



16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

A FAITH- AND COMMUNITY-BASED TOOLKIT

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FOREWARD

Josephine Hicks, former Chief Church Relations Officer

“Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being? I will, with God’s help.” This portion of the Baptismal Covenant reflects a driving principle behind all of Episcopal Relief & Development’s work. In everything we do, we seek to respect the dignity of every human being. This includes eliminating barriers to growth and development. For women and children, those barriers can include unequal access to economic resources and decision making. Worse, women and children too often suffer from violence. Violence has a devastating impact, not only on the women who are direct victims of violence, but also on families and communities. It also contributes to cycles of poverty. By contrast, preventing violence, promoting equal access to economic opportunities and decision making, and cultivating women as leaders helps women thrive and become productive contributors to their communities and economies. This toolkit will help you and your congregation learn more about these important issues and Episcopal Relief & Development’s transformative work in this area.

Tammi Mott, Vice President, International Program Operations

At Episcopal Relief & Development, we and our partners around the world share a vision for the work we do. It is a vision of community where all people — regardless of their identity — live together in abundant dignity, trust, hope and love. This vision springs from our faith in the goodness of creation and our belief that every being is created equally in God’s image. This vision is sustained by our deep commitment to our work, as demonstrated throughout the stories and resource links in this toolkit, which are both hope-filled and transformational in helping women and girls to rise up empowered and resilient. Be it for 16 or 365 days, I invite you to join with us and our global partners as we journey toward this vision. I lift up to you this toolkit and the opportunities it provides to learn more, pray more and do more so that, by our working together, violence against women and girls may truly be no more.

The Rev. Pascual Torres, Co-founder and Executive Director, Siempre Unidos

“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Siempre Unidos is a faith-based organization committed to eradicating all forms of violence and discrimination. We welcome the initiative launched by Episcopal Relief & Development, 16 Days of Activism, by sharing stories, reflecting together, praying and acting. For those who accept the invitation, the toolkit provides resources for the journey that will empower them to respond effectively and to step firmly into the fight to eradicate a form of violence so subtle that it masks itself as culturally correct, socially accepted, harmless and sometimes even funny. The material in this toolkit reflects its roots and connection with the Baptismal Covenant of the Episcopal Church as it is written in its Book of Common Prayer: “Will you persevere in resisting evil ... Will you seek to serve Christ in all persons ... Will you strive for justice... and respect the dignity of every human being?” it asks. And the people respond, “I will with God’s help. Amen.”

Trigger warning

This toolkit includes resources, factual accounts and narratives around themes of physical and sexual violence and other forms of discrimination. This content may be difficult for some. We encourage you always to care for your safety and well-being.

INTRODUCTION

16 Days of Activism

Nicole Hosein, Director, Violence Prevention, Protection & Resilience Cluster

Dear Friends and Allies working to end violence against women and girls,

As the Director of Violence Prevention, Protection & Resilience Cluster at Episcopal Relief & Development, I am honored to present this 16 Days of Activism toolkit. This resource is designed to inspire faith-based action and foster deep reflection on ending violence against women and girls (VAWG)—a critical issue that affects millions of lives globally.

The stark reality is that worldwide, an estimated 1 in 3 women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. This isn't just a statistic; it represents countless individual stories of pain, resilience, and the potential for transformation. As someone who is 1 in 3 of those who've experienced violence, I have dedicated my entire adult life to addressing VAWG and supporting survivors to access the essential services they need to recover and heal. Survivors of VAWG are not just numbers, they are people deserving of dignity, respect and support.

Episcopal Relief & Development’s work in communities across the world has shown us the transformative power of faith-based approaches in addressing VAWG. In Liberia, where over

90% of the population identifies as either Christian or Muslim, we've witnessed remarkable change through interfaith collaboration and community-led initiatives.

Take, for instance, [Mother Susanna](#), a pastor in Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia. Once hesitant to speak up about violence against women and girls, Mother Susanna now proudly raises her voice to reduce violence in her community and actively supports survivors. Her journey exemplifies how our programs build confidence and support local leaders to become powerful advocates for change.

Our approach recognizes the crucial role that faith leaders play in shaping community attitudes and behaviors. In [Grand Gedeh](#), Liberia, we've seen Christian and Muslim leaders unite in their efforts to prevent violence against women and girls. This interfaith cooperation not only addresses GBV but also contributes to broader social cohesion, even during potentially divisive times like elections.

Young people are also at the forefront of this change. In [Bong County](#), we met a youth group creating dramas to illustrate how to combat predatory behavior in schools. Their energy and optimism for a violence-free future is truly inspiring and demonstrates the potential for long-term, generational change.

In rural Burundi, we've seen the transformative power of community-based interventions. Through our partner, the Service Anglican pour le Développement Communautaire (SADC), we support a safe house for survivors of violence against women and girls. This initiative goes beyond providing immediate support; it encourages survivors to become community volunteers, challenging cultural norms and offering hope to others. [The story of Chantal](#), who once could only greet visitors from behind a curtain and now sees her children in school and her husband participating in positive change programs, exemplifies the profound impact of our holistic approach.

This toolkit, divided into 16 Actions mirroring the 16 Days of Activism, is designed to harness this same spirit of change in your own communities. Each action provides a Scripture or quote, a fact sheet, an action step and a reflection prompt. We encourage you to use this resource with your parish, school or community, not just during the 16 Days of Activism, but as a guide for ongoing engagement throughout the year.

Our objectives are threefold: to encourage our networks to join the global effort to end violence against women and girls; to raise awareness of VAWG and the work being done to address it; and to amplify the voices and prayers of all those working towards equity and the empowerment of vulnerable women in their communities.

As you engage with this toolkit, remember the words of a faith leader in Grand Gedeh: "Before the program, we used to think that beating our wives was a sign of love... Now we know better." This profound shift in perspective is what we aim to achieve—one person, one community at a time.

I invite you to join us in this crucial work and **I offer my support should you need help with the action steps or reflection prompts. You are welcome to email me at nhosein@episcopalrelief.org**. Your reflections, actions, and commitment can contribute to a world where all people live in dignity, free from violence. Together, we can create lasting change.

In solidarity,

Nicole Hosein
Director of Violence Prevention, Protection & Resilience Cluster
Episcopal Relief & Development

Violence against Women and Girls

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) encompasses physical, sexual, psychological and economic harm directed at women and girls because of their sex. This includes threats of violence, coercion, and deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. VAWG is rooted in inequality and discrimination and disproportionately affects women and girls across all societies.

Intimate-partner violence is the most prevalent form of VAWG worldwide: Almost one-third (30%) of women who have been in a relationship report experiencing some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner in their lifetime.¹ VAWG reinforces stereotypes and inequalities in society, reflecting and perpetuating the subordination of women and girls.

The subordination of women's rights all over the world is sustained by harmful social, cultural and religious attitudes and practices and, in some cases, is encoded in law and policy. VAWG occurs in various forms, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, forced sterilization, child marriage, revenge porn and cyber-stalking. It commonly is categorized into five central interrelated forms:

- Physical violence
- Psychological violence
- Sexual violence
- Socio-economic violence
- Spiritual violence

Spiritual violence is described as coercion and control of one individual by another in a faith context that can occur within faith communities. This abuse may include: misuse of Scripture or the pulpit to control behavior; excusing violent behavior; requiring submission to abuse; and

¹ <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

reinforcing male privilege, for example by suggesting that the abuser has a divine position or that victims' endurance of abuse is Christ-like.²

On January 18, 2018 in a letter to the The Episcopal Church, the Rt. Rev. Michael B. Curry, who served as the 27th Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, and the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, former President of the House of Deputies, stated:

"As our societies have been forced into fresh recognition that women in all walks of life have suffered unspoken trauma at the hands of male aggressors and harassers, we have become convinced that The Episcopal Church must work even harder to create a church that is not simply safe, but holy, humane and decent. We must commit to treating every person as a child of God, deserving of dignity and respect."³

As Christians, we believe that God created all humans equally, in God's image, and that all are worthy of dignity, adequate resources and to be in loving, liberating and life-giving relationships with God, one another and God's creation. Our Scriptures, Jesus' Way of Love and our Baptismal Covenant call us to love one another and to seek and serve Christ in all persons. GBV, however, continues to be an obstacle to that vision for equality, development and peace. The promise of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) – to leave no one behind – also cannot be fulfilled without ending VAWG.

Faith leaders have a unique position of trust and influence at both the individual and community levels to claim and nurture this vision, acting as catalysts of change. Ultimately, to be lasting and effective, change must occur within our own hearts, homes and communities. All are areas in which faith leaders are actively engaged.

The Toolkit

The Episcopal Church General Convention has passed various [resolutions](#) calling for a faith-based response to violence against women and girls. In 2024, the church resolved:

That Episcopal institutions and individuals participate in opportunities for activism and advocacy, including but not limited to, engaging with the Office of Government Relations (OGR) on issues of gender justice and gender-based violence and taking action on action alerts through OGR's Episcopal Public Policy Network, as well as through the Episcopal Church's work at the UN and UNCSW and by participating in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence sponsored by United Nations

² Restored: A Handbook for Female Christian Survivors of Domestic Abuse (2019) www.restoredrelationships.org

³ <https://houseofdeputies.org/2018/01/22/standing-tamar-letter-presiding-bishop-president-jennings/>

Women and encouraging use of Episcopal Relief and Development's 16 Days of Activism Toolkit.⁴

This toolkit provides a framework for users to join a global faith-based movement against GBV by praying, learning and acting together.

Episcopal Relief & Development's work engages community and faith leaders to take action and speak out against violence around the world. Its programs play a pivotal role in creating interfaith networks in many countries that provide tools, skills and support for leaders to challenge the attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate injustice and discrimination. This toolkit draws heavily from the learnings and successes from this work.

The toolkit is a set of resources specifically designed to help guide people of faith through the 16 Days of Activism and beyond, to a 365-day commitment to restoring dignity to individuals, families and communities everywhere. The toolkit will remain accessible as a usable and valuable resource all year.

Episcopal Relief & Development encourages users with a social media account to share Scripture and facts and to pray for all those experiencing violence as well as for those actively engaged in ministries to combat it. The toolkit contains resources for faith- and community-based action. Users can also share how they are using these resources by tagging @EpiscopalRelief or using the hashtag #16DaysOfActivism.

A Faith- and Community-Based toolkit

This toolkit inspires prolonged reflection rooted in faith. It provides users with Scripture that can reinforce our belief in the inherent and equal dignity of all God's children as made in God's image, and it centers responses to survivors of VAWG in our faith.

All of the reflections and actions contained within the toolkit can be completed alone. However, groups such as youth and women's ministries, as well as collective prayer groups, are encouraged to consider using them.

An Evidence-Based Toolkit

Former Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, in his statement to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, spoke about the disproportionate suffering of women: women of color; women of African descent; indigenous women; women with disabilities; women experiencing

⁴ Resolution A089

discrimination for their ethnicity, race, caste, descent, language, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity/expression; migrant, refugee, internally displaced, undocumented or stateless women; enslaved, trafficked or incarcerated women; rural women; women experiencing poverty; unemployed women; women whose work is considered immoral, illegal or unacceptable; older and aging women; widows; and women who are heads of households.

Systems and structures that oppress women based on their gender and other intersecting and marginalized identities can dramatically heighten vulnerability to VAWG, the presiding bishop noted.

In response, the toolkit includes facts about violence experienced by some of the most vulnerable women globally. It provides sobering facts about VAWG to raise awareness of the extent to which it occurs. It also highlights responses and preventative measures led primarily by faith communities. The toolkit contains resources for faith-based action that are supported by evidence of impact and/or are recognized as best practice.

Episcopal Relief & Development has divided the toolkit into 16 Actions, parallel to the 16 Days of Activism, but encourages users to regard the toolkit as a living document that can be referred to and utilized for all 365 days of the year.

ACTION 1: PRAY TOGETHER BEYOND BORDERS

Faith

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

Luke 1:46-55

Fact Sheet

- The United Nations recognized violence against women as a human-rights violation in 1993 when it adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.
- Globally, an estimated 1 in 3 (30%) women have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.⁵
- 84% of Native-American and Alaskan-Native women have experienced violence, 56% have experienced sexual violence and, of that second group, more than 90% have experienced violence at the hands of a non-tribal member.⁶
- Women physically or sexually abused by their partners report higher rates of serious health problems. For example, they are 16% more likely to have a low-birth-weight baby and almost twice as likely to experience depression compared to women who have not experienced partner violence.⁷

Reflection and Action

Join in prayer at the start of 16 Days of Activism.

The Heads of communion of Churches Beyond Borders have published devotions focused on violence against women and girls, timed with and inspired by the 16 Days of Activism. [The devotions](#) are written by the four bishops (heads of communion) and others representing each of the Churches Beyond Borders: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, Anglican Church of Canada, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and The Episcopal Church. Each writer has been deeply involved in this work, addressing grave issues such as missing and murdered Indigenous women, human trafficking, women at the borders, exclusion of people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity and domestic violence. Since Advent coincides with the campaign, they chose the Magnificat as their guiding text, offering prayer and reflection alongside the call for awareness and action. The devotions give thanks for the strong and enduring voice of Mary as she says "yes" to the angels to the angel's annunciation and as she greets her sister Elizabeth. We share the Rev. Joann Conroy's prayer and reflection. She is the president of the ELCA American Indian Alaska Native Association, Inc. (AIAN) and a chaplain at the Good Samaritan Society/Sanford Health in Maplewood, Minn.

⁵ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women#:~:text=Estimates%20published%20by%20WHO%20indicate,sexual%20violence%20in%20their%20lifetime>

⁶ <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249736.pdf>

⁷ https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/85239/9789241564625_eng.pdf?sequence=1

Woyatan Iyeché Mary

Mary said, "My soul sings praises"

As we gather in your name, Creator God, we face the Four Directions remembering before you all Indigenous women and girls who are missing and murdered. We pray for those who are victims of violence, their families and communities. In Mary's Song we find our way, loved, blessed, protected and strengthened with God who created us. We breath. Wakan Tanka, wocikiyaye, wocikiyaye. God Hear our Prayers. Amen.

Slow breaths and read:

Luke 1:46-55

⁴⁶ "My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

⁴⁶ ēkwa Mary ōmisi itwēw,
"nitahcāhk mamihcimēw kā-tipēyihcikēyit.
⁴⁷ mīna nitahcāhk cīhkēyihitam, ayisk
kisē-manitow ē-pimācihit,
⁴⁸ ēkwa nikī-kiskisitotāk, niya ē-atoskēyākaniwiwān.
anohc ohci kahkiyaw ayisiyiniwak sawēyimikowisiw nika-itikwak.
⁴⁹ ayisk ana kā-māwaci-sōhkātisit
kihci-kīkwaya nikī-tōtamāk mīna kanātaniyiw owīhowin.

(Plains Cree)

Slow breaths and read:

⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him from
generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵⁰ Áádóó dahodísiniígíí da'ahílchííhdéé'
áádóó da'ahílchííhgóó hwe'aa a'ááh
hasin bił dahóló.
⁵¹ Hagaan bee
hwe'adziil bééhózingo ájiilaa,
Diné bijéí biyi'déé' ádaa hodzódli yee

Slow breaths and read:

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generation to generation.

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áádóó da'ahíłchííhgóó hwe'aa a'ááh
hasin bił dahóló.

⁵¹ Hagaan bee
hwe'adziil bééhózingo ájiilaa,
Diné bijéí biyi'déé' ádaa hodzódłí yee (Navajo)

Slow breaths and read:

⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and
lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and
sent the rich away empty.

⁵² Tsu-na-li-ni-gi-dv du-we-ka-hv-sv u-na-nv-di-yi,
a-le u-yo i-yu-na-dv-hna-de-gi du-sa-la-da-nv.

⁵³ A-go-nu tsu-ni-yo-si-s-gi o-s-dv ge-sv du-ka-li-i-s-ta-nv,
tsu-ne-hna-i-no a-sv-ha do-u-ne-nv-s-di-yi ni-du-wa-ne-lv-gi.

(Cherokee)

Slow breaths and read:

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

⁵⁴ Iye towaonxila kin he kiksuye,ca Israel
ookiyeye cin he ikiye ce;

⁵⁵ Hunkakewicunyanpi, Aberaham cinca
kici, henan ohinniyan oie
wicakicaton qon hje iyececa ce,
eya,

(Sioux Lakota)

WO CI KI YAYE.

Recommended reading

- [The Executive Summary](#) of Canada's "National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls"
- [The Declaration](#) of the ELCA to People of African Descent
- "[Seeing the Face of God in Each Other](#): The Antiracism Training Manual of The Episcopal Church"

ACTION 2: MAKE A COMMITMENT

Faith

"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2

Fact Sheet

- Four women a day in the United States are killed by their partners.⁸
- In the U.S., White women earn only \$0.79 for every \$1 earned by a White man, Black women earn \$0.62 and Hispanic or Latino women \$0.54.⁹
- 67% of the transgender community reported negative workplace outcomes such as being fired or forced to resign, not being hired or being denied a promotion while in the workforce.¹⁰

Reflection and Action

Bearing one another's burdens requires that faith communities respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG) and other forms of discrimination and hold themselves accountable to survivors. Commit your faith community to fulfilling the spirit and actions of the global campaign. You can adapt and adopt the pledge below and post it on your website or on social media.

We proclaim with one voice that violence against women exists in our communities and is morally, spiritually and universally intolerable. We recognize the damage that gender-based violence and other forms of gender injustice do to women, girls and society as a whole.

We acknowledge that our sacred texts, traditions and values too often have been misused to perpetuate and condone abuse. We draw upon our healing texts and practices to help make our families and societies whole.

As people of faith, we believe in the inherent dignity and divinity intrinsic to each person and are called to uphold it by Matthew 25:40: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

We hereby commit ourselves to learn and take action surrounding gender-based violence by engaging in the global campaign, 16 Days of Activism, and we will continue to learn and take action after its conclusion.

⁸ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mind-games/201909/the-number-women-murdered-partner-is-rising>

⁹ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/03/24/482141/quick-facts-gender-wage-gap/>

¹⁰ <https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf>

ACTION 3: DIALOGUE ON GIRLS' EDUCATION

Faith

"Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come." **Proverbs 31:25**

Fact Sheet

- At least 207,459 children younger than 18, most of them girls, were married in the United States between 2000 and 2015.¹¹
- One in five women in college experiences sexual assault.¹² Students are at the highest risk of sexual assault in the first few months of their first and second semesters in college.¹³
- Women who identify as lesbian, bisexual or gay are more likely to experience sexual assault on college campuses than those who identify as heterosexual.¹⁴
- As of 2022, at least 38 African Union countries have measures in place that protect the right to education for pregnant students and adolescent mothers to various degrees.¹⁵

Reflection and Action

Episcopal Relief & Development's Violence Against Women and Girls program in Liberia, a partnership with the Episcopal Church Liberia Relief and Development (ECLRD), [convenes Christian and Muslim faith leaders for dialogue and reflection](#) on religious, social and cultural practices and beliefs that can undermine or uplift women and girls' strength and dignity. Over the course of 8 years we've witnessed remarkable change through [interfaith collaboration](#) and community-led initiatives that included:

- Decreased intimate partner violence (IPV) experienced by women from 41% to 33%.
- Decreased adolescent boys' IPV perpetration; decreased men's IPV perpetration in three of four counties.
- Improved anti-VAWG and gender-equitable attitudes for all congregant groups (i.e., men, women, adolescent boys and girls).
- Increased knowledge of available VAWG services for survivors.

A crucial tool for facilitating thoughtful and challenging reflections is the Fact, Association, Meaning and Action (FAMA) tool. FAMA is a behavior-change communication tool presented as a set of visual cards used to assist faith leaders, women, girls, boys and men in identifying and understanding various social phenomena that affect women's and girls' freedoms. Most

¹¹ https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/child-marriage-in-the-US-prevalence-impact_8-2020_ICRW.pdf

¹² <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ccsvsfr.pdf>

¹³ Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network. (2016). Campus Sexual Violence Statistics

¹⁴ <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ccsvsfr.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/30/across-africa-many-young-mothers-face-education-barriers#:~:text=As%20of%202022%2C%20at%20least,adolescent%20mothers%20to%20various%20degrees>

cards depict discrimination against girls to emphasize links between early socialization and subsequent abuses such as intimate- partner violence.

FAMA trainings foster a deepening engagement around socio-economic factors that inhibit the education of girls, such as early pregnancy and sexual abuse and harassment by teachers and peers. The FAMA cards have led to scrutiny and challenges to long-held sentiments such as: “If you invest in a girl’s education, she will simply be married off and your investment will be wasted.”

Review the images of the FAMA cards themed “education for girls” and “sex for grades.” Then engage your community in a dialogue in response to the questions the cards pose.

ACTION 4: FOSTER DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Faith

"In the church, too, we must avoid any implications in our teachings or behavior that men and boys are in any way superior to women and girls or entitled to dominate them. We know that the Bible was written in cultures where women were not equal. But Genesis is clear that, in our creation, [all genders] equally reflect God's image and so are worthy of equal dignity and respect (Gen. 1:27). The same equality is true in salvation, for 'there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ' (Gal. 3:28)."

[Archbishop](#) Thabo Cecil Makgoba, *"To the Laos – To the People of God"* (2013)

Fact Sheet

- In 1988, the Rt. Rev. Barbara Harris became the first female bishop consecrated in the Anglican Communion.
- The Dutch Reformed Church Botswana ordained its first female priest in 2003.
- The Church of England appointed its first female bishop, the Rt. Rev. Libby Lane, in 2019.
- The first female bishop in Central and East Africa was consecrated in 2021 from the Anglican Church of Kenya- [Emily Awino Onyango](#)
- There were [97 female bishops at the last Lambeth Conference, up from ~14 from the one before](#)

Reflection and Action

Imagine a gathering of bishops. Imagine a convening of leading Episcopal school educators. Do you imagine an inclusive and diverse leadership?

The Beijing Platform states that representation of women in leadership is critical for development. Episcopal Relief & Development's programs invest in institutional change that supports transformative leadership positions for women to help change harmful attitudes about women's role in society. This is highlighted in the Mazi yi Moyo (Water is Life) program in Angola, a partnership with the Anglican Church of Angola.

This is highlighted in the Diocese of Aru's women's empowerment program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a partnership between Episcopal Relief & Development and the Anglican Church of Congo. Through vocational training centers, women like Brigitte gain skills in cutting, sewing, and entrepreneurship. But the program accomplishes another goal: transforming attitudes about women's leadership. Brigitte's husband, Orionzo, initially had doubts about her participation but came to recognize the program's importance after witnessing the positive changes in his wife's confidence and capabilities. Today, both speak out as advocates for equality in their community, demonstrating how investing in women's leadership creates ripple effects that shift harmful social norms about women's roles in society.

Read more about the Diocese of Aru's women's empowerment program in Episcopal Relief & Development's 2024 Impact [Report](#).

Read Tearfund's guidelines for integrating women's specific sanitation needs into WASH programs [here](#).

ACTION 5: FOCUS THE LENS ON VAWG WITH THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Faith

"For just as a body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less part of the body." 1 Corinthians 12:12-15

Fact Sheet

- About 17 % of Zambian girls aged 15 to 19 are married, compared to only 1 % of boys of the same age group.¹⁶
- 32 % of Kenyan young women aged 18 to 24 and 18 % of their male counterparts reported experiencing sexual violence before age 18.¹⁷

Reflection and Action

In 2020, the Anglican Communion launched a notable series of webinars to mark the 16 Days of Activism. Speakers included the Most Rev. [Thabo Cecil Makgoba](#), archbishop of Cape Town and metropolitan of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, who encouraged people of faith to make fighting violence against women and girls within the church part of the liturgy: "If it is read, if it is sung, if it is prayed, it is believed." Series themes included: [addressing violence around the communion](#); and [engaging men](#) in ending violence against women and girls.

¹⁶ <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/zambia-fighting-gender-based-violence-fresh-cases-continue- emerge>

¹⁷ <https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2018/may/gender-based-violence- in-kenya>

ACTION 6: ENGAGE MEN AND BOYS

Faith

"Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman."
1 Corinthians 11:11

Fact Sheet

- Men are more likely to perpetrate violence because of unequal gender norms, including attitudes accepting of violence; or a sense of entitlement over women; if they have low levels of education; a history of child maltreatment; exposure to domestic violence against their mothers; harmful use of alcohol.¹⁸
- One in 40 men in the U.S. is a victim of rape or attempted rape during his lifetime.¹⁹
- In the U.S., 97% of domestic-abuse perpetrators are male.²⁰

Reflection and Action

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a societal crisis, and it is imperative that we engage women and girls, men and boys in combatting it so that our work is transformative. Engaging men and boys in transforming harmful gender norms and unequal power dynamics is critical to achieving gender equality. For transformative, sustainable change to occur, men and boys must see themselves as partners in the process. Men and boys also benefit when harmful norms are challenged.

[St. John's Episcopal Church](#) in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, engages men and boys, women and girls in its ministry for gender equality and justice. Initiatives include a project advocating for equitable access to menstrual-hygiene products and a forum for men and boys to examine their responsibilities to end VAWG and other forms of inequity.

We encourage you to review the image of the Faith, Association, Meaning, Action (FAMA) card themed "economic violence", found [here](#), and then engage your community in dialogue in response to the questions it poses.

Recommended reading

- "[Change Begins with Us: Parenting for a World of Dignity for All](#)" by Episcopal Relief & Development Senior Program Officer Ernest Cajuste
- Promundo's "[The Role of Fathers in Parenting for Gender Equality](#)"
- The World Council of Churches and the AIDS Initiative in Africa's "[Contextual Bible Study Manual on Transformative Masculinity](#)"

¹⁸ <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

¹⁹ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf>

²⁰ <https://opdv.ny.gov/professionals/abusers/genderandipv.html>

ACTION 7: ENGAGE WITH THE EPISCOPAL PUBLIC POLICY NETWORK

Faith

"Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."
Isaiah 1:17

Fact Sheet²¹

- As of September 1, 2021, just 10 countries have a woman as head of state and 13 countries have a woman as head of government.
- Only four countries have 50% or more women in parliament in single or lower houses: Rwanda with 61%, Cuba with 53%, Bolivia with 53% and the United Arab Emirates with 50%.
- A further 19 countries, (nine in Europe, five in Latin America and the Caribbean, four in Africa and one in the Pacific), have reached or surpassed 40%.
- More than two-thirds of these countries have applied quotas – either legislated-candidate quotas or reserved seats – opening space for women's political participation in national parliaments.

Reflection and Action

The [Episcopal Public Policy Network \(EPPN\)](#), run by the [Office of Government Relations](#), is a grassroots network of Episcopalians across the country dedicated to carrying out the Baptismal Covenant call to strive for justice and peace through the active ministry of public policy advocacy.

EPPN advocates for stronger legislative protections against violence against women and girls. The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act has been reauthorized on a bipartisan basis four times since it was first passed, with the most recent reauthorization happening in 2022, which reauthorize VAWA through 2027.²²

The latest reauthorization preserves advancements made in previous reauthorizations and includes a number of additional improvements to the current law, which are:²³

1. Distributing funding to states, Tribes, and territories for local prosecutors, law enforcement, and victim advocates to support survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.
2. Expanding special Tribal criminal jurisdiction with support to Native communities.
3. Increasing culturally-specific resources and support for survivors and communities.

²¹ All facts taken from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>

²² <https://www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/senate-passes-bipartisan-violence-against-women-act-reauthorization>

²³ <https://www.ncdsv.org/violence-against-women-act-vawa-30th-anniversary-september-2024.html#:~:text=Providing%20new%20funds%20to%20address,that%20address%20gender%2Dbased%20violence.>

4. Addressing online harassment and abuse and combatting cybercrimes.
5. Promoting prevention and strengthening services for survivors of sexual assault.
6. Addressing the nexus between firearms and domestic violence.
7. Expanding options for survivors to hold offenders accountable.

EPPN's spring 2019 action alert quoted the Rev. Bradley Hauff, missionary for Indigenous Ministries:

"The Violence Against Women Act is significant especially for Indigenous Native-American women, who experience, in proportion to the general U.S. population, much higher rates of domestic abuse and violence, higher than any group. In particular, laws which have made it virtually impossible to prosecute non-Indigenous men in tribal courts for acts of violence such as rape and murder committed against Indigenous women, as well as child abuse and sex trafficking on reservations, have exacerbated this problem."

EPPN also urges the passage of the Keeping Women and Girls [Safe from the Start Act](#) that expands the ability of the U.S. government to prevent VAWG and provide early interventions at the onset of humanitarian emergencies.

Recommended reading

General Convention Resolutions

- [2024-A017](#): Dedicated support within the Episcopal Church for LGBTQI+ and Women's Ministries
- [2024-A098](#): Addressing Violence against Women and Girls
- [2024-D042](#): Ending Child and Forced Marriage
- [2024-C037](#): Working for equity, support and protection of all LGBTQIA+ and Anglicans
- [2018-D032](#): Advocate for Gender Equity, Including Reproductive Rights, in Healthcare
- [2018-C054](#): Adopt Guiding Principles for Inclusion of Transgender and Non-binary People
- [2022-D045](#): Support the Protection of LGBTQI+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers

ACTION 8: DIALOGUE ON HIV/AIDS AND DISCRIMINATION

Faith

*"Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand." **Isaiah 41:10***

Fact Sheet

- People living with HIV/AIDS experience high levels of labor discrimination. The International Labor Organization reports that people with HIV/AIDS have an unemployment rate three times higher than national averages.²⁴
- Women living with HIV experience significantly higher rates of intimate-partner violence than women that do not have the virus.²⁵
- Specific groups of women are disproportionately affected by HIV. An analysis of studies measuring the pooled prevalence of HIV in 50 countries estimated that, globally, female sex workers are approximately 14 times more likely to be infected than other women of reproductive age.²⁶

Reflection and Action

Every year on December 1, millions of people come together to commemorate World AIDS Day. It's an opportunity for people worldwide to advocate for the rights of people living with HIV and to memorialize those who have died from an AIDS-related illness. Founded in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first international day for global health. Since then, awareness has grown about the links between vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV) and HIV/AIDS.²⁷

Siempre Unidos is a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Honduras supported by Episcopal Relief & Development. Operating in Honduras since 1999, this organization focuses on clinical and community-based services, advocacy and outreach for people living with HIV and communities vulnerable to infection as a result of their marginalization, such as commercial sex workers, incarcerated populations and transgender youth. Siempre Unidos successfully reached UNAIDS 90-90-90 Campaign goals, with 91% of its patients maintaining suppressed viral loads.²⁸

Siempre Unidos outreach includes, a support group for those living with HIV/AIDS to support their medical and psychosocial needs better.

²⁴ https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/01_PeoplelivingwithHIV.pdf

²⁵ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/hiv-and-aids/facts-and-figures>

²⁶ https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/01_PeoplelivingwithHIV.pdf

²⁷ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/INT_CEDAW_GEC_4726_E.pdf

²⁸ UNAIDS' ambitious 90-90-90 campaign goals stated that: By 2020, 90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status. By 2020, 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy. By 2020, 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression.

The incidence of GBV against people living with HIV/AIDS, sex workers and LGBTQ populations in Honduras is extreme, and Siempre Unidos' ministry is vital.

Read more about the work of [Siempre Unidos](#) and you can join global activists commemorating World AIDS Day by wearing a red ribbon, the universal symbol of awareness and support for people living with HIV.

ACTION 9: DIALOGUE ON LIVED IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Faith

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." **Galatians 3:28**

Fact Sheet

In the US:

- 28% of LGBTQIA+ students are bullied online because of their sexual orientations.²⁹
- Nearly one in five lesbian, gay or bisexual students has been physically forced to have sexual intercourse, more than three times the rate of their heterosexual peers.³⁰

Reflection and Action

As Christ followers, members of The Episcopal Church have a legacy of inclusion, aspiring to tell and exemplify God's love for every human being. Bishops, priests and deacons cooperate as leaders at all levels of our church. Leadership is a gift from God and can be expressed by all people in our church, regardless of their identity or sexual orientation.

Read about [The Rainbow Initiative](#), which is Episcopal Migration Ministries' response to General Convention 2022 Resolution [D045 "On Supporting LGBTQ+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers"](#). Their goals for the Rainbow Initiative include: working with Episcopal congregations and others to bring visibility and aid to LGBTQ+ forced migrants, and reviewing and revising EMM materials and procedures in order to ensure that they are fully inclusive of LGBTQ+ forced migrants.

All Saints Episcopal Church in Beverly Hills and St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Long Beach, California, are just two of the US congregations that minister to LGBTQ communities. All Saints notes that 48% of the homeless youth in Hollywood, California, are LGBTQ. In their lives, they've faced the worst kind of bigotry and discrimination. Watch the ECF Vital Practices [webinar](#) "Discipleship from the Margins" on the transformative power of transgender youth leadership in The Episcopal Church.

Globally, LGBTQ people face discrimination based solely on their identities. Our partners in [Brazil](#) and [Honduras](#), Serviço Anglicano de Diaconio e Desenvolvimento and Siloe, challenge hate crimes and other forms of discrimination against LGBTQ populations.

Recommended reading

[Austen Hartke's](#) "Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians" (2018)

²⁹ <https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm>

³⁰ <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6509a1>

ACTION 10: DIALOGUE ON DISASTER RESPONSE

Faith

"He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8

Fact Sheet

- Globally, more than 70% of women have experienced gender-based violence in a crisis setting. Women often avoid using shelters due to the fear of sexual violence, putting their lives at further risk in disasters such as hurricanes.³¹
- In refugee camps around the world that arise as a result of natural disasters, conflicts and wars over scarce resources, women and girl refugees are exposed to higher risks compared to male refugees. Social strains in such situations aggravate stress levels in the family, which may result in incidences of domestic violence.³²
- There was an increase from 33.6% to 45.2% victimization rate for women and 36.7% to 43.1% for men after experiencing Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Calls to the National Domestic Violence Hotline from Gulf Coast states increased 13% to 21% in Louisiana.³³
- In some cases, social constructed masculine roles increase men's mortality in disaster situations. Many men are exposed to risky situations and even die because they believe that by being the "stronger sex" they need not take precautions and because society expects them to take heroic rescue action. For example, there were more immediate deaths among men when hurricane Mitch struck Central America, not only because they were engaged in open-air activities, but because they took fewer precautions when facing risks.³⁴

Reflection and Action

Disasters do not discriminate but their impact does. Disasters, whether they are manmade or related to natural hazards, affect each of us differently. Climate change hazards, such as drought, severe flooding and tropical storms, are exacerbating existing inequalities, often resulting in more negative impacts for women. During and after disasters, women are at greater risk of experiencing violence, including rape, sexual exploitation, and assault. In addition to violating human rights, violence impedes development gains, as it undermines physical and mental health, prevents women from assuming leadership and decision-making roles, and impacts the economy through increased health expenditure and reduced productivity. This threatens the achievement of sustainable development. The United Nations Population Fund urges us to pay attention to VAWG risks in disaster-management laws,

³¹ [ActionAid International. 2016](#)

³² https://www.unisdr.org/files/48152_disasterandgenderstatistics.pdf

³³ <https://www.hscadv.org/policy-and-research/disasters-and-dv/>

³⁴ Bradshaw, 2004

policies and planning, and to assume VAWG is taking place, even if no reliable data is available.³⁵

In the aftermath of disasters, the Episcopal Relief & Development disaster team works with local partners to respond to the physical and emotional needs of the most vulnerable, helping individuals and families to recover from disaster. You can read about how in the US, [Episcopal Relief & Development works with dioceses](#) to assist members of vulnerable groups in the **immediate aftermath** of natural and human-made disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes, oil spills and other disasters.

Also read our current partnerships with dioceses in [Puerto Rico](#), [Maui, California](#) and [New Orleans](#), to address **long-term recovery** needs after recent major disasters like hurricane Ida and wildfires.

Our team is not only working with partners immediately following a disaster, but we also walk along side of them as they walk with their communities to find long-term solutions that are both climate-adaptive and meet their stated needs. You can read about our **long-term recovery** program in the dioceses of [Puerto Rico](#), [Maui, California](#) and [New Orleans](#).

Our unique partnerships work in low-income, undocumented and migrant communities to restore homes and provide emotional support, all while implementing disaster resilience strategies that will help the most vulnerable withstand future disasters.

Recommended reading

[“Loving One Another: A Biblical Discussion Toolkit on Gender-Based Violence.”](#) Anglican Service of Diakonia and Development (SADD) of the Anglican Church of Brazil, Global Partnerships Committee of the Scottish Episcopal Church and Christian Aid Scotland

³⁵ <https://www.cisa.gov/publication/guidance-essential-critical-infrastructure-workforce> [Natural Disaster and Gender Based Violence - There was an increase from 33.6% to 45.2% victimization rate for women and 36.7% to 43.1% for men after experiencing Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Calls to the National Domestic Violence Hotline from Gulf Coast states increased 13% to 21% in Louisiana.](#)

ACTION 11: FAITH COMMUNITIES AS SAFE SPACES

Faith

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." **Luke 4:18-19***

Fact Sheet

- "Although rates of IPV are high, rates of help seeking for this issue are relatively quite low. Research has suggested that between half and three quarters of female survivors in the US never report violence to the police, and that only about 40% of survivors seek medical or psychological care."³⁶
- Faith communities are often the first place survivors of violence against women and girls turn to for help, yet many clergy report feeling unprepared to respond appropriately to disclosures of abuse.³⁷
- Studies show that survivors who receive supportive responses when they first disclose abuse are more likely to seek additional help and experience better recovery outcomes.³⁸
- Approximately 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men have experienced severe intimate partner violence, but many cases go unreported due to shame, fear, or lack of safe disclosure environments.³⁹

Reflection and Action

Faith communities have a sacred responsibility to create environments where all people can experience safety, healing, and the fullness of God's love. Too often, however, survivors of violence against women and girls find that churches are unprepared to respond with the care and competence that trauma requires.

Creating truly safe spaces means moving beyond good intentions to develop systematic approaches to prevention, recognition and response. This includes training leadership to recognize signs of abuse, establishing clear protocols for supporting survivors, and building networks with professional services.

In 2012, the Anglican Consultative Council requested all provinces to adopt and implement the Charter for the Safety of People within the Churches of the Anglican Communion. The Charter establishes 5 key commitments:

³⁶ Fleming CJ, Resick PA. Professional versus personal resource utilization in survivors of intimate partner violence. *Psychol Trauma*. 2016 May;8(3):319-24. doi: 10.1037/tra0000074. Epub 2015 Sep 21. PMID: 26390106; PMCID: PMC4801694.

³⁷ Goertzen, G. (2021, October 26). Creating safer faith communities for survivors of abuse. *Good Faith Media*. <https://goodfaithmedia.org/emerging-voices-creating-safer-faith-communities-for-survivors-of-abuse/>

³⁸ Jacques-Tiura AJ, Tkatch R, Abbey A, Wegner R. Disclosure of sexual assault: characteristics and implications for posttraumatic stress symptoms among African American and caucasian survivors. *J Trauma Dissociation*. 2010;11(2):174-92. doi: 10.1080/15299730903502938. PMID: 20373205; PMCID: PMC2862213.

³⁹ Harbor House. (n.d.). Statistics. *Harbor House*. <https://www.harborhousedv.org/resources/statistics/>

1. **Providing support where there is abuse** - Ensuring survivors receive immediate care and ongoing support
2. **Implementing effective responses to abuse** - Having clear procedures for reporting and responding to disclosures
3. **Adopting and promoting standards for the practice of pastoral ministry** - Training clergy and lay leaders in trauma-informed care
4. **Assessing suitability for ministry** - Proper screening and background checks for those in positions of trust
5. **Promoting a culture of safety** - Creating environments where abuse is prevented and survivors are believed and supported

The Anglican Communion Safeguarding Commission recommends implementing the **8 C's** framework:

- **Common Principles** - Adopt clear safeguarding guidelines and ensure consistent implementation
- **Coordinate** - Work collaboratively between different ministries and leadership levels
- **Collaborate** - Partner with professional services, law enforcement, and community organizations
- **Children** - Include and meaningfully involve children in creating safe environments
- **Consult** - Include survivors' voices and community input in developing policies
- **Communicate** - Ensure all staff, volunteers, and congregants understand safeguarding principles
- **Continuously** learn and improve policies based on experience and best practices
- **Complaints** mechanisms - Establish clear, accessible procedures for reporting concerns

Faith communities can take practical steps to become safer spaces by [developing trauma-informed approaches to worship and pastoral care](#), creating private spaces for confidential conversations, establishing partnerships with local domestic violence organizations, and ensuring that sermons and teachings affirm the equal dignity of all people while never excusing or minimizing abuse.

Consider conducting a safety audit of your faith community: Are there private spaces for confidential conversations? Do your leaders know how to respond supportively to disclosures? Are your teachings consistently affirming of survivors while condemning violence? Do you have clear referral pathways to professional services?

Recommended Reading

Read more about [creating trauma-informed faith communities](#) and [implementing comprehensive safeguarding policies](#).

ACTION 12: DIALOGUE ON WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND FINANCIAL SECURITY

Faith

"But she said, 'As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug: I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.'" 1 Kings 17:12

Fact Sheet

- Women around the world are responsible for 75 % of all unpaid work.⁴⁰
- Between 1995 and 2015, the global female labor-force participation rate decreased from 52.4% to 49.6%. The corresponding figures for men are 79.9% and 76.1%, respectively. Worldwide, the chances for women to participate in the labor market remain almost 27 percentage points lower than those for men.⁴¹

Reflection and Action

In 2019, the Center for Women's Global Leadership dedicated its toolkit for the 16 Days of Activism to raising awareness of the International Labor Organization [Convention](#) on Violence and Harassment adopted that year. Violence and harassment in the world of work is a global phenomenon that disproportionately and uniquely affects women, prohibiting them from fully realizing their human rights. This abuse contributes to social and economic inequality, creates vulnerability and perpetuates exploitation and precarious working conditions for millions based on sex, race, class and other social characteristics.

Discriminatory barriers to women's integration into the workplace combine with barriers to women's financial inclusion in accessing banking services and exacerbate the feminization of poverty. Data show that, when women have more financial earning power and the ability to decide how finances are managed, they bring positive economic change to the lives of their children, families and communities.

Episcopal Relief & Development's programs encourage women to participate in financial decisions and to earn an income so they can provide food and health care for their families, as well as educate their children. Women participate in Savings with Education (SwE) groups, which offer critical financial and business training as well as provide small-business loans to individuals and groups. SwE groups develop micro-insurance products, village banks and cooperatives for people without access to traditional financial markets and institutions.

Read about the [SwE](#) program in Angola to learn more about the impact it has on women's financial health and well-being and watch Josephine Hicks, former Episcopal Relief &

⁴⁰ <https://16dayscampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-Global-16Days-Campaign-Guide-Final.pdf>

⁴¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_457317.pdf

Development vice president for Episcopal Church Programs, speak about community empowerment and SwE [here](#).

ACTION 13: DIALOGUE ON HOUSING INSECURITY

Faith

*"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." **Matthew 25:35-40***

Fact Sheet

- One of every four homeless women in the United States is homeless because of violence committed against her.
- More than 92% of homeless mothers have experienced severe physical and/or sexual abuse during their lifetimes.⁴²
- In many major cities around the country, domestic violence is cited as the top reason for homelessness among families with children.⁴³

Reflection and Action

Faith-based communities dedicated to serving survivors of violence against women and girls (VAWG) are located throughout the U.S. One such resource is [Thistle Farms](#), located in Tennessee. This Episcopal organization assists survivors of domestic violence through a two-year residential program that provides safe housing, a meaningful job and a support system of other survivors.

Our partner, The Anglican Church of Burundi (PEAB), refers women experiencing violence to government-run safe houses for shelter and medical care, including psycho-social support. [PEAB](#) also engages and enrolls survivors of violence in workshops on financial security. In 2019, it formed five savings groups, with approximately 25 members in each. Some group members are using their savings for group income-generating projects.

These opportunities for shelter and financial empowerment, coupled with the social networking and cohesion that group membership in savings and loans programs provide, build the social and financial-support systems that can help prevent violence against women and children, as well as improve the lives of women already affected by such violence.

⁴² <https://www.greendoors.org/facts/family-homelessness.php>

⁴³ Ibid

ACTION 14: OBSERVE THURSDAYS IN BLACK WITH THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Faith

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." **Matthew 5:9**

Fact Sheet

- People with intellectual disabilities – women and men – are the victims of sexual assault at more than seven times the rate for people without disabilities. That rate increases to about 12 times for women with intellectual disabilities.⁴⁴

Reflection and Action

The World Council of Churches (WCC) describes Thursdays in Black as a global movement for a world without rape and violence. The campaign is simple but profound: Wear black on Thursdays and show your respect for women who are resilient in the face of injustice and violence. The WCC invites us to share our Thursdays in Black photos on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, using hashtags #ThursdaysinBlack and #WCC! See the WCC video "Towards a World Without Violence" [here](#).

Recommended Reading

"[The Handbook](#) for Female Christian Survivors of Domestic Abuse," published by [Restored](#)

⁴⁴ <https://www.npr.org/2018/01/08/570224090/the-sexual-assault-epidemic-no-one-talks-about>

ACTION 15: EMBODY JUSTICE, MERCY AND COMPASSION

Faith

"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns".

Psalm 46:5

Fact Sheet

- 18 Indigenous women ran for congressional seats in 2020 — a record in a single year.⁴⁵
- A record number of Indigenous women were elected to Congress in 2020.⁴⁶
- The 117th Congress has a record number of Native-American women after voters elected three to the House of Representatives.⁴⁷

Reflection and Action

The Rev. Canon "Ginny" Doctor contributed to the 2021 "Churches Beyond Borders Joint Devotions." She was a member of the Mohawk Nation Turtle Clan and lived for years in New York state, Alaska, and Toronto. Ordained a priest in The Episcopal Church, she most recently served as the coordinator for Indigenous Ministries in the Anglican Church of Canada. Ginny passed away in 2021 at the age of 71. She dedicated much of her work and passion toward justice for Indigenous Peoples on the continent of Turtle Island, with a particular concern for Indigenous women and girls and the disproportionate violence they often face. Ginny's reflection excerpted from a previously published article for The Anglican Journal (June 11, 2019) under the title "Where are all our flowers going?" is a call to justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Churches Beyond Borders offered this reflection as a tribute to Ginny's legacy and vision.

"Where have all the flowers gone...?" – Pete Seeger

I grew up on a reserve near Syracuse, New York. As children, for the most part, we lived a carefree, safe life. There were times of family violence related to alcohol abuse; alcohol was not part of our traditional lifestyle, but was brought to my people by the settlers. We called it the "mind changer," and that is what it did.

Alcohol brought with it the power to change our communities — but another, greater problem is one I remember well, and one that our whole country is now facing. For Indigenous communities across North America, the disappearance and murder of women and girls is a life changer — once that kind of violence enters the community, it doesn't leave. I remember one of our young girls being abducted, sexually abused and murdered. It devastated the whole community, and after that our moms were more restrictive about where we went and told us not to travel the roads alone.

⁴⁵ <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/election-analysis/native-american-women-candidates-2020>

⁴⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/nov/04/native-american-women-elected-congress-record-number>

⁴⁷ Ibid

This kind of advice is widespread among Indigenous women and based on our life experience. When I lived in Alaska, I was driving a group of elders to a meeting in one of the Alaska Native villages. They were talking about the road we were traveling. One said there were many good berry patches off that road. Another said, "Yes, but we always have to carry a gun and never pick alone." Then one elder said, "This is a bad road. Several women have died along this road." She went on to say, "When I pick berries, I don't fear the bears. I fear those crazy white men."

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) has now produced [its final report](#). It's more than a thousand pages long, with personal stories of loss and the hard numbers. It's in plain language and is available online for free. Where do we go from here? How do you talk about a problem so large that it needs a thousand pages and its own acronym?

MMIWG has been with us for a long time; it goes way back to first contact. And it's here with us now. Every day on Facebook, I see several postings of missing Indigenous women and girls. Each one breaks my heart, and I wonder, "Where are all our flowers going?" They are gone to death and human trafficking.

What needs to change in our communities to protect our women and girls? I see two ways to help our women and girls, and our church can help in both of these tasks. For one thing, we can make a good life for them in our communities — a task that is economic and environmental. Maybe then, they won't have to travel bad roads looking for something better. We must tend to the gardens in which our flowers grow, increasing economic justice within them. We can find value in their work and their skills, bringing opportunities to where they live.

The other way is spiritual. We can find value in who these women and girls are, in their being. This is about honoring the importance of women and girls by reconnecting with our traditional values: respect, humility, wisdom, truth, honesty, courage and, most important, love.

My niece just sent me pictures of the flowers she has grown; they are beautiful, but not as beautiful as the two daughters and son she is raising. There is beauty all around us. Look for it, cherish it and safeguard it — before you have to ask, "Where have all the flowers gone?"

ACTION 16: Observe Human Rights Day on December 10

Faith

Dear God, creator of the heavens and the earth, we pray for all who have gathered globally to observe the 16 Days of Activism.

Help us to see one another through eyes enlightened by understanding and compassion.

Release us from prejudice so that we can receive the stories of our sisters and brothers with respect and attention.

Open our ears to the cries of a suffering world and the healing melodies of peace.

*Empower us to be instruments in bringing about your justice, peace and equality everywhere.*⁴⁸

Fact Sheet

- Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. It is a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected.⁴⁹

Reflection and Action

The United Nations has organized [four world conferences on women](#). Each produced a political declaration.

The Fourth World Conference took place in Beijing in 1995. Next year (2025) marks 30 years since the Beijing Conference on Women's Rights and the popularization of the phrase "Women's Rights are Human Rights."

The [Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action](#) is a key global-policy document that sets strategic objectives and actions for the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality. In preparation for that conference, members of the Anglican [Mothers' Union](#) and Episcopal churches met frequently to identify their priorities.

During the conference, the women's consultation included a daily noonday prayer — an important pause amid long days of debate about ecumenical women's priorities for gender equality. Twenty- six years after the conference, women around the world continue to use this communal prayer, adapted to their circumstances. The prayer above is an adaptation of that prayer. We invite you to coordinate a noonday prayer with members of your faith community.

⁴⁸ Beijing Noonday Prayer [updated for Episcopal Relief & Development toolkit]

⁴⁹ <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights#:~:text=Human%20rights%20are%20rights%20inherent,and%20education%2C%20and%20many%20more.>

Read more about The Episcopal Church's continued advocacy for women's rights in the [Episcopal News Service](#).

CONCLUSION

The 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women is the most widely recognized and longest running campaign for women's rights in the world, and it spans two Sundays.

Reflect on your views of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) at the beginning of 16 Days of Activism compared to what you know now about its prevalence and about local and global responses. Will you continue the conversation around VAWG after 16 Days of Activism is over?

We challenge you to sustain your prayer, commitment, reflection and action throughout the year. For those seeking to go deeper into this work, Episcopal Relief & Development's [Grace, Justice & Hope Toolkit](#) offers comprehensive resources for integrating these actions into worship services, educational programs, and community formation throughout the year. Continue to follow Episcopal Relief & Development's partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Honduras, Brazil, Liberia and elsewhere as we strive to fulfil our common vision of community where all people – regardless of their identity – live together in abundant dignity, trust, hope and love.