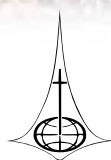


Churches Say "No" to Violence against Women

Action
Plan
for the
Churches



The Lutheran World Federation
Department for Mission and Development
Women in Church and Society

ACTION PLAN FOR THE CHURCHES

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THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION
DEPARTMENT FOR MISSION AND DEVELOPMENT
WOMEN IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

CHURCHES SAY “**NO**” TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

ACTION PLAN FOR THE CHURCHES



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FOREWORD

The document “Churches Say ‘NO’ to Violence against Women” is the result of a collaborative undertaking of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches between 1999–2001. It began in response to the “Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women” 1988–1998, and was prepared by the Secretary for Women in Church and Society of the LWF Department for Mission and Development. Diverse groups of women and men were invited to further reflect on the issue of violence, provide action plans to reduce it and contribute to enrichment of the text.

In response, some churches shared that they had already addressed the issue. Some delegated responsibility to women’s groups for their reaction or appointed special groups to assess whether it spoke of, or to, their particular contexts. Others corrected, added and provided insight so that the text could be used universally.

Some churches translated the draft into their own languages to reach a wider audience. In regional and national meetings church leaders affirmed the document, acknowledged the existence of violence and the need for further discussion. Others planned educative projects or the setting up of crisis centers for victims.

All of these are necessary and welcome responses as the LWF accompanies the churches in identifying the diverse manifestations of overt and covert forms of violence. The document suggests ways in which women, men and faith communities could work together to overcome the sin of violence against women that hurts individuals, communities and the church’s very image. To be healers, we must first heal ourselves.

Concise by intention, this working document invites individuals and congregations to use it as a discussion starter. The LWF offers it in contribution to the “Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace,” 2001–2010, and to the United Nations “International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World,” 2001–2010.

When those who are victimized suffer, so does God. Let us work together to overcome all forms of violence that are an offense against God and humanity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'I' followed by several loops and a final flourish.

Ishmael Noko, General Secretary

The Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, December 2001

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to the many courageous people, men and women, who continue to advocate for an end to violence against women and children. Each and every initiative taken to effect an impact through Christ in all areas of church life that might affirm women is worthy of praise.

We thank the many churches, women's and other groups that responded to our invitation to contribute to enriching this publication, in particular, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Evangelical Church in Germany. We also thank those who intend to use it as a discussion starter, and those who translate it thereby rendering its content accessible to a wider audience.

Especially, we express compassion for all women, and their children, in their efforts to overcome oppression and who might benefit, either directly or indirectly, from this document.

We note appreciation for the insights of all researchers and activists whose writings provide such a wealth of information about violence, especially Pamela Cooper-White, Elizabeth A. Johnson, and Hisako Kinukawa.

Thanks are also due to the members of the Special Committee appointed by the LWF Council that approved the document for publication, as well as to the LWF Department for Mission and Development team.

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is neither a new nor an easy subject to grapple with. Prolonged global activism has helped us to name the many evil dimensions of violence against women and how they affect quality of life for everyone. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has highlighted the issue in several of its recent Council meetings for further action in and through the member churches (Appendix V). Some churches have taken an admirable lead in extensive educative and policy-formulating processes. The *Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration* that came out of the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women identified violence against women as one of the priority concerns of the international community, and one particularly deserving urgent response.

The “Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women,” 1988–1998, firmly emphasized

the elimination of all violence in various forms (sexual, religious, psychological, structural, physical, spiritual, military), and the culture of violence, especially as they affect the life and dignity of women. And we declare our readiness, to confront any attempts to excuse, cover up, or justify violence. We declare...that its presence in the church is an offence against God, humanity and the earth.¹

As a response to this challenge to the churches the LWF Council, at its 1999 meeting, resolved to

- encourage all member churches to face the painful issue of violence against women in all its manifestations particular to their context, and
- ask the desk for Women in Church and Society to propose ways to accompany the churches in their efforts to address the issue.²

A draft document was prepared by the desk for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) and shared with all heads of churches, women leaders, seminaries and ecumenical organizations with the purpose of

- encouraging the churches in their particular contexts to open up ways to see how violence against women pervades our daily living not only in overt ways but also often in insidious and covert ways that may not even be recognized or accepted as violence.
- using this document as a discussion starter in the congregations, among special interest groups and in church-based seminaries and educational institutions.
- analyzing, acknowledging and understanding local manifestations of violence.
- discovering resources from within oneself, through the church, communities and networking, for ways and means to reduce violence and find possibilities of offering services to the affected.
- recording and sharing with the communion, the affirmative policies and actions taken through this process that would serve as guidelines for others seeking such remedial measures.
- offering this document to serve as a comprehensive guide to congregations for working toward a transformed and transforming community of women and men.
- making this document an LWF contribution to the “Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace,” 2001–2010, called by the World Council of Churches, as well as the UN “International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World,” 2001–2010.

It is often said that violence against women is a private family affair and therefore should be dealt with at that level. Global activism has brought to light that it is no longer a private issue of individuals, but a global one from

INTRODUCTION

which many women worldwide suffer—whether from the north, south, east or west, whether affluent or impoverished, highly educated or illiterate, holding high positions or working for a daily wage, from high society or lowly slums. Violence cuts across all barriers and looms over women of all ages as they cry out for strong, affirmative steps to be taken. Their cries should no longer be silenced or stifled within the four walls of their homes for the sake of family pride, honor, security, stability or the children, and so on, because violence against women is a sin.

Others may say that this is a women's issue that should be dealt with by women. Some women are doing just that: struggling for justice through awareness raising, lobbying for changes in structures and policies, and by rendering services to the victims, accompanying them as they move from being victims to becoming survivors. But this does not stop the perpetuation of violence. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN bodies insist that violence against women is a human rights issue and should be treated as such. This conceptual framework gives promise of greater relief through regulations and policy formulations that hold governments accountable. But it is a slow process, as policies at best are good intentions and subject to the interpretation of executive authorities such as the judiciary, police, and others. They in turn must first be sensitized in order to be effective executors of policies and laws.

Religion is often used as a tool to oppress women. One task of people of faith is to affirm the liberating potential of religion as expressed in the *Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration*. "Religion, thought, conscience and belief may and can contribute to fulfilling women's and men's moral, ethical and spiritual needs and to realizing their full potential in society."³ We need to live out this expression and take measures to correct the theologies, policies and practices that may imply the contrary. One way to begin is to specify to Bible readers that Scripture is also reflective and a product of particular contexts, cultures and ages; and biblical interpretations must look beyond and transcend these realities to attain the

gospel's life-affirming message. This is very difficult and could be misconstrued as a faith-disturbing task. If the church is to transcend the vicious cycle of violence and prepare a transformed and transforming community of men and women, it needs to take the risk.

There is no doubt that violence against women is a painful reality seen and experienced by women daily. Violence against women, it should be said, is an extremely sensitive and painful issue for some men. The topic brings a sense of shame, anger, frustration and guilt to these men, as they feel they stand collectively accused. Some deny its very existence in their lives, or reject having anything to do with it. In a few cases, they might even claim that this is their right as a father, husband or brother. Some men have been subjected to violence from women.

Women cannot hold men alone responsible for violence. Women have been obliged to hide or deny the fact of violence in their lives due to a sense of shame and humiliation. Some have become apathetic and have learned to treat it as an inevitable fact of life for fear of further violence and the impossibility of leaving home. Women sometimes use violence against other women and men. It is often said, "Women are their own worst enemies." All people are part of a system that moulds and conditions them, and demands certain roles and behavior that are prescribed as norms by religion, culture, tradition and patriarchy. If violence against women and children is to stop, men and women must work together against it. They must ask, "What does this mean to me and how should I think, behave and respond so that violence could be reduced?" "Just as the women's movement appeals for a new model for women—empowered actors not victims—new models of masculinity are needed, ones that do not include or depend on dominance over women."⁴ Similarly, new models of women's ways of being need to be explored, ones that would not suffer in silence any amount of oppression but that would speak out against it. A systematic gender analysis would help us to understand the attitudes, roles and behaviors of men and women conditioned by religion, culture, patriarchy and how they could be changed.

INTRODUCTION

Rather than viewing each other with mutual suspicion, hostility, fear, doubt and insecurity, when women and men discuss this issue among themselves and together, an alliance and true partnership could be forged to rout out this sin.

The feminist movement has shown that “women have not been good in appealing to male solidarity whereas fundamentalists have been,”⁵ which has given rise to some backlash against women, further compounding the problem.

The need to bring men and women together to work toward building healed, and healing ‘shalom’ communities makes the issue of violence against women not only a life issue but one of faith. As a faith community, the church begins this task with affirmation of the image of God in women and men and their co-responsibility and co-privilege as stewards of all creation. It looks at Jesus and his solidarity with women as a model for all to emulate. It sees the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on women, men and children as a sign and gift from God for mutuality and equality. This is received with faith in and through baptism. Our justification by grace through faith proclaims that no one is to be excluded or downgraded because of patriarchy and hierarchy. Therefore, the church looks at violence against women as a sin against life, which should be named and condemned, as it disregards the image of God in the person affected, be it woman, man, girl or boy.

Violence does not only injure the physical, emotional and psychological integrity of the victim but also damages the humanity of those perpetrating violence. [The church believes that] each act of violence against women within the church injures the body of Christ and makes it impossible to be a community of women and men in a very fundamental way.⁶

As a community called to liberate all who are oppressed, the church’s imperative is to be involved in the liberation of men and women from a culture of violence to fullness of life and communion. To play a prophetic role, the church needs to disturb the comfortable, and comfort the disturbed.

This requires enormous determination, discipline and concerted initiatives in awareness raising, value orientation, referral services and alternative options for victims. The church can no longer deal with women’s issues as a distant topic ‘out there,’ or as one without relevance to the church. As a faith community, we the church need to join with secular efforts to analyze what motivates a man to be violent, why women are unable to get out of the cycle of violence and how the church, as an instrument of God, could stop its perpetuation. As an influential community, the church has to equip both men and women, so that they value not only themselves but also God’s image in one another.

The church as a hope-sharing, care-giving instrument of God needs to offer hope and options for new life to victims, and opportunities for violators to repent, reform and make amends. It also needs to ensure that future generations grow up to be a true communion of not only listeners to the Word but also ‘doers’ of the gospel. There is every possibility of the global Lutheran communion playing a dynamic and leading role in addressing this issue.

At the same time, the church must open itself to self-analysis of its structure, policies, theology and practices, so that its commitment to be a transformed, truly transforming and witnessing community can be fully realized.

THE PROBLEM AT A GLANCE

Violence affects women worldwide in many different ways throughout their lives. Even a brief summary from many parts of the world presents an alarming and depressing picture.

In childhood, girls may be subject to child marriage, sexual abuse and female genital mutilation. Throughout their childhood, adolescence and adult life, women may be denied education, health care and even food, restriction of mobility, choice of education, job and life partner. Throughout the course of their lives, women may be subject to forced pregnancy, emotional, physical or sexual

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abuse by relatives, partners, spouses, or non-family members, or subjected to sexual harassment, trafficking or rape.

Domestic violence, i.e. violence occurring within the household, is the most widespread form of violence against women. Studies in thirty-five countries suggest that one-quarter to one-half or more of all women have been physically abused by a current or former partner or husband. It is the leading cause of injury to women that, for some, recurs almost every day leading, in some cases, to death.

Adolescent girls and young women experience violence disproportionately. Forty to fifty-eight percent of sexual assaults are committed against girls aged fifteen and younger, usually by family members or someone the victim knows.

Violence can have numerous negative consequences not only to women's psychological well being, but also on women's sexual and reproductive health, such as unwanted pregnancy, miscarriage, pelvic inflammatory disease, chronic pelvic pain, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and infertility. Fear of domestic violence often prevents women from using contraceptive devices or asking their partners or husbands to use them.⁷

HOW IS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DEFINED?

The term violence against women means

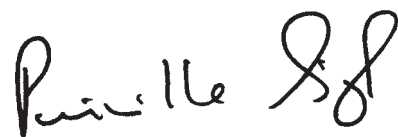
Any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life.⁸

Violence against women is not a linear process that gets worse and worse, it is not even a cycle that comes and goes and comes back again to haunt. It is like a tornado or a twister, that gathers momentum as it builds up a destructive power and sucks up the person and those around her in its vortex and then throws them around battered, disoriented, deprived and at times irrevocably lost for life. It is not even one cycle that you can study, understand and therefore can get equipped to deal with, but comes as several cycles from many sides that involve systems and structures that govern our lives.⁹

This document tries to name and explore the overt as well as the covert forms of violence against women. It explores some of the accompaniment needed by victims to move from victimization to survival and to full humanity. It offers some positive responses that could be made to reduce violence. These are not prescriptions but open invitations to explore the process of naming the sin, affirming the fullness of life for the violated and opening up opportunities for education. The appendices provide additional resources and information to those who are suffering, and to those who want to help them.

Let us begin the process by asking:

'Is there violence within the church?'



*Priscilla Singh
Secretary for Women in Church and Society
Department for Mission and Development
The Lutheran World Federation*

CHAPTER 1

NAMING THE SIN



CHAPTER 1 . NAMING THE SIN

Sin is a state of bondage that rules over and distorts human life. It is a turning away from God, which leads to sinful acts of control over, abuse of and violence against other people. Such acts are often justified by the assumption that some are intended to dominate over others. For example, Genesis 3:16b, "...your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you," is often used to justify the control of men over women. But this passage describes the result of sin entering the world, and is a description of a fallen humanity, rather than a prescription of what God had intended. It is a fallen state from which Jesus Christ has already redeemed us. The persistence of the fallen state is because we are unwilling to accept the justification by God's grace through faith received through Christ. God's act of reconciliation not only frees us as persons from the bondage of sin but also helps us to be one in Christ. (Gal 3:28)

The church needs to point out the two differing accounts of creation because popular interpretations of selected passages like Genesis 3:16 have been used in the subjugation of women. Ephesians 5:22–24, I Corinthians 11:2–16, I Timothy 2:9–15, Colossians 3:18 are used similarly. The church, therefore, must start with the confession that violence against women is not only a sin 'out there' in the world but that some church members themselves have at times committed such sinful acts, and that we have sinned both in our actions and our failure to act.

However sporadic, insignificant or inadequate they may seem, the church as a healing community has made many attempts to deal with the issue of violence against women. Some church communities

run safe, short-term shelters for women, and provide pastoral counseling, or at least handle the issue in private as a family problem. Almost all of these activities of healing and affirmation are initiated by women and usually carried out as a voluntary service. These are signs of hope for all women who, for so long, remained voiceless out of fear.

What has not yet been sufficiently forthcoming from the pulpits and church educative instruments is an open denouncement of violence against women and a confession from the church of its inability to contain it, through apathy and some of its practices. Too often, the church has dealt with violence against women "by minimizing, trivializing, invisibilising, or externalizing it."¹⁰ So the church must analyze whether "they might have preached the gospel, for centuries, in a way that contributed to men's proneness to violence, the powerlessness of women and girls, and society's tolerance for violence in the family."¹¹

The church could begin this by explaining the plurality of contexts in the Scriptures and the need for us to transcend these limitations to elevate the centrality of the gospel message in all situations so that there may be healing and freedom in Christ, not just for individuals but also for families and communities.

Most importantly, it has to be confessed that there is also violence within the church because of some policies and practices that prevent women's access to leadership. There is also the reality of clergy abuse, sexual misconduct, control over some women workers, and apathy to deal with these issues in sensitive and just ways.

CHAPTER 1 . NAMING THE SIN

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Express in public statements that all forms of violence are a sin that disregard the image of God both in the perpetrator as well as in the victim, and that this should never be tolerated or excused.*
- *Inform congregations about the reality of the various forms of violence against women in church and society particular to their contexts.*
- *Develop policies and practices for holding perpetrators of abuse accountable in church and society.*
- *Set up a specific focus on the issue at a prescribed time each year, e.g., observe a 'Solidarity Sunday' with women.*
- *Appoint staff to address, redress and monitor violence against women, e.g., open up a full-time, well-funded women's cell in the church.*
- *Create vigil groups in congregations that enquire into reports of violence in communities.*
- *Include the issue of violence against women in sermons, catechetical instruction and theological curricula.*
- *Initiate discussion on this issue in churches' educational and vocational institutions.*
- *Make the church a safe place to which victims of violence can turn for safety, support and healing.*
- *Offer possibilities of healing to both the victim and perpetrator of violence.*
- *Ensure supportive and collaborative action from local governing bodies.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

No Longer a Secret. The Church and Violence against Women. Aruna Gnanadason. 2nd revised ed. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997.

The Cry of Tamar. Violence against Women and the Church's Response. Pamela Cooper-White. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Women, Violence and Nonviolent Change. Edited by Aruna Gnanadason, Musimbi Kanyoro, Lucia Ann McSpadden. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996.

CHAPTER 1 . NAMING THE SIN

NOTES

CHAPTER 2
ANALYZING DIFFERENT FORMS OF PERSONAL VIOLENCE



CHAPTER 2 . ANALYZING DIFFERENT FORMS OF PERSONAL VIOLENCE

Before coming to the aid of violated women, it is important to understand the different dimensions of violence. Personal violence is often treated as a private issue. Reality proves that it has to be treated otherwise. Apart from affecting women physically and psychologically, it also affects their spirituality. When abused women seek alternative solutions, counseling or solace from spiritual leaders and institutions, the inadequate, ineffectual treatment meted out to them causes them to feel alone, betrayed and angry. They ask, 'Where is God in my pain and what is the church for?'

Personal violence affects not only the women who endure it but also those around them. Women often carry out the triple role of income earner, household manager and nurturer. Expectations of these roles mean they have to work long hours with less than the normal requirement of food, sleep and medical attention, until they suffer from sheer exhaustion. If these women also become their spouses' punching bags, their lives become more miserable. The most obvious forms of personal violence are physical and sexual abuse. But emotional or psychological abuse often can be equally or even more damaging with longer lasting consequences.

TYPES OF VIOLENCE

1. Physical Abuse

Any harm inflicted in any way that leaves a physical mark or bruise on the body, e.g. hitting with hands or with objects, causing cigarette burns, kicking, forced sterilization and abortion, female genital mutilation, damage to property and so on.

2. Sexual Abuse

Any action that uses a person for another's sexual gratification with or without their free consent is sexual abuse. It could be of a person under someone's

supervision. It could be through physical contact such as rape, incest, misconduct and harassment of colleagues or subordinates through touching, fondling, kissing, caressing, sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal or oral), or any activity that degrades women and children in order to sexually stimulate the perpetrator. It could also be without contact, through suggestive looks, obscene or flirtatious remarks, forcing women to view pornography or be the object of pornography, exposing genitals, obscene or anonymous telephone calls, or stalking someone, *inter alia*.

3. Emotional or Psychological Abuse

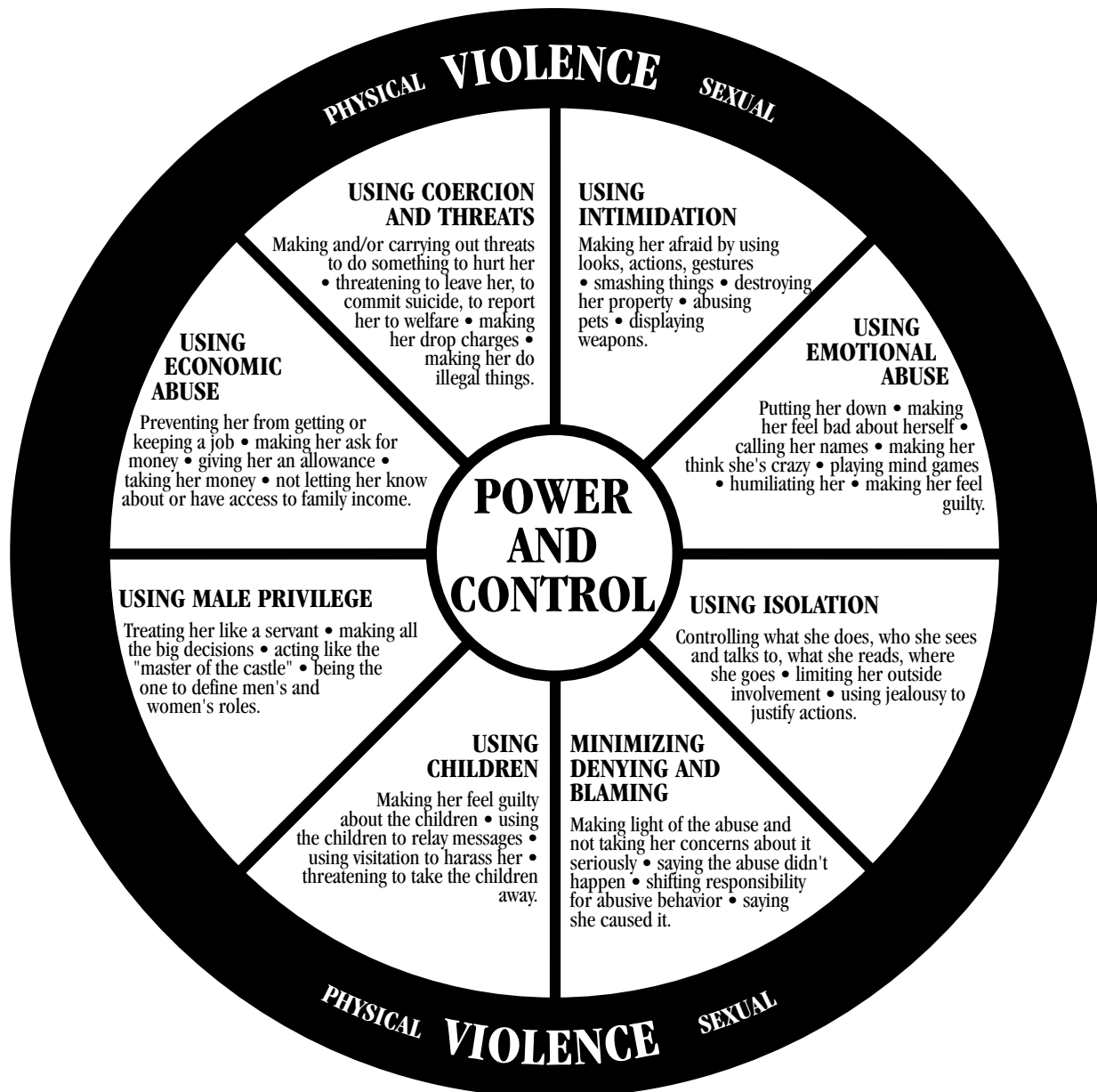
Human beings need relationships for a sense of identity, belonging, and for a meaningful life. The need for such relations, mutuality and shared responsibility leads them to seek, sustain and invest in relationships. But if women are objectivized or manipulated into a situation of powerlessness this need is exploited and abused. Such abuse could take the following forms:

Exclusion: Pretending the woman does not exist—usually expressed through body language, e.g., in committee meetings, suggestions or proposals from women are ignored.

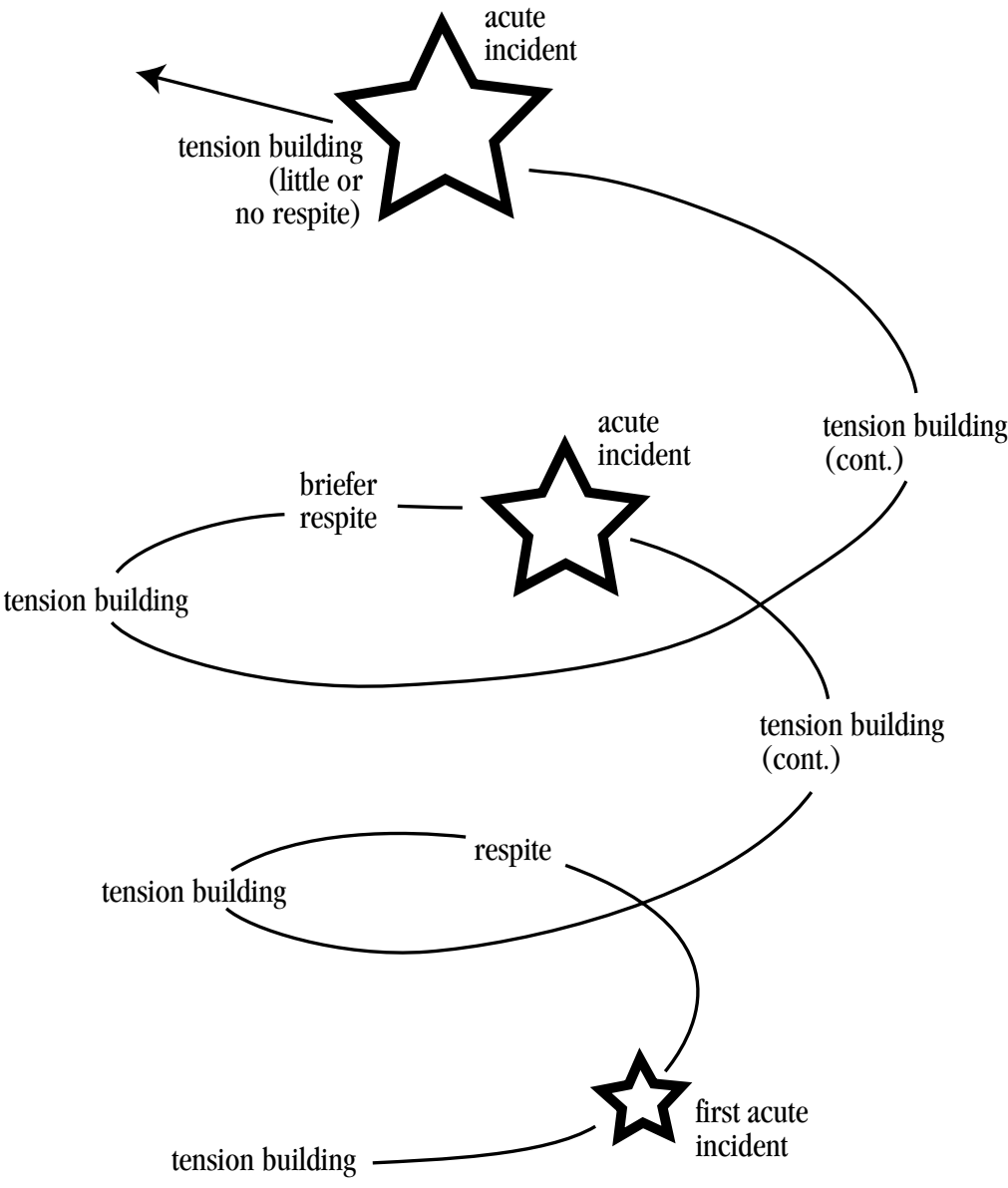
Rejection: Expressing the wish that the woman did not exist, e.g., "I wish you were not my wife/my partner."

Isolation: Denying victims the support of, or having contact with another person. Some marriages take young women out of supportive families to live with unsupportive in-laws, deny them information about their families, keep them locked up or confine them to limited areas.

Criticism: Nagging, harassing, name calling, ridiculing, blaming and putting the woman down while alone, or in front of others.



*'Power & Control Wheel' – Reprinted with permission
Domestic Abuse Intervention Project
Duluth, Minnesota, USA^{12a}*



Cycle of Violence^{12b}

Reprinted with permission

CHAPTER 2 . ANALYZING DIFFERENT FORMS OF PERSONAL VIOLENCE

Threats: Threatening to hurt or desert the woman, or hurting someone she loves, e.g. her children or other family members and even pets.

Corruption: Using the woman to do something illegal, e.g., prostitution or trafficking and selling drugs.

Re-victimization: Blaming the woman for the hurt she experiences, e.g., blaming a widow for being the indirect cause of her husband's death through lack of prayer, not taking good care of him or being the 'bad omen' that brought about his death. It is also blaming a victim of rape that it was her fault or that somehow she had asked for it through the way she dressed, by being in the wrong place or by not struggling or shouting enough. It could also be in the form of ostracism, or of forcing the victim to marry the rapist, and so on. Some women might even seek to re-experience violence they have formerly known by colluding with their partners, unconsciously looking for further victimization.

4. Power and Control

The relationship between a man and a woman when built on mutuality, respect, sharing and love can be very meaningful for both. But this is not always so. Some men who have been conditioned to take control, tend to resort to intimidation, isolation and emotional abuse. In the absence of intervention at the onset of the process, it could turn to physical abuse. Verbal abuse alone can be very damaging. It creates a loss of self-worth and doubts about one's ability to cope. Continuous criticism demoralizes and creates artificial dependency on the victimizer.

Some methods used to keep women under control are described in the 'Power and Control Wheel' on page 17.

5. The Cycle of Domestic Violence

Lenore Walker, a pioneering psychologist and advocate for battered women has proposed that a battering relationship typically moves through several stages:

A tension-building phase, in which the woman experiences 'walking on eggshells' and tries a variety of strategies to avoid or defer a violent incident. The acute phase, in which the batterer inflicts severe harm over a period ranging from two to twenty-four hours (but in some cases stretching to a week or more). And finally, an unreliable respite phase of kindness and contrite, loving behavior. This is sometimes referred to as the 'honeymoon phase' but for the battered woman it is no honeymoon. At best, it is a shaky reprieve within a context of coercion, threat, restricted options and injury. The cycle repeats in spiral fashion, with the tension-building phases becoming longer, the violence incident becoming more dangerous, and the respite phases becoming shorter or nonexistent.¹³

The cycle is further described as the 'love, hope, fear' cycle.

As the cycle revolves, the woman's responses change. During the violent phase, she might break her silence and confide in someone. But if she experiences the respite phase, she says that matters have been resolved with her partner, and there is nothing to worry about. The batterer confesses and seeks forgiveness. This behavior of forgiving and letting go by the woman, and the partner's contrite behavior, are parts of the cycle of violence. These quick responses from the victim and violator should be a cause for concern, not relief. According to Mary Fortune, there is a clear difference between this kind of glib pseudo-repentance and the true, hard-work, long-term repentance of turning one's life and behavior completely around."¹⁴

CHAPTER 2 . ANALYZING DIFFERENT FORMS OF PERSONAL VIOLENCE

If a woman has to leave an abusive relationship, the respite (honeymoon) period would be best, but this is when she is least likely to take such a decision. Any attempt to leave could escalate violence. The man might use emotional blackmail saying he cannot bear to be without her, or would threaten to seek revenge if she were to leave because he considers the woman as property under his control, and would perceive her leaving as the ultimate insult.

During the respite period, the woman believes that her love might turn him around if she stands by him with care and trust. So she chooses to stay on. The woman who has already invested time and energy in a relationship feels daunted by the prospect of beginning all over again, especially if she has children to support, and has been led to believe she is worthless. She might tend to look for the 'goodness' in the man whom she had married or is living with, and separate his identity from the man battering her. She might see violence as a sickness in him for which she could find a cure. If she is a Christian she might be told to believe in the forgiveness of sins and 'turn the other cheek.'

The theology of the cross is another that reinforces sacrificial suffering. The servant leadership model also acts as reinforcement. Therefore it is extremely difficult to break the cycle of violence in a home.¹⁵

6. The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children

Children who witness violence at home are as much affected by it as the women who endure it. They might even learn to accept the situation as normal. Boys learn to imitate a violent father and use violence as a method of conflict resolution, and to get whatever they want. Girl children tend to accept battering as part of women's lives. They may equate love with pain and violence and tend to become involved with abusive men. This leads to the perpetuation of a culture of violence.

Children of abused mothers are six times more likely to attempt suicide and 50 percent more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol. More than half of abused mothers beat their children. Fifty percent of all homeless women and children are fugitives from domestic violence.¹⁶

Disturbing research in the United States of America shows that 100 percent of serial killers either were abused physically themselves or had witnessed it. A history of family violence is one of the greatest predictors of ulterior juvenile delinquency. These are proof of how cycles of violence can self-perpetuate, grow through children, multiply and further escalate violence.

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Establish and maintain short-term shelters for violated women in collaboration with congregations and specialized NGOs.*
- *Offer or initiate special training for the judiciary, medical personnel and police ensuring that victims are not treated as a disgrace and have the right to seek justice and opportunities for rehabilitation.*
- *Open a 'hot line' to respond to reports of violence.*
- *Create policies and rules that would give directives to the clergy and laity for stringent disciplinary action against the perpetrator.*
- *Plan and allocate resources for training in counseling for lay as well as ordained women and men.*
- *Alert women to:*
 - *the psychological process they might go through—finding excuses for the violator, withdrawal of their complaint, or returning to the abusive situation.*
 - *alternative solutions available through solidarity networks.*
 - *ways in which to effectively communicate their situations in legal proceedings.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“Women and Rape.” Written in cooperation with Women’s Solidarity and the Law Society of Namibia. Windhoek: Federation of Namibian Women, 1992.

“What You Can Do to Protect Yourself.” **Appendix I A.**

“Steps to Take When Someone Tells You Her Story of Victimization.” **Appendix II D.**

CHAPTER 2 . ANALYZING DIFFERENT FORMS OF PERSONAL VIOLENCE

NOTES

CHAPTER 3
TRANSFORMING CHURCH AND SOCIETY



CHAPTER 3 . TRANSFORMING CHURCH AND SOCIETY

3.1 STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Structures like family, community and religious institutions offer a sense of identity and belonging. They themselves could become instruments of violence. Despite this, women are expected to be the guardians of, and play roles in, these very same structures. Men also feel restricted by the roles they are expected to play. Structural violence often goes unnoticed and is collectively maintained and validated in the name of order and stability. Characteristics of structural violence are:

- Victims can be individuals as well as groups or collectives.
- Law enforcers change but the structures remain the same.

“Violence against women is deeply rooted in power relations between women and men.”¹⁷ Men are given societal power over women but this power becomes abusive if used to control and oppress others. Many women

are socialized to believe that women are powerless and have no right to ‘own’ power. It has strong images of authority and we (women) do not like to be seen as authoritarian persons.¹⁸

Women are taught and often believe that violence may be deserved. In addition, many societies do little to stop or reduce violence or punish perpetrators, e.g., even where explicit laws against domestic violence exist, the problem is often neglected or trivialized by police and the courts.¹⁹

It is all the more painful when women as agents of socialization themselves perpetuate this harmful trend.

In many parts of the world, the church tends to ostracize women if they are separated, divorced, sin-

gle or unwed mothers. The degree of condemnation intensifies if women are prostitutes or rape victims, without any effort being made to understand the system contributing to these situations. On the other hand, men often are not condemned even though they might create or contribute to these situations.

Sexism perpetuates the belief that people are either superior or inferior to one another biologically.

Historically, sexism has maintained that persons of the male sex are inherently superior to persons of the female sex by nature, that is by the very order of things and it has acted in discriminatory ways to enforce this order. In a pattern analogous to racism, this prejudice classifies a group of human beings as deficient, ordains subordinate roles for them and denies them certain rights on the basis of personal physical and/or psychological characteristics alone. Just as racism assigns an inferior dignity to people on the basis of their skin color or ethnic heritage, so too on the basis of biological sex and its attendant functions, sexism considers women essentially less valuable than men, and labors mightily to keep them in their ‘proper’ social ‘place.’ In both *isms* bodily characteristics are made to count for the whole essence of the human being, so that the fundamental dignity of the person is violated.²⁰

Sexism is a multi-dimensional factor that fixes stereotyped roles for men and women. In many societies particular role expectation denies girls or women the opportunity to study or choose their subject of study or work, confining them to limited jobs, specific roles or to a small geographical area. Both women and men are socialized from childhood into thinking this is normal and necessary to maintain order and stability in family and society. Gender division of labor assumes that men should have control over resources and decision making, which leaves women with no power to negotiate. Sexism can be of different types:

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1. Androcentrism

Viewing the world purely from a male perspective can portray women as objects rather than subjects. This can result in:

Gynopia which is female invisibility. An example is the absence of women's stories in the Scriptures, e.g., the gospels quote Mary Magdalene as the only, or one of the women, who saw the resurrected Jesus. But when Paul talks of it he says in I Corinthians 15:5–6 "...and he [Jesus] appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve. After that he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time." The first appearance to women is completely erased.

Misogyny: Hatred of women is justified by attributing women to be the cause of sin, e.g., 'Women are the gateways for evil.' Similar attitudes then tend to continue.

Androcentrism reveals itself in the form of exclusive language, for example, the term mankind is used instead of humankind, chairman instead of chairperson, brethren instead of brothers and sisters. It also sets rules that exclude women from leadership roles, e.g., since all the apostles were men, only men should be ordained.

2. Overgeneralization

This occurs when a study uses all male subjects or all female subjects but presents the findings in general terms. In the French language, even if ten million women are gathered, if a baby boy is present, they would be referred to in the masculine rather than the feminine gender. In French, the term human rights is still 'droits de l'homme' i.e. man's rights. The church still names the miracle 'The Feeding of the Five Thousand' even though the text reads, "The number of those who ate was

about five thousand men, besides women and children." (Mt 14:21)

3. Gender Insensitivity and Double Standards

In many societies and countries, a man is legally considered head of the household even though he may be unemployed or unproductive, and the woman is the main breadwinner. The man is called 'the primary earner' and the woman is often considered as 'supplementary earner.' In many countries, women are punished for wrongdoing but men are allowed to go free for the same offense. One example of such double standards is the incident of the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8). The man was allowed to go free but the woman was brought to Jesus in judgment.

4. Sex Appropriateness

People who differ from the prescribed gender roles are seen as deviants or problematic people. If a mother goes to work, the question often asked is, 'How will the children adjust and manage if you go to work?' This is never asked of the father. The assumption is that childcare is a maternal responsibility, not shared by both parents.

5. Familism

Giving primacy only to women's traditional roles within the family is termed familism. It is taken for granted that family is the smallest nuclear unit rather than a larger group of family members, and that family is the prime and sole responsibility of women. All adjustments have to be made by them to give utmost priority to family.

6. Sexual Dichotomism

Treating the sexes as two distinct groups with different human attributes is sexual dichotomism. For example, there is a prevailing notion that men are

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'rational' and women are 'emotional,' men are 'strong' and women are 'weak.'

7. Tokenism

This is when for the sake of appearance or in the name of gender representation, a token gesture is

made to be politically correct. For example, one woman is ordained in the church or elected to a church body. Most of the time, due to lack of presence or support from other women, the woman tends to be withdrawn, careful rather than challenging, often adapting herself to the male system and even behaving like men to be accepted by them.

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Initiate discussion in church institutions using gender as an analytical tool to understand the issues of role stereotyping, establishment of hierarchy and patriarchy, undervaluation of women, and the issue of power in gender relationships.*
- *Hold discussions on the concept of power and authority as a vehicle for change and renewal, not for control over others. Jesus' model of power sharing, power giving, relinquishing of power and authority for salvific action on the cross is a model of power for and within community. Understanding this would empower women and generate shared wisdom and action.*
- *Train women to be released from concepts of self-sacrifice, to own power and use it responsibly.*
- *Put gender on all planning and activities' agendas and revise constitutions, laws, regulations and directives to be 'gender just.'*
- *Make policy resolutions that enable women to study theology with the same provisions offered to male students be it scholarships or opportunities for higher study.*
- *Intentionally promote educational opportunities for women and allocate jobs equal to men's with equal remuneration.*

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- *Provide fair and equal chances for upward mobility in the leadership of church institutions.*
- *Review voluntary work to avoid gender hierarchy.*
- *Offer gender-training sessions for youth groups to deal with issues of violence, reflect on and re-evaluate social and traditional norms.*
- *Create men's networks for discussion of new models of male image to*
 - *deconstruct the 'macho' image and emphasize the need for accepting the expressions of emotions such as love, pain and tears.*
 - *share in nurturing roles as something that men should be proud of.*
 - *deconstruct the 'feminine' image from a humble, obedient, self-giving, mother model to that which accepts and seeks selfhood, dignity, self-actualization and clear articulate thinking.*
 - *facilitate learning processes to deal with male anger through non-violent means.*
- *Create discussion groups in theological seminaries to*
 - *analyze and prepare for the challenges of new life and faith experiences.*
 - *reflect critically on cultures, traditions, assumptions and modes of behavior.*
 - *revisit the concept of family as a collection of individuals who belong to one another in loving and mutually responsible relationships.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church's Response. Pamela Cooper-White. Chap. I, "Power and Violence against Women." Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, pp. 17–42.

The Power We Celebrate. Women's Stories of Faith and Power. Edited by Musimbi Kanyoro and Wendy S. Robins. Geneva: LWF Publications, 1992.

"How Men Could Assist in Ending Male Violence against Women." **Appendix III A.**

"Example of a Young Lawyer Who Works against Girl Trafficking." **Appendix III B.**

"The 'White Ribbon Campaign.'" **Appendix III C.**



Cultures have many layers

3.2 CULTURAL VIOLENCE

The persistence of cultural and social norms, traditional beliefs and negative gender stereotypes was the most frequently cited obstacle to the achievement of gender equality.²¹

Culture is the sum of values, attitudes, beliefs, gender relations, child-rearing practices, governing norms, and so on. It is the economic, political, social and spiritual organization of people's existence. Some cultures have evolved from living in a context over a period of several years, some through migration, trade, colonization, and lately globalization. Different treatment of boys and girls is strengthened. Cultural motives or systems can cause violence, e.g., female feticide and female infanticide, conscious neglect of the health and education of girl children and female genital mutilation. Further, colonization that took place in 85 percent of the world brought Christianity in western form and has erased many healthy local cultures. New forms of objectivizing women have arisen. One such example is the 'mulata' women

who are valued as 'sexy women' during carnivals in Brazil. Moreover, culture is now invested with meanings that are problematic and used to deter human rights mechanisms.

In the context of the church, the Deuteronomical Code reinforces local cultures that are detrimental to women, e.g., the concept of purity, pollution, and of women being unclean because of menstrual blood (Lev 15:19–31). Apart from these, biblical texts are still used by a few to endorse the ideologies of racism, sexism and classism.

1. Ritual Abuse

Any abuse carried out as a traditional practice such as temple prostitution and sacrifice of infants, occult belief or satanic worship, could be ritual abuse. In some regions, widows are obliged to follow rituals, life-long procedures, and specific codes of dress and conduct. In India for example, widows have to stop wearing all signs of auspiciousness like *sindhors*, (red marks on the parting of their hair) *bindis* (dots)

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on their foreheads, turmeric paste and flowers, and the necklaces tied at marriage. They are excluded from active social participation in propitious ceremonies even in their own families. They are prevented from inheriting their husband's properties, possessions and work benefits. In some cultures, it is expected that women be inherited as part of their husband's property by his brothers, and have lifelong dependency on them without freedom of self-determination.

2. Female Genital Mutilation

Excision of the female sex organ is supposed to preserve women's chastity and protect them from having sexual feelings that might lead to temptation and eventual disgrace. "Two million girls a year are mutilated through female genital mutilation (FGM). Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and the Sudan account for 75 percent of all cases."²² Besides the shock and pain it causes, the consequences of FGM are even greater. Severe loss of blood, blood poisoning and tetanus could be immediate afteref-

fects. Inflammation of the urinary tract and kidneys, inability to control urination, internal accumulation of menstrual blood, resulting from partial sealing of the genital parts, also could occur. Sexual dysfunction could result from severe pain and trauma during intercourse. Abnormally prolonged and obstructed labor could lead to stillbirths.

Research on the psychological and sociological effects on women as well as the effect on newborn babies is insufficient. Most women are made to believe that FGM is a religious obligation, though the Holy Scriptures do not mention it. Cultural pressure on parents to have their children circumcised is so great that even the most enlightened and educated women subject their girl children to unnecessary pain. Traditionally, it is rationalized as a rite of passage and initiation ceremony into womanhood. It is misconstrued that this would increase fertility and protect the uterus. FGM is an important source of income for professional circumcisers and increases a girl's dowry. All these work against its abolition.

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Recognizing the enormity of the task, analyze the anomalies that exist in local cultures, imposed cultures and biblical cultures, as well as interpretation thereof, that are puzzling for those wishing to remain faithful and obedient to the Scriptures.*
- *Lead Bible study discussions with feminist interpretations on 2 Kings 4:1–7, Num 27:1–11, 1 Cor 14:33–36, 1 Tim 2:2–12*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

"Genitalverstümmelung von Mädchen und Frauen – Eine kirchliche Stellungnahme." EKD Texte Nr. 65. Hanover: Evangelical Church in Germany, 1999.

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3. Honor Killing

Honor is a person's self-worth in his/her own eyes and in the eyes of his/her social group. "Honor becomes honor only when the claim from inside and the reputation from outside coincide."²³

The purpose of honor is to serve as a sort of social rating, which entitles a person to interact in specific ways with his/her equals, superiors and subordinates, according to the prescribed cultural cues of the society.²⁴

The collective honor of the community is held more important than individual honor.

Male honor is based on the sexual exclusiveness and purity of the women related to him (mother, wife,

daughters and sisters) not on his own sexual purity. So women are expected to be submissive, passive, timid, dependent and docile, for which they are honored. Hisako Kinukawa calls it a 'culture of shame' rather than an 'honor culture' because honor is gained by avoiding disgraceful conduct. Women are punished if they stray from expectations of their role or societal norms. They are tortured or killed to redeem the honor of family, clan, caste or community. They are punished to set an example to others not to overstep limits set by their society. When the Taliban took over power in Afghanistan in 1996, women were forced to wear a *burqua* (clothing covering the whole body except the eyes) and were beaten and stoned in public for dressing improperly, even if only for omitting the mesh over their eyes. Women were not allowed to work or appear in public without a male relative.

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Hold Bible study discussions on the story of Tamar (2 Sam 13).*
- *Prohibit the misuse of religious arguments to perpetuate FGM, honor killing and ritual abuse.*
- *Commit to addressing misinterpretations of religion and teach the application of true Christian principles with regard to FGM, honor killing and ritual abuse.*
- *Establish a family or congregational mediation group comprised of women and men to settle family disputes.*
- *Review family laws in the light of Christian principles and human rights.*
- *Initiate dialogue between religious leaders and medical personnel on religious and medical viewpoints concerning FGM and ritual abuse, and formulate strategies.*
- *Encourage religious leaders and scholars to emphasize that these practices are not stipulated in the Holy Scriptures.*
- *Exchange women's desk reports, share experiences and monitor instances of FGM, honor killing and ritual abuse as an ongoing task of the church.*
- *Formulate gender-specific reasons for granting asylum to women.*

4. Sexuality and Marriage

Marriage is viewed as a holy, God-ordained institution. This view is effective if both partners treat it that way. But many men still defend male leadership and patriarchy in marriage rather than mutuality. Vows and sermons in marriage ceremonies are usually reflective of these characteristics, which form the basis of an unequal relationship. The view that women's bodies are for men's enjoyment, that women's primary responsibility is to procreate, nurture the family, take care of family planning and the spacing of children, is a heavy burden on women. Problems are compounded where there is a taboo against discussing sexuality, and when women are illiterate, with little knowledge of their own bodies. Unclear ethical implications of unwanted pregnancy, abortion, female infanticide and family-planning methods subject women to guilt, shame, societal dis-

approval and severe punishment. In some cultures, if divorced, women are dispossessed of their children. In polygamous cultures, the church often remains silent. Sometimes, women unable to conceive are banished from the family.

There is increasing demand for understanding of different life orientations. The church tends to shy away from open discussion, or from being decisive, on these topics because of their potential to divide the church.

The persistence of practices such as inheriting of widows places women at greater risk. Without bargaining power over responsible male sexual behavior, women are further threatened as the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to impact nations and communities. The church has often been reluctant to question such harmful cultural practices, or offer ethical guidance.

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Develop a theological approach to the concepts of marriage, family and sexuality by taking into consideration the changing reality of life situations.*
- *Arrange retreats in all congregations in the LWF communion to include dialogue on mutuality and respect for people's dignity.*
- *Enable pastors to discuss the concepts of marriage, family, sexuality, relationships, and pre-marital and extramarital relationships in contemporary contexts.*
- *Hold Bible study discussions on Gen 2:24, Mt 19:5-6, Mk 10:7-8, Eph 5:30-31, I Cor 7:1-4.*



Economic globalization aids and abets exploitation of women

3.3 EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION AND MODERNIZATION

Economic globalization is intensifying the world's disparities. Private market interests are reducing the role of governments, international bodies and social sphere. This is having a direct impact on women and children. Transfer of financial and natural resources, local expertise and knowledge is escalating. Power and decision-making transfer from nation states to multinationals is creating more losers than winners at a speed never seen

before. Globalization of production has increased feminization of jobs particularly sectors such as food processing, garment manufacturing and assembly-line work. Such jobs do not equip women to develop any particular skill other than just be involved in routine mass production of parts, work devoid of creativity. Women work for long hours in so-called 'sweat shops.' Subcontracting leads to deregulation, giving rise to jobs that offer no fixed incentive or income. While fending for their families, with such disadvantages, these women have to deal with extreme poverty. They become a vulnerable community for further exploitation.

The changing economic system has extended women's role to that of provider. Migration of men to cities in search of a livelihood has left women to fend not only for themselves but also for entire households, at the same time being expected to continue voluntary work in the church and public sphere. Inadequately trained women with no bargaining power are misled by visions of better prospects, and enter labor markets as migrant workers because they have no other choice.

In this vulnerable situation, women are often traumatized, sexually abused, and held in bondage in the countries they migrate to with neither access to the outside world nor adequate remuneration. Their lack of knowledge about procedures and outside support, as well as employers' control over them, subjects them to fear and misery. Often, they are forced to work long hours, denied time off and deprived of adequate food, official travel documents, money and communication. Unable to understand the local language, they are left unregistered with appropriate authorities. They live in constant fear of arrest, fines, imprisonment or deportation.

Transformation of agricultural land into industrial areas displaces peasant and indigenous workers.

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Mass displacement of people with either inadequate or no compensation, guidance or knowledge of how to invest money for a sustainable livelihood leaves family responsibilities with women. The entry of multinational companies into agro-business ventures has turned subsistence farmers from landowners into cheap laborers without any choice over pricing, use or distribution of produce. Overproduction of

selected cash crops, artificial production methods and pesticide use wreak harmful effects on produce, people's health, bio-diversity and the earth's sustainability. Local knowledge is patented and marketed back to them. Reduced access to traditional and natural resources, and lack of training in appropriate technology further marginalize women from new job opportunities.

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Encourage congregations to analyze how economic globalization affects local communities and be involved in campaigns calling for debt cancellation.*
- *Intensify training for women in locally appropriate technology.*
- *Keep supportive structures in place for single mothers, divorced or separated women, and widows, to help them with employment.*

1. Trafficking of Women and Children

Trafficking of women and children is the third highest income earner after illegal arms trading and drug trafficking. Trafficking is either through forced abduction or with the knowledge of 'middle men,' the family or even individuals themselves compelled to seek better economic opportunities. Those apprehended are frequently treated as offenders by officials, charged with illegal entry or arbitrarily arrested. They are fined and, if unable to pay, are imprisoned or sent to an unspecified detention center for an indefinite term without judicial hearing or access to counsel. Alternatively, they are left at the border of a foreign country with

no means of returning home safely. This often leads to re-arrest, detention and possible torture. Trafficking of women to foreigners for marriage may affect them adversely.

Statistics show that more and more children, as well, are becoming involved in this insidious, 'mafia-like' industry that often colludes with local police. Anyone trying to intervene places him/herself in a life-threatening situation. Ten million children worldwide are affected. Two million are trafficked across borders annually. Every day in Asia alone, one million are abused. Trafficking is carried out clandestinely or with legitimate travel papers, a three-month tourist visa, or through bogus marriages.

2. Sex Tourism

This has become a booming industry.

In 1999, 8.5 million tourists came to Thailand. It is commonly estimated that 70 percent of the tourists are men traveling alone, 49 percent come specifically for sex with children. If this is true, approximately 49 percent of tourists come for sex.²⁵

They come mostly from East Asia, the USA and Europe. A few travel agencies working together offer this type of inexpensive tour. Economic deprivation in countries made poor through political and ethnic upheaval leaves women with little option but to sell their bodies and those of their family for survival. Their own families and societies further stigmatize them.

3. Rape as a Weapon

Rape is the forcible entry into the most private, most vulnerable and arguably most sacred parts of the human body and, as such, it is a spiritual crime as well as a physical one.²⁶

“Rape is all the hatred, contempt and oppression of women in this society concentrated into one act.”²⁷ Gang, or community rape, is a particularly brutal form of sexual abuse. It does not end as a one-time event and often leads to re-victimization.

There is a death threat attached even if physical battering does not follow. The terrifying message is that women are objects to be controlled by those who

have the brute strength, position, social status, or are considered of a higher class or race.

Rape was used as a weapon during colonization and is being used increasingly as a weapon of war and in conflict situations as a political weapon of repression and torture of prisoners. It is also used for gratification and to exercise power and dominance. It is considered an effective method for debasing women, who are seen as men’s property, and to defile purity of race by producing offspring.

Rape can never be mistaken for an impulsive act of passion. It is often premeditated and meticulously planned. It is not an expression of an uncontrollable sexual urge but an act of aggression motivated by the need to express power, authority, hatred of women and a desire to humiliate them, and take revenge.

- Alcohol and drug intake cannot be held as cause for rape, but lessens inhibition.
- Not just beautiful young women are raped but also little babies, children and very old women. A man might rape whoever is vulnerable, accessible and within his reach.

Women do not want to be raped. One third of rapes occur at home, and one third during daytime. More than 50 percent of rapes are committed by someone known personally to the victim. In some countries, marital rape is now considered to be violence punishable by law.

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POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Churches, NGOs, governments and travel agents could collaborate in addressing these issues.*
- *Highlight the issue in local newspapers to build up a 'resistance' network.*
- *Declare that there is absolutely no excuse for rape, be it alcoholism, drug abuse, temptation or temporary loss of control.*
- *Follow up on instances of rape to ensure that legal action takes place, and the victim receives adequate support to overcome the trauma.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

“Understanding Victims of Rape.” **Appendix II C.**

4. Invasive Technologies

Because of the preference for male children in some societies, sex pre-selection through genetic manipulation is used and, at times, girl children are aborted. Harmful birth-control pills are distributed. Birth-control methods are tested on ignorant and innocent women in poorer countries, with or without their knowledge, to control population or to

test the efficacy of new methods and drugs. In this way women are placed under the control of partners, families, governments, religious teaching and the medical profession, even though it is women themselves who experience actual unwanted pregnancy, abortion, fertility therapies, living with pain, guilt and the outcome for the rest of their lives.

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Educate women to make informed choices on pregnancy, birth control and the number of children they can afford to have.*
- *Discuss sexuality in all its dimensions in open non-judgmental ways.*
- *Hold seminars on marital and family life.*

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5. Media

Negative images and stereotyped portrayals of women are increasing. There is lack of coordinated effort to improve and change women's status through the communication industry. Beauty contests and the modeling profession set the standard for women's body image, pressurizing women. This could lead to obsession with appearance resulting in self-destructive eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia. Much exposure to violence through the media has not only desensitized humankind to its horror but also has created a culture of violence.

Children from affluent societies imbibe this culture through television. They are actively initiated into committing hundreds of acts of violence hourly by playing harmful video games, and sometimes become violent in real life.

The use of the Internet to traffic women and sell pornography has aggravated the exploitation of women. The lack of mechanisms to regulate the use of Internet has worsened this situation. While the issue of pornography and exploitation of women has always been there, it is now more difficult to monitor and curb these activities. The targeting of women and girls through pornography, sex tourism and the sex trade has been exacerbated by electronic communications. The sex trade can now use Web sites for their portrayal of women, with capacity to reach many more people. In the UN European region, the result is an increasing number of women-hating Web sites; this, and the use of flaming and stalking, tend to dissuade women in these parts of the globe from using the Net.²⁸

Of 3.5 million Web sites, 23,000 have already been detected as advocating sex with children.

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Monitor Web sites periodically as a cooperative initiative of local communities and congregations.*
- *Develop a critical approach to portrayal of women in the media and make it a part of discussions in women's, men's and youth group activities.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

Wenn Gott und Körper sich begegnen, Feministische Perspektiven zur Leiblichkeit. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel. Gütersloh, 1989.



Rising from the abyss

3.4 ASSUMPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF THE CHURCH

1. Patriarchal Characteristics of the Church

Churches are mostly modeled on hierarchy and patriarchy. This leaves less room for all God's children to be recognized, equally valued, loved, participating in God's creation, and sharing in the fullness of life offered by Christ. Patriarchy is a controversial term and a complex system maintained by religion, politics, economics and society. It allows for

male supremacy that supports male dominance in every unit of society and engenders a hierarchical power structure and rule of 'elite' males. This means the subordination of 'non-elite' males too but non-elite males are superior to non-elite women and subjugate them. It is also true that elite women can subordinate non-elite men but elite women, if there can be such, can never be equal or superior to elite men.²⁹

Because of this ideology, there is the possibility and reality that even women can be dominant and non-supporters of women's cause. Men and women have to understand this mechanism to avoid misconceptions of each other.

2. Language about God

This shapes thinking and life orientation for the corporate faith community and its individual members.

As the focus of absolute trust, the holy mystery of God undergirds and implicitly gives direction to all of a believing person's enterprises, principles, choices, system of values and relationships.... While officially it is rightly and consistently said that God is spirit and so beyond identification with either male or female sex, yet the daily language of preaching, worship, catechesis and instruction conveys a different message.³⁰

The images of God used by the church are mostly male: father, king, lord, and so forth. One difficulty

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created by this is that while we understand God's maleness to be metaphoric, the metaphor could attribute divinity to the male, rendering him supreme over the 'non-divine' female.

Therefore each and every word about God must be analyzed to see if it speaks of God and not of the one who speaks and interprets God; whether it speaks of the attributes and the Divine Mercy of God or of the power of the one who uses the language. Effort needs to be made however difficult it might

prove to be, to move beyond gender, toward the divine mystery of God.³¹

3. Jesus as a Male and His Preference for Male Disciples

These have been set as standard for male clergy, apostolic succession and church leadership. This needs to be reviewed in light of New Testament and early church witness.

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Highlight how Jesus empowered women to speak and witness in public transcending norms and boundaries.*
- *Discuss the many ways in which women supported him: as a financial resource, as hospitality providers, through solidarity in his suffering, faithfulness and devotion.*

4. The Concept of Jesus as Victim/Sacrifice

Women are burdened by this concept. The burden

becomes even heavier through a tradition of discipleship focusing on self-sacrifice, self-denial, willingness to suffer, humility and service. Some women socialized in Christianity who suffer from violence tend to identify with Jesus as sacrificed victim. In their suffering, they can feel close to him renouncing the possibility of actively resisting their suffering.... An unquestioned following of instructions leading to self-denial, service and submission to men by women, further encourages the perpetrators to continue to inflict violence and strengthens the structures that continue to create new victims.³²

Therefore, "...thinking of Jesus as victim/sacrifice can reinforce structures of violence and tie the victim to

their role as victim."³³ It is important to make a distinction between the sacrifice of a victim and the volitional, conscious consent to sacrifice for the good of others, as was the case of our Savior.

The fact that God wants life for the crucified and makes this possible would give the message to women who suffer from violence that God also wants them to have life, a good life. The biblical understanding of life is not restricted to mere survival but to life in all its fullness, a good life together with the other creatures in freedom, peace, joy, love and justice.³⁴

Jesus' crucifixion does not sanctify suffering. It remains a witness to the horror of violence done to another.... It is not a model of how suffering should be borne but a witness to God's desire that no one should have to

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suffer such violence again. The resurrection, the realization that the Christ was present to the disciples and

is present to us, transformed but never justified the suffering and death experience.³⁵

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Offer theological grounding of Jesus not only as a victim/sacrifice but also as the one who rose victorious contributing to the overcoming of violence.*
- *Include in baptismal and catechetical instruction the issue of violence to equip women and men for real-life situations.*

5. Epistles over the Gospels

Selected texts are used to define roles and set women's code of conduct. It is Paul's stricture 'women be silent' that is used as the norm rather than Jesus giving the hemorrhaging woman the option to speak in public. This text is often used

rather than Jesus' invitation to the woman to 'go and tell' (Jn 20:17). Further, texts have been used out of context or without reference to their audience either to fit a concept or be true to the Scriptures.

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Highlight Paul's commendation of women as co-workers and Galatians 3:28, which emphasizes the end to differences and our oneness in Christ.*

6. Biblical Literalism

Most Christians adopt biblical literalism as the only way they can remain faithful to God's calling.

This makes it difficult to explain the 'texts of terror' in the Bible like that of Tamar, the androcentric translations, the androcentric composition of texts, the patriarchal formation of the Canon and tradition texts, patriarchal history of effects and theological attenuation of misogynist effects.³⁶

Church teachings need to analyze how to deal with "theological inconsistencies and theological frozenness that does not thaw" to accommodate the chang-

ing contexts, perspectives, cultures, values and particular expectations of those in need.

7. Theological Concepts that affect Victims of Violence

Sexually violated women and children have problems with the concept of God as omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. They feel guilty because God has seen everything. They feel angry because the all-powerful, all-present God did not come to their aid. So they tend to denounce God or feel betrayed. Some aspects of traditional theology

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are apt to condition women to a life of suffering, sacrifice and servitude. This has led to an understanding of suffering as a God-sent blessing for personal edification and atonement of other's sins.

A misrepresentation of God sending God's only son to suffer is sometimes used to justify any unjust suffering. Such a theology has silenced victims forcing them to endure pain. Suffering on the cross has to be interpreted as an expression of God's love to overcome evil. Jesus' voluntary self-sacrifice was for eternal reconciliation rendering it unnecessary for anyone else to suffer unjustly. The fact that Jesus' resurrection was a victory over his victimization could free women from a one-sided identification with the

suffering Christ. They could, instead, identify with the victorious Christ. It encourages them to leave the vicious circle of violence, fear, thought patterns and habits of their role as victims.

According to Paul, Christ freed human beings to be free, not to suffer (Gal 5:1). God identified God's self with Christ, as victim and sacrifice for the victimized and oppressed.

The cross should be projected not as a call to suffer but a commitment to an Easter of new and life-bearing beginnings, an Easter of dignity and strength, an affirmation of life and a heritage of bonding and community.³⁷

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Include women's perspectives in theology, highlighting their leadership in biblical times and offering alternative interpretations of biblical texts.*
- *Reclaim and rename the image of God from a patriarchal God-Father-Judge image and use differing images of God (the kind and strict parent, the just and merciful judge, feminine and masculine images in the Scriptures, from diverse cultures and from one's own experiences, e.g., images of God as mother: Num 11:12-13, Deut 32:18, Ps 131:2, Is 42:14, 46:3-4, 49:15, 66:9. As midwife: Ps 22:9-10. As lover, friend, woman who cooks: Mt 13:33, Lk 13:20-21. As a mother bear: Hos 13:8. As one who shelters humanity under a warm wing: Mt 23:47, Lk 13:34, Ruth 2:12, Ps 17:8-9, 36:7, 57:1, 61:4, 91:4.*
- *Explore the possibilities of using gender-neutral terms for God like YHWH and the 'I am' sayings of Jesus. Read examples of women and men in ministry: Acts 18:1-28, 1 Cor 16:19, Rom 16:3-5.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

"When the Truth Is Untrue: Sexual Abuse as Context for Communicating God." Helene Horsfjord. LWF Women magazine No. 54 "Resist and Reduce Violence against Women." Geneva: LWF Publications, 2001.



Theological frozenness needs thawing.

8. Model of Servant Leadership

In the church we have good leaders who understand power and use it effectively. But there are some who

- are authoritarian and abuse power.
- only want to serve others, or
- are 'pseudo servants' who refuse to claim their own power.

Women tend to fall into the latter categories. The church must make efforts to model itself on servant-hood as expressed in Luke 22:25–27 where the highest leader becomes the servant of all. The church

should bear all these aspects in mind before accompanying victims.

9. Lectionaries

The churches' lectionaries focus more on central biblical actors and themes, which do not highlight women's leadership that has already been minimized in the biblical narratives. This could indirectly increase marginalization of women.

To come to a clearer sense of the future as a church, we need all the stories we can gather, the painful and difficult ones as well as the beautiful and inspiring ones. Only when we have all the stories can we the church begin to see ourselves as a whole people.³⁸

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This would help women, men, youth and children to live and witness amid the world's challenging contexts.

The interpretative principles guiding the choices of the lectionary must consider, fundamentally, the biblical texts about women, which are included and those which are excluded, where in the Church year they are found, and what the convergence of the three texts seems to imply.³⁹

Often, direct references to women in biblical texts either describe women as a problem to humankind,

e.g., Eve, and the Samaritan woman, or as exemplary, like Mary, mother of Jesus.

Without access to the stories, however ambiguous, the church is poorer. We don't have all the stories we need to make our lives, as individuals and as churches. All of us, women and men, may begin to believe that women have always been silent in and marginal to the story of God's relationship with people, and that the present and the future can only either continue this pattern from the past or make a dramatic and wrenching break from it.⁴⁰

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Uplift the first creation story (Gen 1:27–28), which signifies not only equality in creation, but also co-privilege and co-responsibility as stewards of all creation, instead of the second story where woman is seen as man's help-mate only (most often interpreted as a subordinated position and as the cause of sin and suffering).*
- *Include exemplary leadership like that of Miriam, Deborah, Esther and Abigail to highlight the need and relevance of women's leadership.*
- *Rediscover the image of Mary, mother of Jesus, not only as a pious, obedient, submissive young woman, but also as one who consented to God's call to play the key role in God's saving action without permission from her betrothed or family. She should be portrayed as someone who could understand and analyze the socio-political context, and who could sing a radical revolutionary song and be willing to participate in God's salvific mission.*
- *Use Ephesians 5:28 to emphasize a respectable and loving relationship between partners based on Christology.*

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Replenishing the desert

10. Liturgies

Liturgies need to provide space for sharing of life experiences, often considered emotional and so of lesser importance. Women, seen as ‘emotional’ beings cannot contribute their rich and diverse liturgical expressions for use in main worship services. Their contribution is confined to their own groups. This rich resource, if heeded, certainly would enhance everyone’s worshipping experience.

Women have been and continue to be strengthened by the gospel freedom and equality embodied in the liturgy and by the hope of triumph of life over death it proclaims. At the same time, women know that the Church in its liturgy has usually promised more than it has delivered. While affirming the baptismal unity and equality of all Christians, the liturgy has often recognized only leadership gifts of men.⁴¹

One way to lift up women’s contribution would be to remember the liturgical act of the woman disciple who gave Jesus a Messianic anointing with precious oil, whenever the church commemorates the passion of Jesus (Mt 26:6–13, Mk 14:3–9).

Over the protests of the male disciples, Jesus praises the woman’s act, and promises that it will be told in her memory wherever the gospel is proclaimed. However, by the time the gospels were written down, the woman’s name had already been forgotten. It is important to note that the context and the content of the story are thoroughly liturgical—she performs a significant and readily recognizable liturgical act, that of anointing. And Jesus’ promise to her is a liturgical one, involving proclamation and remembering.⁴²

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But care should be taken not to confuse her identity with that of Mary of Bethany or Mary Magdalene.

Besides the nature of church structure, theological understandings and teachings that create and validate male supremacy, the church has often been silent over, or kept private, the violence against women issue. Some of the churches unwittingly collude in perpetuating male supremacy whenever they

- let interpretations and teachings persist that have often portrayed women as the cause of sin, thereby legitimizing their secondary status.
- adopt a male-centered, patriarchal and hierarchical model detrimental to full use of women's God-given potential to be co-partners in the church's mission and ministries.
- prescribe women's mode of dress, behavior and appropriate roles, confining them to a limited, specified position.

- show no appreciation for the gifts that women, the largest worshipping community, bring to the church: time, talent and tithes.

- deny equal opportunities to women in leadership, decision-making positions and ordination, although other churches in the communion are promoting women's leadership.

Jesus' solidarity with women from all walks of life, especially his concern for those marginalized, his deliberate affirmation of women, transcending traditions and norms, is a mandate for us. The fact that women were in solidarity with Jesus not only during his life and ministry, but also in his suffering and death and beyond that, resurrection, emphasizes the need to affirm and commend women's faithfulness. The first appearance of the resurrected Jesus to women is proof that Jesus wanted them to share in the proclamation of the good news. The fact that Paul commends women's contribution and calls them 'co-workers' challenges us to encourage women to be part of the church's diverse ministries.

POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *Incorporate in our liturgical commemorations of the passion of Jesus the act of the woman disciple who gives Jesus a Messianic anointing with precious oil.*
- *Include feminine as well as other images of God in liturgy, hymns and other church publications.*
- *Make language gender-just and inclusive and give equal importance to creative liturgies of women and children.*
- *Allow liturgies to be reflective of the rich and diverse local cultural contexts.*
- *Develop a basic form of flexible Christian worship that allows for shared experience of a living spirituality of body, mind and soul.*



Trapped potential

11. Resurgence of Religious Extremism

The rise in extreme fundamentalist movements accentuates the violence endured by women. They find it difficult to admit to enduring domestic violence because such movements cause them to feel that confessing to it is denying God's presence in their lives. Many women from some charismatic groups even condone family violence saying, "The devil is tempting my husband." Forgiving the husband is emphasized because he is perceived to be violent only under the influence of a spirit of violence. They

try to hide the problem because it is bad testimony, out of fear of the pastor or criticism from others.

Their theology creates feelings of shame and inhibition as they suffer. It is a suffering spirituality based on a theology of resignation, the idea being that women's lives are an expiation of their sins. Between feelings of guilt, demonic temptation and sacrifice, domestic violence finds a suffering complicity in women that fears social or congregational punishment.

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POSITIVE ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN

- *The church could initiate and offer dialogue and interfaith discussion on*
 - *the relationship between violence and religion.*
 - *the role of the institutionalized church in reducing violence.*
 - *our understanding of non-violence in our violent reality.*
 - *human rights and religious freedom.*
 - *safeguarding religion from fanaticism.*
 - *the situation of killing in the name of religion.*
 - *religious extremists as ardent believers and thinkers rather than ‘satanic.’*
- *Avail resources from fields such as psychology to understand fanaticism, its identification, manifestations and ways to contain it.*
- *Lead discussions on who has the right to interpret and speak on behalf of religions.*
- *Revisit the concept of secularization as an ideal model for nations to follow, of individualism and selfhood over community orientation and our relatedness to God, church traditions, other religious traditions and their implications for present contexts.*
- *Examine the aggressive behavior of ‘self’ that is incapable of sharing and respecting others’ selfhood.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Women’s Prayer Services. Edited by Iben Gjerding and Katherine Kinnamon. Mystic, Connecticut, USA: Twenty-Third Publications, 1987.

Did I Betray the Gospel? The Letters of Paul and the Place of Women. S. Wesley Ariarajah. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996.

Feminist Interpretation. The Bible in Women’s Perspective. Luise Schottroff, Silvia Schroer and Marie-Theres Wacker. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998.

She Who Is. The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse. Elizabeth A. Johnson. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998.

Women and Jesus in Mark. A Japanese Feminist Perspective. Hisako Kinukawa. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994.

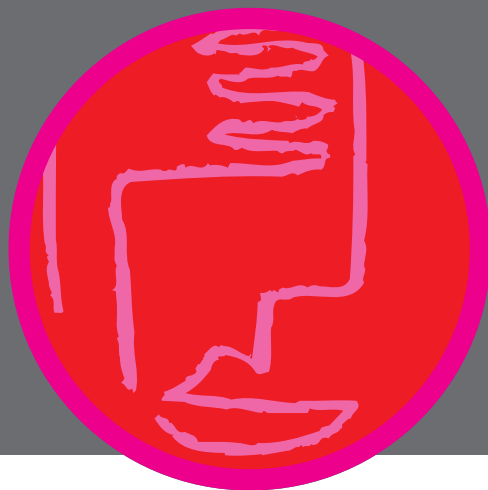
“A Prayer for Those Who Suffer from Rape and Assault.”

Appendix IV B.

“Jesus Heal Us.” **Appendix IV C.**

CONCLUSION

This document is an invitation to the churches to take positive, affirmative steps to bring life in all its fullness to women and to avail their diverse, God-given gifts to enrich the life and strengthen the witness of the church. Women have shown their faithfulness. But has the church as an institution been in solidarity with women as Jesus was in his life and ministry? The church has pioneered many liberating actions. Eliminating violence against women could be another.



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A safe haven

I. AID TO VICTIMS

A. What You Can Do to Protect Yourself⁴³

1. Talk with a friend or relative you trust about what's going on. They may be a good source of support.
2. Contact your local domestic violence program to find out about laws and community resources, i.e., shelters, counseling, legal assistance, before you need them. They can help you plan ways to stay safe.
3. Ask your health-care provider or a friend to take photographs of your injuries, i.e., bruises, scratches, black eyes, etc., and make sure that they are put in

your medical records, or in a safe place with a written description of what happened. This information will make it easier for you if you decide to take legal action in the future, such as getting a restraining order, pressing criminal charges, or obtaining child custody if you need to do this.

4. Arrange a signal with a neighbor to let them know when you need help, i.e., turning a porch light on during the day, or pulling down a particular window shade.
5. Keep some money stored in a secret place so that you have access to it in an emergency or, if you decide to leave, be sure to include some coins so you can make calls from a public phone if you need to. You can also pack a change of clothes including personal-care items, an extra set of glasses, important legal papers, etc., for yourself and your children and ask a neighbor and/or friend to keep it, along with an extra set of keys, in case you need to leave quickly.
6. If you decide to leave, take important papers with you, i.e., birth certificates, passports, health insurance documents, photo ID/driver's license, immunization records, checkbook, medication, food stamps, social security cards, etc., for both you and your children.

B. Biblical Texts That Would Offer Solace

Ps 7:1-4, 6, 8-11; 10; 12; 13; 16:7-9, 11; 17; 20; 23; 25:1-5; 27:1-3, 7-9; 30:1-5; 31:14-16; 35:22-28; 38:6-10; 43; 46:1-7a; 55:1-8; 62:2-7; 70; 77:1-4, 6-9, 11-14; 103:6-8, 11, 12; 116:3, 4, 8-11, 15, 16; 121; 139:1-24; 143:4-8; 145:13-21

Is 40; 41:10-13; 43:1-3a; 49:15

Job 21:7, 9, 14-16

Mt 11:28-30

Lk 11:5-13

Rom 8:18-25, 29a

Jn 14:27; 16:21-24

II. AID TO PERSONS WHO ASSIST VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

A. Identifying Battered Women

Though any woman has the potential to become a battered woman, she may not be able to disclose or expose the violence she undergoes because of the social stigma and shame attached to it. She may hide it to avoid further victimization. But a trained eye can detect the following characteristics: diminished self-esteem, uncertainty, anxiety to please, inability to plan for the future, depression, a suicidal tendency, mood swings, nervousness, irritability and inability to concentrate.

She may also have self-destructive tendencies like drug or alcohol abuse or reckless driving, and may inflict wounds on herself or develop eating disorders. She might have extreme bouts of dependency and independence, blaming others or herself. She alternates between seeking revenge or finding excuses for the abuser. She may also ask questions such as 'What is the point anyway?' or 'Is this my fate?' or 'Who really cares?' and so on.

B. Identifying the Batterers

There are two general categories:

- The antisocial batterers who have very little self-control are highly irritable and violent in most situations.
- The classic batterers who are violent only with intimate partners and their children.

Men in the second category have explosive tempers limited to their private life. In public, they appear nice and courteous. But they suffer from low self-esteem and a need to control people and objects. They are afraid of becoming 'losers' and so are very



Finding the way up

possessive. They might imagine their spouses as being unfaithful and accuse and beat them for even talking to other men. They might be very suspicious and constantly pry into their partner's personal belongings for evidence of 'misbehavior,' ask probing questions or frequently telephone to check on them.

Batterers often have very strict and traditional ideas about women and their roles. They are anxious to prove their superiority even by beating their partners. They are usually highly dependent on them and often do not know how to meet their own needs. They do not make friends easily, or express their feelings or communicate freely. They may have seen their fathers beating their mothers or might

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have been beaten themselves as children. They do not accept responsibility for their negative behavior and minimize or deny their violent acts.

Helping the victim to heal and the perpetrator to repent and reform lies at the core of reconciliation. But care needs to be taken that reconciliation as seen from the victim's viewpoint differs from that of the perpetrator.

C. Understanding Victims of Rape

Recovery of a victim takes place in several stages beginning with intervention followed by long years of support.

The first stage is called the 'rape trauma syndrome' in which the victim goes through disorientation and disruption of normal coping mechanisms, shock, fear (including fear of retaliation), anxiety, withdrawal, crying, unexpected outbursts, self-blame, intrusive reliving of the events of the rape and other classic post-traumatic symptoms such as nightmares, sleep problems, startle responses, hypervigilance and physical symptoms such as nausea and headaches.⁴⁴

The second stage is the 'recoil or pseudo-adjustment stage.'⁴⁵ This stage might last for several months or years when the victim appears to be coping and can assume normal activities. In this stage, the victim needs the assurance that the counselor is not bored or annoyed with the victim's preoccupation with the crime.

The third stage is the stage of 'integration.' But any reminder of the past act might evoke the horror of their experience.

D. Steps to Take When Someone Tells You Her Story of Victimization⁴⁶

1. **Create an atmosphere of safety and welcome** for victims-survivors to speak. Victims know very well when they are not welcome. If you put up posters, announce information, talk about violence women experience, they will begin to come to you.
2. **Believe the story.** Many victims are threatened with worse abuse if they tell. Sometimes the abuser may be someone you know and trust, and they may fear that you will not believe them. Give them praise and encouragement for telling you. To tell takes courage and strength, and it may be important to say so to the victims.
3. **Validate the feelings.** Victims are afraid, often ashamed, and sometimes afraid also that they are going crazy, if they are having bad nightmares or flashbacks. These feelings are normal to someone who has been through such a crisis.
4. **Emphasize safety.** Victims often minimize and deny the pain they are experiencing, and the threats to their well being. If you use the word 'safety' when speaking with them, it can help them to make their own safety a priority for them.
5. **Affirm that the victim is NOT to blame.** Many cultures tell victims that the violence is their own fault. Abusers also often tell victims this. You may wish to say firmly, "You do not deserve abuse" or "I do not believe that you are to blame."

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6. **Respect, support and empower.** You may have strong ideas about what the victim should do. You may want a battered woman to leave her husband, for instance. But if you give her orders or tell her what to do, in a way you are doing to her just what her abuser has done. Instead, inform her of resources and options in your community. She may not be aware of agencies available to help her. Support the decisions that she makes, even if you do not always like them or agree with her. Your support now may help her to make different choices later. Help her to expand her choices, in however small a way. You may be able, together, to imagine some creative possibilities she might not see by herself. If a battered woman chooses to stay where she will surely be abused again, she might be afraid that you would abandon her. It may be useful to say, "If you stay with him, I will be concerned for your safety. But I will still be here for you if you need me." You may be able to help her think of new ways in which she can be safer while remaining at home and working on her other resources, so that at some later time, she may be more ready to leave.
 7. **Remember the other family members and friends.** When abuse happens to someone, there are other victims besides the one who is directly hurt. Children who witness family violence, for instance, are also harmed by what they see. Those who love rape victims also suffer with them. In families where there is evidence of incest, the distorted family dynamics harm everyone. Sometimes, women are helped to make new choices if they understand that their children are also being harmed by the violence the women experience directly.
 8. **Victims may have spiritual crises as a result of their abuse.** Theological empowerment is as important as social and economic empowerment. Listening to the faith connections that are made by victims may be important learning to you. Provide good information about the many strong role models in the Bible, as well as about the ways in which sexism affected the tradition. Offer some new options, of a loving God rather than a judging God. There may be questions we need to be well prepared for like, "Why did God allow this to happen?" or "Where was God when I was suffering?" Be aware that grace is present in healing and in the support of the community for the one who is harmed. God calls us to "...bring liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." (Is 61:1)
- Above all, the victim must be able to trust that what she confides in a listener would be kept strictly confidential. If necessary, a clear agreement should be reached beforehand on what part(s) of the conversation could be shared and with whom.

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Support and solidarity

III. MEN'S SOLIDARITY NETWORKS

A. How Men Could Assist in Ending Male Violence against Women

1. Read, discern and understand

- the process and effect of socialization in family, society and church.
- about masculinity and femininity.

- gender inequality and role stereotyping.
- the concept of power and power relationships.
- the root causes of violence.
- the connections between structures, systems and social forces that create conflicts between women and men.

2. **Analyze** your own attitudes and actions that might perpetuate sexism and violence, and work toward changing them.

3. **Confront** degrading, ridiculing remarks and jokes about women.

4. **Do not buy** magazines, books, videotapes, posters, music or any objects of art that portray women as sex objects or objects of violence. Monitor the Internet and report on any pornographic sites.

5. **Support candidates** for leadership positions who are committed to the full social, economic and political equality of women. Actively oppose candidates who are known to be abusers of women.

6. **Advocate** for increased investment for battered women's shelters and rape-crisis centers. Volunteer where men are needed to lobby, in educational institutions, youth centers and political party meetings.

7. **Organize** or join groups of men, in church and society to work against sexism and violence. Support women's movements that work toward ending violence against women. Commend men who set new models of solidarity and affirmative action toward women.

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B. 'Example of a Young Lawyer Who Works against Girl Trafficking'⁴⁷

One simple example is that of Mr. Joshi a young lawyer in Nepal who works against girl trafficking. Once on a visit to the village, Mr. Joshi saw a man beating his wife. He asked the man to stop. The man said that he could beat his wife as he liked because she was his property. "Are you stronger?" the lawyer asked. "Yes" was the answer. "Then what kind of a man are you if you beat someone weaker?" asked Mr. Joshi. The man said, "O.K., I see what you mean" and stopped beating his wife. Mr. Joshi was questioning the model of masculinity in the village, getting the men to think about it in a new light.

C. The 'White Ribbon Campaign'⁴⁸

Another model is the 'White Ribbon Campaign' which lists ten 'do's' on what every man can do to help end men's violence against women:

1. Listen to women...learn from women.
2. Learn about the problem.
3. Learn why some men are violent.
4. Wear a white ribbon.
5. Challenge sexist language and jokes that degrade women.
6. Learn to identify and oppose sexual harassment and violence in your workplace, school and family.
7. Support local women's programs.
8. Examine how your own behavior might contribute to the problem.
9. Work toward long-term solutions.
10. Get involved with the 'White Ribbon Campaign's' educational efforts.





Faith and hope

IV. SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT

A. Scripture as a Helpful Guide for Those in Crisis

Reciting passages that assure the presence of God in our trials, fears, doubts and terrifying situations provides powerful accompaniment.

Reading of Ps 22:1–2, 14–15; 23; 27; 55:1–8; Is 52:2, 7–10; Rom 8:31–39.

B. A Prayer for Those Who Suffer from Rape and Assault⁴⁹

God of Love, hear my prayer. I come to you bruised and weary, angry and sad. Hold me and wipe away my tears. Help me to see that this insanity was not my doing. Walk with me through this long valley of darkness. Stay with me when I feel lonely. Sit with my heart for at this moment your gift of life to me is beyond my own feeling—even my own knowing.

Show me how to accept the care of those who love me and who pray for me, especially when I cannot find the words to pray myself. Pour out your healing spirit upon me, Gentle God, so that my spirit may again breathe and then revive to feel hope and love once more. All this and all that you see I need, I ask of you. Amen.

Anonymous

C. Jesus Heal Us⁵⁰

Leader: Jesus, lover of humanity, you healed the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, a foreigner who came to you, a Jewish teacher. By your gift of life you showed us that we are one people, all worthy to be loved. Now we come to you, as mothers in spirit, praying for the healing of the world, saying:

All: Jesus, heal us.

For this country, suffering from the self-inflicted wounds of racism, greed, the genocide of its native people, and the oppression of the poor, teach us that greatness can only be found in justice, generosity and compassion. We pray:

Jesus, heal us.

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For peace among all nations, that the dry bones found in battlefields and the mass graves dug by tyrants rise up as a resurrected humanity, committed to peace and the well being of all on earth. We pray:

Jesus, heal us.

For you Church divided, blundering, often intolerant, we rub our eyes, hoping to clear our vision and keep it ever on you. But we lose ourselves in the mists of delusions, fears and doubts. Send us the guiding light of your wise spirit, the healing of your love. We pray:

Jesus, heal us.

For all we name now in this assembly who need healing and our prayers: (*those assembled offer names...*)

And so today as we celebrate the feast of redemption we lift up all the living for your mercy, and thank you for the lives of all our loved ones who now celebrate your glory in heaven.

(by Irene St. Onge, San Francisco, California, USA)

D. Litany for Healing from Sexual Harassment⁵¹

Leader: In the name of God in whose image men and women are created.

All: Amen.

We confess that by our thought, word and deed we have not honored your image in

each other, we have limited you as we have demeaned each other, we have turned away from the source of wisdom and trusted our own foolishness.

Set us free today.

From the need to conceal at all cost, from the need to hide behind the safety of the Church.

Set us free.

From the temptation to compromise convictions for the sake of diplomacy and to trade lies for our self-gain.

Set us free.

We trust that beyond our pain

There can be healing.

Beyond the brokenness

There may be wholeness

Beyond the hurting

There may be forgiveness

That beyond the silence, there may be understanding.

And that through understanding, there is love.

(Ecumenical Center Chapel service, 3 November 1994, Geneva, Switzerland)

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V. RESPONSES FROM LWF COUNCIL MEETINGS ON THE ISSUE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

1992 LWF Council Meeting [Madras] Chennai, India

After identifying violation of women's rights by men (and also by women) as a program priority of the LWF Department for Mission and Development desk for Women in Church and Society (DMD-WICAS), the following strategies were recommended as listed in the DMD-WICAS publication, *A Clear Plan of Action* (1992), pp. 19–20:

“Exposure of the **violation of women's rights** by men, by social, political and economic structures, and by women themselves:

“The church can play a crucial role in bringing healing and wholeness to injured women and to the entire society by

- overcoming the conspiracy of silence on questions of violence and sexuality.
- initiating in-depth studies on specific forms of violence in order to better understand how they are planned and executed and what factors contribute to their perpetuation.
- recognizing that violence against women is a reality and not a myth and that women are frequently not believed when they relate their painful experiences.
- giving sermons and creating learning experiences to reflect on the question of violence (from Sunday School programs through Baptism and Confirmation classes and in all Christian education events of the church).
- organizing workshops for men and women to collectively identify all kinds of violence, to explore their root causes and to take steps to eliminate them.

- creating safe and secure space for women to discuss their experiences.
- enabling victims of violence to find refuge and to seek sustainable solutions.
- forming committees to monitor violence in the media, and designing methods of protest actions.
- calling for changes in laws, traditions and practices that discriminate against women, and becoming a force for transformation.”

1993 LWF Council Meeting Kristiansand, Norway

On the basis of the points raised in the DMD director's report about the worldwide issue of violence against women, and

“since violence permeates the whole of society, including the churches, the Council

“VOTED to urge the member churches to

- engage in study and provide education about violence against women, as encouraged by the LWF Seventh Assembly, particularly involving clergy and [laity] in educational programs, which focus on all forms of violence against women (sexual, domestic, racial, reproductive, psychological and institutional).
- re-evaluate and review their concept of education, particularly Christian education, for both children and adults.
- provide social support and practical assistance for victims/survivors and those working with such persons and the perpetrators.
- engage in advocacy work for social policies and legislation, which will protect women.

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- develop policies and procedures, which are to be used in instances of sexual abuse and harassment within the church and create a forum where sexual abuse might be discussed openly.
- support the many women's organizations actively involved in the issue of violence against women; and, furthermore
- request appropriate LWF departments to develop a coordinated action plan for communicating the Council action to the member churches and for providing resource materials, which will assist the churches in addressing the issue of violence, taking into consideration the recommendations from the International Consultation of Lutheran Women (Mexico, July 1989) and related actions of churches, the United Nations and other organizations."

(*LWF Documentation* No. 33, "People of God—People of Nations." Geneva: LWF Publications, September 1993, p. 120)

1994 LWF Council Meeting Geneva, Switzerland

"The Council VOTED to

- oppose all acts and forms of violence against women, regardless of any custom, tradition or religious consideration that may be invoked to sanction such violence and, in particular, female genital mutilation.
- urge member churches to take deliberate action to stop all forms of violence against and exploitation of women in their societies and their churches.
- support the aims of the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, including its stance that trafficking in women is a form of violence.

- underscore the importance of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) convened by the United Nations General Assembly, which includes these and other issues of concern to women on its agenda, and welcome the participation of the member churches of the Lutheran World Federation in this conference."

(*LWF Documentation* No. 35, "An Agenda for Communion." Geneva: LWF Publications, September 1994, p. 95)

1999 LWF Council Meeting Bratislava, Slovak Republic

"Human Rights for Women

"The Ninth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation said, "Women's rights are human rights. Women are disproportionately affected by the unequal sharing of resources; in marginalized groups of refugees, indigenous and prison populations women are the most vulnerable. In many places women are blocked from inheritance and property rights and are less able to gain skills and education. Violence against women is widespread in society and happens also in the church and Christian homes. Violence is silenced, ignored, indirectly accepted and sometimes backed by biblical interpretations. We must confess and acknowledge the sin of the church in tolerating violence against women, especially the abuse of women within the church.

"The Desk for Women in Church and Society of the Department for Mission and Development addresses all forms of violence against women and works toward a community of solidarity in which respect for the human being reigns for women and men alike.

"The Council VOTED to

- encourage all member churches to face the painful issue of violence against women in all its manifestations particular to their context; and

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- ask the Desk for Women in Church and Society to propose ways to accompany the churches in their efforts to address the issue.”

(*LWF Documentation* No. 44, “The Gospel Transforming Cultures.” Geneva: LWF Publications, September 1999, p. 158)

2000 LWF Council Meeting Turku, Finland

“In the previous year, it was recalled, the desk for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) had been asked to propose ways to accompany churches in their efforts to address the issue of violence against women. A document, “Churches say ‘No’ to Violence against Women,” representing one such way, initially had been presented to the committee in draft form for reaction and comments, before work was to be continued and the document finalized for approval by the Council next year. But in view of the urgency of the matter, the committee had requested that once its comments had been incorporated, the document be shared with the member churches for use in their various contexts, and for their input, rather than wait a further year until the document had been approved by the Council.

“The document, it was suggested, might be strengthened by a resolution from the Council. But after some discussion, it was agreed to incorporate the committee’s comments and share the document in draft form with the member churches for immediate use and feedback from them. A letter from the General Secretary would accompany the document explaining the process, requesting that the member churches give it attention and that other ways to address the issue of violence against women be identified. Meanwhile, the draft shared with the committee was also shared with the Council members for information.”

(Minutes of the Meeting of the LWF Council, Turku, Finland, June 2000, par. 163, 164)

2001 LWF Council Meeting Geneva, Switzerland

“13.1 Churches Say “No” to Violence against Women

“The chairperson recalled that the Council, at its June 2000 meeting, had requested that the draft document “Churches Say ‘No’ to Violence against Women” be shared with member churches for their immediate use and feedback. The Program Committee had received a report on the process, on the reactions received and suggestions made, and had expressed its appreciation for the positive support shown for the document. During the course of the meeting, reactions had also been received from other Program and Standing Committees.

“The Council discussed and approved a motion to amend the original recommendation to include a representative of the Program Committee for World Service in the special committee to be appointed to finalize the document. In response to a concern over the reference to a period of two years in the last point of the original recommendation, the Council further approved an amendment and

“VOTED to

- receive the document with the provision that the responses and additional input received from the Program and Standing Committees and the LWF member churches be incorporated wherever possible.
- appoint a special committee of five Council members (two from Mission and Development, one from International Affairs and Human Rights, one from Theology and Studies and one from World Service) to go over the changes and approve the document for publication.
- extend the deadline for further response to the document.

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- make the draft ready by the end of December 2001 for publication in English and translation and publication in French, Spanish and German; and
- accompany member churches, which want to translate the document into local languages, and facilitate distribution to all heads of churches, lay leaders, pastors in congregations in all member churches, seminaries and to women leaders as a matter of urgency.

“The nomination of the members in this special committee was referred to the Nominations Committee. The Council’s action is recorded under Item 6.5.”

(Minutes of the Meeting of the LWF Council, Geneva, June 2001, par. 179–186)

“6.5 Appointment of the Members of the Special Committee

“In line with its action to establish a special committee of five Council members (see Item 13.3), the Council, upon the recommendation of the Nominations Committee,

“VOTED

“to appoint a Special Committee until the end of December 2001 with the following membership:

Rev. Dr Kajsa AHLSTRAND
Theology and Studies

Rev. Thorbjörn ARNASON
International Affairs & Human Rights

Bishop Joseph Paul BVUMBWE
Mission and Development

Rev. Dr Prasanna KUMARI
World Service

Rev. Ágnes PÁNGYÁNSZKY
Mission and Development

“and with the task to go over the changes and approve the document *Churches Say “No” to Violence against Women* for publication.”

(Minutes of the Meeting of the LWF Council, Geneva, June 2001, p. 4)

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We invite you to

read this document in lay, clergy and special group meetings as a discussion starter.

edit, enlarge or comment on it to expand the content.

translate it into your local language for a larger audience.

share it with victims to help them overcome victimization.

promote it in ecumenical, non-governmental and government networks as a Lutheran communion contribution to reduce all forms of violence.

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