



# *Men and Masculinities in Post-Conflict and Conflict Settings:*

## ***IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION***

**Gary Barker**  
**International Center for Research on Women**  
**Co-Chair, MenEngage Alliance**

# Objectives of Workshop

- Reflect about gender and masculinities in the context of conflict and post-conflict
- Present and discuss examples of program interventions with men in post-conflict and high violence settings
- Practice an awareness-raising activity for staff development on the challenges and complexities of working on gender and GBV within post-conflict settings

# Framing the Discussion

- How do norms related to masculinities contribute to men's involvement in violence and conflict?
- What factors help men stay out of or recover from violence during the post-conflict period and reduce GBV?
- What are the implications for policy and program development?

# Masculinities and the Manhood Bottleneck

- Stable employment as gateway to marriage and family formation (which in turn are often gateways to receiving family assets)
- **Many low income young men stuck in perpetual “youthhood”**
- Resentment toward the “big men” and corruption
- Pessimism that socially recognized manhood will be attained
- **Results:** large numbers of idle young men, alcohol/substance use, migration, depression, risky sexual behavior, fatalism – with implications for lives of young women

## Masculinities are central to creating conflict and must be part of solutions

- Deliberate manipulation of unemployed boys and men;
- Armed groups become surrogate families, offer male role models;
- Violence, including SGBV, becomes a way to achieve status and power;
- Challenge of returning to civilian life in which men revert to status of being "boys"
- Acknowledge that power is central to understanding gender for women and men in conflict settings and that many men and boys perceive themselves as powerless even as they have more power than women and girls



## A *Youth* from Nigeria

*Mahbub:* Since 1981 I have been involved in every riot there has been. If the violence came, I would be involved. I had no work. I had nothing to do. Why should I not get involved? Three months ago, I became employed as a civil servant. Now that I am getting my daily bread, why should I get involved (in such violence)? Lots of young men do not have this (stable work).



## Competitive Manhood in the Midst of Conflict

"And then when I saw someone dead, I cried. When I first saw blood, I ran back home... And then they started to burn all the churches in our neighborhood...and we went with them (to burn the churches). We were happy to be there (going with the group to burn and loot the churches). I was inside a church building holding a stick (to destroy things). And then they started to tell me to steal anything that we could. And the other boys came back from burning and looting another church and told us all they got and all they did, and so we said we can outdo them. **So even in civil war, you have young men trying to outdo each other.**"

"The other guys would teach you, how to kill with a machete, how to do it well. If it took you too long ... too many blows, they would laugh at you. It got to be kind of a contest to see **who could kill the most in one day.**"



# The “Production” of Violent Boys and Men in Conflict Areas

- *Liberia and Sierra Leone*: Rites of passage, drugs, traumatization
- *Uganda*: Selection of youngest boys, traumatization, threats, coercion
- *Rwanda*: Propaganda machine, manipulation of ethnic tensions, threats; engaging young men as the foot soldiers; contests to see who could kill the fastest
- *Northern Nigeria*: Recruitment of unemployed boys and young men, payment, playing up religious/ethnic differences by religious and political leaders

## Men, Masculinities and SGBV: What we know about the factors

- ***Witnessing*** or experiencing violence
- Belief in ***rigid gender norms***
- Lack of social controls + ***impunity***
- ***Adversarial views toward women*** + low empathy
- Men's ***economic stress***
- Substance/***alcohol*** use



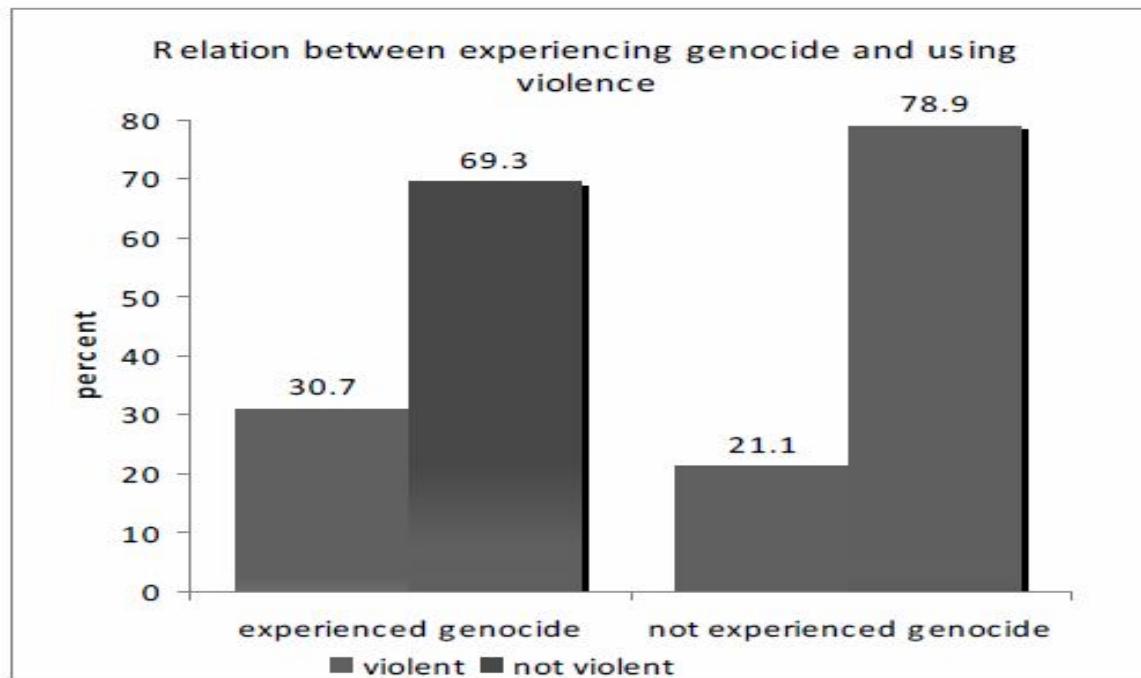
## Men and SGBV in Post-Conflict Rwanda: Results from IMAGES

(Rwandan Men's Resource Center and ICRW)

- Nationally representative sample: n=3612; carried out mid-2010
- **39% of men say they have used GBV against partner; 57.2% of women say they have experienced violence**
- **37% of women say they experienced marital rape; 3.7% of men say they have done it**
- In the last year 9.3% of women experienced violence
- 66% of men and 53.5% of women experienced violence growing up; 44% and 40% witnessed GBV in home
- **80% of men and women witnessed/experienced violence of some kind during genocide**

## Men who experienced violence during the genocide more likely to use violence against women

*Graphic 13: Relation between experiencing war/genocide and violence against women by men. (p<0.05)  
(n=2301)*



## Men, GBV and Conflict Settings

- **Conflict exacerbates GBV**, creates new contexts for it, changes social sanctions
- ***Post-conflict settings***: fragile social institutions, special vulnerabilities of refugees
- ***Understanding multiple roles of men***: as victims, witnesses, perpetrators of GBV in conflict settings
- ***Sexual violence*** as factor of some conflicts - ***may or may not be sanctioned by armed groups or may be opportunistic***



# The Gendered Violence Men Face in Conflict and Post-Conflict

- Forced conscription
- Specific targeting of men and boys for killing/massacres
- Forced witnessing of sexual violence against women
- Forced to use sexual violence as part of initiation into armed group
- Sexual violence against women, but also against boys and men
  - study in Liberia, 7.4 percent of male non-combatants interviewed reported experiencing sexual violence as did 32.6% of former male combatants



# After the Conflict: What Happens to Men?

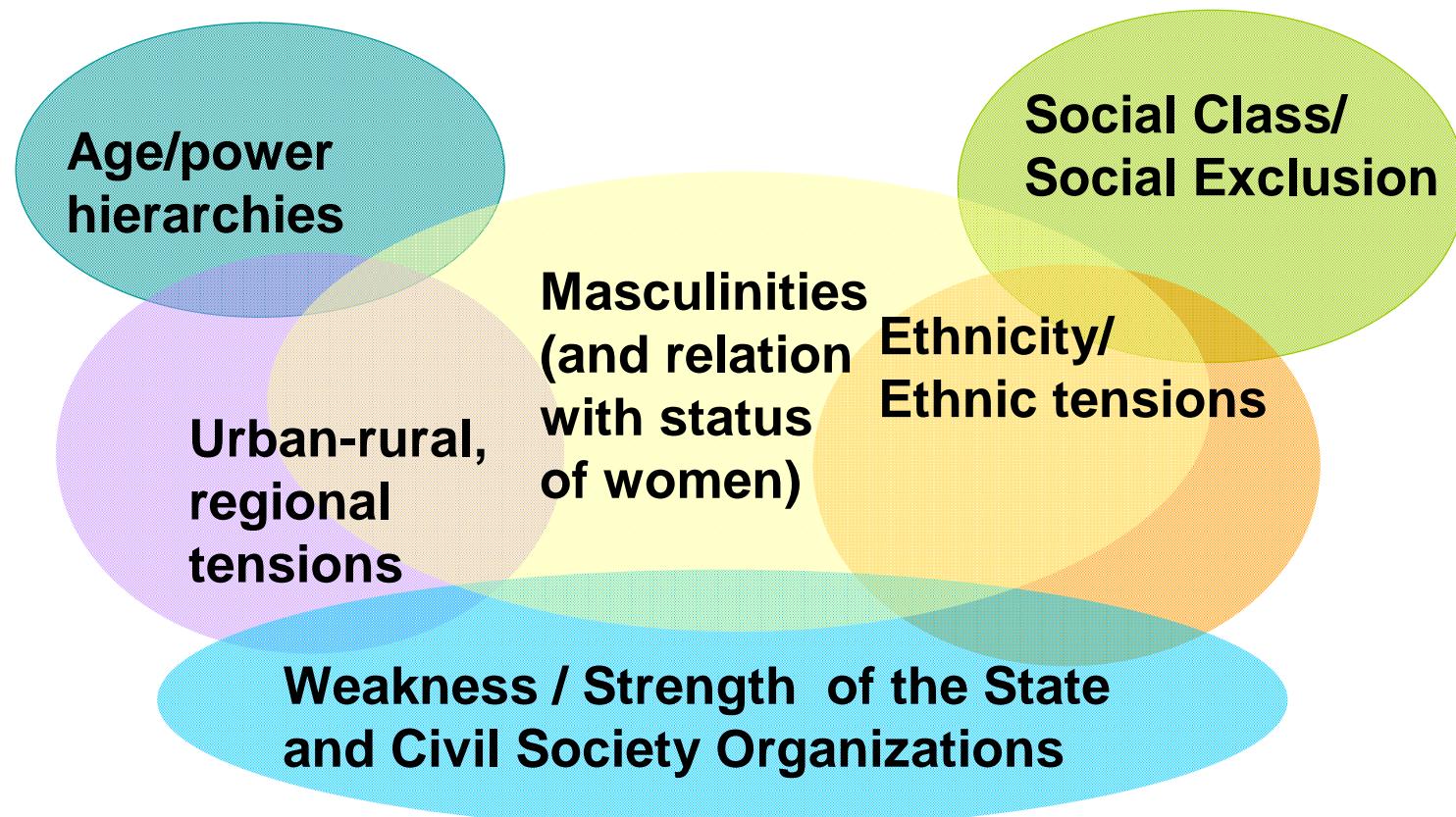
- Young men IDP camps: nothing to do, nothing to be
- Sexual violence in camps
- How is aid distributed in camps?
- The effects of waiting ....
- Transactional sex: men buying, young women selling
- The challenge of transition – going back to “youthhood”, lost livelihoods

## *Protective and Restorative Factors*

### Helping Men Leave Violence

- **Build on valued relationships and social support:** relationship with someone (a parent, a grandparent, a female partner) they would disappoint if they got involved with or returned to violence;
- **Finding alternative identities:** alternative identities or sense of self that was positively valued by young man and those in his social setting, particularly male peers (e.g. good student, good athlete, musical skills, community building, peace building);
- **Build personal reflection skills:** able to reflect about risks and costs associated with violence; having experienced or witnessed violence and constructing positive meaning; able to express fear of violence;
- **Engaging with pro-social peers:** helping young men find male peer groups that provide positive reinforcement for non-violent male identities;
- **Building new rites of passage, community mobilization around the needs of youth**

# Men, Masculinities and Conflict





## Ways forward: Implications for Action

- Engaging women as **peacemakers**, men as peacemakers
- Helping **young men/men find new identities** – understanding that combatant status offered a sense of identity and power
- **End impunity around sexual violence** – before, during and after conflict
- Recognizing the **multiple roles of men and young men in conflict**: change agents, ex-combatants, perpetrators of violence, police, military, witnesses of violence, victims of violence
- Need for more **comprehensive youth development policies** that understand the gendered needs of young women and young men
- **Challenging the power hierarchies** that leave youth excluded
- Helping men find identify in employment creation, community-building – and as **caregivers**

## What works in fragile settings? (*Where there is no gender expert ...*)

- Build on *positive, local cultural practices* (men's roles in the lives of children, elders, positive rites of passage)
- Identifying the "*voices of resistance*"
- Working with local *women's groups*
- Finding *relatively easy-to-implement models*, eg voluntary savings and loans associations (VSLAs)