

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND COVID-19: HOW CHURCHES CAN RESPOND

Foreword by The Most Rev'd Dr Josiah Idowu-Fearon, Secretary General of the Anglican Communion

'During the COVID-19 pandemic many countries have seen an increase in domestic abuse and in the numbers of women and men requesting help from national helplines, where available. Domestic abuse remains a hidden scourge in our societies and churches that is far too often left unchallenged and excused. Domestic abuse is a sin and can cause lifelong trauma to survivors. As Christians we are called to love God and one another and to care for each other. This means we have a responsibility to hold each other to account and call out injustice when and where we see it. Recalling ACC resolutions 15:7 and 16:3, which encourage us all to address domestic abuse and gender based violence, I commend this resource to you to enable you to respond to domestic abuse in this time of increased need.'

Introduction

COVID-19 has had, and is having, a significant impact on communities around the world and as a result governments are putting different measures in place to control the outbreak. Some of these measures, such as isolating at home, can have an impact on the prevalence and severity of domestic abuse and gender based violence. National domestic abuse helplines in many countries have seen a huge surge in calls. It is not the government measures that have caused the abuse, as that responsibility and choice remains with the perpetrator, more that the measures can hinder survivors gaining the support needed or escaping from the abuse. The increased fear, tension and lack of money can worsen a toxic environment where abuse can thrive unchallenged.

The Church is well placed within communities to be a light and refuge in times of need and can reach into communities where governments cannot. Our Christian call is to love one another as Christ loved us and not to turn away from our own flesh and blood. This document is a guide to equip church leaders and churchgoers (laity) to be able to respond to domestic abuse in line with good practice.

The 4 R's approach of **recognise, respond, refer and record**, is used as a framework for this response with survivors, without taking away survivors' own ability to respond and let you know what they need as well. The 7R's approach of **recognise, repent, remove, refer, make restitution, record and review** is used as a framework for perpetrators to stop the abuse and be held accountable for their actions. The guide covers an introduction to the theology, what domestic abuse is and how prevalent an issue it is, followed by practical actions that we can all take, including engaging men, and advocating for change. Prayer is part of our response, but survivors of abuse do need our practical help and support too.

Throughout this document, to represent the dominant form prevalent form of domestic abuse, the abuser will be referred to as 'he' and the victim and survivor will be referred to as 'she'. The same best practice principles laid out in this document apply for male survivors of abuse as well and it is important to recognise that this is also happening in communities and to be on the look-out for signals, so that male survivors can also receive help. The term *survivor* will be used rather than *victim* to acknowledge the capacity of women to survive in their current circumstances as well as those who are no longer with an abusive partner and have managed to survive.

COVID-19

The world is experiencing unprecedented times with the spread of COVID-19, also known as Coronavirus, and countries' responses to the pandemic are varied. These measures include: physical distancing, self-isolation in the home, shielding, lockdowns, movement control orders, stay at home notices, circuit breakers, shops and services closing down or opening for a limited amount of time. The result is that normal life has been curtailed and existing inequalities have been accelerated and exaggerated between and within communities affecting access to food, housing, employment, health and other social services. These and other fundamental rights have been deeply compromised, particularly for those who are most vulnerable in our communities.

For more information on COVID-19 please see the ["Knowing the Facts" section of the COVID-19 resource hub.](#)

An unequal world

In scripture, the story of God and humankind is a story of relationship and longing for relationship: God's costly seeking of relationship with us; our seeking of relationship with God; our relationship with one another. Relationships are fundamental to human flourishing – the abundant life that God desires for all His children. However, in our churches and communities around the world we are falling short of this. How we view one another, our attitudes, assumptions, stereotypes, prejudices, and expectations can lead to abuse and impose unjust burdens on those who are most vulnerable in our communities.

Unequal power and stereotypes between women and men, whether among individuals or around us in our societies, culture, churches and law, are deeply damaging. Women and girls, men and boys may be influenced by cultural views and misunderstanding of scriptures, that can lead to controlling others and abuse. Women and girls often suffer the harmful consequences of the inequality in our societies.

Gender based violence is a cause and consequence of unequal power relations between women and men, girls and boys. It is often exacerbated in times of epidemics, war and political unrest when cultural norms of inequality are exposed and are exploited to entrench an abuse of power and control over another person.

What does the Bible say about abuse?

God is a God of love and calls humanity to live in loving relationships with one another. Yet violence and abuse exist in our societies and the Bible recognises this and reflects our lived experience. Sadly, violence and abuse can affect anyone at any time. Violence and abuse diminish a person and can crush them, preventing them from fully flourishing into all that God created them to be. The consequences can be lifelong. God does not shy away from these difficult issues. In 2 Samuel 13 we read about the raping of Tamar, a princess and daughter of King David, raped by her brother Amnon. The consequences of violence against Tamar were significant as she went on to live as a desolate woman after being raped. Jesus hates violence and abuse and its consequences for the victim. ***It is a sin.***

Malachi 2:14 informs us that God sees how a wife is treated by her husband, 'the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.' The Lord sees behind closed doors and knows that abuse exists. Malachi 2:14 is also a reminder about the vows and the covenant of marriage made before God to love and to cherish. In Psalm 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.'

Jesus is the example that we follow as Christians. Jesus' life on earth showed us the way to live and treat one another. Jesus exposes injustices, brings healing and challenges authorities when they fail to act justly. In Luke 8:2-

11 we see how Jesus protected the life of the woman caught in adultery as she was about to be stoned by men. He spoke to the woman at the well who had five husbands and treated her with dignity and respect (John 4). Colossians 3:19 is straightforward in its instruction 'Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them.' Ephesians 5:29 states practically what that means in action: 'no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church'. When abuse does happen survivors can be assured that seeking refuge from abuse is a wise action to take to keep oneself safe from harm (Psalm 22:3).

Christians are called to live a life of love, and to model loving and healthy relationships, to enable each other to flourish into all that God created us to be. 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'.

It is clear that God calls us to love, not use and abuse, others. There is no justification or excuse for domestic abuse and gender based violence in the scriptures.

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse. Whilst abuse can happen at any age this document focuses on adult females who are or have been in a relationship with someone else. This includes physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, verbal and financial abuse. We do however, need to be alert to the sexual exploitation and abuse of adolescent* girls and younger especially in a time of crisis when their vulnerability is increased. For example, early and/or forced marriage, pregnancy, exploitative survival sex and rape are known to increase dramatically during epidemics and times of crisis.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent on the perpetrator using many different tactics, including limiting contact with family, friends and community to create dependent isolation. Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim.

At the heart of domestic abuse is the abuse of power and control over another person. It is using another person by whatever means to get them to do what you want them to do without any regard for their care, welfare, life or liberty. It is a sin. It stems from a perpetrator's belief in entitlement and privilege, that the female partner is subordinate and that the female exists to serve their needs. In many countries it is a criminal offence and needs to be treated as such.

Be aware of the myths of abuse, such as 'he only behaved that way because he was angry', or he was drinking alcohol, or was on drugs, or he is mentally unwell. These may be contributing factors to the abuse but they are not the cause of abuse. A perpetrator of abuse chooses to abuse. It is a conscious choice.

Domestic abuse is different from a relationship where unhealthy behaviours occur (such as shouting between individuals in situations where tensions are raised). However, where unhealthy behaviours exist, the risk of an abusive situation occurring is increased, as individuals may seek control over the other parties in the relationship. For example, an unhealthy relationship can tip over into domestic abuse when there is an intention to win the argument no matter what, subdue the other person and make them feel bad, and get your own way on things without considering others in the household.

* The World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescents as those people between 10 and 19 years of age. The great majority of adolescents are, therefore, included in the age-based definition of "child", adopted by the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*,⁴ as a person under the age of 18 years.

How big an issue is domestic abuse?

One in three women globally have experienced either physical abuse and/or sexual abuse by an intimate partner. This rises to over 70% in some countries. Domestic abuse is also experienced by churchgoers, often mirroring what is going on in our societies. It is a serious issue that can result in the loss of life. [UN Women state](#) that approximately 82 women a day are killed intentionally by their partner or former partner. All forms of violence, including gender-based, sexual and intimate partner violence, may increase a woman's risk of acquiring HIV and other STI's. Young women and adolescent girls have the highest incidence of intimate partner violence; in some settings, up to 45 percent of adolescent girls report that their first sexual experience was forced. Young women who experience intimate partner violence are 50 percent more likely to acquire HIV than other women (UNAIDS 2015c, 37).

There has been an increase in both private and public gendered violence during COVID-19. Some countries have seen domestic abuse rise by a third. Check the statistics in your own country for the levels of domestic abuse and any increase under COVID-19. (see also Appendix 2). Domestic abuse is a gendered issue which means that it will overwhelmingly impacts women more than men. That does mean that some men will also be victims and survivors of domestic abuse. All abuse is wrong and must stop and any survivor needs help and support to heal and recover.

What is the impact of COVID-19 on domestic abuse?

Many countries have seen an increase in domestic abuse and calls to their national domestic abuse helplines during the COVID 19 lockdowns or stay at home notices. For example, South Africa had 87,000 calls to the domestic abuse helpline in the first month of lockdown, and Malaysia a 44% rise in calls to its national hotline. In Kenya a 16 year old female was held captive by a man and sexually assaulted. The attacker reportedly said he kidnapped her because he needed female company to get through the government-imposed COVID-19 lockdown ([Human Rights Watch, April 2020](#)).

Isolation is a key tactic of an abuser, made easier by government stay at home notices during COVID 19 and where there is seemingly no way out for survivors of abuse. An abuser can control nearly every aspect of the woman's life whilst under lockdown so that she is unable to live freely. She may not be able to go out to the shops to buy food because of the government imposed restrictions, or because the male partner controls access to money and does not give her the money needed to buy essentials such as food, soap and sanitary items to keep healthy, clean and well (this is known as financial abuse). The abuser may be enforcing sex against the woman's will (rape) or the abuser misuses scripture to coerce the survivor to have sex. With nowhere to escape to, the survivor may feel as though she has no option but to appease the abuser (this is sexual abuse). Government-enforced confinement in the home can result in women's negotiation and appeasement measures being restricted, reduced or rendered useless.

It is important that everyone is aware of what government notices and legal notices actually say so that there is no confusion over the mandatory requirements or what is allowed. For example, in some countries, stay at home notices can be breached in situations of domestic abuse so that the survivor can access the help and support they need.

Practical action for church leaders and good neighbours

Safety of the victim/survivor and their children is always the first priority. Keeping the survivor and children safe from harm is an imperative. Ensure that any response keeps you safe too.

When addressing domestic abuse, it is helpful to use the 4 R's as a reminder of the process. These are Recognise, Respond, Refer and Record. Even in a lockdown situation or with physical distancing restrictions these principles apply.

1. **Recognise** that domestic abuse happens in church communities too and will probably increase in severity and prevalence during COVID-19. Learn to identify the signs of abuse (see table below) and be ready to respond appropriately within the remit of restrictions (physical distancing etc.)
2. **Respond** by saying I believe you. This could be online, via a text message or WhatsApp as well as face to face when lockdown is over. Many survivors will have been told or feel that no-one will believe them and that no-one will help them. Helping them make a safety plan is a good practical step to take (see table below).
3. **Refer** the survivor to the local or national domestic abuse services, if they are available in your country (link to this information is in the table below). If the survivor's life is in immediate danger, then call the emergency number for the police. Domestic abuse can be a life threatening matter and needs to be taken seriously. See table for other options.
4. **Record** what the survivor has said. This can be written notes or a photograph of any physical evidence. Always gain the permission of the survivor before taking photographs.

Even during a pandemic there are practical actions that we can take.

Who/What	Role of Good Neighbours	Role of Church Leaders
<p>Recognise the signs of domestic abuse</p>	<p>Look for signs of abuse such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a woman is never on their own, she always looks sad and miserable, 2. she cannot afford to feed herself or her children, 3. she has unexplained bruises, 4. she appears to have frequent illnesses, 5. her partner is saying they are stupid, worthless, can't do anything. 6. Her partner insults and criticises her. <p>Recognise that what you initially see and hear is probably the tip of the iceberg of abuse.</p> <p>Put up a general social media post that you know about domestic abuse and that you are safe to talk to about it.</p> <p>Recognise the particular vulnerability of adolescent girls and girls generally to sexual exploitation and abuse, especially when they are out of school.</p>	<p>Look for signs of abuse such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a woman is not permitted to attend church online, pray or read the Bible. ● she has unexplained bruises or appears to have frequent illnesses. ● her partner criticises them, says negative things about her and is disrespectful. ● the abuser may say that his partner is always complaining and that she is giving him a hard time. <p>Be wise about being co-opted by the abuser to justify the abuse. Abusers can be very charming and often try to foster allies by being helpful to those outside of the home as this adds to the barrier for the woman being believed.</p> <p>Recognise the particular vulnerability of adolescent girls and girls generally to sexual exploitation and abuse, when they are out of school.</p>

	<p>Be wary of men offering the 4C's of cash, clothes, cell phone and car access to young women which grooms them for future exploitation and abuse.</p> <p>Recognise that adolescent girls at home in isolation with relatives can become victims of abuse.</p> <p>Recognise that children in the home are witnesses and can be victims of the abuse themselves. Children can be used as a tool for abuse of the woman.</p>	<p>Be wise to men offering the 4C's of cash, clothes, cell phone and car access to young women which grooms them for future exploitation and abuse.</p> <p>Recognise that children in the home are likely to be witnesses and impacted by the abuse. Children can also be used as a tool for abuse.</p> <p>Recognise that adolescent girls at home in isolation with relatives can become victims of abuse.</p>
<p>Respond</p>	<p>Say I believe you as there will be a huge fear that no-one will believe the abuse has been going on.</p> <p>Listen attentively to what she is saying. Tell her this is not her fault and that she is right to talk about it and ask for help.</p> <p>Check what is the safest way to communicate with her, text, WhatsApp, phone call.</p> <p>Suggest she makes a safety plan for in the home (rooms with locks on the door, door wedges etc.) and a safety exit plan, if she decides she needs to leave for her own safety and for the safety of the children.</p> <p>Create a code word to use with the survivor, such as a name beginning with A, so that you know when she is at an increased risk of abuse</p> <p>Suggest moving to a friend or family member's home, mother or sister or aunt who are sympathetic and understand domestic abuse or trained to respond in these situations. Safety is the first priority. Many countries are making exceptions for leaving the house when it is a survivor escaping abuse.</p> <p>Share links to available local transport. Some countries are providing free transport for survivors fleeing abuse such as a free train ticket to a refuge or a taxi to a safe place.</p> <p>Is there a local emergency fund that can be accessed either state/council provision or an emergency church fund or self-help group? This can provide an initial fund to get a safe place or to get to a safe location.</p>	<p>Listen and believe survivors of abuse and inform them that the abuse is not their fault and that they are right to disclose the abuse.</p> <p>Check what is the safest way to communicate with her, text, WhatsApp, phone call.</p> <p>Create a code word so that you know when she is at increased risk of further abuse.</p> <p>Is there a church emergency fund available that can support the survivor to access transport to a relative's home for safety, or to the next province to a relative's home? If so, provide emergency funds and a guide on available transport. Funds could be provided for the survivor to leave and gain access to emergency shelter for a few days or a week.</p> <p>Safety is always the first priority and finances can be a huge barrier to accessing help and support.</p> <p>Are there food vouchers that the church can give out so that the survivor can feed herself and her children?</p> <p>If there is no local safe house or refuge and it is possible, offer the church as a sanctuary to the abused. This can be dangerous, and in some countries illegal, so needs careful attention if undertaken.**</p> <p>Download a copy of Restored's Church Pack on ending Domestic Abuse for further information and ideas. This is available in</p>

	<p>Are there food vouchers available to give out from the church or local community centre so that the survivor can feed herself and the children?</p>	<p>several languages. Link also in the appendices.</p> <p>Include the topic of domestic abuse in your sermons, prayers, liturgy and notices during the services to make sure your congregation knows what domestic abuse is and that help is available.</p> <p>State that domestic abuse is a sin, wrong, and never acceptable and must stop. Clear messages from a church leader can help prevent abusers from justifying their abuse behind closed doors.</p> <p>Put up posters in your church or outside your church about domestic abuse and local domestic abuse service providers so people walking past can notice it.</p> <p>Put up notices on your church website and Facebook pages about domestic abuse and where to get help and support.</p> <p>Send letters to local clergy and church leaders to be aware of the increased likelihood of domestic abuse and encourage them to speak out about it in sermons/church notices and notice boards and on social media and media.</p>
<p>Refer</p>	<p>Give the details of the local domestic abuse services if there are any where you are. If not, the national number for the services. See Hot Peach Pages www.hotpeachpages.net/ for a list of global helpline numbers in different languages.</p> <p>If the violence and abuse is life-threatening encourage the survivor to call the police.</p> <p>Often survivors can downplay the abuse that happens and not fully understand the seriousness of the situation they are in. If they refuse to get help, but there are children at risk in the home, you will need to follow child protection guidelines and report to the local social services, or the police if none exist.</p> <p>If there is a local Mothers' Union, connect the survivor into the network for further companionship, help and support if appropriate.</p>	<p>Pass on the details of the local or national domestic abuse services available. See https://www.hotpeachpages.net/ for national helplines around the world.</p> <p>If there are no domestic abuse services currently available or they are unable to be reached, connect to the safeguarding officer, child protection officer, pastoral lead in your church or a female leader for further help and support.</p> <p>Refer to the Bible and explain that God hates violence and abuse and reassure them that it is right to disclose abuse.</p> <p>Connect the survivor into the local Mothers' Union for support and companionship especially if there are no domestic abuse service providers accessible locally.</p>

		Download a copy of Restored's Church Pack on ending Domestic Abuse for further information and ideas.
Record	<p>Keep an accurate record of what has been said. Write down as soon as possible after the disclosure exactly what was said. Do not write your own opinion but simply record what you have heard. Write dates, times of incidences if given. Make a note of the date and time of the disclosure.</p> <p>Keep the record safe. It could be used later by the police or in court as evidence.</p> <p>Keep a record of your own support and advice to the survivor of abuse, for example that you gave a leaflet or number for the domestic abuse services, or you explained how much danger she was in.</p>	<p>Keep an accurate record of any disclosure on the day it is made. It is important to record the words of the survivor and not your own opinion on the matter.</p> <p>Keep the record safe and do not disclose to anyone except the 'Safeguarding Officer' or Child Protection Officer or Pastoral Leader if you have one in the church.</p> <p>Keep a record of your own support and advice to the survivor of abuse, for example that you gave a leaflet or number for the domestic abuse services, or you explained how much danger she was in.</p>

** This is a significant undertaking and should only be considered when absolutely no other alternative is available. The doors of the church need to be locked and a key available to the survivor and one other person only. The abuser must not be made aware of where the survivor is located. It could be dangerous. Do check whether this is legal practice within your own country before considering this action.

What not to do

DO NOT ASK THE ABUSER IF WHAT THE SURVIVOR IS SAYING IS CORRECT AS THIS CAN PLACE THE VICTIM AT FURTHER RISK OF HARM AND COULD RESULT IN DEATH.

It is important when a survivor discloses abuse that we don't minimise it, excuse, justify or spiritualise the abuse. Do not ask for evidence, blame her or ask her to return to her husband or partner as it may be unsafe to do so. Don't make unrealistic promises. Be aware of your own capacity and resources.

Do not refer the couple for counselling or mediation as this places a portion of responsibility on to the survivor and deflects it from the perpetrator who needs to take full responsibility for their actions and the consequences of their actions.

Actions Survivors Can Take

Survivors also have their own capacity and may be able to take the following actions, depending on their own individual circumstances.

What the survivor can do	What this looks like practically
Recognise abuse is happening to you	Shouting, blaming, hitting, not letting you go out, stopping you talking to others, taking away money or restricting access to money are examples of domestic abuse.
Respond by asking for help and keeping yourself safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Call the police if in immediate danger. ● Call the domestic abuse services in your country or area if there are any. ● Ask for help. The abuse is not your fault, no matter how many times the abuser tells you that you made him do it.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep yourself safe in your own home and make a safety plan. Leave spare clothes, important personal documents and a set of keys with a good neighbour who you can trust. ● Create a code word for your neighbour, church leader or employer so that they know when you need help. For example, if you start talking about Angela or another name beginning with A that you have agreed, in the conversation the other person will know you are at risk and need help. ● Be wary of men offering to rescue you and offer you a home with them at this time of vulnerability. This often leads to further exploitation and abuse in the future.
<p>Refer yourself to the domestic abuse services available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Call the domestic abuse services. Keep the number in your phone under a female name beginning with A, such as Angela, so it is near the top of your contact list. ● If the police have been contacted keep a record of the crime number for follow up. Ask for a follow up call or visit if this is feasible. ● If there are no domestic abuse services available in your area contact your local Mothers' Union person to connect to the network for help and support. You are not alone in this.
<p>Record any incidences of abuse for future reference</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If possible and without the abuser knowing, keep a record with dates, times and what happened to you. This could be used as evidence later on should you want to take matters further. ● Take photographs and keep them under a general file on your phone such as neighbours. ● Ask your neighbour/church leader/employer to keep a record if they hear or see the abuse occurring and also when you disclose the abuse to them. This can then be used later in court if required.

Engaging Men

If we are to see an end to domestic abuse, then engaging men in the response is vital to bring about the comprehensive change needed. Men can model positive masculinity and challenge other men's attitudes and actions that diminish, denigrate and destroy others.

It is important, more than ever, that men live a life following the example of Jesus and make a stand regarding domestic abuse. Modelling positive, healthy relationships is essential to maintaining a healthy and wholesome household. It is also an excellent witness to your neighbours and gives survivors of abuse an example of what life can be like outside of abuse.

The socialisation of men in many cultures and countries around the world offers a restrictive view of masculinity that can be toxic. This can lead to the development of harmful views that are destructive to both men and the women with whom they are in a relationship. Social expectations placed on men that are unrealistic and narrow can be heightened at a time when work is stopped and men unused to being at home may lack the skills (such as cooking) to adjust to the new environment. Men may need to reflect on what attitudes they have been socialised too, and what needs to change to ensure a healthy, collaborative and effective running of the home. This is a time for new foundations to be set for the future post COVID-19.

With a variety of the different aspects of life combining in one place such as home working, and home schooling, positive household management is key to ensuring the smooth running of life in lockdown. This means open and

honest discussions about the running of the household and dividing the tasks up equitably and fairly. Completing a 24 hour clock of who is doing what during each hour of the day can be a helpful start in overviewing all the tasks undertaken and who is doing each task and the length of time it takes. This provides a basis for discussion in reallocating tasks so that no one person in the household is overburdened. This may mean that new skills need developing with the advice and support of others. Another indicator that may point to inequality is to observe who is the person sitting on the sofa the most or watching TV whilst others are working around the house. What works in each household will be different but the key is that assumptions should not be made about who 'should' be doing what simply based on tradition or gender.

An important question to ask is 'How is what I am doing affecting my relationships with others?' This reflection enables an assessment of whether our attitude, actions and behaviours build one another up or result in the breaking down of a relationship.

Positive action men can take during a stay at home notice can be found in '[Men in Lockdown](#)' and the 'Men under Pressure' resource [here](#).

The UN runs a *He for She* campaign to engage men in achieving gender equality. During COVID-19 they are running a campaign called *#HeForSheAtHome* looking at how roles and responsibilities are discussed and adapted for the successful running of the household. More information and photos of good ideas [here](#).

Perpetrators

Perpetrators of abuse are in need of being held to account for their action and redemption. The scandal of the gospel is that love, grace and forgiveness is available to all. ***This must not be used as an excuse to avoid criminal charges being brought against an abuser.*** God is a God of justice as well as love and forgiveness. The consequences of the perpetrator's actions remain and justice needs to be sought.

Encourage perpetrators of abuse to access a course for them to work towards changing their harmful attitude and behaviour. Ensure perpetrators are held to account for their actions as justice is important for healing for the survivor and restoring trust in humanity and confirms that the abuse she has suffered is wrong. Perpetrators can use the **7 R's for Perpetrators Framework** to bring about change in themselves and work towards repairing the wrong done. The **7R's** are recognise, repent, remove, refer, make restitution, record, review.

Actions Perpetrators Can Take

Perpetrators have the capacity and self-control to change their attitude and behaviours and hold themselves to account.

What perpetrators can do	What this looks like practically
Recognise you are perpetrating abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shouting, hitting, blaming, manipulating, coercive and controlling behaviour, isolating another person is abuse. • That abuse is wrong and must stop • That abuse is a choice you are making • Abuse creates immense pain, lifelong trauma, breaks trust completely, • Abuse is a sin and an affront to God, • Abuse is a criminal offence in some countries, • Acknowledge your choices in committing the abuse and the misuse of power and control
Repent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the wrong you have done

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the serious nature of your behaviour and the impact of your actions on those around you, your partner, children, neighbours, relatives, church members and community. • Confess to God your sin with your whole heart remembering God sees into our hearts and is not fooled by false confessions. • Commit to turning yourself around, being held to account for your actions by someone who will not be persuaded by your excuses. Confess to a church leader and the person who will hold you to account for all that you have done. God forgives but the consequences of your actions remain and need to be addressed.
Remove	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove yourself from the context and the home if you will be a risk to others by perpetrating further abuse or if asked by the victim. • If your partner does not want to reconcile you must respect their position and make every effort to ensure the separation is safe and civil.
Refer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer yourself to the police for the abuse you have perpetrated and be held to account under the law for your actions. • Justice is an important part of rebuilding your life and the life of the survivor and may take other forms in addition to those required by the law of the land.
Restitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make restitution for the wrong you have done. For example, pay back the money that you have withheld from your partner, or not provided for the children. • Agree with your accountability person*** the actions you will take to make amends and how you will take them. • Commit to weekly accountability measures and honestly reporting back. • Always place the survivor at the centre of the actions with an intermediary asking her what she needs from you.
Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record the agreement made with your accountability person with agreed meetings to update on the action you have taken to change your own attitude and behaviours. • Do not make excuses or justifications for not taking the agreed actions. • Take full responsibility for yourself and demonstrate the changed attitude and behaviour.
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the agreement made at regular intervals to ensure that you are openly held to account for the change needed to prevent committing further abuse. These intervals can be mutually agreed with your accountability partner and can take place over the phone or internet during COVID-19 restrictions. • Do not breach the review agreement and keep to the dates and times agreed with your accountability person. • Take responsibility and own your own actions and inactions. • Do not deflect responsibility for your actions, deny the abuse, minimise the abuse you have committed, excuse your behaviour or blame someone else for your actions.

***Accountability persons need to be incredibly wise to the different aspects of abuse that a perpetrator can employ to gain power and control. Often perpetrators of abuse can be very charming and convincing and they can groom a person effectively. There needs to be a sharpness of mind and an intolerance for excuses and justifications for their abuse and for not taking the agreed action or for any breaches of the agreement made. It requires strict rules and guidance.

Advocacy

Advocacy is speaking out for, with and on behalf of others highlighting an injustice or gap in a service provision that could be impacting on one section of society in particular and leaving them disadvantaged. Advocating on behalf of others particularly in this time of crisis, enables governments and churches to see the gaps in the responses and work to plug those gaps. It is important to always remain polite in contacting church leaders and government officials. Ensure that you clearly explain the issue you are contacting them for, what the impact is on either yourself, the household, community etc., and what you are asking for as a possible solution to the issue.

If it is feasible, and safe to do so within your own country, consider advocating to your government for the following:

Ask:

- a. For funding of domestic abuse services to increase as demand increases.
- b. For funding for safe houses/refuges as the need increases for women and children to be kept safe from harm.
- c. For a national advertising campaign highlighting the issue of domestic abuse and where to get help during the pandemic
- d. For the enforcement of laws that criminalise abuse so that perpetrators will be held to account and brought to justice.
- e. For systematic education of the police and judiciary on the gendered nature of domestic abuse and the prevalence and impact in order for them to respond in line with good practice.

Summary

Remember that domestic abuse happens, including in churches.

Look out for the signs of abuse and respond with the 4R's framework – Recognise, Respond, Refer and Record for survivors.

Hold perpetrators to account and encourage them to undertake the 7R's – Recognise, Repent, Remove, Refer, Restitution, Record, Review always acknowledging that reconciliation is not the goal - the goal is to stand up for the safety, sanity and dignity of the survivor.

APPENDICES

Appendix One - Resources and Links

Global Domestic Abuse helplines <https://www.hotpeachpages.net/>

An equity based approach in dealing with the pandemic – Men Engage Alliance
<http://menengage.org/resources/an-equity-based-approach-to-dealing-with-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

Malaysia Women's Aid <https://wao.org.my/implement-emergency-response-to-domestic-violence-amid-covid-19-crisis/>

Restored COVID-19 response resources <https://www.restoredrelationships.org/Covid19/>

Church Pack on Ending Domestic Abuse in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Russian, Swedish, Polish and Hindi <https://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/51/>

Church Pack on Ending Domestic Abuse adapted for the USA
<https://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/147/>

Making a Safety Plan <https://www.restoredrelationships.org/help/making-a-safety-plan/>

Domestic Abuse: In Churches Too – UK research on domestic abuse amongst churchgoers across Cumbria infographic <https://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/146/>

Domestic Abuse in Churches in:

Peru <https://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/83/>

Argentina <https://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/100/>

Bolivia <https://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/90/>

Redemptive Masculinities (Chitando and Njoroge 2016, Chitando and Chirongoma 2012)

Created in God's Image: From Hierarchy to Partnership, World Council of Reformed Churches <http://wcr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/CreatedInGodsImage.pdf>

Created in God's Image: From Hegemony to Partnership (positive masculinities manual), World Council of Reformed Churches http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PositiveMasculinitiesGenderManual_0.pdf

A week without violence toolkit, World YWCA https://www.worldywca.org/ywca_ressources/week-without-violence-toolkit-2019-is-now-available/

Appendix 2 Domestic Abuse Statistics and Gendered Impacts

The European Parliament have reported that domestic violence rose by a third in some EU countries following the lockdown <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200406IPR76610/covid-19-stopping-the-rise-in-domestic-violence-during-lockdown>

Australia has reported a 75% increase in internet searches relating to support for domestic violence victims. <https://www.france24.com/en/20200406-un-chief-decries-horrifying-rise-in-domestic-violence-amid-virus-lockdown>.

UK has seen three times as many domestic killings over the first three weeks of lockdown and a 25% increase in calls to the national domestic violence helpline.

In Malaysia, Women's Aid have seen a 44% increase in calls to the helpline <https://wao.org.my/implement-emergency-response-to-domestic-violence-amid-covid-19-crisis/>

Brazil has seen a 50% rise in calls to the domestic abuse helpline

In the UK research from the University of Coventry and the University of Leicester found that 1 in 4 churchgoers across Cumbria, one region of the UK, were being abused in their current relationship. This rose to 42.2% when previous relationships were taken into account. Over 90% of the abuse was perpetrated by men <https://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/146/>

Research with churches across Bolivia, Argentina and Peru found that domestic abuse happened in churches too <https://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/83/>

Other Impacts

Compromised maternal health care <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2020/04/17/fearing-coronavirus-many-rural-black-women-avoid-hospitals-to-give-birth-at-home>

Public Violence –

Police brutality in enforcing isolation orders:

Across Africa <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52214740>

India <https://www.dw.com/en/india-police-under-fire-for-using-violence-to-enforce-coronavirus-lockdown/a-52946717>

Acknowledgements

Author

Mandy Marshall

Contributors:

Chiseche Mibenge – Episcopal Relief and Development, USA

Rev Rachel Carnegie, Anglican Alliance, UK

Paulo Ueti – Anglican Alliance and Anglican Communion Office, Brazil

Martha Jarvis – Lambeth Palace, UK

Andrew Khoo – Advocate and Solicitor, Malaysia

Sally Smith, Consultant, UK

Tagolyn Kabekabe, Anglican Alliance, Solomon Islands

Rob Dawes, Mothers Union, UK

Naomi Herbert, Mothers Union, UK

Provincial Community Development Coordinators, Mothers Union, Worldwide.

Esther Sweetman, Restored, UK

Rev Carole Hughes, IAWN Member, New Zealand

Lizzie Green, IAWN Member, UK

Rev Helen Van Koevering, IAWN member, USA