

MASCULINITIES, FAITH AND ENDING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

RWANDA SUMMARY REPORT

Tearfund is a Christian relief and development agency building a global network of local churches to help eradicate poverty.

Tearfund has 10 years' experience working through church-based partners in the response to sexual violence.

Tearfund is a founding member of We Will Speak Out, a coalition of faith-based groups, international aid agencies and individuals committed to see the end of SV in communities worldwide.



www.wewillpeakout.org

Tearfund would like to acknowledge the Anglican Diocese of Kigali and Gasabo, who helped facilitate this research.



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This summary report is based on research commissioned by Tearfund's HIV and SV Unit and conducted by Technical Advisor Prabu Deepan.

For the full report visit:
www.tearfund.org/sexualviolence

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TRANSFORMING MASCULINITIES

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is one of the most frequent forms of violence worldwide.

It is estimated that one in every three women or girls will experience violence in their lifetime¹ – commonly at the hands of someone they know.

Globally, this affects 1 billion people.

Tearfund believes that this is one of the most damaging problems within societies across the world.

It has been working for more than ten years on the issue.

To date, many government and civil society development programmes have focused on raising awareness of the issue and empowering and advocating for the rights of women, girls and SGBV survivors.

Yet what has been lacking is engagement with men and boys, who are the main perpetrators of violence, and sometimes they are victims themselves.

Rather than excluding them from strategies to end SGBV, Tearfund calls on the church and other agencies to work with men and boys as part of the solution – to re-envision manhood in order to break the cycle.

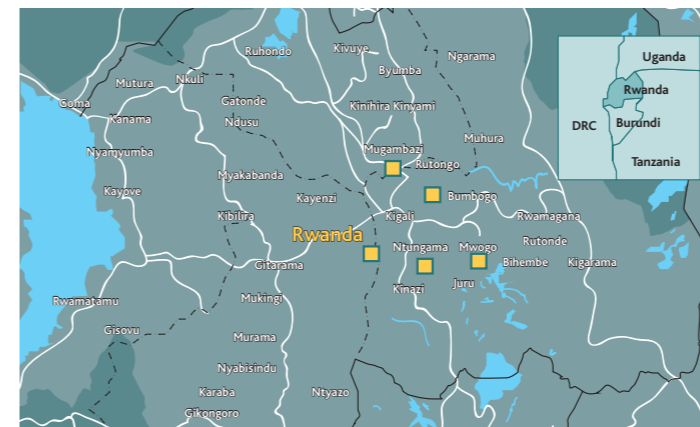
If we are to uproot SGBV, it is imperative that we understand the broader dynamics of gender and triggers of violence.

We need to examine male identities and roles; address their experiences of becoming a man, their experiences of trauma and violence within the family and their vulnerabilities in an evolving social environment.

We must examine aspects of the harmful historical and traditional values, behaviours and knowledge that have influenced society and allowed SGBV to breed within communities. This will serve both genders and is a crucial component of intervention programming if we are to succeed in ending SGBV.

¹ Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence (2013) WHO

Community parishes who participated in the study.



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RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Rwanda is located in the Great Lakes Region in Africa and shares its borders with Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Since its independence in 1962, it has faced many cycles of violence, the most notorious being the 1994 genocide that claimed millions of lives and left the country destroyed.

Today, with the help of the international community and progressive policies, post-genocide Rwanda has moved beyond its brutal past, to a place of stability and growth.

Compared to other countries in the region, the Rwandan government has heeded the evidence and has both a law to prevent and punish gender-based violence and a national strategic plan to end it.

Tearfund has been working with the local church addressing the issue of SGBV since 2011. Together, we are committed to being a catalyst in ending all forms of violence against women and girls and acknowledge the positive role men and boys can play in restoring society and redeeming manhood.

- 31 per cent of women reported to be victims of physical violence
- an average of eight women and/or girls were raped every day in Rwanda; 80 per cent of those were 18 years old or under

Sources: National Strategic Plan Rwanda 2011-2016, pp.4; Rwandan police 2005; Report on Masculinity and Gender-Based Violence in Rwanda, RWAMREC, MenEngage, & ICRW 2010.

During August and September 2013 a study into men, faith and masculinities was conducted within five parishes of the Anglican Diocese of Kigali: Rutongo, Bumbogo, Mwogo, Bihembe and Ntunga.

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to ascertain the social attitudes, practices and behaviours and biblical understanding of men and women. A total of 391 people were interviewed through 10 group surveys and 15 focus-group discussions.

Study objectives

- To make available a baseline study of existing attitudes, knowledge and practices of men and women around the following themes: male identity, gender roles, manhood, gender relations and SGBV.
- To further understand the context where acts of violence occur and why.
- To provide a safe space for men and boys to articulate their own experiences of violence.
- To design effective programmes to engage men and boys in the response to end SGBV.
- To challenge and equip the church to promote equitable, caring, non-violent relationships and positive masculinities.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Although it is positive to find an understanding among participants that holding on to strict gendered roles is harmful for everyone, the survey-based results often differed greatly from those voiced in face-to-face discussions.

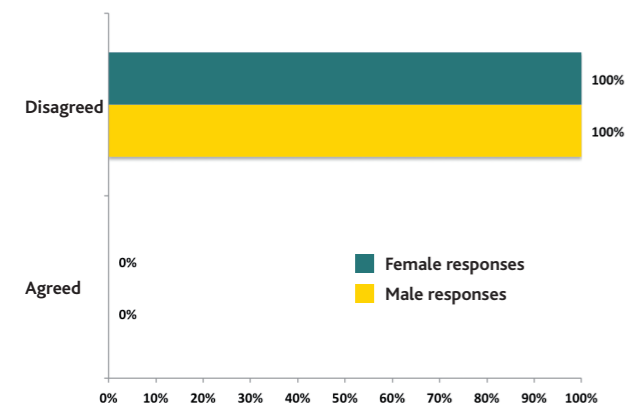
This highlights the grip that taboos have within Rwandan culture, making it difficult for people to share the truth publicly about sensitive issues, such as violence within the home and community.

Here are the key research findings.

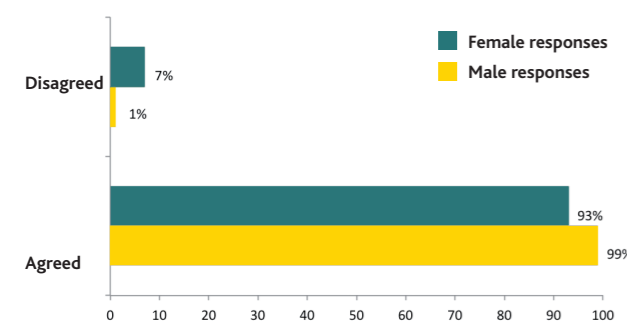
Gendered roles and attitudes

1. Men and women held strong attitudes on gendered roles, which was reinforced by their misinterpretation of scripture. These culturally-prescribed roles caused frustration at home and in the community, and affected family relationships.
2. Participants agreed that holding on to strict unequal gendered roles was harmful to everyone's well-being.
3. Almost 100 per cent of women thought their key role was to take care of the home and cooking, yet 39 per cent of men disagreed and expressed more open-minded attitudes.
4. Almost all people agreed that being a man means providing for your family and extended family economically, which was burdening men when they could not fulfil this role.
5. 100 per cent of men surveyed disagreed that there was a time when a women deserved to be beaten, and yet in face-to-face discussions had the opposite view and said they needed to be corrected.
6. An overwhelming majority of both men and women agreed that it is manly to defend the honour of the family, even with violence.

There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten



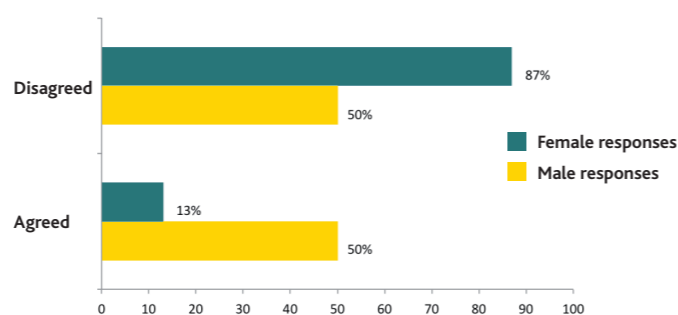
To be a man means providing for your family and your extended family



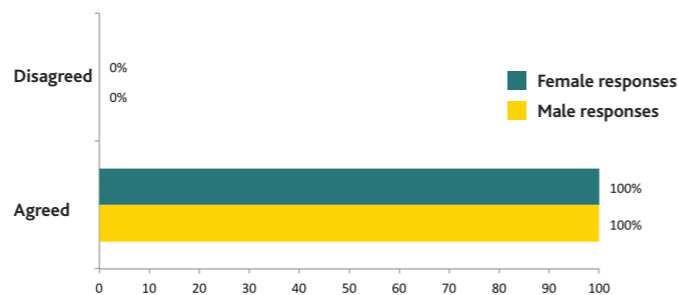
Decision making and domestic duties

1. All participants agreed that women should obey their husbands.
2. However most women (87 per cent) did not think a man should have the final say in family matters.
3. On paper most men and women indicated that a woman can refuse sex with her husband and yet in discussions had the opposite view and said it was a biblical duty.
4. Decisions concerning women's health, children's education, financial investments and household expenses were made solely by men.
5. 95 per cent of men said they had the final say about decisions involving children such as schooling.
6. However men were rarely involved in household chores or taking care of the children.

I think that a man should have the final say in all family matters



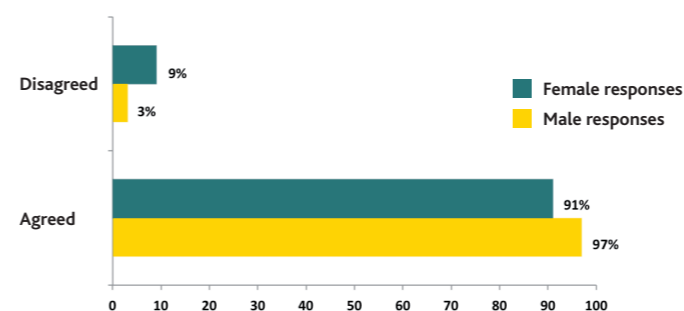
I think that a woman should obey her husband



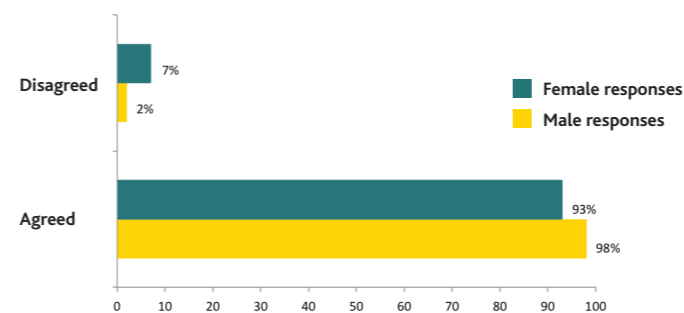
Violence, manhood and SGBV

1. Most people agreed that a woman is still not consenting to sex if she doesn't physically fight back.
2. However almost all those surveyed thought that a woman asked to be raped by the way she dressed and behaved.
3. Some men believed that there were times when they needed to discipline their wives in order to control or correct them.
4. Most men felt that a woman cannot be raped by her husband because he is entitled to her body through marriage and biblical teachings.
5. There were contradicting responses around victimization and blame – all agreeing that women asked to be raped by the way they dressed and yet disagreeing with the statement: if a women is raped she is usually to blame for putting herself in the situation.
6. Most men and women believed it is acceptable for men to use violence to defend the honour of the family.

I think that some women ask to be raped by the way they dress and behave



It is manly to defend the honour of your family even by violent means



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the aftermath of the genocide, the church in Rwanda has faced extreme criticism from diverse groups – accused of failing to effectively oppose the genocide and of complicity in the violence.

As an institution and with its vast resources and power, the church continues to be influential on the policies and governance of Rwanda. But it is clear that the church has some urgent work to do to restore a correct biblical understanding of manhood and equality in relationships.

Today, in the discussions with several activists and pastors, it is evident that the church is ashamed of its past silence and is in the process of reinventing itself – committing to ending SGBV is one way to show it has changed.

For a full list of recommendations for the way forward, please see Chapter Six of the research report.

Breaking the silence

The church needs to openly denounce and reject the normalization of violence under any circumstances, and break the stigma associated with the victims of violence. This will encourage victims to speak out and have the courage to pursue justice through the courts.

Awareness and education

- From a sound biblical perspective, there need to be facilitated discussions in the church and community on gender relations, gender equality and positive standards for being a man.
- There needs to be pre- and post-marriage counselling for couples on equitable and non-violent relationships as well as the promotion of existing laws, policies and services related to SGBV.

Leadership

- Church leadership, at all levels, needs to promote positive leadership models and Christlike characteristics – to challenge the dominating, controlling and violent leadership that has previously been exhibited by men in church, community or business settings.
- Church leaders need to show commitment to uphold the law of the land, and promote good practices and principles in dealing with survivors of SGBV, even accompanying them through court trials.

Safe spaces

- Leaders need to break the stigma around victimization and change the focus from the victim to the perpetrator. This has to be demonstrated from the pulpit and within private spaces when counselling.
- We need to provide safe spaces for men, women and children to heal from their own traumatic experiences of violence, and to offer psychosocial support.

Partnerships

- The church is perfectly placed to address the issue of SGBV in rich and poor, and rural and urban communities. It needs to promote a coordinated and uniform response by churches in Rwanda and explore interfaith dialogues in an effort to end SGBV.
- Locally and nationally, church leadership must also engage in joint advocacy efforts, adding its voice to others' campaigns and working collaboratively with other agencies to save resources and increase impact.
- The church needs to work in partnership with other organisations working on SGBV- related prevention, response, care and support services, to address this issue efficiently and holistically.

Tearfund believes that the church should always be a place where social norms and attitudes can be challenged if they are causing harm

The Bible teaches that all humans should be treated with love and respect and that men and women are created equal in the eyes of God



Men from the church participating in discussion regarding SGBV. Photo: Eleanor Bentall/Tearfund.