



Science, Religion,
and Culture
HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL

Interrogating the **SILENCE**

*Religious Leaders’
Attitudes toward
Sexual and
Gender-based
Violence*

FINAL REPORT
OCTOBER 2015



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Executive Summary

This report describes the results of a yearlong qualitative study on religious leaders' understandings and responses to issues of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Conducted by the Science, Religion, and Culture Program (SRC) at Harvard Divinity School with the support of IMA World Health and WeWillSpeakOut.Us, this study was designed to address knowledge gaps in the broader literature on religion and sexual and domestic violence. As both an intervention and extension in this way, the goal of this project was not only to illuminate the relationship between religious practice and gendered and sexual violence, but to also interrogate this relationship from the various perspectives and dynamics that capture its true complexity.

To attend to these goals, the research for this project was conducted in two clusters between fall 2014 and summer 2015, and involved integrative, ethnographic engagement at several faith communities in the Boston metropolitan area. This qualitative investigation, including interviews, focus groups and participant observation, provided access to a range of attitudes and perceptions from members of these communities, as well as the backdrop on which a number of important and compelling stories emerged. All together, 7 religious communities and 3 university chaplains participated in the study. A sub-sample of participants that serve as religious leaders on college campuses provided a particular, oft-ignored angle through which to consider the complex relationship between faith and sexual and gender-based violence. This angle is colored further by the legal framework of Title IX and ongoing conversations about campus-based violence and assault.

The findings from this research coalesce around three distinct themes: (1) understandings of sexual and gendered-based violence; (2) how this understanding is reflected in conduct; and (3) perceived needs by communities dealing with sexual and gender-based violence. The findings' themes reveal surprising diversity in attitudes toward sexual and gender-based violence, despite each site's apparent fit within the general category of a "progressive" religious community. To be sure, all participants had very clear negative views of SGBV broadly defined; and yet, mapping out their notions of tone, priority, training, and response exposed a level of nuance that would otherwise be imperceptible on the surface where value judgments are solely based on binary distinctions between good and bad.

As the ultimate goal of this study is to create space and opportunity for open and honest dialogue around the state of religion and sexual and gender-based violence, its conclusions should be read as a starting point for future practical and theoretical work at this nexus. In particular, some of this work should include (1) sustained attention to the important role religious leaders play in dealing with issues of sexual and gender-based violence; (2) equipping religious leaders with the knowledge and resources necessary to support victims and survivors; (3) pushing religious leaders to think more critically about the structural, societal, and cultural systems that undergird how incidents of violence take place; (4) training religious leaders to be mindful of the gender relations and gender roles that play a significant part in instances of violence; (5) meaningful production and sustained engagement with theological resources that adequately address issues of sexual and gender-based violence; and (6) maintaining prevention as the chief concern for religious leaders and faith communities. For this study, these concluding points offer a viable way forward in shifting perceptions and perspectives on faith and sexual and gender-based violence.



Introduction

In June 2014, *Sojourners* and IMA World Health, on behalf of WeWillSpeakOut.Us, commissioned a survey of Protestant pastors' views on sexual and domestic violence. Curious about the Protestant Christian community's understanding of and response to this violence, the survey provided an opportunity to gauge the pulse of concern for an issue that, despite policy-based inroads, remains culturally and socially entrenched in our society. The results were astounding. Of the 1000 Protestant pastors surveyed, an overwhelming majority (74%) underestimated the level of sexual and domestic violence experienced within their congregations, while only 56%, or just over half, were adequately familiar with local resources that specifically address sexual and domestic violence.¹ And though 81% of pastors said they would take appropriate action to reduce sexual and domestic violence if they had the training and resources to do so, the Broken Silence report generated from this research highlights—at best—a significant blind spot within our churches in recognizing, responding to, and preventing sexual and gender-based violence.

The compelling results of this survey emphasized the depth and extent of the problem while raising important questions that required additional investigation—a task taken on by

1. Broken Silence: A Call for Churches to Speak Out—Protestant Pastors Survey on Sexual and Domestic Violence (Washington, DC: Sojourners and IMA World Health, 2014), 2.

this project. This study on “Religious Leaders’ Attitudes towards Sexual and Gender-based Violence” (henceforth RLA-SGBV) sought to expand our knowledge base by asking about other members and stakeholders in different congregations. We focused on the intricate dynamics and interpersonal networks that permeate all communities. Though pastors serve an important role within this scheme, their leadership [position] does not foreclose others’ interest or investment in this issue. By giving voice to the multiple stakeholders that make up a congregation, a fuller picture of the relationship between faith and sexual and gender-based violence immediately comes into view. Similarly, we sought to further qualitatively investigate variables related to race, class, denomination, and faith tradition, as we extend the research to include other faith communities. In looking to these variations with an analytical earnestness, we seek to disrupt the erasure of important factors that shift understandings and responses to this issue—even as those erasures are unintentional. Finally, we ask what more can be gleaned about the relationship between sexual and gender-based violence and religion if we approach the topic ethnographically. We propose that a deeper qualitative analysis would allow for better understanding of concerns, issues, and problems facing religious leaders and affecting their response to SGBV.

To this end, our research should be

read alongside this earlier work (most importantly the Broken Silence Report), not in competition with its findings, but in support of its overall mission to shine a theoretical light on the untapped potential, challenges, and opportunities of faith communities to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

Explanation of Sites & Methods

Conducted in two clusters between fall 2014 and summer 2015, the RLA-SGBV project worked with faith communities local to the Boston area to provide more qualitative insight on religious responses to issues of sexual violence and victimization. Ranging in denominational affiliation, size, ethnic and racial makeup, and socio-economic capacity, these communities were selected to participate in the study based on their availability and willingness to engage this topic. The first cluster of sites was recruited from the database of the Office of Ministry Studies at Harvard Divinity School. The second cluster was recruited through snowballing technique with the help of local ministers and Harvard Divinity School alumni.

Taken together, the sites from both clusters of the study included 7 actual congregations and 3 university chaplains associated with at least two schools in the area. Of the 7 congregations, 6 were Protestant Christian churches of varying denominations, of which 5 were led solely by a male pastor. The remain-

ing congregation was a Reformed Jewish synagogue. Two of the three university chaplains were also affiliated with two Protestant Christian denominations, while the third chaplain was Muslim.

Our researchers used a multi-method approach that relied on one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and participant-observation. Using this multi-method approach allowed us to tap into the range of perspectives, stated or otherwise, that formed the backdrop for what we saw as the community's general understanding of sexual and gender-based violence. With interviews in particular, in an attempt to get to the heart of these perspectives, we sought to ask questions that would outline each respondent's background, baseline attitude, and deeper attitude toward sexual and gender based violence, as well as the behaviors they acknowledged they did or did not exhibit when addressing these issues. Overall, the goal of our interviews and focus group sessions was not to elicit details about specific instances of violence or abuse in these congregations, but rather to encourage respondents to respond thoughtfully and honestly about their motives, commitments, and responsibilities, however minimal, in conceptualizing and responding to these instances. In working with university chaplains, we used a scaled version of our mixed-method approach that suited the nature and structure of the communities served and the roles of the religious leaders. Universally, we approached sites through connection with religious leaders and used snowballing techniques to recruit subjects for interviews and focus groups.

“When I think of violence in general, but particularly with respect to this very specific scope, gender, I think it’s something that is unexpected, I think it’s something that happens in the heat of passion.” —Study Participant

Participant-observations were restricted to publicly open events and meetings and were conducted with the explicit permission of community religious leaders. The research protocol and methods were reviewed and approved by the Harvard University Institutional Review Board.

Analysis of Data

The interviews and focus groups conducted during this research provided significant information, which can be categorized under three main themes: (1) understanding of sexual and gender-based violence, (2) how this understanding is reflected in conduct, and (3) perceived needs by the communities when dealing with SGBV. Moreover, a specific section is dedicated to findings peculiar to college and university campuses.

1. Understanding of Sexual and Gender Based Violence

The recent media attention to sexual and gender based violence created a substantial awareness of the topic for many of our subjects. SGBV was not an obscure phenomenon or concept, and although most subjects chose other terms to refer to such practices (e.g. domestic violence, abuse, sexual assault), they could see how the term “sexual and gender based violence” related to the experiences they had in mind.

Predictably, data showed significant diversity in the detailed understanding of SGBV among religious leaders from

different communities, and between leaders and their congregants. This diversity in understanding was primarily rooted in a religious leader’s personal experience, which colored their perceptions of SGBV and how they reacted to it. For instance, gay pastors were more attuned to how SGBV affected LGBTQ communities, as well as to how current media coverage left much unsaid and uncovered. Religious leaders growing up in traditional family structures highlighted how traditional gender roles can play a significant role in facilitating the occurrence of domestic violence.

Most interviewed religious leaders focused primarily on domestic violence and violence within the family as the center of SGBV and as the area with which they are most in contact, or expect to be most in contact. For many of them, incidents of domestic violence were seen as sudden and “spontaneous”—that is, they cannot be expected or anticipated by either victim or perpetrator. In their view, domestic violence seemed to be an extension of heated arguments and strained marital relations, but are generally born out of momentary experiences. At the same time, traditional gender roles and norms were seen by many as a reason for such marital conflicts to escalate to violent action.

This idea of the spontaneity and unexpectedness of acts of domestic violence show religious leaders’ significant investment in the family as a structure and institution that is central within their congregations. While this perception of spontaneity of domestic violence provides a wider view allowing religious leaders to receive information about in-

cidents of SGBV or domestic violence (since it can happen unexpectedly to almost anyone), it limits their ability to recognize systemic problems that render these incidents repeatable and that create observable patterns of violent behavior. Furthermore, this perception of SGBV as spontaneous limits the ability or desire of these leaders to facilitate the victim's departure from an abusive relationship. It also poses questions on how an abusive relation can be defined in opposition to instances of violence. Yet, the recognition that traditional gender roles have a significant impact on these occurrences is important to bear in mind as it represents a critique to traditional views on women's roles and to the traditional division of labor in the family.

At the same time, viewing domestic violence as a sudden, unexpected, and spontaneous act betrays a desire to understand why these events take place, all while maintaining the religious leader's commitment to the spiritual and material welfare of all congregants—including the perpetrators of these acts. By linking these instances to sudden bursts of anger, even if facilitated by traditional gender norms, religious leaders are able to continue their care for perpetrators of these acts in good faith and are able to make sense of the reasons, or rather the lack thereof, behind such acts. Most, if not all, religious leaders interviewed in this study and included in other research on the topic had little if any awareness of sociological and ethnographic research on SGBV and on the reasons and mechanisms behind these occurrences; our research shows that

there will be significant value in including these studies in as a part of trainings for religious leaders. The commitment of religious leaders to the welfare of all members of their community increases their need for deeper consideration of the underlying mechanisms behind these forms of violence. Such understanding would permit them to respond more actively and to more correctly recognize such situations without betraying what they perceive as their commitment to their congregants. We see that these issues become all the more important in minority communities, where suspicion of law enforcement is significant and where racial stereotypes render the roles of religious leaders even more complicated.

A number of religious leaders believed that SGBV is an issue that affects women and other "unseen" groups. In their view, SGBV includes rape, verbal abuse, and physical harassment, including inappropriate touching on public transportation or "construction workers catcalling women on the streets." These subjects tended, too, to be more attuned to how this problem affects LGBTQ communities and how queer men can also be victims of SGBV. They also saw children as important victims of this violence, although it was not clear whether the described violence against children was essentially sexual in nature. For these religious leaders, who adopted a much wider view on SGBV, sexual and gender based violence was inseparable from other acts of violence committed against vulnerable segments of the population. The specific sexual or gendered nature of such violence was further ev-

idence of the overall vulnerability that cuts across different groups in society.

Only few subjects, who witnessed sexual and gender based violence in their own lives, described what they thought of as the experience of victims and survivors and accounted for such experiences in their understanding of SGBV. They focused on the vulnerability of the victims and the isolation that they may experience. Others explained how such incidents result in a “sense of worthlessness” that affects victims and survivors and that constitutes one of the more significant features of the psychological damage incurred as a result of these experiences. They thus envisioned part of their role (or the role of people working with these victims and survivors) the restoration of a sense of self-worth among survivors. They considered disclosure to be the first step in this process of restoration.

In a number of instances, congregants and religious leaders shared their overall view of what constituted sexual and gender based violence. Domestic violence constituted the most salient understanding of SGBV. In one instance, Rev. SD, who saw SGBV as referring to domestic and inter-partner violence (irrespective of gender) as well as sexual harassment and rape outside the home, estimated that his congregants would share his views. While his congregants agreed on most of these categories, their perception of SGBV, as seen through interviews as well as focus groups, was focused on the secretive and discreet nature of this violence. While the pastor did not define SGBV as based in secrecy and did not seem to consider such a fac-

tor to be important to his understanding of such violence, congregants considered secrecy central. The discrepancy is telling: congregants were deeply aware of the fact that the majority of instances of SGBV remain hidden with little access to support. This hidden nature of SGBV, as perceived by the congregants, allow one to consider less visible forms of abuse—from psychological and emotional abuse and violence to marital rape—many of which can be difficult to detect in view of the leadership, alongside more noticeable acts of SGBV.

2. How Perceptions and Understanding of SGBV are Reflected in Conduct and Behavior

Predictably, all subjects investigated in this research had very clear negative views of sexual and gender-based violence, broadly defined. The already negative connotations attached to ‘violence’, as well as recent media attention to cases of abuse, provide the basis for an overall negative attitude, and a sincere desire to support victims and survivors. However, a deeper inquiry into these attitudes highlighted important details about how religious leaders understood their role in relation to SGBV.

As explained before, religious leaders perceived their role to be one directed towards all their congregants, including perpetrators. In conciliating their overall negative attitude towards SGBV and its perpetrators with their feeling of commitment towards their congregants, some religious leaders attempted to further understand the motivations or to highlight the spontaneous nature of SGBV. By focusing on the spontaneity

“This community has a desire for justice. The perpetrator must be held accountable for justice, to create opportunity for restorative justice. This is an environment where redemption can occur.” —Study Participant

and unexpectedness of acts of violence, religious leaders intended to protect their congregants from being deemed unsalvageable. In other instances, leaders highlighted the otherwise good character of perpetrators, or drew attention to the somewhat borderline nature of specific acts, to explain these acts as violations or mistakes that do not form a pattern. While this commitment provides an important entry point to rehabilitation of perpetrators, it may also explain the reluctance of many victims and survivors to rely on the help of religious leaders in their communities.

During our participant-observations, it was clear that many religious leaders were not entirely confident about how to present our research to the community as a whole. There were instances where it became clear that this research might suggest to congregants that the community is under specific scrutiny or that it suffers from problems not suffered by other communities. In these instances, the negative connotations of SGBV made it more difficult to have open conversations about the subject. Awareness of the extent of these acts of violence and how they can be found in various communities was not widely available. Because of this, religious leaders seemed to feel torn between conflicting responsibilities: on the one hand, their duties to protect their communities and the integrity of those communities and, on the other, their commitment to addressing SGBV issues and to helping victims and survivors.

Conversely, where religious leaders were more invested in issues related to sexual and gender based violence,

the extent of their efforts in their congregations was markedly different. In a small minority among the subjects under study, religious leaders showed significant personal and professional investment in these issues and in working with their congregants to prevent and deal with incidents of SGBV. They were able to establish a special ministry for SGBV that dealt with these issues among their congregants, preached regularly (2-4 times a year) on the issue, and led theological reflections on the topic. Here, as well, religious leaders were faced with the challenge of working with perpetrators. They continued to believe that they had a responsibility towards all their congregants, perpetrators included, and affirmed the necessity of redemption in their SGBV ministries. Although they were aware that there is a continuing intellectual, theological, and practical tension in asking “when grace outshines accountability, if ever,” they described their congregation as one based on accountability, remarking that redemption and welcoming perpetrators back cannot be achieved without such accountability. Prison ministry was cited as an example of how such redemption can be achieved.

3. Perceived Needs to Deal with SGBV Victims and Survivors

Religious leaders seemed aware of the deficiency in their training and in the resources available to them to deal with SGBV. Some showed concern about how traditional views on the role of women in the family and the community contributed to instances of violence. While they did not consider these at-

“With all this discussion about Title IX, these conversations need to be had about the culture of power dynamics and female assault. We have to ask how do we protect our students, how do we help them protect each other? As a chaplain at the university, I talk about this with students fairly often, helping them to process the experience psychologically, emotionally, physically and spiritually.” —Study Participant

titudes to be particularly a problem in their own communities, this in itself reflects their view that a coordinated effort at changing traditional views about women is important in preventing SGBV. It is instructive to consider the theological resources devoted to such reconsideration and how religious leaders can make use of these resources. For both religious leaders and their congregants, the absence of specific procedures or systematized ways of dealing with these incidents constituted a significant deficiency. Predetermined procedures would allow leaders and congregants alike to engage with such incidents more effectively and to better serve victims and survivors. The procedures would include how to provide immediate help, how to seek professional and more specialized help, and how to intervene to prevent further abuse, among other matters.

While almost universally agreeing on the importance of preaching about SGBV and using the pulpit and their position of authority to intervene in these situations, religious leaders seemed to hardly engage in such activities—a conclusion we reached that is based on leaders’ own testimonies, interviews with congregants, and our participant-observations. In fact, our project was not always identified to the entire congregation in an attempt to avoid the seemingly uncomfortable feelings attached to this issue. Although most religious leaders in the study were able to reflect theologically on issues of SGBV, they did not seem to consider theological engagement with SGBV or preaching on the subject to be part of their imme-

diately priorities. Religious leaders also failed to see ways of streamlining this topic in their engagement with their congregants, rarely including it within their overall ministry or pastoral activities. Here, it is important to note the exception described above where religious leaders showed significant engagement, preached regularly, and established a ministry to deal with SGBV. This exception, however, remains an outlier to the sample under study.

Views on SGBV on College Campuses

In our research, we created a sub-sample of religious leaders on college campuses representing different faiths and coming from a number of campuses in the Boston area. The specificity of college and university campuses, in our analysis, stems from the role of religious leaders vis-à-vis the community, the rules and regulations in place, and the nature of the community at hand. Religious leaders on campuses do not have a traditional, stable congregation. Instead, they offer support and care to dynamic groups of students, who spend only a few years within this particular environment. Many of those who seek support from religious leaders and ministers do not necessarily participate in other congregation-related activities. Often times, ministers and religious leaders on campus are either current or former students, which gives them more access to the experience of their community. On campuses, Title IX represents the most important legal and administrative framework for dealing with cases of sexual and gender-based violence. Title IX provides a significant-

ly wider framework for dealing with different cases of harassment and gender-based discrimination than what is normally available under State or Federal law. Yet, recent debates have shown that Title IX has seldom been applied to its full extent and that many victims and survivors have been denied, intentionally or unintentionally, the protections afforded to them by law. Finally, the unstable and dynamic nature of the community on campus poses additional challenges to religious leaders as they attempt to address their potential congregants.

Ministers and religious leaders on campus were more informed and more concerned with issues related to SGBV. Recent media attention and the efforts made on many campuses to revise and standardize procedures related to Title IX were welcome, but seemed to fall short of the intended results for our subjects. They expressed their belief that SGBV should be defined widely to include different types of violence, whether physical, psychological, or emotional. Some expressed concern about what they perceive as political violence committed against women in relation to contraception or abortion. Some were also concerned about the lack of representation of women on panels discussing and deciding issues related to women's reproductive health and considered this to have a ripple effect across society and to represent acts of political violence.

Religious leaders on campuses were concerned about the lack of proper training for students on issues related to sexual and gender-based violence.

While training is often directed towards women (on their rights, how to protect themselves, how to report incidents of violence, etc.), hardly any training existed for young men on what constitutes proper behavior. In the view of most religious leaders on campuses, such training and education—coupled with an environment of respect and support—would have important effects in preventing acts of violence and harassment. They also highlighted the importance of including acts of violence against queer students, who are often left out in discussions related to Title IX and are not afforded the same level of protection and support.

The transient nature of congregants on college campuses affected how religious leaders there perceived their role. Unlike their peers outside campuses, who felt responsibility to all their congregants including perpetrators, religious leaders on campuses saw their role as primarily related to protection of the most vulnerable and to education geared toward prevention of such acts of violence. The fact that their congregants would eventually leave in few years shaped their interventions, and their perception of their role as one intended to provide a safe and supportive environment for students; this understanding afforded them the opportunity to be more attuned to a wide array of violent behaviors that affected different students in their congregations. Their past participation and continued presence in academic institutions enhanced their knowledge and experience. And yet, their impact remains limited because of the nature of their roles on campus.

Summary & Conclusions

In line with the central conclusions of “Broken Silence” report, we agree that religious leaders have little support and little training in dealing with issues related to SGBV. In most cases, there are—if there are any—weak systems and procedures in place to aid their thinking and decision-making, and they are generally ill-informed about available resources. Despite respecting their religious leaders, many congregants found it difficult to be open about such questions with them and were reluctant to approach their religious leaders for help and support, deeming the overall environment unwelcoming toward discussion of SGBV.

Moreover, we found that existing training does not often address issues that are most significant and troublesome for religious leaders. Chief among these concerns is how they can lead conversations about SGBV in their communities without suggesting, for instance, that their community is plagued with these incidents at considerably high rates. They also struggled with their commitment to the cohesion of their communities, worrying that discussion of these incidents would threaten such communal integrity. Here, it is important to highlight that this concern did not lead religious leaders to blaming victims. It did, however, make them more uncomfortable, feeling at a loss when dealing with these issues. Many religious leaders were deeply aware of how traditional views on roles of women in society and within family structure are implicated in incidents of SGBV. At the theological levels, religious leaders seemed aware of existing theological

resources in their traditions that could help their interventions but were often reluctant to resort to them. We remark that the absence of active engagement with these resources confines religious leaders to a passive position in which they become unable to adapt these resources to the needs of their communities. We also remark that all subjects showed deep interest in and commitment to prevention, seeing this as their ultimate role and responsibility.

Therefore, we conclude:

1. Religious leaders represent an important resource for dealing with issues of sexual and gender-based violence. As research has previously shown, their roles cannot be overestimated and their interventions would have significant impact.
2. Also as demonstrated by previous research, more work is needed to equip religious leaders with tools and familiarize them with resources to provide support to victims and survivors of SGBV.
3. We argue that training religious leaders should not focus solely on practical questions. Instead, deeper explanations of how incidents of violence take place and about the social mechanisms that allow for these acts of violence are very much needed. The already well-developed body of ethnographic, sociological, and historical literature on the topic will provide important background for impacting how religious leaders think about these issues. Contrary to common wisdom that more succinct, practice-oriented training is best when approaching these issues, we argue that deeper, longer, and more theoretical and overarching discussion will help religious leaders understand the issues facing their com-

Contrary to common wisdom that more succinct, practice-oriented training is best when approaching these issues, we argue that deeper, longer, and more theoretical and overarching discussion will help religious leaders understand the issues facing their communities, design intervention plans that suit their own constituency, and support an open environment that would allow for conversation and communication.

munities, design intervention plans that suit their own constituency, and support an open environment that would allow for conversation and communication.

4. In the same vein, we also argue that training and education on issues related to women's role in society and in the family, on gender relations, and on women in the family and work space are deeply needed. We believe that such trainings, based on a well-developed literature in gender studies and other fields, would provide significant support to religious leaders in their efforts.

5. We find the lack of theological engagement with issues related to SGBV truly problematic, as it conditions and underwrites the general discomfort felt by religious leaders in approaching the topic. They feel unprepared to address SGBV through the tools they know best. We argue that this difficulty resides not in the absence of theological resources on the topic but in deficient and timid engagement by religious leaders. Here, we argue that interreligious reflections can offer little help; such settings do not provide significant opportunities for internal discussions but tend to prioritize, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the mobilization of shared resources. We argue that a more effective engagement can only be achieved through intra-community theological reflections that use existing resources, many of which were developed through interreligious reflections, to develop community-specific tools. We argue that these tools will be more effective when deployed by religious leaders, especially in minority communities. It is important to note here that the small minority of religious leaders who demon-

strated deep and regular engagement with the topic arranged and engaged in inter-religious reflections, but also insisted that intra-community discussions were deeply needed and remained most helpful when mobilizing their communities' theological resources.

6. We would like to underscore that prevention remains the chief concern for all our subjects. We believe that this represents an important opportunity to combat SGBV by further equipping religious leaders to intervene preventively.

Given our limited sample that is located in a specific geographical region, it is difficult to generalize the results of this research. However, we believe that this investigation, aided by previous scholarship and research on the topic, provides important data and analytical points that can be tested and analyzed further in other contexts, and provides sufficient information that can help in further designing interventions. We also believe that the collaboration between the Science, Religion, and Culture program at Harvard Divinity School, IMA World Health, and WeWillSpeakOut .Us constitutes an important model for how research can be informed by experience on the ground, and how interventions can be informed by scientific research. We hold that this model promises the best results and the most effective interventions.

Based on the previous results, SRC, IMA World Health, and WeWillSpeakOut .Us will continue their work in the development of resources for religious leaders to approach SGBV more effectively. ■

About the Science, Religion, and Culture Program

The mission of the Science, Religion, and Culture program at Harvard Divinity School is to open space for the study of how science and religion become enmeshed with, distinct from, and implicated in broader social, political and cultural structures, and to examine the ways in which topics interact to shape and structure knowledge, social practice, and everyday life. We do so in view of specific cultural contexts and the myriad anthropological, historical, philosophical, and theological dimensions of the relevant discourses, conversations, and constructions, and our work includes a particular commitment to the questions of gender, sexuality, race and socioeconomic class.

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IMA World Health, the secretariat and host of WeWillSpeakOut.US, is a faith-based public health and development organization. IMA's mission is to build healthier communities, by collaborating with key partners to serve vulnerable people. www.imaworldhealth.org.

WeWillSpeakOut.US is a movement of diverse faith groups from across the US joining together with other leaders for action and advocacy to end the silence around sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). www.wewillspeakout.us.