

# Sexual Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict: Engaging Men and Boys



The **MenEngage Alliance** is a global alliance in over 30 countries that seeks to engage men and boys in effective ways to reduce gender inequalities and to promote the health and wellbeing of women, men and children, including ending all forms of gender-based violence (GBV). The alliance is comprised of a consortium of NGOs from the Global South and North who work in collaboration with numerous international NGOs and UN partners. A Steering Committee and International Advisory Committee coordinate MenEngage.

The **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programs to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

This MenEngage-UNFPA advocacy brief explores how to engage men and boys in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings. Both the prevention of such violence and the quality of responses when it has occurred will be greatly enhanced by understanding men's varied relations to this violence and by engaging men at diverse levels. This brief has three parts:

I. **“Sexual Violence, Peace, Conflict and Post-Conflict,”** which discusses the context of sexual violence in conflict, and in both war and peace.

II. **“The Place of Men and Boys in Relation to Sexual Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict,”** which discusses the varied roles of men and boys as perpetrators, survivors, witnesses, peacekeepers, police and soldiers, service providers and change makers.

III. **“Engaging Men and Boys on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings,”** which outlines a range of policy and programmatic proposals focused on engaging men.



## Background

Gender-based violence is a gross human rights violation. The obligations and commitments articulated in numerous international and regional instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Security Council resolutions 1308, 1325, 1820, 1888 and others, provide a global mandate requiring the UN and states parties to act on it at all appropriate levels.

It is important to highlight three key principles that underlie this brief: (1) violence against women and girls is almost always more prevalent than violence against men and boys in conflict settings; (2) men and boys are part of the problem and also must become a greater part of the solution; and, (3) sexual violence against women and girls, as well as against boys and men, stems from many of the same underlying causes and thus the solutions must be approached more holistically. ***Interventions focused on boys and men should not be pitted against those aimed at women and girls but rather work toward establishing programs that engage all populations.***

The intent of this advocacy brief is to highlight those programs/studies that focus on engaging men and boys in their diverse roles in relation to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings. There is an understanding that in a majority of post-conflict settings, most victims of sexual violence are women and girls and that most resources should go either directly or indirectly to meeting their needs.

While stressing that looking at the particular contributing factors and scale of sexual violence in conflict and addressing that the conflict-related contributing factors are important, the roots of sexual violence that are present in times of peace (Smits & Cruz, 2011, p. 2) should not be ignored. Without this acknowledgement (and the fundamental social changes that are required to end it), any means to address sexual violence within conflict will be incomplete and will tacitly turn a blind eye to the underlying nature of the problem.

Similarly, solutions need to take into account the diverse relationship of men to sexual violence. If the framework is only of women and girls as victims and men and boys as perpetrators, it misses the many who have suffered, and can contribute to “men feeling accused, abandoned, and more vulnerable,” which can lead them to undermine efforts required to move forward (Smits & Cruz, 2011, p. 3).

From the start, it is important to acknowledge that there is a controversy on these issues; some groups think that because too little attention has been paid to woman and girls as survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict, engaging men is a distraction or a drain on scarce resources. Others argue that the victimization of boys and men in conflict settings has been ignored or even denied and make the case that this may in fact prolong and produce conflict and undermine gender equality.

## I. Sexual Violence in Peace, Conflict and Post-Conflict

Conflict exacerbates the gender inequalities and abuses of power that can lead to GBV. ***Conflict does not cause sexual and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV), although it may manifest new forms of GBV in those settings.*** Sexual violence takes on new forms as a consequence of conflict and is often times used as a tactic of warfare, whether randomly, opportunistically or systematically. Both conflict and post-conflict environments are places where sexual violence tends to be more prevalent and more severe due to higher levels of violence, breakdown of social cohesion and law and order, and the compounding of existing vulnerabilities. With the breakdown of social order, impunity is also more likely.

***Sexual violence and other forms of GBV have been used in conflict as a tool to demotivate conflict-affected populations from fighting back, through terror and attempted subjugation, or to humiliate and shame men and women.*** It is sometimes used as a tool of indoctrination and group bonding for combatants. It is used as a reward or form of compensation, (“the spoils of war”) for combatants who are usually not otherwise paid. Sexual violence is sometimes an instrument of genocide, used to transform the ethnic or social composition of a society. Combatants may use it strategically, as a threat or warning to control areas of economic or political importance, as well as randomly, resulting from the



breakdown in law and order. It can be a consequence of conflict or be systematic, such as when it is ordered or sanctioned by military commanders, or when used as a condition for receiving aid or gaining safe passage. Reports illustrate that women and girls of all ages, from elders to babies, have routinely suffered horrific and brutal sexual abuse at the hands of military and rebel forces. Rape has long been used as a tactic of war, with violence against women during or after armed conflicts reported in every international or non-international war-zone (UN SG's UNITE to End VAW, 2011).

***The testimonies of women who live to tell of their suffering, including as sexual slaves during wartime, demonstrate the levels of unimaginable trauma that have been forced upon women and girls*** over the course of history particularly because of systemic, institutionally-mandated sexual violence.<sup>1</sup> Sexual violence is one result when the power of life and death is handed to a group of men who already carry sexist attitudes towards women and whose upbringing has reduced their own capacities for empathy. The impact of sexual violence, especially rape, can be devastating. Physical consequences for women and girls include injuries, unwanted pregnancies, fistula and STIs including HIV. Widespread sexual violence that is endemic in many post-conflict situations,

perpetuates a cycle of anxiety and fear that impedes recovery (UNFPA, 2012) and affects the emotional and psychological well-being of those who have endured such violence.

***Most of the direct victims of GBV are women and girls; some are men and boys.*** Even in those settings where women and girls are more likely to be victims, men and boys can be made to witness, particularly when the sexual violence is used as a systematic weapon of war. Furthermore, extreme deprivation and loss of contact with families and communities create conditions whereby women and young people may be forced to trade sex to survive or may be trafficked into prostitution (Ward, 2002; Holst-Roness, 2007).

The nature of post-conflict situations can encourage and sustain GBV: the existence of weak, failed or newly reconstructing states, the conditions in refugee and internal displacement camps, a pronounced social fragility including family break-up, the loss of livelihoods and the trauma from war, including experiencing, witnessing or committing sexual violence itself.

***In post-conflict settings, sexual violence and physical violence against a female partner can be ways for a man to assert that he is dominant even though he has lost everything,*** is powerless in the face of the military and political corruption, and hasn't been able to protect those he loves (Lwambo, 2011, p. 4). It can also contribute to an overall societal acceptance of violence. As noted below, data from IMAGES Rwanda found that men who experienced violence during genocide were more likely to report using violence against female partners (Barker et al., 2011). Similarly, evidence from IMAGES-eastern DRC found that men who experienced displacement were more likely to report physical violence against a female partner, suggesting again the impact of conflict-related displacement on couple relations (Slegh et al., 2012).

***Additionally, in many post-conflict settings women's traditional roles of caring for children and the household remain relevant even as men are often unemployed and face difficulty providing for their families.*** Many men who are ex-combatants

and non-combatants feel powerless and unable to fulfill their traditional roles and may use violence against women and children out of frustration or unconscious or conscious attempts to reassert their power (Slegh et al., 2012).

### **Levels of Sexual Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings**

Although there is still a lack of data pertaining to the levels of sexual violence against women and men both during and following conflict situations, available data shows alarming levels of abuse. ***The data available suggests that victimization of men and boys occurs at a lower rate than against women and girls, but that men and boys may be even less likely to report abuse due to the stigma associated with suffering sexual violence*** (e.g. that sexual violence only happens to women and thus that suffering it reduces them to the status of women, or stigma related to same sex contact between men).

***Accurate, reliable and timely data on the nature and scale of sexual violence during conflict is inherently difficult to gather*** (World Health Organization, 2007). Even in times of peace, sexual violence is often underreported, unpunished and neglected. This can be exacerbated in conflict and post-conflict contexts due to: (1) lack of services and lack of access to services due to insecurity, poor road conditions and infrastructure; (2) isolation of survivors; (3) lack of knowledge about the crime or resources available; (4) fear of stigma or reprisals; (5) fear of further isolation leading to destitution or risk to life and livelihoods; and (6) the absence of communication channels and humanitarian organizations. In many settings, political and social institutions that might otherwise monitor or research sexual violence are unable to reliably or safely do so; in some contexts, those services may be completely absent. In other settings, the very political institutions and military in control of a nation or territory are the ones responsible for the abuse.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the lack of large-scale, pre-conflict studies often makes it difficult to measure the trends in sexual violence during and after wars.

And yet, as indicated above, to the extent we do have data, it indicates a major and urgent problem.

### **Some estimates concerning conflict-related sexual violence:**

- **Globally**, sexual violence against women, men, adolescents and children has been reported in 51 countries that have experienced conflict within the last 25 years, giving a sense of how common it is a component or consequence of conflict (Bastick, Grimm, & and Kunz, 2006).
- Among a random sample of 205 women and girls in **Liberia**, nearly half (49%) reported experiencing at least one act of physical or sexual violence by a combatant (Swiss et al., 1998).
- In **Sarajevo Canton**, 80% of the 5,000 male inmates held at a concentration camp reported being raped, and more than 50,000 women were raped (UN Women, 2010).
- In the eastern **DRC**, at least 200,000 cases of sexual violence, mostly involving women and girls, have been documented: 1,100 per month (UN Women, 2011).
- In **Colombia**, 36% of internally displaced women in the country had been forced to have sex by men (Ministry for Social Protection, 2003).
- In **Sierra Leone**, among a random sample of internally displaced persons, 9% of female household heads and 8% of female household members reported war-related sexual assaults (Amowitz et al., 2002).
- One of the most rigorous studies of sexual violence in the eastern **DRC** shows the magnitude of this violence against both males and females. This careful study suggests that in an area with 5 million people, 1.3 million women and 0.76 million men are survivors of sexual violence, although this includes pre-, during- and post-conflict data (Johnson et al., 2010, p. 561).

- A recent household survey carried out in Goma in eastern **DRC**, including an urban population, an IDP camp and a military base found that almost 9% of men and 22% of women had experienced sexual violence during the conflict. A total of 17% of men reported having carried out sexual violence or rape during a conflict situation. 34% of men reported having carried out any form of sexual violence (either in conflict or in the home or community). 16% of men and 26% of women reported having been forced to witness sexual violence (Slegh et al., 2012).

### **Sexual Violence: War and Peace**

As noted earlier, sexual violence is not created by conflict. In war and peace, **sexual violence is driven by gender norms that socially sanction dominance of men over women** (and of men over children and socially-weaker men), and “by notions of manhood that valorise sexual conquest, grant men a sense of entitlement to women’s bodies and allow men to trivialise men’s violence against women or to treat it as a private matter without fear of serious sanction” (Peacock, 2012, p. 6).

**The conditions of conflict and the associated social breakdown create a lethal environment where long-established patterns of men’s violence and the social acceptance of violence against women and girls can become greatly amplified.** As Gloria Steinem states, “If you’re going to get groups of men to risk their humanity, health, and lives in wars of offense, the traditional way is ... to addict them to the ‘cult of masculinity’. You have to convince them they’re not ‘real men’ unless they kill and conquer” (Steinem, 2012).

**This appears to be part of a larger pattern in which many forms of violence become normalized and trivialized and create trauma that in turn reduces resistance to violence.** Numerous studies have shown, outside of the context of conflict (but in post-conflict settings where there is also data), that the single strongest predictor of whether a man will commit sexual or physical violence against a woman is whether as a child he witnessed violence in his home by a man against a woman. In war as in peace, violence too often begets violence.

The multi-country study, the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) carried out in collaboration with MenEngage, finds in some settings that **exposure to violence in war is a predictor of violence against women in conflict and post-conflict settings.** For example, data from Rwanda found that men who were affected by genocide-era violence were more likely to use physical and sexual violence against partners (Slegh & Kimonyo, 2010). In addition, given that IMAGES data shows that 3.5% of all Bosnian men aged 18-59 report having witnessed sexual violence during the war, the consequences even when peace comes can be quite dire. Men who reported experiencing violence during the war, or who were involved as combatants, or who were displaced by the war in Bosnia were more likely to report having used physical violence against women (Dusanic, 2012). IMAGES data from eastern DRC also found, as mentioned above, that 16 percent of men and 26 percent of women reported having been forced to witness sexual violence, and men who were displaced by the conflict had higher reports of use of physical violence against female partners (Slegh et al., 2012).

**Harmful gender norms give social permission for some men to commit extreme forms of violence against women and make it difficult for men who are survivors or witnesses of violence to come forward, either to report the violence or to seek help, both in war and peace.** These norms reinforce the notions that to be a man requires having power, being in control, not submitting to the power of another man, and being able to handle whatever life throws men’s way. For a man to admit to having been assaulted or to being powerless to stop an assault against those he loved is experienced as emasculating or the equivalent of saying, “I am not a man.” One man, a rape survivor of the conflict in eastern DRC, said this:

**There were five men and I was raped by them. They considered me like their woman...I had to wash their clothes, take care of their children and I was raped everyday . . . I was like a wife to the people in the forest. I did everything that a wife does (Christian, et al., 2012).**

Taken together with deep-seated homophobia, these norms strongly impact men’s reactions to sexual violence in conflict.

## II. The Place of Men and Boys in Relation to Sexual Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict

***Men's roles and relationships to GBV in conflict and post-conflict situations include that of perpetrators, victims, witnesses and agents of change.*** Understanding how to best engage men and boys in the prevention, mitigation, and individual and societal recovery from this violence requires understanding these varied roles.

### **Men as Perpetrators**

***Sexual violence can be consciously used by political and military commanders with diverse objectives,*** including terrorizing the local population and humiliating and “emasculating” men (either through sexual violence against their wives and children or directly against them) so they will flee or not fight back, and as a means of “ethnic cleansing.” It is also used as a horrific means of group bonding and a way for men (including child soldiers) to prove their manhood by demonstrating fearlessness or to fulfill exaggerated versions of male sexuality (Wesemann as cited in Barker & Ricardo, 2006; Schauer & Elbert, 2009). In this sense, it is a progression of existing definitions of masculinity and men's power, reinforced and manipulated to meet specific political/military objectives (Dolan, 2002; Cockburn & Zarkov, 2002; El Jack, 2003; GTZ, 2009). Indeed some researchers have found examples of how armed groups have deliberately manipulated existing rites of passage for boys as part of the “production” of combatants (Barker & Ricardo, 2006).

***Sexual violence can also be more opportunistic, that is, carried out by individual soldiers (for some combatants,*** it is taken as a reward or a spoil of combat, or even in place of salary) or non-combatant men taking advantage of the destruction of social cohesion and impunity that often accompanies conflict.

***Perpetrators can even be peacekeepers, aid workers, and other security and outside actors who enter into conflict or post-conflict settings to help those affected.*** These actions, taken against vulnerable individuals, replicate some of the same crimes peacekeepers are deployed to guard against and help the population recover from. In addition to undermining their work, sexual violence by these actors creates new

problems, exacerbates existing ones, and brings discredit to their organizations, and in the case of peacekeepers, the UN. Even though peacekeepers are meant to protect civilians, and specifically mandated to protect women and girls from sexual violence in conflict as per UN Security Council Resolution 1888, they are sometimes the very ones perpetrating the crimes.

### **Men as Witnesses**

***Sexual violence in the context of conflict is nearly always carried out in the presence of others*** (fellow combatants, family members, spouses and/or community members). In some cases, community members and family members are deliberately made to watch. Such actions serve to objectify women and girls as symbols of “conquered territory” as is clearly evident in cases where husbands



and fathers have been forced to watch their wives and daughters being raped (Gomaz Alcaraz & Garcia Suarez, 2006; Dolan, 2012). This is also a means to terrorize a population, encouraging flight and discouraging retaliation. In interviews with 53 sexual violence survivors in the DRC, more than a fourth (26%) were sexually assaulted while members of the family or community watched (Scheuer & Elbert, 2009). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, Human Rights Watch has documented cases of fathers and brothers being forced to rape daughters and sisters, respectively. They also have collected testimony of males forced to witness sexual assault against their female relatives (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

***Little is known about the psychological impact on men and boys of being made to watch sexual violence against a loved one in the context of conflict.***

What limited information that exists suggests a mixture of helplessness, anger or blame toward the victim or themselves, alcohol use, depression and withdrawal. Research on men's witnessing physical violence against their mothers indicates that this is a traumatic life experience for boys. Across cultural settings, men who report witnessing such violence are more likely to report suicidal ideation, alcohol abuse and delinquency; in turn,

as noted above, they are far more likely to use violence against their female partners than men who do not witness this violence (Barker et al., 2011). Research on those who witness torture against a loved one also shows that they suffer a similar degree of psychological trauma as those who experience the torture. Although one should not equate the impact of witnessing with being a direct victim of violence, the effects are severe because witnessing *is* an experience of violence.

### **Men and Boys as Survivors of Sexual Violence**

***Within the last decade, sexual violence against men and boys (rape, sexual torture, genital mutilation, sexual humiliation, sexual enslavement, forcing a man to commit incest or rape) has been reported in at least 25 conflict settings*** (Russell, 2007; Human Security Centre, 2005). These acts routinely aim to enforce the subordination of men and whole communities and to “strip men of their manhood” (Carpenter, 2006; El Jack, 2003). Often times, sexual violence perpetrated against men is in the presence of others. When committed in public spaces, communities—families, peers and combatants—interpret sexual violence against men as evidence of territorial conquest (Alison, 2007).

***Although the numbers are less than those concerning sexual violence against women and girls, sexual violence against men and boys is even more underreported*** (Bastick, Grimm, & Kunz, 2006). As noted above, shame, humiliation, homophobia, a fear of stigmatization against male survivors, and minimal attention to men as victims of sexual violence all help to explain why more men do not report the crimes committed against them.

In spite of the dearth of information about men’s victimization, perpetration of sexual violence against men has many of the same objectives as that against women including exercising power and control over populations and territory; drawing attention to grievances and deflecting attention from other atrocities; indoctrination and building group identity; genocide; and vengeance. Additionally, rape is used against men to feminize, emasculate and “homosexualize” them as a way of reducing their social stature. It is, unfortunately, very effective in achieving many of its objectives (Vess, 2010).

## **III. Engaging Men and Boys in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings**

### ***Men as Agents of Change***

The intention of MenEngage, UNFPA and its partners in their interventions in post-conflict settings is helping to ***ensure that men play a positive role in changing attitudes towards female and male survivors of sexual violence***, in advocating for perpetrators to be held responsible for their crimes, and in transforming the norms of their respective societies so that sexual violence, both in and out of war, becomes a thing of the past. Fortunately, men in many countries are already playing this role; the goal is to greatly increase their numbers.

***Some men are in particularly advantageous positions to be agents of change in conflict and post-conflict settings.*** Just as soldiers, police and peacekeepers may be perpetrators of violence, men in these groups can also play an important role in helping rebuild society, protecting vulnerable citizens, recasting social norms and bringing justice - and so in this sense men may be involved in the process of individual and social restoration. Aid workers, service providers and those in medical professions can not only play a direct role as agents of change in the course of their daily work, but their social standing can also give them a powerful voice in their communities (PLoS, 2009). They can support programs that prevent sexual violence, minimize vulnerabilities, and encourage positive social norms that may have evolved due to changing gender roles brought on by conflict and displacement. And in fact, there are political, community and religious leaders who are actively speaking out against the violence.

***Most importantly, the average man in each community has a critical role to play in examining his own beliefs and actions in relation to sexual violence*** and in his relationships with women and other men, in setting an example for his sons, and in speaking out in his community.

Programs that engage men in this area provide education, awareness-raising, and practical tools and skills for men to be active participants in preventing sexual violence and empowering women and girls. They also create spaces and opportunities for men who are already supportive of gender equality to be more effective agents of change.

There are a wide range of programs, initiatives and policy measures that are critical (1) to restore physical and emotional health and safety to women, men, and girls and boys who have experienced sexual violence in conflict; (2) to bring perpetrators to justice; (3) to change social attitudes concerning survivors of sexual violence; (4) to ensure peacekeepers and humanitarian actors not only respond appropriately to survivors of sexual violence, but do not intentionally commit or inadvertently exacerbate the abuse; (5) to rebuild families and civil societies damaged not only by war but additionally by sexual violence; (6) to provide economic empowerment and opportunities to help survivors of sexual violence rebuild their lives; and (7) to bring about the long-term societal changes to prevent sexual violence in both conflict, post-conflict and non-conflict settings.

*Organizations wishing to engage men as survivors, perpetrators and agents of change are strongly encouraged to seek training and expertise so their staff understand the range of issues and sensitivities involved, and to ensure their interventions are as effective as possible and do not have unintended negative consequences.*

### ***First, protect, support and care for survivors of sexual violence***

As already noted, the majority of survivors of GBV are women and girls; some are boys and men. In any setting, the most urgent priority is the prevention of new incidents of GBV, making sure re-victimization does not happen, and that the most vulnerable - most often girls and women, but sometimes boys and men - have the support and protection they need. Engaging men in prevention and recovery can only happen after this has been insured. This means:

- Care must be taken so that efforts to address and involve men and boys (including those who have been directly victimized by sexual violence) in no ways pits their interests and needs against women's and girls'.
- Efforts to engage men and boys must have structures of accountability to programs developed by and aimed at women and girls.
- Work with men must do no harm. In one example from an NGO working in Liberia, a drop-in center was

created for female survivors. Men started using this space for their own activities and soon women no longer felt safe in this space. This does not mean that work with men in GBV should be avoided as being "too dangerous," but that care must be taken when implementation in settings in which women survivors of violence have only begun to receive the support they need (Lehman, 2009).

- For the safety of women and children, program workers, police, and health-care providers must have opportunities to learn about the cycles of violence and how to intervene and intervene early because, in part as dysfunctional and destructive coping mechanisms, male victims and witnesses of abuse sometimes become perpetrators of abuse.
- Because women have much less power at the national level, men must be engaged to support community-based and community-owned initiatives in ways that support and enhance women's leadership and active involvement.

### **DRC: Accountability to Women Leads to Changes for Men**

Women who were benefitting from the programs of Women for Women International (which provides aid, support services, and training to women survivors of sexual violence) were still facing ongoing violence in their homes. So they asked Women for Women International to work with men to prevent violence in their families. The Men's Leadership Program of Women for Women International now educates male community leaders to publicly speak out against sexual violence and works to reintegrate survivors. This is an example of the importance of multi-tiered interventions that are accountable to the expressed needs of women in a community.

### ***End impunity for those who have committed, ordered or condoned sexual violence.***

- A key part of engaging men and boys (or any perpetrators of sexual violence) is to set clear boundaries and behavioral norms which have consequences when broken. Local and regional members of the MenEngage Alliance support efforts

by the international community and national justice systems to develop and maintain mechanisms to hold responsible those who perpetrate sexual violence. This includes engaging key players within national justice systems and agencies that enforce laws, most of whom are men, and providing them with necessary training to understand the nature and impact of sexual violence, and holding those justice systems accountable for acting to address sexual violence. It also includes supporting international bodies such as the International Criminal Court, and international efforts to address and prevent sexual violence in conflict, as is laid out in UN Security Council Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1960.

- Protecting the vulnerable against retribution by engaging local authorities and agencies is critical so as to have the greatest impact on the local level, along with the support provided by the survivor's immediate family and community. Part of insuring that survivors feel safe to report and bring charges is insuring they will not face retributions for doing so. Working with existing men's groups or creating new ones, can be part of such processes.
- Advocating both existing approaches to justice (within national and international courts) and alternative approaches that do not further subordinate or reinforce negative or abusive actions against women is key. This includes transitional justice<sup>3</sup> measures, such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions or the Gacaca court in Rwanda, and restorative justice frameworks, such as those developed among First Nations peoples in Canada. The common denominator of these alternative approaches is that they pursue justice within a framework of personal healing, restoration of social cohesion, accountability to survivors and the community, if possible the transformation of perpetrators of violence, and to facilitate a whole society moving forward.
- High profile cases (such as the 2011 conviction and 20-year imprisonment of a colonel in the Congolese army<sup>4</sup>) are important for sending out a clear social message, for saying no one is above the law, and also for helping survivors in their own process of healing. There is a need to encourage the use of justice systems to shift social norms and signal that perpetrators of sexual violence are committing a crime and will be held accountable both during times of conflict and of peace.

### ***Hold security actors and peacekeepers accountable.***

Reaching law enforcement and the military, including peacekeepers, requires:

- Comprehensive and strictly enforced internal codes of conduct, and disciplinary and educational measures for police or soldiers who perpetrate or turn a blind eye to GBV, whether in a non-conflict, conflict or post-conflict settings.
- Periodic training of soldiers and police both in these codes of conduct and in the larger issues surrounding GBV and its impact on women, men, children and communities.
- Developing fair methods to hold officers accountable for the actions of their subordinates.

### ***Working with Peacekeepers***

In Timor-Leste, Sudan, Liberia, and Chad, UN Action, OCHA and UNFPA have led initiatives with UN peacekeepers concerning sexual violence (UN Action, 2010). In Liberia and DRC, where there have been charges of abuse by peacekeepers, the UN has implemented training programs on codes of conduct and the consequences of perpetrating sexual violence. These initiatives examine the links between gender norms (for women and men) and conflict-related sexual violence. The purpose of these initiatives is to ensure security personnel are equipped to prevent GBV and to appropriately address survivors' needs, in addition to securing peacekeepers' compliance with UN policies against acts of sexual violence.

### ***Strengthen prevention by engaging men and boys, and doing so with caution.***

Providing safety and support for survivors of violence must be an immediate objective in conflict and post-conflict situations:

- Governments and agencies are wise to quickly engage men as allies, promoters and leaders alongside women in local and national initiatives to address and prevent sexual violence in post-conflict settings and to promote justice and amelioration.
- This can include easy-to-start campaigns, such as the White Ribbon Campaign,<sup>5</sup> which require few

resources. Such awareness-raising efforts can lay a foundation for ongoing and more in-depth initiatives.

- Local efforts to involve men and boys in discussions about the nature of sexual violence are important to help create conditions for survivors to be welcome in their communities, but also to prevent enraged and humiliated men from using violence themselves.
- Where possible, it is helpful to garner the support of high-profile men, including military and religious leaders, but only if they can make a genuine and constructive commitment to speaking out against sexual violence.

At the same time, in the context of greatly-needed aid coming into a post-conflict situation:

- Caution must be taken to prevent much-needed funds going to NGOs that wish to work with men, but that lack the know-how and technical skills to be able to do so in a cost-effective and appropriate manner.
- Care must be taken to prevent funds going to organizations that opportunistically jump on the “engaging men” bandwagon but do not approach this work within a framework of gender equality, the empowerment of women, and the transformation of harmful and destructive ideas of manhood.<sup>6</sup>
- Care must be taken so initiatives don’t have a one-off, or one-dimensional character. Efforts to support individuals and communities recover from large-scale use of sexual violence, and efforts to change gender relations, take ongoing, long-term commitment that gets expressed and embedded in a wide range of social, cultural, political, educational, and economic institutions and initiatives. A billboard or public event is only a small step, and without follow-up could lead

to resistance on the part of some men.

- Finally, approaches must be developed within a gender equality framework. If the roots of the violence lie in gender inequality, the subordination of women, the effects of trauma caused by violence and in harmful definitions of manhood, then the solutions lie in the end to such practices. Thus, even short-term initiatives must be based on a gender analysis.

### ***Support legal and policy reforms.***

Having the capacity to respond to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict (as well as in non-conflict) environments requires a responsive legal and policy framework. This means:

- Laws must recognize all forms of sexual assault as crimes and their implementation must be strictly enforced.
- Men and boys must be educated to understand and support the implementation of new laws in order to decrease the likelihood that they will perceive them as anti-male and subsequently resist rather than support them. IMAGES data from multiple settings, including post-conflict settings, affirms that many men view such laws as “against men” (Barker et al., 2010). This entails the need for public education campaigns affirming that laws against GBV are human rights mandates “for all.”
- The predominantly male corps of police, prosecutors and judges must be trained not only in the administration of laws on sexual violence but in the underlying issues, including the impact of this violence on families and communities, the underlying causes of sexual violence, and the factors that make it difficult for survivors to come forward. Recruitment of more women to serve in law enforcement and criminal justice also sends a powerful message about equality to men and boys.
- Organizations working with men and boys need to partner with women’s rights organizations to monitor whether resources put into training translate into improved implementation and better access to justice for women.
- Urge the men who control most governments and civil services to ensure budgets (for courts, prosecutors, police, health care and social services) reflect the severity of these crimes and that there is adequate support – financial, psychological and legal – to survivors and their families so they have the ability to



seek legal remedies.

- At the highest international levels, there needs to be explicit recognition of the roles of men in ending sexual violence in war. Recent Security Council Resolutions on “women, peace, and security” as they are called – such as SCR 1960 (2010) – implicitly include some men as agents of change, given their emphasis on the security and justice sectors, which are largely male-dominated. However, they contain little mention of men as victims, witnesses, perpetrators or non-security sector agents of change. A 2012 UN Security Council Statement (S/PRST/2012/3) did say that this violence “also affect[s] men and boys,” although it does not go beyond that. Support for national legal and policy responses will be enhanced through international acknowledgment of men’s varied roles as perpetrators, survivors and agents of change.

### **Support male witnesses and survivors of sexual violence.**

Although support programs for men can often be developed and run in parallel with those for female survivors and witnesses, it is important to give voices to the distinct experiences of each sex and to build programs that understand the specific gendered dimensions of sexual violence. This includes:

- Helping health care and support workers develop the individual and institutional knowledge and skills to work with male survivors. For example, in many cultures men and older boys are expected to be self-sufficient and not need help. Furthermore, homophobia can be a powerful force that prevents men from coming forward as victims of GBV. Resources are required so that health care and social workers can learn safe and effective ways to provide help and support to men. Programs for male survivors should be customized and adapted specifically for the cultural context, rather than tacked on to existing programs focusing on female and child survivors. A recent guidance note developed by UNHCR and the Refugee Law Project is useful in this regard (UNHCR, 2012).
- Understanding that witnessing violence against loved ones is a direct experience of violence and can result in the same type of deep and lasting trauma as survivors of assault experience. Those working with men need training in techniques to work with those men and boys who have experienced such trauma.
- Understanding that the specific gendered experience

of men means that those who have been sexually assaulted or who have been forced to witness violence against those they love, often feel emasculated and deeply humiliated, to the extent that their whole manhood is called in to question.

### **Male Witnesses Tell Their Stories**

Sonke Gender Justice has collected stories of men who witnessed violence against family members and faced a long road to recovery. David Tamba and his pregnant wife were attacked by an armed group in Sierra Leone in the 1990s. They were savagely beaten, and his wife miscarried. David intended to seek revenge by joining a rebel group, but before he did, he met a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) protection officer at a refugee camp who drew him into her work to raise awareness among men concerning the impact of violence. David went on to start the Sierra Leone’s Men’s Association for Gender Equality, which provides support and shelter for vulnerable women, works to educate men and address the underlying social causes of men’s violence, presses for legal and cultural changes, and ensures that new gender equality laws were properly implemented.

Pascal Akimana fled Burundi in 1993 with his 11-year old sister to the DRC. They were stopped by DRC soldiers who raped his sister in front of him and beat him seriously. He wanted revenge and first thought that he, too, should rape and murder. But then, “A voice inside told me not to kill, not to rape. This is not what I want. I do not want to beat up my girlfriend, like my father beat up my mother. I want to use all this energy in a positive way. My life will be different from my father’s.” In UNHCR refugee camps between Kenya and South Africa, he participated in workshops on gender issues and soon decided to dedicate himself to work with men.

Both men now speak out about the deep trauma of witnessing sexual violence. It is critical that we support men who have witnessed sexual violence and support them in speaking out. If we consider that, in Bosnia, there are 50,000 women survivors of sexual violence experienced during the conflict

and 30,000-35,000 men who witnessed this violence, we get a sense of just how sexual violence is used to decimate the soul of a country. The trauma is individual and collective; it can affect women and men in different ways; it takes years to heal.

### **Minimize the possibilities of future violence**

Immediate responses must be framed within the need for long-term prevention, which entails the following:

- Engage men as partners and allies in women's economic empowerment in post-conflict settings, and seek ways to include messages about gender equality and violence prevention in livelihoods programs in post-conflict settings. This includes engaging men via the policy sector, as parliamentarians and in the armed forces, among others. At the program level, there are examples, such as a recent pilot study carried out by Promundo and CARE-Rwanda, which found that engaging men in discussions with their partners who were involved in a savings club program led to much better outcomes than not engaging men; these include better couple communication, more participation by men in caregiving, better economic outcomes, and more involvement by men in family planning (Promundo & CARE International, 2012). Examples at the policy and institutional level of engaging men in women's economic empowerment in post-conflict settings are still largely lacking.
- Take advantage of the need to rebuild families and social cohesion by helping men to be more positively involved as caregivers and fathers, who learn a full range of childrearing tasks and see such work as part of the responsibilities of all parents. The recently launched MenCare campaign ([www.men-care.org](http://www.men-care.org)) provides ideas on how this can be done, including in post-conflict and high violence settings.
- Identify specific strategies and techniques to work with children and adolescent boys who have experienced, witnessed or committed sexual violence, and to help them understand the consequences of their actions, receive specialized care and grow up into men who do not resort to violence against their families and communities.
- Reach men and boys with a range of messages, including why women and girls are a critical part of

any peace process. Beyond specific messages, community-based violence-prevention programs for men and boys, in partnership with women and girls, play a critical role in ending the cycle of violence and creating safer and more equitable communities. Evidence shows that, to be effective, programs must have a strong grounding in gender equality and transforming destructive and limiting gender roles and relations (World Health Organization, 2007a).

- Create safe environments for boys and men to explore and challenge their long-held beliefs about women and girls and to become leaders in their communities by shifting social norms and ending gender-based violence in all its forms.

### **In the Balkans – Working to overcome the long-term effects of militarization on masculinities**

CARE (in partnership with Promundo, the International Center for Research on Women and others) has worked with adolescents and young adults to challenge the deeply entrenched social, ethnic and religious norms that have influenced their lives. A youth-led community and school-based campaign called "Be a Man" ("Budi Musko" in Serbo-Croatian) has slogans like, "Be a man, break the mold." Impact evaluation has found changes in attitudes and reductions in self-reported bullying behavior as well as positive interactions between young men across ethnic lines, including in the ongoing conflict areas of Kosovo. Within the group education activities are messages about the meanings of consent and sexual violence.

Projects like this show the potential of work with young men in post-conflict settings to construct new ways of being (Balkan) men who are aren't militaristic, xenophobic, homophobic or misogynistic. Impact evaluations at the school level have confirmed important changes in attitudes on the part of young men, including reductions in various forms of ethnic-based prejudices.

***Devote the resources necessary for ending sexual violence in war and in peace and encourage men in power to make the necessary commitments.***

- Globally on average, men have disproportionate economic, political and social power. A relatively small number of men generally control the purse strings of governments, most non-governmental agencies, health-care systems, the private sector, the media and religious institutions. If one were to take seriously the terrible toll of sexual violence in war and conflict, but also to understand that the roots of this violence lie in the conditions one normally thinks of as peace, it is critical that organizations working with men and boys engage the men who control resources to educate them about the impact their decisions have on women's lives and advocate for a more fair distribution of resources. At the same time, it is important to realize how many men, particularly the lowest income men most affected by conflict, often perceive themselves as powerless and experience injustices in the context of conflict; these feelings and injustices should be understood as directly related to the violence they may carry out against women (although they, of course, are far from the only ones who may commit violence).
- It is also critical that organizations working with men and boys support women's rights organizations and together engage in determined advocacy to ensure that the necessary resources are made available. Developed world nations have committed to providing 0.7% of GDP as foreign aid, but their governments continue to cut back on aid, including for women's rights, gender equality and ending sexual violence in war and peace.



## **Conclusion**

Addressing the multidimensional issue of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings is complex and challenging. The international community has recognized that effective prevention and response will require long-term, comprehensive and coordinated efforts by multiple stakeholders that address the various aspects of affected populations including their health, education, economic, legal, psychosocial and security concerns (Brussels Call to Action, 2006). And while the international community including the UN, through efforts such as UN ACTION, are working to improve the coordination, accountability, advocacy and support for national efforts, and to address the needs of survivors – much more is needed in the way of political action, funding and coordination. Too often, discussions of “engaging men” in the process of SGBV in conflict are vague and lack the rigor and reach necessary to achieve true change. This review affirms that we have increasing data on men's experiences and use of SGBV in conflict, and that we have an emerging set of program responses and examples to draw on. Long-term prevention requires taking the engagement of men seriously, with high-level commitments, based in evidence, supported by an adequate degree of resources and based always in the fundamental need to achieve human rights for and accountability to survivors.

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 Promundo: <http://www.promundo.org.br/en/>

## Resources on GBV Including Sexual Violence

- Caring for Survivors of Sexual Violence in Emergencies Training Pack (<http://www.rhrc.org/resources/index.cfm?type=guideline>)
- GBV Information Management System ([www.gbvim.org](http://www.gbvim.org))
- Handbook for Coordinating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Settings (<http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/content/library/documents/handbook-coordinating-gender-based-violence-interventions-humanitarian-set>)
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action (<http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/>)
- IASC Guidelines on Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings (<http://www.interaction.org/document/iasc-gbv-guidelines>)
- Handbook for Coordinating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings (<http://onerresponse.info/GlobalClusters/Protection/GBV/publicdocuments/GBV%20Handbook%20Long%20Version%5B1%5D.pdf>)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC) ([www.rescue.org](http://www.rescue.org))
- Managing GBV Programmes in Emergencies E-learning Course (<https://extranet.unfpa.org/Apps/GBVinEmergencies/index.html>) and Companion Guide (<http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/publications/pid/10495>)
- MenEngage: Boys and Men for Gender Equality (<http://www.menengage.org>)
- Nobel Women's Initiative (<http://nobelwomensinitiative.org>) Stop Rape Now: UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict ([www.stoprapenow.org](http://www.stoprapenow.org))
- Mobilising Men in Practice: Challenging sexual and gender-based violence in institutional settings (UNFPA and IDS): [http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/Mobilising\\_Men\\_in\\_Practice.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/Mobilising_Men_in_Practice.pdf)
- Women for Women International: Helping Women Survivors of War Rebuild Their Lives (<http://www.womenforwomen.org>)
- WHO ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies (<http://www.who.int/gender/documents/violence/9789241595681/en/index.html>)
- Partnering With Men To End Gender-Based Violence: Practices that work from Eastern Europe and Central Asia (UNFPA): [http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2009/partnering\\_with\\_men.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2009/partnering_with_men.pdf)

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed overview on the extent and consequences of GBV in conflict and wartime, see the Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/45: <http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/b6ad5f3990967f3e802566d600575fcb?Opendocument>

<sup>2</sup>The international community is taking steps to consolidate data collection, analysis and management. The Sexual Violence Research Initiative ([www.svri.org](http://www.svri.org)) is coordinating efforts to consolidate empirical data on sexual violence, including in conflict settings. The UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict website provides a dataset accessible at: <http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed-Conflict/UCDP-PRIO/>. To systematize surveillance data during emergency responses to conflict, UNFPA is working with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO on a standard GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS) that enables frontline GBV service providers to safely collect, store, analyze and share reported GBV incident data ([www.gbvim.org](http://www.gbvim.org)).

<sup>3</sup>Transitional justice refers to a range of approaches that societies undertake to reckon with legacies of widespread or systematic human rights abuse as they move from a period of violent conflict or oppression towards peace, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for individual and collective rights. In making such a transition, societies must confront the painful legacy or burden of the past in order to achieve a holistic sense of justice for all citizens, to establish or renew civic trust, to reconcile people and communities, and to prevent future abuses" (Sigsworth, 2008, p. 14).

<sup>4</sup>Lt. Colonel Mutare Daniel Kibibi was tried by a gender justice mobile military court in South Kivu, DRC. The conviction resulted in part from strong international involvement: financial support, partnerships between jurists in the DRC and the US and the Open Society Justice Initiative, UN logistical support, NGO support for survivors to come forward, and media attention (Davis, 2011; Cole, 2011; Faul 2011).

<sup>5</sup>The White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) is an international public education effort educating men and boys and engaging them to publicly speak out against violence against women. Founded in 1991, it has been implemented in more than 55 countries.

<sup>6</sup>We have received reports, for example, of groups in northern Uganda that received international funds after claiming to have experience working with men. In fact, they had no such experience (at least not in work to end GBV or promoting gender equality) and their work contained sexist messages.

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