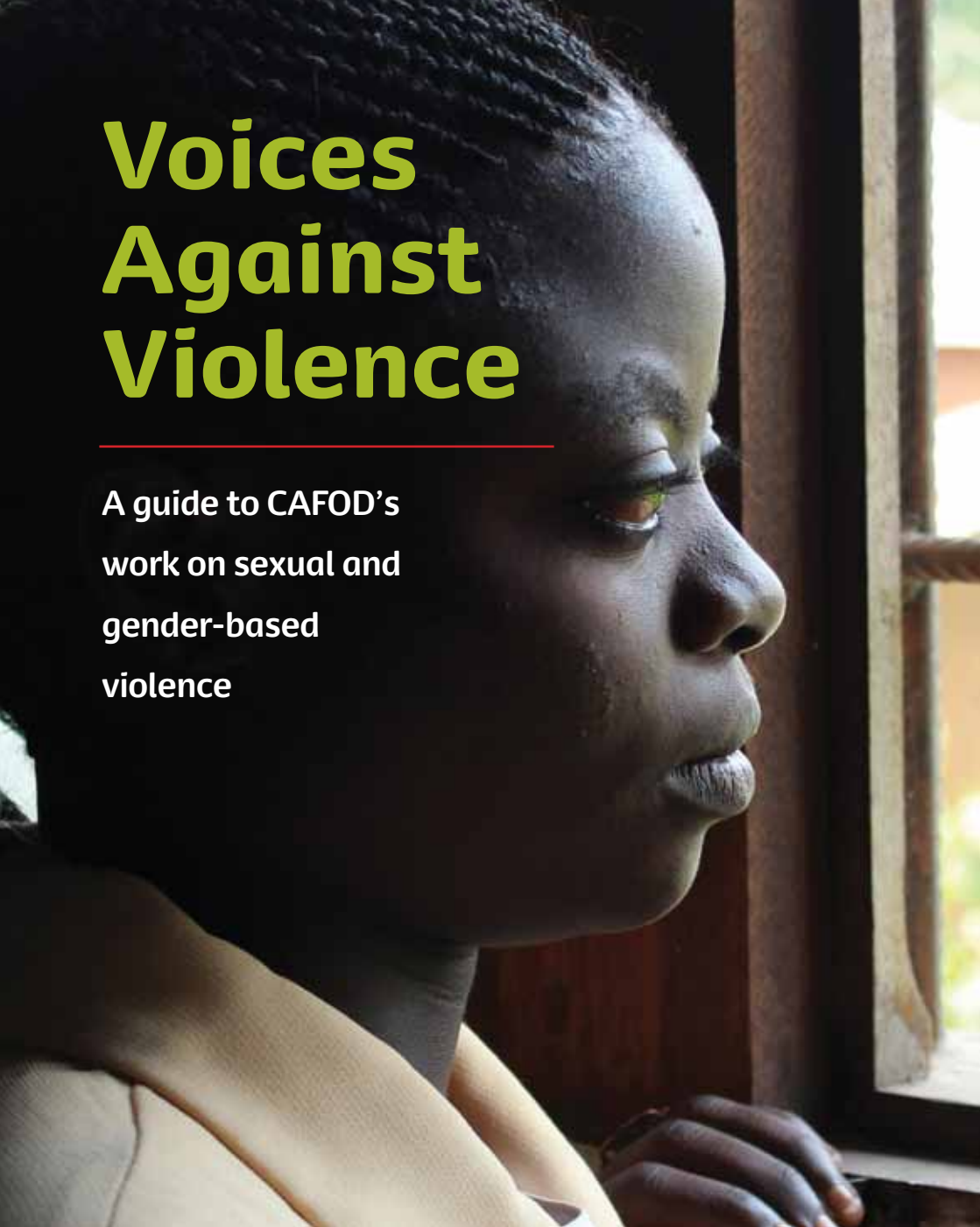


Voices Against Violence

A guide to CAFOD's
work on sexual and
gender-based
violence



CAFOD's work on gender-based violence (GBV)

CAFOD sees violence against women and girls as a violation of human rights.

Our partner organisations respond internationally in a variety of ways:

- Providing support to survivors: medical care, safe spaces, counselling, legal assistance
- Working with leaders in the Church
- Influencing community attitudes and behaviours around harmful cultural practices
- Awareness-raising with the community
- Reducing vulnerability of adolescent girls who are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation
- Working with male perpetrators
- Increasing access to justice by training paralegals and police
- Ensuring protection from sexual and gender violence is considered in our humanitarian responses
- Advocating for national and international responses to gender violence by working with the UK Department for International Development (DFID), stakeholders such as the Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) and our networks (eg Gender and Development Network)

Over the next few pages we will be sharing the voices of women and men who are working to end sexual and gender-based violence, and the voices of survivors.

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Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| International statistics | 5 |
| Map | 12 |
| Case studies: | |
| Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Safe spaces for survivors | 6 |
| Malawi: Working with the Church to promote women's and girls' rights | 8 |
| Kenya: Working to eradicate female genital mutilation | 10 |
| Lebanon: Changing men's attitudes | 14 |
| Nicaragua: Supporting survivors of sexual exploitation | 16 |
| Cambodia: Working with male perpetrators | 18 |
| Guatemala: A voice for indigenous communities | 20 |
| International advocacy: Violence against women and girls during conflict | 22 |
| Our networks | 24 |

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

25 November - 10 December

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign calls for the elimination of all forms of violence against women through raising awareness about gender-based violence (GBV) as a human rights issue.



The dates were deliberately chosen to symbolically link violence against women and human rights and to emphasise that such violence is a violation of human rights. The campaign starts on 25 November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and ends on 10 December, International Human Rights Day. This 16-day period also highlights other significant dates including 1 December, World AIDS Day. 25 November was declared as a day against violence against women by the first Feminist Encuentro for Latin America and the Caribbean held in Bogota, Colombia in 1981. It originally marked the day that the three Mirabal sisters from the Dominican Republic were violently assassinated in 1960 during the Trujillo dictatorship.

Understanding gender based-violence

The *UN Beijing Platform of Action* defines GBV as physical, sexual and psychological violence. Gender violence not only occurs within the family but often extended family and the general community. It can also be committed by the police, the military, state officials and immigration authorities and even UN peace keepers.

Often violence of this nature is understood as an issue that only affects women. The term GBV goes beyond that. Firstly, men are also affected by violence. Secondly, the term deliberately shifts the focus from women and their role as victims towards existing unequal relations and predominately power relations. In order to stop gender-based violence there is a need to work with women and men.

Statistics

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

UN agencies estimate that at least 200,000 women have been raped in DRC since 1998. (United Nations 2013)

Malawi

It is estimated that half of the girls in Malawi will be married before the age of 18, with some as young as 9 or 10 forced to marry. (Human Rights Watch 2014)

Kenya

In Kenya, 27 per cent of girls and women aged 15-49 years have undergone female genital mutilation, despite 86 per cent of Kenyan girls and women opposed to this practice. (UNICEF 2013)

Lebanon

An estimated 75 per cent of Lebanese women have experienced domestic violence at some point in their lives. (United Nations 2009)

Nicaragua

The prevalence rate of violence against women in Nicaragua is as high as 52 per cent. (World Health Organisation (WHO) 2013)

Cambodia

In Cambodia 22.5 per cent of married women experience domestic violence, and close to 90 per cent do not report it. (UN Women 2011)

Guatemala

Seven out of ten indigenous girls and boys suffer some type of abuse as a result of domestic violence, with three times more sexual abuse against girls than boys. (UNICEF 2008)

Safe spaces for survivors

CAFOD's partner organisation the **Justice and Peace Commission (CDJP)** in Bukavu, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, works with survivors of rape in an area ravaged by conflict. Sexual violence has become a weapon of war and most cases are committed by armed men. CDJP support women who have not only been subjected to horrendous abuse but then have to watch the perpetrators move freely in their villages, untouched by legal consequences. Often women and children are abandoned by their husbands and families, who blame the women for being raped. And children born of rape are frequently ostracised by their community and denied an education.

CDJP run several 'listening centres' which provide counselling and group support to survivors of sexual violence – services which they otherwise may never receive. As well as initial support in the aftermath of an attack, CDJP provides lawyers for people who wouldn't normally be able to pay for legal support. They also offer family mediation and help survivors to set up activities so they can earn an income. But the Church's work alone is not enough. Most cases they refer to hospital never reach the courts. They need the support of the political and legal authorities to make sure that survivors are protected and are able to seek justice.

Thérèse Mema Mapenzi works for CDJP in Bukavu, eastern DRC, and discusses the harsh reality faced by women who have been raped:

“For a woman to manage to say that she has been raped is a work that takes a lot of time. Many women hide themselves for fear of being stigmatised by members of the community”

The work of CDJP is healing the physical and psychological wounds of war and allowing women and children to return to their families and communities. Further international support is needed to improve accountability and integrate sexual and gender-based violence initiatives into peace and security efforts.



Feza from
Mwanda,
Bukavu



“Two men raped me in front of my husband. I was taken to the forest and for three days I was raped by many men. Take our stories and tell everyone what is happening here. The world thinks it knows—but it doesn’t know. This isn’t a story of the war, this is our lives now. If the world is bored with the story then they have forgotten how to be human.”

Malawi

Working with the Church

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world with 74 per cent of the population living in poverty and women and young people continually excluded from decision-making processes. This, combined with a strong sense of traditional roles for women and men and their lack of confidence to express their needs and interests, means women's views are often disregarded.

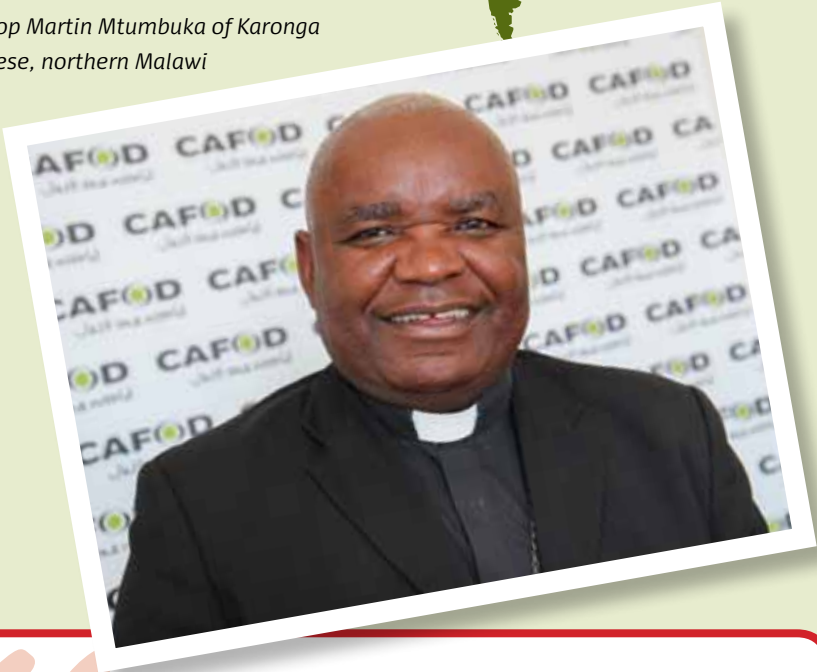
In the remote Diocese of Karonga in Northern Malawi, Bishop Martin Mtumbuka is leading a project by the **Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP)** to promote the rights of women and girls. The remoteness of Karonga is highlighted by the lack of road access, schools, hospitals and state structures; and a recent survey commissioned by CCJP identified frequent violations of women and girls' rights including rape and sexual abuse of children.

Child marriage is common in both rural and urban areas in Malawi, ranking eighth of the 20 countries that are considered to have the highest rates of child marriage by the UNFPA, and nearly half of girls are married before their eighteenth birthday. Child and forced marriage are deeply entrenched in Malawi's traditions, including Karonga, yet adolescent pregnancy is stigmatised. When traditional leaders learn of a teenage pregnancy they convince the girl her only option is to marry. Bishop Martin is in contact with traditional leaders to use every means possible to deal with these issues:

“Within the Church we appeal to their conscience and we work with young people and women's groups. But we are also working with state institutions so that if people don't listen to their conscience then the state mechanism will deal with the problem”

Karonga CCJP is working closely with 20 traditional and religious leaders and parish justice and peace committee members; training them in human rights with a focus on women and girls and equipping them with the knowledge of what to do if their rights are violated.

Bishop Martin Mtumbuka of Karonga diocese, northern Malawi



“In the Diocese of Karonga we are facing many challenges in respect to gender equality. One of the practices is where a poor family can give away their daughter to a man in exchange for food and money. The girl might be six years old yet the man still has a right of access to her as a wife. They don’t give away their son, it is usually their daughter.”

Kenya

Working to eradicate female genital mutilation

Some three million women and girls face female genital mutilation (FGM) every year while 100-140 million have already undergone the practice. FGM is a form of gender violence largely prevalent in pastoralist communities in Kenya. It is practised despite its harmful side effects which include profuse bleeding, shock, acute urine retention, HIV infections, ectopic pregnancies, recurrent urinary tract infections and often early and forced marriage resultant of a girl's transition into 'womanhood' post-procedure.

The organisation Gender Environmental and Sustainable Development (GESD) has been supporting Church partners to promote gender equality within their programmes and practices. **Caritas Maralal**, CAFOD's partner in the Catholic Diocese of Maralal, north west Kenya, runs projects in this region where FGM is a stipulated rite of passage for women and girls. The gender desk of the Church ensures that gender issues are addressed in every project implemented in Samburu County. In addition; staff and policy makers have been trained on the harmful side effects of FGM. In each and every community training session there is a compulsory component on gender violence. This has helped to increase awareness of this detrimental practice.

In Suguta Mar Mar Parish, located 42kms away from Samburu County headquarters, the Catholic Church has a girls' education and rescue centre, accommodating girls who are survivors of FGM, forced marriages and other forms of GBV to find shelter there. They also provide counselling as the girls get separated from their families upon fleeing their homes.

Caritas Maralal is also using media tools, including the internet and community radio to inform women and men about the negative effects of FGM.

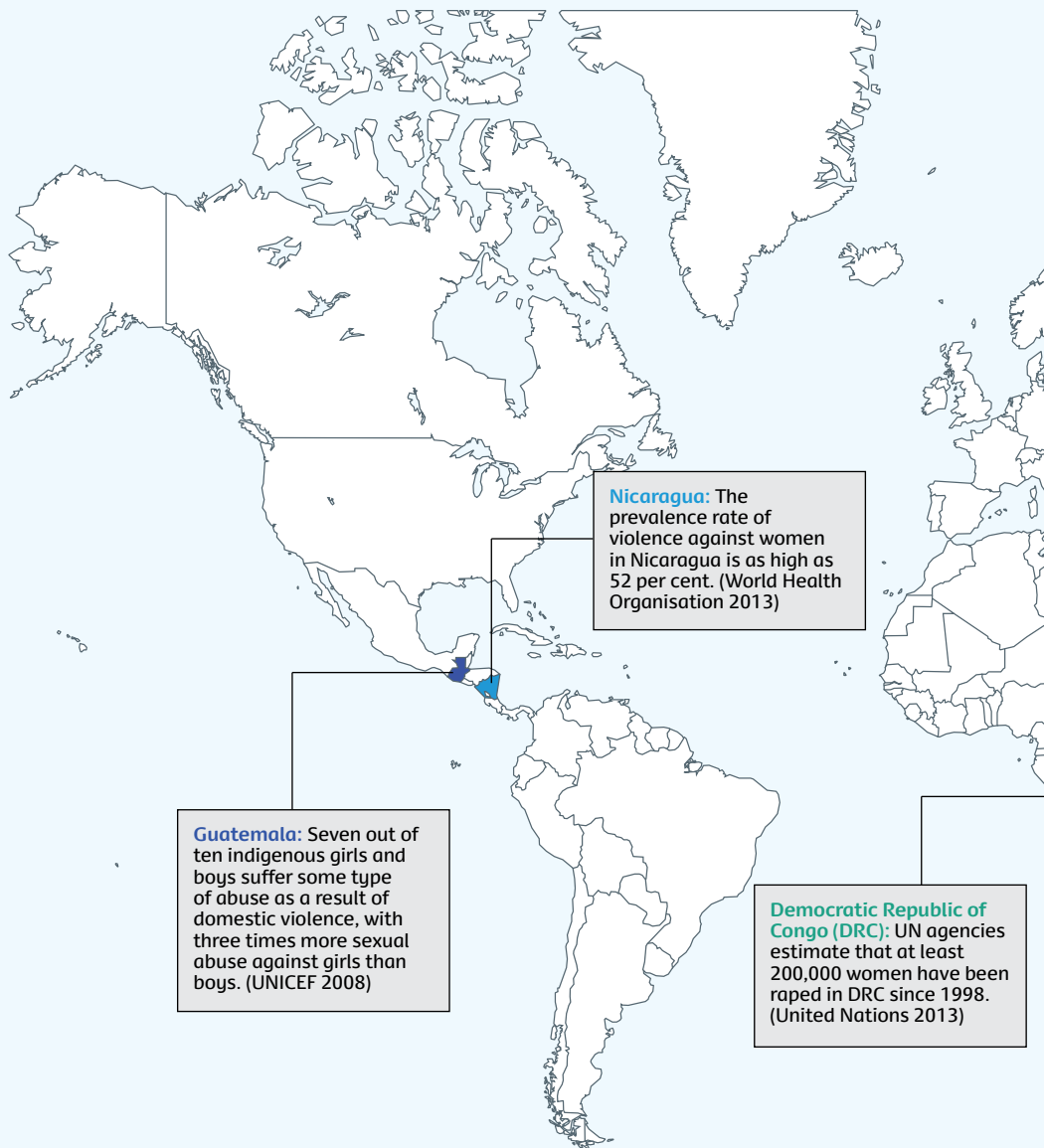
Survivors of FGM have to live with the effects every day of their lives

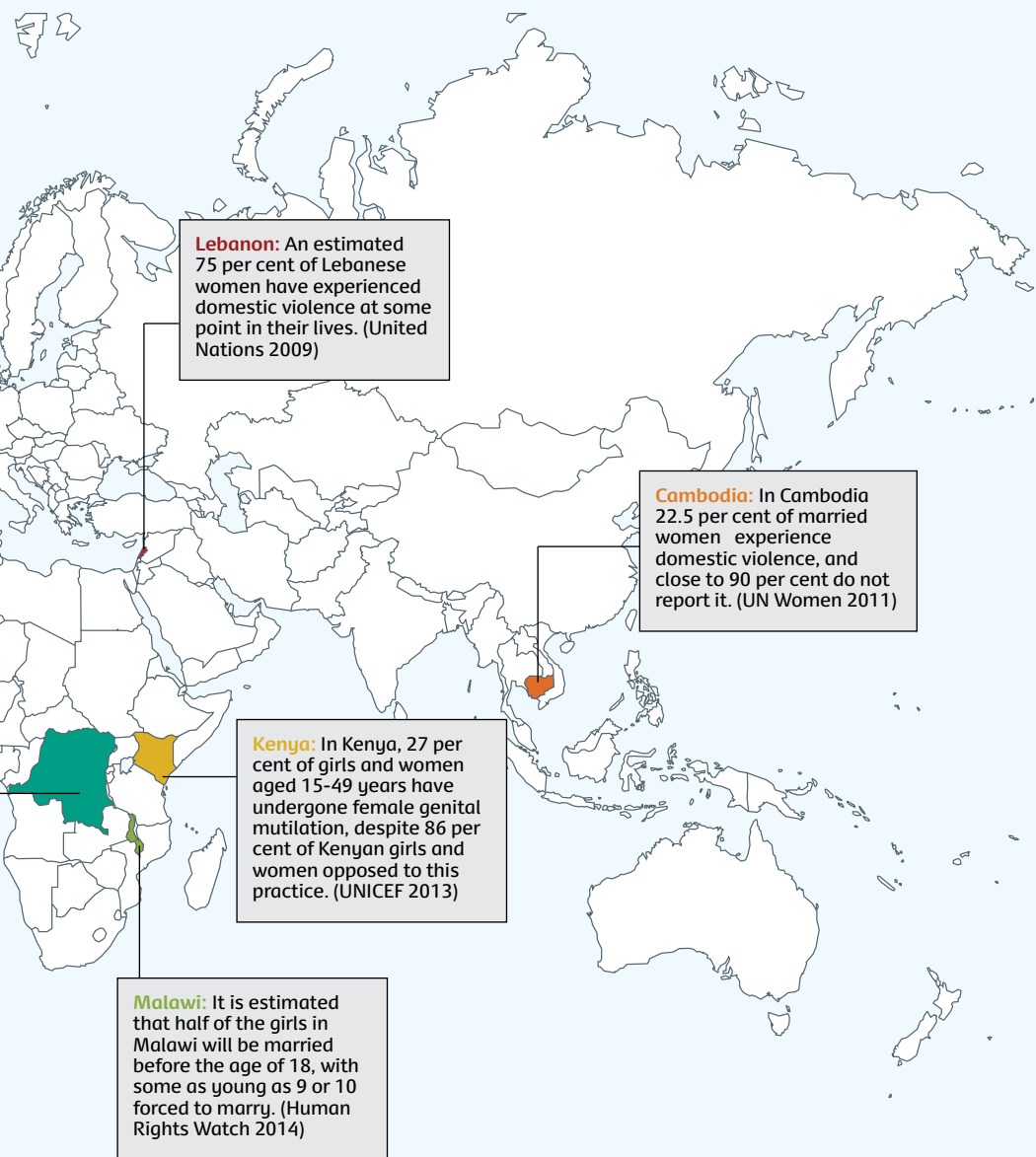


“We work towards the eradication of FGM by supporting women to enter leadership positions in community projects; by training women, men, girls and boys on the negative effects of FMG; by liaising with the Kenya anti-FGM board and by enabling men to become agents of gender-based violence response and prevention.”

Espila Lucy, gender focal person for Caritas Maralal

Extent of sexual and gender violence worldwide





Lebanon

Changing men's attitudes

Although many Palestinians were born in Lebanon, they are classed as 'foreigners' despite making up almost 10 per cent (400,000) of the country's population. As such have no access to the Lebanese social security system and very little access to public health and education services. As refugees in Lebanon, Palestinian women are denied their civil rights and protection and are facing triple discrimination as Palestinians, refugees and women. Unemployment, poverty and overcrowding in the refugee camps have contributed to high levels of domestic violence and almost a quarter of women in the camps have been beaten by their husbands.

Association Najdeh (AN), founded in 1976 and a partner of CAFOD for more than 20 years, is a Palestinian NGO who run a number of centres across all Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. They aim to reduce levels of domestic violence through innovative initiatives including training women for leadership and supporting women facing domestic violence through legal support and counselling for women and girls who are affected.

The association puts on interactive theatre shows which provide a safe environment for women and men to discuss issues including women's rights and taboo subjects such as domestic violence, encouraging the idea that women and men are equal. A young man explained:

"I started thinking, what if this happened to my mother or sisters?"

Change is not easy in such conservative settings - women used to hide the fact that they were going to the centre from their husbands. But now there are some husbands actually encouraging their wives to go together. Whilst audiences are still largely attended by women, over 200 men have participated in the interactive theatre shows so far. Leila el Ali, director of AN, says:

"My message to you is this: we don't want to fight you. We don't want to take any authority from you - in fact we don't want to take anything that belongs to you. What we want is to have our space, play our role as women and to equally share the responsibilities of private and public life"



Educating the community through interactive theatre productions

“I want everybody to watch the shows because they deal with women’s problems and in our society women have no rights at all. I try to share what I learn from the shows with neighbours and friends. We still live in a very conservative society, but we have to change. I see many boys hitting their sisters. I want them to see the shows and learn from them like I did and change their behaviour.”

Ahmad; 17-year-old interactive theatre attendee

Nicaragua

Supporting survivors of sexual exploitation

León is the second largest city in Nicaragua and has high levels of poverty, unemployment and underemployment. Girls, adolescents and young women from poor families are particularly vulnerable as many come from broken homes where domestic and sexual violence is common. Between 1998 and 2008 more than 14,000 cases of sexual abuse were reported with two thirds of the victims under the age of 17. Many leave home at an early age and work in the markets where they are easily taken advantage of and at risk of commercial sexual exploitation and prostitution.

Our partner, the association **Mary Barreda**, a Christian-inspired organisation based in León, work on institutional issues including child labour, prostitution, sexual abuse and domestic violence. Their overall aim of reducing levels of vulnerability faced by girls and adolescents who are exposed to commercial sexual exploitation and young and adult women in public situations of prostitution in León.

Mary Barreda works with young and adult women in many ways. They have a clinic where sex workers receive a medical revision every three months. They take a holistic approach to helping adolescents escape situations of exploitation, including workshops, training and prevention work in collaboration with promoters who work with schools on issues such as HIV and AIDS, gender equality and violence.

Mary Barreda also works with other key actors, including the police force, equipping them to effectively guarantee the security and protection of women and girls. They arrange meetings between the police and different vulnerable groups, and run six training sessions per year with different levels within the police.

Today Mary Barreda also works with the husbands, sons, step-fathers and men in general, because the struggle for rights and dignity “belongs to everyone” (founder of Mary Barreda). Their work with women and girls at risk of sexual exploitation also involves the girls’ mothers, and together they try to find ways to think of alternatives to get them away from sexual exploitation.



Adolescents taking part in an educational workshop



“

“We stimulate their capacity to make decisions and we insist that they have dignity as children of God, and that gives them strength.”

Mercedes Toruño; former director and founder of Mary Barreda

”

Cambodia

Working with male perpetrators

Cambodia is a country where domestic violence is common, with more than 1 in 5 married women aged between 15-49 having reported violence against them with many cases still left unreported. In a male dominated society, women are often afraid to stand up and make their voices heard.

Over the last ten years our partner **Banteay Srei** have been working to change this. They work towards empowering women to provide a stronger community, better support for women affected by violence and offer protection and education to those who need it.

Banteay Srei also encourage men's participation in addressing gender-based violence through the establishment of 'Gender and Peace Networks' (GPN); a network of female and male volunteers who are given training to work with others in reducing violence and helping to secure a peaceful environment.

Mr Panha is a GPN volunteer in his village and is trained to assist women and the perpetrator of violence. He supported a husband, Sintee, who used to hurt his wife and children after excessive drinking. After a year of support, Sintee is living in peace with his family and is helping other friends who were in the same position as him, guiding them to stop drinking:

"Today I see that my family is happy. I feel recognised and accepted by the community that I have changed and I am now working to build a strong relationship with my family"

Banteay Srei also offers security to women affected by violence by providing a safe house for women seeking refuge from violence, rape and human trafficking. They provide the essential shelter and protection the women need and continue to support them when they return home to ensure their safety and health are maintained.



Hai Hean (right), a member of the local government and trained in women's rights visits a family affected by domestic violence

“It is not common for men to get involved in women’s rights issues such as domestic violence. Before Banteay Srei introduced this project men were not respectful of women. Domestic violence was a problem and women did not leave their homes much.”

Guatemala

A voice for indigenous communities

Guatemala is one of the most unequal societies in the world. Fifty-one per cent of the total population are living in poverty, particularly in rural areas, and illiteracy, infant mortality and malnutrition rates are high.

For indigenous communities the situation is even worse. Deeply engrained discrimination against them means that their culture and ethnic identity are constantly threatened, and they have very limited access to economic opportunities. In addition, when they suffer violence or crime they cannot turn to the authorities because they do not speak Spanish.

CAFOD's partner, **Pastoral Social - Caritas Verapaz**, works alongside girls, boys, women and men to give information and training on human rights including indigenous peoples' rights, gender issues including violence against women, and HIV. With this training people can raise their self-esteem and gain confidence. It gives them the courage to go to authorities and report violations to their human rights; and Pastoral Social - Caritas Verapaz staff accompany them to serve as translators and to give them moral support and strength. One woman said:

"Now I have self-esteem, I can speak out".

In a country such as Guatemala, where racism and discrimination against indigenous women and men is prevalent, the type of work Pastoral Social - Caritas Verapaz is doing is vital. They are a well known organisation and because they are active in several local and national networks and platforms, public officials open the doors to them and treat people accompanied by them with more respect.

For anyone who has suffered a rape or other sexual attack, speaking out can be one of the hardest things to do. But for people who are already vulnerable, mistrustful of the authorities or already know they will not be heard because they are poor and indigenous, it is almost impossible. That is why Pastoral Social - Caritas Verapaz's work is crucial: they really are a voice for the voiceless.



Mayan indigenous women participating in a human rights workshop run by CAFOD's partner, Pastoral Social - Caritas Verapaz



“Can you imagine being in a place where you are raped and afraid of authorities who don't speak your language? This is what happens in Verapaz where many indigenous women and men are not accessing public services which are in Spanish”

**Montserrat Fernández Piñón; CAFOD programme officer
-Central America**

International advocacy

Violence against women and girls during conflict

Violence against women and girls is recognised as a significant human rights, global health and security issue. Sexual violence in conflict situations destroys lives and damages communities.

Following the civil war between 1996-2003, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has struggled to re-establish its authority, leading to an increase in many foreign and local armed groups. These groups, as well as the national army, are known for their human rights abuses including torture and sexual violence against women and girls.

CAFOD has been working in the DRC for 18 years with local partners throughout the country. One project has been training ‘protection monitors’, like Francois, in eastern DRC to raise awareness of the issues with the community and to provide specific support to survivors of sexual and gender violence. Francois now takes part in a radio broadcast twice a week, along with guest experts, where he helps to answer questions posed by listeners calling into the show:

“Where can I go for help? What can I do to protect my daughter? What kind of reactions can I expect from my child who has been attacked?”

The radio broadcast is a tool which has a huge impact in a country so vast and remote; and with the help of CAFOD’s partner it is encouraging people to call in and seek the help they need.

As well as supporting affected communities, CAFOD is working in networks such as the We Will Speak Out coalition to ensure that the voices and experiences of faith-based organisations are heard at national and international levels. Coalition members attended the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in 2014 to call on governments and international policy makers to tackle the underlying causes that drive the conflict in DRC and end impunity for rape as a weapon of war.



Francois, a trained protection monitor, takes part in a radio show addressing issues of sexual and gender violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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“People call from far and wide. We’re really getting this difficult topic out in the public domain.”

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Your support is vital to help us stop violence against women and girls.

Next steps

Visit cafod.org.uk/gender to find:

- more articles about our work to promote gender equality
 - prayers and reflections
 - all our downloadable gender resources
-

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