A mapping on sexuality, human rights and the role of religious leaders: exploring the potential for dialogue

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Commissioned by Hivos

Inhoudsopgave

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Foreword

The first idea for this mapping on sexuality, human rights and the role of religious leaders emerged in autumn 2013, when HIVOS and the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development participated in a couple of events that all addressed the challenges around religion and sexuality.[1] The 'Open for Change' conference organized by HIVOS is an example.[2] One of the programmatic lines addressed "tough dilemmas". Tough dilemmas point us to the complexity of the problems people in the world are facing. Sexuality as a theme brings at the surface such tough dilemmas. It works as a magnifying glass on issues that play a role in development and social change, but may not be recognized as such. Religion is an important issue that features in the complexities around sexuality in many countries around the world.

The Knowledge Centre Religion and Development (KCRD) at Stichting Oikos aims to increase the attention for the roles and meanings of religion in the lives of people worldwide. Dutch society is highly secularized and the freedom of individuals to make their own decisions has become an increasingly important value. The idea that religion is often hindering rather than liberating has become influential. However, religious leaders and organizations have potential for contributing to or motivating processes of social change. This potential is often overlooked or sidelined. The KCRD is dedicated to sharing alternative stories, and bringing out voices that are not so often heard.

Tough dilemmas are not easily solved. They but challenge us to take a step back and try to understand what is happening. Even though this report is a Mapping of religious actors, it also shows the consequences of how we look at the values and norms that inform our work as civil society organizations in the Netherlands, our work towards development and positioning in the world. We highly value Hivos for initiating this journey. It has been a great pleasure to travel with them in this Mapping to explore the potential for exchange and engagement with religious leaders on issues of sexuality, intimacy and health.

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[1] The authors express their gratitude to Merel van Meerkerk and Rogier van der Weijden for their editorial support .
[2] HIVOS Open for Change website: http://openforchange.hivos.org.

Background to this Mapping

Hivos has been active in SRHR-issues for many years, especially on issues generally considered ´more controversial´. Hivos´ support of LGBT organizations dates back to the early 1990s. The organization has furthermore been working on abortion rights, rights of sex workers, against gender-based violence and for sexuality education for young people.

Religion has not been a specific focus in most of Hivos' programs so far. Hivos' engagement with religion has been primarily through its Knowledge Program and selected initiatives by some regional offices. Concerning sexuality, Hivos has long regarded religion as the root of the problem; the driving force behind homophobia as well as the source of dangerous myths and taboos. While this may to some extent be true, religious communities and discourses are much more diverse. Over the last few years Hivos has come to realize that it needs to understand religious arguments better if it wants to contribute to a more tolerant public opinion regarding sexual diversity, and to a more favorable context that allows people to live the sexual lives they want. A better understanding of what makes people think the way they do, will enable Hivos to address more possible points of engagement and dialogue.

1. Introduction

"*…there is no scientific basis or genetic rationale for love. There is only the grace of God.*"

These were the words of retired Bishop Desmond Tutu in response to the acceptance of the anti-homosexuality bill in Uganda in February 2014.[3] He fiercely spoke against any form of discrimination or exclusion from a religious perspective, centralizing love, a power that cannot be measured in science of any sort. This Mapping takes as point of departure the work of religious actors and religiously inspired development organizations that (potentially) share this view about the centrality of love with the South African Bishop. They bring this into practice in their work on sexuality-related issues in religious contexts, with religious people and religious leaders. For some this means a focus on the love for people regardless of their gender, sexual or religious identities, for others its means helping people in the struggle of reconciling and legitimizing their sexualities and relationships of love. These actors, each in their own way, create space for awareness and open attitudes to other people. As a recent Facebook post by the Christian AIDS Bureau for Southern Africa stressed it:

"*Hate grows in the soil of ignorance, and when it comes to sexuality, there's a lot of ignorance to go around*".[4]

Many of the people that have been interviewed for this Mapping work on ending ignorance in two ways: by opening up conversations about sexuality and the related tough dilemma's in religious contexts, and by showing (often through their practical work) that working with – and from within – religious contexts should not be ignored in the field of development. As Theologian and Director of the Global Fund for Women Musimbi Kanyoro formulated it in a recent speech: *"84% of the world says that religion is important. The Netherlands may be secular, but the countries you work with are not. You cannot ignore that!"* [5] Based on the realization that religion plays a role in how people shape their sexual lives and that religious leaders and communities influence the sexual and reproductive health and rights of people, this Mapping aims to:

1. identify progressive religious leaders: where they are, which issues they address, how and to which extent these religious leaders have an impact in and beyond their own community

[3] The Guardian, 'Desmond Tutu Condemns Uganda Proposed Anti-Gay Law'. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/23/desmond-tutu-condemns-uganda-proposed-anti-gay-law
[4] For the CABSA facebook page, see: https://www.facebook.com/CABSA?fref=ts.
[5] Musimbi Kanyoro's Speech at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 May 2014. Cf. For more information see: http://www.religion-and-development.nl/news/92/let-us-engage-otherwise-you-will-be-a-minority

2. describe and analyze the various discourses of religious leaders that address sexuality and human rights and thereby 'define'/give meaning to the term 'progressive religious leaders'

3. provide pointers on the involvement of these progressive religious leaders in issues of sexuality and potential entry point for intensified engagement between religious and human rights actors, among which Hivos.

1.1 Religion and sexuality

This report departs from a dialectical perspective on sexuality, meaning that we see sexuality as interconnecting personal, social and structural dimensions of sexuality.[6] In view of the research question how religious actors understand and approach sexuality, we focus on the social and structural dimensions of sexuality. In doing this, however, it is important to realize that the personal and the social can never be clearly separated. Personal dimensions of sexuality are always in dialogue with the social and the structural.[7] In other words, the religious actors we map in this report are (more or less influential) voices that influence how sexuality is lived socially and personally within certain communities. Various researchers have pointed out the complex entanglement of the personal and the social in sexuality. Anthropologist Robert Thornton, for example, argues that sex usually (though not always) takes place in the intimate relations between persons.[8] It is social, but in a hidden way. Every society in the world has rules, norms and values to socially organize this hidden sexuality. Religious norms and values are part of that as Thornton indicates: '*Religious rules pertaining to sex are one of the primary ways in which the value of pleasure to the person becomes value for the large social group of which she or he is a part.*' In societies in which religion plays an important role in peoples personal and public life, religion and sexuality are naturally entangled. In more secular contexts, non-religious norms, views, social rules and values on sexuality have a larger influence on how sexuality is being organized.

In all contexts, religion and sexuality are always entangled with other aspects of social life. People negotiate these different norms and values in their personal lives, in the communities they live in, within religious communities and organizations, but also more publicly. Because of the role of religion in constituting or legitimizing social and structural dimensions of sexuality, people and organizations working on improving sexual health and rights will always encounter and respond to religion in some way. At the same time, religion is highly contextual. Sexuality in Kenya, South Africa or the Netherlands for that matter, has many different meanings, depending on the social and structural context. The

[6] Spronk, Rachel (2009) "Sex, sexuality and negotiating Africanness in Nairobi". Africa : Journal of the International African Institute. 79 (4): 500-519.
[7] Cf. Hubert J.M. Hermans (2012), *Handbook of Dialogical Self Theory* (Cambridge).
[8] Thornton, Robert J. (2008) *Unimagined community sex, networks, and AIDS in Uganda and South Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 23

understanding of sexuality in African contexts for example, has been highly influenced by colonial and post-colonial discourses in which sexuality was associated with chaos and disease. The devastating impact of HIV/AIDS has revived these older problematizations of sexuality. This has also influenced an approach of sexuality in which pleasure tends to be ignored.[9] In 2011 a volume edited by Sylvia Tamale proposed to speak about African Sexualities as an alternative to more stereotypical discourses on sexuality in Africa.[10] This perspective opens up the idea of exploring multiple narratives and discourses on sexuality in African contexts and societies. We see the various, multiple and sometimes conflicting religious narratives and discourses on sexuality as part of this multiplicity.

1.2 On progressiveness and polarization

In this report we rely on a broad understanding of 'progressiveness' in relation to the work of religious actors around sexuality. We acknowledge that being progressive has specific connotations in the Dutch context, in which it is linked to individual freedom and liberalization in cultural values and lifestyles around sexuality including a tendency to see religion as a problem.[11] This report takes as a point of departure the multiple ways in which religious actors approach issues around sexuality, and more generally speaking the multiplicity of discourses around sexuality. These discourses also include public health and human rights based approaches to sexuality that informs the work of development actors. Against this background, this report explores which discourses religious actors use to address sexuality and how this translates into concrete programmes and initiatives around sexuality. International development discourses on sexuality draw on human rights as a framework for tackling sensitive issues around sexuality in communities and countries around the world. In the interviews for this report we have not always addressed human rights as such. Instead we have explored how religious actors (propose to) respond to discrimination and exclusion and contribute to inclusion of marginalized people within their faith communities or society in general, as this seems to be a fruitful way to explore points for linkage of religious inspired and human rights based approaches.

We consider a broad and open understanding of progressiveness particularly important against the background of polarizations around sexuality in certain national and international settings in which religious actors play a role. Polarization is a social dynamic that is part of life.[12] It often divides communities in two poles and as a result a majority in the middle dissapears. In a previous publication, Bartelink has explained that people who

[9] Anne Philpott, 'To Stop HIV, Lets Bring Sexy Back', 26 May 2014. See: http://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/anne-philpott/to-stop-hiv-lets-bring-sexy-back.
[10] Sylvia Tamale (2011) *African Sexualities. A reader* (Capetown, Pambuzuka Press).
[11] C. Schuh, M. Burchardt and M. Wohlrab-Sahr (2012) 'Contested Secularities: Religious Minorities and Secular Progressivism in the Netherlands', in *Journal of Religion in Europe* 5(3). *and* Paul Mepschen, Jan Willem Duyvendak and Evelien H. Tonkens (2010) 'Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in The Netherlands' in *Sociology*, vol. 22, 962.
[12] The background on polarisation is inspired by writings on the topic at Dialogue for Peaceful Change. Cf. http://www.stichtingoikos.nl/sites/default/files/uploads/Documenten/DPC_leaflet.pdf

have the loudest voices push polarization.[13] Religious actors have sometimes acted as pushers, for example by legitimizing violent or discriminatory discourses on LGBT people, in countries such as Uganda, Zimbabwe or Nigeria. On the other side human rights activists have also acted as pushers on their side of the polarization. Focusing on pushers of the polarization is usually not effective, in particular for civil society organizations, because it is hard to change their views and find common ground. However, in polarized situations there is always a silent majority in the middle that does not want to take sides. It is in this middle where there is space for (building) common ground.

In order to understand how different actors respond in situations of polarisation, as well as to understand one's own role in that context, it is important to take a step back and ask: What is happening here? Rather than looking at religious actors as opposing human rights, we explore how they contribute to a more open understanding of sexuality in religious contexts. The religious organisations that we introduced in this Mapping have developed different strategies to deal with polarizations around sexuality. In their own ways, our interviewees have pointed at the complex entanglement of sexuality and religion with other discourses, for example on class, gender, marriage and family relations, and social mobility.[14] It is important to understand these entanglements and the specific, contextual factors that influence how religious actors understand and approach sexuality. When addressing religious leaders, it is important to take into account how they are part of their broader context. In a general mapping like this one, we cannot do that for all the networks, organisations and leaders discussed. Therefore we outline some general dynamics that may play a role in how religious leaders operate and develop their own strategies and approaches to sexuality.

In this mapping we focus on Christian leaders, and in particular on organisations and networks of and for Christian leaders that have taken up issues broadly related to gender and sexuality, often but not always through engagement with the fight against HIV and AIDS.

1.3 Method and Approach

This report is written to share and reflect on the results of the first stage of the Mapping, and is based on selective literature study and a small-scale empirical study involving 15 interviews with people working in religious development organizations or networks around issues broadly related to sexuality. The literature study is mainly based on ongoing research at the KCRD around religion and sexuality, for which relevant journals are accessed regularly and the work of researchers affiliated with the Religion, Aids and

[13] Brenda Bartelink (2014) 'How open are we really. Exploring the fifty shades of Grey in Religion and Sexuality' in: F. Kaulingfreks, *Social Innovation in Practice* (Hivos).
[14] Kamp, Linda van de (2013) "Public counselling: Brazilian Pentecostal intimate performances among urban women in Mozambique". Culture, Health & Sexuality. 15: S523-S536; Astrid Bochow and Rijk van Dijk (2012), 'Christian Creations of New Spaces of Sexuality, Reproduction, and Relationships in Africa: Exploring Faith and Religious Heterotopia' in *Journal of Religion in Africa* (42)4.

Social Transformation in Africa Research Network (RASTA) is followed intensively.[15] Some recently published articles have been reviewed particularly for the purpose of this study, and an additional review of resources that address development within mainline and Pentecostal Christian contexts was done. The literature study provides the basis for defining important terminology used in this report, and for sketching the fields of tension in section 4, in which the various discourses of religious actors on sexuality and human rights are embedded. We will draw on this in our analysis in the empirical sections that follows.

The interviews have been held specifically for this Mapping. In the selection of interviewees we have approached people or organizations that were already part of our network. In addition, organizations in our network connected us to relevant partners. Those people who were willing and able to participate have been interviewed. All 15 interviews have been conducted via Skype or telephone. The interviews were semi-structured and based on a topic list. During the interview interviewees had the freedom to share their views and ideas on the topic, and explain the approaches of the organizations. The interview questions thus often served as a checklist to see which themes had been addressed already in the answers of the interviewees, rather than as a strict interview format. A couple of months later a second round of research was done, including interviews with three people and review of additional materials. This informed the re-writing chapter 4 and let us to include more concrete examples of the type of discourses religious leaders use and to assess their impact.

We acknowledge that the chosen method and approach, as well as the limitations in the selection of interviewees, limits this Mapping in important ways. It is, however, not our pretention for this Mapping to be comprehensive. Rather, it provides pointers and suggestions for further research and engagement, and can therefore be seen as the initial step in what hopefully will become a longer journey. We highly recommend a follow-up to this mapping that focus on a more empirical analysis of progressive religious leaders, their discourses and their impact more thoroughly within a specific national or local setting.

Chapter 2 of this report introduces the most important discourses on sexuality and gender in mainline and Pentecostal Christian contexts in Africa. It then turns to discussing where we can find (potentially) progressive religious leaders in Chapter 3, focusing particularly on three organizations of religious leaders that work with religious leaders around HIV/AIDS, gender and sexuality. In addition we discuss two transnational networks of religious leaders. In chapter 4 we shares some lessons and insights that can be drawn from the experiences of organizations working with religious leaders around HIV/AIDS, gender and sexuality.

[15] For more information on RASTA see: http://religion-aids-africa.org.

2. Discourse analysis on sexuality and human rights in African Christian contexts

The Christian landscape in Africa is diverse and has been very dynamic in the past century. A century ago historic mission churches; Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and Lutheran churches established by European missionaries, dominated the scene. In the course of the 20th Century African Christianity grew impressively and denominations and theologies shifted radically. First when in the 1970s when African independent churches started to appear, and later in the 1990s when the Pentecostal movement made radical changes in the religious landscape. According to Historian of Religion in Africa David Maxwell, it is hard to quantify the impact of the Pentecostal movement but vast numbers of 'the latest generation of African Christians describe themselves as 'born again'.

In general Pentecostal Christians share three characteristics. First, is the emphasis on charismata; the workings of the Holy Spirit. These 'gifts of the Spirit' include divine healing, glossolalia (speaking in tongues), exorcism and prophecy. Second is conversion or 'becoming born again', which is essential to the Pentecostal identity. This is usually expressed in both spiritual and social changes such as the breaking with cultural traditions and ties. Third is that Pentecostals share a belief in the infallibility of scripture. The movement is in social-economical terms, a middle class movement. Part of its attractiveness for up-worth mobile Africans is its theology focused on this-worldly success rather than a good after-life. Pentecostalism influenced the emerging of new churches all over the continent, from small village churches to huge urban churches in cities such as Nairobi, Lagos, Accra and Maputo. While the movement matured in these cities, it has also profoundly impacted on the churches and theologies of the so-called mission churches.

The mission background of first generation African leaders, and the ties with churches and communities in Europe and elsewhere has influenced mission churches to be important development actors. These churches have a long history in providing services such as health and education. In the response to HIV/AIDS these churches, as well as faith-based NGOs have gained a new significance in relation to broader concerns with health, sexuality and gender. Development donors often sponsor Church programmes or NGOs that emerged from them. While Pentecostal churches have their own significance in view broader development aims, their ties and connections to the field of development are quite different and more limited compared to the mission churches.[16] Yet, these churches have a significant impact on changing the narratives and practices around

[16] Freeman, Dena. 2012. Pentecostalism and development churches, NGOs and social change in Africa. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

gender and sexuality of people in various African societies, in particular around the newly emerging urban middle class, as we will explain in this chapter.

In addition to this quick glance over the dynamic within Christian contexts in Africa, transnational religious and developmental relations continue to be influential in contemporary African Christianity. Mainline churches are often embedded in networks of other faith based organizations, regional networks and networks related to the World Council of Churches. While Pentecostal churches can be fairly independent, some are part of large church bodies with numerous branches throughout Africa and sometimes also Latin America, North America or Europe.

In this section we introduce the most important characteristics of discourses on sexuality, gender and intimate relations within mainline and Pentecostal Christianity in Africa. In doing so we will refer to a variety of religious actors that engage with these themes in Christian and development contexts. In addition to a rough distinction between mainline or mission churches and Pentecostal churches, we also refer to religious leaders, networks of religious leaders and faith based organizations that engage with churches and religious leaders around issues of sexuality and gender.

2.1 Mainline discourses

When we explore discourses on sexuality and gender in contemporary mainline Christian discourses, as we find them in the circles of African mission churches, the centrality of HIV/AIDS cannot be ignored. They became involved in HIV/AIDS related activities through roles as health care providers, and became increasingly involved in prevention, in particular when ARVs became more widely available.[17] Issues of prevention of HIV/AIDS has steered mainline churches in the direction of discussing sexuality, however a reluctance to discuss these intimate issues openly is still visible in many mainline church contexts. Theologian Adriaan van Klinken, who is a researcher on HIV/AIDS, sexuality and gender in Zambia, explained that in Zambia religion is the centre of peoples' lives and secular approaches to HIV/AIDS are easily rejected, as they are seen as compromising religious values. Religious ideals are a more accepted alternative to secular ideals around sexuality, and in the response the HIV/AIDS churches have developed a language to address sexuality in line with their own values. To some extent this a language issue, 'responsibility' is for example an important word to motivate people to be faithful in marriage. Mainline churches often shy away from openly addressing broader and more sensitive issues around sexuality and intimacy. According to van Klinken this word responsibility could be connected to condom use, yet unfortunately this is not done because condoms are associated with immoral sexual behaviour. At the same time there was flexibility in practice:

[17] Cf. Ruth Prince, Philippe Denis, and Rijk van Dijk (2009) Introduction to Special Issue: Engaging Christianities: Negotiating HIV/AIDS, Health, and Social Relations in East and Southern Africa. Indiana University Press.

'They would not say it in so many words, but many priests do allow condom use and people know that'.

The pragmatic argument: *"In times of emergency, people have to protect themselves."*

The Church of Central Africa Synod of Livingstonia (CCAP) is one of the oldest and biggest churches in Malawi. It has 170 congregations and more than 1,000 prayer houses throughout the Northern region of Malawi. With about 200,000 adult members, the church reaches about 25% of the adult population in the Northern region of Malawi. In its ministry, it does not only reach out to communities with spiritual care but it is also involved in development projects for education, health care, HIV/AIDS, water & sanitation, food security, and civic education. CCAP's program 'LISAP' focuses on providing care, treatment and support to people affected by HIV/AIDS. The church engages with young people through education and life skills programs. HIV/AIDS and healthy sexual relationships are addressed through a Christian perspective. Sexuality is seen as an important aspect of the life skills program of CCAP. Sichinga: *"Initially the one way information* [on sexuality] *was shared by parents or elder peers. We realized it is important to engage our youth in serious discussions on sexuality."* In the life skill courses that CCAP offers to young people, important focus is placed on building self-esteem among the youngsters, giving them the idea that they are valuable human beings. In relation to sexuality, young people are encouraged to listen to their bodies and discover who they are as individuals: *"We are combining the Biblical teaching with the thinking of today. It really helps to bring the ideas to the young ones and develop them to be a good human being."* This can help them to make healthy choices on matters related to sexuality. CCAP employs the ABCD approach, and provides information on Abstinence before marriage, Being Faithful, use of Condoms and Delaying sexual activity: *"Usually the church would stop would stop at abstinence only. But looking at the extent of dangers church members were exposed to, even the youth were exposed to, they changed their views. In times of emergency, they have to protect themselves."*

Website: http://www.ccapsolinia.org/

Mainline church programmes on HIV/AIDS prevention are sometimes mainly focussed on a biomedical approach to sexuality. Other programmes combine biomedical and religious/ spiritual approaches. The church programme described is an example. It is most likely run by professionals such as teachers or public health experts, who have become skilled in navigating between church policies that are sometimes restrictive and the concern with young people's health needs. The discourses we find in these more 'developmental' parts of religious institutions and faith-based organisations tend to be rather pragmatic. This does not mean that the same openness on sexuality, gender and other intimate issues can be expected within the church segments that primarily function as places of worship and care for the faithful. Often there are differences within mission churches in how sexuality and gender are understood and addressed within and between different parts and segments of the church.

Religious Leaders

In order to bridge the gaps between how sensitive issues such as gender based violence, sexuality and HIV/AIDS are addressed within mission church contexts, some organisations have developed methods to engage religious leaders into addressing these issues more consistently within their ministries. Initially HIV/AIDS has been a key concern and was often chosen as a lens to address issues of sexuality, gender and broader human rights.

'HIV/AIDS is like a microscope on many other issues, such as inclusion issues, access to health care, education, and issues relating to poverty, class and race',

explains the director of the Christian Aids Bureau of Southern Africa (CABSA) Lyn van Rooyen. It is therefore a conscious choice of CABSA to continue a focus on HIV/AIDS, even broader issues around sexuality and gender are addressed as well.

The challenges around "*We should love everybody like Christ loved us*."

The Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ) is an ecumenical umbrella organization of Christian churches that seeks to promote cooperation and fellowship between Christian churches and organizations in the nation. It supports member churches to halt and reverse the spread and impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia. This is amongst others done by engaging religious leaders on topics related to sexuality, gender and HIV/AIDS, and providing them with the information and materials they need to address these issues within their own congregations. When religious leaders are trained on topics like HIV/AIDS, gender based violence and sexuality, they are given manuals that can help them discuss these issues within their own congregation. In these manuals, frequent references are made to the Bible to support the inclusion of people who are living with HIV/AIDS. For example to 1 Corinthians 12, to argue that people living with HIV/AIDS should also be respected and valued as part as the body of Christ. Agnes Konayuma explains: "*In Christ we are one. That is why we have to change. We all have fallen short of the grace of God.*" CCZ stresses that religious leaders: "*are not supposed to judge, judgement is from God alone. People are already under pressure, what they expect from religious leaders is love.*" CCZ als addresses gender inequality, in particular related to early marriage and polygamy: "*Churches are fighting with the tradition, maybe to ban some of the traditions and practices that were practices by our forefathers, which they thought were good things, but now encourage the spread of HIV/AIDS and gender based violence.*" There are however challenges, even when focussing on tackling discrimination and inequality from a faith perspective. Some topics such homosexuality, cannot be discussed openly within many churches in Zambia. Konayuma explains how restrictive positions on homosexuality are related to the idea that Zambia is a Christian nation: "[Homosexuals] *are not open now. If you talk openly you are persecuted. You cannot talk about it. People may be embracing them,* [but] *there is where the challenge is* [...] *to make it open, discuss it freely. It is not allowed, because Zambia is a Christian nation. If we allow it, that Christian* [identity] *will be lost.*" At the same time this does not mean that in practice, CCZ staff ignore sexual minorities. While addressing their health needs because 'everyone is created in the image of God', speaking out on their right to be free from violation or discrimination is not possible.

Website: http://www.ccz.org.zm/

According to Pauline Njiru from EHAIA, a programme on HIV/AIDS related to the World Council of Churches, religious leaders are much more open to discuss sexuality if they get aware of their own vulnerability around HIV/AIDS. They will be open to considering any method, including condom use:

> *"So we don't tell them what to do, but empower them to understand. You don't antagonize. We don't start with the condom".*

Language seems crucial here; eventually sensitive topics can be openly discussed with religious leaders but it all depends on how you address them. In the example from CCZ in the box text it becomes clear that churches that have taken up the fight against stigmatization and discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS, in particular with and through religious leaders. Drawing on general Christian principles that underline grace rather than judgement, they engage religious leaders and churches in becoming more inclusive.

Progressive inclusion?

The effort to work towards more inclusive churches in Africa is challenging, and there are certain limitations or boundaries that are hard to overcome. While the discourse of grace and inclusivity may have the potential to apply to sexual minorities as well, this is often not done openly and dependent on individual people within these church organisations. Theologian and researcher Adriaan van Klinken argues that homosexuality is too controversial for religious leaders in Zambia, and points out how engaging in this debate will hinder the mission of African theologians to fight HIV/AIDS. In their efforts to fight stigma and discrimination around HIV/AIDS African theologians have tried to avoid any association with homosexuality.[18] The work of African theologians that can be labeled as homophobic often draws on arguments that homosexuality is part of western culture and therefore un-African. In addition, there are examples of African religious leaders from mainstream churches that have openly advocated against the acceptance of LGBT people or supported the introduction of criminalizing laws.[19] In addition, it is important to be aware that there are visible, less visible and consciously silent initiatives of religious leaders to work on the inclusion of LGTB people within churches and in broader society.[20]

Njiru, who is a theologian at EHAIA, affirms that it is important that church members speak out on homosexuality and tackle to homophobia in the church. Personal engagement between religious leaders and LGBT people of faith is important to get to know LGBT people and 'getting to know how they think'. She has been involved in a series of events that bring various people within the church together around the issue of homosexuality and focus on creating such personal engagement. In the limited opportunities to address homosexuality within churches or faith-based organizations, personal engagement with LGBT people and respect for their human dignity seems to be central. An organisation that facilitates such dialogue processes between religious leaders and congregants and LGBT people of faith is IAM or Inclusive and Affirmative Ministries. It is IAM's mission to work on inclusion of on LGBT people in mainstream Christian churches. This is done through personal encounters between people in church communities and (Christian) LGBT people in safe spaces where people can share their questions and difficulties in person. IAM works within religious contexts on inclusion and tries to be a catalyst of change within that context. The acceptance of their views in the mainstream of the mainline African churches continues to be a challenge, and it is still too early to identify strong progressive voices. Yet there are initiatives before and behind the scenes that are important.

Some religious leaders have stood up as progressive role models. The Anglican canon, Gideon Byamugisha is an example. He is the founder of INERELA+, a network of religious leaders that are affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS. Narrating his live-story in a public lecture in 2012 he explained how his own experience in living with HIV/AIDS gradually

[18] Van Klinken (2013).
[19] Cf. Kapya Kaoma 'Intercepting the international human rights agenda' on http://www.politicalresearch.org/author/kkaoma/#
[20] We have come accross some examples of silent initiatives that cannot be discussed in detail in this paper.

engaged him in fighting stigma and discrimination related to gender and sexuality. In an interview with the Guardian in 2009 he says:

> *"I realize that if I am happy to speak out against discrimination and stigma in relation to HIV, then I should also be happy to speak out against paralysing homophobia, sexism, tribalism, Puritanism, fundamentalism and against anything else that reduces and diminishes our love, care and support for each other as we travel the road of faith and belief."*

In 2010 he was among a group of activists that presented a petition to the Ugandan parliament against the country's anti-homosexuality bill.[21] This example shows that the work on inclusion of people living with HIV and AIDS may not directly include the inclusion of LGBT people. It also shows that his work can catalyse a process by which people and religious leaders in particular gradually develop more inclusive attitudes.

Gender

Gender inequality and gender violence has been addressed more broadly within mission church context and (theological) discourse. An influential example is the Tamar Campaign. Initially developed as (just) a Bible study on the story of Tamar in 1992, the study had such an impact that a campaign was started to encourage people in mission churches to speak out on violence against women and children and to support survivors of violence.[22] In taking Bible study as an entry point for conversation in local groups, safe spaces were created were people could talk openly about gender violence. Since 1992 more of these contextual Bible studies were developed to open discussions on sensitive issues within church settings. The Ujamaa Centre at the University of Kwazulu Natal plays an important role in connecting biblical scholarship to community activism around these issues.[23] Njiru from EHAIA, also affirms that theologies are needed that provide an alternative for '*a theology that says women are inferior to men*'. People in religious communities need to become aware that theologies that stress the inferiority of women are destroying lives, leading to HIV/AIDS and sexual abuse. All over the African continent scholars of religious studies and seminaries work on developing these inclusive, life-affirming theologies, many of them being members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.[24] Religion and other dimensions in broader society are interlinked with the theme of gender, and more specifically with the activism for gender equality among religious actors. When we asked Lyn van Rooyen from CABSA which societal issues are strongly interlinked with HIV/AIDS, she says:

> "*Issues around equality, decision making, gender based violence. So yes, I think the whole issues of how we deal with gender, within faith communities is becoming more and more important for us*".

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[21] For the 2009 interview with rev. Byamugisha in the Guardian cf. http://www.theguardian.com/katine/2009/dec/04/gideon-byamugisha-homosexuality-bill?guni=Article:in%20body%20link, On the 2010 petition, cf. http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/871000/-/wj4kfk/-/index.html and http://www.theguardian.com/katine/2010/mar/02/uganda-mudslide

[22] Gerald West and Phumzile Zondi-Mabizela (2004) 'The Bible Story that Became a Campaign: The Tamar Campaign in South Africa (and beyond)' in Ministerial Formation

[23] On Ujaama cf. http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Homepage.aspx

[24] http://www.thecirclecawt.org/newsletter5855.html?mode.

In this section we have discussed the most important discourses on HIV/AIDS, sexuality and gender that provide the basis for progressive leadership on these issues with the context of mission churches in Africa. HIV and Aids in particular have been important to engage religious leaders in conversations and activities around the broader themes of sexuality and gender. While sexuality, and sexual diversity in particular is still sensitive and contested, gender is a theme that has been addressed more broadly in these churches and theological discourses. These discourses have already catalysed some open and more silent initiatives to work on inclusion of LGBT people even tough challenges still remain.

Pentecostal discourses

Characteristic for Pentecostalism is that it stresses alternative ways of living through its emphasis on the break with the past. Anthropologists have pointed out how this has influenced the creation of new social space in various African societies, in particular for the emerging middle class elite. Anthropologists of religion, Bochow and van Dijk argue that these, often highly individual spiritual changes, have profound impact on how relationships and sexuality are approached and understood as well.[25] Anthropologist of sexuality, Rachel Spronk's studies on sexuality and intimacy of middle class young adults in Nairobi discuss various social and cultural influences on how people are making decisions with regard to sexuality.[26] Pentecostal moralities are not the only significant discourses that influence her interlocutors. Yet she also observes changes in patterns of courtship, a growing influence of Christian marriage ideals and rituals as discourses that extent beyond the context of religious leaders and their churches into the public sphere. She points at the influence of print and digital media in this.

Marriage

Marriage is an important institute in Christian contexts in Africa that has gained importance in the wake of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Churches have become actively involved in orienting people towards marriage as the right form of relationship. A Nigerian pastor and researcher we spoke for this mapping exercise who requested to remain anonymous, underlines the importance of a conservative view on marriage. '*Young people are expected to keep themselves pure and abstain from sexual relationships until they are married*', he says. He states that this is a 'traditional African view of marriage' that contrasts with western liberal influences. Interestingly, anthropologists have argued that the Pentecostal emphasis on marriage and abstinence is counter-cultural. Rather than being a traditional African view on relationships, they have argued that the emphasis on marriage within Pentecostal theology and praxis signals a break with traditional spaces of tolerance for sexual relationships outside of marriage. At the same time it is also counter-cultural in its openness on sexuality, which breaks with more

[25] Bochow and Van Dijk (2012).
[26] Spronk, Rachel. (2011) ""Intimacy is the name of the game": media and the praxis of sexual knowledge in Nairobi". Anthropologica. 53 (1): 145-158.

traditional patterns of secrecy around sexuality. That these developments are not exclusive to those churches that belong to the Pentecostal movement can be seen in the work of the Council of Churches in Zambia. The CCZ initiates discussions on traditional marriage practices that expose people to increased risks of HIV transmission. Examples are early child marriages and polygamous marriages. Based on research experience in various African countries, we have also observed that religious leaders tend to be sensitive to arguments that emphasize a break with harmful cultural or traditional practices around sexuality. This is however no guarantee that these leaders are as open to examine assumptions with regard to gender and sexuality that are legitimized in reference to Christian beliefs or theologies.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Pentecostal churches produce alternative, yet from a human rights perspective ambiguous sexual moralities. On the one hand a quite rigid sexual morality is produced in which sexuality is confined to heterosexual marriage and pre-marital, marital and extra marital relationships are strictly regulated. In addition, male authority is emphasized. Yet research shows that Pentecostalism does not simply reproduce patriarchal relations, without fundamentally altering them. The reformulation of women's positions and their demands with regard to marriage, relationships, and their sexual and reproductive health, creates a new social space in which women are empowered to make their own decisions. Pre-marital abstinence is at once a break with the past and re-affirming patriarchal discourses. Anthropologists Bochow and van Dijk point at the empowering effects of abstinence discourses because it gives individual women authority over with whom they engage in a relationship and on which conditions.[27] Prayers to ask God for the right husband, for example, is a legitimate way in which women can ask for the right husband while remaining single and taking care of their natal families. Pentecostal teachings have the potential for women to protect themselves from violence or disease: 'In the context of high HIV/AIDS infection rates, sexual harassment, high divorce rates, and multiple concurrent relationships, the manner in which Pentecostalism creates a promise of reshaping relations for the better carries much weight and power'.[28] Women have gained power within these changed Christian contexts. Rather than entering into marriage because it was part of a family transaction, within Pentecostal contexts women have more space to make individual decisions and choose their husbands.

The impact of Pentecostal discourses on sexuality and marriage also creates ambiguity in individual women's sexual and reproductive health choices. In a study on Pentecostal university students in Kampala Uganda, Jo Sadgrove argues that young people are caught between pressure of being morally upright in a Christian sense and the social dynamics at university campus in which transactional sex is common.[29] To the outside world they stress Christian messages of abstinence before marriage, while at the same time engaging

[27] Bochow and Van Dijk (2012).

[28] Ibid.

[29] Transactional sex is engaging in sex to obtain material goods. Young and often poor women engage into relationships with 'boy friends'. They benefit from the goods and gifts they get and as a favour have sexual relations with them.

in sexual relationships with male friends, often in exchange for support, gifts or housing. In doing so they may conceal unhealthy sexual behaviour; i.e. jeopardize HIV-prevention or run the risk to become victims of violence.[30] The example of 'Love Therapy' in the box text below is another illustration of how ambiguous Pentecostal teachings around sexuality impact on women. Bochow has described another example of ambiguity on reproductive health and healing in her study on Christian family planning in Botswana.[31]

Love Therapy in the Brazilian Universal Church of the Kingdom of God

In a study on educated, working Pentecostal women in Mozambique, Linda van de Kamp gives another example of ambiguity. She studied counselling sessions in the Brazilian Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Lusaka. The church originating in Brazil in 1977 claims to be present in 176 countries and had 5-600 branches in Southern Africa 2005. The counselling sessions called 'Love Therapy' resemble a church services, but are entirely dedicated to the themes of love, sexuality and marriage. While open to couples, men and women, usually many women visit these sessions. In a context in which it is unusual to speak about sexuality openly, these counselling sessions are an example of how Pentecostal Christians are breaking with traditional secrecy around sexual relations. To break with spiritual and cultural ties and neutralize evil powers is one of the recurrent messages in these sessions. Women are motivated in particular to go to these sessions to engage in a loving relationship. These loving relationships are performed through bodily rituals. According to van de Kamp, Love therapy has ambiguous meaning to women. While creating openness to talk about sexuality, and remain single until they find the right man, the ideal of marriage is dominant over a single life-style. In a context in which women outnumber men in Pentecostal churches this puts an extra-ordinary pressure on women to produce successful relations, while they risk failure and loneliness in their private lives.

Source: Linda van de Kamp (2013) "Public counseling: Brazilian Pentecostal intimate performances among urban women in Mozambique". Culture, Health & Sexuality. 15: S523-S536.

These examples draw attention to the argument that an increased openness on sexuality in Pentecostal churches, and the potential for empowerment of women in particular also comes with certain limitations for the free choice and empowerment of people to make their individual choices. Therefore, the focus on the individual and individual choices and behaviour are in line with the secular human rights discourse. Together with a progressive focus on change and transformation, this opens up potential for linkage between Pentecostal and secular human rights actors to work together to tackle certain harmful practices. The counselling practices within Pentecostal churches are interesting in this respect.[32] However, at the same time there may be crucial differences between the moral positions of secular human rights actors around sexuality and the sexual moralities and structures that are produced in Pentecostal contexts.

Gender and masculinity

In the discussion and examples outlined above, there is an argument that Pentecostal discourses can have positive implications for empowering women into more equal

[30] Sadgrove, Joanna (2012) "Morality Plays and Money Matters: towards a Situated Understanding of the Politics of Homosexuality in Uganda". *The Journal of Modern African Studies : a Quarterly Survey of Politics, Economics and Related Topics in Contemporary Africa*. 50 (1): 103-129.

[31] Astrid Bochow ' The Choice of Health. Christian Family Planning among Cosmopolitan Educated Professionals in Time of HIV/aids in Botswana' in Beckman, Gusman and Shroff

[32] Rijk van Dijk (2013) "Counselling and Pentecostal modalities of social engineering of relationships in Botswana". Culture, Health & Sexuality. 15 (sup4): S509-S522.

positions vis-à-vis men. Scholars such as Chitando and van Klinken have scrutinized (Pentecostal) discourses on male headship and reviewed its implications for gender equality and gender relations. According to Chitando, Pentcostalism is producing a 'soft masculinity' in which abstinence, faithfulness and family involvement are promoted as positive values. However:

"*The Pentecostal approach is still rooted in the paradigm of the male as the leader. ... While Pentecostals encourage women to be economically empowered, they are not willing to challenge the myth of male headship*".[33]

Men continue to be seen as ultimate decision makers in the Pentecostal ideal of marriage and the family. Van Klinken is more positive about the potential that the Pentecostal discourse on Biblical manhood holds for transforming male- female relationships and tackling patriarchal structures. Mainly drawing on the example of the Zambian Pentecostal Leader Joshhua Banda (cf. chapter 3), van Klinken argues that Pentecostal discourses redefine responsibility and headship from a traditional emphasis on superiority to the responsibility of men to create an equal relationship of love and respect in their marriage. Male headship is thus interpreted in a more nuanced way. Jesus Christ, in particular, is a role model for this Biblical ideal of manhood.

Mainline feminist theologians Esther Mombo and Heleen Joziasse from St. Pauls University in Limuru Kenya critically reviewed Van Klinken's analysis of Pentecostal masculinities. Women theologians fear that the emphasis on Biblical manhood will backlash in terms of achieving equal rights for women to speak out and act as leaders within Christian contexts.[34] Based on empirical research among Christian women in communities in Kenya they argue that Jesus Christ should be promoted as a role model for mutuality and relationship, rather than male headship. While being an example of the diverse views and positions within African Christian contexts on gender, this also illustrates the dynamics between Pentecostal and Mainline actors and discourses. In our interviews with organisations working with Religious Leaders and experts in our networks it became clear that organisations generally focus on mainline churches. Also, some examples illustrated that organisations working on HIV/AIDS, sexuality and religion in mainline church contexts sometimes feel challenged or hampered by Pentecostal religious leaders. Trudy Harrison, working with the Anglican organisations Mosa Maria that works on curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS in local communities explained to us:

> "[An evangelical pastor working in the Bloemfontein area] *tells people that he can cure them of whatever disease they have. People are desperate and want hope. He gives them hope. He tells people that he can cure HIV/AIDS. Then he tells them that is because God has cursed them that they have this disease. People caught up in religious fervour, are convinced that they are cured, and they*

[33] Reference from E. Chitando, 'A New Man for a New Era? Zimbabwean Pentecostalism, Masculinities and the HIV Epidemic' in *Missionalia* 35:3 (2007), 122 and 124. For reflection Cf. Adriaan van Klinken Klinken, A.S. van. n.d. Male Headship as Male Agency: An Alternative Understanding of a 'Patriarchal' African Pentecostal Discourse on Masculinity. Igitur. Igitur. http://ubu-ojs.library.uu.nl/index.php/rg/article/view/URN:NBN:NL:UI:10-1-101580.
[34] Personal interview with Heleen Joziasse, teacher at St. Pauls theological college in Limuru, Kenya. Spring 2013

stop taking the ARVs. There is a woman who is nearly dead. She stopped taking ARVs for five months."

The evangelical pastor that claims to be able to cure HIV/AIDS also paid a local radio station for a broadcast spot to compete with Mosamaria who was having regular broadcasts on the importance of medical treatment on HIV, as the message of Mosamaria could cut his income for providing miracle healings. Other examples we have come across in this and other research projects are discourses in which Satanism is responsible for homosexuality or gender based violence that are influential among Christians in local communities. Such discourses contribute to scapegoating of marginalized people and therefore seriously hamper any effort to more inclusive communities.

2.3 Dynamics in polarisations around religion and sexuality

In the introduction we have explained that the discourses on sexuality and religion in African societies are often polarized, in particular when it comes to local, national and transnational dynamics around homosexuality and LGBT rights. In this chapter we have provided a general outline of the most important discourses around sexuality within mainline and Pentecostal contexts on the African continent. While it is as an overview too general to account for the huge diversity in countries, local contexts and specific churches, it is also too specific because of its exclusive focus on internal religious discourses. However, religion should not be seen as a dimension of life or social sphere that is separate from other dimensions or spheres in life. Polarisations around sexuality and religion have, at times, become so extreme because of the entanglements with other developments in society. Mentioned before is HIV/AIDS, its huge impact as well as the mobilization of churches, faith groups and faith based NGOs and their increasing significance in the public sphere as a result from access to HIV/AIDS funding.[35]

Intergenerational dynamics

Intergenerational dynamics are another crucial influence, both for understanding the impact and attractiveness of Pentecostalism for young people, as well as for understanding the moral panic around sexuality and sexual diversity within African societies. The Pentecostal movement is a movement that has been attracting young people in particular, because it does not accept the authority of older generations uncritically.[36] Young people resist older generations making decisions on important moments in life around birth, marriage and death. Pentecostalism offers them a legitimization to make their own decisions. Anthropologist Allessandro Gusman has discussed the Pentecostal theology around salvation, or the deliverance of sin.[37] In his study of young people in Pentecostal Churches in Kampala he shows that the experience

[35] Sexuality, AIDS and Religion: Transnational Dynamics in Africa (Conference), Nadine Beckmann, Alessandro Gusman, and Catrine Shroff (2014) Strings attached: AIDS and the rise of transnational connections in Africa.
[36] Cf. Rijk van Dijk http://www.religion-and-development.nl/documents/doc/paper%20van%20dijk.pdf
[37] This entanglement will be further introduced and explained in chapter 5.

with HIV/AIDS has influenced young people to engage with Pentecostalism. The concept of salvation in Pentecostal theology has come to refer both to notions of being *saved* in a spiritual sense with being *safe* in a physical sense at the same time. Young Pentecostals in Kampala that have adopted this 'rhetoric of the Joseph Generation' that combines being born-again with a strong emphasis on abstinence from sexuality. By constructing themselves as a morally upright generation they contest the authority of the generation of their fathers, as they have become associated with death caused by HIV/AIDS, war and famine.[38]

Thus, intergenerational dynamics are visible within polarisations on religion and sexuality in more than one way. Pentecostalism is one important context in which intergenerational conflicts are played out. Pentecostal discourse is attractive for youth because it affirms a break with traditional family relations and affirming individuality of its believers.[39] Yet these changing intergenerational dynamics in African societies must be seen in the context of population growth and migration to urban areas. Practices of polygamy are declining, in particular in urban areas.[40] In addition older patterns of gerontocracy are blurring under influence of globalization and the local appropriation of views and customs from abroad. Under influence of conflict, violence, HIV/AIDS, and migration, families have broken down and traditional forms of sociality have been put under pressure. Youth have therefore no clear place in society, or views on the place of youth in society differ amongst different generations.[41] This creates tensions between generations, in which sexuality often plays a role in marking out boundaries between generations and symbolizing generational lifestyles.

In this context we can also understand a concern about sexual morals of young people among older generations that often play decisive roles in the leadership of religious organisations and institutions.[42] Vincent Sichinga from the Church of Central African Presbyterian, Synod of Linvingstonia gives an example of the latter. He explains the urgent problems they encounter among youth such as unwanted pregnancies, illegal and unhealthy abortions, and HIV/AIDS.

> "*It is all about being opened up, without sharing or having or information about it, (otherwise) the problem cannot be solved*".

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[38] Alessandro Gusman. *HIV/AIDS, Pentecostal Churches, and the "Joseph Generation" in Uganda. Africa Today Vol. 56-1:* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009), 67-86.

[39] Bochow and van Dijk (2012); Alessandro Gusman. 2009. HIV/AIDS, Pentecostal Churches, and the "Joseph Generation" in Uganda. Indiana University Press. Dijk, Rijk van. 1998. "Pentecostalism, cultural memory and the state: contested representations of time in postcolonial Malawi". Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power. 155-181…

[40] James Fenske (2013) 'African Polygamy. Past and Present' Working Paper, Munich Personal RepEcArchive, http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/48526/1/MPRA_paper_48526.pdf.

[41] J. Abbink (2005), 'Being Young in Africa, The Politics of Despair and Renewal' in: J. Abbink and Ineke van Kessel (eds.), *Vanguard or Vandals, Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa* (Leiden and Boston) pp. 1-33

[42] Brenda Bartelink and Erik Meinema (2014), 'Contested Sexualities and Shared Concerns, Power Dynamics in a Transnational Network of Faith-Based Organisations', in: Nadine Beckmann, Alessandro Gusman, and Catrine Shroff (eds.), *Strings Attached: AIDS and The Rise Of Transnational Connections in Africa* (Oxford University Press). *and* Erik Meinema (December 2010), *Youth and NGOs in Kenya and Uganda. How to deal with sexuality?* Educaids network Uganda/ Kenya/ Netherlands. University of Groningen.

Sichinga illustrates that for many churches it is not easy to change their views about sex outside of marriage, but that a concern with the sexual health risks of young people creates a space and a necessity for a more open conversation with young people on sexuality. This includes the possibility of informing youth on condom use instead of limiting prevention messages to abstinence only. In his views we see both a concern with the sexual morality of youth, as well as the space to not always take the morality as a point of departure in sex education. In a study on the church and faith based organisations working on prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexuality organisations in which we were engaged several years ago, we observed that some religious organisations combine religious arguments with public health arguments in the sex education provided to youth.[43] For example, during a group discussion with a fieldworker and peer educators of the YWCA in the slums of Kampala, a fieldworker argued:

> '*Youth won't be able to use condoms consistently, so it's better to abstain.*'

We also observed that sex educators would argue that using condoms increases sexual health risks, because young people do not use them consistently or because they don't have access to condoms. These arguments were entangled with the fear of stimulating 'immoral behaviour' among young people when advising them to use condoms, and led to an emphasis on abstinence before marriage in sex education messages for youth.

It has become clear that young peoples sexual choices cannot be explained in terms of resisting or complying with religious arguments only. Similarly, assumptions about the religious motivations of young people choosing for abstinence should not be made too easily. Cultural sociologist Marian Burchardt shows in his work on youth in townships in Cape Town that religious arguments are less prominent than notions of romanticism in young peoples choices for abstinence and faithfulness. Burchardt highlights the importance of understanding young peoples sexual cultures, including their choices for abstinence and faithfulness in marriage, in other frames than the frame of religion only.[44] Intergenerational dynamics are one dimension to take into account, as an influence on the moral claims that various actors make with regard to sexuality and abstinence within Christian contexts. These dynamics also play a role in the broader public and political debates on sexuality in many African societies. These examples call for a broader perspective on how sexuality is addressed by religious actors or with reference to religious arguments.

Resistance to and appropriation of international discourses

International human rights discourses are not always easily accepted or appropriated in local contexts. There are many examples of resistance based on religious arguments.

[43] Bartelink and Meinema (2014), 'Contested Sexualities'

[44] Burchardt, Marian. 2011. "Challenging Pentecostal moralism: erotic geographies, religion and sexual practices among township youth in Cape Town". Culture, Health & Sexuality. 13 (6): 669-683.

Much as been written on the contestation over human rights in relation to religion, yet what is relevant here is the dynamic behind these contestations in particular when it comes to the (lack of) appropriation of international discourses in specific local settings. Professor of Law Sylvia Tamale has argued that women's rights have been advocated primarily based on western arguments that ignore the potential of culture and religion for emancipating women in Africa. Women's sexual and reproductive roles in Uganda are closely connected to the family. According to Tamale, the family rather than the individual should be the context in which they can pursue their rights. Fighting for women's rights to (sexual) pleasure would be much more convincing for many women in Uganda if it was based on the positive aspects of the culture of Sharia, which guarantees sexual pleasure and frowns upon sexual violence. Therefore it can be a source for women to advocate their sexual rights.[45]

In recent interviews in Riruta, a local neighbourhood in Nairobi Kenya, local female religious leaders criticized discourses on gender equality:[46]

> *When women went to Beijing in 1995, the kind of changes we were looking for it was in politics, in offices etc. Down in the communities, also because of illiteracy, the problems are still there. Because of culture and tradition, many thought that Beijing was about equality, a woman becoming the same as a man. They would say that a man cannot give birth or breastfeed, and women cannot make someone pregnant. And ignored that what women are looking for is sharing tasks and responsibilities*".

Another interviewee added that men feared they would loose their power:

> *"When this Beijing issue came it* [the position of women] *worsened in fact. Men thought women were taking authority and men started fighting this authority. I don't think it was well understood as being about balance. Men have this mentality that women want to rule over them".*

In interviews with female and male leaders in the community (religious and other) it became clear that there was a widespread assumption that discourses on gender where only about women, or purposely excluded men and ignored their specific gender issues.[47] Most of the religious leaders interviewed were pastors in local Pentecostal churches, while some of them were affiliated with mainline churches. After becoming involved in the programme Channels of Hope for Gender, run by World Vision, many of these leaders

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[45] Source: Sylvia Tamale (2008). 'The right to culture and the culture of rights: a critical perspective on women's sexual rights in Africa' in *Feminist Legal Studies*. 16, 47-69

[46] These interviews were conducted by Brenda Bartelink and Erin K. Wilson as part of an evaluation of the Channels of Hope for Gender Programme by World Vision, which resulted in an internal report for World Vision and in various blog posts in 2014: Brenda Bartelink and Erin Wilson 'We must all be allowed to love each other with honour: spirituality and social transformation', blogpost on *Open Democracy/ Transformation*: https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/brenda-bartelink-erin-wilson/we-must-all-be-allowed-to-love-each-other-with-honour-sp; Brenda Bartelink 'Relatiestress' on VicerVersa Online (November 2014); Erin K. Wilson ' Is it really inconceivable reimagining the role of religion in promoting gender equality' on http://religionfactor.net/2014/11/20/is-it-really-inconceivable-reimagining-the-role-of-religion-in-promoting-gender-equality/ (last accessed December 15 2014)

[47] See also Erin K. Wilson ' Is it really inconceivable reimagining the role of religion in promoting gender equality' on http://religionfactor.net/2014/11/20/is-it-really-inconceivable-reimagining-the-role-of-religion-in-promoting-gender-equality/ (last accessed December 15 2014)

had taken up a discourse of gender relations or relations between men and women to advocate for more equal roles and relationships between men and women in their churches and the community.

While religious leaders in rural and less developed city neighbourhoods questioned international discourses on gender equality, within Christian theology there is much work done on integrating gender and human rights discourses by female theologians in particular . An example is the work of the members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. This network brings together African Christian women theologians working in various religious and secular institutions. They are concerned with the liberation of women in Christian contexts and address explicit and implicit patriarchal discourses in churches and in Christian theology.[48] While they often work within a religious framework, the network also addressed patriarchal cultures that hinder the social transformation towards a more equal society in general.[49] Members of the network are usually affiliated with mainline churches and the universities and seminaries related to that. Yet, their reach might be beyond mainline church contexts. St. Pauls seminary in Limuru close to Nairobi is an example of a mainline theological faculty that also attracts students from Pentecostal churches.[50]

Overlapping dimensions- local, national and transnational

The previous examples have already indicated that local discourses on gender and sexuality cannot be seen outside the context of the national and transnational dynamics that influence them. According to historian of Christianity Phillip Jenkins, homosexuality is one of the chasms in today's Christian world. Some studies on homosexuality in African societies have heavily criticized Christian theologians who justify discrimination of homosexuals by referring to a selection of verses from the Bible. Historian Marc Epprecht is an example, however he also points at the influence of colonial discourses on homosexuality, as well as the involvement of US Pentecostals in fuelling hatred against homosexual people in African countries such as Uganda.[51] Rev. Kimundu, from Other Sheep Africa – Kenya, considers this influence highly problematic in the fight for inclusion of LGBT people within the Kenyan context. Yet, controversies over and struggles with homosexuality in Christian and Muslim contexts cannot be seen as independent from the broader societal contexts of which they are part. Controversies experienced around homosexuality in societies such as Uganda have been said to tap into a desire to protect the institute of marriage and the family and in a fear of losing control in a rapid changing society.[52] Religion and politics have also become entangled in Zimabwe, as Massiiwa

[48] Adriaan van Klinken (2013), 'Transforming masculinities in African Christianity gender controversies in times of AIDS.' (Farnham, Surrey. England: Ashgate). Pp.55

[49] Van Klinken (2013) 55

[50] Esther Mombo and Heleen Joziasse (eds.) (2011) *If you have no voice, just sing! Narratives of Women's Lives and Theological Education at St. Pauls University* (Limuru Kenya)

[51] Epprecht, Marc (2008) *Heterosexual Africa?: the history of an idea from the age of exploration to the age of AIDS*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

[52] Joanna Sadgrove, (2012), 'Morality plays and money matters: towards a situated understanding of the politics of homosexuality in Uganda' in *The Journal of Modern African Studies: a Quarterly Survey of Politics, Economics and Related Topics in Contemporary Africa*. 50 (1) 103-129.

Ragies Gunda explains in his study on homosexuality and the Bible. Political discourses that stress masculinity and argue that homosexuality is not African have drawn on arguments from Christian discourses in which a literal interpretation of Bible texts is chosen over a contextual reading. The conflation of politics and religion in how homosexuality is addressed, have limited the space for alternative Christian voices that advocate for inclusion. A similar entanglement between Christian discourses and discourses on nationalism and citizenship (albeit with different consequences) can also be seen in the Zambian context in which homosexuality is often rejected based on the argument that Zambia is a Christian nation. However, the observation that the presidential candidate that was accused of promoting homosexuality became president after all and LGBT people have a relative space to be in a same sex relationship and live together for example suggest that many people in Zambia have more tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality. Homosexuality does feature in political campaigns though.[53] Finally another example from Uganda also indicates that political discourses have limited the space for religious leaders to explore alternative stances towards homosexuality. Our interviewee at INERELA+ Uganda explains that the discussions around the anti-homosexuality bill has impacted their work significantly:

> '*We feel that everybody has the right to be who they are, and if people come to us for counseling we help them, with the new law we are obliged to report people if they are homosexual, this endangers our work and also makes that homosexual people will not seek counseling on HIV/AIDS. It is a serious problem*'.[54]

Homophobia in African societies must be seen in the context of complex, national and international political dynamics in which experiences with and perceptions of Western influence play an important role. The space for progressive voices, in particular if these voices are from religious leaders, is not only dependent on the space within religious contexts but also profoundly by the political and public space to advocate for inclusion of people regardless of their sexuality or gender.

[53] Interview Adriaan van Klinken, May 2014
[54] Interview May 2014

3. Religious leaders

Religious leaders are authoritative figures in churches and communities in many African contexts. While women who are more inclined to visit churches than men, the authority of religious leaders extends beyond the church, which makes them important agents of change. Influenced by limited knowledge and insight, religious leaders often promote stigma and discrimination. Religious leaders often lack theological training and are not able to access for academic theological discourses. So while "*there are brilliant materials on an academic theology level. The challenge is converting that to a local congregational level, and equipping local pastors and youth leaders and so on to deal with sexuality".* [55] Historically, religious leaders have therefore often responded to sexual reproductive health (SRH) problems with an underlying judgement apparent in the language they used.[56] Doing so, religious leaders implicitly created a distinction between 'us' and 'them', in which the 'us' are morally right and innocent, while 'they', the ones with sexuality related problems, are sinners and guilty. Furthermore, there is a tension between theology and practice. Many religious leaders feel that they need to protect the values of faith. Based on this thought, they feel that talking about sexuality is the same as condoning it, and that those who practice sinful behaviour are not true believers. Therefore religious leaders are often not addressing sexuality, gender and related issues. Yet when they do address it, it is often done in a very stigmatizing and moralist way. As a result well-intended community actions are sometimes hampered or blocked by religious leaders.[57] At the same time there is potential for engaging religious leaders in issues of sexuality and gender by providing them with theologies and methodologies they can use as leaders to integrate this in their preaching and pastoral care. Organisations that have focussed on working with religious leaders such as CABSA (or Channels of Hope, cf 5.2) have experienced religious leaders appreciate the opportunity to be equipped with new theological insights and inspiration for their sermons and Bible studies. Theology and Bible study is therefore an entry-point when working with religious leaders that should not be underestimated. In this chapter we discuss the role and potential of religious leaders to be(come) progressive voices on sexuality and gender by discussing the discourses and impact of three different programmes that work with religious leaders.

3.1 Promoting inclusive attitudes around HIV/AIDS

The Christian AIDS Bureau of Southern Africa (CABSA) was founded in 2001 after Christo Greyling, an HIV-positive ordained minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in South

[55] Lyn van Rooyen, CABSA
[56] Christo Greyling, lecture at a webinar organized by RelDev on religion and sexuality. https://www.anymeeting.com/WebConference-beta/RecordingDefault.aspx?c_psrid=EF55D8888147.
[57] See World Vision website: http://www.wvi.org/church-and-interfaith-engagement/channels-hope-hiv. *and* World Vision, 'Channels of Hope and Advocacy'. http://www.wvi.org/health/publication/channels-hope-and-advocacy.

Africa, started talking about his positive status in faith communities.[58] Churches verbalised the need for a centralized information and resource centre, where they would have access to training and support. CABSA supports Christian communities in responding to the challenges of HIV through advocacy, comprehensive online information services and a variety of trainings and workshops on mobilisation and networking. The two flagship projects of CABSA are the Christian AIDS Resource and Information programme (CARIS), which manages a website that provides churches with access to resources, and the Churches Channels of Hope Training in which religious leaders are trained to facilitate processes of churches and communities to become more inclusive towards people living with HIV and Aids. The approach of CABSA is based on the idea that religious leaders and people of faith are key change agents when working on issues of social justice and community transformation. As program manager Lyn van Rooyen explains:

> "*Particularly in Africa and sub Saharan Africa. People have a much stronger link to faith communities, and have a very strong trust relationships with their faith communities. We believe that it would be impossible to bring social change and social transformation without, without full involvement of faith communities.*"

Discourses

In their work CABSA integrates a spiritual component and this enables people to connect to their various aspects of their human identity when addressing HIV/AIDS and issues of discrimination and exclusion.

> "*We are emotional and spiritual beings. I think people often leave a training saying that all is good and well, but if you don't address all the aspects, it does not change behaviour or attitudes.* [...] *One of the strengths of the Churches Channels of Hope program is that we are trying to convey the scientific knowledge* [...] *but do this in the context of a sound Biblical base. The feedback says that this is what makes the training different.*"

The cooperation between religious leaders, managers and scholars from different denominational backgrounds, is important in ensuring a balanced combination of scientific, spiritual and personal perspectives on HIV/AIDS. Van Rooyen:

> "[We have a pool of people from] *the north and the south, different faith traditions, older, younger, male, female, theologians, people at the university level, project planners and mangers in the grassroots.*"

Christian perspectives on these issues are variable and highly diverse. Also, by working with people from different denominational and institutional backgrounds, CABSA aims to maintain a balance of voices and secure continuous improvement the content of the Channels of Hope trainings.

[58] Website: www.cabsa.org.za

The Body of Christ has Aids- examples of alternative discourses and new language

In 2010 a Xola Skosana, a religious leader at the Way of Life Church in Khayelitsha, an informal settlement near Capetown gave a sermon in which he said that Jesus is HIV positive. This caused uproar that was even picked up in the international media. Why did he say this – Was it out of disrespect or to dishonor Jesus? No, I do not think so! He explained his statement as follows: "In many parts of the Bible, God put himself in the position of the destitute, the sick, the marginalized. When we attend to those who are sick, we are attending to Him. When we ignore people who are sick, we are ignoring Him." This principle of being interdependent and responsible for one another is a core principle in CABSA's work around HIV/AIDS well. It is expressed in the phrase: 'We are the body of Christ' based on the Bible verses Ephesians 12:12 which is the basis for inclusion of people living with HIV and Aids. If one person has HIV and AIDS, the whole Body of Christ has HIV/AIDS. Everyone suffers and everyone is responsible for the response to people living with HIV/AIDS.

These and other Biblical resources give people a new language for dealing with people living with HIV and Aids in their churches and communities. It stresses 'compassionate justice' rather than an ultimate truth when it discusses tough stuff such as gender relations and sexuality. This is however challenging as well, as Christina Landman observes in her analysis of CABSA theology. People that are trained in the Churches Channels of Hope programme go back to their churches addressing sensitive issues such as gender equality and run the risk of being alienated rather than heard. At the same time it is necessary to go beyond the safe and more accepted areas. While sexuality is discussed, it is often discussed within the context of marriage referred to as 'lawful' sex. However the discourse of inclusion and acceptance, that form a basis for agency around themes of HIV/AIDS, gender and sexuality also needs to be understood as applying to people who are not married. Therefore, religious discourses that have been successful in engaging religious leaders in fighting stigma and discrimination around HIV/AIDS have the potential to be expanded to gender and sexuality. Yet, more is needed to build an alternative discourse to include unmarried young people for example.

Sources: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/aug/25/pastor-jesus-hiv-south-africa, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7RA6ZIzsok, http://www.cabsa.org.za/Sermons

In Bible studies of CABSA for instance, various voices are expressed and multiple perspectives are reflected upon. Although it seldom happens, CABSA states that it may edit or exclude voices or opinions from its programs' content when these opinions contradicts the guiding principles that are used as a starting point for developing content.[59] One of the most important guiding principles is that everyone should be approached with human dignity, as everyone is created by the image of God. CABSA encourages people to listen to each other with respect, even if they do not agree on certain issues. In their approach CABSA does not take a controversial stance on sensitive matters only for controversy sake, but keep the discussion open by taking a 'gentle' approach.

> "*We don't believe we have the answers, but we seek for truth with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When someone says: 'But the Bible says…" it closes down a discussion. But if you say: 'How I understand the Bible at this stage', the discussion stays open."*

It is this attitude that CABSA fosters in its own approach and among the religious leaders they work with.

[59] For more information on the guiding principles of CABSA, see: http://www.cabsa.org.za/content/churches-channels-hope-training-facilitators.

Impact

In 2012 and 2013 CABSA published two impact reports that combined quantitative analysis with qualitative data reflecting the experiences of people that have been trained as a facilitator.[60] In 2012 CABSA trained 35 religious leaders, which added up to a total trained religious leaders of 735 since the start. Based on accounts of people that were trained, almost 30.000 people have been providing other people in their churches and communities with information on HIV/AIDS. The settings in which these religious leaders give their messages are highly diverse, where one comments to have opened up conversations within family sphere another has reported to engage with political leaders on country level in South Africa. The Churches as Channels of Hope training discusses various 'though issues', including condom use, contraceptives and homosexuality. In the qualitative account of religious leaders responses to the Churches Channels of Hope training provided in Annex 5 it stands out that religious leaders only refer to HIV/AIDS. It is therefore hard to say anything on how Churches Channels of Hope impacts on sensitive issues broader than HIV/AIDS, and what the potential is for creating a basis for leadership on issues of sexuality and gender among religious leaders. In de study of reports of religious leaders that have been trained in 2013 information is provided on the countries in which CABSA has provided trainings.[61] Next to South Africa (57) in which the majority of activities have taken place, Nigeria (7) and Zimbabwe (16) are countries in which CABSA is quite active.

Thursdays in Black- common concerns and joint advocacy

Since the 1970s various groups and movements have taken up a Thursdays in Black campaign to advocate for a cause related to women. In the 1980s the World Council of Churches started an international human rights campaign under this label. Wearing black on Thursday as a peaceful way of standing up against gender based violence. Since church organisation Diakonia initiated in in South Africa in 2008, various organisations in South Africa have joined the campaign. CABSA has embraced the campaign as a way to connect faith-based and non faith-based organisations around the issue of gender violence. Gender violence is a common concern that crosscuts divides throughout the world. It is a concern in the Global South as well as in the Global North, among people and communities from various cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds. Because of their networks among religious leaders and organisations, the Thursdays in Black campaign is actively promoted to raise attention for gender-based violence in African church contexts.

Cf. Campaign website: http://www.thursdaysinblack.co.za

CABSA focuses primarily on religious leaders from mainline churches, and their networks are also pre-dominantly mainline. The organisation has strong links to transnational networks such as the World Council of Churches, which include various branches of mainline and African Independent (indigenous) Churches. What makes the organisation interesting is the combination of off-line and online advocacy work. In addition, *Thursdays*

[60] Rhodé Jansen and Lyn van Rooyen (2013) *CABSA Impact Report: Analysis of Impact Reports of Trained Churches Channels of Hope Facilitators in their local communities in 2012 amd Report of Churches Channels of Hope Facilitators Training July 2013* (CABSA) http://www.cabsa.org.za/content/cabsa-churches-channels-hope-impact-report-20122013 (last accessed on Dec. 18 2014) and Lyn van Rooyen (2014) *Impact Report. Analysis of Impact based on reports of Trained Churches of Channels of Hope Facilitator Activities in their Local Communities in 2013* (CABSA)

[61] Lyn van Rooyen (2014) *Impact Report. Analysis of Impact based on reports of Trained Churches of Channels of Hope Facilitator Activities in their Local COmmunities in 2013* (CABSA), copy obtained via CABSA director.

in Black is interesting because it has the potential to connect faith-based and non faith-based groups (world wide) in campaigning for gender equality.

3.2 Advocates for harmony- religious leaders and gender equality

Channels of Hope is a programme that mobilizes community leaders – especially faith leaders and their congregations – to respond to core issues affecting their communities, such as HIV and AIDS, maternal and child health, gender equity and gender based violence and child protection.[62] As a faith-partnership programme Channels of Hope is related to and mainly working within the context of World Vision area development programmes. However the methodology is also used outside the context of World Vision, and local religious leaders have initiated their own independent groups and organizations using Channels of Hope methodology. World Vision is a global Christian relief, development and advocacy organization dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Channels of Hope was initially developed by the CABSA as Churches Channels of Hope. World Vision signed a Licence Agreement with CABSA in 2004 to utilize, adapt and implement the program globally. Since then modules have been developed for Gender, Maternal and Newborn Child Health, Child Protection and Ebola. It also been expanded to engage with Muslim leaders. Channels of Hope works directly with local religious leaders, who often minister to smaller communities or congregations. However in the course of the work around the world, they have also engaged with more prominent religious leaders. Here we take Channels of Hope for Gender as an example, informed by an independent evaluation of the Channels of Hope for Gender commissioned by World Vision that was recently done by one of us.[63]

Discourses

Channels of Hope for gender starts takes a personal point of departure by engaging the religious leader and his/her spouse in an exploration of gender in their own lives, in the Bible and in the wider community and culture. "*We bring in stories, experiences, we bring theology in. We are not pushing religious leaders to move,*" says CoH founder Christo Greyling. After being confronted and challenged through their faith, faith leaders become advocates for further engagement, personally and through their congregations, to address the critical issues raised during the CoH workshops. In a later phase of the CoH program local church congregations are guided and empowered for action, they are assisted to develop their own strategies and action plans according to their size, their own vision and their needs, in such a way that it forms part of a broader community response. For the religious leaders that had taken up gender relations as a theme to address within their churches and in community activities, Genesis was the most important source on which

[62] Website: http://www.wvi.org/church-and-interfaith-engagement/channels-hope-hiv
[63] The evaluation was done by Dr. E.K. Wilson of the Centre for Religion, Conflict and the Public Domain at the University of Groningen and Brenda Bartelink from the KCRD at Oikos. The unpublished report was shared with World Vision.

they based their discourses. In addition to the *Genesis Mandate*, they often also referred to the harmony of creation. This is related to the broader story of the fall in Genesis, in which Adam and Eve had been disobedient and sin and brokenness become part of human life. It is however connected to Jesus, who was sent by God to restore creation. Christians are called to follow Jesus example and live as much as they can in accordance with how God has intended creation to be in harmony rather than in conflict. Discrimination between men and women are seen as a sign of a broken creation, for men and women to live in harmony women need to be honoured and their dignity needs to be acknowledged.[64]

Pastor Charles Maina Macharia- Nairobi, Kenya

Pastor Charles Maina Macharia is pastor at the Gospel Revival Centre Muchatha in Nairobi. The Gospel Revival Centre in Nairobi is a Pentecostal church was founded in 1980 and has established many home-groups and churches since then. Charles Maina's church in Muchatha is small, counting among 40 members, even though more people may visit the church services. In 2012 Charles became involved in a workshop from Channels of Hope on gender relations. ' I'm a theologian, done quite a bit of theology and I've been in the church in ministry for a period of time. So I wen to the first training and I was sitting there and I was just interested to hear what it is about. And I heard gender – in Kenya, you know when someone starts talking about gender they are talking about women and women being raised to the same level as men. I was sceptical. But I went to the workshop a second time and when I started looking at the *Genesis Mandate* we discussed on Day 2 of the Workshop I began to look at it in a different sense. I had read Genesis, but I had not realized I had read it wrong. I went home and began helping more around the house. Now it is part of our family culture, things have changed'.

Maina was trained as a facilitator and as a volunteer he organised workshops together with other pastors in the neighbourhood of Riruta. In 2014 around 8 of these local pastors registered a community-based organisation called **Churches Channels of Hope**. The organisation has a Facebookpage called CohforGender Riruta Kenya. The community based organisation's main activities are to 'create awareness to many families of the plan of God in gender relations contrary to what most of our tradition teaches.. it is not about gender equality but gender relations'. Churches Channels of Hope provides workshops on gender in churches, and a programme called Barefoot that opens up conversations on gender relations with children and youth in schools. In addition a group of young people that operates under the wings of the organization has created drama and plays to address gender relations that are played in churches and in community gatherings.

'In the workshops we deeply look at Genesis 1, 2 and 3', says Maina. These are important texts from the Bible on which the messages on gender relations given by the pastors are based. The *Genesis Mandate* is a central principle introduced in these texts, in particular in Genesis 1:26-28 where is narrated how God has created humankind to take care over the world and everything in it. In verse 27 it says that God created humans in his own image, he created them male and female. This text is read and discussed among the pastors and other participants in the workshops to rethink unequal relationships between men and women in their community in light of how God has intended men and women to be equal, since they were both created in his image.

Many of the religious leaders interviewed for a recent evaluation of Channels of Hope for Gender explained how reading these texts in light of gender relations was an eye-opener. Like Charles Maina, many of them narrated how this had changed their personal and family lives. Other had actively started preaching on these topics in their churches, became volunteers to train others on this or had become engaged in more practical initiatives such as creating savings groups, setting-up businesses for women or local charities for marginalized groups in the community. While the evaluation report itself is

[64] Sources: interview with Charles Maina Macharia in Riruta september 2014 and follow-up through mail in December 2014, Bible Studies provided with Channels of Hope for Gender.

an internal document, various stories and examples have been published, based on interviews with over 40 religious leaders who have been engaged in Channels of Hope for Gender.[65]

The story of Charles Maina and the approach of Channels of Hope for Gender interesting in view of exploring religious leaders potential for engaging progressively around issues of gender and sexuality. First is the importance of connecting personal transformation to progressive engagement of religious leaders in processes of social transformation. In this example personal transformation is realised by connecting personal stories that come from people's own communities to personal reflections on the Bible. This catalyses a process in which religious leaders start to rethink their own views and behaviours with regard to gender, personally, as a religious leader, and as a leader in the community. This personal process is fundamental for the engagement of these religious leaders in change on social level. Second is the importance of language, against the background of the dynamics around international human rights discourses and the limited acceptability of these discourses in local contexts, language that is more in line with the language of religious leaders and their communities is important. For religious leaders that have been engaged in Channels of Hope for gender, an emphasis on family and harmony in relations was definitely more attractive than a focus on gender equality and empowerment.

Connecting the personal and the spiritual

Channels of Hope' focuses on religious leaders' own experiences, reflecting on their own behaviour through questionnaires that are discussed anonymously as part of the programme. This makes the leaders aware that they are not living-up to the strong normative frames themselves. Also, people are invited to share their life story. Religious leaders hear the story of someone living with HIV, or who lost a child during pregnancy or childbirth. They experience that it is a reality, also in their communities, and are confronted with the question: "What do we do to help them?" According to Greyling, religious leaders are then challenged to rethink their moral frameworks and theological understandings. It creates an intrinsic motivation rather than something that is brought to them from the outside. The following story about a recent Channels of Hope training that Greyling shared serves as an example: *"We brought in a father who discovered that his son is gay. The father was a prominent church leader, and the son was a church leader as well. Let the group listen to the story of this church leader. It touches on all the hard stuff. It brings the emotions and the judgements all together, now it is not theorising about it, now it is personal".*

Thirdly, the example points to the importance of time, time to engage religious leaders in a process and build a relationship. This also seems relevant in relation to a more critical perspective on an approach to gender like this one. When religious leaders appropriate and put into practice discourses on harmony in creation and gender relationships, they do not necessarily apply this to more sensitive issues such as gender based violence or sexual diversity. Inclusiveness is a challenge and that challenge is does not disappear after religious leaders start to read the Bible more inclusively. Some of the religious leaders

[65] Other examples have been provided in various publications: Brenda Bartelink and Erin Wilson 'We must all be allowed to love each other with honour: spirituality and social transformation', blogpost on *Open Democracy/ Transformation*: https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/brenda-bartelink-erin-wilson/we-must-all-be-allowed-to-love-each-other-with-honour-sp; Brenda Bartelink 'Relatiestress' on VicerVersa Online (November 2014); Erin K. Wilson ' Is it really inconceivable reimagining the role of religion in promoting gender equality' on http://religionfactor.net/2014/11/20/is-it-really-inconceivable-reimagining-the-role-of-religion-in-promoting-gender-equality/ (last accessed December 15 2014); Brenda Bartelink 'Het leven, de liefde en de leer. Bronnen van inspiratie in ontwikkelingssamenwerking' in Special Vice Versa, December 2014

explained to struggle with judgements inappropriate behaviour of women often seen as a motivation for rape and sexual assault. An excerpt from an interview with a religious leader in Kenya illustrates how it takes time to reconsider deeply rooted ideas and assumptions in light of the perspective of harmony and inclusiveness:

> RL: There are ideas that we're not very clear on how to approach it. There are areas that from the Christian point of view that we're not quite sure how to approach it – homosexuality for example. We who are using it are the same people who have told that this is how things should be. So still need to find proper means for approaching issue of homosexuality.
>
> Interviewer: Do you think issues should be addressed?
>
> RL: Yes, more about how to go about it because it's so sensitive. We need to be better equipped to go into these conversations on these issues with the community.[66]

It is challenging to change messages on issues about which religious leaders themselves have been very focal previously, as the somewhat cryptic sentence 'we are the same people who have told that this how things should be' illustrates. It also shows that reflecting on what equality means in relation to the Bible and the live within church and community, can lead to questions that extent beyond the focus on traditional gender roles.

Impact

Finally, for this mapping it is hard to measure the impact of these messages. This would require some quantitative analysis of the numbers of religious leaders that have been engaged, but more importantly qualitative follow-up to see which discourses these religious leaders draw on and which messaged they give about gender and to whom. Charles Maina is not a pastor of any mega church, and many of his colleagues are pastors of local congregations often in poor communities. However more prominent religious leaders have been involved as well. Sheikh Hassan Omari, Member of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims is an example.[67] In addition there are some examples of religious leaders that have organised themselves in a CBO from Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa, who work with local churches and religious leaders on gender relations. Many of these CBOs are new and need time and resources to grow into an organisation that can have an impact.[68] At the same time these religious leaders are often part of local pastors fellowships and of bigger mainline or Pentecostal church organisations or networks, that can also be utilized to bring these messages further. Finally, what is interesting about Channels of Hope compared to the other organisations discussed in this chapter, is that they seem to be more successful in engaging Pentecostal leaders. Again, while these

[66] Quote interview religious leader in Kenya, September 2014.

[67] Cf. Channels of Hope ' Igniting a Movement': http://jliflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/CoH-Pamphlet-Igniting-a-Movement-Final-13-11.pdf

[68] An example of a CBO that has been established in the 1970s and taken up an aim work with local pastors around gender relations is Ziphakamise in Kwazulu Natal in South Africa: http://www.ziphakamise.org.za/index.html

usually are local leaders at somewhat smaller churches, it places them in a more unique position compared to the other organisations.

3.3 Addressing homosexuality-from the margins to the centre?

Organizations that have been the most outspoken on issues of sexuality and diversity are organizations that work on the inclusion of LGBT people within religious contexts such as Other Sheep and IAM.[69] Other Sheep works primarily in Pentecostal contexts. An important aspect of the work of Other Sheep is to introduce faith communities and religious leaders to alternative interpretations of Biblical texts. Rev. Steve Parelli, director of Other Sheep:

> "*We will have a seminar around the question: 'What does the Bible really say about homosexuality?" Because that is where they* [Christian communities] *all will start. When discussing homosexuality, they will not start by using the principle of law or human rights as a reference point, but with the Bible.* [...] *so we fight fire with fire."*

The goal of Other Sheep with these alternative interpretations is not to put a new orthodoxy in place, but to create a pluralism in which different interpretations can co-exist. In the words of rev. Parelli:

> "*We are not saying that our interpretation is the correct interpretation. We would be making the same mistake as the people who are against gays. We also say that those who say the Bible is condemning that they have the right to say that. But please do not voice your opinion in hate speech terms.*"

According to Jose Ortiz, coordinator at Other Sheep, many of the religious clergy who are approached are given food for thought by creating awareness among them that being gay and Christian at the same time is a defendable position based on a careful understanding of the scriptures. For many LGBT people who are living in a context that condemns their LGBT identity, the message of Other Sheep is one of restoration and liberation. As many LGBT people living in the African countries in which Other Sheep works are facing discrimination, exclusion, rejection by their families or even juridical persecution. In such a situation, homosexuals are often taught that God hates them. Rev. Parelli explains:

> "*The response is phenomenal. They are ostracized. They believe that God hates them. And we come and show them how it is not so. They are restored literally.* [...] *That is the power of religion.*"

In addition religion enables Other Sheep to build trust:

> "*We don't understand their culture or religion. But once we say we are evangelical, we had the born again experience, we are immediately brought into confidence. If you had the born again experience, you talk the same lingo.* [...] *If you come to Africa, and you identify as evangelical, you*

[69] In addition an example within in Muslim contexts is Inner Circle: http://theinnercircle.org.za

are on common ground. If you are from the evangelical faith, it opens doors. That is one area where you can say there is enough commonality. We don't know Africans, we don't know African cultural experience, but it is in the area of religion where you can really comment cross culturally."

IAM, or Inclusive and Affirmative Ministries, an organisation based in South Africa, has used similar methods of contextual Bible study in combination with sharing personal stories and engaging religious leaders and LGBT people of faith in a process of dialogue. IAM sees itself as a catalyst and has engaged with other catalysers to open up conversations about sexuality in mainline or mission church contexts. This is visible in publications such as the 'The Evil of Patriarchy' that addresses patriarchal structures in church and society that create exclusion mechanisms that are contradictory to values of justice and equity. Systems of oppression are questioned more generally and diversity is addressed in a broad way, realizing that every person is speaking from its on positions and multiple identities. It is a challenge to find common ground, as Judith Kotzé director of IAM explains:

"We are often seen as too gay for the churches and to churchy for the gays, too white for the blacks and to black for the whites"

It is a challenge to speak and advocate from a position in the margins, and the question is what the potential is to connect to the middle, to the often silent majority that does not speak out on issues of homosexuality. We pick up on this question again, after taking a closer look at the discourses that are produced by IAM in particular.

Discourse

As a catalyst in mainline church context in Southern Africa and other African countries, IAM draws on a contextual reading of the Bible. Contextual Bible Study is a See-Judge-Act method that is used by people to read the Bible and engage with the Bible from their personal perspectives and lives. It is related to liberation theology, a theological movement that has emerged from and was particularly strong in Latin America.[70] A recently published resource manual gives three characteristics of contextual Bible study.[71] First, it is explained that Contextual Bible Study is always situated within the 'social analysis and needs of particular communities of the poor, the working-class, and marginalized'. It is their perspective on reality that shapes the whole Bible study. Second, Contextual Bible study provides a way of doing theological analysis, "reading the signs of the times". The Bible is read carefully within its own literary and socio-historical context, thereby providing a theological resource from which people themselves can reflect on what this means for social analysis of their own context. And third it is explained that Contextual Bible always ends with theological resources provided by the Bible study to

[70] West, Gerald O. 2014. "Locating Contextual Bible Study within biblical liberation hermeneutics and intercultural biblical hermeneutics". *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*. 70 (1): 10.

[71] Explanation is taken from the paper *Doing Contextual Bible Study: a resource manual* (Ujaama Centre, University of Kwazulu Natal, South Africa) http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/manuals/Ujamaa_CBS_bible_study_Manual_part_1_2.sflb.ashx (last accessed on December 18)

plan for social transformation. This way of reading the Bible is also promoted by feminist theologians related to the Global Network of Concerned Women Theologians. Contextual Bible Study also informs the earlier mentioned Tamar Campaign. Despite the differences in religious leaders addressed, all examples of discourses on HIV/AIDS, sexuality and gender in this chapter draw on some form of contextual Bible reading. CABSA and IAM focus primarily on mainline religious leader while Channels of Hope seems to be more successful in engaging with Pentecostal leaders. However while this Bible Study method is widely used across African mainline contexts, to address broader social issues with theologians and religious leaders, it is by no means accepted by the majority within church contexts.

Who owns the Bible?

In a study on Homosexuality and the Bible in Zimbabwe, theologian Massiiwa Ragies Gunda explains that the political and public discussions on homosexuality should be understood as a debate over interpretations of the Bible. Starting with how the Bible was introduced to Zimbabwe by western missionaries, Gunda shows how at the time Zimbabweans appropriated the Bible as a Divine source for answering existential questions. In the course of history, ownership over the Bible was claimed by different groups of people in Zimbabwe, and the Bible has therefore never been interpreted in the same literal sense throughout time. This opens up the possibility of rereading the Bible in light of gender and sexuality, and to consider that if humanity is created in the image of God, prejudice based on gender or sexuality should be tackled. Analysing the homosexuality debate in Zimbabwe, Gunda observes that political arguments on homosexuality being alien to Zimbabwean culture have drawn upon contestations over the interpretation of the Bible. President Robert Mugabe has presented himself as taking a Christian position in his vilification of homosexuals in Zimbabwe, making it virtually impossible for religious leaders to take a different position.

Source:
Gunda, Masiiwa Ragies. 2010. The Bible and homosexuality in Zimbabwe: a socio-historical analysis of the political, cultural and Christian arguments in the homosexual public debate with special reference to the use of the Bible. Bamberg: Univ. of Bamberg Press.

Impact

Religious leaders and their organisations advocating for inclusion of LGBT people in churches and communities speak from marginalized positions a so-called sexual minorities, but also because they advocate a way of reading and interpreting the Bible that is contested. The question therefore is how can these organisations have an impact beyond the direct care for people who suffer from discrimination and violence, and how they address and engage religious leaders and people in the middle or even on the other, more conservative wings of the churches? For IAM it is clear that their focus is on the mainline churches, from their contextual way of reading the Bible they can connect to a long history of discussions within mainline church contexts that are relevant to the issues and positions they want to raise. With Pentecostals there is less common ground. Within mainline church contexts there are many challenges as well, as can be seen in Uganda where mainline church leaders have publically supported to anti-homosexuality bill. In these contexts with polarised positions, it is really difficult for religious leaders to speak out and share an opposing opinion. The experience is that when religious leaders go public, they talk the status quo. Behind the scenes there is often more space. In an interview, the example of a Bishop in Uganda was mentioned. This bishop engages with other religious leaders on the issue of homosexuality emphasizing pastoral care,

advocating against stigma and discrimination from a religious perspective. While such efforts are crucially important, these are processes that heavily rely on personal contacts and its direct impact is hard to measure.

Other strategies and approaches include engaging with other networks of religious leaders to raise issues that have to do with sexuality and gender more broadly. Examples are recently established working groups within the World Council of Churches on gender and on sexuality. While the World Council of Churches as no authority over member churches, it can have an impact among its members. Member churches that are already more inclusive can have a positive influence on other member churches. Judith Kotzé affirms that it is crucial to connect people to address broader issues of gender and sexuality, including homosexuality, with religious leaders. The involvement of organisations like CABSA and INERELA+ (Cf. chapter 5) is critical. Not only because of the extensive networks of religious leaders they have build, but also because there are no networks of religious leaders that address sexuality explicitly. 'You don't get attention on sexuality or sexual orientation only', says Kotzé, therefore it needs to be connected to issues that are of concern to religious leaders such as HIV/AIDS, or gender relations that were discussed above. Yet despite that IAM seems to operate and speak from the margins, the fact that they are connected to these other networks and acknowledged as a voice within a mainstream network such as the WCC shows that they have the potential to catalyse broader reflections into the mainstream of the mainline (mission) churches.

3.4 Advocating for life-affirming theology

As indicated previously, transnational networks that have emerged mainly around the urgency to address HIV/AIDS within church contexts in Africa, are seen as important for realizing potential for progressive inclusion of people regardless of their gender or sexuality in African church contexts. In this and the following section we introduce EHAIA and INERELA+ that have been mentioned before, in more detail.

EHAIA, Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa[72]

The Ecumenical HIV and Aids Initiative in Africa (EHAIA) was founded in 2002 by the World Council of Churches (WCC) to take an active role in the response to HIV and AIDS. The work on EHAIA is based on the idea that churches in Africa are rooted in communities, and therefore prove influential institutions and a force for transformation - bringing healing, hope and accompaniment to all people affected by HIV/AIDS. The EHAIA was launched to enable churches in Africa to access information, training and resources, and to connect with other churches and bodies working in the same field to help them deal with AIDS in their communities. EHAIA works through a project leader and assistant based at the WCC in Geneva. Furthermore five regional consultants and two theological consultants staff the project. They receive guidance from an international reference group and regional reference groups, and work in collaboration with the All Africa Conference of

[72] Website: http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/hivaids-initiative-in-africa

Churches, sub-regional church fellowships, national councils of churches and associations of people living with HIV. EHAIA conducts workshops and training programmes and responds to individual requests for advice from churches on HIV church policy development, pastoral training or project planning support. EHAIA furthermore distributes information and resource materials in the various regions, and communicates via a website and electronic newsletter.

Discourse

Through working from a 'life affirming theology', EHAIA aims to challenge Christian theology that condemns people who are HIV positive. In the words of Pauline Wanjiru Njiru, regional coordinator in Africa: "Through using life affirmative theology, we have been able to significantly reduce the stigma within churches. That has been our biggest achievement". According to rev. Njiru a life affirmative theology means that the impact of theology on the possibility of living a dignified life is taken as a measure to evaluate existing theologies and to develop alternatives: "A theology that says women are inferior to men, is a theology that helps men to abuse women. [This theology] derives from Genesis, in which Sarah called her husband 'master'. Such a theology leads to HIV, sexual abuse for women and gender-based violence. Women's rights have been destroyed. They are not true, because they are destroying life, they are not affirming life. A theology that says that a man can have as many partners as he wants [is not a good theology]." Based on such observations, EHAIA has developed a program on redemptive masculinities that aims to forward 'more peaceful and transformative masculinities'.[73]

Angela Konayuma from the Zambian Council of Churches and Pauline Njiru from EHAIA. Konayuma describes how her organisation uses texts from the Bible (e.g. Jesus saying in Matthew chapter 25 "*I was hungry and you did not feed me*") to make religious leaders aware that they contradict certain religious principles by condemning people that live with HIV/AIDS rather than taking care of them. EHAIA has developed a so-called 'life affirming theology' that renounces harmful (cultural) practices and focuses on theology that affirms human rights. Through using theology, Bible texts and Bible studies, religious leaders are engaged in a discourse that affirms inclusion and non-discrimination, and focuses directly or more indirectly on respecting and safeguarding the human rights of people in local communities.

At the same time, rev. Njiru realises that some denominations have trouble discussing several of the more sensitive topics within the Kenyan context, such as the use of condoms and homosexuality. Rev. Njiru explains that as soon as the topic of homosexuality is raised, there are religious leaders who do not want to talk about it or only discuss it in condemning ways: "*With regard to homosexuality, we are going back to the way it was with HIV/AIDS. It is blown out of proportion and everyone just goes in that direction. Sexual minorities can't speak within their congregations. That are the issues that we see.*" For rev. Njiru, the only way to discuss these issues and to challenge the

[73] For more information about EHAIA's programme on redemptive masculinities see: World Council of Churches, 'Redemptive Masculinities': http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/justice-diakonia-and-responsibility-for-creation/ehaia/redemptive-masculinites.

stigmatization and discrimination of homosexuals that is taking place, is to engage with religious leaders on a personal level.

In similar ways, some churches feel that when a church is offering condoms, this is similar to promoting immorality. To be able to raise these sensitive topics with religious leaders, rev. Njiru and the programs of EHAIA often choose an approach that does not antagonize the debate, but searches for multiple ways in which people can protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and other sexuality related problems. According to rev. Njiru, using the SAVE methodology developed by INERELA+[74] helps raising the issue of condoms within the church. During our conversation, rev. Njiru explains that in their workshops with religious leaders, they begin with asking how HIV is transmitted and how transmission can be prevented. Often religious leaders themselves will mention condoms as a way to prevent the sexual transmission of the virus. This serves as a starting point for discussing when and how the use of condoms can be integrated within a life affirming theology.

Impact
EHAIA is an ecumenical organization that is not bound to the doctrines or guidelines of specific churches. In the words of rev. Njiru: "*Because we are an ecumenical movement, it gives us the upper hand in the discussion. If a bishop has specific views within one of our member denominations, a priest cannot challenge the bishop. We are not restricted by denominational policies, therefore we can bypass denominational issues.*" EHAIA hopes to have a major impact through working with religious leaders who often have an influential role within local communities. It remains the question to what extent religious leaders will take seriously the topics and issues addressed within the workshops, and if they bring in these topics in their own communities.

3.5 Connecting advocates for inclusion

INERELA+ is an international network of religious leaders – lay and ordained, women and men – living with or personally affected by HIV. Its work is based on the recognition that religious leaders have a unique authority that plays a central role in providing moral and ethical guidance within their communities. INERELA+ looks to empower its members to use their positions of respect within their faith communities in a way that breaks silence, challenges stigma and provides delivery of evidenced-based prevention, care and treatment services. INERELA+ was founded by the Anglican Rev. Canon Gideon Byamugisha, who was the first African religious leader who disclosed his HIV positive status. Rev. Byamugisha: "*At the time that I opened up, HIV was regarded as a disease of sinners.*" Following his disclosure to the public, he began to speak widely to other leaders about the need to reduce stigma associated with the disease. In 2000 he founded the Africa Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV/AIDS.

[74] See page 13 for a description of this organisation.

Because there are also many people living with or affected by Aids outside of Sub-Sahara Africa, ANERELA+ was merged into INERELA+.

Discourse

INERELA+ has focused on producing discourses on HIV/AIDS that are both holistically and medically accurate. It is expressed in the following quote: *"We speak about life, not judgment. We speak about prevention, not condemnation. We speak about truth."* More concretely it is translated in the so-called SAVE approach, a response to what was originally formulated by the leaders of the African Network (ANERELA+) as a reaction to the shortcomings of the existing method known as 'ABC.' Long used as the foundation of comprehensive HIV prevention programmes around the world, ABC stands for 'Abstinence; Be faithful; use Condoms.' According to rev. Byamugisha, there are several shortcomings to the ABC approach, as it is:

- Narrow – limiting itself to sexual modes of HIV transmission
- Inaccurate – in assuming that people who are abstinent or faithful will completely avoid HIV, and by implying that those who are faithful do not need to use condoms as an added protective measure
- Stigmatizing to PLHIV – by implying that people who are HIV positive have failed in abstinence and faithfulness
- Inadequate – by leaving out messages for families, communities and nations, and placing the burden of prevention on the individual.

SAVE counters these faults by focusing on safer practices, covering all the different modes of HIV transmissions like blood transfusions, use of condoms and sterile needles for injections. The 'A' refers to access to treatment, not just ARVs, but also HIV-related infections, good nutrition and clean water. 'V' refers to voluntary counselling and testing, while 'E' refers to empowerment, as inaccurate information and ignorance are two of the greatest factors driving HIV-related stigma and discrimination. Empowerment also needs to address vulnerabilities caused by gender inequality, homophobia, illiteracy, poverty, etc.[75]

For this mapping, we have spoken to Gabriel Amori, coordinator of the Ugandan chapter of INERELA+. He explains that sexuality related matters were previously not an easy topic to talk about, and that openness about the topic of HIV/AIDS and sexuality is a process that requires much effort:

"*Engagement* [with the communities]*, that takes a lot of process. You have to change the mind of individuals, especially leaders, to let them know this is something we need to discuss. Right now I am travelling to the north to run a training. Part of training is on HIV, within the complex of topics, elements of sex education those things, we have to slowly begin to bring it in. So that people understand the value. When someone who is not a religious leader is coming in to talk about these issues, people will think: 'this person is trying to corrupt my mind'. This is where the element of role modelling of religious leaders comes in, than they see*

[75] For more information on the SAVE approach see: INERELA+, 'SAVE Toolkit'. http://inerela.org/resources/save-toolkit/.

how they can handle sex education. That is beginning to come. It is on the way."

The fact that Uganda's recently assumed law against homosexuality, the 'Anti-Homosexuality Act', makes homosexuality an extremely difficult topic to discuss within the Ugandan context. The act not only broadens the criminalization of homosexuality to include life-sentences in prison, but also criminalizes organizations that know of homosexual people or are supportive of LGBT rights. This law also limits the potential of INERELA+ to discuss homosexuality. In the words of rev. Amori: "*The law makes it mandatory to report homosexuals. That is where it hurts us very badly.*" However, rev. Amori feels that the laws in Uganda are not in line with the calling of faith leaders: "*For us as faith leaders, we are not supposed to draw lines who to deal with or not to deal with. We simply walk with individual as he or she is. With this law, a lot of young people have gone underground, they are no longer seen openly to express themselves. It will take a lot of time before they are free to express themselves*." Because promoting homosexuality or not reporting homosexuals that seek for counselling of a religious leader is criminalized in Uganda, INERELA+ needs to be careful to avoid misunderstanding of the aims of their programs, making sure it will not be seen as promoting homosexuality. In this way, INERELA+ can continue their work without being persecuted by law.

Impact

The impact of Gideon Byamugisha and of the INRELA+ network and approach is crucial in providing in its ability to engage the mainstream of churches into becoming more inclusive churches and societies. This is an important way of creating space for progressive voices. Judith Kotzé from IAM explained that there are currently no networks of religious leaders on sexuality, apart from IAM and the GIN-SOGGIE network that was recently established. 'You don't get attention to sexuality and sexual orientation easily. The involvement of religious leaders from INERELA+ is crucial'.

3.6 Leadership, progressiveness and authority- a reflection.

The question to identify progressive religious leaders and their discourses on and engagement with sexuality and gender is not an easy one to answer. Religious leaders that have initiated organisations to promote more inclusive attitudes within church context often operate from marginalized positions. In addition, networks and organisations that engage with religious leaders around issues of HIV and Aids seem to have a bigger impact as they tap into the concerns of people in churches and local communities. These networks my catalyse progressive leadership on gender and sexuality. However for organisations such as CABSA and Channels of Hope it is also challenging to utilize their work around HIV and Aids and gender as entry-point to discuss homosexuality for example. While they give examples of doing this, they have to be very careful and take one step at the time. In this section we conclude with providing two (contrasting) examples of Pentecostal leaders and churches that openly address matters of gender and sexuality in the context of their churches.

Joshua Banda- Northmead Assemblies of God Zambia

Joshua Banda is among the most prominent religious leaders of Zambia. A senior pastor and bishop in the Pentecostal Assemblies of God he frequently features in the Church programme on national TV. As a chair of the National Aids Council, he has an influential position close to the government. Joshua Banda has actively advocated for the inclusion of people living with HIV and Aids, spoke openly about this and was publicly tested at a time when HIV and Aids was still a taboo within churches. Banda emphasizes the importance of social enhancement of HIV and Aids, and their ability as church leaders to marry HIV positive people and allow them to start a family in a healthy way. Adriaan van Klinken, lecturer in World Christianity at the University of Leeds in the UK, has analysed Banda's discourses on masculinity within his own church context. In sermons and through special meetings, Banda emphasizes the

Mavuno Church

Mavuno Church is known as a progressive church attracting young people in Nairobi, Kenya. The church has also several branches in other countries in East Africa, including Kampala. Mavuno Church is another example of a Pentecostal church that successfully utilizes mass media to bring its messages across. While it is less directly linked with politics, its activities do have an impact in the public domain. In February 2014 the church posters Blurred Lines, inviting young people to a sexuality education programme, displaying a sparsely dressed young couple, cause controversy in the Kenyan media. The church used it as an opportunity to call for more openness on sexuality and to raise its concerns about the sexual behaviour of young people. Aiming to advocate for sexual purity for youth, controversial messaging was used. The church has also actively spoken out about homosexuality. While taking the position that people need to reconcile their sexuality with the Bible, relying on a widely accepted discourse in Christian contexts that homosexuality is a sign of the brokenness of Gods creation, it also advocates for acceptance and inclusion. In a series called Sin City this was addressed:

'When we encounter stuff about people we don't know how to deal with we make the sin the most defining thing about the person. One of the ones many of us don't know how to deal with is homosexuality. We have made homosexuality a shameful thing to talk about. The gay movement is just waiting to tear the church apart on this issue. We are as fearful as people used to be of AIDS twenty years ago. As an individual where do you need to demonstrate acceptance? Is there some one or some people that you need to redefine as bearers of God's image who are worthy of dignity? How do we accept people who have become comfortable with sin? What can you do as a life group this week to demonstrate the acceptance of Jesus? All of this life is theory until we start to put credible action to it. Mavuno is a church for ***real people, with real issues and a real God.*** *As the leaders of Mavuno, we want you to know that this is the culture we want to encourage.'*

Sources:
(April 2011) 'No perfect people allowed' on http://mavuno.wordpress.com/2011/04/03/no-perfect-people-allowed/
(October 2012) 'Mavuno Church opens discussion on Homosexuality' on MSMGF http://www.msmgf.org/index.cfm/id/11/aid/6939
(March 2014) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anSIT1rUIcU

Joshua Banda is an example of a Pentecostal leader with both religious and political authority. He illustrates the openness on sexuality within Pentecostal churches and affirms the rigid moralities around marriage that are dominant within Pentecostal discourses at the same time. Given his views on homosexuality is would not account as a progressive leader. Yet as van Klinken stressed in an interview for this mapping, the fact that he has opened conversations on homosexuality within Zambia underlines his dedication to openness as well.

Mavuno Church is another example of the 'Pentecostal openness' on sexuality. The way they have engaged on matters of sexuality within the church and in the public domain, demonstrates openness as well as exclusiveness. While stressing the importance of sexual purity, it is very open and accepting to people that do not live up to Christian ideals. The

concept of sin provides a sense of equality, as the text quoted above indicates, through the realisation that one is a sinner.

These two examples of religious leaders and churches that have show leadership around issues of gender and sexuality are quite different from one another. Mavuno Church is controversial and their impact beyond their church congregation may therefore be more limited, despite their good media access. The leadership of Banda appears to have a huge impact in religious and political circles in Zambia, but is less 'progressive' when seen through the lens of this report. It is however important to be aware that religious leaders do not always take big steps in how they publically engage with issues of sexuality and sexual diversity. Reverend Byamugisha is an example, as well as the famous Desmond Tutu who publicly compared homophobia to apartheid.[76] Desmond Tutu was asked by IAM to dedicate (part of) a church service to homophobia, but responded that it was still too early and church communities need to have time to grow into acceptance. Remembering this conversation, Judith Kotzé of IAM, affirmed that doors should not be barked in, but slowly opened. Christo Greyling from Channels of Hope affirmed this as well. Advocating strongly how religious leaders should change could easily lead to alienating them from discussing sensitive topics such as homosexuality.

This chapter has addressed various examples of organizations and networks for and off religious leaders that have advocated and worked towards creating more inclusive churches in Africa, in particular addressing HIV/AIDS, gender and sexuality. It has highlighted differences in the extent to which these networks and organizations can be seen as progressive voices. As Lynn van Rooyen from CABSA stressed:

"The faith based sector is so broad. One group of people has a progressive understanding. Then we have one group of people that have more progressive secular world, but are in a very traditional and fundamentalist faith based organizations."[77]

Important observations in this chapter were that there are much less Pentecostal voices that stress inclusion of people regardless their gender and sexuality, including faith based organisations that work in Pentecostal contexts. Muvuno Church was discussed as an example of the previous, and Channels of Hope as an example of the latter. In addition it also stressed the value of how these organizations are positioned and linked in different segments and wings of African Christian contexts.

[76] See: Afrol News, 'Homophobia equals Apartheid'. http://afrol.com/articles/13584.
[77] Interview Lyn van Rooyen, May 2014

4. Strategies for engaging with religious leaders

In this section we outline some of the strategies used by the organisations and networks discussed in this mapping in their work with religious leaders. Drawing upon our interviews with religious leaders and employees of faith-based organisations that work with religious leaders, we show the perceived challenges and fruitful approaches in engaging with religious leaders when working on SRHR issues.

4.1 Talking about sexuality in religious contexts

Sexuality is often not an issue openly discussed by religious leaders. It is usually discussed in terms of a strict ethical frame. Njiru explains:

> "*Now the issue of sexuality, it has not been in the pulpit* [...] *we still remain silent, it is a taboo. 90% of infections have been sexual* [yet] *we don't talk about it, nobody will mention the word sex in life".*

Many religious leaders feel that if they discuss sexuality openly, they will implicitly support loose sexual morals and undermine the religious principles they should uphold.[78] Greyling states that

> *"religious leaders often feel that they must protect their faith, their ethical values and what they believe god is calling them to do. As it relates to sexuality, that is often one of the most hardest areas to touch on. Sexual* [issues are] *treated much harder than other problems in religious settings. You must have been doing something wrong to get these problems".*

For this reason broader prevailing societal norms and values, as well as their responses to the fields of tension described before, often feature in discourses on sexuality within religious settings.

The motivations of our interviewees and the faith based organisations they work for, or with, to engage with religious leaders around issues of sexuality are clear. Beverly Hendrix from the South African faith based organisation Fikalela calls these religious leaders "*the gate-keepers*". Engaging with these gate-keepers creates the ability to establish a relationship with the community. Christo Greyling, founder of Channels of Hope and director of Faith Partnerships at World Vision:

> "*The government comes with systems structures, messages and legislation, NGOs have their own development approaches, models and key messages, but in the local community faith community*

[78] Interview Christo Greyling May 2014, and interview Pauline Wanjiru, May 2014.

leaders are very often the gate-keepers. They decided which messages are appropriate, but can also stop or block messages. Getting through to the communities you need to take religious leaders into account".

According to Gabriel Amori of INERELA + Uganda the positive potential of religious leaders is that they can function as role models to which religious communities listen. As a result, Amori states, *"(The) congregation will be healthy and community will be healthy"* as a result. Religious leaders thus play important roles in their local context.

Two main strategies are utilized by organisations/ networks such as CABSA, Channels of Hope, IAM, EHAIA and INERELA+ to motivate a more open conversation on sexuality among religious leaders and their communities:

- stimulating and facilitating theological work on sexuality
- and engaging religious leaders on various levels in conversations on sexuality and intimate issues

4.2 Holistic approaches: touching mind, heart and soul

A holistic approach is recommended when working with religious leaders on sexuality and gender. With holistic we mean that in conversations on sexuality and gender, space should be created to explore religious and other values, as well as perspectives from public health, human rights and other discourses. For all organisations introduced in this mapping providing alternative theological or religious views is at the core of their approach to deal with potentially harmful or discriminative views. However, a holistic approach is not exclusive for organisations who work from a religious perspective. As CABSA director Lyn van Rooyen explains:

"Accepting that your world-view influences your sexual decision-making is already a starting point. Start considering so many HIV trainings or HIV programs ignore the complex interplay of factors around sexual decision-making. I think in any program where you start considering that facts are not the only thing, it is not just sexual health, it is our health seeking behaviour in a much broader perspective. We know that knowledge about the dangers of smoking doesn't change smoking behaviour. That is just one part of it. Just use condom or just say no, [this message] *is just too simple. A broader perspective would be more successful"*.

Gabriel Amori from INERELA+ Uganda explains that you have to engage with religious leaders in a process. Judith Kotzé from IAM also considers it critically to focus on a process rather than results. Building trust and creating safe spaces are considered crucial. Engaging with religious leaders on issues of sexuality on a personal level is not easy, it can in fact be very painful. Recently, Van Rooyen participated in a faith-based workshop on sexuality where an Ethiopian Bishop stated that homosexuality is a sin. She saw him stating this with tears running down his face. Next to her, Judith Kotzé was also in tears,

being confronted with a judgement that directly touched her own identity as a Lesbian and a religious leader fighting the stigma in her own life. As Van Rooyen explained:

> "*I saw tears rolling down her face.* [...] *this might change the perception of the Ethiopian orthodox church leader, because he can see what the impact is of his judgemental view*".

These processes, however painful and lacking a clear outcome or result, are considered crucially important by organisations with experience in working with religious leaders.

Three strategies stand out that can be valuable for any organisation that wishes to engage with religious leaders around gender and sexuality:

- Make it as personal as possible by "*exposing them to reality, stick it through the mud and let them see lack of understanding*".[79]
- Create space to reflect on the existential, spiritual and value aspects of the issues
- Focus on process rather than the outcome

4.3 Diversity, flexibility and pragmatism

The diversity within African Christian contexts is diverse, and closely related to other contextual factors such as an urban or rural setting, class, ethnicity and economic status. It is the question of something as a 'faith-based sector' actually exists, which underlines the importance of a clear focus on which religious leaders one wants to engage with and for what purpose. The diversity can also be strength when engaging with religious leaders across different denominations, countries and backgrounds. Channels of Hope, for example invites religious leaders with various viewpoints to engage in debates on certain aspects of sexuality. Leaders are given tough statements that often create a massive debate, and are encourage going back to their own theologies and the discourses of their specific council or denomination.

> "*With catholic leaders you should never discuss a different interpretation of certain dogmas*",

explains Greyling. But like Muslims they do have the principle of 'lesser evil'. A child getting infected with HIV/AIDS is a worse 'evil' than if it is having protected sex and remains HIV negative. Condom use is than the lesser evil. Religious leaders are provoked to come up with such principles themselves.

On another dimension, religious leaders, communities and organizations are more diverse than polarized public debates often suggest. In this report we have discussed various examples that indicate that religious discourses are not only ideological but often also pragmatic. There is space to manoeuvre within religious contexts. There are principles such as forgiveness and compassion that create space in these contexts. Religious rituals such as catholic confession, but also the emphasis on accepting people in Muvuno Church

[79] Interview Christo Greyling, May 2014

are cases in point. Gabriel Amori from INERELA+ emphasizes that a pragmatic approach is one that is a contextual approach:

> *"The truth is that societies are in a transition. A lot of things that used to be very remote or very strange are beginning to be common. Some of them are very liberal and some of them are very resistant.* [I am] *Mindful of the fact that within our own membership peoples reaction are not the same* [...] *our approach is pragmatic".*

Christo Greyling phrased it slightly differently stressing that '*you have to meet them (the religious leaders) where they are.* When taking a rights-based approach when meeting religious leaders for the first time, chances are they will reject you because they feel that:

> *"a rights-based approach will force them to become secular. It will force them to allow things that are contradictory to faith. Now we have to say yes to abortion, or a child has more rights than parent. If you start with discussion on the issues, that faith principles, and then tell them, this is what the convention of the child says, it is underlining what you say anyway.* [...] *Then they accept it much easier, they embrace it actually*."[80]

Pragmatism is therefore also a strategy to be used by organisations that want to engage with religious leaders, which can conflict with more activist attitudes towards promoting human rights on gender and sexuality:

> "*If the activists come and share, they often are so strong about what they want to change, if they bring in the story it alienates. They see that the faith community is a barrier, a problem, and because of that, they come in sometimes with sharp edge when they engage. That is where it is important to come in honestly, willingly to go on a journey.*"

An open attitude is therefore required from all sides.

Strategies that can be valuable when engaging with religious leaders are:

- Know what you want to achieve and in which context
- Do a contextual analysis to identify religious leaders that are (potentially) 'progressive' within their own context.
- Create a diverse network with more liberal, majority and conservative religious leaders but avoid focussing too much on religious leaders that take extreme positions.
- Be pragmatic, meet them were they are
- Carefully choose you own approach, be open about your views but aware of the pitfalls of activism

4.4 Pitfalls and the challenge to engage

Influenced by the polarizations and dynamics that have been discussed in various places in this report, a secular development organisation from the Netherlands may have to tackle some presuppositions before engaging with religious leaders in African contexts.

[80] Interview Christo Greyling, May 2014

Many people "*put an umbrella around the faith sector*", as Lyn van Rooyen explained. Secular organisations from Western Europe tend to have certain ideas in mind about how religious leaders and communities think and act that does not allow for seeing the diversity that is actually there. It is therefore important to avoid ' *broad generalizations*'.

In addition, religious leaders and organisations are often approached in an instrumental way:

> "*The only role faith leaders is, if they are useful to us, or fit into our agendas. That is what faith leaders pick up and come resentful about. Maybe they have different objectives or want different outcomes.* [But] *we all want to address the same problems. If you use utilitarian approach,* [saying] *'where can we use faith leaders?', it will not work*".

According to Njiru there is also tension between western donors and organisations on the ground:

> *"Donor mentality and the organizations on the ground conflict. How you deal with the issue in the west is that you want results, answers. We give you results that are not really results. Like with stigma we are still very far away from solving this problem. If you overcome one stigma, there are ten other forms of stigma to tackle as well. As EHAIA we are close to the grass-roots our partners are in touch with people and can really identify what is happening there".*

So how can organisations such as Hivos, try to bridge the gap between secular development actors and religious actors, between donor mentality and grass-roots approaches? Van Rooyen explains that organising a meeting or workshop with religious actors does not solve her dilemma:

> "*You need to start with a conversation and listen to each other. Maybe not coming from an attitude that one of us has the final answer* [...] *Instead, you need to ask how can we work together towards tackling this problem. That is part of the roles we as a mediating organisation can play.*"

Gabriel Amori affirms this in his own words:

> "*We need mutual respect in the dialogue with the Netherlands. Some things will not move here, but we can value what is existing and build on that.*"

To know which language to use and what existing entry points for engagement with religious actors are needed, knowledge of the specific religious actors and the context in which they are embedded is necessary. Judith Kotzé, experienced in facilitating dialogue on sexual diversity in church contexts, has emphasized the importance of safe-spaces in which such dialogues on sexuality can take place. Building a relationship of trust and cooperation is a first starting point that can take some time to establish.

Strategies for engagement:

- be aware of your own presuppositions
- invest in building relationships of trust for all actors involved

4.5 Pointers for engagement

The interviews we have conducted also provide some more concrete pointers for further engagement between Hivos and religious actors around the themes of sexuality and human rights. Expecting our interviewees to be quite critical about the work and approaches of secular organisations, to our surprise many of them consider HIVOS' interest in engaging with religious actors as a positive development. For some of these organisations, in particular the smaller ones, this interest was expressed alongside a need to attract more funding for their work with religious leaders.

Concrete suggestions derived from the interviews:

- Gabriel Amori indicated that he is interested in establishing connections and explore potential for cooperation between Hivos and INERELA+ Uganda.
- A concrete point for linkage and engagement came from Lyn van Rooyen at CABSA. She sees potential for cooperation between the LGBT rights advocates in Hivos networks and the religious leaders CABSA works with, and is interested in further contacts with Hivos on this subject.
- Christo Greyling of Channels of Hope sees the potential for engagement not directly in bringing activists in touch with religious leaders, but rather in exploring how to bring sexual rights issues to religious leaders by keeping it close to themselves. For example by bringing them in touch with LGBT people of faith. He affirms that it is important to start a journey together and is open for further conversation with Hivos.
- Other Sheep has shown interest in cooperating with HIVOS in their efforts to support LGBT rights.

Based on this general mapping of religious actors, focussed on transnational religious networks and a small selection of more locally operating organisations from various countries, we have some suggestions for further engagement. In the group of actors, one sub-group appears to be specifically interesting for Hivos: Other Sheep, Iam and Inner Circle, the religious organisations that focus on LGBT rights. These organisations are however not new to Hivos.

In addition, in view of the broader context of polarisation and the dynamics between various voices within the religious context that we have described, Hivos may not only be interested in working with organisations that explicitly represent quite liberal voices within these contexts only. We consider it therefore interesting and worthwhile to explore the possibilities for engaging with organisations that speak to broader religious communities and operate more explicitly in the 'middle'. We have mapped out various examples in this report, among which CABSA, INERELA+ and Channels of Hope, as well as various local programmes and organisations.

This Mapping has given some examples of religious leaders and their discourses. In addition it has discussed networks and organisations that religious leaders have established to raise awareness on issues of gender and sexuality within religious contexts. These religious inspired networks and organisations provide the most concrete entry points for engagement with religious leaders, if desired these organisations have the potential to act as mediators in establishing lasting relationships with religious leaders. Building lasting relationships based on cooperation and trust has appeared to be crucial in engaging with religious leaders in the report.
This Mapping had important limitations, as has been outlined in the introduction. The process and the results in this report show that asking a general research questions such as identifying religious leaders, cannot be easily answered without a clear focus on a context and the possibility to do more empirical research on the ground. Taking these limitations into account, we highly recommend Hivos to further operationalize the questions on engagement with religious leaders in small-scale qualitative studies with a clear focus.

While acknowledging that our knowledge of the impact of specific projects and programmes of the religious organisations is limited at this point, some suggestion have come to mind on areas where Hivos can bring its specific expertise and have added value in relation to initiatives that have already been taken in engaging with religious leaders. The following suggestions in that direction are:

- Several religious organisations indicate that it is often a problem for progressive and more liberal religious voices to be heard. A concrete example comes from Zimbabwe were Pentecostal churches ally with the most important publishing houses. There may be a potential to engage with progressive religious leaders on communication and innovative use of media, or in the broader linking of media and journalists to 'progressive' religious actors to build their mutual capacities to allow the more moderate or liberating religious voices to be heard.

- In addition there may also be potential for exploring how innovative approaches to work with young people that are available within HIVOS can be of benefit for various religious actors and networks.

In conclusion we can only emphasize again that there is definitely an interest among the religious organisations and network in this mapping to further explore points for linkage and engagement focussed towards a long-term goal of creating a dialogue with religious leaders on sexuality and human rights.

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