marshall</b> , Co-Director, Restored<br><b>Heather Barclay</b> , Advocacy Officer, International Planned Parenthood Federation<br><b>Ken Bluestone</b> , Political and Policy Advisor, Age International                |
| <b>WORKSHOP:</b>   | <i>Facilitator:</i> <b>Rose Wright</b> , Campaigns and Social Policy Assistant, Mothers' Union<br>Moving Beyond the 16th Day: what are our priorities for policy and practice?  |

## INTRODUCTION

*"I am delighted Mothers' Union is hosting this important event, which brings together so many fantastic NGOs, community leaders, service providers and passionate women and men - all together under one roof. Tackling violence against women and girls in all its forms is a priority for this Government, and it's a personal priority for the Minister. We are helping to end violence at home and abroad, by allowing women to check their partner's history, introducing domestic violence protection orders, criminalising forced marriage, and prioritising women and girls in our work overseas. Over this parliament we will continue to build on this important work... I would like to thank Mothers' Union and everyone here today for all the work you are doing in this area."*

**Caroline Dinenage MP,**  
**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Women, Equalities and Family Justice**

On 25<sup>th</sup> November 2015, the first day of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, Mothers' Union welcomed an exciting line-up of speakers and delegates from a range of organisations. The speakers took delegates on a journey through the various forms of violence that girls and women experience through their life-course across the world; and the day ended with a workshop and open discussion to identify strategies for working towards an end to all forms of violence against women and girls. The day also launched the tour of Mothers' Union's Worldwide President, Lynne Tembey, across Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and South Africa, to visit Mothers' Union grassroots members and programmes and learn how they are working to end gender-based violence

This report outlines the key highlights from speakers and recommendations from the workshop groups. The outcomes will inform the ongoing advocacy and campaigns work of Mothers' Union's four million members to end violence against women and girls, particularly the role of community-based responses as well as national legislation and international agreements, to ensure that tackling gender-based violence is a year-round effort.

Mothers' Union would like to thank the speakers and their organisations for taking part, as well as the delegates, who participated so actively. The summaries of the speakers' presentations are based on verbatim transcripts of their speeches as well as their Powerpoint presentations; and any misrepresentation is unintended.

---

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN AN ONLINE WORLD: DEALING WITH A NEW TOOL FOR ABUSE**

**Laura Higgins**, South West Grid for Learning; and Revenge Porn Helpline

**Steve Watkins**, Northamptonshire Police

**Jenny Hopkins**, Crown Prosecution Service

### **Laura Higgins - 'Revenge Porn'**



'Revenge porn' is the non-consensual sharing of images of an intimate nature. However, it is often not revenge and is certainly not porn; and there is a need for different terminology to describe this form of abuse. Victims are typically young women aged 18 to 25 and this form of abuse may occur following the ending of a relationship, possibly already abusive, with a former partner posting intimate images or videos online, often on multiple sites. Sometimes the images will be sent to the victim's family or employer, possibly with extortion, or 'cyber/sexual blackmail'. However, with younger people any coercion is more likely intended to get more pictures or increasingly graphic content, rather than extorting money. Some images may also be gathered through hacking devices such as webcams and storage.

Revenge porn: "photographs or films which show people engaged in sexual activity or depicted in a sexual way or with their genitals exposed, where what is shown would not usually be seen in public".

Since April 2015, 'revenge porn' has been a criminal offence in England and Wales under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act, which has set clear boundaries; but is only applicable to offences committed after April 2015, which is a problem for those who have experienced long term online abuse. However, in the experience of the Revenge Porn Helpline, the police response to revenge porn has been poor and has included an element of victim blaming; for example, by asking victims why they took/appeared in the pictures, or by dismissing the impact of it on a person's life.

The Revenge Porn Helpline works with police, social workers, schools, healthcare and foster workers to help keep children safe online. The helpline provides callers with support and advice on how to deal with revenge porn, such as getting it taken down, reporting it to the police or finding further support in cases of domestic abuse. The Helpline works with the porn industry, websites such as Twitter and internet service providers to improve reporting mechanisms for revenge porn. The organisation has also produced resources such as toolkits to support organisations working with victims.

## Steve Watkins - Cyber Stalking: Identification and risk management for 2016 and beyond



Cyber stalking is the use of online technology to perpetrate 'real world' offences. It is different to cyber harassment or 'trolling', which is nasty and abusive messages delivered online. Cyber stalking has real consequences that impact on peoples' lives; and dealing with crime in the online world is just as important to the police.

There are several distinct types of cyber stalker. The '**incompetent suitor**' is someone who lacks social skills, and despite knowing that their feelings may not be reciprocated, believes they are entitled to a relationship with the person they are cyber stalking. This type of stalker typically has mental health problems and is generally not dangerous to others.

The '**classic stalker**' might stalk celebrities for example, believing that they've been 'tipped the wink' online; or that a friendly comment indicates the person is acknowledging a relationship with them. This type of perpetrator may be dangerous, particularly when the relationship is 'removed' from them.

The '**rejected suitor**' is stereotypically a domestic abuse perpetrator. Before the advent of the online world, a victim could be separated from their abuser, for example by them moving into a refuge. However, perpetrators can still reach their victims through the online world and asking a victim to remove themselves from that world may be unrealistic. Abusers may also install monitoring devices onto their internet enabled victim's devices, if they sense the relationship is breaking down. They may also use revenge porn and ultimately track their victim down to carry out 'real world' abuse.

The '**predatory cyber stalker**' hunts their victim down, finds out as much about them as possible and targets them in some way, either by committing a violent offence, a sexual offence, or some other serious aggravating crime - often for the 'thrill of the chase'. This type of stalker may keep on going until they are caught, but are the rarest group of cyber stalker.

Cyber stalkers start off by researching their victims, finding out as much about their target as possible, using several different online platforms and even installing spyware on that person's phone etc to carry out surveillance. They may then use intimidation or blackmail; and finally an attack, such as creating a false online profile or even a physical attack.

The Northamptonshire Police Force has created a risk assessment process - Cyber Abuse Risk Assessment (CARA) - that allows them to determine what level of risk a victim is at and how best to support them. They work closely with IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advisors), providing advice for low level risk victims and allocating high risk victims a detective. The information from victims is also vital in helping the police gather information on the perpetrators and stopping them; and the sooner the police are involved, the better the outcome for the victim.

The process has been very successful in protecting victims of cyber abuse and tackling perpetrators.

- Seven high risk victims of Adult Digital Abuse / Cyber Stalking have been identified, safeguarded and protected

- One suspect has been prosecuted as a result and at least one further has been disrupted
- More than 100 high risk domestic abuse victims have been safeguarded
- 100% of IDVAs responding to a survey stated that they would or may use the process to help victims and 89% stated that the Cyber Abuse presentation and the training provided have improved their ability to help victims
- The knowledge, skills and understanding of IDVAs around Adult Digital Abuse and Cyber Stalking has been significantly improved. Victims who have presented to the IDVA service have reported that they are very pleased with the CARA process and that it has significantly increased their confidence in police

Further developments in the Force's work include a mobile app that enables victims of Adult Digital Abuse to access advice and support, as well as report the crime; expanding the CARA Process to all front line police officers; and fully integrating the process into the Digital Investigations Portal.

---

### **Jenny Hopkins – Prosecuting perpetrators of online abuse**



The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) uses the term 'violence against women and girls' (VAWG) to encapsulate different types of offending, including domestic abuse, sexual offences, forced marriage, so-called honour based violence, trafficking, FGM, and prostitution offences; but this sometimes does encapsulate offences that are carried out against men and boys.

The 2015 annual CPS VAWG report highlights the changing nature of VAWG and the increasing amount of online activity used by perpetrators to humiliate, control and threaten victims. Approximately one third of all direct threats that were made to victims online, are actually carried out. Therefore, the CPS is making cyber enabled VAWG a particular focus of attention.

With advances in technology, places victims could once go to feel safe are no longer places that can be assumed to be safe, for example a friend's or parents' house. Such places can be infiltrated by the perpetrator, which increases the psychological as well as physical damage to the victim. Prosecutors have witnessed how some perpetrators build up trust with their victim through social media, so that victim believes that they are in a true friendship or relationship, which can have disastrous effects. For example, young girls are encouraged to send sexualised pictures and messages which the perpetrators then use to blackmail them into carrying out physical sexual acts. Gangs also use social media to coerce girls into gang activities such as selling drugs or for sexual initiation for young male gang members.

The CPS has a cyber crime strategy, including a cyber crime manual, which is being used to address VAWG now, as well as online fraud. The CPS is also working with the Home Office to address legislation that reflects modern day criminality; such as the introduction of the offence of revenge pornography. There are other new offences enacted or due to be enacted, for example possession of rape pornography; coercive and controlling behaviour of an intimate partner; and it will shortly be an offence to send a sexualised message to a child or young person. The CPS is also working with the Home Office and College of Policing to develop training on the offence of controlling and coercive behaviour, in particular to address victim blaming.

Advances in technology, however, also provide investigators and prosecutors with new ways to gather and present evidence. In 2015, the CPS had the highest volume of all

referrals from the police in relation to VAWG; the highest number of charged defendants; the highest number of prosecutions; and the highest number of convictions ever. Since April 2015 around 40 cases of revenge porn have been prosecuted.

---

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE UK**

**Chair: Polly Neate**, *Women's Aid*

**Dr Christine Barter**, University of Bristol

**Joe Hayman**, PSHE Association

**Gjori Langeland**, Domestic Violence Intervention Project

### **Christine Barter – Gender-based violence in teenage intimate partner relationships**



In 2009, the University of Bristol carried out the first wide-ranging, school based study to look at issues of violence and control in young people's relationships across England, which surveyed 1500 young people aged 14-17, and interviewed 90 young people. Another study, based on 82 interviews, was carried out with young people not in full time education, including young mums, young people in residential care, and young people in pupil referral units.

A second research study was carried out in 2015, across five European countries, which also included a focus on online abuse and control, in particular 'sexting'. The Safeguarding Teenage Intimate Relationships (STIR) project examined instances of online and offline, physical, emotional and sexual violence, and the impact it had on the young people. It also examined the risk and protective factors, in order to further understanding of how to prevent abuse in young people's relationships, and to help them build resilience.

Following the mapping of policy and practice in the five countries, 4500 young people took part in school-based surveys to examine how well violence in teenage relationships was understood in those different countries, for example what legal frameworks there were and how professionals worked. One hundred young people were also interviewed, with expert workshops across the five countries. Young people's advisory groups were held, which fed into a messaging board where young people interacted about healthy relationships, discussing questions such as what does control look like; what is surveillance; what are the different forms of violence; and what is the impact? Through this, the young people created the STIRitApp web/phone based app.

The research in England found that:

- 48% of girls had experienced online abuse, including control and surveillance; compared to 25% of boys
- 48% of girls had experienced face-to-face emotional abuse; compared to 27% of boys
- 22% of girls had experienced physical abuse; compared to 12% of boys
- 41% of girls had experienced sexual abuse, including pressure and force; compared to 14% of boys.
- 44% of girls had sexted a sexual image; compared to 32% of boys
- 39% of girls had received a sexual image; compared to 47% of boys

The survey also examined the subjective negative impact of abuse, and found that young people who had experienced this felt upset, unhappy, scared, humiliated,

embarrassed, bad about themselves, shocked, annoyed and angry. However, a small minority of participants did not see the behaviour as negative, but that sometimes it meant they felt protected, loved, wanted, good about themselves, or that it was funny. Some young women felt that the abusive behaviour demonstrated that their abuser was 'at least thinking about them', or blamed themselves for the abusive behaviour, especially in relation to sexual violence. However, girls blamed themselves less in the case of physical violence.

Factors associated with (but not necessarily causing) a young person being involved in intimate partner abuse were identified as:

- Experience of family violence or child abuse
- Being bullied or being a bully
- Having an aggressive peer group
- Having an older partner (two years or more)
- Negative gendered attitudes
- Regular use of online pornography
- Performing poorly at school

Young men were more likely to end a relationship that was becoming problematic, particularly if there were levels of control, whereas for young women it seemed to be a normalised aspect of their experiences in relationships.

---

## **Joe Hayman – The role of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) in tackling gender-based violence**

**PSHE**  
Association

Currently, the preamble to the national curriculum in England and Wales states that 'all schools should make provision for PSHE education'. The word 'should' is a challenge, and the aim of the PSHE Association is to change that to 'must'. All state maintained secondary schools must teach sex and relationships education (SRE), although the current Government is aiming for more secondary schools to become academies, rather than state maintained. All schools must also have a sex and relationships education policy, but that policy can be to **not** teach about sex and relationships. When teaching sex and relationships, schools must have regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance, which was published in 2000. This predates the widespread use of the internet, and therefore the challenges that young people are presented with by the online world.

PSHE education can play an important role in preventing violence against women and girls, as well as achieving a range of other positive outcomes. One key part of PSHE is education on healthy relationships and consent. Learning about consent has to take place as part of a wider programme, as issues of consent do not come up in isolation – they need to be looked at alongside gender equality, identity, attitudes to violence, self-image and mental health.

Recent inquiries into child sexual exploitation, as well as the Children's Commissioner's report on abuse in the family environment, have recommended that all schools should teach about subjects such as consent and healthy relationships, to ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. Only one in eight cases of abuse actually comes to the attention of authorities, and when those cases do come to light, it is when children and young people understand that the behaviour is abusive and have the language to share with others. This is what PSHE should achieve.

Unfortunately, there are many challenges and myths around PSHE and SRE.

### **Myth 1: PSHE sexualises children**

Preventative sex and relationships education is, in fact, associated with later first sexual intercourse, consenting relationships, use of contraception, reduced unplanned pregnancy, and increased disclosures of abuse.

### **Myth 2: PSHE detracts from academic learning**

An analysis of social and emotional skills programmes shows that PSHE actually improves attitudes and behaviour of pupils, and demonstrates an 11% improvement in attainment. Ofsted has found a strong correlation between outstanding PSHE and outstanding whole school inspection results.

### **Myth 3: Parents are unsure about schools teaching about sex and relationships**

90% of UK parents say they would support compulsory PSHE with education about healthy relationships, and with consent at its heart. Only 1% of parents strongly disagree. Statutory guidance also makes it clear that parental consultation in the development of a PSHE programme is absolutely essential.

### **Myth 4: Sex and relationships education undermines the ethos of church schools**

There are hundreds of examples of church schools delivering PSHE education to a high standard. A school's sex and relationships education policy should always be developed by the school's governing body, consulting with parents and community leaders and in line with the ethos of a school, whether it is a faith school or not.

There is, however, considerable support for statutory status for PSHE from:

- 92% of young people
- 90% of parents
- 88% of teachers
- 85% of business

---

## **Gjori Langeland – The role of perpetrator programmes in addressing gender-based violence**



Perpetrator programmes seek to stop domestic abuse in both current and future relationships. They are not set up to keep poorly functioning couples relationships together but to improve the health, communication and safety within relationships. Often programmes work with victims of domestic abuse to enable them to leave their abuser safely, or with the perpetrator to leave a relationship safely; and to begin to repair the damage to any children so that child contact might be safer in the future.

The Domestic Violence Intervention Programme (DVIP) was one of the first agencies in the UK to deliver domestic violence perpetrator programmes, and was one of the first to achieve an accreditation standard with Respect, the national standard setting agency for perpetrator work.

The key to any kind of perpetrator work is to work with partners and ex-partners, and provide a support service for the victims (usually women). Although programmes may rehabilitate perpetrators, the aim of the work is to prioritise safety of victims and any children. The DVIP works in a co-located model. Staff go into settings, mainly in social care, to work alongside social workers and other frontline practitioners to increase the focus on how they work with perpetrators, usually fathers, including a focus on the father's responsibility for their child's health and wellbeing, through their relationship

with the other parent. The DVIP also runs culturally specific services, such as Al-Aman, which works with Arabic speaking women and men in communities in West London.

The perpetrator programme runs over 26 weeks, for two and half hours per week, delivered usually in a group setting; or in a one-to-one setting for those men who are not able to access a group setting; or for male or female perpetrators who do not fit in with a programme aimed at heterosexual men. The programme has a thorough risk assessment and ongoing risk management processes, with clear case management for every single case and collaborative working with the criminal justice, social care and health systems. The integrated support service for partners, and all relevant ex-partners of perpetrators, often works with women who have not yet begun to seek help - around 30% of the women that the programme proactively contacts, because their partner is accessing DVIP services, have not yet begun to help seek.

It is particularly important to maintain contact with the partner in order to manage expectations. A perpetrator may beg his partner not to leave because he has joined the programme, and not actually attend; or continue the abusive behaviour whilst on the programme. Therefore, it is important that the women's service is able to communicate with that woman and support her in managing her safety if her partner is still abusive. This process is embedded within a coordinated community response, for example with Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC).

DVIP also works from a pro-feminist model because, overwhelmingly, gender-based violence is an issue of male violence towards women in intimate partner relationships.

It is a challenge to measure the success of programmes, and measures have been widened in recent years to include:

- Individual behaviour change leading to cessation of violence and abuse
- Improved risk assessment and management due to coordinated local risk management processes, such as MARACs
- Improved outcomes for children re child protection and child residence and contact arrangements, due to contribution of information about the perpetrator from the perpetrator programme
- Proactive support for partners, leading to increased contact with victims who may not have otherwise have been given support

The Mirabel research project by the Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse has evaluated perpetrator programmes, and found that:

- Most men who complete a Respect accredited domestic violence perpetrator programme stop using violence and reduce most other forms of abuse against their partner
- Most of the partners and ex-partners of men on programmes say that they feel, and are, safer after their partner or ex-partner completed the programme

The challenge for working with perpetrators of gender-based violence is being able to sustain funding, that will provide for good quality and robust programmes.

**Nkosazana Maqoma**, Mothers' Union South Africa

The array of forms of violence against women and girls in South Africa is vast. Currently, almost one in three women and one in nine young girls are raped every day in South Africa. One form of sexual violence, which is increasingly prevalent is the rape of women and men who identify as non-heterosexual. This is perpetrated against lesbian women in particular, with around ten raped or gang-raped weekly, and 500 raped each year. This form of violence, referred to as 'corrective rape', stems from societal attitudes towards sexuality, and the idea that lesbian women can be 'made' heterosexual through rape; with perpetrators stating 'it will teach them to become real women'.

There is limited justice for survivors of this form of sexual violence, as often perpetrators will buy their release from repercussions through an often corrupt criminal justice system. Societal attitudes, discrimination and stigma against the women who experience this form of violence, means that often the community will side with the perpetrator, rather than the victim.

Gender-based violence within schools is also a concern in South Africa, and on any given day there is likely to be a child raped within the premises of a township school. Child protective services estimate that more than 40 children are raped every day in South Africa. Gender-based violence in the community also undermines and interrupts the education system, especially when learners become the targets of rape, sexual harassment and bullying.

The rates of teenage pregnancy also give rise for concern, with children as young as 11 or 12 becoming pregnant often as a result of sexual abuse by older men. This form of gender-based violence is exacerbated by poverty, with an element of transactional sex attached, as perpetrators will often buy things for the younger girls as a way to coerce them into sexual activity. The impact of teenage pregnancy on the family, especially those headed by a single mother of the young girl, can be severe, further exacerbating poverty and straining coping mechanisms.

Harmful cultural and traditional practices continue to take place in many parts of South Africa; and one of these is the issue of 'initiation school', where boys are taken to the bush to 'learn how to be men'. Often exposed to alcohol and drugs during this process, on return the boys are often pressured by their peers to 'test their manhood'. This often involves them finding a vulnerable woman or girl, such as an older woman, or child and raping or gang raping her.

Mothers' Union members are affected by this, and in 2013 two women from the Diocese of Grahamstown were raped and killed in their homes. Ukuthwala – another harmful cultural practice carried out in parts of South Africa – involves the abduction of young girls for marriage, by an older man, often with the consent of the girl's family, who receive a payment from the perpetrator. Cultural and traditional factors also make it more difficult to address gender-based violence, as it is often considered taboo and unacceptable for a woman to talk about some of these practices, as well as gender-based violence on the whole. Finding a language and framework for the issue has been a challenge for many members of traditional societies in South Africa, and there remains a lot of stigma around gender-based violence.

Stigma has not only led to those experiencing gender-based violence feeling that they cannot talk about it within the public space, but also feeling unable to report this as a crime. This is exacerbated by a lack of training and sensitivity within the criminal justice process, which can lead to the re-traumatisation of survivors if they do choose to report. Due to the historical and contextual situation of South Africa post-apartheid, there is also a lack of trust around reporting to the police, due to a fear of police brutality. Whilst this is an ongoing issue, there has been some progress in this area, such as the introduction of Thuthuzela centres in some cities, which offer a more therapeutic and joined up approach for those reporting gender-based violence.

Mothers' Union in South Africa focuses on gender-based violence as one of its three priority areas, along with health and education, which feed in to this issue. The issue of gender-based violence has also been taken on by the Anglican Church as a whole, with the creation of a Women and Gender Desk within the Province. Mothers' Union in South Africa works to end gender-based violence in a variety of ways; and one area of focus is prevention, and engaging men and boys. Mothers' Union works with boys before they enter the initiation process, in order to equip them with resilience to the pressures they may face there, as well as providing support to single parents of these boys in establishing moral foundations for their children.

Working with the 'We Will Speak Out' coalition, Mothers' Union South Africa discovered a gap in the provision of therapeutic support for survivors of gender-based violence, and so developed Bible study materials as well as other resources to help shape women's understanding of gender-based violence and address stigma. Mothers' Union works closely with the church in addressing gender-based violence and sensitising and training church leaders.

The South African Government recently launched the '365 Days National Action Plan', with the aim of keeping gender-based violence on the agenda, beyond the 16 Days of Activism. Whilst the Government has accepted the need to continue raising awareness of the issue, as well as providing support to organisations dealing with issues of gender-based violence, it is vital that policy, and rhetoric, are carried through into action. More emphasis needs to be placed on prevention rather than as a reactive outcome. Prevention must include a range of stakeholders such as civil society, community based organisations, faith groups and faith-based organisations.

Improvements to both the recording and gathering of evidence in relation to gender-based violence must be addressed, along with the continued sensitisation and training of professionals such as the police. Whilst improvements are being made to reporting processes, there remain significant flaws with the way in which gender-based violence is dealt within the criminal justice system. Often perpetrators only serve very short custodial sentences before being released on bail; corruption means that they can buy their way out of repercussions; and there are issues with the recording of evidence, which prevents perpetrators from being charged.

Stigma and the voiceless-ness of survivors, often rooted in harmful traditional practices and culture, also need to be addressed. Gender-based violence impedes democracy and development, and compromises quality of life, in both economic and social terms. Whilst there are many challenges in addressing gender-based violence in South Africa, there is also hope that civil society can make a difference - if we do not give up.

## **TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS ACROSS THE WORLD: OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY**

**Mandy Marshall**, Restored

**Heather Barclay**, International Planned Parenthood Federation

**Ken Bluestone**, Age International

### **Mandy Marshall – Tackling gender-based violence through a faith-based approach**



Restored is an international Christian alliance working to transform relationships and end violence against women. It exists to challenge and resource the church and to answer two key questions: 'Where is the Church?' and 'Where are the men in the church?', in a global society where one in three women is beaten, coerced or otherwise abused in her lifetime.

There are concerns that society, and in particular the church, is not dealing with gender-based violence as the pandemic it is. Domestic abuse accounts for 75% of violence against women and girls, and the home is the most unsafe place for a woman to be. Whilst some believe that domestic abuse only occurs within certain parts of society, and that wealth acts as a protector from violence, this is not the case. Domestic abuse affects women in all cultures, societies, and contexts, including in the church. According to a survey by the Methodist Church in 2002, 17% of women reported having experienced domestic violence; and in 2013 Restored conducted a survey with Christianity Magazine, which found that 19% of female respondents had been raped; 40% had suffered some form of intimidation in their relationship; and 16% had experienced physical violence.

The fact that domestic violence is rarely spoken of or acknowledged in the church could be because there is no safe space in this context for women to talk about it, or because people do not know what to do or where to seek help. Toxic theology around gender-based violence and the role of women that is sometimes taught within churches can also exacerbate and perpetuate gender-based violence. Research by Restored in four Latin American countries found that 30% of women in the church have suffered sexual abuse, and that 10% of women thought that submission to their husbands in cases of domestic violence was God's will. Stigma, embarrassment and humiliation surrounding gender-based violence also prevent women from seeking help and support.

Restored provides a range of resources and training for churches across the world, to help them engage with issue of gender-based violence, and to equip them to deal with it. In Ecuador, in response to the fact that 40% of women had suffered violence in their relationships, Restored worked with local organisations to produce a six-month online training course for pastors, looking at the issue of domestic abuse, addressing some of the theology around this and challenging men. As a result, they have launched PACT 2016, whereby churches are adopting a 'Charter for Churches' on ending domestic abuse. Restored also works with men and boys, engaging them in ending gender-based violence, and run 'First Man Standing', a campaign which sees men and boys pledge to address gender-based violence.

Restored has been effective in engaging the church with the issue of gender-based violence, and in July 2015, along with Faith Action, launched the Faith Leaders Declaration on Domestic Abuse, in the House of Lords, which was endorsed by a range of faith leaders in the UK.

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is a global federation working in almost 170 countries, seeking to empower the most vulnerable women, men and young people to access services, education and information on sexual and reproductive health. IPPF’s 65,000 service delivery points include family planning, maternal and child health, and sexually transmitted infection (STI) and HIV treatment, prevention and care.

Women are joined by many positive shared experiences, but are also joined by the shared experience of fear and violence as a result of gender; the greatest human rights violation facing the world today. Gender-based violence, which is one of the least prosecuted crimes, presents one of the greatest threats to lasting peace and development. It is caused because women are unequal, but it also perpetuates the inequality of women in society.

Gender-based violence has a range of vast and far reaching impacts on women and girls, and can affect their sexual and reproductive health, physical and mental health, economic wellbeing and productivity, and participation in community and political life. Women who experience violence are more at risk of unwanted pregnancies, maternal and infant mortality, and STIs including HIV. Women who have HIV are also more at risk of violence, and this often means that they are less willing to talk about the fact, seek help and treatment, or even to find out their status.

Violence against women and girls can lead to increased absenteeism from work, decreased labour market participation, reduced productivity, and lower savings, which increases the vulnerability of survivors. The stigma that impacts women affected by violence, can lead to increased isolation, as well as reduced social and political participation. There are also links between the age of first marriage and violence against women and girls, with women who are 20 years old or younger at the time of first marriage more likely to report physical or sexual violence. Globally, one in four women are physically or sexually abused in pregnancy, linking health and reproduction to women’s experiences of violence.

IPPF seeks to address gender-based violence and promote women’s equality, from a sexual and reproductive health perspective, and to engage with women affected by violence through health service access points. Some of these entry points, which enable women and girls to access gender-based violence screening and treatment, include services such as home visits during pregnancy, post-natal screening, interlinked referrals with the health sector and women’s organisations, and gender sensitisation programmes for health staff. It is important to reach women where they are, especially as the stigma and isolation, as well as risk, may prevent them from proactively seeking help for gender-based violence. In 2015, IPPF provided 1.9million prevention, screening and counselling services related to gender-based violence; however this is only the tip of the iceberg, and there are still many more women that need to be reached.

Health services, women’s organisation’s and services for gender-based violence, are at risk, due to the lack of funding and political will in many parts of the world, as well as due to external factors such as conflict. This must to be addressed if we are to see lives that are free of violence, and lives of freedom and peace.

It is estimated that by 2050, the number of women and men over the age of 60 will reach two billion, around one fifth of the world's population. Whilst a society in which people are living longer is something to be celebrated, as a result of improvements in areas such as healthcare and education, there are issues in relation to the treatment and lived experience of older people that give cause for concern, and which must be addressed.

With a quarter of women globally over the age of 50, and the majority of women living longer than men in most parts of the world, ageing is a gendered issue. Whilst in some areas older people hold greater status, and elicit respect, value and recognition, in many other areas older age brings a range of unique difficulties to be overcome. Whilst older women are not exempt from the issues faced by women generally across the globe, these are often exacerbated by issues of ageing, such as discrimination, and additional vulnerabilities and insecurities that getting older may bring. In many parts of the world, women continue to carry out the majority of unpaid care and work in to their advanced years, especially in multi-generational households, with grandparents providing care for grandchildren, to enable parents to work. This unpaid care and work is often not formally, or informally, recognised or valued. For many in developing countries, the burden of continuing to provide food and meet the basic needs of their families, still falls firmly upon the shoulders of women, and does not stop as women get older.

As well as facing the same forms of gender-based violence experienced by younger women, such as domestic and sexual violence, there are specific forms of gender-based violence which are unique to older women. One form often experienced by older women is the issue of widow inheritance, which can lead to sexual violence, as well as further marginalisation. In parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America, women in later life are being accused of being witches, resulting in extreme violence and abuse towards them, often from members of their own communities or those close to them. A Help Age International study found that 2,575 older women in regions of Tanzania were killed after being accused of witchcraft during a five-year period. Reasons for these accusations are manifold and often stem from cultural beliefs or attitudes, such as that if a woman has red eyes she is a witch, when in reality many older women have red eyes as a result of the smoke from poorly ventilated cooking fires.

Women are also affected by other forms of elder abuse, such as abuse and mistreatment in prisons, lack of access to justice, and marginalisation due to gender and age. Research by Help Age International in Peru, Kyrgyzstan and Mozambique found that 20% of women interviewed had experienced sexual violence and abuse since the age of 50. An Oxfam report from the Democratic Republic of the Congo found that 15% of the women receiving care after sexual violence from conflict combatants were over the age of 55, which is of significant concern when taking in to account that only 2.4% of the population is over 55.

Whilst it is clear that older women are affected by gender-based violence, there is a significant gap in the official data collection tools used, which means that often older women are 'invisible', or do not exist in the official data. The major data collection tool used by UN agencies and national governments purely focuses on women between the ages of 15 to 49. As these tools do not take in to account the experiences of women over the age of 49, an entire demographic of older women is missing from the data. This issue is being addressed by Help Age International, which has successfully lobbied for the age cap to be taken away, or at least raised in the indicators surrounding the Sustainable Development Goals.

There is also a legislative gap in many places that prevents older women from receiving the support and protection they need, in order to keep them safe from elder abuse. Of 133 countries surveyed by the World Health Organisation and UN Office on drugs and crime prevention, only 59 said they had laws to prevent elder abuse.

Age International works in more than 30 countries helping older women and men by responding to emergencies, transforming health, fighting poverty and protecting rights. As well as focussing on calling for better legislation in dealing with elder abuse, and the importance of improved data collection, Age International is also looking at the possibility of a new human rights convention that deals specifically with older people.

---

## WORKSHOPS

Conference delegates participated in workshop groups at the end of the day, to reflect upon what they had learned and to share their own experiences and insights into violence against women and girls. Each group explored a different theme using set questions and finally fed back to the rest of the delegates. The following section summarises each group's discussions. The views expressed were not necessarily shared by all, or reflective of the views of Mothers' Union.

### Social norms and cultural change

**1.** *How do social norms currently shape attitudes towards gender, and violence against women and girls in both a UK and global context? What are the current needs and gaps in challenging harmful norms?*

- Gendering starts from a young age, often with harmful stereotypes about power. The commercial world also creates gender stereotypes through toys, clothes and advertising. This also sets up expectations for boys and girls about what they can achieve.
- The apportioning of 'shame' has often been based on women's sexual behaviour and appearance.
- Different generations and age groups perceive social norms differently; which affects social norms themselves.

**2.** *What is working in addressing and changing social norms which lead to the perpetuation of gender-based violence in the UK and globally? Do you feel that progress has been made in this area? What do you think has contributed to any progress in addressing these social norms?*

- There is more information on gender-based violence, and greater empowerment to deal with it, than in the past.
- Laws can be used to change social norms, as well as vice versa.
- One programme in Malawi that has worked in changing norms is a women's forum that informs women of their human rights, with education cascading to other women and leading to change within the family - and consequently the community.

**3. What are the next steps needed in both policy and practice to challenge and change social norms which perpetuate gender-based violence? How do you think these could be implemented effectively?**

- There is a policy and legislative gap around sexualisation and gendering and a space to address it.
- There could be further regulation of the entertainment industry and media guidelines.
- There should be education for boys and girls in schools about social norms that perpetuate gender-based violence.

## **Provision of services for survivors of gender-based violence**

**1. What are the current challenges affecting the provision of services for survivors of gender-based violence?**

- Lack of financing for services for those experiencing gender-based violence.
- Culture and attitudes towards gender-based violence, including reluctance towards labelling certain cultural practices as gender-based violence.

**2. What services have been effective in supporting survivors of gender-based violence? Please give examples of best practice in this area. What has facilitated this effectiveness?**

- Best practice is to involve survivors of gender-based violence in the design of support services.

**3. What are the next steps needed in both policy and practice, in addressing needs of service providers for survivors of gender-based violence, and the issues identified?**

- Good debriefing and education of those providing services for survivors.
- Policies to protect funding for services.

## **Law enforcement and the criminal justice system**

**1. What issues/gaps in provision can you identify in the legal and criminal justice system in addressing gender-based violence in the UK? Is the law currently adequate in protecting/delivering justice and deterring perpetrators from committing gender-based violence?**

- There is sometimes a delayed response in intervention/ action by the police and legal system after someone discloses a form of abuse e.g. stalking. Action often isn't taken until physical or sexual violence has been used.
- There is more of a focus on protection than on deterring perpetrators of gender-based violence.

**2. What advances have been made in policy and practice in relation to the law and criminal justice system in addressing gender-based violence? Are there any gaps**

*between policy and practice? Are there any examples of times when this has worked well, or any examples of best practice around this issue?*

- Human trafficking is now a crime in England and Wales under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015.
- There is still an issue with creating an environment where someone feels safe to disclose gender-based violence e.g. at a police station – it may be daunting for a victim and they may have concerns about confidentiality.
- There is still victim blaming in practice.
- There is training on dealing sensitively to disclosures of violence - in theory progress has been made, but what does this look like in practice?

**3.** *What are the next steps in relation to law enforcement and the criminal justice system in addressing gender-based violence more effectively? What needs to occur at the policy level? What needs to occur in implementation and in practice?*

- UK wide legislation on all forms of gender-based violence is needed.
- There may be a role for restorative justice in some cases.

## **Dealing with perpetrators of gender-based violence**

**1.** *What are the current gaps/issues in dealing with perpetrators of gender-based violence? What needs can you identify in this area?*

- There may be a gap in research on perpetrators and why they carry out abuse.
- Patchy/unequally distributed resource for support/re-education of perpetrators.
- Lack of willingness of perpetrators to attend rehabilitation programmes – maybe it should be mandatory.

**2.** *What examples of best practice/approaches that have worked in dealing with perpetrators of gender-based violence do you know of?*

- Family mediation akin to restorative justice e.g. Atalafro programme in Wales.
- Disclosure of domestic violence history to partners, through Clare's Law.

**3.** *What are the next steps in dealing with perpetrators of gender-based violence, preventing reoffending, and dealing with underlying causes? What, if any, are the risks involved in your opinion? Please think about what needs to be done in terms of policy, and also practice, and what you think needs to be done in terms of implementation.*

- There should be mandatory rehabilitation for perpetrators, with restraining orders being used during this time.
- It would be helpful to understand from perpetrators themselves why they abuse women.
- Funding for perpetrator programmes should be ring-fenced.
- There is a risk of failure to reform individuals.

## Addressing gender-based violence globally in a post-2015 development context

### 1. What current gaps can you identify in approaches to tackling gender-based violence in the current global development context/agenda?

- Lack of knowledge and awareness at the personal level, e.g. what FGM is; of disparity between what we know and what goes on.
- Lack of education about gender-based violence across the world.
- Gap between policy/training/education, and what is happening on the ground.
- Inequality in gender norms and women's status is not being adequately tackled.
- Lack of linkage between implementation of legislation and attitudes/behaviours.

### 2. What has worked well in both policy and practice, in terms of addressing gender-based violence in the global development context?

- Local and global partnerships.
- Political will, including cross-party political will, and support.
- Accountability mechanisms to ensure good communication.
- Adequate funding to address gender-based violence.
- International pressure and policy.
- Women's participation at levels and across all creeds, classes, races, ages etc.
- Strong, inclusive cross-sectoral approaches/collaboration to tackling gender-based violence.

### 3. What are the next steps in terms of policy and implementation in addressing gender-based violence in the post- 2015 development context?

- Funding for grassroots, women's rights organisations.
- Continue and develop partnerships, political will, accountability, participation and a cross-sectoral approach in implementing global development goals.
- Investigate and address gaps in all areas and forms of gender-based violence.

**Mothers' Union also launched a petition at the conference calling on the UK Government to exempt victim-survivors of domestic abuse using the Child Maintenance Service from the 4% resident parent collection fee. Using the Child Maintenance Service, rather than a family-based arrangement, may be the only safe way for victim-survivors of domestic abuse to claim support for their child.**

See the petition at: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/p/stopcharges>

May 2016  
Mothers' Union  
Mary Sumner House  
24 Tufton Street  
London SW1P 3RB  
[policy@mothersunion.org](mailto:policy@mothersunion.org)  
020 7222 5533  
[www.mothersunion.org](http://www.mothersunion.org)