



### BACK TO THE BASICS TO END SGBV

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#### GENESIS 1:26-31

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,<sup>[a]</sup> and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God **he created them;** male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to **them**, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

<sup>29</sup> Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.

<sup>30</sup> And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

<sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

#### INTRODUCTION

We were created in the same image and likeness of God with equal dignity and worth. Regardless of being male or female, both men and women were given, equal dignity and worth, equal power to rule and care for creation, equal possibility of using all of creation for their needs, equal responsibilities of forming and increasing their family, harmony of relationships and essentially both were very good. The life we live today shows a completely different reality than this VERY GOOD plan of God. We must therefore be deliberate in reviewing and returning to the very basics of our faith: as we were created.

#### SGBV DEMOGRAPHICS

Globally 1 in every 3 women/girls face intimate partner or non-partner SGBV<sup>1</sup> with 4 out of 10 women having undergone SGBV in sub-Saharan Africa: physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, social, and economic violence. Some of the most prevalent cases of SGBV

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialsustainability/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls>

include: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – 200 million women have gone through FGM; Domestic violence; Child Marriage and forced early marriage; Early childbearing; Human trafficking; Sexual exploitation; Rape, and attempted rape among other sexual violence acts.

Most countries globally spend 3.7% of their GDP to manage SGBV related violence. This is double what most countries spend on education. Unfortunately, 27 out of the 30 countries with the worst SGBV practices are in Africa.

It is important to note that SGBV does not respect boundaries, nations, social status, gender or even religion. It is seen in the lives of all sorts of people regardless of their backgrounds. Thus, the rich and poor, women and men, boys and girls, literate and illiterate, Persons with Disabilities and those without, suffer in the same way and magnitude, even though demographics show women and girls as the worst hit. Therefore, this agenda is an entire society agenda.

### **SBGV DURING COVID-19**

During the COVID-19 period we have also seen a rise in SGBV. More so, this increase is seen in domestic violence. Being with your family should be the safest you can get, but NO it is not, as things stand. Husband and wife having more time together should help the families be stronger, now it is the opposite. At this rate, we may end up discouraging even honeymoons after weddings in the future, due to the fear of the violence that may happen when two intimate partners stay in the same room alone.

### **WHY THE INCREASE?**

Africa is one of the most religious of continents, but still with very high SGBV? PEW FORUM Demographics indicate that we are 63% Christians, 31% Muslim, 4% Traditional faiths and others 2%. By 2050 Africa shall be the leading continent in Christianity globally; having 1.1 billion Christians double what we have currently; 550 million, with Islam being projected to move from the current 250 million to 670 million at the same time. While more people are becoming religious, and more so joining the religions of peace, why are we failing even more into violence? We still have many religious leaders and adherents being involved in SGBV. Women and girls are still the most religious of all, yet they are the most affected? Do we teach water and drink wine?

A lot of traditional cultures are being revived, which is positive and negative at the same time. As religious leaders during this decolonial era, we must review and revise our strategy of handling culture. Our strategy as faith leaders from the colonial period has mainly been to reject culture outrightly, while some few churches accepted culture holistically. It was such which made many Christians in Africa dualists (having two parallel religions in their lives). At this period of the revival of traditions and cultures, this group of dualists is growing even bigger. We must therefore critically review culture

and embrace what is good in it and reject what is not, in that way those Christians that desire to continue with the good in their culture will know what is acceptable and what is not, and this will eliminate the dualist and syncretistic that end up bringing violent tendencies in society

Families are the cornerstone of our society and religions, thus when we have violence in such a holy and important institution as a family, then we are in grave danger of the collapse of our society. Our children are learning very well from us – because SGBV is increasing not decreasing. They seem to carry over our violent histories and “legacies”. We need to change how we live as a people and end the inbred violence. The violent experiences of our children, seen by children when their parents are involved in SGBV is transmitted to them and future generations. We must put a stop to this trend

We must also teach against misguided theologies and misguided cultural trends that help continue the sexual and gender-based violence in our homes. Many use scripture to teach how: Men/boys are superior to women/girls, ignoring that God offered both equal dignity and worth, others teach that Men are like God, ignoring that God created both in His image and likeness. All these areas must be retaught not just in theological institutions and among the practising clergy, but also at homes.

## **ACTION POINTS**

The Faiths have several action points

- ◆ A calling and the ability to help those who are vulnerable or oppressed. Teach people to come out and report their violent experiences. Keep teaching about the equity of men and women from creation and also practice the same in the religious leadership.
- ◆ Push for the formulation of legislation that deals harshly with offenders in your country
- ◆ Rescue and offer solace for all survivors
- ◆ A responsibility to decolonize our cultures. Most African cultures were very respectful of women before colonialism. The violent part is actually foreign to our cultures, but we are still stuck in such colonial mentality. After colonialism some of cultures seem to have excessively taken violence on women and girls, who they consider second class humans, to another level. We must teach that culture evolves, and endeavour to also take what is good in the local cultures, so that we can contextualize and transform our society using them, while taking the lead in disbanding the wrongs in our cultures and showing what is wrong and detrimental about it.
- ◆ Sensitize and guide society on the best way to live. Teach and create forums that insists that SGBV is not just evil, and a human right issue, but also, a sin and an ill intended agenda to erase the original plan of God for how men and women, boys and girls should live in this world

- ◆ Equally sensitize men and boys, informing them that SGBV is an issue to them too. The reason most men and boys are perpetrators is because not many were taught that the power the patriarchal society gave them doesn't belong to them.
- ◆ Preach continuously on gender justice and more so on SGBV, which is a real issue in the field. Do it at this period of the 16 Days of Gender activism and also beyond it. Don't stop until you see change in your local church, parish, deanery, bishopric, Archdiocese etc. Make SGBV a part of your sermon, mention something about it every time and people will see it is a serious issue

## CONCLUSION

We must go back to the basics and review what we teach, what we taught and what we have been taught about men and women. The holy books of our faiths show God's original plan was for equity and harmony among men and women, boys and girls. With time, we have been shaped by our cultures and contexts and have highly gone off what God original put in place. We must be deliberate about teaching that original dignity, equity, harmony of relations, equity of forming families and power over creations. We must seek for a more sustainable approach of handling SGBV. Thus, the need for continuous sensitization during and beyond the 16 Days of Gender activism

We must offer our resources to help collect data and evidence on what works to identify, prevent, mitigate and respond to SGBV. Create safe spaces for rescue and care services towards survivors, children, women, girls, men and boys. Push for laws on SGBV – only 22 countries of Africa had some SGBV laws by last year. Critically review our understanding of the local cultures and choose to use that which can be useful in our fight against SGBV. Sensitize and bring more men on the fight against SGBV, making them champions of this God given justice and equity.

## LAUNCH OF 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

The theme of the launch: **“Impact of Covid-19 on Gender Justice and Child Protection:**

**Action by Faith Actors During and Beyond the Pandemic.”**

Global theme : **“From Awareness to Action.”**



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