

# DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

29.01.21 | ONLINE

## WHERE ARE THE MEN IN GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE DISCOURSES?

### EVENT DETAILS

The first CSSG online workshop of 2021 was held on Jan 29, 2021. The session was attended by 29 participants included academics, students, faith-based activists and practitioners, especially activists working within Irish contexts. We had 1 male participant. This is significant!

#### Speakers:

- Dr Carol Ballantine, Freelance Researcher
- Dr Nita Mishra, University College Cork
- Triona Pender, Action Aid

#### Chair:

Deirdre Murray, Plan International

### OVERVIEW

#### Dr Carol Ballantine - Inquiring into past abuses in Ireland

Dr Ballantine discussed the recent report into the mother and baby homes in Ireland, an institutional system which can only be described as systematic gender based violence, perpetrated against unmarried women (of all colour) with no alternatives. She raised the question of accountability and responsibility, issues which the Commission of Investigation report suggests cannot be fully addressed. The Commission states, on the first page of the Executive Summary, that "Responsibility for that harsh treatment rests mainly with the fathers of their children and their own immediate families".

She demonstrate that researchers have conclusively shown that responsibility was held by many specific, nameable individuals. When we ask about specific groups of individuals with regard to gender based violence - whether they are men, priests, nuns or authorities - it is not good enough to say that they are acting in line with the social mores of their time. Such norms are always contested and debated and they are always constructed.

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### **Dr Nita Mishra - Field narratives from India**

Dr Mishra brought attention to everyday field narratives from India whereby gender-based violence becomes embedded in the lives of ordinary poor women and men as a result of social and economic disparities. Families have struggled to find alternate livelihoods in the Covid19 period as a result of loss of employment opportunities, and in a few cases this has resulted in violence (upon older people as well as women) within families. Communities realise this as resulting from mental health problems of individuals are willing to deal with it in a communal manner.

From secondary sources, Dr Mishra, also highlighted the conflict within Indian (especially Hindu) society where women are worshipped as 'Devi' (goddess) and still 'raped' in public spaces with impunity. The comments of male political leaders, bureaucrats at high offices, and a Bollywood actress in twitter/ newspapers/ other social media platforms were shared in the presentation to corroborate the above point. In terms of 'where are the men', we see a dysfunctional response - ordinary folks at community levels were ready to deal with gender-based violence at the individual level, had more empathy, and readily meted out some form of punishment to the perpetrators. In these instances, some men were the perpetrators while others were the peace-makers. In the case of duty-bearers (politicians, bureaucrats, high-profile individuals), we see an opposite reaction where there seems to be a consensus that gender-based violence is an acceptable norm if women tend to sidestep their place in society. Having said that one must recognise that sources were selected to focus on the two arguments and is not intended to generalise any group of women or men.

### **Triona Pender - Behaviour analysis in Communities**

Triona Pender focused on ActionAid's work in Ethiopia, Kenya and Nepal which aims to make communities safer for women and girls as well as give them more economic security. We work with University College London to implement a Behaviour Change methodology to help us better analyse and understand behaviour; and we work with the Men's Development Network here in Ireland to help us engage better with men and boys in our programme. We use the 7 Key Questions for Men (see resources below) to start talking to men and to understand their motivations and bring them into our programmes.

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- The study group session led to the participants planning to network in the future to raise awareness and bring to public discourse the violence that happens behind closed doors.
- An important fallout is to have a part 2 of the webinar inviting male speakers to address 'where are the men'.
- The study group are also looking at producing policy briefs from speakers and participants working together on this subject.
- Quotes from the Chat discussions reflects the timeliness of the webinar globally:

*"I think it is important as otherwise the gender-based nature of such crimes gets lost. In Ireland, we have a lot of work to do with regard to femicide."*

*"Haven Horizons have a purpose based diploma on violence and coercive control in intimate relationships. it runs in LIT and is online. it talks about the different kinds of violence that is used and motivations, and why different responses may be needed in different context. They talk about prevention, response and changing societal attitudes."*

*"Is it beneficial to have the media report the murder of a woman at the hands of the partner /spouse? I live in Spain and many days the main news will report the latest murder of a woman by her partner / spouse."*

### RESOURCES

- Dr Carol Ballantine - Inquiring into past abuses in Ireland [Presentation](#)
- Scholars have drafted a statement about the flawed methodology of the Commission of Investigation, which can be found here:  
<http://www.nuigalway.ie/globalwomensstudies/news/researchers-respond-to-the-report-of-the-commission-of-inquiry-into-mother-and-baby-homes.html>
- Dr Nita Mishra - Field narratives from India [Presentation](#)
- Men's Development Programme, Men's Development Network -  
<https://mensnetwork.ie/mens-development-programme/>