

MASCULINITIES, FAITH AND ENDING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

DRC SUMMARY REPORT

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 SV in communities worldwide.



www.wewillspeakout.org

Tearfund would like to acknowledge the Province of the Anglican Church of DR Congo who helped facilitate this research.



As part of the United Kingdom's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI), the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office has funded the Anglican Church of DR Congo and Tearfund and its partners to empower and mobilise church and other faith communities to reduce sexual violence in conflict-affected areas.



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This summary report is based on research commissioned by Tearfund's HIV and SV Unit and conducted by Technical Advisor Prabu Deepan.

For the full report visit:
www.tearfund.org/sexualviolence

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TRANSFORMING MASCULINITIES

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is one of the most frequent forms of violence worldwide.

It is estimated that one in every three women or girls will experience violence in their lifetime¹ – commonly at the hands of someone they know.

Globally, this affects 1 billion people.

Tearfund believes that this is one of the most damaging problems within societies across the world. It has been working for more than ten years on the issue.

To date, many government and civil society development programmes have focused on raising awareness of the issue and empowering and advocating for the rights of women, girls and SGBV survivors.

Yet what has been lacking is engagement with men and boys, who are the main perpetrators of violence, and sometimes they are victims themselves.

Rather than excluding them from strategies to end SGBV, Tearfund calls on the church and other agencies to work with men and boys as part of the solution – to re-envision manhood in order to break the cycle.

If we are to uproot SGBV, it is imperative that we understand the broader dynamics of gender and triggers of violence.

We need to examine male identities and roles, address their experiences of becoming a man, their experiences of trauma and violence within the family and their vulnerabilities in an evolving social environment.

We must examine aspects of the harmful historical and traditional values, behaviours and knowledge that have influenced society and allowed SGBV to breed within communities. This will serve both genders and is a crucial component of intervention programming if we are to succeed in ending SGBV.

¹ Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence (2013) WHO

Community parishes who participated in the study.



RESEARCH OVERVIEW

The DRC has been plagued by years of conflict that have claimed more than 5 million lives.

But what has brought the world's attention to Africa's second largest country is the use of sexual violence (SV) as a weapon of war.

In 2007, the UN estimated that there were 27,000 incidences of SV in South Kivu alone. Perpetrators are militia, government soldiers, and other opportunists exploiting the vulnerability of girls and women in conflict-affected areas.

But 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 across the whole country. It is not exclusive to conflict-affected areas or carried out only by those carrying arms.

Now we are calling on the church and the international community to widen the scope of SV to SGBV – to acknowledge other forms of violence that have been taking place within communities for many more years, such as that suffered by the 3 million women who reported being victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) in 2011.

Tearfund and the local church are committed to being a catalyst in ending all forms of SGBV - with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and acknowledging the positive role men and boys can play in restoring society and redeeming manhood.

During January 2014 a study into men, faith and masculinities was conducted (in partnership with the Anglican Church) in the towns of Bunia, Goma and Bukavu, in Orientale Province and North and South Kivu Provinces.

A total of 346 people were interviewed through 17 group surveys and 10 focus-group discussions.

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to ascertain the social attitudes, practices and behaviours and biblical understanding of men and women.

Study objectives

1. To make available a baseline study of existing attitudes, knowledge and practices of men and women around the following themes: male identity, gender roles, manhood, gender relations and SGBV.
2. To further understand the context where acts of violence occur and why.
3. To provide a safe space for men and boys to articulate their own experiences of violence.
4. To design effective programmes to engage men and boys in the response to end SGBV.
5. To challenge and equip the church to promote equitable, caring, non-violent relationships and positive masculinities.



Following Jesus where the need is greatest

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The conflict in the DRC has exacerbated the deeply-rooted gender inequality that was already present.

Research results show that the roles and identities of men and women are tightly defined: women are seen as inferior to men, treated as a possession; men are expected to provide, and demonstrate violence and toughness. Many thought God ordained it this way.

However, compared to other countries where this research has been carried out, respondents were more willing to express their opinions and hopes, and articulated a strong desire to change.

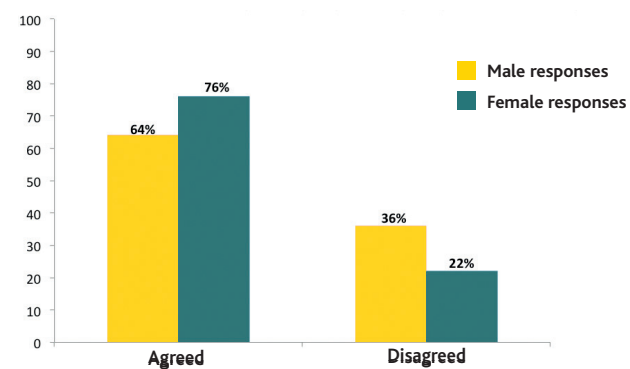
Here are the key research findings.

"Our culture prevents women from progressing. We see in other cultures that women are doing other work, and this is helping the development of their communities. We need the same in our country."

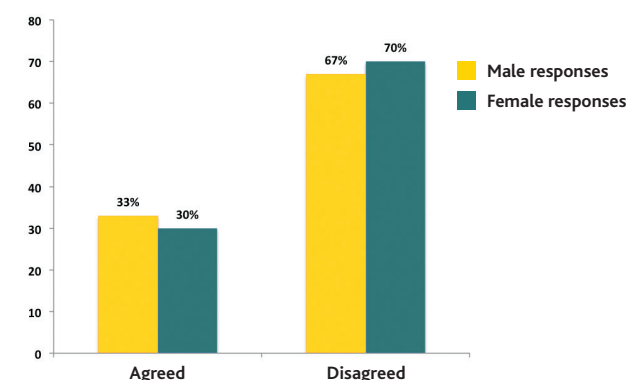
Gendered roles and attitudes

1. More than two thirds of men and women agreed that a man needs to provide for the family and extended family, in order to be viewed as a proper man.
2. In the survey a large percentage of men and women did not think that being manly equated with being tough, yet almost a third thought it did and emphasised this in the focus group discussions (FGD).
3. "My husband needs to be tough, if not I will not respect him."
4. Men were threatened by women's increasing role as breadwinner. Their frustrations and feelings of neglect in the home were manifested in violence to demonstrate power and reassert control.
5. 59 per cent of men and 81 per cent of women were of the view that it is a mother's responsibility to care for the children.
6. Almost half of men and women thought a woman's most important role was to cook and take care of her family. "If she doesn't know to cook she is not important in society."

To be a man means providing for your family and your extended family



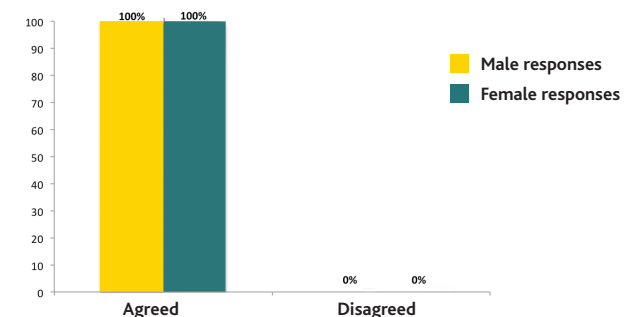
To be a man, you need to be tough



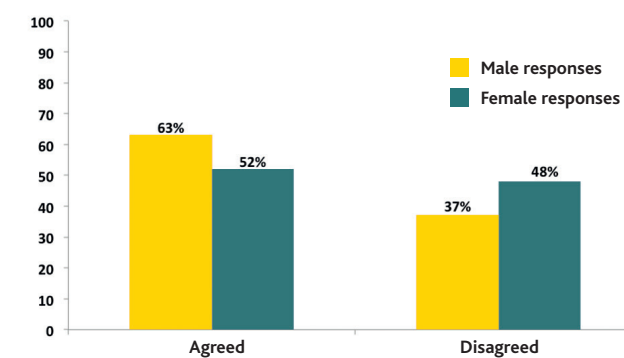
Gender relations and decision making

1. Unanimously, 100 per cent of men and women agreed that a woman should obey her husband.
2. Male dominance in decision making was attributed to male superiority, believed to be created by God – the majority justified this in discussions.
3. More than half of women and men thought that a woman cannot refuse to have sex with her husband. "Because it is the right of the husband, the woman doesn't have the right over her body."
4. 81 per cent of men and 86 per cent of women disagreed that it was a woman's responsibility to avoid getting pregnant.
5. Men are the gatekeepers of women's health; 90 per cent of men and 87 per cent of women said it is the men who have the final say in health-related matters.
6. In reality women did all of the household chores, but survey results showed that a large majority of men thought they should share this work (66 per cent of men and 69 per cent of women).

I think that a woman should obey her husband



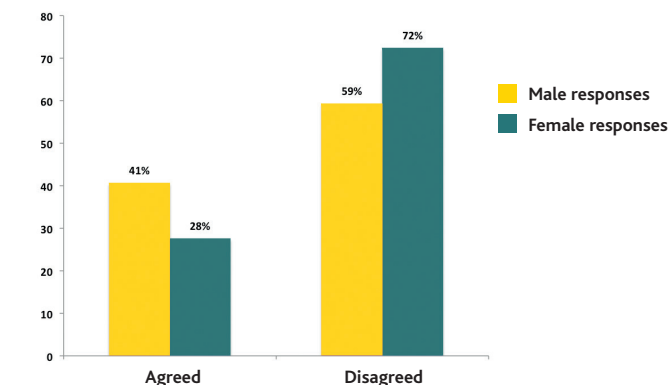
I think that a man should have the final say in all family matters



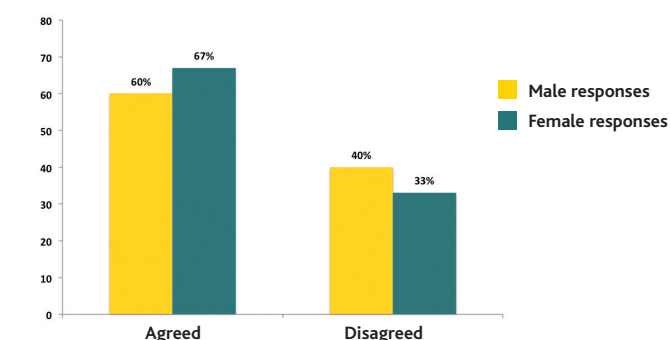
Violence, manhood and SGBV

1. It was expected that a woman would tolerate violence for the sake of the family (60 per cent of men and 67 per cent of women believed this).
2. 69 per cent of men and 49 per cent of women did not think that it was manly to defend the honour of the family, even by violent means.
3. It was debated in the FGDs that violence should not be used in general life, yet there was an unspoken understanding that it was acceptable within the home.
4. Almost half of men thought that there were times when a woman deserves to be beaten.
5. 82 per cent of both men and women thought that some women asked to be raped by the way they dressed and behaved.
6. It was clear a woman's body was not viewed as her own, with more than half of men and women agreeing that a woman cannot refuse to have sex with her husband.
7. Men felt entitled to dominate women and believed woman was created for man, as his helper and subordinate.

There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten



A woman needs to tolerate violence in order to keep the family together



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that SV in the DRC is not just a feature of war or an outcome of the conflict. It is embedded in everyday thinking and tolerated as the norm.

The conflict has forced many people to adapt their roles, but this has also led to increased violence in the home, behind closed doors.

However, positively, men and women also expressed progressive thinking and desired a better future.

For a full list of recommendations for the way forward, please see Chapter Six of the research report.

"The problem of rape is not with the victim, but the mentality of the men."

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."

Awareness and education

- 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 publicly denounce all forms of SGBV against women and girls using correct biblical teachings and discussion.
- The church must openly denounce marital rape as a sin and not in line with the Christian faith.
- There needs to be sound theologically-based education as well as repeated training for lay leaders, pastors and bishops in order to set right biblical misinterpretations.
- Churches should offer pre- and post-marriage counselling, which includes teaching on IPV, marital rape and aspects of equitable relationships.

"Rape is like guns in our country, it's killing our women."

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

Leadership and role models

- Church leaders need to promote and live out Christlike characteristics, and act as positive role models - demonstrating humility and reflecting how Christ interacted with women and subverted the social norms of the day.
- Leaders should be trained as champions to engage men and boys in the prevention of SGBV and promote positive masculinities, which are non-violent and promote equity.
- The church in DRC has to be unified in denouncing SGBV, and work together with other faith groups 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.

Safe spaces

- We need to create safe spaces for men to discuss the concept of positive masculinities, and facilitate discussions for them to share their frustrations, challenges and traumatic experiences with peers and church leaders. This is crucial to help them adapt to the changes around them and heal from past experiences.

Partnerships

- The scope of work on rape in the DRC has to expand to address the broader context of SGBV. Faith based organisations (FBOs) and non-FBOs need to find common ground and draw from each others' work and areas of expertise.
- Others need to acknowledge that the church and FBOs have great potential to end SGBV, due to their historic influence within communities.
- 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.

Policy and practices

- The international community should prioritise focusing on building the capacity of government to respond to SGBV across the whole country – not solely conflict-affected areas.
- It is imperative that judicial systems are scrutinised and strengthened in order to hold perpetrators accountable and end the culture of impunity; this includes providing a protection scheme for survivors that enables them to access justice without fear, intimidation or alienation from their communities.



A group of men who participated in the study. Photo: Prabu Deepan/Tearfund.

Tearfund believes that the church should always be a place where social norms and attitudes can be challenged if they are causing harm. The Bible teaches that all humans should be treated with love and respect and that men and women are created equal in the eyes of God.