

Quick guide to Journey to Healing

Through *Journey to Healing*, Tearfund supports survivor networks and the global survivor movement, enabling solidarity and connection among survivors worldwide, and advocating for the end of sexual and gender-based violence.

Why respond to sexual and gender-based violence

One in every three women and girls will experience physical and/or sexual and gender-based violence in their lifetime. That is about 1 billion women and girls in our world today (WHO, 2021).¹ Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) happens in various forms such as rape, physical abuse, harassment, economic abuse and discrimination across generations and societies. It violates the rights of people, especially women and girls, and deprives them of their dignity.

How did Journey to Healing begin?

In 2013, Tearfund UK commissioned a research study to hear the voices of survivors of SGBV in several countries.² This study highlighted that survivors need:

- safe spaces for healing and support groups to journey with them
- a holistic response that addresses their medical, psychosocial, legal and livelihoods needs
- places of worship which function as places of refuge, providing spiritual and emotional support
- supportive faith leaders who speak out against the stigma faced by survivors
- their voices to be heard and their experiences acknowledged, leading to changes in policy and practice

The Journey to Healing approach

Listening to survivors was the crucial first step towards responding to SGBV. This was followed by working with and envisioning faith and community leaders to support survivors in mobilising and breaking the silence over SGBV in their communities. Churches have been playing an important role by journeying with survivors for their healing, and identifying and building the capacity of 'survivor champions' who lead survivor groups and movements. This process of healing and equipping champions has been developed by survivors and has now been piloted in countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. It typically takes one year to develop a survivor champion through this process.

Journey to Healing is a survivor-centred approach which was co-developed with survivors in South Africa. It is a peer-to-peer support group model and creates a supportive environment for healing which acknowledges and respects survivors' agency, autonomy and decision-making potential. It creates safe spaces for survivors to speak out and overcome trauma: a journey from fear to courage, from self-doubt to confidence about their future. The approach primarily supports female survivors but can be adapted for use with male survivors, who may face additional stigma.

This quick guide is designed to give an overview of the *Journey to Healing* approach, and does not prescribe the unique and individual journey that each survivor and each group will take.

Key elements of Journey to Healing



Informed and led by survivors

At every stage of *Journey to Healing*, from the initial development of the process to the healing groups themselves, we are informed and led by, and accountable to, survivors, who are the experts in their own experience. Tearfund's work to end SGBV invites and integrates the perspectives of survivors.



Engaging faith leaders

Faith leaders often have the ability to influence the norms and behaviours of their congregations and communities. Faith leaders trained in *Journey to Healing* can play a key role in reducing stigma and shifting attitudes towards survivors. They can strengthen advocacy efforts and campaigns around SGBV, and make their churches accountable to survivors. One way they can do this is by addressing problematic interpretations of the Bible and other religious texts.

The role of the organisation implementing *Journey to Healing* is to facilitate safe spaces for peer support groups for survivors and to bring multi-disciplinary services together (for example, health, social and protection services) to enable holistic healing. As healing continues, survivors can work together to develop processes and plans that enable healing, and begin addressing their needs.

¹ WHO (2021) *Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018*

² Tearfund (2017) *Are we listening to survivors? A summary of research with survivors of sexual violence in DRC, CAR, South Africa, Burundi, Myanmar and Colombia*

Steps along the Journey to Healing

The healing process is a journey that is unique to each survivor. Although the *Journey to Healing* approach sets out some key steps, it is also organic and the pace should be set by members of the support group.



Resources for the journey

There are two key resources to help train and equip champions to facilitate a survivor group.

A *shared journey* is a training manual to equip champions to walk with survivors, while *Out of the shadows* is a champion's guide to facilitating survivor groups.

Resource 1: A shared journey



Survivors meet in peer support groups



Survivors are trained as 'champions' to speak out against SGBV in their communities



Survivors are supported through their journey of healing.

A *shared journey* is a training manual containing a set of activities and tools to equip champions so they can go on to facilitate groups of survivors of SGBV. The tool is designed to build champions' understanding of the guiding principles of healing work, and to equip them with the basic skills and knowledge they will need to facilitate groups with survivors.

A *shared journey* trains survivor champions in four key areas:

- 1. Laying a strong foundation**
Key aspects for forming and organising a peer support group
- 2. A heart for healing**
The personal qualities and attributes needed in a survivor champion
- 3. A head for healing**
The key knowledge and learning that a survivor champion needs to acquire
- 4. Hands that heal**
Identifying practical ways the group can support and empower one another to live fulfilling lives

Resource 2: Out of the shadows

Out of the shadows is the manual used by trained survivor champions to facilitate interactive activities for groups of survivors. The activities are designed to support survivors to process their traumas, and to reinforce their dignity, value, identity and confidence. It is an important workbook that is process-driven to help participants gain skills and knowledge of the healing process.

Out of the shadows takes survivor groups through three key phases, as illustrated in the table that follows. The time it takes to heal is different for each survivor, but for many survivors true freedom can be achieved by completing these three phases.

Phase	Goal	Outcome
1	Connection	Trust and safety
2	Cohesion	Building hope
3	Consolidation	Sharing and growing

Phase 1

Without building trust and safety in group work, it will be difficult to deal with trauma. SGBV often leads to isolation and harmed relationships. Working in a group setting helps people to acknowledge past hurts and creates a new foundation for healthy relationships going forward. This phase seeks to build connections and form a safe environment in the group setting.

Phase 2

The key element of this phase is building hope from brokenness in the context of working in a group: the goal is cohesion and relationship. The aim is to form strong, secure bonds between group members so that the pain of the past can be examined without the fear of being further wounded. Survivors tell their stories and 'unpack' their pain in the presence of women who care for and about each other.

Phase 3

The key elements of this phase are sharing and growing as groups so that the groups expand into a strong network, part of the global movement to end SGBV.

The manual also includes key guidelines for safeguarding to ensure no harm is done during the peer group discussions. These are an especially important consideration given the risk of exacerbating people's trauma.

The ultimate destination

Our hope is that survivors will continue to heal, and support others in their healing. Tearfund is committed to supporting survivors and survivor networks to lead the way in ending SGBV. We desire to see both women and men living with dignity, free from stigma and abuse, and the *Journey to Healing* process is a foundational part of Tearfund's response to SGBV.

Other tools and further reading

Hand in hand

Bible studies to transform our response to sexual violence
<https://learn.tearfund.org/-/media/learn/resources/bible-studies/hand-in-hand-bible-studies-sv.pdf>

Research with survivors

For Tearfund reports on this subject, please visit:
<https://www.tearfund.org/about-us/what-we-do/sexual-and-gender-based-violence>

learn.tearfund.org

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