



FAMILY: THE GIFT OF DIGNITY



Delight at new family member.

Photo:COTT.

The first foundation upon which the idea of family rests is 'Dignity'. Dignity is one of God's greatest gifts to humankind in creation – it gives us the right to be valued solely because we matter to God.

EDITORIAL

A problem with using the word 'family' is that, when set in a global context, it doesn't fit with a single understanding or description. 'Family' can mean what we want it to mean – biological, nuclear, extended, tribal, of nations, of churches, etc. At base, 'family' is a group of people in some sort of relationship. Yet, throughout human history, family has played an enduring and essential part in human experience and formation – psychologically, socially, legally and theologically. The idea of 'family', for most of us, evokes strong feelings of affiliation and loyalty towards other members of the family.

In the Bible we discover God using 'family' both in creating patterns for society and also as the place where the dignity of our being made in the image of God is received, recognised and nurtured. The gift of a name is symbolic of this bestowal of identity within the family, as it celebrates family as the primary place of belonging.

However, in whatever way 'family' is understood and experienced across the world, there are perhaps three biblical features which give structure to what makes 'family' distinctive. They also offer a thread of connection which makes sense of how 'family' sits at the heart of a global church.

The first foundation upon which the idea of family rests is 'Dignity'. Dignity is one of God's greatest gifts to humankind in creation – it gives us the right to be valued solely because we matter to God. This gift of dignity underpins and even goes beyond human rights enshrined in law, for human dignity is a gift of God's grace. As a gift of grace, such dignity is to be championed not only within the biological family, but also in the family of God's people. All the love and care which characterise family life are celebrations of the value which we give to one another as members of the family.

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The second foundation is 'Belonging'. The notion of belonging has its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. The people of Israel belong to God and are held within his loving focus. Belonging is also central to God's redemptive activity in Jesus. He calls us to belong to him and, in him, to each other. Belonging to family and community is a feature of being human, which Jesus celebrates in so many of his healing miracles as he enables those healed to be restored to the communal family from which their illness had separated them. The importance of not being lost from our family is celebrated in the parable of the Prodigal Son and is found in the astonishment of Jairus's family when their little girl is restored to them.

Yet dignity and belonging are fragile things, even within a family. Living together is no easy thing and through neglect, deliberate act or abuse, the interconnectivity which is so essential to being a family is damaged or destroyed. The character of forgiveness – expressed by the crucified Christ – is essential to restore the relationships which enable us to belong and which secures our dignity.

Forgiveness is the third foundation which is fundamental to being a healthy family. Forgiveness enables the future, because within a family, relationships can be recovered, restored and renewed. Yet for a family to flourish, such forgiveness has to be accompanied by a repentance which moves a family and its relationships in a new direction, away from those things which have hurt, damaged or abused.

Advocacy for the family is not to champion a particular expression of family connection. Advocacy gives voice to the networks of connections which receive the God-given gift of dignity and which celebrate each person by ensuring that they know that they belong and that none should be marginalised or lost. At its best, the family is a redemptive community, where we experience the character of God's forgiveness through the forgiving love of those of whom we are part.

Giving voice to the family and resisting all that strips dignity and all that excludes, is the stuff of the IAFN's work in the cause of a God who works through grace, who gifts dignity and who, through redemptive love, calls us to belong in the families of God's world.

Bishop David Rosedale, Chair of IAFN.

DIGNITY AND RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS



'Positive Masculinity': relating to children.

Photo:COTT.

The importance of Fathers

The Revd Lovington Nyoni of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa reflects on his own journey to understanding the need for positive masculinities in family settings.

The College of the Transfiguration, Grahamstown (COTT), is an Anglican Church residential centre in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa which comprises Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. Students also come from Zimbabwe, Botswana and sometimes as far afield as Sudan, Haiti and Mauritius. The diversity in culture and race gives richness to the theological ethos which forms the foundation of all College work. The concept of family is embraced in the COTT formation programme, which grapples with life in its entirety and involves a participatory approach, recognising the different racial and cultural contexts.

I am a male priest serving in the Diocese of Natal as the Diocesan Youth Coordinator and also as an Associate Chaplain for Anglican students in colleges and universities in the diocese. I was born in Swaziland and am married to a South African. Part of my theological and priestly formation happened at the College of the Transfiguration where I spent three years (2009-2011).

This background afforded me a wide spectrum of social and cultural experiences and I can emphatically say there is a great need for an understanding of 'Positive Masculinity' in Southern Africa. As I interacted with fellow students from different cultures and dioceses, it emerged that we are in general agreement that most of the challenges we associate with the youth like drugs, crime, high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, suicide, prostitution, incest, sexual harassment, can be attributed to a lack of healthy family units and positive masculinities in our society. Most children in Southern Africa grow without a father either he is physically not there for some reason or he is

present but does not meet the family's need for a father. He is as good as absent.

Exploring the ministry to children in a Biblical Hebraic context (during the Christian Education module), led me to conclude that it is not just a male role model that our children and youth need, they need fathers. I think to expect a child to be positively impacted or influenced by just a male not a father is an improvisation. The designation 'male' is devoid of the relational element that *babe* in SiSwati or *ubaba* in isiZulu (a father) signifies. In Swazi culture a male *umuntfu lomdvuna* is a derogatory term given to an irresponsible young man or a father. Yet the Mosaic Law spoke precisely to parents in the context of family units on how to bring up their children. The home provides parents and children space to be in close proximity, to enhance relationships, fellowship, intimacy and engagement. The shared space during

meals makes a perfect platform for shared learning, both explicit and implicit. Engaging in my Christian Education class made me realise that even though the biblical instruction said parents had to teach their children the Law (Deuteronomy 6:6-9), it should be apparent that parents could not be experts in the Law or God's way of life. Before God, parents and children stand on the same plane as fellow human beings. The only sure distinction perhaps is that each person, child and parent, will always be at different stages of their walk with God. It follows then that voices of both parents and children were heard, being maximised by attributes such as humility and love that

Hearing the 'voices' of young people while doing the course, voices we fathers muzzle in our homes, churches and society, was a huge challenge.

characterised family life. This two-way learning process allowed for interrogation, feedback, observation, monitoring and accountability. Children are allowed to seek clarity; parents are humble enough get a different perspective on matters from children and so on.

It is in this context that 'positive masculinities' are a given. I learnt that it is in this context where intellectual and physical changes of children are observed, spoken about and made easily intelligible for children. Where the lines of communication between fathers and their children are open and the playing field level, subjects like sex and romantic relations are not taboo but part of an ongoing conversation about life.

It was shattering for me to learn in the Christian Education course how much most of the cultures I have been exposed to in Southern Africa, even in the wider continent of Africa, provided for models of family units or communities with similar principles as the Hebraic model of raising children. But along the way, those models have either been distorted – largely by men

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– or disrupted by labour-migration, death, etc. None of the African cultures I know condone male dominance and the subjugation of children. The primary role of a father was to love his family. But in many of the cultures, the role of a father has been relegated to biologically fathering a child, providing financial and material support for the family, ensuring the safety of one's family and effecting discipline in the home.

So glaring was the extent of distortion of fatherhood in our society that many fathers assume that fulfilling the above roles automatically translates to love for the child, and so children have an obligation to show appreciation, to love their fathers – especially by toeing the line. Another assumption is that fulfilling these roles gives us fathers the prerogative to determine what is best for everyone in the family.

As we continued to explore components of the course, especially psychological development of young people, postmodernism and the impact of consumerism on our kids, I realised how vast the gulf was between us and our children. Because most of us do not spend quality time with our children, we do not know where they are intellectually and emotionally. We have no idea what they want from a father. When we happen to be at home, we want to dictate, to impose what we think is right for them. This is not helpful for our relationship and muzzles their voices. Unfortunately, exposure to consumerism accentuates their aspirations. Before long, we lose our privilege to be fathers to our children because, according to them, fatherhood is earned not just ascribed. To some degree, fatherhood is ascribed to the man for his biological contribution to the 'making' of the child, but that privilege is revocable should he fail to meet the obligations of a father.

It was through this Christian Education course, facilitated by the Dean of Studies, Father Percy Chinganga, that I felt God calling me specifically to work with the youth. Before this, I had never been directly involved with them either in my parish or diocese. Hearing the 'voices' of young people while doing the course,

voices we fathers muzzle in our homes, churches and society, was a huge challenge. I could not bear the thought that some of them end up in red-light districts, in prisons, in rehabs because there was no one to love and guide them. Having been raised in a home where children were not allowed anywhere near adults, a home where there was no room for sex education and open dialogue on sensitive matters with my father, my perception had to change as God was drawing my attention to positive masculinities within youth ministry. This change did not come easily but I am glad that today I am able to relate to young people. Fellow students at College knew that before I liked to keep to myself, but it all changed.

Young people are not afraid to approach me on any subject especially matters relating to relationship and sex and their frustration with their parents.

In April, I organised a Diocesan Youth Sports Day where about 2000 young people turned up – an event with great impact on young people in the diocese. Today, I am able to clean up an auditorium which the youth had been using for a festival and have fun with them while we do that. Young people are not afraid to approach me on any subject especially matters relating to relationship and sex and their frustration with their parents. Many of these youngsters are proud to introduce me to their peers not as their priest, or chaplain but as 'daddy'. I am not a youth ministry guru who provides them with all the answers to their questions. I am clear that I am a fellow pilgrim with them and part of my mandate is to champion and embody positive masculinities in the world, especially for the benefit of raising a balanced generation for God. I carry the same attitude to my family and wife and it is building us day by day.

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Empowering Women for family development

Marie Pierrette Bezara, Mothers' Union Provincial President, writes from Madagascar

Family is the basic building-block of our society, but seeing its current situation in this changing world, we are afraid for its future. However, God gave a privileged position to the family compared to all his works. First, God placed the man in a garden with a rich environment; his role was only to cultivate, to protect, to guard it and to respect some obligations. God promised to continue to provide him with everything he needed, then God gave a woman as a suitable companion to help him: (Genesis 2:18); moreover, God offers the woman the chance to come into partnership, to become a mother – what a marvellous task! That is the family in God's plan: a family who will never lack for anything, where each one has a space, a family who lives in peace, unity and stability.



Women at the centre: family picnic.

Photo: Madagascar MU.

Nowadays what has occurred? We see families destroyed, separated, couples divorced, impoverished families, single mothers, mothers who lose their space in the family.

Let us find out more about the issues affecting families in

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MU members proudly display their handicrafts.

Photo: Madagascar MU.

Madagascar: women in Madagascar, also known as Malagasy women, generally live longer than men whom they outnumber. They are traditionally subservient to their husbands. Eighty per cent of Malagasy families earn their living from agriculture so the majority of fathers are farmers, and unfortunately use inappropriate traditional agricultural methods. These old-fashioned farming practices combined with natural hazards (cyclones, drought, locust invasions) limit production. However, children are considered as wealth and each family, on average, has more than eight children, making family planning traditionally a taboo. In Madagascar, the marriage does not give rise to a new distinct entity but serves chiefly to continue the life of the broader family. It provides for a flow of life, that the life received from the ancestors will be passed on from generation to generation.

Outside the towns and cities, there is no easy transport or communication. Madagascar is the fourth largest island in the world but it is among the poorest countries. The protracted political crisis has taken a heavy toll on its economy and its people – especially the most vulnerable. More than 80 per cent of the population lives on under two dollars a day and poverty has sharply increased. The right to education cannot be fulfilled if poverty prevails. Because of the limited agricultural production, we see fathers not able to afford scholarships for their children and many births are not registered. Malnutrition and lack of access to health care are prevalent. Fathers who are not able to satisfy their families' needs sometimes engage in binge-drinking and the mothers are subject to domestic violence. The young girls become pregnant and some young people are migrating to the cities. To seek for their livelihood, girls become involved in prostitution or sexual tourism, and the boys become offenders. We are overwhelmed in the face of the family's plight.

The Mothers' Union (MU) would not close its eyes in the face of this daily suffering because its objective is 'Christian care for the family'. As Diocesan President of Toamasina, which consists of 40 parishes – 34 of them in rural areas, I was able to run projects with the MU members in rural and urban areas.

In rural areas, the first project was one where each month we visited a village in order to share the Gospel. The second project had the overall goal of creating income for women from their talents. Malagasy women, especially in rural areas, are naturally good at handicraft, and

each afternoon, after their work in the field, their *divertissement* is making baskets for their own home with local leaves. So the

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MU encouraged them to make more baskets than they use at home, and store them in the MU store.

In Toamasina and other urban areas, we put in place another project to support income-generating activities for women. We created a learning centre with training sessions on dressmaking, cooking, embroidery, basketry and pastry-making. The trainers are MU volunteers, and groups of 30 single mothers in difficulties are the beneficiaries. Each woman has a mentor who supports her till she is able to open a shop for her craft. Now there are about 384 beneficiaries who have their own shop, and most of them say that their life was changed by the project. They are happy because they can support themselves. As MU Provincial President, I now expect to extend this scheme to the other dioceses, and to put in place a new project for girls as a contribution towards reducing the number of young girls becoming pregnant.

I am aware that empowering women is a key and fundamental element for family development. May the light of God shine upon the family so women, with their own space, will save, for all members, its internal space and dignity.

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Children and teenagers: learning about respectful relationships

Senior Chaplain Eleanor O'Donnell writes about the 'Year of Dignity' at Geelong Grammar School, Australia

Geelong Grammar School is Australia's largest and arguably best known co-educational boarding school in Australia. There are eight Senior School boarding houses – four for girls and four for boys – as well as two co-educational day boarding houses. More than 80 per cent of Senior School students are full boarders. Our Middle School also has a mix of full boarders and day boarders, and brings the number of students on the campus to around 900. This means that a large group of girls and boys spend much of their lives together in this place during term-time, and the nurture of respectful gender relations becomes a twenty-four hour a day and seven-day a week enterprise in our Anglican setting.

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This year was proclaimed the *Year of Dignity* by the Director of Student Welfare as a way of reminding the whole school community that one of our core beliefs as a school is the nurture of strong relationships. Staff and students have been prompted to think again about the ten essential elements of dignity explained in Donna Hicks' recent book*. They are: Acceptance of Identity, Inclusion, Safety, Acknowledgment, Recognition, Fairness, Benefit of the Doubt, Understanding,

Independence and Accountability. These elements describe ten different ways people experience an acknowledgment of their dignity and, conversely, describe ten different ways people can experience an injury to their dignity – an emotional wound that undermines their sense of value and worth as a human being. As a school community that spends more time together than apart, these messages about building holistic relationships are taken seriously by staff and student alike in Assembly, in the Chapel, in the classroom and in each boarding house.

Two new focus groups for senior students are being set up this year specifically to consider what it means to be a female student at Geelong Grammar, and what it means to be a male student at Geelong Grammar. The pressures and expectations of gender in a boarding school context will be looked at closely for students by students, with the facilitation of senior staff. Although we have in the main a happy and harmonious community, we recognise that there may well be issues that girls

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face here that boys do not, and vice versa. There will also be similar issues that manifest differently for girls and boys – such things as body image, pressure to conform to a culture, health and nutrition, expressing sexuality, the use of drugs and alcohol, and conflict-resolution and the notion of friendship. What we seek above all things is for each student to flourish, and that necessarily includes being treated with dignity in all settings, and feeling safe in every aspect of school life.

Most of the specific issues that come to light in the focus groups will have already been considered in general terms through *Positive Education* – the active teaching of well-being strategies right across the school. The stated focus of Geelong Grammar School is learning to flourish, and our model of *Positive Education* has six domains of flourishing: positive purpose, positive accomplishment, positive engagement, positive health, positive emotions, and positive relationships.

Actively promoting respect of self and other, recognising the different but related concerns of girls and boys on campus, and teaching positive ways of flourishing as a subject in its own right and pursuing cross-curricular links, indicates the deep commitment the school has to an all-round education for each student. Our female and male students are necessarily shaping their attitudes to gender relationships here on campus each day and each night of term. That we openly focus on dignity as a core value, that we create opportunities for gender issues to be explored here, and that we explicitly teach students ways of flourishing as human beings of equal worth, make it less likely that our students will perpetrate or suffer abuse in close relationships. In fact, we hope that the nurture of dignity experienced at Geelong Grammar will become a hallmark of the lives of all who pass through its gates.

*Donna Hicks, *Dignity*, Yale University Press, 2011

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Romance Academy: learning about teenage relationships.

Photo: Romance Academy.

Teens, sex and Romance Academy

By Claire Benton-Evans, Youth & Children Officer for the Diocese of Edinburgh, Scottish Episcopal Church

Young people growing up in Scotland are facing a lot of opportunities and challenges that their parents did not have. Teenage girls at a Scottish High School spoke to me recently about their big groups of friends, which include boys and girls. "We all just hang out together", they said. "It's good, because we just get on with each other, like we'll have to at work." In Scotland, as in the rest of the UK, there is a broad acceptance of gender equality and differing sexuality – indeed, equal rights are enshrined in law and in school anti-bullying policies – although the girls still experience crude jokes, misogynistic behaviour and negative judgements of their physical appearance.

A particular challenge is the prevailing use of the internet and the impact it has on teenage relationships. "Everyone has a mobile phone", one girl said. "I know girls who have been pressured into sexting [sending sexual pictures of themselves by text] by their boyfriends. I know that a lot of the boys watch porn on their phones and tablets – sometimes we hear them talking about it." In this context, teenagers are surrounded by conflicting messages about sex and expectations of sexual behaviour.

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The ecumenical chaplaincy team at this girl's Scottish High School could see that something needed to be done, so they started a Romance Academy. This is a project that began in the UK, co-founded by Youth Worker, Rachel Gardner. It is strongly

supported by Anglicans (including the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams). The Romance Academy "exists to help young people to build and sustain healthy relationships; to assist parents in understanding and supporting their children; and to lead the charge in establishing a framework of healthy relationships for young people. We address the underlying causes of risky youth behaviour such as poor self-esteem, low aspirations and lack of positive family/community life by promoting the value of stable relationships through our unique 14-week intervention project. Our aim is not just to encourage young people to delay sexual activity, nor do we simply point them in the direction of contraception. Our aim is to give our young people the tools to make intelligent choices around relationships and sex."

We address the underlying causes of risky youth behaviour such as poor self-esteem, low aspirations and lack of positive family/community life by promoting the value of stable relationships

The church youth workers and chaplains working at this Scottish High School have seen the difference that Romance Academy has made to young people's lives. It has enabled boys and girls to talk to each other about relationships and explore some of the myths, pressures and expectations they face. Romance Academies are being run across the UK and their effectiveness is best expressed by the young people themselves. One teenage girl from London said: "I had never known what I really wanted in relationships. I lost my virginity when I was 14 but I knew I wanted to explore more about relationships... being in the Romance Academy gave me the confidence to say I wanted to wait. Before I would have jumped in and had sex straight away, but I gave myself time, and we really got to know each other. Everything I learnt through the Academy helped me to become a sort of grown-up. I know now I can be loved and I can love myself." A teenage boy said, "Every teenager is trying to find themselves and we think that having sex is the way to do it. That's why the Romance Academy was really important in helping me find out who I was without having to have sex."

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BELONGING AND IDENTITY



Ugandan children proudly show off their birth certificates.

Photo: PLAN.

Over 230 million children under five have not been registered at birth – with particularly low rates of registration in parts of Africa and South East Asia. The International Anglican Family Network, with support from many Archbishops and Bishops, is working on an initiative, in partnership with local churches and organisations such as the Mothers' Union, to increase the number of children who have the protection of a recorded name and date of birth and the rights the certificate can convey to health care and education in their later life. As Bishop David Rosedale, Chair of IAFN writes,

"The gift of a name to a new baby is a wonderful and a sacred moment, conferring both identity and status to the child as they take their place within the family and community. In our complex and bureaucratic world, Birth Registration is one way of ensuring that a child has both identity and status, not only in their family, but in the wider world. In the Bible, high significance is given to the gift of a name within the wider community of God's people, as an affirmation that we belong to the God who knows us by name. The public act of registering a birth gives worldly recognition to a truth of our faith: that each child coming into the world matters to God."

For more information about the importance of birth registration and how churches can help, please contact IAFN coordinator at St Andrew's House, 16, Tavistock Crescent, London W11 1AP, UK; mail@iafn.net

Identity, survival and child development

A worker with the Children at Risk Action Network (CRANE) a partner of Viva – a Christian organisation working to inspire lasting change in children's lives through the power of collective action – writes about the challenges of promoting birth registration in Uganda.

One of the pertinent issues raised in the fight against child abuse is the absence of records about children. These are not just for purposes of identity but also instrumental in accessing other basic rights for survival and development. According to *Uganda Health Demographic Survey 2011*, only three in every ten births of children under five are registered. CRANE has worked in partnership with churches and child ambassadors on this subject of child birth registration. Community mobilisation and awareness-raising about birth registration has been carried out by the child ambassadors – children working in safe clubs supported by mentors. Training-sessions were an eye-opener to parents about the importance and the legal procedures required to obtain a birth certificate. It was evident most people confuse the birth certificate with immunisation and birth-notification cards (given after delivery). Many have not registered their children because they are not aware of birth registration. An assessment made in two districts showed that 215 households had 237 children not registered. Many children are either born at home or in clinics where registration is not done, and the highest number of unregistered children was in rural areas.

Parents don't attach any importance to birth registration. Apart from some urban schools, rural schools don't ask for birth certificates when enrolling children until a certain level of education, so parents don't give it immediate attention. Besides, both government and local authorities pay lip-service to birth registration. Generally, there is limited understanding of what birth registration entails, why it has to be done and the major steps taken to obtain a certificate. Here are some of the parents' voices:

- "I thought a birth notification form is the birth certificate." (Buikwe)
- "How was I supposed to know this? I live deep in the village and gave birth at home under the help of a traditional birth attendant. She did not tell me anything like that." (Nakaseke)
- "I would like to register my children but I do not know where to go and where to start." (Care giver Bwaise)
- "What will I gain by registering my child? Is there any hope for sponsorship?" (Kambimbiri)

Society is also suspicious about birth registration because of political and traditional beliefs, while others say they associate it with child trafficking. As a result of this, some child ambassadors missed out on the opportunity to be helped to get birth certificates.

A person is charged for registering and the issuing of a birth certificate. To fully register a child costs a minimum of 15000Ug to 20,000Ug – in addition to the long distances to the nearest registration offices and the experience of making wasted trips. Mentors who were helping parents frequently made wasted trips to the sub-county and registrar's office. The Ugandan Registration Services Bureau (URSB) has the challenge of a poor network and one office serving many districts. Situations such as these, have made many parents reluctant, while others have lost interest after acquiring a short birth certificate from the district when the long birth certificate is required.

To help improve the status of birth registration, there is a need to increase awareness by exploring opportunities such as radio-talk shows, local newspapers, children's clubs, posters, television programmes and integrating or using scripture (for example Luke 2:1-20) to help society appreciate the importance of the act as well as the procedures for registering children.

Schools, churches and other institutions working with children, should include birth certificates as one of the child-protection documents needed for them to enrol on programme activities. One of the child ambassadors proposed that parents pay a mandatory fee through schools to support the exercise. However, this should be done in a way that does not put children at risk. Training and supporting local volunteers to help parents register, and working with authorities to bring birth registration services closer are needed, because most children are not registered due to the inaccessibility of birth registration facilities.

Churches and NGOs should advocate for free and compulsory birth registration and certificates because most parents fear the costs involved. Articles 7 and 8 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* give all children the right to a legally-registered name, officially recognised by the government, and a nationality. The Articles call all duty bearers to register all children at birth within their state of jurisdiction.

CRANE's work, outlined above, reached 997 adults from 20 communities with the message about child birth registration. A total of 668 children were able to receive their birth certificates. Of these, 448 were supported by CRANE while 220 were locally supported by primary care givers. This exercise is continuing, with more children being registered locally, but the goal of universal free birth registration, as set out in the Convention, is far from being achieved.

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Church help for women and girls.

Photo: Anglican Communion Office.

Domestic violence against women – Bangladesh

Presented by Janet Sarker, Church of Bangladesh Education Department

Bangladesh is highly populated and one of the poorest countries in the world. The socio-cultural environment germinates different types of discrimination across the diverse strata of community and gender difference where women face major problems. Girls are often considered to be the financial burden of their family and, from the time of birth, they receive less investment in health, education and other basic support. With the advent of puberty, differences in the ways that adolescent girls and boys are treated become much more prominent. Adolescence is not viewed as a distinct phase of life: instead the onset of physical maturity is seen as an abrupt shift from childhood to adulthood. At puberty, girls' mobility is often restricted, limiting their access to learning and necessary recreational and social activities.

Domestic violence is a pervasive problem in Bangladesh, presenting a huge threat to the security of girls and women. In 2007, research disclosed that more than half of married women aged from 15 to 49 had experienced some form of physical and/or sexual assaults from their husbands. More than one-third

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of both men and women believed that men are justified in beating their wives – for example if they argue. The practice of dowry, a lower age at marriage and poverty, are all associated with women's higher likelihood of experiencing violence. Adolescent girls are often victims of "Eve teasing" or sexual harassment, and are not prepared to cope with such a situation. In one of its most extreme forms, violence against women takes the form of acid attacks and burning.

Although legislation exists to prevent child marriage, dowry and acid attacks, enforcement remains weak. Since May 1999, there have been reported almost 3,000 cases of acid-throwing, the

vast majority against girls and women. Sadly, suicide is also common among girls aged between 14 and 17. *The Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey* reported that more than 2,200 children, including about 1500 girls, committed suicide in 2004.

Education is essential to reducing discrimination and violence against girls and women, and Bangladesh has made great progress in this area. The country has already achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education. Women's employment rate is increasing rapidly but their wages are roughly between 60 to 65 per cent of men's. Garment workers are 80 per cent women, the majority teenagers who suffer many kinds of harassment and deprivation of their rights.

Bangladesh is largely a male-dominated society and women's position, status and power are generally determined by men. To remedy this, awareness and capacity-building for women through education are very important – as important as changing the attitude of men. Globalisation and the growing consuming society has increased the disparity level among 'have and have-nots', with women, as the most vulnerable segment of society and the family, suffering most. If men's greed or necessary demands are frustrated, they sometimes get addicted to drugs and become aggressive to women and children. Misuse of modern technologies can also be responsible for generating violence against women. Young men often indulge in rape and sometimes kill their girl partners. Pornography and violent films play a significant role in this.

Domestic violence should be denounced, but that should be done through a social movement where, we believe, the Church has prominent role and responsibility.

Government agencies, NGOs, civil society and media have been working in this field for the last few years and a significant improvement has been achieved. Many girls are now getting more education, many women have learnt to speak out for their rights and enjoy increased scope of livelihoods with improved income, and these have significant impact in obtaining liberation from violence and exploitation.

In the Christian families and churches, violence against women and children is not a usual event. The Church of Bangladesh has its awareness and follow-up activities among its parishes through its different educational programmes under Women's Fellowship and Youth Development, and these have been inspiring the community to live in Christian faith and values. Our schools give special focus on teaching the children living with spirituality and it has huge impact in building the character of students to understand decent living and giving values, respect and care to others – especially to women and children.

Domestic violence should be denounced, but that should be done through a social movement where, we believe, the Church has prominent role and responsibility.

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www.churchofbangladesh.org



Peru: the challenges of ministering where there is poverty.

Photo: Anglican Diocese of Peru.

Globalisation and the pressures of rapid change

A cry from the heart of Anna Blessing-Boe, Mothers' Union Diocesan Outreach Coordinator, Diocese of Vanuatu in the Anglican Church of Melanesia

Our small and scattered islands of Vanuatu in the South Pacific Ocean used to be a very beautiful and harmonious country. But this is no longer the situation with global changes creeping in so fast no one recognises them. It is like a plague of the eye and it is there. We have just experienced a mother getting rid of her baby son – a nine month old. This happened in our country's capital town. It happens almost every month and is very sad.

The main issues that we commonly face are:

- Children without proper homes
- Mothers abused and who have nowhere to go for temporary shelter
- Pregnant teenagers are abused by their parents and with nowhere to go.

I believe a proper safe and secure home is needed for such as these and at the same time they need to be provided with teachings and awareness.

I pray for people out there to hear these pleas for the victims.

I believe a proper safe and secure home is needed for such as these and at the same time they need to be provided with teachings and awareness.

Contact Person: Mrs Anna Blessing-Boe, MU Diocesan Outreach Coordinator, Luganville, Santo, Sanma Province, VANUATU

Poverty and its multiple challenges

Diocesan Social worker Erika Montoya offers a glimpse of how poverty is affecting families in Peru

Peru is very cold at the moment. The poorest households are suffering because their houses are made of cardboard, plastic and wood. Everything is very damp and there is lots of sickness among the children such as asthma and bronchitis. These past months I have been working with people who have been abused but with few resources. We had to take some girls into care because they didn't have the care of their mother. Not long ago a man killed his wife and children. There is a lot of violence in my country. Women, girls and people with mental illness suffer most. I know whole families where almost all have a mental

I know whole families where almost all have a mental illness. The country does not provide help much for it. Please pray that God will give me and my family strength to help others.

illness. The country does not provide help much for it. Please pray that God will give me and my family strength to help others. I have ambitions to study but I cannot because of the cost. Though exhausted and distressed by bad and unjust people I am still doing the work of Christ.

Contact Person: Erika Montoya, Diocesan Social Worker, Comunion Peru, Iglesia Anglicana del Peru, Apartado 18-1032, Lima 18, PERU



Wasteland of deprivation. Syrian refugee camp.

Photo: Awareness Foundation Harvest newsletter (March 2014).

Finding strength and generosity among Syrian refugee families in Lebanon.

Huda Nassa, a Director of the Awareness Foundation, writes about her recent visit to a refugee camp in Lebanon arranged by the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, an organisation that administers humanitarian aid in the camp. Extract from 'Harvest', the newsletter of the Awareness Foundation (March 2014)

It was a long journey, but worth it to see the camp and spend time with the people there. What I found at the camp was heartbreaking. I could not believe that people would find themselves living in such chaos and misery in the 21st century. During my visit, I tried so hard to find any sign of hope, dignity or childhood in this wasteland of humiliation, deprivation and despair, but I failed.

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The inhabitants of the camp lacked fresh water, medicine and clean clothes and their shelters are built from anything they can scavenge such as old advertising banners and pieces of wood. The children have no toys, no books and no schooling at all. When the adults leave the camp to seek work (\$4 a day at local farms, a rate that no Lebanese worker would accept), the children are left to survive as best they can. The children have lost any sense of a childhood: they do not play or sing.

As a result, families in the camp are under tremendous pressure. There are more children than adults, so the few must try to provide for the many. Even in such hardship, new lives are coming into the world. The picture on p12 shows a family with a brand new addition. This newborn baby is luckier than some – he has a family around him to try to look after him. Many of

One tragic little girl was found wandering alone by one of the families in the camp. She does not know what has happened to her own family. Even in great hardship, humanity shines through: the family that found her have taken her in.



Little girl and 'new brother'.

the children in the camp were not so fortunate. One tragic little girl was found wandering alone by one of the families in the camp. She does not know what has happened to her own family. Even in great hardship, humanity shines through: the family that found her have taken her in. She is pictured being carried by one of her new 'brothers.' This act of incredible generosity and kindness, even when they have so little themselves, is a shining example of their Middle Eastern culture. I was also very touched that the families in the camp insisted on offering us coffee when we visited them. I wish I could have had more time to spend with this family, to play, to eat and to talk some more with them. I also wish that I had arrived with several truckloads of toys, books, clothes and food for everyone.

Contact Person: Huda Nassa, Director for Middle East, Awareness Foundation, Lodge House, 69, Beaufort St, London W11 1AP, UK



Single Mother parenting group from Gikomero Parish, Shyogwe Diocese.

Photo: MU Rwanda.

Positive parenting and child protection

The Revd Immaculée Nyiransengimana describes how a Mothers' Union community-based parenting programme is making a difference to families in Rwanda.

The parents identify the issues that they have in parenting; discuss them together and try to find solutions themselves. Through those groups, they learn parenting skills from one another.

Children in Rwanda are exposed to physical, psychological and sexual violence. Physical violence against children is common in Rwanda where some parents are still using physical punishment like beating. Sexual violence against children is also a major issue. To solve the different challenges that children face, Mothers' Union Rwanda introduced a Parenting Programme in 2005.

The Parenting Programme has a community-development focus, based on community needs as defined by members of community. Through this programme, parents are organised in small groups of eight to 20. The parents identify the issues that they have in parenting; discuss them together and try to find solutions themselves. Through those groups, they learn parenting skills from one another. In the groups, parents discuss different topics including parenting according to the Bible, child growth and development, nutrition, violence against children, disciplining children positively, communication between children and parents, effects of drug abuse on children, child labour, family planning, prevention of HIV among children, poverty eradication, child registration.

To make the parenting groups very fruitful, the facilitators play a big role in organising them according to parents' needs. In this way, the following kinds of parenting groups are available in Rwanda:

- Single Mother parenting groups:** these girls became parents prematurely and are unprepared. They experience a high level of stigma from the family and the community in general. They need knowledge and integration.

- Widow Parenting groups:** they started their duty of parenting together with their husbands. Unfortunately, their husbands passed away and they are obliged to

play this big role of parenting alone. They need to be encouraged and to have double energy for this work.

- Elderly parenting groups:** most of the elderly in these groups are looking after their grandchildren. There is a big age gap between them. The young people are influenced by the modern world and they see their grandparents as outdated. Often, the grandparents want to educate them in the same traditional way they did for their children. In addition, most of elderly are physically and economically too weak to satisfy basic needs for their grandchildren. When they meet together in the group, they share these challenges and support each other.

The young people are influenced by the modern world and they see their grandparents as outdated. Often, the grandparents want to educate them in the same traditional way they did for their children.

- Healthy Mum Parenting Groups:** these are young mothers who started to meet when they were pregnant - mostly with their first child. They learn many things about parenting, especially how to care for their children from birth up to the age of five.

- Child-headed family parenting groups:** due to the genocide that Rwanda passed through in 1994, and to HIV which took the lives of many people, some families are headed by children who look after their brothers and sisters. They need to know how to care for their young siblings.

The Parenting programme also encourages men to engage themselves in child care and parenting. *(continued on p12)*

FAMILY: THE GIFT OF DIGNITY



Photo: MU Rwanda.

The Diocesan Mothers' Union, Fathers' Union and Sunday school coordinators with Rt Rev Gasatura Nathan and a police representative, in the child protection workshop.

Child Protection Workshop

Through a child protection workshop held in June 2014, Mothers' Union Rwanda has equipped church leaders with skills needed to advocate for the rights of children and protect them against all forms of abuse. The participants could learn and understand about the ways in which children may be harmed, what the Church can do to prevent abuse, and how they can help parents to protect their children and the children to protect themselves.

Facilitators at the workshop included an agent of Rwanda National Police who have a fully-fledged programme of child protection.

Contact Person: Revd Immaculée Nyiransengimana, Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda, PO 2487, Kigali, RWANDA.



Family strength: Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Photo: Awareness Foundation.

NEXT NEWSLETTER: CHURCH RESPONSES TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING A joint publication by IAFN and the International Anglican Women's Network (IAWN)

Many Church leaders and churches are already working to combat the evil of a wide-ranging and growing modern slave trade where vulnerable people – women, children and men – are trafficked within and across national borders and exploited for prostitution, forced labour and domestic servitude.

If your Church is raising awareness of human trafficking or engaging in prevention, protection, the rehabilitation of survivors or advocacy, please let us know by contacting:

Dr Sally Thompson, IAFN co ordinator, by email: mail@iafn.net or post.

Dr Elaine Cameron, IAWN Steering Group, by email: elaine.ging@gmail.com or post.

Postal address for both Sally and Elaine is: C/o Revd Terrie Robinson, Anglican Communion Office, St Andrew's House, 16 Tavistock Cres., London W11 1AP, UK

We are looking for articles of up to 500 words and plan to publish the newsletter before the end of this year.

See <http://bit.ly/1kaUSpX> for Anglican Consultative Council resolution 15.10 (October 2012) on the trafficking of human persons.

PRAYER

Loving Father

Your greatest gift to each of us is the dignity which comes from being made in your image and being the focus of your love.

Grant us grace to recognise and nurture this gift in those who share our lives.

May the bonds of relationship and family be channels of the value you give us in knowing us each by name.

Through your Spirit, empower us to uphold this dignity in all people and, so empowered, restore your gift of dignity where it has been abused in the tragedies of this fallen world.

In our hearts and lives may our commitment to our own family be a celebration of your gift of dignity and a beacon of hope for those who have lost sight of your presence in this world.

We ask this in the name of your holy family

Amen

IAFN is an Anglican forum for the exchange of information about challenges facing families in different countries and contexts, and the practical work being undertaken by churches and individual Christians. See website www.iafn.net for further information and how to receive the newsletters electronically or in the printed version.

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