

Side by Side Shared Conversation 4: Advocacy, Gender, Faith and COVID-19

July 2020 ([Link to Recording](#) / [Slides](#))

Jenny Brown, Senior Church Advocacy Adviser, Christian Aid and Side by Side Steering Group

Jenny Brown started her professional life as a lawyer before changing careers to be the coordinator of an ecumenical advocacy network, working in Rwanda, Burundi and Eastern DRC. Jenny then moved onto working for Christian Aid, where she spent 16 years leading their influencing at the European Union. She is now Christian Aid's Senior Church Advocacy Adviser, supporting senior church leadership as they speak publicly on issues of mutual concern. In this role, she also provides support on advocacy to Side by Side, supporting both members and national chapters.

Introduction

- Delighted to be asked to introduce this conversation about advocacy – feel very strongly personally as well as professionally that people of faith, and leaders of faith communities, have responsibility to speak out and to challenge injustice wherever they see it.
- The theme of this conversation emerged from our first shared conversations back in March, on a faith response to COVID-19. In addition to all the practical steps that were proposed, there was a clear signal that advocacy, influencing at different levels for change, was a necessary part of a faith response. This is our chance to take that part of the conversation further.

Various reasons why faith leaders can have such impact:

- Eighty-four per cent of the world's population self-identify as members of a faith group. Faith leaders represent a lot of people – that gives them potential for a lot of influence:
 - The ability to demand and achieve change, and
 - To hold authorities accountable for implementation of laws and policies, and
 - Accountable for abuse of power including gender injustice
 - That's happening in many countries - faith leaders are engaging with decision makers and policy makers, challenging and proposing alternatives.
- Faith leaders can speak with moral authority and credibility. They're respected in their communities, and that means they're likely to be taken seriously by the people with power when they speak out.
- Conscious that faith leaders can be part of the problem of gender injustice, as of other kinds of injustice, but they can be and are increasingly part of the solution.
- The members of Side by Side show a lot of energy for advocacy for gender justice and are doing it in all sorts of ways and contexts. This varies, for example:
 - In Brazil, challenging local police to respond more appropriately to complaints by survivors of domestic abuse
 - In Kenya, campaigning for national legislation, for example the 2/3 gender rule, to ensure increased participation of women in politics.
 - In regional spaces, such as the African Union, collaborating with the All Africa Conference of Churches and Christian Aid to hold a seminar on the vital importance of involving women in peace building and conflict resolution
 - And at a global level, Side by Side regularly coordinates advocacy at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, working with a wide range of faith actors to enable a strong faith voice for gender justice. Our starting point at CSW is that member states should recognise faith leaders as critical actors and stakeholders in their work for gender justice. We've also done targeted advocacy on Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Gender Equitable Law and Families.

- One of the joys of Side by Side is the way that it enables faith leaders and organisations to network, share ideas and experiences, and collaborate on advocacy initiatives. A great way to maximise the impact of their individual voices. If you'd like to know more, do look at our advocacy briefing, which you'll find on the [website here](#).

Mandy Marshall, Director for Gender Justice, Anglican Communion

Mandy Marshall is a leading international campaigner against gender-based violence, and the new Director for Gender Justice at the Anglican Communion. Mandy is the former Co-Director of Restored, a charity she co-founded to end violence against women. She previously worked for Tearfund, a Christian development agency established by the UK Evangelical Alliance in 1960, as its Programme Development Advisor for Gender.

Questions Framework

- How can faith networks, institutions and leaders be mobilised to advance gender justice? What tools can be used?
- From your work with/as faith actors, where are the challenges, and where are the opportunities to advocate at national, regional or global levels during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What types of advocacy can faith actors engage in to ensure gender just responses to the pandemic?

Overview of how the Anglican Communion and the Anglican Church are involved in Advocacy

- People listen to faith leaders, the Anglican Communion are in 165 countries worldwide and has around 80 – 85 million members, which is a huge reach.
- We know that when people speak out about gender justice, it can be life changing, bringing about behaviour change.

Tools for Advancing Gender Justice in Faith

- **Know what has already been agreed internationally, e.g. UN/Regional bodies**, and use it with your own church hierarchy. You can show that this is what is agreed at the UN level, and ask what we are doing about it in our own faith community? Can we be world leaders in this area?
- **Know your own country's law and the gaps**. What can we use in our country's legislation? How is our place of faith implementing this law? Are there resources attached to this implementation? Can faith lobby for the gaps to be addressed?
- **Know what your faith has already agreed**. Look at the Agreed Motions and look at how is it being implemented?
- **Know your faith's scripture and teaching**. Look to scripture to support a discussion on your area of advocacy.
- **RESOURCE: [God's Justice: Just Relationships between Women and Men, Girls and Boys](#)**
- **Communicate**. Look for ways to encourage others, to show what you are doing and make others aware.
- **Act**. Listen to when you are being called to act.

Know what has already been agreed internationally e.g. UN/Regional

- Use the Internationally agreed instruments in place
- Ask what is being done to implement them
- Be prepared to be the answer

Know your own country's law and the gaps

- How is your faith abiding by the law?
- What are the gaps that need addressing to ensure equality?
- How is your faith working towards ensuring equality within your nation?

Know what your Faith has already agreed

- Discover the structural mechanisms of your faith to pass agreements or resolutions

- Find out what has already been passed
- Lobby for implementation of the agreements/resolutions with funding
- Fill the gaps – if there is nothing in place, create a resolution or agreement
- Monitor implementation

Know your faith's scripture and teaching

- Read the scripture and gender/feminist theologians and commentators for examples
- Highlight the scriptures and stories around gender justice issues

Communicate

- Write articles in key newspapers, magazines, web pages that are read by your target audience
- Create a film clip/video to highlight the issue and the impact on your faith and people of faith
- Participate in or host discussions/debates on gender justice

Act

- Lobby for gender justice, training, funds, resources etc.
- Be a part of the solution – don't expect others to do everything
- Monitor implementation
- Collect stories of change and impact

United Nations Advocacy Instruments

- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (1948)
- [CEDAW](#) (1979) – Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
- [DEVAW](#) (1993) – Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women
- [Beijing Platform for Action](#) (1995)
- Millennium Development Goals – Goal 3 (2000)
- UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security 1325 ([UNSCR1325](#)) – 2000
- [Elimination of Domestic Violence Against Women](#) (2004) UN Resolution 18/147
- UN Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW) [Agreed Conclusions 2013](#) on VAWG paragraphs 14, 15, x & mm
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) aka Global Goals – [Goal 5](#) Gender Equality (2015)

Regional Examples

- [African Union Protocol on Women's Rights](#) – 1995
- [Istanbul Convention](#) (Europe) - 2011

Anglican Resolutions

- The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) is the governance body of the global Anglican Church.
- It meets once every three years to review the progress of the Anglican Church worldwide and to agree foci for the future.
- It passes resolutions aimed to encourage Provinces (usually national Anglican churches such as the Church of England, Church of Burundi etc.) to consider and recommend the implementation of the resolution.

ACC Resolutions

1. ACC 15:7 (2012) Gender Based Violence
2. ACC16:3 (2016) Gender Equality and Justice
3. ACC17:2 & 3 (2019) Equipping God's People for Gender Justice

Scriptures - The Bible

The Bible can be seen as contentious area when discussing gender issues. It is, however, useful to know some key stories and verses that highlight issues that support advocacy.

For Example – **Ending Violence Against Women**

1. **2 Samuel 13** – The Raping of Tamar. It shows that God sees and knows that rape happens and the destruction it causes and the importance of justice.
2. **John 8:2-11** – The woman caught in adultery. Jesus protected her life.
3. **Psalms 11:5** - we read a clear and strong anti-violence message, 'The Lord tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.'
4. **Colossians 3:19** is straightforward in its instruction: 'Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them.'
5. **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** tells us what love is: 'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres'.

Example – **Gender Based Violence (GBV)**

- Primates (Bishops) Letter (2011)
- Church of Burundi/DRC and Rwanda hosts workshops for Bishops on ending GBV (2011)
- Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) Resolution 15:7 – Gender Based Violence (2012)
- Church of England (C of E) send delegate to the UN CSW focussing on ending violence against women. Lobby's for the inclusion of faith in the response and some mention included (2013)
- Delegate reports back to the C of E with recommendations. Report picked up by a Bishop and work together to put a motion before the General Synod. (2013)
- Delegate speaks at the General Synod of the C of E under special measures on a GBV resolution. Unanimously passed. (2014)
- Side by Side Gender Justice created for people of faith working on gender justice (2015) Anglican Church founder member.
- Work alongside charities to help train and resource Provinces (countries), Dioceses and Churches (Restored, Tearfund, Christian Aid)
- ACC 16 Resolution 16:03 Gender Equality and Justice (2016)
- Resource – '*God's Justice: Just Relationships between Women and Men, Girls and Boys*' published by the Anglican Communion Office explores theology of gender (2019)
- ACC 17:2 and 3 Equipping God's People for Gender Justice (2019)
- Domestic Abuse and COVID-19 resource (2020)

Throughout the International Anglican Women's Network (IAWN) work towards the full inclusivity, participation and leadership of women.

Domestic Abuse and COVID-19 resource

Information

- What the Bible says about abuse
- Domestic abuse – what it is and global stats
- Impact of COVID -19 on domestic abuse

Practical Action

- 4R's response – church leaders, churchgoers, and survivors
- What not to do
- Engaging men
- 7R's for perpetrators of abuse
- Advocacy
- [NEW RESOURCE: Domestic Abuse and COVID 19: How Churches Can Respond by Mandy Marshall](#)

Key Points

- It takes time!
- Find your champions and gatekeepers
- Know the routes and opportunities for advocacy
- Research - find out who is already working on this and join in
- Build momentum
- Communicate don't alienate
- Deliver – be the answer
- Celebrate success

For Reference: More UN Resolutions

In addition to these major resolutions, the subject of violence against women has also been addressed in several other resolutions, including a series of resolutions on the “Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women” (see Resolutions [64/137 \(2009\)](#),^[11] [63/155 \(2008\)](#),^[12] [62/133 \(2007\)](#)^[13] and [61/143 \(2006\)](#)^[14]), a series of resolutions on “Elimination of all forms of violence, including crimes against women” (see Resolutions [59/167 \(2004\)](#),^[15] [57/181 \(2002\)](#),^[16] and [55/68 \(2000\)](#)^[17]), and a series on “In-depth study of all forms of violence against women (see Resolutions [60/136 \(2005\)](#)^[18] and [58/185 \(2003\)](#)^[19]). Many of these resolutions resulted in in-depth reports to the Secretary-General. A complete list of General Assembly resolutions and accompanying reports on violence women can be found on the [UN Women website](#).^[20] The UN Human Rights Council (HRC) has also passed several resolutions on eliminating discrimination and violence against women, including Resolutions [14/12 \(2010\)](#),^[21] [15/23 \(2010\)](#),^[22] [12/17 \(2009\)](#),^[23] [11/2 \(2009\)](#),^[24] [7/24 \(2008\)](#),^[25] and many others. A complete list of HRC resolutions and accompanying reports can be found on the [UN Women website](#).^[26]

Rev. Asir Ebenezer, General Secretary, National Council of Churches in India

Rev. Asir Ebenezer is the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in India. He is a minister of the Church of South India with three decades of working on pastoral-diaconal concerns within church and ecumenical settings. Among other things he designed 'Gender Equity Enabling Timetable (GEET)', Women DARE (Dalit and Adivasi Rural Entrepreneurs) as programs that build gender sensitivity in the church and society using legal and faith resources and platforms, as well as by creating economic models that strengthen women driven local economies that challenge patriarchy-ridden hegemonic global empires. The learnings of these experiences were captured in the Church of South India's newly created policies - CSI Child Protection Policy, CSI Gender Policy and CSI Disability Inclusion guidelines.

Both in CSI then and in NCCI now, Rev. Asir vigorously promotes the Thursdays in Black campaign to address Gender based Violence both as faith communities (through church and church run institutions) and amongst their peers in society. He is presently working with his colleagues in the NCCI on a policy on gender and sexual inclusion. These experiences and learnings will eventually and hopefully be gathered together as the NCCI's Advanced Institute on Religion, Gender and Sexualities. Rev. Asir Ebenezer brings his trainings in diverse fields of mental health, commerce and theology to accompany churches and ecumenical bodies in India and around the world grow in that inclusion which challenges individuals and institutions 'to be included' into the world of the marginalised communities, aided by tools and techniques that professionalism in every field has to offer.

Introduction

- Faith actors are an important element for working on gender justice and tackling gender based violence.
- Particularly, in our country, where there are many different religions, faith actors are important.
- In this context, where faith plays an important role, we need to capture on that to ensure that gender justice is delivered upon.

- On the other side, however, we are not sure how much religion plays in our lives today. In the growing neoliberal economic context, with growing secularisation, whether in countries in the South, religion will sway, like it used to do.

Experiential Sharing

- The presentation will be an experiential sharing of what we have been doing in our context in India.
- In the Church of South India, a member of the National Council, we used **policy making** as a space where we can address gender justice among faith actors.
- Focus areas included child protection and gender policies for the Church of South India.
- This was a participative process, which became a tool, where churches and faith leaders could speak out against gender based violence and speak out for gender justice.
- **Joint Community Responses** – when we were working on a campaign on the girl child, we asked every local church to partner together with peers of different faiths, to address female infanticide.
- **Legal advocacy** – working on the prevention of sexual harassment at work act, where we needed to form internal complaints policies, wherever we had more than 10 employees. This was an effective tool to talk about gender justice in our own context.
- **Social audit tool** – this mainstreamed gender justice, so that it could be addressed as faith actors.
- Abridged version of **positive / transformative / redemptive masculinities document**, to support men's organisations within churches to talk about gender justice.
- As the Church of South India and the National Council of Churches in India, we effectively use the **Thursdays in Black campaign** in all our churches, around 40,000 local churches in 5,000 – 6,000 schools, colleges and hospitals. It is a huge network, and when we take the campaign to these institutions, it becomes an effective tool to address gender justice.

Challenges Faced

- At the local level, we have the equivalence of faith leaders. However, at a national level, not every faith tradition is structured in the same way. This becomes a challenge to address issues at a national level and made us realise the importance of **working with faith leaders at a local level**.
- If we can facilitate dialogue at a local level, we can then bring different faith traditions together.
- Another challenge that we faced was to ask **who is a faith leader?** For churches it is different, for Sikh community it is different, and what about the believers in the pew? In India, we have *Voices Against Sexual Abuse in the Church (VASAC)*, who are faith leaders, they are not ordained but they are opinion leaders and faith leaders in their own context. **Defining faith leaders is context specific.**

Faith Advocacy

- In the National Council of Churches, we have Rev. Jyoti Singh, who runs a helpline every week for people experiencing gender based violence.
- We also have platforms for sexual and gender minorities, to contact us, so that we can support and move forward together. **Helplines are very important for us.**
- We plan to intensify our Thursdays in Black campaign, to involve more faith traditions. Currently, we have been working as a Christian movement, but if we can take it across every faith tradition to accompany this campaign, we can create greater impact.
- Joint fact-finding missions together, bringing different leaders together, to listen to the cries of the people together, and speak to the media to engage others to speak out.
- Another area that we identify as important is **reading one another's scriptures together**, as people of different faith traditions. This is a tool that we find useful to do together, to advance gender justice, as Side by Side communities of different faith traditions.

Gladys: On communicating and not alienating, how do we toe the line between being inclusive but also addressing gender based violence and others forms of injustice with courage?

Mandy: It is a balance, you must approach it that some people will not know anything about it. The very term, gender, can scare people. When we come at this, we must be aware of the fear that that can induce, and the misrepresentations of the word, especially in our faith contexts. I've come at it from a relationship perspective, then working out to a rights-based approach. How is what I am doing affecting relationships? Am I helping these relationships to flourish? People can relate to the language of relationships.

For example, when I have been doing training in different countries, I use word association activities, to understand what people think of when you say gender, faith, feminism. Most people can agree that we want better relationships in the world, and this can be an entry point, to bring people on a journey together. Using personal stories can also be powerful, when you talk about how the injustice impacts different people, it is hard for people to dismiss that and therefore what needs to change.

Faustina: We have a challenge here in Tanzania in men engagement on gender justice, the majority are not showing up for interventions. What is Mandy's experience in the Anglican Communion?

Mandy: In terms of engaging men, this can sometimes relate to the terminology that we use. Sometimes people don't understand that that term gender, includes men. At Restored we created the [First Man Standing Campaign](#) to engage men and provided bible studies for them. Tearfund are working on transforming masculinities, and in the Anglican Communion, we are starting to develop this work. Are we targeting webinars / seminars that engage men to get them involved? We must change our approach to ensure we are engaging men of faith to champion this issue.

Rev. Asir: Inclusion is about being included into the mind of the other. Being included into the world of the other. We learnt this when we worked with people with disabilities. If I was to transpose this into gender work, it is about walking into the shoes of a woman, as a man. And looking at her world, I think this is an important starting point.

Rachel: During this time of crisis, where our movement is limited, where are the opportunities for advocacy and how can we bring faith actors together now?

Rev. Asir: Several years ago, the World Council of Churches explored the theme prayer as advocacy. At the core of that was that we pray, not because God does not know, we pray to let one another know that we are concerned. In our experience in India, we have found that prayer can bring people of different faiths together. Prayer itself is an important tool in advocacy. If we can bring people of different faiths together, during COVID-19 and other times, is an important starting point for advocating for gender justice.

Mandy: Prayer is so important. It is also important to utilise the current meetings that are happening during the lockdown. For example, church meetings on the local level meeting online, you can raise the issue of gender justice – what are we doing and what can we are doing? The new Domestic Abuse and COVID-19 resource suggests different ways for people to engage at this time.

Dionne: As much as we are hearing about women and girls... I am wondering if there are any examples of specific work being done with boys?

Rev. Asir: Yes, we are working with boys. We are also working with gender non-conforming children. When we talk about gender justice, we also talk beyond gender binaries. We are working on modules for teachers, as well as children, to address bullying of gender non-conforming children. The Genesis creation narrative about man and woman being made equal, is not about two characters being made

equal. It is about all of us being made male and female. I think this is one interpretation that helps us speak to boys and girls, men and women. That as men, we are made male and female. And as women, we are made male and female. We are not made as two categories, this helps us to address gender justice among men and boys.

Mandy: There is work being done in the UK, and internationally in this area of engaging boys. For example, in Burkina Faso, a church group brought together young men to discuss gender justice and theology. This resulted in some dramatic changes, where the young men / boys, started to challenge their own parents on how they treated one another. I think in a lot of places, with young people, they are very open about discussing these issues. Often, it is getting over the fear of discussing gender justice theology. A lot of people may not want to discuss it because it is contentious. When you open up that discussion, however, with young people, you find that they are often thirsty for that knowledge. Young people can be great advocates for change, to challenge the injustice in their cultures. When you give young people the information, the resources, and the tools, they can be fantastic at being real catalysts of change.

Ann-Marie: How can we advise Met Police on protection against FGM & IPV over long summer holidays here and globally as COVID is not over?

Mandy: Looking at FGM and Intimate Partner Violence, it is important to look at the entry points. In the UK, we have a law that outlaws FGM in the UK and sending people overseas to get FGM. It is pushing for the implementation for that law and working with others in the sector on this. It is important to ask the Met Police what they are doing, during this summer season and under lockdown, to ensure girls are kept safe from harm. You can write to them / lobby them, to ensure the issue is raised up. You can also engage community and faith groups to use the resources that are out there to engage on this.

Helen: I am struck by Rev Asir's comment 'who are the faith leaders?' And then how do we reach people with this issue in COVID times. When English might not be the first/ most used language, there are illiteracy issues, online is not an option for most, so many issues of intersectionality that are affecting violence in these times - how can the grassroots be heard and reached urgently in these times?

Mandy: When we were producing the Domestic Abuse and COVID-19 resource, we engaged with the Mother's Union, who have representatives all around the world. Working with the Mother's Union to consult / develop the document that they will use / have used to implement in their countries. One way of doing this is to do radio programmes on domestic violence, which can be heard by many. What is available locally? What can be used to communicate our messages? It is also about adapting the tools that you have for people in a non-literate environment, for example, using pictures to get the message across and where to access help. At the Anglican Communion we are routinely translating resources, in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. The Domestic Abuse and COVID-19 resource is also being translated into Swahili.

Rev. Asir: For faith traditions in different countries, the context may be different. For example, in India we find that a faith leader could be a Muslim woman academic. It is important to define in each context, who can provide leadership in that context. It may not be the Bishop or the priest, it may be an ordinary believer from the power that can provide that leadership. Returning to the example, Voices Against Sexual Abuse in the Churches, that voice for gender justice will never come from the hierarchy, it will only come from the pew. That is why I ask that in every context, we define who is a faith leader, a person who leads from the front, or a person who sits at the top.

Rachel: Where do you find hope in these times of crisis?

Mandy: I always think there is hope for change. For in these times of crisis, the intersectional discrimination raises its ugly head, and cannot be ignored. When it raises to the visual level, we have hope for the change. We can point out how people are being excluded, and marginalised. We can

challenge people to respond. How as we as a faith community standing alongside them and transforming their situation? In the Bible, we have the story of the Good Samaritan, we have a man who is abused, and people walk on the other side and ignore it. At this time, we can see the people who are suffering the most, and know that our job is not to ignore them but to walk alongside them and help when they are in need. Praying is important and sometimes we are that answer to prayer, where we get involved and act. There is always hope for change. Jesus is an example of a transformed man, who treated men and women with great dignity and respect.

Rev. Asir: Where do I see hope? I see hope in networking with social networks. I see hope in religion and faith being the conviction and the moving force. But the involvement comes from being part of a social movement. Particularly, in a multi-faith context, it is very clear that we can come from our own faith convictions but we must work together, as citizens of different countries, as a social political movement for change.

Resource Links Shared During the Conversation

The Role of Faith Leaders in Achieving Gender Justice, Side by Side,

<http://sidebysidegender.org/advocacy>

Thursdays in Black Campaign, World Council of Churches, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/get-involved/thursdays-in-black>

Domestic Abuse and COVID-19: How Churches can respond, Anglican Communion,

<http://aco.org/media/415112/201905-da-covid-19-churches.pdf>

God's Justice: Just Relationships between Women and Men, Girls and Boys Study Materials for use by Theological Colleges, Seminaries and Training Schemes in the Anglican Communion,

<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/348551/TEAC-Just-relationships-women-men.pdf>

First Man Standing, Restored, <http://www.firstmanstanding.com>

Ending Domestic Abuse: A Pack for Churches, Restored,

<https://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/51>

Primary School Resource, Restored, <https://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/105>

Research and Resources, 28 Too Many, <https://www.28toomany.org/research-resources>