

# **MEN, FAITH AND MASCULINITIES: DRC**

*A baseline assessment on the social attitudes,  
relations, and practices of men in relation to gender,  
and sexual and gender-based violence in the  
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*

Commissioned by Tearfund's HIV & SV Unit  
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Tearfund is a Christian relief and development agency building a global network of local churches to help eradicate poverty.

Tearfund has 10 years' experience working through church-based partners in the response to sexual violence.

Tearfund is a founding member of We Will Speak Out, a coalition of faith-based groups, international aid agencies and individuals committed to see the end of sexual violence in communities worldwide.



[www.wewillsspeakout.org](http://www.wewillsspeakout.org)

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## Executive Summary

Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has claimed the lives of more than 5 million people. The conflict has caused severe damage to infrastructure and property and halted development. The people of the DRC have suffered greatly, especially women and girls. More than 1.8 million women and girls have reported that they have experienced sexual violence (SV) in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

Since 2008, SV has been internationally recognised as a weapon of war, after the 1820 UN resolution was adopted. And under the DRC's constitution it has been considered a crime against the state since 2005. However, there are several new studies highlighting the silent epidemic of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). This has been affecting women and girls in other areas of the country for many years – especially intimate-partner violence (IPV). These studies highlight the need to broaden the discussion on SV beyond conflict-related violence only and include other forms of violence against women and girls. Only this way will there be an effective and sustainable response to break the cycle of SGBV and shatter the cultural of impunity. There are several studies that suggest that men and boys have also been victims of violence during the conflict and in their lifetime. Their frustrations are high because of being unable to fulfil their role as family provider. A crucial part of the strategy to end SGBV is to engage men and boys, who tend to be the main perpetrators.

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), under its Prevention of Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI), funded a project called *Silent No More* by Tearfund and the Anglican Church of the DRC, which aims to empower the church and other faith communities to reduce SV in conflict-affected areas in eastern DRC. This research was commissioned as part of that project. The primary objective of this study was to understand the existing attitudes, knowledge and practices of both men and women in relation to masculinities, and this will serve as a baseline for engaging men and boys in future intervention projects. The secondary objectives were to provide information for designing evidence-based programmatic interventions in addressing SGBV, with the specific remit to engage men and boys. This baseline study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection. A total of 346 respondents (159 men and 187 women) participated in this baseline study through 17 group surveys and 10 focus-group discussions (FGDs).

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<sup>1</sup> Amber Peterman, Tia Palermo, and Caryn Bredenkamp (June 2011) *Estimates and Determinants of Sexual Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 101, No. 6, pp. 1060-1067

## Key findings

### Gendered attitudes, roles and identities

The roles and identities of men and women were defined, restricted and controlled by the gender norms in their communities. Forty-eight per cent of men and 43 per cent of women were of the view that a woman's most important role was to cook and take care of her family. A male respondent from Bunia said, *"The most important role of a woman is to cook, if she doesn't know to cook she is not important in society."* Additionally 59 per cent of men and 81 per cent of women were of the view that it is a mother's responsibility to care of the children. Interestingly 33 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women agreed that: *"To be a man you needed to be tough,"* and emphasized their views with comments such as: *"My husband needs to be tough, if not I will not respect him."*

It was found that most of the men and women associated toughness, dominance and control with being superior to women, and a male characteristic as the head of the household. Such views and opinions also stemmed from their understanding of men and women's role as depicted by the Bible. One respondent said: *"When God created man, God said that he was the head of the family, and therefore the man needs to be tough."*

Men and women believed that men were created as superior to women, and women were their subordinates. Their day-to-day interaction together was strongly influenced by this, and formed the boundaries for marital relationships too. In the survey and discussions men quoted a series of examples from the Bible to justify their view of why God created man to be superior to women. They used stories from the Old Testament, such as Adam being manipulated by Eve, Rebecca deceiving Isaac, and Delilah betraying Sampson. Almost a third of the men and women also disagreed with the statement that men should share household work with women. They said: *"God separated the work for men and women, therefore this is not relevant to men,"* and *"Men shouldn't share work because his responsibility is providing for the home, and women should take care of the children and domestic duties."*

The need for men to be the family provider was evident, in order to be recognized as men in their homes and as the head of the family. Sixty-four per cent of men and 78 per cent of women were of the view that: *"To be a man you need to be able to provide for your family and extended family."* The current situation seemed to challenge the men as they were finding it difficult to make ends meet, and also their male identities seemed challenged by the fact that most of the women were generating income and therefore leading the family. Men felt frustrated and neglected, and this seemed to be a motivation for the use of violence within the home to demand respect and demonstrate power.

Despite this, there were great opportunities to engage men and boys in positive dialogue, because the inequality and superiority they had expressed stemmed from their misunderstanding of biblical scriptures. There is a great opportunity to work with the church to shatter these misinterpretations and promote instead biblical truth – God-inspired equitable relationships and gender equality. One of the powerful views made in relation to this was: *“Our culture prevents women from progressing, and we see in other cultures that women are doing other work, and this is helping the progress and development of their communities. We need the same in our country.”*

### **Decision-making and household duties**

Unanimously, 100 per cent of both men and women agreed that a woman should obey her husband, and 63 per cent of men and 52 per cent of women agreed that a man should have the final say in all family matters. These findings along with the responses during the FGDs highlighted that existing decision-making practices within the home were dominated by men. Even when the woman was generating the income there were times when the men controlled the finances, a woman expressed this to be challenging when her husband uses it on alcohol. She said: *“He takes the money, but doesn’t give it to me, and if you ask he will beat you, then he asks for food, even when he didn’t give money.”* There was no mention of discussions or shared decision-making processes in the responses.

Male dominance in decision-making was also attributed to the superiority of men as believed to be “created by God” and because the man was the head of the household. Ninety per cent of men and 87 per cent of women said it was the men who currently made the decisions relating to women’s health. Likewise, a vast majority of the decisions relating to children and education, household expenditure, such as clothing and food, and any financial investments were also made by men. The women seem to have little or no involvement in this process, including when decisions involved her personal needs.

Even though 66 per cent of men and 69 per cent of women were of the view that the men should share household work, the women did almost 100 per cent of the current household work in reality.

### **Sexual relations and reproductive health**

*“Because it is the right of the husband, the woman doesn’t have the right over her body”.* Fifty-six per cent of men and 51 per cent of women were of the view that a woman cannot refuse to have sex with her husband. They also quoted bible verses to justify their responses. A young man said: *“I married her for sex, and I will not have it with other women, because I don’t want to contract HIV and therefore she cannot refuse.”* Women also expressed fear in refusing sex

because *“Even when I’m not ready I surrender to my husband when he wants to have sexual intercourse, because if I refuse, he will go find another woman. Sometimes even when he is drunk he comes and has sex and leaves, there is no pleasure in it for us.”*

Such beliefs are reinforced through cultural norms and traditions, including what is expressed in this comment: *“When a woman is married, the pastor advises her to give sex when the man wants, and explains if not he will leave her.”* Women reported to have little or no control over their bodies, whether it was having a sexual intercourse or giving birth to a child, everything was decided by the men. This stems from the false understanding of biblical scriptures, concerning issues of gender and masculinities. They believed that God created women as subordinate to men, who were superior.

## SGBV

*“Rape is like guns in our country, it’s killing our women.”*

*“Rape at home is the most common form of rape in Congo, but victims hardly speak out in order to protect the dignity of the family.”*

These comments sum up the situation in the DRC. It is important to note that SV or rape is not an isolated act of violence that only occurs during conflict; warfare makes it worse by breaking law and order and increasing impunity.

Forty-one per cent of men and 28 per cent of women were of the view that there were times when a woman deserves to be beaten: *“When a woman makes mistake she must be beaten”* and *“beating the wife is not a physical but moral correction.”* Men also said that there were times when they beat their wives because of their frustration in being unable to provide for the home or when they feel their wife neglects them. They said that if she does this their children wouldn’t respect them and their neighbours will question their male identity. In relation to this discussion there was a general expectation that women should tolerate violence for the sake of the family – sadly, 60 per cent of men and 67 per cent of women were in agreement with this view. One man said: *“In our culture a sign of love is for the woman to be beaten”* and also *“In marital life there are several problems that take place, and in the case of a drunkard husband, she should understand his state. He can do whatever to her and she should understand that he doesn’t know what he is doing.”*

The use of physical violence was related to men’s headship of the household, and the need to discipline and correct women in order to provide leadership. All of this was influenced by their biblical understanding of headship; of course this is misinterpreted. But this adds to the prevailing cultural practices and further boosts the status of men as superior to women.

Some respondents stated: *“Marital rape was not possible, because the woman’s body didn’t belong to her according to scriptures.”*

The majority of the women shared similar views: *“The rape by our husbands is very common, because we are raped many times by our husbands.”* The respondents said that the most common form of rape was within the home, and within the family or extended family, sometimes even by men in church. However, women and girls hardly spoke about this due to the stigma associated with victimization and a fear of bringing dishonour to the family. One woman said: *“We don’t want to report our husbands who rape us, because we don’t want him to be arrested.”*

Respondents said that rape victims recently known to them were all female and aged between four- and 65-years-old.

Women and girls continue to suffer in silence and in isolation. Survivors of SGBV internalize their trauma and blame themselves for their victimization.

### **Stigmatization and victim blaming**

The most challenging issue in addressing SGBV is the stigma associated with the victim; this prevents survivors from seeking much-needed help. Eighty-two per cent of both men and women from the survey were of the view that: *“Some women asked to be raped by the way they dress and behave.”* And they called on the government to bring strict rules on women’s attire. The focus on victims evades the critical need to address the behaviour of the perpetrators and exacerbates the existing impunity. There is a critical need to break the silence on SGBV and end stigma and victimization. A woman in the discussions summed up for her experience of SV in response to the debate on attire: *“We are raped because we are women.”*

### **Opportunities to address the broader dynamics of violence**

Sixty-nine per cent of men and 49 per cent of women disagreed with the statement: *“It is manly to defend the honour of your family even by violent means.”* This was an interesting considering the explicit agreement with the use of violence in the home. What was evident through the discussions is that the people of the DRC were tired of the conflict and instability, which has affected every aspect of their lives, especially in the eastern DRC: *“Violence should be condemned,”* said one respondent and another man pleaded, *“Please ask our government to end violence.”* Other responses included:

*“It is not good to use violence, because the person I’m inflicting violence on is a person just like me”, “As a Christian you shouldn’t avenge yourself, the laws of this country are there for this”, “when the problem started you may have not been around, and to react without understanding the issue will not resolve it.”*

## Recommendations and conclusion

The recommendations are to address the broader dynamics of gender and masculinities and provide a guideline to address SGBV in the DRC.

### Churches/faith-based organisations (FBOs) and non-FBOs

- **Awareness:** it is crucial to raise awareness of existing laws and policies in relation to SGBV. The church can be a catalyst in reaching all parts of the DRC and needs to publically denounce all forms of violence against women and girls using biblical teachings and discussions.
- The church must openly denounce marital rape as a sin and not in line with the Christian faith. It should also demonstrate its commitment to ending SGBV through visible actions.
- **Education and training:** to effectively respond to SGBV in every level of the church there needs to be sound theologically-based education and training for lay leaders, pastors and bishops. Leaders should be trained as champions to engage men and boys in the prevention of SGBV and promote positive masculinities, which are non-violent, dominant, equitable, and promotes the equality of women and men. There also needs to be pre- and post-marriage counselling, which includes teaching on IPV, marital rape and aspects of equitable relationships.
- **Role models:** church leaders need to promote and live out Christlike characteristics, based on humility and demonstrating how Christ interacted with women and subverted the social norms of the day. People should be aware of successful campaigns such as *First Man Standing* – a campaign by the UK-based organisation Restored, which promotes positive masculinities. And *One Man Can* – a global campaign to engage men and boys in SGBV and HIV-related work, by the South African non-government organisation (NGO) Sonke Gender Justice.
- **Safe spaces:** we need to create safe spaces for men to discuss the concept of positive masculinities. A space for men to share frustrations, challenges and traumatic experiences with their peers and also church leaders is crucial in helping them cope with the changes around them, and also heal from past experiences.
- **Leadership:** the church must demonstrate its commitment to ending SGBV in the community at both local and national level. The church in DRC has to be unified in denouncing SGBV, and work together with other faiths to engage men and boys to end SGBV. The church needs to take the leadership in breaking the silence on IPV, especially the issue of marital rape.
- **Non-FBOs:** the scope of work in the DRC on rape has to expand to address the broader context of SGBV. FBOs and non-FBOs need to find common ground and draw from each others' work and areas of expertise. It should be acknowledged that FBOs have a positive role to play and due to their historic influence within communities can achieve greater positive impact. The generalisation that religion has perpetuated harmful practices around gender needs to be stopped. It must be understood that this has arisen from a misinterpretation of scriptures and misleading teachings by some people in

positions of power. Organisations need to work together to address sensitive issues in non-harmful ways.

- **Policy and practice:** There needs to be a coordinated and prioritised focus on building the capacity of the government to respond to SGBV. Strengthening and resourcing the judicial systems is imperative to hold perpetrators accountable and to end impunity. The state also needs to acknowledge the vulnerabilities of men and boys, their traumatic experiences of violence, and affirm the positive role men and boys can play in ending SGBV.

## Conclusion

SV in the DRC has affected thousands of lives in conflict-affected areas, but the most underreported epidemic is the silent suffering of women and girls in their own homes, churches and communities. Women are raped and beaten by their husbands and relatives; children are raped by their uncles and neighbours. Women are perceived as inferior by men, who also feel entitled to their bodies. The conflict in DRC has exacerbated SV, but it is motivated strongly by the harmful attitudes and deeply-rooted gender inequality that was already present. SV is not only a weapon of war; it has been used as a weapon in daily life to oppress and abuse women and girls. In order to effectively respond to the issue we must broaden our thinking to see it as something that permeates the whole of life, and address the dynamics of gender and masculinities across the whole of the country.

The church is well positioned to address SGBV across all strata of society and also behind closed doors. The church can be a catalyst, if mobilized, to denounce all forms of violence, prevent the misinterpretation of scriptures and have a positive influence on gender dynamics. It should also work in partnership with other agencies in the DRC to end all forms of SGBV for the well-being of the whole nation.

## **Definitions of key terms and acronyms**

BASELINE: A minimum survey that can be used for comparisons

DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo

FBO: Faith-based organisation

FCO: Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the government of the United Kingdom

FGD: Focus-group discussion

GBV: Gender-based violence

ICPD: International Conference on Population Development

ICRW: The International Center for Research on Women

IMAGES: International Men and Gender Equality Survey

IPV: Intimate partner violence

PSVI: Prevention of Sexual Violence Initiative

SGBV: Sexual and gender-based violence

SRH: Sexual and reproductive health

SV: Sexual violence

TEASING: Eve-teasing (making sexual remarks and advances towards someone)

VAW: Violence against women

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction: why masculinities and men?

Violence against women and girls is a global phenomenon threatening the lives of women and girls everywhere. It is also a threat to social and economic development and affects the lives of every person in society. SV can affect anyone, despite their gender, but women and girls continue to be the most affected. One in every three women will face violence of some form in their lifetime according to the United Nations.<sup>2</sup>

The people of the DRC have been affected by years of conflict and political instability. It is well known globally that they have witnessed and experienced the most horrific forms of SV. The situation in the DRC has also been a catalyst in warranting specific focus on addressing SV in conflict situations.

Conflict and political instability in the DRC has affected law and order and exacerbated the situation around SV. According to a report in 2010, between 1.69 to 1.80 million women reported to having been raped in their lifetime, and more than 400,000 women in the preceding 12 months.<sup>3</sup> These shocking statistics have gained international attention. Today, thankfully, there are many non-government organisations (NGOs), civil-society networks and government projects working to end conflict-related SV. Tearfund and its church partners are also calling on the church and international community to widen the scope of SV to include SGBV – to go beyond the weapon of war narrative and acknowledge other forms of violence that have been taking place within communities for many years, such as IPV.

Violence has been normalized as a masculine trait, and there is an unspoken expectation that men will be violent to demonstrate their manliness. This is hugely harmful and damaging, not only to potential victims of SV, but to men themselves and society in general. Therefore it is important to deconstruct masculinities to promote positive male role models in order to prevent and respond to SV effectively.

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<sup>2</sup> *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence* (2013) WHO

<sup>3</sup> Amber Peterman, Tia Palermo, and Caryn Bredenkamp (June 2011) *Estimates and Determinants of Sexual Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 101, No. 6, pp. 1060-1067

## **The *Silent No More* project in DRC**

The *Silent No More* project is funded by the UK's FCO and Foreign Secretary's PSVI. The primary purpose of this project is to empower and mobilise the church and other faith communities to reduce SV in conflict-affected areas in eastern DRC, through evidenced-based interventions. The 15-month project will work in 15 communities – five communities each in north and south Kivu and Orientale provinces. The specific outputs of the project includes: training and mobilising church leaders to prevent and respond effectively to SV; setting up community-based referral pathways to help survivors access healthcare and legal services; setting up community-action groups with the participation of men and women to prevent SV; promoting positive masculinities to engage men and boys; training and equipping people from the community to document, compile evidence and report on incidences of SV; and promoting safe spaces for survivors to receive counselling and holistic recovery. This project is implemented by the Anglican Church in the province of Congo, with technical support from Tearfund's long-term partners, such as HEAL Africa.

## **Tearfund's work on SV in Africa**

Tearfund has been working in Africa for decades around different programming themes, from responding to emergencies to proactively engaging churches to respond to the HIV and AIDS epidemic. It has a very successful track record of HIV and AIDS programming and is a respected and valued stakeholder.

Even though Tearfund has been addressing SV as a sub-theme in its HIV and AIDS programming globally, in recent years this has evolved into a stand-alone programmatic theme and is being scaled up in the Great Lakes region and sub-Saharan Africa.

Tearfund has also been working with the Anglican Communion to end SGBV in other countries in this region, specifically in South Africa, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia and Tanzania. Engaging men and boys is a critical component of Tearfund's *Ending sexual violence together* framework and programming. This area of work is being piloted as a collaborative intervention with Restored and Sonke (Gender Justice) in Burundi and Rwanda initially, and then rolled out across another three countries.

In order to be effective in addressing the behaviour, practices and attitudes of men and women with regards to gender and SGBV in these countries, a baseline study was carried out in Rwanda and Burundi in August-September 2013. The baseline study on DRC was commissioned as a starting foundation to the work on engaging men and boys in the eastern DRC to end SGBV.

## Men, faith and masculinities

In the recent years, programming around the issue of SGBV has been influenced by discussions, debates and studies around masculinities and men, and masculinity as a social and political construct to uphold patriarchal values, norms and systems. This contributes to behaviour that leads to the perpetration of SGBV, and also creates the space within society to do so with high levels of impunity. These discussions have demanded that organisations must work with men and boys, not only to address their behaviour, social attitudes and practices, but also their own experiences of violence, trauma and victimization.

A baseline study to better understand the attitudes, behaviours and practices around men, manhood, masculinities and faith was commissioned in the DRC. This was in order to better inform our responses and strategies when integrating working with men and boys as part of SGBV programming.

This report will comprise three main sections: 1) the baseline, 2) the analysis of some of the key findings and narratives, and 3) recommendations and programming suggestions, with guidelines on working with men and boys.

In the context of the DRC it is important to understand the broader dynamics of gender in addressing SGBV. SV is not just a weapon of war, but infiltrates all of society – it takes place in our homes, our workplaces, our churches – and often behind closed doors. Civil conflict aggravates the situation and adds even more cruelty.

It is crucial to understand the different types of masculinities, and the challenges faced by both men and boys in maintaining their gender identities. It is also important to understand men's vulnerabilities and their own traumatic experiences, and explore ways to engage the church to respond to their specific needs. This study will provide evidence-based recommendations for programming for both the church and other non-FBOs as they work to engage men and boys to end SGBV in DRC.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Methodology

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to ascertain the social attitudes, practices and behaviours of men and women in relation to gender and SGBV in the Orientale, and north and south Kivu provinces in eastern DRC. Data was collected through group surveys and FGDs. The survey was structured with statements related to gender and SGBV, and the FGDs were around related programming areas.

### Objective

Assess and understand the given contexts and existing knowledge around gender, SGBV and masculinities within countries, in order to integrate engaging men with intervention projects.

### Design

The statements of the survey were adapted from the *International Men and Gender Equality Survey*<sup>4</sup> study tool, specifically the *Gender Equitable Men Scale*<sup>5</sup> and gender-relations scale. The questions were adapted to the context and appropriateness. In consultation with local partners, the statements guided discussions and other themes as identified by the researcher.

### Sampling

Group survey participants and the FGD themes were selected and approved by the Anglican Church of the DRC, Tearfund's partner implementing the work on SGBV.

The baseline study was carried out in the towns of Bunia, Goma and Bukavu, which are in the provinces Orientale and north and south Kivu. The total number of people interviewed was 346, (159 men and 187 women). Data for this baseline exercise was collected through a series of group surveys and follow up FGDs.

The six groups surveyed separately consisted of the following:

1. Church-going men
2. Church-going women
3. Non-church going men
4. Non-church going women
5. Young boys (16-30 year olds)
6. Young girls (16-30 year olds).

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<sup>4</sup> International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) model, developed by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and Instituto Promundo ([www.icrw.org/node/765](http://www.icrw.org/node/765)); the WHO multi-country study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women; and the South Africa study of Men, Masculinities, Violence and HIV, carried out by the Medical Research Council

<sup>5</sup> The Gender Equitable Men (GEM) scale was developed by Population Council and Promundo and by surveys on sexual violence and physical violence against women carried out by the Medical Research Council of South Africa

Four groups took part in FGDs:

1. Church-going men
2. Church going women
3. Non-church going men
4. Non-church going women.

We attempted to collect data from 10 groups in each town (through six group surveys and four FGDs), but this is the final count of completed groups:

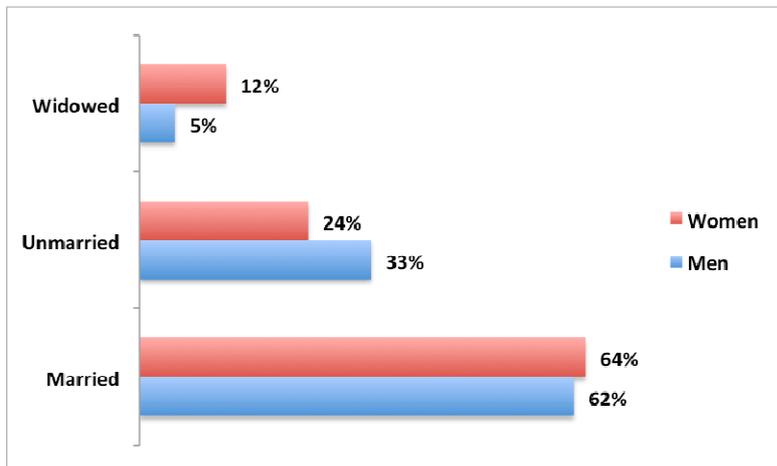
Location	No. group surveys	No. FGDs
Bukavu	6	4
Bunia	5	2
Goma	6	4

### Total sample size and breakdown

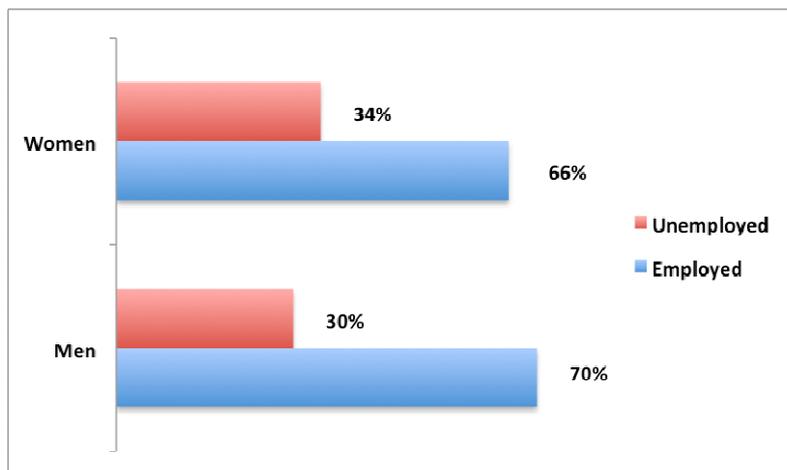
Location	Group survey		FGDs	
	MALES	FEMALES	MALES	FEMALES
Bukavu	42	47	25	31
Bunia	32	21	18	23
Goma	22	36	20	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>83</b>

## Demographics of the respondents

### Marital status



### Employment status



The survey was conducted with men and women in separate groups. Responses were captured through a show of hands after each survey statement. A total of 17 groups surveys were conducted in the three sites. The survey consisted of 27 statements, around gender relations, attitudes and practices, domestic violence, SV, household duties and masculinities.

## Structure of the tool

### Survey

The survey was split into three sections, and there were multiple statements within the first two sections where participants could either agree or disagree. The third section on current practices consisted of statements where participants could choose the responses of either men or women. The following are the broad section themes.

Sections	Statement themes
Gender attitudes	Gender roles, domestic chores and domestic violence
Gender relations	Decision-making, partner relations, consent, attitudes around rape and victims and household duties
Current practices	Decision-making around health, assets and finances. Practices around domestic duties.

### The FGDs

As a separate exercise, a total of 10 FGDs were carried out. The discussions were guided by the survey statements, and also around participants' understanding of gender, SV, SGBV, and the role of the church in addressing this. This was to probe further into the issue of SV in DRC and its connection to armed conflict, to see whether this is only a problem within a conflict setting or if this is an issue that exists in all of general life within the DRC.

Themes for the discussions were:

Theme of discussion	Discussed sub-themes
Gender	Gender roles, culture, faith, equality, SGBV, root causes of SGBV
Violence	Why violence, power, structures, the role of faith
Engaging men	Why/how men can contribute, challenges
Church	The role of the church, the challenges, what does the word of God say

### Analysis

Data analysis of the survey results is done in two parts. The findings are analyzed on face value, in terms of what it represents of participants' attitudes, behaviours and practices. The responses will also provide a baseline from which to evaluate the impact of the work on engaging men in the respective areas. The findings also will be used for programme design, and for engaging the leadership of the Anglican Church in the DRC in order to integrate and mainstream the work with men and boys to end SGBV.

Data from the survey and discussions will be used as a narrative to describe the current status of the attitudes and practices of men in relation to SGBV in the DRC.

### **Limitations**

This exercise was carried out with great support from all parties involved; however given the subject matter and the timelines involved, it did have its limitations. The respondents were all from the towns and therefore it is not representative of the wider community. The findings can only be used in relation to the research sites.

The survey was administered in groups and some responses could have been influenced by the popular response of the group.

It was difficult to encourage non-church going men and women to participate in Bunia, due to their availability and also because this area was predominantly Christian.

People's understanding of the statements and discussions was also challenged by their low-literacy levels and lack of previous exposure to this type of work. Some people also lacked confidence to share their view, as they may have never been asked such questions or even their opinions before.

The non-church going men category was originally meant to be focused on non-Christians, but due to the background of vast majority of the respondents who were of the Christian faith, but not attending a church at the given time, it was decided to rename this group non-church group.

Because the surveys and the FGDs were administered in groups, individual demographics weren't captured, and therefore it will be not possible to disaggregate data by gender, age, marital status or employment status.

However, despite the limitations, the outcome was still positive to the intention of the assignment.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Defining key concepts

#### Gender

Gender is understood as socially and culturally constructed, encompassing behaviours, roles, responsibilities, rights and expectations that distinguish men from women. Classification forms around femininity (female roles) and masculinity (male roles) (Bhasin, 2000, pp.1-2).

#### Gender equality

Gender equality refers to equality in rights, opportunities and responsibilities for women, men, girls and boys. Equal rights refer to equality of rights under the law. Equality of opportunities refers to equality in access to work, land, education, health and other recourses that enable opportunities. Equal responsibilities refer to equality in tasks and contributions to the development of society.

#### Gender equity

It is the process of being fair to men and women. To ensure fairness, measures must often be put in place to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from operating on a level playing field. Equity is the means to achieving equality.<sup>6</sup>

#### Gender-based violence (GBV)

The United Nations (UN) defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women. This includes threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

#### Intimate partner violence (IPV)

IPV is a serious, preventable public health problem that affects millions of people. This term describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy.<sup>7</sup>

IPV can vary in frequency and severity. It occurs on a continuum, ranging from one hit that may or may not impact the victim to chronic, severe battering and even murder.

There are four main types of IPV (Saltzman et al. 2002):

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<sup>6</sup> Definition from UNESCO's Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework, April 2003

<sup>7</sup> Definition by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- Physical violence is the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury or harm. Physical violence includes, but is not limited to, scratching, pushing, shoving, throwing, grabbing, biting, choking, shaking, slapping, punching, burning, use of a weapon, and use of restraints or one's body, size, or strength against another person.
- Sexual violence is divided into three categories: 1) use of physical force to compel a person to engage in a sexual act against his or her will, whether or not the act is completed; 2) attempted or completed sex act involving a person who is unable to understand the nature or condition of the act, to decline participation, or to communicate unwillingness to engage in the sexual act, eg, because of illness, disability, or the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or because of intimidation or pressure; and 3) abusive sexual contact.
- Threats of physical or sexual violence use words, gestures or weapons to communicate the intent to cause death, disability, injury or physical harm.
- Psychological/emotional violence involves trauma to the victim caused by acts, threats of acts or coercive tactics. Psychological/emotional abuse can include, but is not limited to: humiliating the victim, controlling what the victim can and cannot do, withholding information from the victim, deliberately doing something to make the victim feel diminished or embarrassed, isolating the victim from friends and family, and denying the victim access to money or other basic resources.
- It is considered psychological/emotional violence when there has been prior physical or sexual violence or prior threat of physical or sexual violence. Stalking is often included among the types of IPV. Stalking generally refers to, "harassing or threatening behaviour that an individual engages in repeatedly, such as following a person, appearing at a person's home or place of business, making harassing phone calls, leaving written messages or objects, or vandalizing a person's property." (Tjaden & Thoennes 1998).

### **Sexual violence (SV)**

Sexual violence (SV) is any sexual act that is perpetrated against someone's will. SV encompasses a range of offences, including: a completed non-consensual sex act (eg, rape), an attempted non-consensual sex act, abusive sexual contact (eg, unwanted touching), and non-contact sexual abuse (eg, threatened sexual violence, exhibitionism, verbal sexual harassment).

## Violence against women (VAW)

The UN defines VAW in the Vienna Declaration<sup>8</sup> as;

Article one:

For the purposes of this declaration, the term violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women. This includes threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Article two:

Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

- (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation
- (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution
- (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

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<sup>8</sup> The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women was adopted without vote by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993

## **Masculinities**

This term conveys that there are many socially-constructed definitions for being a man and that these can change over time and from place to place. The term relates to perceived notions and ideals about how men should or are expected to behave in a given setting. Masculinity and femininity are relational concepts, which only have meaning in relation to each other. The word masculinities (plural) is used as opposed to masculinity (singular) as different forms of masculinities exist – shaped by class, ethnicity, race, tribes and sexual orientation. And also because, within masculinities, there are hierarchies – some are dominant or hegemonic while others are subordinated, marginalized or complicit. Masculinities are normative practices, structured and shaped by gender relations. It's inherently historical and its making and remaking is a political process affecting the balance of interests in society and the direction of social change (Connell, 1995, p.44).

## **Sexual and reproductive health (SRH)**

Sexual health and reproductive health overlaps. In addition to supporting normal physiological functions such as pregnancy and childbirth, works needs to be done to reduce the adverse outcomes of sexual activity and reproduction (ICPD, 1994). SRH programming within development work aims to enable people of all ages to have safe and satisfying sexual relationships by tackling obstacles such as: gender discrimination, inequalities in access to health services, restrictive laws, sexual coercion, exploitation and gender-based violence.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> As defined by the UN International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Sexual violence in the DRC

The DRC is the second largest country in Africa, with a population of 75 million people. It is one of the most mineral-rich countries in the world, possessing 50 per cent of Africa's forestry with a river system that could power the entire African continent.<sup>10</sup>

The country has been plagued by years of conflict and political instability, particularly the “two Congo wars.” The first war that started in late 1996, when the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire – led by Laurent Kabila and supported by Rwandan and Ugandan troops – marched into eastern DRC to take control of the country from the Hutu militias. In an attempt to take complete authority, Kabila ordered the Rwandan and Ugandan forces out of DRC in 1997, which led to the “second Congo war,” when the Rwandan and Ugandan forces occupied eastern and northern parts of the DRC.<sup>11</sup> These two wars have claimed more than 5 million lives. In 2000, the World Health Organisation (WHO) ranked the DRC 188 out of 190 countries evaluated in the World Development Index.<sup>4</sup> Oxfam and the WHO estimates that between 37 to 75 per cent of the population has no access to healthcare.<sup>12</sup>

Loss of lives, damage to property and extreme poverty isn't the only consequences of long-term conflict in the DRC. SV and other forms of violence against women and girls, and men and children, have come to the world's attention and the international community is demanding a focus on addressing SV in conflict settings. The UN estimates that there were 27,000 incidents of SV in 2007 in the province of south Kivu alone.<sup>13</sup> Another report in 2010 found that two in five women in eastern DRC are victims of SV, including rape.<sup>14</sup> According to a report in 2009 it is estimated that as many as 200,000 survivors of SV are living in the DRC.<sup>15</sup> Some of the reported types of SV in the conflict setting are: gang rapes, forced incest, abduction, rape in public, rape by objects, such as gun butts or metal objects, which constitutes the cruellest and vilest form of SV – akin to torture. The perpetrators are known to be both militia and government soldiers, and other opportunists exploiting the vulnerability of young girls and older women in conflict-affected areas.

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<sup>10</sup> Langley, Virginia (2014) *The World Factbook* Central Intelligence Agency

<sup>11</sup> *Violence against women in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Whose responsibility? Whose complicity?* (November 2011) International Trade Union Confederation. This report also has extensive information the history of conflict in DRC

<sup>12</sup> *Characterizing Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Profiles of Violence, Community Responses, and Implications for the Protection of Women* (August 2009) Harvard Humanitarian Initiative

<sup>13</sup> *Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Militia attitudes, Community Responses, Policy Implications* (2009) Harvard Humanitarian Initiative

<sup>14</sup> Melhado, L (2010) *Rates of Sexual Violence Are High in Democratic Republic of the Congo*. International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health

<sup>15</sup> Cochrane, Kira (2008-05-09). *The victims' witness* The Guardian (London)

There may be some inconsistency in the statistics, but what is evident is the severity of SV in the DRC, especially in the conflict-affected areas of north and south Kivu and Orientale provinces.

The impact of SV is not solely physical injury and emotional and mental trauma, but also the stigmatization of victims – who are rejected by their husbands, families, neighbours and even their churches. Victims of gang rape are especially socially isolated if their children were born out of rape or if they become infected with HIV. Some victims of severe, systematic gang rape also develop fistulas as a consequence. A fistula is a hole in the women's vagina and traumatic fistula is a result of repeated rape or butchering with objects. Many women are abandoned or ostracised from their families because of the foul smell of fistulas if left untreated.<sup>16</sup>

The complexity of the context of DRC makes it extremely challenging for both the government and other key stakeholders to address this issue. The lack of infrastructure, inaccessibility, insecurity and stigma related to victimization makes it difficult for those affected to seek the much-needed medical health, psychosocial care and legal services they need in the aftermath of a sexual attack. The impunity for the perpetration of SV and instability in most areas increases the vulnerability of women and girls and makes it almost impossible to seek social justice.

The report by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative referred to in this chapter provides a comprehensive background to the extent of SV and conflict in the DRC.

### **Sexual and gender-based violence in the DRC**

The prevalence of SGBV, particularly rape in the DRC has become an international concern and the fact that rape is used as a weapon of war is widely recognized. The UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1820, passed in 2008, identifies SV as a threat to world peace and security, and a tactic of war used to dominate, humiliate, terrorize and displace civilian populations. However, there is still much work to be done in addressing this issue. There has been international attention on conflict-affected areas and there is literature, studies and articles widely available on the prevalence of rape in eastern DRC. But it is important to acknowledge that rape in the DRC is not exclusive to the eastern regions or conflict-affected areas. It is important to acknowledge that SV is not an isolated act committed by only those carrying arms, whether military or militia. There are very few studies on SGBV in the DRC. Those studies that do exist document the prevalence of diverse forms of SGBV in other parts of the country.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.fistulafoundation.org/what-is-fistula/fast-facts-faq>

An American public health journal estimates that 3.37 million women are victims of IPV and 1.8 million women victimized by rape.<sup>17</sup> It is challenging to address IPV because marital rape in the DRC is not considered an offence.<sup>18</sup>

Studies highlight the crucial need to discuss the issue of rape and SV in the DRC beyond the weapon of warfare narrative, and to understand the broader dynamics of gender that contribute to SGBV.

## **National and international responses to SGBV in the DRC**

The Constitution of the DRC defines SV as a form of GBV and it is criminalised. It also condemns SV as a crime against the state. However, because of the inefficiency of the judicial system – due to corruption, lack of resources, adequate staffing, and interference by political and military authority – it is almost impossible to address SGBV from a legal standpoint, and adds to the existing impunity.<sup>19</sup> Even though different forms of SV are classified as crimes against humanity under the Congolese military penal code,<sup>20</sup> there are many challenges faced in prosecuting perpetrators from the military. In 2007 a report by the UN Organisations Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) stated that 54 per cent of reported SV in the first six months of that year were committed by the DRC armed forces.

In 2006, the penal code was amended to widen the definition of SV and included the insertion of objects into a woman's vagina, sexual slavery and also sexual relations with minors as statutory rape. However several key stakeholders have criticised it to be ineffective due to the dysfunctional justice system.<sup>21</sup>

International responses to SV have been notable, mandated by the UNSC resolution 1856 of December 2008. The UN Organisation Mission in the DRC (MONUC) was a peacekeeping mission which prioritised civilian protection in the north and south Kivu, and through various other resolutions the UNSC requested that MONUC work towards the protection of women and girls. However, MONUC has been criticized by NGOs on its failure to protect civilians, and MONUSCO, the organisation which took over, has been said to lack adequate resources, rapid response capacity and has inadequately trained its troops to respond to this issue effectively.

Critics' revealed the complicity of MONUSCO during the Congolese military operations in 2009 – Kimia II, recorded to be marred by human rights violations, and also the mass rape of 380

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<sup>17</sup> Amber Peterman, Tia Palermo, and Caryn Bredenkamp (June 2011) *Estimates and Determinants of Sexual Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 101, No. 6, pp. 1060-1067

<sup>18</sup> Mechanic, Eli. *Why Gender Still Matters: Sexual Violence and the Need to Confront Militarized Masculinity*. Partnership Africa Canada

<sup>19</sup> *Violence against women in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Whose responsibility? Whose complicity?* (November 2011) International Trade Union Confederation

<sup>20</sup> *Prosecuting sexual violence in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Obstacles for survivors on the road to justice* (2009) African Law Journal

<sup>21</sup> *Analysis: New laws have little impact on sexual violence in DRC* (2011) IRIN

civilians in north Kivu in 2010. However, the good work of the MONUSCO to provide safety for humanitarian workers is noted.<sup>22</sup>

Other UNSC resolutions, such as September 2009's 1888, urges all conflict parties to investigate reports of SV that have been committed by military personnel and to bring perpetrators to justice. UNSC adopted a resolution in December 2010 similar to 1820, which both condemn the use of rape and other forms of SV during wartime and announced targeted measures and instruments to fight those forms of violence. The resolutions build on Resolution 1325, which pushed for the involvement of women in peacemaking processes. Several key global leaders have been vocal on the need to end SV in the DRC. UK Foreign Secretary William Hague has been actively engaging on this issue, and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, has created momentum to address SV in the DRC by addressing the root causes of conflict.

### **Men, masculinities and SGBV in the DRC**

Men and boys are also victims of SGBV, but the development sector does not focus on this issue due to its complexity in the programmatic theme of gender. The discussion on SGBV in the DRC needs to include men's experiences of violence, and the frustrations caused by the gendered expectations of men and boys in society. A study in 2012 explored the impact of SGBV on the lives of men and boys, and found the following:

There were high rates of unemployment among men, which lead to frustrations when unable to provide for the family as expected. They reported high levels of economic stress; 72 per cent of men reported that they were ashamed to face their families because they were out of work; 74 per cent spend most of their time looking for work; 53 per cent have considered leaving their families because of a lack of income and 78 per cent are frequently stressed or depressed because they do not have work.

In terms of men's reporting of SGBV, 48 per cent of men reported that they had carried out forms of physical violence against women, such as beating, kicking, slapping, pushing etc. And 34 per cent of men reported that they had carried out acts of SV, such as inappropriately touching, rape and grabbing. The majority of these acts were committed outside conflict areas.

It is important to note that 9 per cent of men reported they had personally experienced SV during the conflict, and 16 per cent of men reported being forced to watch rape being carried out by others.

In relation to men's own experiences of childhood trauma from violence, 21 per cent of men reported being forced to touch someone else's genitals and someone else touching theirs

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, pp. 30

before the age of 18, and 18 per cent reported that someone from their family tried to have sexual relations with them, and 11 per cent said someone in their family forced them to have sexual relations.

The study gives an overview of men's experiences of SGBV, and how these traumatic experiences play a role in constructing their masculine identities.<sup>23</sup>

## Christianity in the DRC

Christianity is the majority religion in the DRC, with almost all of the population professing the Christian faith (96 per cent). Fifty per cent are affiliated to the Roman Catholic Church, 39 per cent to the Protestant Church (Baptist, Anglicans), seven per cent to other Christian, 1.5 per cent Muslims and 2.5 animist or no religion.<sup>24</sup> The Christian faith and leadership is extremely influential in the lives of people, locally and nationally.

The Anglican Church has been actively involved in addressing SGBV in the Great Lakes region of Africa since 2011. Under the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, the Anglican Communion has taken on the responsibility to break the silence on SGBV. The Anglican Archbishop of the DRC, Henri Isingoma, has been spearheading the work since 2010, but has lacked the necessary resources.

In 2013, the FCO funded the international NGO Tearfund and its partners, such as HEAL Africa, to address SGBV in the DRC – a project funded through its PSVI. This initiative is called *Silent No More* and focuses on engaging Christian leaders and the church to holistically respond effectively to SGBV.

## Sexual violence, masculinities and the Bible

The study of masculinity was an outcome of feminist studies and activism, and is now becoming an integral section within the field of gender studies. In order to discuss this in relation to SGBV and the role of men and boys, the following concepts are helpful and discussed in the publication *Redemptive Masculinities* by the World Council of Churches. The following are excerpts from the introduction by the authors, Chitando and Chirongoma.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Sleghe, H., Barker, G., Ruratotoye, B. & Shand, T. (2012). *Gender Relations, Sexual Violence and the Effects of Conflict on Women and Men in North Kivu, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Preliminary Results of the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)*. Sonke Gender Justice Network and Promundo-US: Cape Town, South Africa, and Washington, DC

<sup>24</sup> CIA World fact book: DR Congo

<sup>25</sup> Ezra Chitando and Sophie Chirongoma, (eds) (2012) *Redemptive Masculinities: men, HIV and religion*. World Council of Churches

Firstly, there has been general acceptance of the plural word masculinities as opposed to simply masculinity based on numerous research that shows that there is no typical way to be man, and that there are different versions of manhood.

A further study by Barker and Ricardo<sup>26</sup> emphasises the need to take the plurality of masculinities in sub-Saharan Africa. They define the versions of manhood in Africa as:

*(i) Socially constructed, (ii) fluid over time and in different settings and (iii) plural. There is no typical young man in sub-Saharan Africa and no single version of manhood. There are numerous African masculinities, urban and rural and changing historically, including versions of manhood associated with war, or being warriors and others associated with farming or cattle herding. There are indigenous definitions and versions of manhood, defined by tribal and ethnic group practices, and newer versions of manhood shaped by Islam and Christianity, and by Western influences, including the global media.*

Secondly, masculinity is not seen as monolithic, but shaped by many processes and intersecting identities or conditions that produce multiple variables amongst different groups, individuals, institutions and societies.<sup>27</sup> This means that men are susceptible to change. This also gives the possibility that we can transform negative masculinities into positive ones in relation to gender equality and freedom from violence. The following is an excerpt on African masculinities, which resonates the same sentiments as above.

*That definitions of African masculinities are not uniform and monolithic, not generalizable to all men in Africa, and that masculine behaviours in Africa are not natural or unchanging— suggesting the possible emergence of new (and less violent and less oppressive) ways of being masculine.<sup>28</sup>*

There has been extensive literature focused on SV, masculinities and the Bible, and the most relevant and comprehensive narrative can be found in the World Council of Churches (WCC) publication *Redemptive Masculinities*. It is highly recommended for anyone interested in an extensive and systematic reading in relation to this theme. For the purposes of this report, and to give an overview of the existing thoughts on masculinities in relation to Christianity, the following narratives are quoted from *Redemptive Masculinities*. But it is advisable to read the publication provided in the references section of this report, from page 173 onwards, entitled *Thus Says the Lord? Sacred Texts and Masculinities*.

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<sup>26</sup> Ricardo, Christine and Gary Barker (2008) *Men, Masculinities, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence: A Literature Review and Call for Action*, Rio de Janeiro: Promundo

<sup>27</sup> Gardiner, J.K. ed. (2002) *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Directions*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 1-29

<sup>28</sup> Morrell, Robert and Lahoucine Ouzgane (2005). *African Masculinities: An Introduction* in Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell (eds), *African Masculinities: Men in Africa 494 Bibliography from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present*, 1-20. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press

## Tamar

In 2 Samuel 13:1-22, the story of Tamar is found. The WCC publication goes on to discuss the “Tamar Campaign”, which is used as a bible study to discuss the issue of rape, and also discusses the concept of alternative masculinities. This section also gives an outline and discussion guide on how to use this story from the Bible to discuss this issue. It is an extremely effective campaign in terms of “breaking the silence” surrounding rape from within the church.

## Hosea and his wife Gomer

In Hosea 1-3, God uses Hosea’s marriage to Gomer to highlight Israel’s unfaithfulness to God and worship of other gods. However it is also an excellent study on how Hosea, as the husband, is commanded to forgive his wife and bring her back to him after she was unfaithful. This section is found from page 193 in *Redemptive Masculinities*.

## Joseph

Matthew 1:18-25 narrates the events leading up to the birth of Jesus. We see the unusual situation of Mary – miraculously pregnant with Jesus. As she is soon to be Joseph’s wife we also see a conflicted Joseph, unsure of how to respond to this challenging situation. Given the context, standing by Mary is not an easy decision for Joseph to make as a Jew and as a man. However the Bible also describes him as righteous and he chooses to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and make the difficult decision to continue to marry Mary, irrespective of the consequences and potential shame and embarrassment it may bring them. Joseph also assumes the role of a father. Luke 2: 41-52 gives an account of the incident when Joseph and Mary couldn’t find Jesus and highlights Joseph’s actions, “*Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.*” This can be discussed in promoting positive fatherhood in relation to today’s context, when many men abuse and discriminate against their children based on gender or due to the circumstances of their birth. This is from page 211 of *Redemptive Masculinities*.

## Paul

There is extensive review of the Epistles of Paul, a book which was written within the context of the Roman Empire and how this should be read with this context in mind in relation to what it says on marriage, sex, gender equity, hegemony and hierarchy. Also a section on Paul as an example, who breaks down the concept of hegemony and dominating behaviours by describing himself as: “slave to all” (1 Corinthians 9: 19-23).

Paul calls men and women equal in Christ, and calls for gender equality in sex and marriage. Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians:7 provide a great reflection for man – setting a standard for equitable relationships. This section of the publication can be found from page 229 in *Redemptive Masculinities*.

*Redemptive Masculinities* is a great resource for faith-based interventions to end SGBV.

By re-reading some of the scriptures we can understand better what the word of God says in relation to gender equality, masculinities and SV. It also provides case studies, discussion guides and real-life examples to assist related work.

## CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter reports the findings from the group surveys. The responses are presented in themes, which correlate to the discussions and analysis of the surveys and FGDs found in chapter six. As evident in the following findings, there is a pressing need to work with both men and women on addressing broader gender dynamics in order to effectively tackle the issue of SGBV. There is also a need to work with men and boys to challenge the current attitudes surrounding the masculinization of violence and feminization of the household and caregiving roles. The findings also show how women and girls tend to be the gatekeepers of harmful attitudes with regards to gendered roles and identities specifically on manhood. These beliefs also need to be deconstructed when addressing SGBV in the context of the DRC.

### Gendered attitudes and roles

Attitudes on women, and their roles (male response)	Agree	Disagree
A woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family	48%	52%
Changing nappies, giving kids a bath and feeding the kids are the mother's responsibility	59%	41%

Attitudes on women, and their roles (female response)	Agree	Disagree
A woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family	43%	57%
Changing nappies, giving kids a bath and feeding the kids are the mother's responsibility	81%	19%

Attitudes on men, and their roles (male response)	Agree	Disagree
To be a man, you need to be tough	33%	67%
To be a man means providing for your family and your extended family	64%	36%
It is manly to defend the honour of your family even by violent means	31%	69%

Attitudes on men, and their roles (female response)	Agree	Disagree
To be a man, you need to be tough	30%	70%
To be a man means providing for your family and your extended family	78%	22%
It is manly to defend the honour of your family even by violent means	51%	49%

## Attitudes on sexual and reproductive health (SRH)

Attitudes on SRH (male response)	Agree	Disagree
It is a woman's responsibility to avoid getting pregnant	19%	81%
A real man produces a male child	2%	98%

Attitudes on SRH (female response)	Agree	Disagree
It is a woman's responsibility to avoid getting pregnant	14%	86%
A real man produces a male child	-	100%

## Attitudes on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

Attitudes on SGBV (male response)	Agree	Disagree
There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten	41%	59%
A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together	60%	40%
Women should accept teasing even of a sexual nature because it is harmless	3%	97%
Teasing becomes harmful to women only when there is physical contact	10%	90%
It is manly to defend the honour of your family even by violent means	31%	69%

Attitudes on SGBV (female response)	Agree	Disagree
There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten	28%	72%
A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together	67%	33%
Women should accept teasing even of a sexual nature because it is harmless	-	100%
Teasing becomes harmful to women only when there is physical contact	-	100%
It is manly to defend the honour of your family even by violent means	51%	49%

## Gender relations and decision-making

Gender relations – Decision making/Domestic (male response)	Agree	Disagree
I think that a woman should obey her husband	100%	-
I think that a man should have the final say in all family matters	63%	37%
I think that men should share the work around the house with women such as doing dishes, cleaning and cooking	66%	34%
I think that a woman cannot refuse to have sex with her husband	56%	44%

Gender relations – Decision making/Domestic (female response)	Agree	Disagree
I think that a woman should obey her husband	100%	-
I think that a man should have the final say in all family matters	52%	48%
I think that men should share the work around the house with women such as doing dishes, cleaning and cooking	69%	31%
I think that a woman cannot refuse to have sex with her husband	51%	49%

## Sexual violence, inclusive of rape

Gender relations – SV, inclusive of rape (male response)	Agree	Disagree
I think that when a woman is raped, she is usually to blame for putting herself in that situation	13%	87%
I think that if a woman doesn't physically fight back, it's not rape	22%	78%
I think that in any rape case, one would have to question whether the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation	4%	96%
I think that some women ask to be raped by the way they dress and behave	82%	18%

Gender relations – SV, inclusive of rape (female response)	Agree	Disagree
I think that when a woman is raped, she is usually to blame for putting herself in that situation	16%	84%
I think that if a woman doesn't physically fight back, it's not rape	43%	57%
I think that in any rape case, one would have to question whether the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation	29%	71%
I think that some women ask to be raped by the way they dress and behave	82%	18%

## Current practices around decision making and household work

### Decision-making

Practices – decision-making (male response)	Men	Women
Who in your household usually has the final say regarding the health of women in the family?	90%	10%
Who in your household usually has the final say about decisions involving your children (their schooling, their activities)?	95%	5%
Who has the final say about decisions involving how your family spends money on food and clothing?	88%	12%
Who has the final say about decisions involving how your family spends money on large investments such as buying a vehicle, a house or a household appliance?	95%	5%

Practices – decision-making (female response)	Men	Women
Who in your household usually has the final say regarding the health of women in the family?	87%	13%
Who in your household usually has the final say about decisions involving your children (their schooling, their activities)?	70%	30%
Who has the final say about decisions involving how your family spends money on food and clothing?	77%	23%
Who has the final say about decisions involving how your family spends money on large investments such as buying a vehicle, a house or a household appliance?	94%	6%

## Household work

Practices – who does the following at home (male response)	Men	Women
Preparing food	1%	99%
Cleaning the house	-	100%
Washing clothes	1%	99%
Taking care of the children	1%	99%

Practices – who does the following at home (female response)	Men	Women
Preparing food	-	100%
Cleaning the house	-	100%
Washing clothes	-	100%
Taking care of the children	-	100%

## CHAPTER SIX

### Discussion on key themes

From the data collected through the group surveys and FGDs, the aim of this chapter is to understand the current attitudes, practices and knowledge on gender and masculinities in relation to SGBV. This will also enable a broader narrative to understand the context in which SGBV occurs, and expands the discussion on SV in the DRC beyond its use only as a weapon of war. If SGBV is to be successfully addressed there needs to be stronger voice to end impunity and coordinated efforts to hold perpetrators accountable. Long-term prevention projects need to address the broader gender dynamics and address the root causes of SGBV as they are influenced by culture, religion and other beliefs.

The findings are segregated into broader themes and quantitative and qualitative responses are amalgamated to provide an overview into the current context in the research sites.

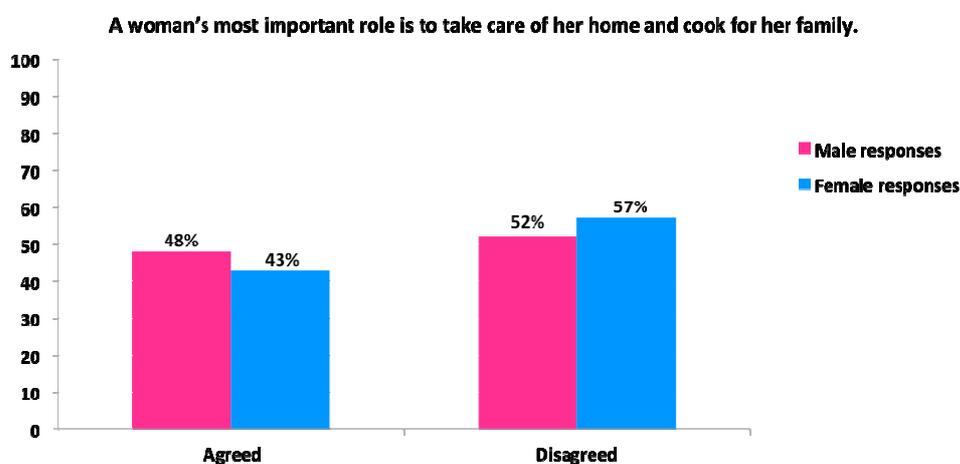
### Attitudes on gendered roles and identities

48 per cent of men and 43 per cent of women agreed with the statement: *“A woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family.”*

59 per cent of men and 81 per cent of women agreed with the statement: *“I think that changing nappies, giving kids a bath and feeding the kids are a mother’s responsibility.”*

33 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women agreed with the statement: *“To be a man you need to be tough.”*

64 per cent of men and 78 per cent of women agreed with the statement: *“To be a man means providing for your family and external family.”*

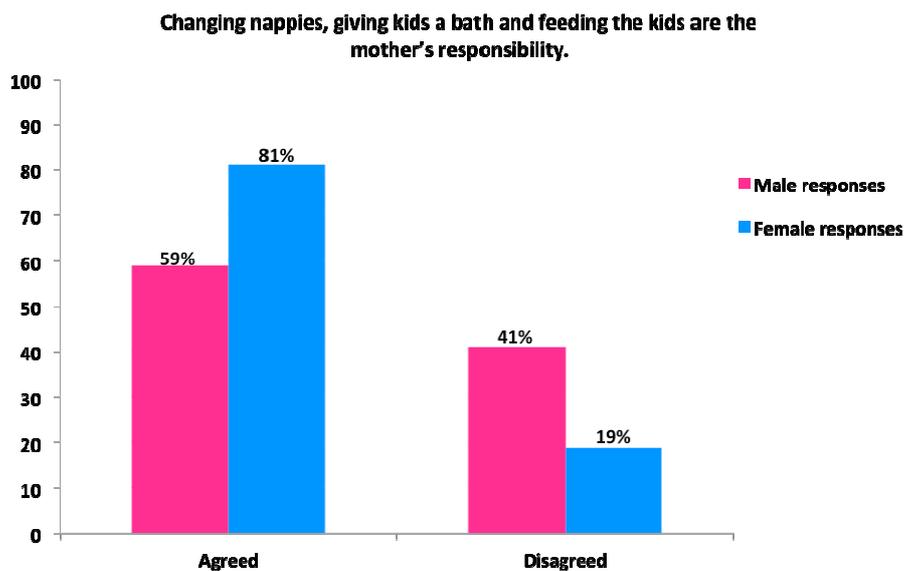


The findings related to gendered roles and identities were surprisingly mixed.

The results about a woman's domestic duty weren't as definitive as other countries in this region. Responses included:

*"All domestic duties are the woman's responsibility."*

*"Yes, because the most important role of a woman is to cook, if she doesn't know to cook she is not important in society."*



The women who agreed with this statement also had similar views to those expressed around a women's role in household work. *"When they are women, and she is the wife, the wife must do all these duties."*

The men and women were also of the view that a man needs to be tough, and linked this to their belief that this was how God created him to be. Here are some of the comments from respondents in relation to this:

*"The man was created in the image of God, and God gave him all the skills and capabilities to plan everything."*

*"When God created man, God said that he was the head of the family, and therefore the man needs to be tough."*

Both men and women from the FGDs linked male toughness to superiority, and perceived it to be the natural order of things and the way God intended it to be right from the story of creation. Being tough was seen as a masculine trait. There was an expectation of men to demonstrate this, in relation to men's role in protecting their families and disciplining their wife and children.

*“This is the place of men, as superiors,” said one female respondent. “My husband needs to be tough, if not I will not respect him.”*

*“Children will not get a good education if the father is not around, because the mother is not strict with the children.”*

The discussions around toughness and the superiority of men were linked to their perceived role in society as leaders, providers and decision-makers. This was also used to justify women’s role in the homes as caregivers, helpers and subordinate to men.

Some responses included:

*“The man is like an umbrella in the house, when it rains they will all come under the umbrella, and the wife also needs protection and the man has the power in that house to do so.”*

*“Through the bible we take the example of Adam and Eve, Eve caused Adam to sin.”*

*“Samson was betrayed by Delilah and Job’s wife wanted him to give up his faith.”*

*“Rebecca lied to Isaac to give inheritance to someone else.”*

*“Because of all these weakness of women as seen in the Bible, God cannot give responsibilities to women.”*

But it is also important to note that 34 per cent of men and 31 per cent of women disagreed with the statement: *“I think that men should share the work around the house with women such as doing dishes, cleaning and cooking.”*

However, doing household work was perceived to be unmanly and having a negative impact on male identity. Responses included:

*“If a man does these things at home, the woman will neglect and not respect the man.”*

*“God separated the work for men and women, therefore this is not relevant to the men.”*

*“Men shouldn’t share this work because his responsibility is providing for the home, and women should take care of the children and domestic duties.”*

The challenges with this belief that men are tougher and superior to women and that women are inferior and subordinate to men is that it narrows the space for discussion on men’s vulnerabilities and their challenges. It also takes away women’s abilities and their resilience.

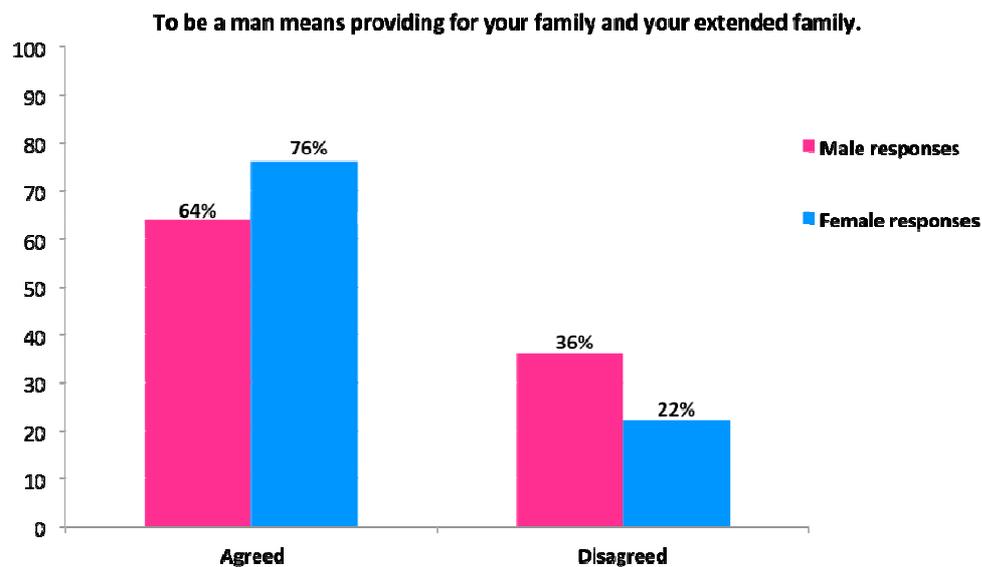
As in the findings in chapter four, what is also evident is how vulnerable men are, and how resilient women are in taking over the role of head of the household after the loss of a partner and their ability to live on despite traumatising experiences of conflict and SV.

The role of men as providers of the family played a crucial role in defining the male identity in these communities. As highlighted in the beginning of this chapter, the vast majority of the men and women interviewed were in agreement with this view.

It is interesting to note that the view of men as the provider was also linked to the perception of men as superior and tough. Some expressed views such as:

*“The man is in charge of all affairs of the family.”*

*“Bringing up the children is a woman’s responsibility. The man goes to work to provide.”*



Most of the men found it challenging to make ends meet. Some comments from men in Baukavu were: *“Joblessness of men is a big issue.”*

*“We don’t feel good, because right at this moment we cannot provide for our families.”*

Most men found this aspect to be challenging, as both men and women said that the concept of who is head of the household is changing in the current context of DRC, where most men find it challenging to provide and women are doing income-generating activities and taking over the breadwinner role. However, in the opinion of men this was a great challenge, as they perceived that the power was shifting from them to the woman in the household, as she earns the money. Here are some opinions expressed:

*“Because of the wars, most of the men lost their jobs. The females became the providers.”*

*“My husband used to work, and he fell sick, now I’m doing everything. However, he monitors things at home.”*

*“In the homes where the man is unable to work, and the woman is the one working, the women become boastful and neglect their husbands.”*

Men also said: *“We can support her in everything, but not when she neglects us.”*

When asked what was meant by ‘neglect us’ they said not respecting their superiority, not having sex and not cooking for them.

Men and women seemed frustrated by these changing identities. Women expressed the added burden of having to care for their families in addition to working all day to provide for them. They said that most of the men, even if they were unemployed, didn't help out at home as he believed it would diminish his status at home and in society. Women also shared how the men used their hard-earned money to abuse alcohol and other substances, and leave the family with no money for food to eat or to spend on their children's education.

What was evident through the survey and FGDs findings was the internal struggle that is taking place within homes and communities because of the changing roles and identities of men and women – forced to adapt due to the difficult context of ongoing warfare in the DRC.

There is a struggle to retain the male identity, an identity constructed by their cultures and their own interpretations of the scriptures.

An elderly man from Bukavu said: *“Our culture prevents women from progressing, and we see in other cultures that women are doing other work, and this is helping the progress and development of their communities. We need the same in our country.”*

However he also expressed his confusion: *“When missionaries brought the gospel to our countries, it seemed to resonate with our existing cultures which makes men superior to women, and reduces the responsibilities. But now, when we want to help women, we are confused, as our faith and culture tells the opposite.”* They also expressed the societal pressure to conform to the norm, *“When the husband and wife agree to share their work at home, the relatives from the man's side will make problems saying that the man has become the women.”*

These statements reflect the struggle within each of the communities to adapt to a changing environment. It also shows that people are grappling with their own understanding of gendered roles and identities, which most of the time was harmful to both sexes – particularly restricting the positive role men can play in their lives of their children. This also limited men in talking about their own vulnerabilities and challenges, which affect their relationships with their partners and halt their progression in society.

The attributes of gendered identities and roles stemmed from their misinterpreted views of biblical scripture, such as the story of creation and stories such as Rebecca and Isaac, Samson and Delilah and Paul's teaching on relationships. The inequality expressed was very strong and related to how they understood scripture within the lens of their existing cultures and traditions.

## Opportunities

Despite the challenges discussed in the previous section, it is important to note that not all men and women were restricted by their gendered roles and identities. Amid the current challenges and any personal views, men and women also chose to differ from the current status quo.

52 per cent of men and 57 per cent of women disagreed with the statement: *“I think a woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family.”*

41 per cent of men and 19 per cent of women disagreed with the statement: *“Changing nappies, giving kids a bath and feeding the kids are the mother’s responsibility.”*

67 per cent of men and 70 per cent of women disagreed with the statement: *“To be a man you need to be tough.”*

Some men and women expressed open-minded and positive thinking around gendered roles and identities, and also quoted biblical passages as a motivation for this. Some views expressed: *“Sometimes men think the only place for women is in the kitchen, this is unacceptable.”*

*“According to how God created man and woman – they both have skills they can use to help each other.”*

*“This was true in the old times, but because of life’s realities, this has changed. A woman is able to do what a man is in today’s society.”*

Regarding childcare: *“The child is of the man and the woman, there is no law that the man cannot take care of the child.”*

*“When you love each other, there is no specific role, you share your work.”*

*“The child is the fruit of unity, so taking care of the child should be done by both.”*

For some, the current reality in the DRC seems to have almost forced them to re-examine their roles and identities, relearn their scriptural understanding of gender equality, and also look for practical ways to make life work for the overall well-being of their families.

To sum up, a man said: *“When we marry, we become one, so our lives must reflect this in practical actions.”*

## Decision-making and household duties

The findings on decision-making processes were strongly linked to perceptions of gendered identities – male superiority and female inferiority, as discussed in the previous section.

100 per cent of both men and women agreed with the statement: *“I think that a woman should obey her husband”*

63 per cent of men and 52 per cent of the women agreed with the statement: *“I think that a man should have the final say in all family matters”*

When asked *“who in your household usually has the final say regarding the health of women in the family?”* 90 per cent of men and 87 per cent of women answered that it was the men.

It was evident through the findings of the survey and the discussions that the majority of the decisions were made by the male head of the household. But in the instance where a male wasn't available, a close relative (male) would step in or failing that, the woman is able to be a decision-maker. Decisions relating to finances, food and clothing, children and education, were made by men according to both the men and women. Comments expressed include:

*“He comes home with the money, but doesn't give, and if you ask he will beat you, then he asks for food, even when he didn't give any money.”*

*“Often women are too emotional, and can't handle themselves, that's why the decisions must be made by men.”*

*“Because the man is the head of the house.”*

Women expressed that it was challenging when the man still makes the financial decisions, even though she is the one earning the money, and also how the money is misused, such as on buying alcohol.

There was no mention of discussion on decision-making processes, and a woman from Goma said: *“He doesn't want to listen to me, and hardly talks.”*

What is interesting to note is that the male dominant decision-making process was expressed as a *“God given order”* and *“Because God made man the head of the household.”*

Men also said that tradition and culture encourages this: *“the husband is superior because he paid a dowry for his wife.”*

All of these attitudes and practices seem to stem from an understanding of gendered roles and identities which was rooted in gender inequality, male dominance and rigidly-defined roles.

The process for decision-making was founded on inequitable attitudes among men and women.

Sixty-six per cent of men and 69 per cent of women agreed with the statement: *“I think that men should share the work around the house with women such as doing dishes, cleaning and cooking.”* Yet, in reality it was women who did the current household and childcare work.

Questions on current practice: who does the following tasks at home?	Male responses		Female response	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Preparing food	1%	99%	0	100%
Cleaning the house	0%	100%	0	100%
Washing clothes	1%	99%	0	100%
Taking care of the children	1%	99%	0	100%

We cannot address the male-dominant, decision-making process that is currently prevalent without addressing gender inequality and its harmful effects.

### Opportunities

Not all men and women were in agreement with the expressed opinions, 37 per cent of men and 48 per cent of women disagreed with the statement:

*“I think that a man should have the final say in all family matters.”*

It was hopeful to hear positive, more open-minded responses, such as:

*“What if the man is wrong? Then I cannot agree.”*

*“We disagree because Christian teaching encourages us to dialogue to make a decision.”*

*“Some women are more powerful and intelligent than men.”*

*“We must take shared decisions.”*

The current reality in relation to decision-making is bleak, more than 70 per cent of all decisions about health, finances, children, and investments are being made by the men of the household.

This is a crucial area for engagement on promoting good practices on mutual decision-making and promoting equitable relationships.

## Sexual relations and reproductive health

The influence of gendered identities promoting male superiority and in the context of decision-making being dominated by men can only mean one thing: there is limited space for a woman to exercise her autonomy. This is even truer in the discussion on sexual intercourse and in reproductive health.

Fifty-six per cent of men and 51 per cent of women were of the view that a woman cannot refuse sex to her husband. And even though only 19 per cent of men and 14 per cent of women agreed with the statement: "It is a woman's responsibility to avoid getting pregnant." It was evident through the discussions that the majority of respondents held similar views as there was little variance in their response.

When asked why they had agreed that a woman cannot refuse sex to her husband, the primary reason quoted was that biblical scriptures state that a woman's body belongs to her husband.

Men had views such as:

*"Because I married her for sex, and I will not have it with other women, because I don't want to contract HIV."*

*"Because it is the right of the husband, the woman doesn't have the right over her body."*

*"She cannot refuse sex because the Bible says she must submit to her husband."*

The only exception, when she could refuse, was when she was ill or during menstruation.

A male respondent summed up all of this with his opinion: *"Every girl is supposed to know that when she gets married, she is supposed to have sex with her husband. When he needs you, you must satisfy him."*

Even though only a minority of the respondents agreed with the statement that a woman should be responsible for avoiding pregnancy, many expressed contradictory views in the FGDs. Most of the views were similar to these responses:

*"When a woman leaves her home to be married, she has to give birth to that family; she cannot refuse to get pregnant."*

*"Avoiding pregnancies are her responsibilities, because she is the one who has to take the contraceptives."*

*"She has to avoid pregnancy, because she the only one who knows she is pregnant."*

What was evident in these narratives was the lack of control a woman has over her body, be it in choosing to give birth or sexual intercourse. It is evident that women comply with the expectations of their husbands and families to avoid negative consequences.

The lack of space for discussion on sexual intercourse expresses the lack of intimacy in most of these relationships, and shows it to be a contractual binding as opposed to a bond of mutual respect, trust and love. This is evident in this response from a young married man from Bunia: *“Why should I tell her I love her, I did that before I got married, I don’t have to love her to be married.”*

The lack of space for discussion on reproductive health and the lack of control over her own body make women even more vulnerable to other threats such as HIV, sexually transmitted diseases and exposure to unsafe abortions.

When asked why a woman cannot refuse sex to her husband, the men and women had this to say: *“Even when I’m not ready I surrender to my husband when he wants to have sexual intercourse, because if I refuse, he will go find another woman. Sometimes even when he is drunk he comes and has sex and leaves, there is no pleasure in it for us.”*

*“In our culture we don’t beat women when they neglect us, we find another wife.” “When a woman is married, the pastor advises her to give sex when the man wants it, and explains if not he will leave her.”*

What is evident in these responses is the way harmful practices and cultural beliefs have merged with misinterpretations of biblical scriptures. The internalization of such norms is also evident in men and women’s lives.

### Opportunities

Even though the discussions pose challenges, the responses during the surveys were mostly positive, and can be interpreted as the gap between knowledge and behaviour. Eighty-one per cent of men and 86 per cent of women disagreed with the statement that: *“It is a woman’s responsibility to avoid getting pregnant”* and likewise 44 per cent of men and 49 per cent of women disagreed with the statement: *“A woman cannot refuse to have sex with her husband.”* The respondents seem to know what the correct thing to do is, but somehow faltered in practice. The focus needs to be on transforming this knowledge into practice in order to promote positive and uplifting relationships that respect the autonomy and well-being of the women and girls in the family.

## SGBV

*“Rape is like guns in our country, it’s killing our women.”*

*“Rape at home is the most common form of rape in Congo, but victims hardly speak out in order to protect the dignity of the family.”*

Given the extensive account of SV discussed in chapter four, and the argument put forth stating that there needs to be broader discussion on SGBV to address the root causes of SV effectively in the long-term, this chapter will discuss responses related to SGBV and link it to gender and masculinities.

Given the limitation of not being able to assess individual prevalence levels of SGBV or SV from the group of respondents, the discussion in this section will be about the perception of SGBV as expressed in the group.

41 per cent of men and 28 per cent of women were of the view that: *“There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten.”*

60 per cent of men and 67 per cent of women agreed with the statement: *“A woman needs to tolerate violence in order to keep her family together.”*

31 per cent of men and 51 per cent of women were of the view that: *“It is manly to defend the honour of your family even using violence means.”*

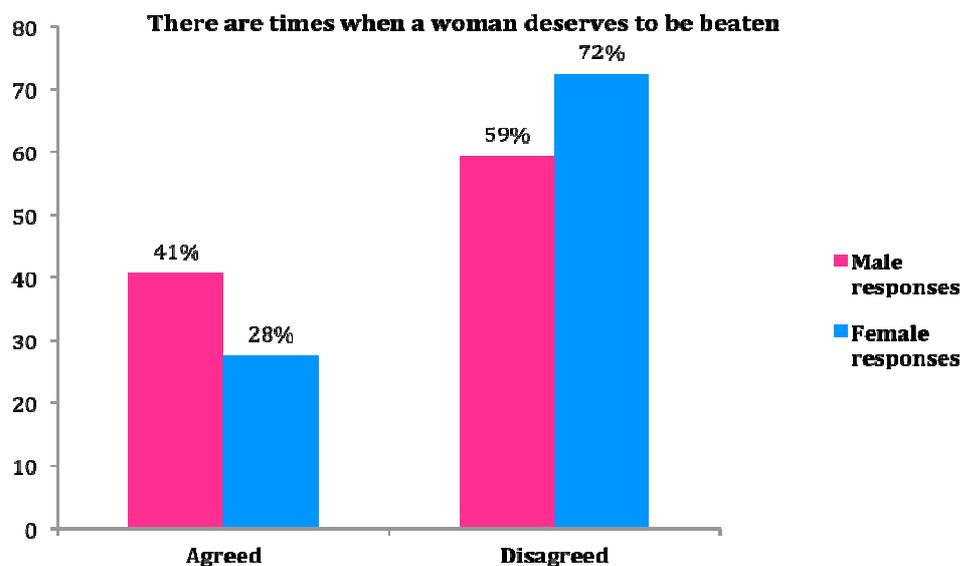
22 per cent of men and 43 per cent of women of the view that: *“If a woman doesn’t physically fight back, it’s not rape.”*

Starting in the home, the type of SGBV experienced ranges from being beaten during arguments over food to being raped over refusal to have sex.

From gendered roles and identities, to decision-making, household duties, sexual relations and reproductive health, respondents expressed the deep extent of physical and sexual abuse experienced by women, and justified by men. This is the current reality of the DRC, in every household. A pastor says in defence of marital rape: *“When a wife is stubborn she can be raped by her husband.”*

Likewise another man expressed: *“When we come home without any money or food, and she neglects us and doesn’t want to have sex, we then have the right to force sex on her.”*

All men responded in agreement.



Men and women both justified their responses for reasons why a woman should be beaten, and this notion strongly derived from the superiority and headship of men, and manifested itself as dominance, control and violence.

These were some of the responses in justification of why a woman should be beaten:

*“When a woman makes mistake she must be beaten.”*

*“Sometimes the women are to be beaten when she misbehaves.”*

*“First she must be advised and if she doesn’t listen, then you can beat her.”*

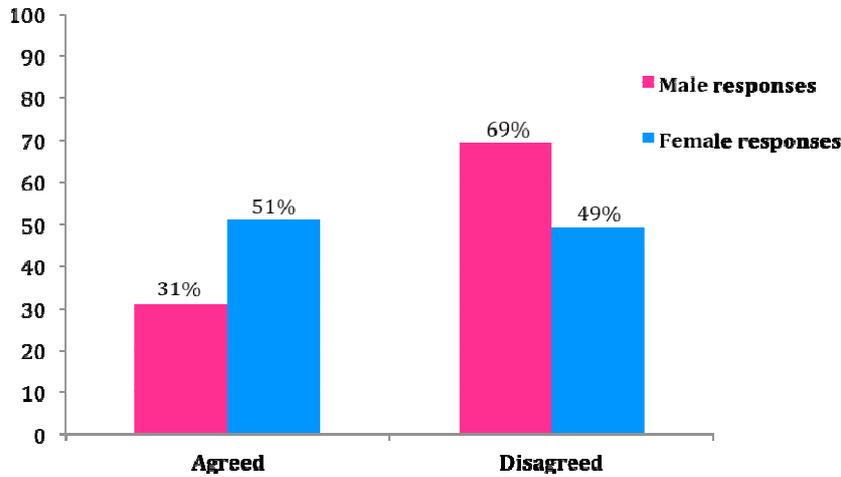
*“If she asks for it, then you can give to her.”*

*“Beating the wife is not a physical but moral correction.”*

*“When the wife doesn’t have good thinking, she deserves punishment.”*

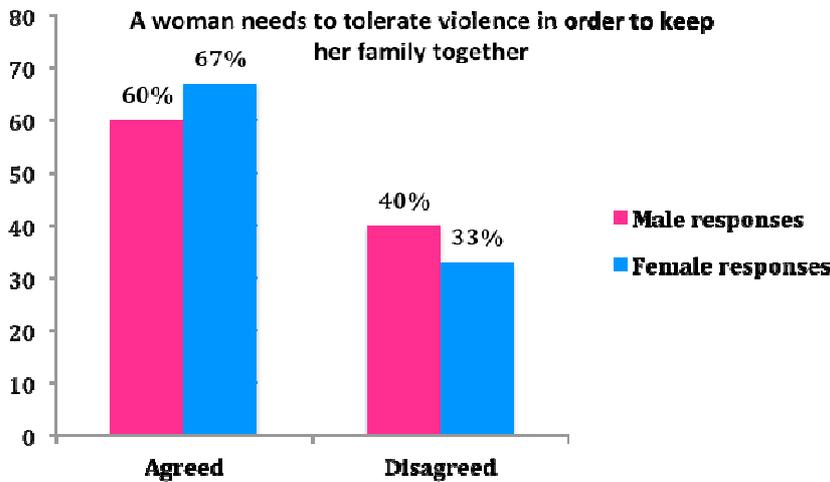
Most men also expressed that they end up beating their wives because of the stress of being unable to provide for the family or if she neglects them in the house. They believed that this was okay to do because if they didn’t beat her, their children and neighbours wouldn’t respect them or consider them a man. This also seems to correlate with the masculinisation of violence.

**It is manly to defend the honour of your family even by violent means.**



Women generally expressed that they have to tolerate violence for the sake of their families.

Many were of the view that: *“The woman has to tolerate because marriage is for life, and she cannot return to her parents. To bring up the children is an important reason for her to remain.”*



Other views expressed included:

*“Because the Bible says that when together they must support one another, share the suffering, and must carry all baggage together.”*

*“In our culture a sign of love is for the woman to be beaten.”*

*“In marital life there are several problems that take place, and in the case of a drunkard husband, she should understand his state, he can do whatever to her and she should understand that he doesn’t know what he is doing.”*

Most of the responses were excusing the behaviour of men, and never really addressing the nature of violence. Violence is embedded deeply in cultural and religious values, and internalised by the victims to believe they deserved it or bear the responsibility for the experience.

What must be understood is that culture and practice normalizes the use of physical violence against women and girls – creating an environment of impunity around SV.

The motivation behind all of this is the same; it is entitlement deriving from the thinking that a woman was created for the man, as his helper and subordinate. This along with structural impunity and challenges such as access to legal and health care services, and stigma and victimization provides absolute impunity for perpetrators to act without any consequences. This is also the case in conflict-affected areas where law and order is non-existent, impunity is higher, and women and girls suffer at the hands of others outside their homes too.

Even though some men and women were of the view that marital rape wasn't possible due to the fact that a woman's body is the property of her husband through cultural and religious beliefs, many expressed the underreported epidemic of IPV, especially marital rape:

*"The rape by our husbands is very common – we are raped many times by our husbands."*

*"When a woman is raped by her husband, she doesn't do anything; she keeps it in her heart."*

*"The men keeping raping because law is not enforced, or the law is bent through corruption and perpetrators get away."*

*"We don't want to report our husbands who rape us, because we don't want him to be arrested."*

*"Even men who go to church rape, they are worse than the pagans in most of the communities."*

*"Many Christian men in our communities exploit the vulnerabilities of widowed women, and inflict sexual violence on them."*

What is evident in the above findings and responses is that SV in the DRC isn't just a feature of war or an outcome of the conflict. Violence is engrained in knowledge, attitudes and practices – it's internalized, normalised and sometimes glorified to promote the status of men over women. From being discriminated against during childhood to being beaten or raped as a grown woman by her husband/partner/relatives or others in the community, women continue to suffer in silence.

This is the current reality of the state of SGBV in DRC. What is not surprising is that the root causes stem from gender inequality and male superiority. Women and men shared countless stories of recent rapes known in their communities, from four- to 65-year-olds; from wives being raped by their husbands to groups of young boys raped in the jungle. The danger in only promoting that in the DRC the issue of SV only exists as a weapon of war is that it excludes the

silent epidemic of violence that happens behind closed doors – a violence that is accepted as the norm or routine and underreported by the victims.

### Stigmatization and victim blaming

One of the most common reasons for women not reporting SGBV is because of the prevailing stigmatisation of victims. Even though the majority of the participants didn't agree with statement: *"When a woman is raped, she is usually to be blamed for putting herself in that situation,"* there was much debate on the issue of dress and behaviour and 82 per cent of both men and women were of the view that: *"Some women ask to be raped by the way they dress and behave."* Men also expressed the following:

*"Women must wear proper clothes if they want to avoid being raped."*

*"We must educate women not to dress in short skirts."*

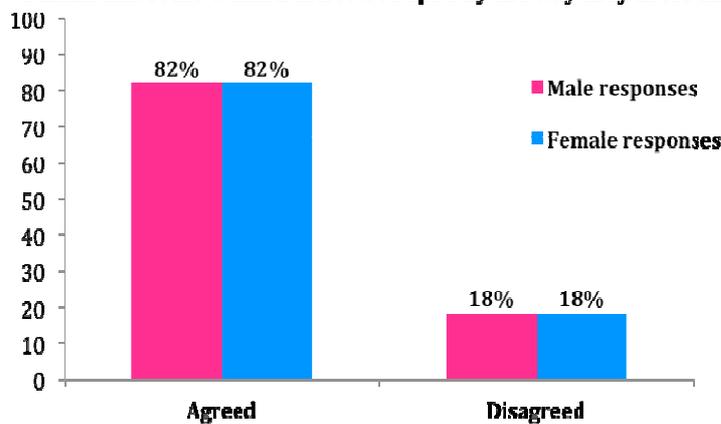
They also recommended that the government should police the dress code to prevent rape.

But a woman summed it all up quite well to highlight the gendered dimension of rape:

*"We are raped because we are women."*

Women and men both explained how their families and husbands reject survivors. This adds to the layer of underreporting and silence on SV. If the stigmatization of survivors continues, the silent epidemic will continue, affecting millions of women and girls in the DRC.

**I think that some women ask to be raped by the way they dress and behave.**



The discussion around the response to rape still seems to be revolving around the victim's attire, even in rural setting where "women dress more modestly" and yet according to participants where most of the incidents of rape happen. The discussion needs to shift towards addressing perpetrating behaviours and motivation, rather than getting caught up in the debate about attire.

The stigmatisation of victims need to be broken if the response to SGBV in the DRC is to be effective, there needs to be a support system that is in place to create safe spaces for women to speak up and share their experiences of violence.

## Opportunities

It is important to acknowledge the few positive responses and progressive thinking that was present within the group. In the survey most men and women didn't blame women for their victimization, however in the discussions and some statements the evidence was contradictory. The types of SGBV discussed in this section seem to be motivated by a misinterpreted understanding of headship, relationship and deeply-rooted gender inequality.

A 52-year-old female nurse had this to say about attire and rape:

*"Even if a woman was drunk, if she was raped, it's still not her fault."*

*"Rape is not the fault of women, everyone has the right to wear what they want, and we must address the perpetrators."*

*"Christian men rape because their spirit is broken, and not freed from bondages."* And to sum up the responses: *"The problem of rape is not with the victim, but the mentality of the men."*

Another observation is that 69 per cent of men and 49 per cent of women disagreed with the statement: *"It is manly to defend the honour of the family even by violence means."* This is unique for several reasons, violence was accepted when it was domesticated (IPV, domestic violence, SV). Yet the men and women denounced the use of violence in their communities. Their responses were: *"It is not good to use violence, because the person I'm inflicting violence on is a person just like me."*

*"As a Christian you shouldn't avenge yourself, the laws of this country are there for this."*

*"When the problem started you may have not been around, and to react without understanding the issue will not resolve it."*

*"Violence should be condemned."*

This provides an opportunity to promote a non-violent culture in every strata of society.

To conclude this chapter, we cannot address SGBV without addressing the cultural and religious influences on gender and masculinities, such as roles and identities. It is evident through the various quotes and findings from the survey that rape and violence is not exclusive to the conflict, but has been deeply rooted in society for years. The conflict has only exacerbated SV and added dimensions of cruelty and impunity to it. Women and girls have been affected by SGBV for a very long time, but continue to suffer in silence because it is expected of them to protect the honour of the family, and also due to a fear of stigma and rejection. To end on a positive note, there is hope. An unemployed man from Bukavu said this about the rejection of survivors: *"If my wife is raped I will accept her, because I love her. If I reject her, she may die."*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Recommendations and conclusions

The purpose of commissioning this baseline study was discussed in chapter two, but one of the key purposes was to understand masculinities in relation to SGBV in the DRC in order to guide evidence-based interventions that can be reassessed at a later stage when evaluating effectiveness. These recommendations can also be adapted by non-FBOs in their work in similar contexts.

### CHURCH/FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS (FBOs)

#### Awareness

- As an immediate response to address the urgency of the issue, there must be awareness-raising within communities of existing laws and policies relating to SGBV.
- It is vital to raise awareness in churches through teaching and sermons and set right the skewed beliefs and misinterpretation of scriptures that have occurred in the past and to denounce all forms of violence against women and girls.
- Churches must demonstrate their commitment to ending SGBV internally within the church and publically, within every strata of society.
- All congregation members must be made aware that marital rape is a sin, and is not pleasing to God.

#### Education and training

- Sound theologically-based training and curriculums must be developed. Key pastors and lay readers may need to be retrained in a correct biblical understanding of the Christlike equity between men and women that is depicted in the Bible. This teaching then needs to be systematically rolled out in communities in order to address key issues: gender, gender inequality, masculinities, harmful relationships, inequitable decision-making, male-dominance and SGBV.
- Pre- and post-marriage counselling must address the issue of IPV, marital rape and inequitable practices within relationships and life-giving and mutually respectful relationships need to be promoted.
- Champions that can spearhead the work need to be recruited and trained to engage and work with men and boys in order to deconstruct current understanding of masculinities, especially the masculinization of dominance, inequality and violence.

## Role models

- There is an urgent need to promote role models for positive masculinities through action-oriented campaigns, such as the *First Man Standing* campaign by Restored Relationships in the UK<sup>29</sup> and *One Man Can* by Sonke Gender Justice in South Africa.<sup>30</sup> Campaigns such as these can be adapted to the DRC context.
- Church leaders need to emphasise that Christ was the ultimate role model for manhood, using his teachings on leadership, humility, non-violence, and also sharing stories about his interaction with women, members of marginalised communities and the oppressed.
- The church needs to promote positive examples of masculinities to normalise these as the stronger influence in their communities. The church should also create a space for men and women to share their positive experiences of fatherhood and relationships.

## Safe spaces

- We need to provide safe spaces where men and boys can learn how to become a better man and to reject the negative masculinities that have influenced them in a harmful way.
- There needs to be a safer space for men and boys to share frustrations, challenges and traumatic experiences with their peers and also church leaders. This will be crucial in helping them cope with the changes around them, and also heal from their own violent past experiences.

## Leadership

- The church and its leadership should demonstrate its commitment to ending SGBV by visibly denouncing violence at a local and national level.
- The church leadership must empower and sensitise lay leaders, pastors and bishops to see the need to work together and be uniform in their preaching in order to end SGBV.
- The church must lead the work to engage other denominations in ending SGBV, encouraging collaboration and unity in order to represent a unified voice from the church and other FBOs.
- The church must commit to ending the stigmatisation of survivors and work to engage men and boys to challenge harmful masculine notions.
- The church and its leadership must break the silence on IPV – specifically marital rape and condemn it as a sin.
- The church must take the lead in broadening the discussion from SV to SGBV, and address the deeply-rooted harmful gender dynamics that have taken hold of societal and cultural thinking.

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<sup>29</sup> For more information on *First Man Standing*, Restored Relationship – visit: [www.restoredrelationships.org/firstmanstanding/](http://www.restoredrelationships.org/firstmanstanding/)

<sup>30</sup> For more information on *One Man Can* by Sonke Gender Justice – visit [www.genderjustice.org.za/tools/one-man-can-toolkit.html](http://www.genderjustice.org.za/tools/one-man-can-toolkit.html)

## NON FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS (FBOs)

- Non-FBOs need to widen the scope of its work on SV beyond just a weapon of war narrative to include the broader impact that SGBV is having across the whole of the country.
- It is important for non-FBOs to acknowledge that while many misinterpreted religious teachings make it challenging to address gender equality and SGBV, there is great scope and willpower to change from within the church.
- Some of the FBOs are a catalyst in bringing about transformation in this area of work, and it is important to find common ground to work together in sharing the vision for a future free of SGBV.
- Religion and faith plays a significant role in the lives of the people in the DRC, and wields massive power and influence at all levels. It is crucial that FBOs and non-FBOs build effective partnerships in order to address harmful practices that have taken root and were influenced by the misinterpretation of scripture.
- All parties should work together and find common ground to dialogue on sensitive issues such as, family planning, contraceptives and the sexual rights of minorities. The “do no harm” development approach should be used when responding to the issue of SGBV.<sup>31</sup>
- The church should also work in coalitions, and with the government, to optimise resources and expertise in order to achieve a significant and sustainable impact.

## POLICY AND PRACTICES

- The focus on strengthening the capacity of the DRC government to respond to SGBV effectively must be a priority for the international community.
- There needs to be urgent strengthening of judicial systems and processes, in order to hold perpetrators accountable, and work to end impunity.
- Healthcare services need to be accessible to those who have suffered SGBV.
- Men who have suffered SV and their subsequent victimisation must also be acknowledged, and response mechanisms must be created to support them.
- All parties need to acknowledge the potential positive role that men and boys can have in preventing SGBV and integrate this programmatic thinking into existing policy and strategy frameworks.
- The government of DRC must also commit to addressing SGBV across the whole country and not solely focus on conflict-affected areas.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/node/103>

## Conclusion

For decades, SV in the DRC has affected millions of women, girls and children, and also even men and boys. But it is women and girls who have suffered the most – at the hands of militia and military during the two wars and ongoing conflict. Rape, mass rape, abductions, forced incest and murder are the most common forms of violence and rape experienced by women and girls in conflict-affected areas. However, there are numerous other accounts and studies that suggest that rape isn't exclusive to the eastern regions, SGBV has affected an even a greater number of women and girls, and for a much longer time.

The most common form of SGBV is within marriage and relationships within the home, known as marital rape and IPV. The motivation behind the perpetration of these acts stems from gender inequality that is deeply rooted in cultural and religious beliefs and practices.

The internalization of these harmful gender ideologies and masculinities greatly influenced identities, roles and responsibilities, resulting in an identity crisis among most men in the current context of unemployment and their inability to provide for their families. This was a cause of violence, as men tried to prove their manhood and superiority through the use of violence in their homes and communities.

Most of the attributes of harmful attitudes and practices were referred back to the Christian faith and its influence through biblical passages. However, the scriptures referred to were misinterpreted and mixed with cultural norms, which created an environment conducive to SGBV. Because of the stigma associated with victims, and the expectation from society for the woman to maintain the honour of the family, women and girls suffer SGBV in silence.

In the context of the DRC, where men and boys are also victims of violence, and face challenges in relation to their male identity and role as a provider, their frustrations with the current context seem to be a catalyst for inflicting violence on the women and girls in their lives.

Yet, this study has also found that both men and women uphold harmful notions of masculinities. The masculinization of violence, toughness and also dominance need to be deconstructed as part of the response to SGBV. The church is incredibly influential and it has the will to denounce all forms of violence. It can shatter the gender inequality which has arisen from a misinterpretation of scriptures.

The huge potential of the church to respond and prevent SGBV must be met with same intensity from other agencies, in order to work in partnership and broaden the scope to address the issue holistically. Together, only this way will we envision an end to all forms of violence against women and girls in the DRC.

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