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**FREE**

**WORLD MISSION COUNCIL** - CONNECTING THE WORLD CHURCH

# WIM



**WOMEN IN THE WORLD CHURCH**

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The Church of Scotland  
World Mission Council

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# Editorial

This year the World Mission Council will present a report on Women in the World Church to the General Assembly. The report is both a celebration and a lament. We celebrate because there are women across the world that lead, inspire, call to action, and create positive change within their communities.

I have been fortunate enough to have been surrounded by such women. My mother is a leader. She is strong, engaging, and as a result has become well known for being a force for good within her community. Throughout my working life I have worked alongside women who are experts in their field. They have a passion and a dedication to their work. They lead congregations, they minister, provide pastoral support, run youth groups, and engage with children. Many will also be the main care giver within their household. Their contribution is invaluable. Despite this, some women are treated as if they have no value.

**Together as a global church we will encourage each other, learn from each other, and hopefully one day women will be valued by all and treated equally.**

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Some will experience back-lash from colleagues. Some will be treated as if their opinion is second to the opinions of their male counter-parts. We have heard stories of women being openly and very actively disrespected during meetings, simply because they are women.

Tragically, many women will return home to face violent partners. Violence within the home affects women from all walks of life; no matter how much money someone might have, no matter what their job might be, or how much faith they may have, no matter how many friends they have, or how strong they appear to be. All women are vulnerable to violence.

This edition of WM will focus on what it means to be a woman in the World Church. We will celebrate the achievements of women all over the world, and explore the challenges women continue to face within congregations and society. Together as a global church we will encourage each other, learn from each other, and hopefully one day women will be valued by all and treated equally.

# WE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS



“For you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). This statement is inclusive. It provides comfort for the excluded, and challenges the comfortable. It clearly marks out Jesus’ standards for society: We are all one.

This statement, however, is very hard to put into practice. It means that everyone is to be treated as equal. Gender inequality is one of the most obvious inequalities we face today. It has a direct impact on 50% of the population, and its indirect consequences will have a negative impact on everyone. This inequality results in violence, in lack of opportunity, and in poverty.

It goes against Jesus’ teaching, that we are all one.

This year, the World Mission Council’s

**Inequality results in violence, in lack of opportunity, and in poverty. It goes against Jesus’ teaching, that we are all one in Christ**

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report to the General Assembly is on Women in the World Church. The report celebrates the achievements and steps forward many Churches have made to bring about gender justice. For example, the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon ordained a woman in February 2017, the first church in the Middle East to

do so. There is also the Christian Church of Sumba in Indonesia which first ordained women in 1989. Now 55% of their ministers are female, and 90% of them are serving in local congregations.

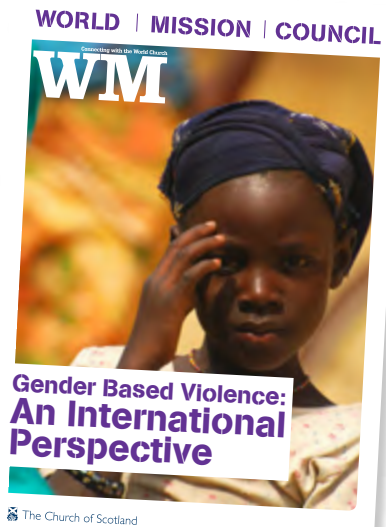
We also celebrate the contribution women have made to the world church, the talent and energy they bring, as well as different perspectives. We have examples of women in the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba bravely keeping churches open and active when the majority of clergy had migrated to the USA. Meanwhile in the Church of Central Africa Livingstonia Synod, the 'Umanyano', or Women's Guild, are very visible in the community in their distinctive black and white uniform as they seek to support the community.

These are just some examples of what we have to celebrate. However, there are challenges to overcome until we have achieved true gender equality. Women who have been ordained will often find themselves working in patriarchal cultures. When a woman starts working within a patriarchal environment her leadership is challenged, her credibility is questioned, and she will often be faced with resistance.

The Rev. Johanna Boitumelo Gaborone, of the United Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, started her ministry within a congregation that had been without a minister for five years. Despite having filled a much needed vacancy, she was not welcomed with open arms. As one elder said: "Presbytery has really belittled us, they sent this little girl and expect her to minister to us."

Facing barriers within their career is not the only problem women face. Unfortunately,

due to power structures within society, women are vulnerable to violence. This could be domestic violence within the home, sexual violence, or societal violence. Women sitting in our congregations, in Scotland, South Africa, the Middle East, or anywhere in the World, are experiencing violence. This violence might manifest itself in different ways, but it is present. It is of vital importance that we do what we can to bring this to an end, so that we can all truly live as one in Christ Jesus.



## ACT NOW...

The World Mission Council has a set of resources designed to open up discussion on Gender Based Violence.

For more information contact: [wmoutreach@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:wmoutreach@churchofscotland.org.uk) or visit:

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk)

# TALITHA KUMI! LESSONS FROM PAKISTAN



**Eleri Birkhead, Development Officer with the World Mission Council, recently visited Pakistan with the Church of Scotland Violence Against Women Task Group.**

In February I was fortunate enough to be able to visit Pakistan with the Church of Scotland Violence Against Women task group.

The purpose of the trip was to learn from the response of our partner church, and organisations in Pakistan, to violence against women. We were also returning a visit from women of the Christian World Service in Pakistan who came to Scotland last year to build on their understanding of our response to violence against women.

**I left Pakistan with comfort and joy because of the passion and the dedication of the women and men who are rising to the challenge of bringing an end to gender based violence.**

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I left for Pakistan knowing full-well that I would hear stories of violence, hurt, and injustice. Of course, the stories came, and each one was difficult to listen to. But in the end, I left Pakistan with comfort and joy because of the passion and the dedication of the women and men who are rising to the challenge of bringing an end to gender based violence.

We met women from all walks of life who have experienced violence themselves. These women were an inspiration; not only because of the courageous way they are recovering from the trauma they have experienced, but because they are able to work towards the fullness of life we hear about in the Bible.

Shunila Ruth lived with her abusive husband for ten years, until she was finally able to leave and return to her family. Her parents were supportive, a rarity in a culture where women who have been abused are often put at fault. She was able to rebuild her life. Shunila did not stop there. To her, it is an injustice that women in Pakistan (and all over the world), are subject to violence.

For an unacceptably large number of women, there is no escape. So Shunila, using her knowledge and experience, set up the Talitha Kumi Association. This organisation exists to provide legal and emotional support for women who have experienced abuse. Along-side this, Shunila is using her position as a parliamentarian to challenge policies which are harmful for women. Under Pakistani Christian marriage law, a woman is unable to file for a divorce from her husband unless she is able to prove that he has committed adultery. This means that women in violent relationships are unable to escape. Talitha Kumi therefore works hard to provide legal representation for women who are seeking divorce. They do not give up easily. They provide women with vocational skills, so that they are able to sustain themselves and their families throughout the legal process. Most importantly, Talitha Kumi provides women with emotional support and a network of people who are on their side. This is invaluable at such a vulnerable and often lonely time. What we learnt from our partners in Pakistan is vital for us here in Scotland. Space for women to speak about their experiences of violence is of utmost importance if we are serious about tackling this issue. Providing a network of non-judgemental support, and challenging policies which are harmful to women, will save lives.

### ACT NOW...

Read Eleri's blog about the visit here:  
[cofswmc.wordpress.com](http://cofswmc.wordpress.com)

# INSPIRING WOMEN IN THE WORLD CHURCH



**Ida Waddell (Mission Partner in Zambia):** "Being referred to as "Mrs Keith" or "the Education Secretary's wife" is normal - despite me having my own name, Ida, and my own senior position as Health Secretary."





**Lydia Adajawah** was the first woman elder to become Presbytery Executive in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana. She feels she has proved that women can excel. **She is called names such as ‘strong woman,’ no nonsense woman’, ‘Iron Lady,’ and ‘Yaa Asantewaa’ (a courageous historical figure in Ghana).**

**Dr. Jessie Mughogho Chihana** is the Director of Ekwendeni Hospital in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Livingstonia Synod: **“This job helps us get in touch with village women, who also get influenced as they see that a woman can head an institution and do a good job.”**



**Anne Emile Zaki** is breaking the glass ceiling in Egypt. She teaches courses at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. She laughs that she is trusted to teach future pastors, but not to be a pastor herself.

# AND STILL I RISE



Rev Valerie Allen is the Convener of the Church of Scotland Violence Against Women Task Group, who recently visited Pakistan.

**Jesus said: “I have come that you might have life – life in all abundance.”  
(John 10:10)**

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Shy teenagers in the United Bible Training Centre in Gujranwala, Pakistan, each had a story of violence to tell – harassment, domestic abuse, discrimination. The young women at the shelter Apna Ghar (“Our House”) shared stories of abduction, forced marriage, acid attack and rape. The women

from the Diocese of Sialkot spoke about women being controlled by men, about their voices being dismissed. On our visit to Pakistan we realised violence against women permeates every age group. However, we also realised that women in Pakistan are like women all over the world. In the face of violence and injustice they are strong, resilient and resourceful. We were inspired by stories of women’s empowerment and endurance, by creative responses to violence and by women courageously taking a stand against injustice. The women we met in Pakistan, like women I have met in Africa, Central America, Europe and Scotland, are gifted, passionate and committed. They are rising above violence and injustice, reaching for life.

In this post-Easter season with women across the world we ask: What does it mean to be an Easter people? Perhaps resurrection is not just a one-off event but a continual process of rising above that which threatens to destroy and rob human beings of fullness of life. Perhaps redemption is the experience of new life even in the midst of violence and injustice. Maya Angelou’s poem ‘And Still I Rise’ is a powerful expression of rising above racial discrimination. “You may shoot me with your words, You may cut me with your eyes, You may kill me with your hatefulness, but still, like air, I’ll rise” she wrote. Let us give thanks to God for women across the globe who are rising - rising to new and abundant life in Christ’s name!

## PRAYER FOCUS:

From the violence that diminishes all of us,  
we rise and pray:  
O God set us free.

From the hurt that breaks our hearts and bodies,  
we rise and pray:  
O God set us free.

From the fear which undermines our confidence,  
we rise and pray:  
O God set us free.

From the masks which hide our pain,  
we rise and pray:  
O God set us free.

O God, set us free to rise with you to new and abundant life.  
Set us free so that men, women and children across the world can flourish.  
Set us free to be the body of Christ, working for justice, peace and wholeness.  
Set us free to empower the oppressed, support the marginalised and help the suffering.  
In your name, we pray.

Amen.

## NEWSFLASH:

Looking for holiday club material? Look no further! Join Professor Potty on his time travelling adventures. The World Mission Council has produced a five day holiday club, complete with craft ideas, songs and Bible study material. Download it from our web page for free.

[www.churchofscotland.org/serve](http://www.churchofscotland.org/serve)

## MISSION PARTNER PRAYER FOCUS



David and Rebecca Morton are in Malawi. They both work in the Nkhoma hospital, and

have lived in Africa for over 20 years.

### Pray for:

1. Give thanks for funding which allows the hospital to provide free maternal health care, but pray for increased government funding for this work.
2. Pray for Rev Kalebe, the new hospital chaplain, as he takes up the crucial role of providing pastoral care for patients.
3. Give thanks for a significant reduction of malaria cases this year.

# IN CONVERSATION WITH MABLE SICHALI



**Mable Sichali from our partner, the United Church of Zambia, visited us in October. We were able to speak to her about her work, and gain an understanding of what it's like to be a woman in such a powerful position in Zambia.**

Mable Sichali's role as Community Development and Social Justice Secretary with the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) is vast. She plans and implements community development projects such as Women's Groups, Missional Congregations, and Sexual and Reproductive Health Programmes with presbyteries, and is involved at every level, from project design, to proposal writing, report writing, and project management. Within this role, Mable also responds to wider issues in Zambian society, such as poverty, HIV, and gender based issues. She is a Deacon with the UCZ, and has served the church for 11 years. It would be fair to say that Mable is a powerful woman with an in-depth understanding of social justice in Zambia. Mable trains women to be politically, socially and economically empowered. She emphasises that one of the most

important things she trains women to do is to critically analyse their own communities. This gives women the skills they need to identify key issues within their community, and to design relevant developmental programmes as a response. Training also raises awareness on HIV, child protection and gender based violence, what she says are "cross cutting issues that affect women in their day to day lives".

When asked about the lives of women in Zambia, Mable is quick to respond. Higher unemployment rates mean that women are now more likely to start small scale businesses. HIV has left a generation of widowed women, who are now sole bread winners for their families. Women and girls are seen as the main care givers, meaning that girls are more likely to drop out of school to care for the family than boys. Girls who leave education early are more at



**As a diaconal worker, I always have to prove myself. I grapple with the issue of acceptability all the time.**

risk of marrying very young. However, things are changing for the better. Policies have been put in place to ensure that women have increased access to land, are taking on leadership roles, and are able to continue their education. Mable explains that women now have a voice; they are able to make decisions, and thankfully, crime against women is now being taken seriously.

But what is UCZ doing to challenge gender stereotypes, and improve the lives of women? Mable's response is encouraging. UCZ ordain women as ministers, and has several female lay leaders. Young women are being empowered throughout Zambia through attending one of the many UCZ schools. A large proportion of the women

who graduate from these schools go on to have leading roles within their chosen field of work. Within the church itself, there are Womens Christian Fellowships, and Girls Brigade Groups where negative stereotypes are challenged, and awareness of harmful practices such as early marriage are challenged.

However, it is interesting to note that Mable finds herself dealing with extra challenges within her role, simply because she is a woman: "As a diaconal worker, I always have to prove myself. I grapple with the issue of acceptability all the time". It is hard to believe that the ability of such a powerful and competent person would ever be questioned. Unfortunately, this behaviour is repeated world-wide, and works as a reminder of the distance we need to travel before we have reached gender equality.

Despite these challenges, it is obvious that Mable has achieved an impressive amount in her career so far: "I am proud that during my time at the Community Development Department, we have started projects in all presbyteries. The fact that more than 3,000 women and girls are empowered with life skills makes me feel happier. I have many success stories but I am proud that God has given me the grace to do my work without much struggle."

**ACT NOW...**

For more information on what our partners are doing visit:

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk)

# WHY WOMEN?



**There are plenty of issues for us to contend with, why focus on women in particular?**

**Each person's gender can determine their life experiences. Here we provide a brief overview of how issues have a specific impact on women, and what our partners are doing about it.**

## **Poverty**

**Women make up more than half the world's population and yet make up around 70% of the world's poor (The Global Poverty Project).**

Mable Sichali from Zambia explains that women in her congregations have become sole breadwinners, as well as the primary care givers within the home. Despite this, women have less access to education, land, and employment opportunities. The United Church of Zambia is therefore training

women to set up community co-operatives, and run small businesses. This not only provides income, but gives women valuable skills and social empowerment.

## **HIV**

**There are more women living with HIV than men. Globally, in 2015 there were an estimated 2.3 million girls and young women living with HIV, that's 60 per cent of all young people living with the virus (UN Women).**

Our Partner Churches in Malawi runs a number of HIV services specifically focused on women. One of these is geared toward reducing the transference of HIV from a pregnant mother to her child and has been hugely successful.

## At least one in every three women around the world experiences physical violence.

Esther Lupafya, pictured on the front cover, is the head of the Ekwendeni Hospital AIDS Programme. Here, services are available for the diagnosis, treatment and care of people living with HIV. She is an inspiration! Both projects help reduce the number of people living with HIV in Malawi.

### Climate Change

**Women disproportionately suffer the impact of climate change, disasters, and severe weather events. This is primarily because they make up the majority of the world's poor and are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change. They face social, economic and political barriers, meaning that adapting to climate change is a challenge.**

Deforestation and climate change has left communities in Bolivia who rely on the forest for survival vulnerable, as fields flood and livelihoods are lost. Women have to spend hours every day collecting firewood for cooking. Not only does this prevent them from engaging in other activities, but when the forest is under water it becomes difficult to get wood for cooking and families are unable to even boil water. The

Church of Scotland Guild is partnering with Christian Aid on a project that will work with over 700 families to educate them about climate change and support them to build and use solar powered ovens - enabling families to eat all year round.

### Physical Violence

**At least one in every three women around the world experiences physical violence. It is estimated that more than 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM).**

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Egypt, our partner in a country where it is estimated that 95% of married women have undergone the process, is fighting to challenge FGM by raising awareness to educate and mobilise communities of women. Programmes like this are having a significant effect on these women and are helping to challenge traditional cultural views on FGM.

### Human Trafficking

**A 2014 UN Report found that women and girls account for the large majority of detected trafficking victims who are trafficked globally for labour or sexual exploitation.**

Our partner, the United Mission to Nepal (UMN) has implemented an anti-human trafficking programme, targeting the women and children who are most at risk with a focus on preventative activities such as awareness raising, skill training and income generation schemes, all of which seek to reduce their vulnerability to trafficking.



The Church of Scotland



## **Join us for the Women in the World Church Conference on the 16 September 2017.**

The Key Note Speaker will be Professor Kwok Pui Lan. Professor Lan teaches Theology and Spirituality at the Episcopal Divinity School in Boston, and is the author of *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. This will take the form of the Duff Lecture in conjunction with the University of Edinburgh New College.

Other speakers from the World Church will share their experiences.

The event will begin at 10.30am, and will take place in Martin Hall, New College, the University of Edinburgh

To register email: [wmoutreach@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:wmoutreach@churchofscotland.org.uk)

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