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Homes of Bondage  
or Households of freedom?  
The role of faith in  
underlying harmful social  
norms

# GBV and COVID – towards a new normal?

- COVID does not cause GBV but it can exacerbate it – gendered expectations and pressures, lockdown with abusers, increased family and economic stress.
- Faith leaders have unique influence at family and home levels where the majority of violence plays out for women and girls. Need a vision of ‘households of freedom’ An

*“Families can be the very places where racism, sexism, patriarchy, selfishness and greed are being passed on from one generation to the next...the church needs to start a movement to renew family life as a place where the rights of women and the rights of children are deeply respected”*

(Albert Nolan, South African faith leader, 1995)

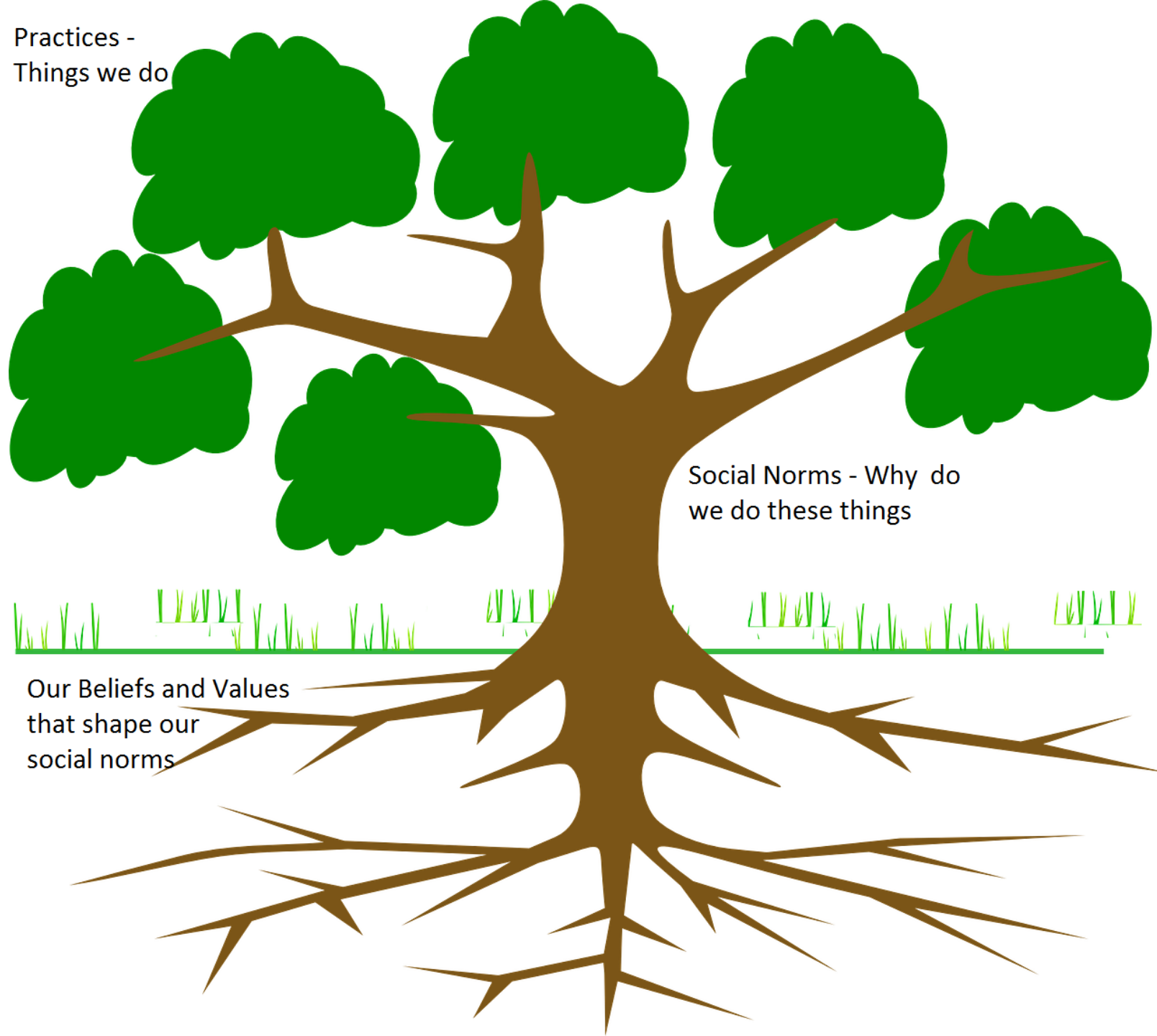
- GBV is preventable not inevitable – change is possible An RDP for the family.



What lies beneath?

Exploring drivers of  
Gender-based violence

Practices -  
Things we do



Social Norms - Why do  
we do these things

Our Beliefs and Values  
that shape our  
social norms



Let your women  
keep silence in  
the churches  
for it is not  
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upon them  
to speak...

If they will  
learn any-  
thing, let  
them ask  
their  
husbands  
at home.

1 Corinthians  
14:34-35



22 Wives, be subject to your husbands as  
you are to the Lord.

# The trunk of the tree – social and religious norms

“If I am not beaten, I am not loved” - Zambian Proverb

“A wife is like a 24/7 garage, she must always be open for her husband” local saying, South Africa

“A woman is like a mat, she must be rolled out for guests” Burundian Proverb

“A marriage is like a bus, there can only be one driver” Zimbabwean pastor

“The first thing the police asked me was ‘what was I wearing’ - rape survivor, South Africa

“A good wife respects her husband, has a peaceful home and does what she is told “– Mother Union member

# The roots of the tree

## FOUR GUIDELINES FOR MODESTY

1. If you have trouble getting into it or out of it, it is probably not modest.
2. If you have to be careful when you sit down or bend over, it is probably not modest.
3. If people look at any part of your body before looking at your face, it is probably not modest.
4. If you can see your most private body parts or an outline of your undergarments through the fabric, it is probably not modest.

MODESTY IS MORE THAN A FASHION STATEMENT. IT IS A DAILY DECISION TO DRESS LIKE THE CHILD OF GOD YOU ARE.



- Submission
- Silence
- Shame



HOW SHOULD A CHRISTIAN WOMAN DRESS?

*As the church submits to Christ,  
so also wives should submit in  
everything to their husbands.*

Ephesians 5:24

jessconnell.com

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Keeping Secrets: *"I must not speak about what happens in my house"*

*"This picture shows the head veil of the Mothers Union uniform which has got the sign on top. It means that every Mothers Union must keep secrets that are known to herself but are not known to others. Even if she has any problem, she can't tell anyone". Mary, MU leader*



# Power as root cause – Adam came first

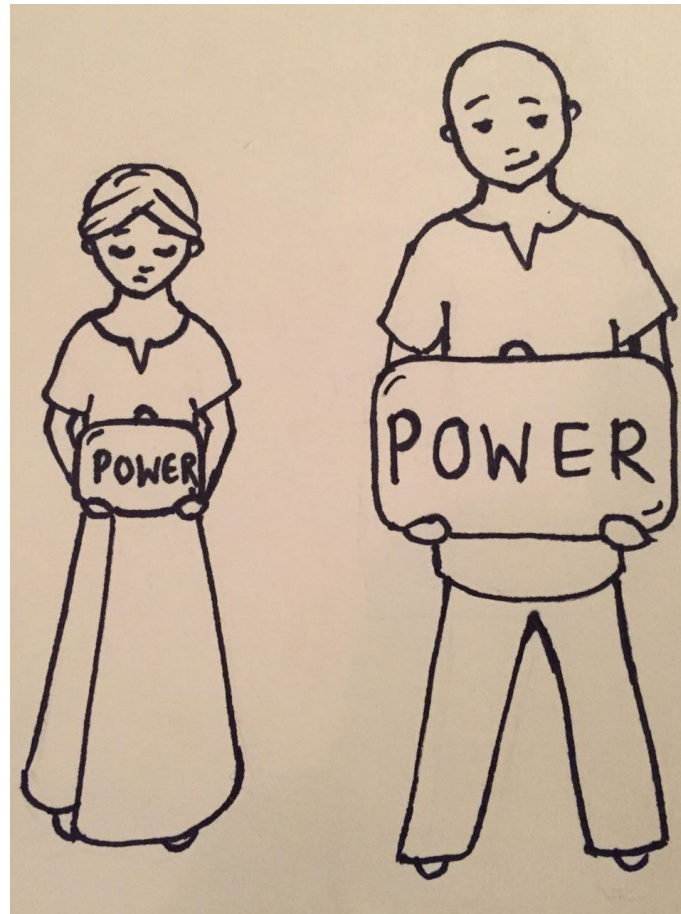
- Participants in South Africa identified discriminatory social norms as GBV drivers that identify men as superior to women. The way people speak about women strengthens the narrative of male superiority and this is often reinforced by church teachings:

*“So, I think it is a crucial thing because I think it is our mind-set, our upbringing, our culture all set out in our language and how we talk to one another. So, if we want to have genuine mutual respect and mutual submission ... not about the one being in power over the other and to get there we have to relearn how to talk to one another”.*

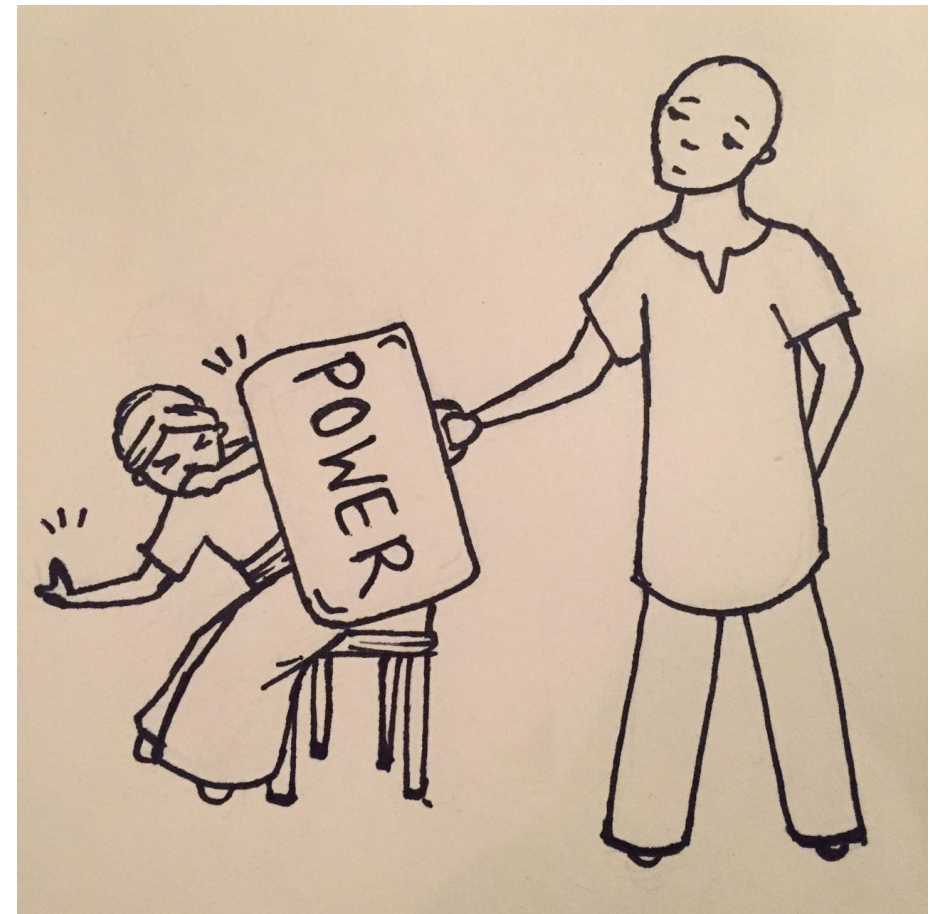
(Female NGO leader, Durban, 2013)



*"The husband is the master of the house." faith leader*



*"the wife has power, but this should not challenge in any way the position of the man as master of the house" faith leader*



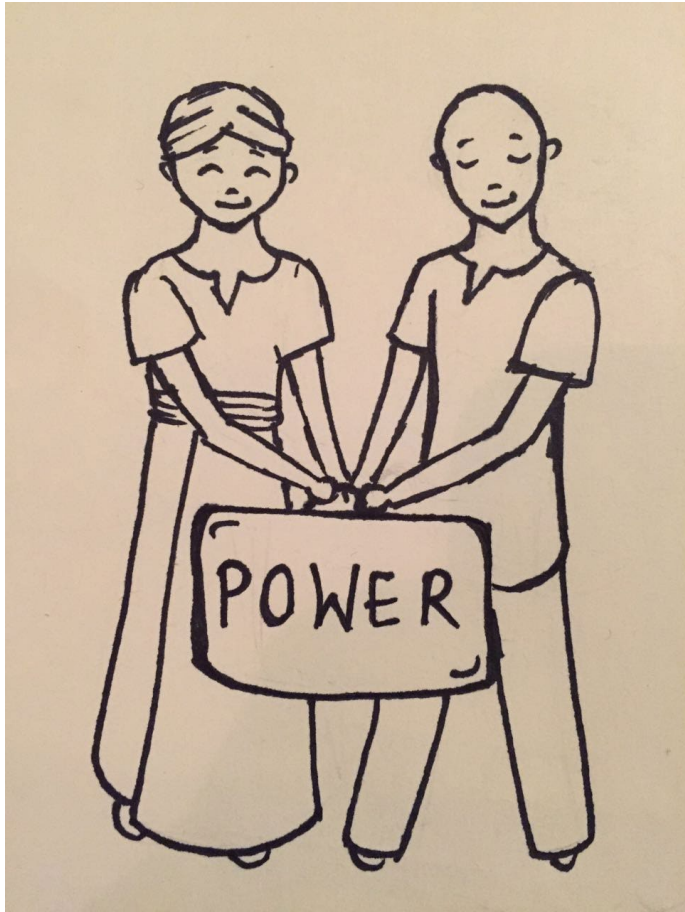
*"What made the man look at himself as superior to the woman is that the man was considering the woman as inferior to him." faith leader*

# Transforming mindsets – tackling roots

*“Fundamentally what needs to happen is a whole paradox shift in the cultural, in the religious area of the way men see women... I believe anything preached from the pulpit gives **moral oxygen** to those. They will breathe it in and go and say that the church has said, ‘you must be submitted to me’. Now they will translate it into whatever way that they feel that the person should be submissive. So, I think that has a large [impact]. It is an overlooked area that we have a huge influence and responsibility... If you get up on the pulpit, you are in a public space ...and you are influencing a mind-set”.*

(Male church leader, Durban, 2013)

# Power-with



*“And God created human beings in the image of God, male and female, God created them”*

*Genesis 1*

*Gender equality sends us straight to the Bible, because God created man and woman in His image and the two of them are therefore the same and are equal. If the husband deems himself higher than the woman, in that case, it is already violence. Because everyone is equal. (Trained faith leader, Africa)*

# COVID-19 - possibilities for a new normal?

