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of churches
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Council for World Mission

A 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GBV INITIATIVE

CONCEPT NOTE FOR TRANSFORMATIVE MASCULINITIES AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE



Mission from the Margins Project

Creating Gender Just Societies

Gender Justice

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence

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Background

1. Creating Gender - Just Societies

Sexual abuse and violence continue to be a brutal life robbing reality globally. Some church traditions, theologies and applications of scripture have perpetuated, legitimised and even sanctioned this sin. While we continue to transform our society into a safe sanctuary for all, we must fight for the elimination and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and accompany and empower the survivors of sexual harm.

Goal:

Our mission is to create a world where SGBV no longer holds power over individuals and communities. We aim to achieve this through a comprehensive approach that focuses on four (4) key pillars: **awareness-building, advocacy, empowerment and survivor support.**

Objectives:

- I. **Raising Awareness:** We will engage member churches, their communities, institutions, and other people's groups to raise awareness about the impact and prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence. Through targeted campaigns, educational programs, and community dialogues, we will challenge harmful norms and empower individuals to recognize and speak out against violence in all its forms.
- II. **Equipping Advocates for Change:** We will provide training, resources, and tools to equip member churches and partners with the knowledge and skills needed to be effective advocates for change. This includes building capacity in key areas such as community mobilization, policy advocacy, and legal literacy to focus on ensuring that laws are not only in place but are also effectively implemented, creating a legal framework that prevents violence, supports survivors, and promotes gender equality.
- III. **Building Comprehensive Support Systems for Survivors:** We will challenge and inspire member churches and partners to establish, strengthen and expand support systems for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. This is to include creating accessible, trauma-informed services, including counselling, legal aid, pastoral support and safe spaces to receive timely and compassionate care, allowing them to rebuild their lives free from violence. This element of the programme will include a **toolkit to help churches accompany survivors and training pastors and counsellors.**
- IV. **Developing theological resources on gender justice:** This is to create theological resources that promote gender justice and contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV). These resources will draw on theological perspectives and values to challenge harmful gender norms, advocate for equality, and address the root causes of violence. By integrating theological perspectives with modern understandings of gender equality, the initiative aims to empower religious leaders, congregations, and communities to actively work against GBV.

Problem Statement & Rationale

GBV is a critical public health and human rights issue. It affects women and girls across nations, ethnicities, socio-economic class, and religious communities.

Between 2023 and 2025, the World Health Organisation (WHO) highlighted several critical findings concerning gender-based violence (GBV):

Adolescent Girls and Intimate Partner Violence (2024): A WHO study published in *The Lancet* revealed that nearly 24% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 who have been in relationships experienced physical or sexual violence from their partners, with 16% reporting incidents in 2023. The highest rates were observed in Oceania and Africa, notably in Papua New Guinea (49%) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (42%). The study underscores the urgent need for multidimensional and multisectoral approaches to prevention measures and targeted support for young girls and women.

Global Femicide Rates: In 2023, the UN reported that approximately 51,100 women were killed by intimate partners or family members, averaging 140 deaths per day. This marked an increase from 48,800 in 2022, highlighting persistent global challenges in addressing GBV.

Conflict Zones Impact: The UN reported that in 2023, women accounted for 40% of all civilian deaths in conflict zones, with a 50% increase in cases of conflict-related sexual violence compared to 2022.

Sudan's Surge in GBV: In Sudan, there was a 288% rise in demand for GBV services over 12 months starting in December 2023, underscoring the severe impact of conflict on women and girls.

Haiti: In Haiti, gender-based violence (GBV) has reached alarming levels, exacerbated by gang violence and political instability.

- **Reported Cases:** Over 6,400 GBV incidents were documented, with sexual violence accounting for 64%, physical violence 20%, and psychological violence 21%.

- **Rape Statistics:** Over 4,000 rapes were reported, with women and girls representing the vast majority of victims (76% women, 17% girls).
- **Victim Demographics:** A significant number of victims were displaced persons (62%), with 94% of displaced women and girls at risk, particularly from sexual violence.
- **Perpetrators:** The majority of perpetrators were men (99%), including gang members, who were responsible for 64% of the violence.

While the figures above are specific to the regions listed, they are indicative of the realities in many countries and communities globally.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global public health issue rooted in societal gender inequalities. It is exacerbated by factors such as armed conflict, natural disasters, and disease outbreaks, which particularly increase the risk for women and girls.

GBV can lead to severe and long-term physical and mental health consequences, such as injuries, unintended pregnancies, complications during pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, depression, and post-traumatic stress.

Theological Rationale:

1. **Genesis 1:27** emphasises that all humans are created in God's image, affirming the inherent dignity and equality. GBV undermines this truth, violating the divine design for respectful and equal relationships.
2. **Proverbs 31:8-9** calls believers to advocate for the oppressed and defend the vulnerable, which aligns with our Christian duty to protect and support survivors of GBV, specifically in situations of injustice and inequality.

Social Rationale:

- **Human Rights and Equality:** GBV is a violation of basic human rights and a barrier to achieving gender equality. Addressing it ensures that everyone, particularly women and girls, can live free from violence and oppression.
- **Public Health Impact:** GBV has severe physical and mental health consequences, making it a public health issue. Providing immediate, life-saving care to survivors is crucial to their recovery and well-being.

- **Prevention and Protection:** Tackling GBV requires systemic efforts in prevention, protection, and rehabilitation, including challenging harmful societal norms and fostering equality.

Addressing GBV is both a theological and social imperative to uphold human dignity, promote justice, and safeguard public health. The call to protect the vulnerable aligns with efforts to end GBV and support survivors.

CWM 16 Days of Activism 2025

Transformative Masculinity: Coalition against GBV

Date: November 25 – December 10, 2025

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that runs from November 25th (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) to December 10th (Human Rights Day), aiming to raise awareness and mobilize action to end all forms of violence against women and girls.

In 2025 the CWM's focus will be on **Transformative Masculinity** - inspiring, challenging and equipping men and boys to deliberately participate in eradicating GBV (**Raising Awareness and Equipping Advocates for Change**).

CWM believes that meaningful change requires the active engagement of men and boys in the work of prevention, protection, and transformation. We therefore invite member churches, with their unique perspectives, reach and influence, to play a crucial role in this year's campaign through a series of intentional, community-rooted actions.

Transformative Masculinity: A Path Toward Gender Equality and Ending Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Transformative masculinity is an approach that actively challenges harmful patriarchal norms by engaging **men and boys** as allies in promoting **gender equality** and ending **gender-based violence (GBV)**. At its core, it seeks to **deconstruct traditional notions of male dominance and aggression**, replacing them with values of **empathy, respect, non-violence, and shared power**.

Rather than portraying men solely as perpetrators or bystanders, transformative masculinity recognises their potential to be **agents of positive change** within their families, communities, and societies.

Key Aspects of Transformative Masculinity

1. Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity

It directly confronts **hegemonic masculinity**—a dominant form of masculinity that reinforces male superiority and often justifies violence against women and marginalized groups. Transformative masculinity seeks to dismantle these harmful norms.

2. Promoting Positive Masculinities

Instead of harmful ideals, it promotes **positive masculinities** based on **non-violence, empathy, respect, and equality**. These traits help build healthier relationships and more just communities.

3. Community-Based and Participatory

This approach is rooted in **community engagement**, using **dialogues, workshops, and local leadership** (e.g., gender champions) to foster sustainable, grassroots change.

4. Involving Men and Boys as Allies

Men and boys are **central to the solution**. By recognizing their role in perpetuating or challenging harmful norms, transformative masculinity invites them to become active allies in ending GBV.

5. Addressing Social Norms

It goes beyond individual behaviour to address the **broader social and cultural norms** that sustain gender inequality, aiming for long-term, systemic change.

6. Utilising Various Tools

A variety of methods are used to engage and educate, including:

- **Scriptural reflections** (in faith-based contexts)
- **Drama and storytelling**
- **Social media campaigns**
- **Workshops on fatherhood, caregiving, and relationships**

Transformative masculinity is more than a concept—it is a movement toward a world where all genders can thrive without fear or oppression. By engaging men and boys through inclusive, community-driven strategies, it paves the way for a future free from GBV, grounded in justice, compassion, and equality.

Objectives and Expected Outcomes for CWM's 16 Days of Activism:

Transformative Masculinity: Coalition against GBV

1. To inspire a minimum of 100 congregations of CWM member churches to engage in activities of raising awareness, building coalitions and carrying out advocacy activities with and among men and boys in their context, commencing Nov. 25, and culminating December 10 (***The objectives, outcomes and suggested activities are outlined below.***)

2. To collect and package stories of the activities conducted by member churches. These will be shared across member churches and other partners to serve as **inspiration and agitation** - challenging the church to commit to ongoing advocacy work for eradicating gender-based violence.
3. To highlight member church's stories in a global consultation scheduled for **December 2025 in South Africa.**

Suggested Objectives and Outcomes for Activities/Initiatives

Knowledge-Based Objective and Outcomes:

Objective:

- By the end of the initiative, boys and men will have a broad-based understanding of:
 - gender equality and the root causes of inequality,
 - the harmful effects of GBV on women, children, families, and communities,
 - the behaviours and attitudes that perpetuate GBV in society,
 - transformative behaviours towards practicing healthy masculinity,
 - their role in preventing violence against women and girls.

Outcomes:

- Men and boys will be able to explain the theological and social principles affirming the need for healthy masculinity, gender justice and equity, and advocacy.
- Men and boys will describe the personal, social, and public health consequences of GBV, including the impact on women, children, and communities.
- Men and boys will explain the connection between healthy masculinity, respectful relationships, and the prevention of GBV.
- Men and boys will identify key behaviours and attitudes that contribute to the prevention of GBV, recognizing that men and boys are crucial in challenging societal/cultural norms that perpetuate violence.

Skills-Based Objective and Outcomes:

Objective:

- Boys and men will develop the skills necessary to respectfully and non-violently initiate and engage in conversations and actions that challenge GBV and promote the protection of women and girls in their communities.

Outcomes:

- Men and boys will practice initiating and leading discussions on healthy masculinity and the importance of respecting women and girls.
- Men and boys will learn strategies to safely intervene in situations where GBV is happening or at risk of happening (e.g. bystander intervention techniques).
- Participants will practice using positive communication techniques to challenge sexist or harmful behaviours among their peers.
- Boys and men will be trained on how to create safe spaces with and for women and girls in their communities, and support and empower survivors of GBV.
- Men and boys will develop skills to be allies in advocating for policy changes that protect women and girls and promote gender equality in their communities. This includes using their positions of influence in communities and society to advance such policies and legislations.

Behavioural-Based Objective and Outcomes:

Objective:

- Boys and men will begin to demonstrate proactive behaviours and attitudes that promote gender equality, respect, and the safety of women and girls.

Outcomes:

- Men and boys will take active steps in their homes, schools, and communities to model positive behaviours that prevent GBV, such as promoting respectful relationships and gender equality.
- Boys and men will challenge derogatory or harmful attitudes about women and girls, both within their peer groups and in the wider community.
- Men and boys will engage in campaigns or advocacy efforts, raising awareness about GBV and becoming vocal advocates for the safety of women and girls.

- Men and boys will commit to stand up against sexism, misogyny, and GBV, both in public and private spaces, setting an example for their peers.

Resources

1. **CWM's 16 Days of Activism electronic Devotional Booklet which can be used in the following ways:**

- To conduct Bible studies with small or large church-based groups of men
- To conduct Bible studies with small or large groups of church-based boys
- To conduct Bible studies with small or large groups of community-based men and boys
- To circulate electronically one day at a time for 16 days as a personal devotional to your target audience.

While the focus is on boys and men, the initiative should not be limited to only these groups.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1tq3i3KcsuO4mpxdqs1OcE9tlGy2j3-Vp?usp=sharing>

2. **Transformative Masculinity – From hegemony to partnership (resource book)**

<https://wcrc.eu/resource/created-in-gods-image-from-hegemony-to-partnership/>

3. **WHO Website on GBV Agenda** [https://www.who.int/health-](https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender/strengthening-health-sector-response-to-gender-based-violence-in-humanitarian-emergencies#tab=tab_1)

[topics/gender/strengthening-health-sector-response-to-gender-based-violence-in-humanitarian-emergencies#tab=tab_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender/strengthening-health-sector-response-to-gender-based-violence-in-humanitarian-emergencies#tab=tab_1)

4. **UN Women – 16 Days of Activism against GBV-This 2024 paper contains links to numerous resources.** https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/unite_16_days_2024_concept_note_final_oct4.pdf

Suggested Activities for CWM Member Churches

Knowledge-Based Activities:

a. Theological Discussions and Workshops:

Objective: Help boys and men understand the theological foundation for gender equality.

Activity: Hold a series of workshops or Bible study sessions focused on key scriptures (Genesis 1:27, Proverbs 31:8-9) that emphasize the inherent dignity and equality of both genders. Engage participants in discussions about how these teachings can guide their attitudes and behaviours toward women and girls.

b. GBV Awareness Seminars:

Objective: Educate about the causes and consequences of GBV.

Activity: Organize seminars or presentations with experts (health professionals, social workers, or survivors) who can explain the physical, psychological, and social impacts of GBV on individuals and communities. Use real-life case studies and statistics to highlight the severity of the issue.

c. Gender Equality Education:

Objective: Explain how societal norms contribute to GBV and how boys and men can be part of the solution.

Activity: Facilitate group discussions and role-playing scenarios where participants explore the concept of toxic masculinity and how it leads to violence. Encourage critical thinking about how societal norms affect both genders and what it means to promote a culture of respect and equality.

2. Skills-Based Activities:

a. Bystander Intervention Training:

Objective: Equip boys and men with the skills to intervene in potential GBV situations.

Activity: Conduct interactive workshops where participants are taught how to recognize signs of GBV and how to safely intervene as bystanders. Role-playing exercises could simulate real-life situations where they practice de-escalation techniques, offering support to victims, and calling for help when necessary.

b. Communication Skills for Challenging GBV:

Objective: Help boys and men develop skills to challenge harmful behaviours.

Activity: Organize peer group (boys and men) discussions and debates about stereotypes, sexism, and harmful gender norms. Teach participants how to communicate effectively with friends and peers to challenge these attitudes when they arise. Encourage respectful dialogue and modelling of healthy masculinity.

c. Safe Space Creation Workshops:

Objective: Teach boys and men how to create safe environments for women and girls.

Activity: Facilitate training on how to create safe spaces within their homes, schools, and communities where women and girls feel respected and protected. This could include teaching boys and men how to listen actively to women and girls, support their rights, and advocate for gender equality in every space they occupy.

3. Behavioural-Based Activities:

a. GBV Awareness Campaigns:

Objective: Engage boys and men in advocacy to challenge GBV in the community.

Activity: Organize a community-based awareness campaign where boys and men take the lead in raising awareness about the negative impacts of GBV. This could include creating posters, hosting community events, distributing educational materials, and using social media to amplify messages of respect, equality, and non-violence.

b. Peer Education and Mentoring:

Objective: Encourage boys and men to become advocates and role models for others.

Activity: Create a peer education program where boys and men act as mentors to younger boys, teaching them about healthy masculinity, respect for women, and the importance of preventing GBV. Mentors can lead discussions in schools, youth centers, or community groups, and provide guidance on navigating relationships without resorting to violence or aggression.

c. Involvement in Local Advocacy or Policy Work:

Objective: Empower boys and men to participate in wider efforts to end GBV.

Activity: Encourage boys and men to join local initiatives or advocacy groups that work toward GBV prevention. This could involve participating in policy discussions, attending public meetings, or volunteering at shelters and community centers. They could also be involved in creating and supporting laws and policies that protect women and girls.

d. Community Action Projects:

Objective: Promote practical, hands-on involvement in reducing GBV.

Activity: Have boys and men participate in or lead community action projects that aim to reduce GBV. Examples include building safe spaces for women and girls, creating a support network for survivors,

or organizing workshops for men and boys in their community on how to prevent GBV and promote healthy relationships.

4. Supportive Activities:

a. Survivor Support Groups:

Objective: Provide a platform for men to hear directly from GBV survivors and learn how they can support them.

Activity: Organize listening to sessions or support groups where male participants can hear from survivors of GBV. This could help humanize the issue and encourage empathy and solidarity. Additionally, it will educate boys and men about the ongoing needs of survivors, such as emotional support, legal assistance, and healthcare. These sessions should include health care professionals, councillors or specially trained pastors who can provide support for any crisis.

b. Leadership and Advocacy Training for Men:

Objective: Equip boys and men with leadership skills to advocate for gender equality.

Activity: Offer training programs that focus on leadership, advocacy, and public speaking, enabling boys and men to take on roles as advocates against GBV. Participants can then go on to lead events or represent their communities at local, regional, or national levels, helping to shift cultural perceptions about masculinity and gender-based violence.

These activities are designed to actively engage boys and men in understanding, preventing, and taking action against gender-based violence. The goal is to provide them with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to be agents of change in their communities, protecting women and girls and promoting a culture of respect and equality.

How Can Member Churches Participate?



Register by emailing your list of activities to: emma.rahman@cwmission.org

Share by depositing stories and pictures in the Dropbox below:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/kb7olye8vq8pld6zqvcgg/AFe5pmNARlDTI-XDwm3GotE?rlkey=vbui6cie1xizrstoc7tgfgjho&st=ngx6pw5e&dl=0>