

Faith Communities Call to Action



Faith leaders play an important role in establishing the moral and ethical compass for members of their communities. They can contribute to important conversations about how men and boys view fatherhood, marriage, and relationships with their communities. As community members who seek to create social change, faith communities offer us valuable allies in the movement to end domestic violence and sexual assault.

Engaging men and boys within the faith community doesn't mean you have to start from scratch!

Many already have the infrastructure in place to engage men and boys, including:

- Fraternal men's groups that discuss faith and masculinity
- Youth groups to educate young members about their faith principles and values
- Involvement in providing services for marginalized and under-served members of their community
- Work with populations traditionally difficult for service providers to reach, particularly rural populations and the urban poor

This section is dedicated to providing some tools to begin the process of engaging men and boys of faith. While much of this section consists of tools for leaders in faith communities, you can use them as well. Please know, these tools are just the first steps towards building long term and sustainable relationships with the faith community. We understand each community has its own unique history and needs — the tools presented are designed to be easily adaptable for cultural relevance or used exactly as presented.

Not all religious or spiritual traditions are represented in this toolkit. Any absence of a faith tradition is not intended as a lack of respect or recognition. Many of the tools here are applicable across all faith traditions, however further resources are given so you may find tools more specific to other traditions.



Resources for Muslim Communities



Content contributed by Farzana Safiullah, Chief Operating Officer of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and Founding Member, Muslim Advocacy Network Against Domestic Violence

Testimonials from Muslim Male Faith Leaders

As the president of the local chapter of the Ahmadiyya Muslim I can confidently say that we have a zero tolerance policy towards domestic violence and are committed to providing assistance to victims. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community will protect the privacy and confidentiality of the concerned parties, ensure that they have access to all available resources and provide fair and respectful treatment to all members affected by domestic violence.

We have specific curricula that address domestic violence, the Islamic teachings against it, and resources for those being affected. In the past, we have done presentations at the Hadee Mosque during Domestic Violence Awareness Month to more deeply explore the topic and raise awareness among all community members.

We remain committed to fostering peace and equity in our families.

Dr. Zarar Bajwa

President, Ahmadiyya Muslim
Community, Harrisburg, PA

While Islam teaches against cruelty and oppression of another human being, my congregation and I are aware that domestic violence affects our community just as any other.

As a leader of my faith community, I remain committed to nurturing harmonious families and offering the necessary resources and support to affected victims and their families. We have had presentations on domestic violence in our mosque to raise awareness of the issue and to remind members of the Islamic teachings against domestic violence, injustice and oppression. Our weekly Islamic schools lay the foundations to create peaceful and equitable families and our Friday sermons promote the same.

Join me in ending violence against women and girls and creating a more loving community!

Rizwan Asker

President
Islamic Society of Greater Harrisburg, PA

What does Islam say about domestic violence?

Muslims are guided by the Holy Qur'an, hadith and Sunnah in the practice of the faith. Domestic violence is unacceptable in Islam. However, religion can be misused to justify battering. It is critical to differentiate between cultural norms and scriptural norms. The following are teachings that guard against violence and mistreatment.

Holy Qur'an

They [wives] are a sort of garment for you and you are a sort of garment for them (2:187)

The blame is only against them who oppress people with wrongdoing & insolently transgress beyond bound through the land, defying right & justice (42:42).

O you who believe...nor should you treat them [women] with harshness...on the contrary, live with them on a footing of kindness and equity..." (4:19).

And those who eschew the more grievous sins and indecencies, and, when they are wroth, they forgive (42:38).

Hadith

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said, 'The best among you is he who treats his wife best' (Bukhari).

The more civil and the kinder is a Muslim to his wife, the more perfect of faith he is; fear Allah with reference to two meek beings, woman and orphans.

Let no Muslim man entertain any rancor against a Muslim woman. Should he dislike one quality in her he would find another, which is pleasing (Muslim, Kitab-ul-Nikah, Al-Wasiyyat bil Nisaa)

O my people! You have certain rights over your wives and so have your wives over you — They are the trust of Allah in your hands, so you must treat them with all kindness (Farewell Pilgrimage).

Sermon Starters:

Friday sermons are an effective platform to address the equality of men and women, precepts of harmonious families, domestic violence, resources to families, rights of women, and equity.

Equality of men and women

The first and foremost lesson given by Almighty Allah to bear in mind is the equality of the human race, especially men and women, and above all between husband and wife.

O ye people! Fear your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and created therefrom its mate, and from them twain spread many

men and women; and fear Allah, in Whose name you appeal to one another, and fear Him particularly respecting ties of relationship. Verily Allah watches over you. (Holy Qur'an, 4:1)

The above verse is one of the verses which is always recited on the occasion of the Nika (wedding) ceremony to remind the couple that so far as their status as human beings is concerned, they are created from the same species, so they are equal. No one is superior or inferior to the other (Cheema, M.A., 2008).¹

Whoso acts righteously, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely grant him a pure life; and We will surely bestow on such their reward according to the best of their works (Holy Qur'an, 16:97).

This verse of the Holy Qur'an clearly affirms that men and women have equal rewards with their Lord in this life and in the life to come, on the Day of Judgment. It categorically recognizes the equal rights of men and women. It also promises that Allah will confer on both equally. Women are not inferior to men. So, if God has not made women inferior to men, they should not be treated inferior to men in any way.

Intervention

And if a woman fear ill treatment or indifference on the part of her husband, it shall be no sin on them that they be suitably reconciled to each other; and reconciliation is best. And people are prone to covetousness. If you do good and are righteous, surely Allah is aware of what you do (Holy Qur'an, 4:128)

Surely, men who submit themselves to God and women who submit themselves to Him, and believing men and believing women, and obedient men and obedient women, and truthful men and truthful women, and men steadfast in their faith and steadfast women, and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their chastity and women who guard their chastity and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Him — Allah has prepared for all of them forgiveness and a great reward (Holy Qur'an, 33:35).

Harmonious Families

And the believers, men and women, are friends of one another. They enjoin good and forbid evil and observe Prayer and pay the Zakat and obey Allah and is Messenger (Holy Qur'an. 9:72)

Justice

O ye who believe! Be strict in observing justice, *and be witnesses* for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or *against* parents and kindred. Whether he be rich or poor, Allah is more regardful of them both *than you are*. Therefore follow not low desires so that you may *be able to* act equitably. And if you conceal *the truth* or evade *it*, then *remember that* Allah is well aware of what you do (Holy Qur'an, 4:136).

1 Cheema, M.A. (2008). *Islamic Teachings on Ideal Family Life*, Silver Spring, MD: AMI



Resources for Jewish Communities



Content contributed by Rabbi Aaron Benjamin Bisno, Frances F. and David R. Levin Senior Rabbinic Pulpit of Rodef Shalom Congregation

Those who sow in tears will reap in joy. – Psalm 121

It was some 2,500 years ago when a national tragedy brought tears to the Jewish People. With the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem, the conquering Babylonians imposed two emotions on the Jewish national Jewish psyche.

First, the destruction of the Temple was an assault by another on the most sacred place we knew. More than stones, the Temple was the most intimate meeting place in our world. In its deepest chamber, the Holy of Holies, we kept the truths revealed at Mount Sinai in a sacred ark, a holy keepsake box. It was the chamber of intimacy, the only place where the High Priest of the day would utter God's most private of Names, akin to the breath of all life, on Yom Kippur, the day of reconciliation.

Second, the destruction of Jerusalem marked the end of self-rule for our People. We were exiled to a foreign land, governed by others, aware that we were once again strangers in a strange land. We yearned to be in control again, but the enemy, even after the assault, emotionally controlled us. As the religious poetry of the day reveals, "By the waters of Babylon we lay down and wept..." It must have seemed like an assault without end, minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, week after week... We felt lifeless and out of control of our circumstances.

It was in this context that the poet dreamed of a better day. "Those who sow in tears will reap in joy" is an acknowledgement that the assault will end and that we will once again enjoy life as it once might have been. In fact, this phrase is a part of what we call a 'Song of Ascent', an uplifting song that was recited as we climbed the steps of the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem. Climbing those steps was an affirming journey. We can rebuild after the tragedy. We can find intimacy. We can take power back!

As it was with the Jewish People way back when, so we hope that it is with you today. You can rebuild. You can find intimacy. You can take power back.

May the words in the prayers that follow be a part of your steps to rebuilding, intimacy empowerment.

Rabbi Ron Symons

Senior Director of Jewish Life
The Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh

Prayers

- Misheberach on Behalf of Families Experiencing Abuse: <https://goo.gl/2eXw5g>
- A Yom Kippur Prayer for Shalom Bayit: <https://goo.gl/DF2rS7>
- Healing Ritual for Abused Jewish Women: <https://goo.gl/1YpA5G>

Sermon Starters:

Our Obligation Not to Turn Away

“*Lo tuchal l'hitalem*: You cannot turn away. You cannot avert your eyes. You must not be indifferent.” (Deuteronomy 22:3) So let us open our eyes, and look at some facts.

Domestic violence is not limited to a husband beating his wife. Rather DV refers to any circumstance in which there is “an escalating pattern of behavior in which one partner in an intimate relationship controls another through force, intimidation or the threat of violence.”

With this in mind, we recognize that DV may be comprised of many different forms of abuse: physical, sexual, financial, verbal and emotional. In abusive relationships, one partner may frighten, humiliate, belittle or harass the other, isolate him or her from others, destroy property, monopolize the money or decision-making power, threaten to commit suicide or take the children if the other ends the relationship. Verbal abuse alone is not a trivial matter; it can have a devastating effect on children's sense of self-worth and is a major cause of depression in marriage; it is also a significant predictor of physical violence.

Fact: Violence against intimate partners is pervasive in the United States. Almost 25% of women say they have been assaulted by current or former partners, according to a report released by the National Institute of Justice & the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (July, 2000). This makes DV the most prevalent cause of injury to women in the United States.¹

Fact: Most domestic violence is not reported to the police. Some call it the most under-reported crime in the country. According to the National Institute of Justice, only about a fifth of all rapes and a quarter of all physical assaults by an intimate partner are reported; the majority of victims say they thought that the police either would not or could not do anything to protect them.¹

What can we do? We can begin by honoring the injunction from Deuteronomy: “*Lo tuchal l'hitalem*: And not turn away. Not avert our eyes. Not be indifferent.”

God's Standards versus Our Own

In the biblical story of Noah, we read “*V'tishacheit HaAretz Lifnei H'Elohim*: The earth became corrupt before God.” (Genesis 6:11).

Why, our ancient rabbinic sages asked, why does verse add the words “before God” to the fact that the earth became corrupt. At first, these words appear superfluous. Is not everything that happens on earth taking place under the watchful eye of the Almighty?

According to the Conservative Movement's Torah commentary *Etz C hayim*, “God deemed the [people's] behavior [to be] corrupt, but they themselves saw nothing wrong with it.”

Fascinating! The people who were engaged in the behavior that led to God's decision to flood the world saw nothing wrong with what they were doing. Indeed, they had come to believe that their actions were not only appropriate but communally sanctioned. We know this because there is no mention of any human being speaking out against their behavior. Indeed, even Noah is silent when God informs him that the world will be drowned on account of their violence and immorality.

What, then, does it mean when the text reads, “*V'tishacheit HaAretz Lifnei H'Elohim*: The earth became corrupt before God”? This refers to the discrepancy between what we may do and justify to ourselves and the standard that God uses to judge our actions.

In cases of domestic violence, it is not uncommon for the abuser to consider his behavior to be perfectly normal and fitting, even justified by some rationalization that ultimately blames the victim for their own abuse. And even when others may collude in this type of thinking, Jewish tradition holds us to a higher standard, that is, God's standards and not our own human biases and personal preferences or rationalizations.



1 Tjaden, P., & Thoennes, N. (2000). Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. Research Report. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Resources for Christian Communities



Content contributed by Rev. Liddy Barlow, Executive Minister of Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania

Stories of violence against women haunt the scriptures. From the rape of Dinah in the book of Genesis, to the assault and murder of an unnamed concubine in Judges 19, to Paul's often-misinterpreted direction that wives submit to their husbands, the Bible demonstrates that the story of God's people has long been marred by domestic violence and sexual assault.

Today the pain continues. Every minute, 24 people experience rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States.¹ Nearly one in five women has experienced rape in her lifetime.¹ In Pennsylvania since 2004, at least 1,678 people have died as a result of incidents related to intimate partner violence.²

These terrible crimes are an offense against God as well as our neighbors. As people of faith and disciples of the Prince of Peace, Christians must speak out, working to end violence and bring reconciliation. The church has an important role to play in changing our culture so that these acts of violence will stop.

Men and boys are essential in this effort. Domestic violence and sexual assault are not "women's issues" — they belong to all of us, and people of all genders must work to end them. Men of courage and good will can participate fully in the struggle against gender violence, calling attention to disrespect and abuse, working as allies to women, and mentoring the next generation.

This toolkit provides resources for clergy to engage men, as well as women, in working to end domestic violence and sexual assault. Inside, you'll find liturgical suggestions, and sermon starters. Authors from many Christian traditions came together to contribute to this resource, and we hope that churches from all parts of the body of Christ will find it useful.

When he stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus cried, "Peace, be still!" Today that is our call as well, as we pray and work for an end to gender violence. Thank you for joining us in this important project!

Rev. Liddy Barlow

Executive Minister

Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania

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1 Black MC, Basile KC, Breiding MJ, Smith SG, Walters ML, Merrick MT, Chen J, Stevens MR. The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2011.

2 Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2017). *Domestic Violence Fatality Report*, 2017. Retrieved from http://www.pcadv.org/Resources/PCADVFatalityReport2016_WEB.pdf

Worship Resources

Call to Confession

Silence can have terrible consequences. When we refuse to speak out against injustice, when we refrain from offering a word of kindness, when we bottle up our own feelings and failings, evil can result. The Scriptures tell us that when we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us now make confession before God.

Prayer of Confession

Holy and merciful God, whom Jesus knew and trusted as Abba, we confess that we have too often been silent in the face of sin — our own failings and the misdeeds of others. We have confused true strength with violent power. We have listened to the clamor of media and culture instead of seeking your still, small voice. We have accepted stereotypes instead of seeking truth. We have doubted our own ability to make change, and so sat idle instead of working for good. Forgive us, Lord. By the power of your Holy Spirit, make us new. Help us to follow you and serve our neighbors, for your love's sake. *Amen.*

Assurance of Pardon

Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Speaking the truth of our sin has freed us to hear this good news: By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and beloved. Let us go forth to love our neighbors and serve our God!

Sermon Starters

Every week, preachers have the opportunity to make the scriptures come alive, connecting these ancient texts to the realities of today's world. Texts throughout the Bible can speak to the issue of gender violence, helping congregations to examine their own lives, find new hope, and recommit to the path of love and peace. The brief reflections below may spark your own ideas as you seek to proclaim Good News in a violent world.

Matthew 18: *Jesus welcomes the children*

One day, my son was having a difficult day. He failed his math test, he spilled his juice, his friends wouldn't play with him, his sister was calling him names. Before long he could not handle the overwhelming pressure any longer and he let out a wail and threw his backpack across the room. Then he stormed to his room where he sobbed for what seemed like an eternity. I gave him time to cool down and I went to check on him. He was a sweaty mess hiding under the blankets on his bed. With all the fatherly wisdom I could muster, I took him in my arms and asked him to tell me about his day.

As he poured out his heart I had no idea what to say or do, so I sat there and listened and held him. I had a few options at this moment, I could have been as angry as he was or I could have dismissed him as juvenile, the ramblings of a small child. What I chose instead was to offer silence, and a shoulder. To let him know that he wasn't alone and he was validated in his grief.

In Matthew 18, Jesus motions a child to his side and in verse 10 Jesus says, "do not despise one of these little ones." In other words, Jesus is saying, "children need to be listened to."

Often times, preventing violence and abuse in the future starts when children are little. Not in belittling, ignoring, or attempting to fix, but in simply listening to our children when they have a difficult day and allowing them to process what they are feeling in a healthy and meaningful way.

— Rev. B.T. Gilligan, Nixon United Methodist Church, Butler

Mark 4: *Jesus stills the storm.*

Male dependence on God admits weakness. Boys and men are socialized to be aggressive, assertive. Men are ridiculed for fear and emotional expression. Social expectations of men promote domination and control over external forces that do not lend themselves to dependency. Male self-reliance can express idolatry — trusting in self rather than depending on God as the source for life.

Mark 4:35-41 faces male anxiety over powerlessness. Natural forces cannot be harnessed by masculine power and strength. At the moment the disciples become aware of their mortality, they cry for a Savior. Fear of death, powerlessness that defies male strength and control, arouse an awareness of weakness. Jesus doesn't define the disciples' weakness as their failure to be courageous in the face of their fate. That could promote self-idolatry. The disciples' sudden awareness of mortality exposes self-idolatry in what Jesus describes as faithlessness to God. By daily trusting God's love and care, faithful men learn how others in their lives depend upon masculine love and care for assurance. Daily submission to God cultivates quiet conviction and devotion that overcomes life's storms. It enables men to practice healthy relationships with God's blessings — their spouses and children.

— Rev. Dr. John Lolla, Bellevue United Presbyterian Church

Psalm 107: *The Lord makes the storm be still*

If you were to describe your life as a ship in the ocean, what would the picture look like? For some the water is clear as glass, and the sailing is smooth. For others, one false Titanic move could begin the onset of a slow sinking vessel, unable to be repaired until one mistake after another swallows you up. Then again, for many, life is one perfect storm of wind, rain, and massive waves crashing down with the heaviest blows a person can bear. The tides ebb and flow but the storm never ceases. For those who live in situations of trauma, as victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, a stormy life is the only life they know. Our work in opposing gender violence is not only to provide life rafts for those who are battered by the waves, but also to call on the storm itself to cease. Not only can we help those who are already victims of violence, but we can work to change the climate, so that destructive storms are never able to form. By addressing the root causes of gender violence, with God's help, we can make the storm be still and hush the waves of the sea.

— Joshua Bullock, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania



Sample Newsletters



Many faith communities share regular newsletters with the members of their religious organizations. These newsletters are a simple and excellent way to build a culture of prevention within the community.

Below are examples of content for a newsletter in February for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, April for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, June for the #FathersDayPledgePA, and October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

These examples can be used word for word or can be customized for your particular community. It could also be useful to add information about your local domestic violence program, which can be found in the “Getting Started” section of this toolkit.

--- February Newsletter

Nearly 1.5 million high school students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner in a single year.¹ One in three adolescents are a victim of physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner. These figures far exceed rates of other types of violence youth experience.²

Every February, Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month is used as a time to engage the young people in our lives in the often-difficult conversations about relationships and dating. While it is important to talk to young women, it's also vital that we talk to young men as well.

There are resources to help you with these conversations. Raising Respect (www.raisingrespectapp.org) is a free app for iPhones and Androids to help parents engage in these often difficult discussions. You can also visit LoveisRespect.org for more information.

--- April Newsletter

Nearly 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men in the U.S. experienced some form of sexual violence during their lifetime.³ No community is immune to the effects of sexual violence, even our own.

During Sexual Assault Awareness Month, we take time to honor and support survivors of sexual violence. We use this month to talk to our friends, families, neighbors and co-workers about the importance of healthy relationships and safe communities.

Each of us can play a part in ending sexual violence. As parents, we can start conversations with our sons and daughters. As teachers, we can educate our students. As leaders, we can set an example for young men and women to follow.

For more information on how to join the movement against sexual violence, please go to PASaysNOMORE.com.

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1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Physical Dating Violence Among High School Students — United States, 2003,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, May 19, 2006, Vol. 55, No. 19.
2 Davis, Antoinette, MPH. 2008. Interpersonal and Physical Dating Violence among Teens. *The National Council on Crime and Delinquency Focus*. Available at http://www.nccdcrc.org/nccd/pubs/2008_focus_teen_dating_violence.pdf.
3 Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

--- June Newsletter

Father's Day is a national holiday celebrating upstanding fathers, and men in general, for their positive role modeling to the youth in their lives. Fathers play the important role of guiding our sons through the often complex and confusing transition from boyhood into manhood. Of particular importance during this development is how our sons learn respect for members of their community.

The #FathersDayPledgePA campaign is a to call on all men to take a stand against domestic and sexual violence and make a commitment to model healthy relationships and masculinity for younger men and boys.

To become a leader in your community, visit PASaysNOMORE.com to sign the pledge and find out how you can continue to inspire the youth in your life to become greater men.

--- October Newsletter

On average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States.⁴ No community is immune to the effects of domestic violence, even our own.

During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we take time to honor and support survivors of domestic violence. We use this month to talk to our friends, families, neighbors and co-workers about the importance of healthy relationships and safe communities.

Each of us can play a part in ending domestic violence. As parents, we can start conversations with our sons and daughters. As teachers, we can educate our students. As male leaders, we can set an example for young men to follow.

For more information on how to join the movement against domestic violence, please go to PCADV.org.

⁴ Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Further Activities



Beyond newsletters and sermons, there are many other activities that faith communities can organize and participate in to prevent domestic violence and sexual assault. Each faith community has its own resource and cultural context, the list below is meant to give options for organizations at a variety of capacities:

- Connect young men with role models and mentors in the community who practice healthy behaviors
- Organize men's groups to partner with women's groups to collaborate on events and activities to empower women and girls
- Use the Healthy Masculinity Activities described in the "Get Started" section of this toolkit for youth groups
- Organize a Father's Day Pledge event to encourage men in your community to take a stand against violence, which can be found in the [#FathersDayPledgePA](#) section.
- Create a group of men to regularly discuss fatherhood, marriage and healthy relationships through religious texts
- Support existing events that build strong community relationships and general well-being
- Partner with your local domestic violence and/or sexual assault agency to offer trainings for staff and educational workshops for the community
- Organize a vigil to honor survivors and lift the silence around domestic violence and sexual violence
- Include your local domestic violence program and/or sexual assault center in charity events and community service projects

Get involved!



Further Faith-Based Resources



Tools for additional spiritual traditions:

Faith Trust Institute	faithtrustinstitute.org
Safe Haven	interfaithpartners.org
We Will Speak Out U.S.	wewillspeakout.us
Jewish Women International	jwi.org
Peaceful Families Project	peacefulfamilies.org
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence	api-gbv.org

