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**COMMUNICATION-BASED BEHAVIOR CHANGE STRATEGIES
TO INTERRUPT THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE AND
PREVENT RAPE AND OTHER SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

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Abstract:

This report summarizes the findings of a team of advisors with experience in behavior change communication and gender-based violence. This assistance provided was deemed procurement sensitive as the results could lead directly and predictably to the development and publication of a bid mechanism/solicitation (RFA, RFP, RFTOP, APS etc.) for new activities. Thus the report was embargoed and is published in 2012. The report includes an assessment of best practices of Behavior Change and Communication (BCC) in post conflict countries and a write-up of what illustrative activities could be funded in the Democratic Republic of Congo to address Sexual Gender-Based Violence through BCC methods.

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ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BCC	Behavior Change Communication
C-CHANGE	Communication for Change
COMEN	Congo Men’s Network
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FARDC	<i>Forces Armees de la Republique Democratique du Congo</i>
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDRC	Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
SEARCH	Search for Common Ground (NGO)
SASA	Ugandan NGO
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SV	Sexual Violence
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There has been intensive global media coverage of the devastating impact of sexual violence (SV) in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in recent years, prompting both world-wide awareness and a flood of humanitarian resources to the area to address the problem. Most humanitarian interventions have focused primarily on efforts to sensitively care for the many survivors of SV. Recently however, there is increasing recognition that these interventions have had little or no impact on the level of SV, and that attention needs to be given to preventing it. This is a more complex challenge than that of caring for survivors. The primary driver of the epidemic of SV is the armed conflict which has impacted the population of the region since 1996, claiming well over 5 million lives— the vast majority of them civilians. As long as the war lasts, spawning ever growing numbers of militia groups with economic as well as political aims, there is little the population can do to prevent the sexual predation which comes as part of this war (specifically, rape as a weapon of war used to intimidate civilians and even beyond that to destroy culture). The increasing presence of an active war economy in the region, which sustains poorly paid troops and other armed groups, makes ending the violence ever more difficult but necessary. Thus part of any prevention effort begins with stating the responsibility of the Government of the DRC, as well as the governments of other involved states, to bring the war to an end. The Government of the DRC (GDRC) passed a sweeping new Law on Sexual Violence in 2006, which has already begun to affect gender relations in numerous ways.

Within this context, eastern DRC is home to many people and organizations, both Congolese and international, working to prevent rape and other forms of SGBV. Armed rape is far from the only form of SGBV active in the eastern DRC. Congolese gender norms, like gender norms in all cultures, permit and enact abuse of women in countless ways. It is well known that armed violence leaves behind it a heightened level of civilian violence, via the presence of small arms and the habit of using them, as well as severe deprivation, frustration and poverty which predispose people to reactive aggression. Thus any capacity to prevent SGBV must differentiate between war and civilian SV, and focus primarily on strategies to “arm” communities with gender norms which diminish violence against women. This involves changing behavior patterns which are core to the identities of both men and women, and such change is exceedingly hard to accomplish.

Many people and organizations in the region are using communication-based strategies of many kinds to address prevention. The field of Behavior Change Communication (BCC) has developed rigorous evidence-based research on the principles and practices which underlie successful and sustainable behavioral change at the social level. Much of this research has been focused on the field of health, and newer efforts to tackle the broader and more complex challenge of gender behavior change extrapolates from the track record of health-based change. Much of the knowledge which currently exists cannot be directly applied in the context of the eastern DRC, where the multiplicity of violent forces outstrips most other contexts. Thus, it is essential to initiate a wide-spread, multi-level and multi-directional campaign of sensitization and mobilization which is based on tested methods and principles. A core principle of behavior change is that it takes time

and involves a series of phases with messages and strategies geared to reinforce each stage. Such a campaign which focuses on the yet-little-understood impact of the 2006 national law on gender-based violence would allow for massive education about the law, while simultaneously using it as a tool for opening discussion about how communities can best adapt to the behavior changes it demands.

The program would initiate a wide-spread campaign of sensitization and mobilization concerning the 2006 law and its impact. This campaign would target all sectors: justice and military (as appropriate) as well as community, including all its organizations and institutions. The purpose would be two-fold: to provide much-needed education about the law and its content, but also to initiate discussion about its implications for the behavior of men and women. The law requires change in the area of gender behavior, as it institutes serious punishment for many behaviors which have fallen within the “normal” range heretofore. Thus the law is a vehicle for sensitization about how to approach changing gender norms in ways which will respect everyone, and preserve continuity with the cultural past as much as possible. A wide array of communication-based strategies – some media-based (television, radio, print media), and some directly interpersonal (sensitization, community theatre, community actions, etc.) – would be coordinated in a phased approach, to be monitored and evaluated over time. Specific mechanisms, aimed at placing responsibility in local hands, would be included to support sustainability.

2. INTRODUCTION

The epidemic of rape in the eastern DRC has been covered extensively in international media, creating a global image of a region experiencing historically unprecedented predation on women. As a physician at Panzi Hospital in Bukavu stated, “We are creating a monster here in the Kivus,”– a generation of youth raised in both extreme and chronic insecurity and deprivation. The sexual violence in these communities (armed and civilian) assaults personal, community, and cultural roots. While armed rape may have evolved as a weapon of war during recent years in this region, it appears to arise increasingly also from more chaotic forces, as evidenced by the development of “disguise.” Men in uniform disguise their accents to conceal their identity, and young men in communities wear uniforms in order to assault women, taking heed of the impunity experienced by men in uniforms. While armed men rationalize their violence toward civilians as punishment for alleged community support of a rival military group, it actually serves to reinforce control of access to minerals in a majority of cases. Undoubtedly and increasingly at times it also results less from a political or economic aim than as a reaction (reinforced by the environment) to their own continual frustration and deprivation, as well as enduring cultural norms which denigrate the rights of women.

Rape used as a weapon of war aims to destroy culture, and it would be difficult to find a place on earth where this aim is more intensively and more successfully pursued than in the eastern DRC. One can imagine that cultural strengths, habits of social support, spiritual beliefs to guide behavior, could be extinguished rather than severely suppressed, without a cessation of armed violence and plunder of resources. The extreme complexity of the sexual violence in eastern DRC requires those wishing to diminish it to endeavor to comprehend its unique aspects and shape interventions which specifically address them, including the differences from one community to the next. This can be illustrated by responses of participants in a discussion group in Mugunga 3 IDP camp near Goma. As women described the repeated experience of being raped by armed men as they go to get wood in the forest, the question of men accompanying them for protection arose. One woman in the group responded, “If the men go, they get killed, if we go, we only get raped.” As observed by a humanitarian worker in the camp, the sexual violence there emanates from hunger, especially in the months since December 2009 when humanitarian food delivery was cut off. The women fetch wood to sell in order to buy food rather than to cook. Women turn to prostitution for the same reason. Unemployed men outside their communities are robbed of an important “man’s role” which is to protect women. This enforced idleness and absence of agency compounds frustration, which often leads to reactive aggression against women.

As usual in contexts of political/military violence, there is an increase in civilian violence which is one of the heaviest prices war exacts, as this civilian violence far outlasts the acute assault of war, and has enduring impact on culture. In DRC overall in 2006, 32% of rapes were civilian, in 2007 the ratio was 64%, in 2008, 75% and in 2009, 66%.¹ While these numbers reflect many factors, including the level of armed violence in the

¹ UNFPA Cluster Protection Report, Sept. 2009.

east, it is clear that civilian SGBV is a serious and growing problem nationwide. As the DRC gains a global reputation as “the capital of rape” the entire country is affected. The widespread highly publicized evidence of the state’s failure to protect its citizens extends the message of impunity throughout the country. Soldiers in the FARDC implicated in the violence return to their communities throughout the DRC, extending the contagion of both HIV/AIDS and violent behavior. Thus while the chronically acute situation in the eastern DRC requires urgent attention, efforts to prevent SGBV there must also arise from an understanding that extreme sexual violence is one end of a continuum. In any culture, violence against women begins with gender norms and behaviors which do not accord men and women equal status and access to opportunity. It is crucial that efforts to address SGBV in the context of the eastern DRC address its roots, through interventions which aim at primary lasting prevention via changes in gender norms, and nationwide effort via the new Comprehensive Strategy is also critical.

In addition to the challenges mentioned above, it is necessary to factor in the issue of trauma in the region of armed conflict. Deprivation of humans needs, continual assault on human dignity, and chronic insecurity causes psychic wounds which take their toll on both men and women. In eastern DRC the violence of the past decade follows generations of these conditions to a less extreme extent. Faced with chronically traumatizing conditions women often become more silent in response to overwhelming obstacles, while men often react with increased reactive violence fueled by frustration. This reactivity leads to negative results which increase frustration and deplete communities. This is how cycles of violence and helplessness become self-sustaining. There is a notable tendency for people in the Eastern region, when asked what would help to prevent SGBV, to reply, “End the war.” While this is indeed imperative for reliable prevention of sexual violence, this response also expresses a sense of resignation widespread among both men and women at the community level, who are slow to articulate actions they themselves can take. Such hesitancy undoubtedly represents an adaptation to the reality and the corresponding belief that the power to change things is out of their hands. This belief is reinforced by humanitarian interventions defined by people from outside the community, particularly those coming from other countries. When pressed, however, people in groups proposed creative ideas. Inevitably these ideas included the need for outside funding, which unfortunately often becomes not only a way to pay for things but also the motivation to do them. On the other hand, one idea which expressed an awareness of the resources people themselves possess, separate from money, came from a man in Mugunga 3 IDP camp. He observed that everyone in the camp shares the problem of hunger and lack of means. Since among them there are a range of untapped skills, they should give each other *apprentissages* (training), so people will have more capacity to work outside the camp and buy food. This idea sparked interest in others in the group, as a positive alternative.

While placing responsibility for envisioning change in the hands of those who need it can be challenging for donors and NGOs, in the case of eastern DRC in particular, it is linked directly to successful outcomes, as it may counteract this resignation ingrained through powerlessness and dependency on outside resources. Communities need to mobilize their own resources, not only for current protection and prevention but to prepare for a more

self-sustaining future and to counteract the further depletion of their cultural roots and values. Without taking these and other psychic patterns of human response to chronic assault into account, interventions to prevent SGBV will be less effective.

To these challenges must be added the complexity of the process human beings go through to change established behavior patterns, which is where Behavior Change Communication (BCC) has much to offer in eastern DRC. Behaviors which are deeply embedded in cultural patterns born at birth, performed unconsciously, and core to identity are resistant to change. Among these resistances are: peer pressure to exemplify traditional attitudes regarding “strong men;” lack of familiarity with alternative gender patterns; and lack of practice in using them. In general men confronted with new messages regarding gender feel reluctance to face the truth about the impact of “normal” gender role behaviors (including direct and indirect violence against women, sex on demand, etc.), as this truth may cause the discomfort of “cognitive dissonance” (disequilibrium between one’s ideal view of self – e.g., as a “strong man;” and one’s self view resulting from new information – e.g., as a man who regularly controls his wife through physical threat and pain.) Intervenors must understand the context. For example, it is common to hear that men whose wives are raped reject and abandon them, and it is easy to consider this a target for behavior change. Targeting this behavior will be more effective if one understands that there has been a strong cultural belief passed forward in parts of eastern DRC that continuing in relationship with one’s wife once she has had sexual relations with another man risks death or severe illness for the husband. In rejecting his wife in response to an unexamined cultural practice the husband loses again, in furthering the fracture of his family and compounding his own shame.

Men in a context such as eastern DRC are severely stressed and frustrated, lacking any means of expressing their human need for efficacy such as employment to support their families. Shame often plays a role in such a context. It is not surprising that, in the wake of the passage of the 2006 law governing sexual misconduct, men react defensively to demands that they reform their behaviors toward women. The sudden and radical change in the state’s response to sexual aggression of any kind impelled by the 2006 law appears as an unexplained threat over their heads, and like men in other cultures, they often react by blaming women for the violence they suffer. In a military camp in South Kivu, one soldier commented, “If you get with a woman at all, you might as well rape her, because she’ll accuse you of it anyway.” They have tended to view these acts as “women’s issues” which do not concern them, though the new law has the potential to introduce new awareness that gender-based violence is bad for men as well as women.

3. BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION (BCC) AS INSTRUMENT OF CHANGE IN RELATION TO VIOLENCE BASED ON GENDER: THEORY AND ISSUES

There are multiple examples of the use of BCC methods to address and prevent negative gender practices in many parts of the world. BCC methods have been more extensively tested and used in relation to public health problems than issues specific to gender based violence. But this experience informs the efforts to address SGBV directly, especially as there are extensive overlaps such as those between gender and reproductive health. Excellent bibliographies exist.² From these one can extract both principles and practices which are associated with efficacy, with one caveat. Across the range of different theories about behavior change, there is broad agreement that people acquire new habits via a series of psychological processes which are sequential. First, new *information* allows people to think and to use cognition to look at ideas, values, practices, from new angles. If new information has impact, it should affect *attitudes* toward whatever the new information is addressing. Via new attitudes, new *behaviors* may emerge.³ However, it is considerably easier to achieve and to demonstrate changes in cognition and attitude than it is in behavior. Thus monitoring and demonstrating impact on *behavior* is essential.

The Transtheoretical Model posits five processes/stages of change: *pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance*.⁴ Maintenance is the stage considered by most experts to be the most difficult. While people may come to see an issue, such as violence against women, differently (for example, beating your wife does not result in her respecting you), there often remains a gap between new perception and new behavior, and **specific attention needs to be paid to how to navigate this gap effectively, as well as the gap between trying out a new behavior and turning it into a sustainable habit**. For example, how do social norms affect a man's willingness to express newly acquired information and attitudes toward women which may draw ridicule from men around him? Also, how does one DO new things without having the opportunity to PRACTICE them, in a supportive environment where mistakes are seen as tools for learning? The Assertiveness Training movement in the USA during the 1980s instructed women in groups in appropriate methods of self assertion, which were practiced in supportive groups via role plays, for example, before being tested in real situations containing risk of failure or rejection.

² Rottach, E, Schuler, S, and Hardee, K. "Gender Perspectives Improve Reproductive Outcomes: New Evidence", IGWG, December 2009.

³ Bratic, V and Schmirch, L, "Why and When to Use the Media for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding," Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, December 2007, p 14.

⁴ Petraglia, J. "Applying Behavioral Science to Behavior Change Communication: The Pathway to Change Tools," Health Promotion Practice, Vol. 8, No. 4, 384-393 (2007).

Raising Voices, a GBV primary prevention project begun in Uganda, has adapted these five stages of individual change to the process of community change. They identify as the phases of community behavior change:

Phase 1 Community Assessment: a time to gather information on attitudes and beliefs about domestic violence and to start building relationships with community members. This phase corresponds to pre-contemplation in individual behavior change.

Phase 2 Raising Awareness: a time to increase awareness about domestic violence within the community and various professional sectors (e.g., social and health services, law enforcement, local government, religious communities, etc.). Awareness can be raised on various aspects of domestic violence including why it happens and its negative consequences for women, men, families, and the community. This phase corresponds to contemplation in individual behavior change.

Phase 3 Building Networks: a time for encouraging and supporting general community members and various professional sectors to begin considering action and changes that uphold women's right to safety. Community members can come together to strengthen individual and group efforts to prevent domestic violence. This phase corresponds to preparation for action in individual behavior change.

Phase 4 Integrating Action: a time to make actions against domestic violence part of everyday life and institutions' policies and practices. This phase corresponds to action in individual behavior change.

Phase 5 Consolidating Efforts: a time to strengthen actions and activities for the prevention of domestic violence to ensure their sustainability, continued growth, and progress. This phase corresponds to maintenance in individual behavior change.⁵

Reiterating the core principles summarized above, Lisa Schirch and Vladimir Bratic comment in relation to the use of media:

“While media can contribute toward the formation of attitudes, opinions and increased knowledge and awareness by supplying information, the limiting factor is the uncertainty that this positive impact will transfer to behavior or result in action. For this to happen, a number of other variables need to be aligned with the media effort. Because action or behavior is dependent on many outside variables and because these variables contribute to the end result as much as any form of communication initiative, only the true integration of all media genres into a greater peacebuilding strategy can insure a significant move toward a peaceful society. In today's media environment it is not enough to employ just a few uncoordinated messages.”⁶

Complicated as the process is, changing behaviors is easier in relation to health problems

⁵ “Prevention of GBV: A Regional Dialogue,” 2006, Raising Voices website.

⁶ Bratic and Schirch, op cit, p 11.

than in relation to issues related to the violence which is one of the results of the inequality of traditional gender roles. Identities which begin to be shaped at birth, such as gender, are central to one's core sense of who one is. Boys and girls are generally not conscious of the way everyday life shapes them into genders. Gender shapes experience, and vice versa. Choices are made which further shape and reinforce gender identity. When people are made aware of gender as a powerful force in their personal experience, the response tends to be intense. Sensitization often awakens keen interest and hope, as well as fear, in people whose identity has placed them in a social position of relative disadvantage, and often awakens resistance in those who are more advantaged. The natural tendency for them, in this case men, is to assume that change will be a disadvantage for them. This is where the skill, patience, and cultural respectfulness of sensitization matters most.

The Process of Engaging Men and Boys

It is not surprising that this issue is among the most important aspects of any effective BCC campaign to prevent SGBV, yet it is not always planned for skillfully. There is significant research and practice at the global level which is easily accessible on the internet (see below). There are a number of findings related to best practices in this area, among them:

- use and development of affirmative messages (transformative gender change);
- use of effective mass media (which can be expensive);
- prior research on and testing of context specific messages;
- focus on gender norm change rather than a specific behavior, or frame specific behavior targets within the broader context of gender norm change; and
- combine mass media with interpersonal group experiences.

The WHO/PROMUNDO 2007 research report on best practices⁷ contains an excellent reference list, and BRIDGE/Irish Aid (2006) have published an annotated bibliography.

How does the specific context of the eastern DRC affect the processes outlined above?

Not surprisingly, interviewees found it easy to identify obstacles to the prevention of SGBV. Among these:

- the grip of longstanding traditions, held especially tightly in an environment which threatens to extinguish them;
- lack of education;
- lack of access to many areas in the region;
- lack of awareness of the new 2006 law against sexual violence; even in Miti/Murheza, less than an hour from Bukavu, half the women in a meeting of an

⁷ WHO/PROMUNDO, "Engaging Men and Boys in Changing Gender Based Inequity in Health: Evidence from Program Interventions," 2007.

- Association des Femmes Rurales* had not heard of the law;
- hunger and other urgent physical threats which demand people's life force and make it difficult to take the step back needed to reflect on attitudes and behavior;
 - the challenge of simultaneously addressing the imminent SGBV threat from armed groups and the growing threat within communities of civilian sexual violence; and
 - impunity— lack of enforcement of sanctions for illegal sexual assault, whether by civilians, militias or members of the armed forces.

These and other challenges make the effort to make progress with the goal of SGBV prevention daunting and fraught with risk. Women who are encouraged to take a case to court, for example, run the risk of increased social rejection or even retribution if there is not a sufficiently protective network surrounding her. Building this network is the work of Behavior Change Communication.

4. REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES OF GBV PREVENTION AND LESSONS LEARNED GLOBALLY

It is beyond the scope of this report to provide an exhaustive overview of BCC practices relevant to SGBV globally, which are easily available on the internet. Instead, representative examples of initiatives with different emphases will be briefly presented to identify generally recognized best practices.

Media Centered Initiatives

The Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication (in collaboration with the National Network on Violence Against Women) offers an example of the impact of a multi-level, multi-media intervention to address domestic violence in South Africa. A description of their approach and results is summarized:

“The vehicle consists of prime time radio and television dramas and print material. It uses edutainment, where social issues are integrated into entertainment formats, which has been shown to be a powerful mechanism to achieve social change objectives. Through drama Soul City is able to reach prime time audiences, and through radio particularly, reach marginalized, rural communities.”⁸

“Recognizing that behavioral change interventions aimed solely at individuals have limited impact, the intervention was designed to impact at multiple mutually reinforcing levels: individual, community and socio-political environment. The intervention and its evaluation results are presented. Soul City successfully reached 86%, 25% and 65% of audiences through television, print booklets and radio, respectively. On an individual level there was a shift in knowledge around domestic violence including 41% of respondents hearing about the helpline. Attitude shifts were also associated with the intervention, with a 10% increase in respondents

⁸ Usdin, Scheepers, Goldstein and Japhet, “Achieving Social Change on Gender Based Violence: A Report on the Impact Evaluation of Soul City's Fourth Series, *Science and Medicine* 61, 2005, pp 2434-2445.

disagreeing that domestic violence was a private affair. There was also a 22% shift in perceptions of social norms on this issue. While demonstrating actual reductions in levels of domestic violence was not possible, the evaluation shows a strong association between exposure to intervention components and a range of intermediary factors indicative of, and necessary to bring about social change.”⁹

Reviewing this project highlights the presence of several elements of effective BCC campaigns directed toward changing patterns of GBV. Multiple media approaches are used to target a wide audience, both geographically and in terms of social strata. Long-term commitment to reinforcing the process of gradual change is evident. Pre- and post-data were gathered to demonstrate concrete Knowledge and Attitude change. It was noted that six months is too short to accomplish sustainable behavior change (time between the particular campaign reviewed and the post-test), and follow up was planned. While the connection with changed behavior is not clearly demonstrated, the evaluation suggests that the campaign affected implementation of the Domestic Violence Act.

Community Mobilization Centered Initiatives

Another effective approach has been developed by the **Raising Voices** project based in Uganda. They reference the WHO World Report on Violence and Health which states, in relation to GBV:

“...there are insufficient programs aimed at primary prevention measures to stop violence before it happens compared with secondary or tertiary prevention. There is also an imbalance in the focus of programs; community and societal strategies are under-emphasized compared with programs addressing individual and relationship factors.”¹⁰

Raising Voices has developed an approach based on a graduated series of interventions aimed primarily at community mobilization for attitude and behavior change. This followed the disappointing results from their earlier efforts, which they describe thus:

Raising Voices’ experience over the past six years in East Africa has been that ad hoc activities and short-term engagement, where individuals and communities are provoked to question the status quo, but are not supported to find workable alternatives, can be counterproductive. They can build hope and then demoralize. When it comes to prevention of violence against women, without synthesis of values underpinning individual activities, without a longer-term plan for managing the process, without pragmatic sequencing of interventions aimed at challenging normalized acceptance of violence against women, and without shrewd strategizing, interventions are likely to have little long-term impact.¹¹

Raising Voices uses a range of activities, among them community education, capacity building, workshops addressing interpersonal relationships, media campaigns,

⁹ Op cit.

¹⁰ Krug et al, (eds), “World Report on Violence and Health: Summary; Geneva: World Health Organization, 2002.

¹¹ Krug et al, op cit, p 96-97.

community theatre, exhibitions, policy review and reform, and service delivery.¹² They also train community volunteers and professionals to engage in ongoing dialogue with decision makers at various levels. Underlying this variety is an understanding that different audiences will be open to different messages and message formats, and that **hearing messages repeated in various ways and settings** contributes to an overall sense that “something is different” about the way “we” view violence against women.

They are committed both to **long-term presence**, and to developing **carefully graduated campaigns**, which foster **community ownership**. They concentrate initially on the first stage of change, which they frame as the contemplation of new information (Community Assessment and Raising Awareness Phase), and plan approaches appropriate to this phase. This process of sensitization, which stimulates critical thinking, builds toward a phase of Developing Networks which can engage in Action. This is followed by a phase of Integrating Action (building actions into habitual patterns) and finally Consolidating Efforts.

Initiatives focused on research to strengthen capacity globally for change via BCC strategies

C - Change (Communication for Change) is an organization working in several regions of the world, including several African countries. This initiative is referenced for its emphasis on developing research to support capacity building in program design, and on processes of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). In regard to this challenging issue of M &E, it is worth searching for adaptable methods of effectively evaluating impact which fit with contextual exigencies. Reference is made to this search for workable methods of evaluation in Catholic Relief Services “Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit:”

“It is worth noting that there are evaluation strategies, such as “Most Significant Change”¹³ that focus on evaluation-as-learning and utilize stories of change to examine impact without a baseline.”¹⁴

5. COMMUNICATION-BASED INITIATIVES TO PREVENT SGBV IN EASTERN CONGO

There are a number of initiatives in the eastern provinces of DRC using elements of BCC to address SGBV among other issues. While few organizations formally utilize the technology of Behavior Change Communication, many use communications-based strategies in creative ways.

Search for Common Ground conducts a range of campaigns within the region specifically based on the principles of Behavior Change Communication. Radio La Benevolencija

¹² Ibid, p 100.

¹³ Dart, J. and Davies, R, “A Dialogical Story-Based Evaluation Tool: The Most Significant Change Technique”, *American Journal of Evaluation*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2003, pp. 137–155.

¹⁴ Catholic Relief Services, “A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit”, p 44, CRS website.

also utilizes the principles of BCC to conduct a variety of radio programs, including an ongoing soap opera focused on the roots and resolution of violence, and a year-long program focused specifically on SGBV. There are numerous NGOs, both international and local, which report doing sensitization on the new law, though there are startlingly few people, even in Goma and Bukavu, who appear to be familiar with it. Many organizations are also doing sensitization about SGBV. The field of BCC has provided needed evidence that isolated communication campaigns rarely have lasting impact. While they may very effectively plant seeds of change (particularly at the Knowledge and Attitude levels), the yield of lasting behavior change requires stage-specific support throughout the phases human beings traverse in changing deep patterns of action. In reality, most of the organizations actively working to prevent SGBV in the eastern DRC will not be trained specifically in the technological details of BCC. It is important to frame the effort broadly in terms of communication-based strategies, so that efforts already underway are reinforced and can synergize with a new initiative tied more systematically to the principles of BCC.

It is particularly important to support efforts already underway to engage men actively in the process of changing gender norms and behaviors. COMEN, a new Congolese men's network, as well as NGOs such as Women for Women, are actively reaching out to men in multiple sectors. It is important to develop an affirming approach to engaging men, based around developing culturally sensitive conceptualization of "positive masculinity," which invites men to reflect on the impact of their current behavior in relation to women and the benefits to themselves as well as women of relationships based on a more equal distribution of power, responsibility and opportunity between men and women. This positive approach has been successful in numerous other African countries, and contrasts with the more usual approach of sensitization currently in use in eastern DRC. Currently there is more emphasis on warning men about the negative consequences to themselves of behaviors which violate the mandates of the 2006 law. Several people suggested the potential benefit of striving to develop approaches which are effective with specific target groups of men, such as those in the military and security forces, those in the judicial system, and those in positions of leadership at all levels.

Among other organizations actively engaged in the SGBV field in eastern DRC include IRC, UNICEF, Children's Voice, Heal Africa, REJUSCO, COOPI, Global Rights, ProJustice, UNFPA, C-Change, Panzi Hospital, Malteser International, and the American Bar Association. It is hoped that a new initiative would include a new method for bringing together and coordinating these and other efforts, to maximize cooperation and comprehensiveness.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION-BASED INITIATIVES TO INTERRUPT AND PREVENT SGBV IN THE DRC

1) For an initiative to have credibility locally, it must acknowledge openly that several of the primary drivers of the SV epidemic in eastern DRC are not directly amenable to short-term impact via the route of communication-based prevention

initiatives based at the community level. It is painfully evident to the population that the war is the primary driver of the epidemic of rape and other SV. Thus goals, in order to be realized, must be realistic, and must be planned and phased over extended periods of time. The military/security situation remains unresolved. Yet efforts are underway which can be supported to strengthen communities' capacity to analyze the sources and destructive impact of SGBV, and to benefit from information, education, and practices which enable men and women to work together to reduce the incidence of SGBV. This is worth the effort since it is a force that is so destructive to their present and future lives. Given the heavy weight of both long-term deprivation and the acute violence of recent years, it is imperative to address *collective* trauma. The resolution of communal trauma is based on developing personal and collective efficacy to combat the abject helplessness at the heart of traumatic experiences. It also depends on the development of communal support which combats the isolation and doubt about self worth which also result from trauma, and restores communal bonds. Using western methods of counseling for trauma healing are often less efficient and effective at eliciting the healing power of community connection and action.

2) The programmatic approach should be based on a massive campaign of sensitization and mobilization at all levels (community population, community leaders, national leaders, military and justice leaders), which is based on the 2006 law on sexual violence. The sensitization must include mobilization to concrete action. The impact of years of assault has diminished many people's belief in their own agency. This tendency to avoid *initiating* change on the part of local people is reinforced by external interveners who hold funds and for the most part leadership in many projects. This situation severely threatens the success of any campaign to prevent sexual violence, and must be actively counteracted. Responsibility for defining change, and deciding how to implement it, must come from Congolese citizens, or they will not "buy in" and change will not take root. It is crucial that systems for reinforcing (both short- and long-term) local initiative and responsibility-taking be built in from the start. Communication messages must encompass traditional understandings/practices alongside new ones, to avoid the natural tendency for people to view them as coming from outside.

3) The approach should be based on an understanding of the ways that behaviors are resistant to change when they are deeply embedded in cultural patterns, taught from birth, performed unconsciously, and core to identity. Among these resistances are peer pressure to exemplify traditional attitudes regarding "strong men;" lack of familiarity with alternative gender patterns, and lack of practice in using them; and reluctance to face the truth about the impact of "normal" gender role behaviors (including direct and indirect violence against women, sex on demand, etc.). Intervenors must understand the context, and understand the value of using approaches which engage men without shaming them.

4) As the prevalence of GBV within the context of war tends to heighten its presence in the population as a whole, the approach should use communication methods which are designed to encourage and invite cultural change country-wide. Communications methods should enable men: a) to work together with women to prevent

SGBV, by understanding that it is in their own best interest as well (and not only in the context of eastern DRC), and b) to understand the relationship between the traditional gender patterns of everyday life and the extreme gender-based violence endemic in the context of war. It is important, alongside communication methods used at the popular level, to simultaneously use similar methods targeted toward other implicated parties. These include military and judicial structures which are not adequately facilitating protection, and the government which is responsible for these structures. This is important in order to create the linkages between attitude/behavior change and structural change which are necessary to effect lasting changes.

Careful research in the field of peacebuilding has yielded the information that some projects focus on influencing people (many people or key people), and others focus on influencing structures. The projects found to have achieved sustainable results were those which connected these two realms, through linking key people at the “influencing people” level to people higher up in the hierarchical structure with the power to change structures (policies, laws, etc.).¹⁵

5) Attend to effective engagement of men from the beginning. This counteracts the tendency for men to view gender as “a woman’s issue,” offers them the opportunity to reflect on their own identity and behavior in a supported context, and offers them positive roles which allow them to model positive change for others. As utterly critical as it is to structure programs for and with men and women together, there are risks involved with engaging men which need to be addressed. The 2007 WHO report summarizing research on best practices for engaging men and boys argues for “transformative gender change.” Among best practices:

“Effective and promising campaigns and community outreach reviewed overwhelmingly used positive, affirmative messages showing what men and boys could do to change, affirming that they could change and showing (whether in characters in theatre, television shows, radio dramas or print materials) men changing or acting in positive ways. Many of the effective campaigns show men as happy or couples as happy, in effect seeking to demonstrate to men and boys what they personally gain from changing their gender-related behavior. Other effective campaigns appealed to men’s sense of justice or their pre-existing desires to provide care and support for their partners and/or children and technicians. Such campaigns are generally among the most expensive but also reached the highest numbers of men and boys (and women and girls).”¹⁶

6) Ensure that the approach will be multi-faceted and multi-directional, providing information and practice in a variety of ways to reach a variety of target audiences, and over a substantial period of time. Based on research reviewed, it is clear that changing behaviors such as violence against women is extremely difficult, fraught with resistance. For example, it is easy to hope that a single action – e.g., a series of programs

¹⁵ “Reflecting on Peace Practices: Participant Training Manual”, Collaborative Learning Projects, 2009.

¹⁶ Barker, G, Ricardo, C, and Nascimento, M, “Engaging Men and Boys in Changing Gender-Based Inequity in Health: Evidence from Program Interventions”, WHO/Promundo, 2007, p 24.

on the law regarding GBV– will enable more women to take cases to court. If there is an absence of community support, financial means and physical access, and judicial receptivity, women have too many cards stacked against them to succeed for the most part. In one region in North Kivu the size of Rwanda, there is only one judge to hear cases. Indeed there is a maze of community and environmental practices which reinforce destructive attitudes about both gender and violence. Again and again in interviews men and women expressed a categorical resistance to cultural change or examination, as though tradition were holy. Men do not carry wood, and for the most part neither men nor women were open to questioning that, despite the evident link between women’s wood fetching and rape. This grip of and on tradition may represent a determination to hold on to what is still theirs in the face of values coming from outside. It is key that interveners understand how people process information so that awareness of the consequences of one’s behavior can be skillfully invited. This applies for both men and women, whose lives in many ways have not permitted them to question what they do. Informing men and women about the new law bears fruit, according to those doing targeted sensibilization, but it also appears that there is need for a great deal more of this. Messages could usefully be framed to raise cultural values for examination, to determine which are destructive and which can be reconceived to support positive change.

7) Skillfully coordinate targets, i.e., address multiple audiences simultaneously, so that, for example, security, military and justice personnel are sensitizing themselves alongside women, their families and their communities. Research indicates that working to change gender patterns in ways which reduce violence based on gender in sustainable ways involves using a *range* of complementary communication methods addressing popular sensitization and education, as well as development of new practices utilized over a protracted period of time, in order to counteract the maze of community and environmental practices which reinforce destructive attitudes about both gender and violence. Repeatedly in interviews men and women expressed a categorical resistance to cultural change or examination, as though tradition were holy. Men do not carry wood, and for the most part neither men nor women were open to questioning that, despite the evident link between women’s wood fetching and rape. This grip of and on tradition may represent a determination to hold on to what is still theirs in the face of values coming from outside. In order for a communication strategy to be effective it must connect with how different people think (including people in different communities and social niches, as well as people of different sexes). It is important to “start where people are” in order to provide continuity from past to present to envisioned future. Culture evolves. Both men and women in the Kivus hesitated to pursue the question of the consequences of their behavior, even if aware the consequences could be fatal. They cited culture as their guide.

Informing men and women about the new law bears fruit, according to those doing targeted sensibilization, but it also appears that there is need for a great deal more of this communication. Messages could usefully be framed to raise cultural values for examination, to determine which are destructive and which can be reconceived to support positive change.

Comprehensive intervention of this kind is very labor intensive, and depends on skillful synergizing of the efforts of multiple interveners to avoid duplicating some efforts while overlooking others. Intervenors need to focus on developing demonstrably successful mechanisms to link all the different stakeholders working on SGBV in a community so that they cooperate rather than compete or duplicate. Several intervenors indicate that the implementation of the Comprehensive Strategy has disrupted familiar channels of communication. This could be an opportunity to approach the competition among stakeholders in a new way.

8) Sensitization must begin with understanding how people see things currently, in order to develop language/messages/approaches which do not shame or blame, but invite everyone (men, community, officials, etc.) to identify their own self interest in changing gender patterns. It has been widely described that the 2006 law, though a positive advance in general, is thus far causing a range of negative as well as positive experiences. The further away from urban areas one goes in eastern Congo, the less access people have to information and the greater the percentage of people who have not heard of the new law. When sensitization about it begins, men tend to respond to it as an attack on them and upon their long-held cultural ways of responding to women. Families are placed in no-win situations. For example, in poor communities traditionally families seek to find someone to marry their daughter when she reaches age 16 in part because she is at increased risk, with no occupation, of becoming pregnant outside of marriage. Under the new law, parents may be prosecuted for this as forced marriage of a minor. What are they to do, if the state has not provided their daughters with the capacity to stand on their own? It is clear that sensitization must be framed differently, and must be more patient when instituted in more isolated communities.

9) Initiatives must arise from within the community living the problem. This is easier said than done for staff in international NGOs. As staff from the Uganda SASA! Community Mobilization Program observed: “Community members are used to having non-governmental organizations take the lead and act as experts. Some community members find it unusual and difficult to become the activists and drivers of change.”¹⁷ While outside expertise can be very valuable, empowerment of women and men at the community level is the fulcrum of change when it comes to gender based violence. Their relationship to existing traditional structures and values, their accessibility to new information, their management of everyday exigencies like hunger and danger which can seem to take precedence over ideas are the factors which need to be understood and mobilized to instruct efforts to synergize between current reality and new possibility. Children’s Voice (Goma) approaches community SGBV beginning with the family of the survivor and moving out into the *quartier*, and finally people in the *quartier* approach their leaders. In one community it was the leaders who came to see the danger of imprisoning youth for years with adult criminals, and developed alternative detention centers which provided support and education while youth served their sentences.

10) Coordinate activities by, to the extent possible, working through already existing Congolese infrastructures which have broad geographic reach, rather than

¹⁷ AIDSTAR One: Integrating Multiple Gender Strategies to Improve HIV and AIDS Interventions, May 2009, p 12.

developing new project related structures. The Ministry of Education has been suggested as a possible vector for this coordination for several reasons. Targeting youth is imperative to support a coming generation less traumatized and more educated than their parents, and to provide opportunities for behavioral change which support a more peaceful future. The Ministry has already introduced courses on rights and “*Education a la Vie*” at the primary level. This latter course has not yet been effectively developed, and would provide an excellent entrée for information/discussion of more equitable gender attitudes and relations. As well as providing broad reach through a community based structure, this encourages needed attention to the national education system. A very frequently expressed view by stakeholders in the SGBV field is that sustainable prevention absolutely requires a better educated population of both girls (who gain opportunity to become independent contributors) and boys, who need positive roles in society, gained through making a living). The Ministry of Health also provides a comprehensive infrastructure which reaches to the grass roots. Religious communities are an important resource in many areas. There are other existing structures at the community level (for example, *relais communautaires* and women’s associations) which should be integrated. Whichever infrastructure is used, intensive sensitization of the “*porte paroles*” (spokespersons) within that structure would be important.

11) New information must be accompanied by the development of supportive opportunities for action and models of new ways of behaving. Some organizations which specialize in involving men have creative ways of redefining “a strong man,” including behaviors which manifest this new strength, and of encouraging women to accept and reinforce new behaviors when men are brave enough to venture “outside the box” of traditional masculinity (Men’s Resources International, Rwanda Men’s Resource Center, Soul City, Promundo, etc.).

12) Maximize modeling by leaders, who have an enormous impact. Leaders everywhere have a stake in the *status quo*, and are scrutinized in their public roles, which makes them challenging targets for change. It is very valuable to identify leaders in all domains (government, military, community, education, religion, the arts, sports) who are willing to publicly support gender change to end sexual violence. These leaders already exist in eastern DRC (and doubtless elsewhere in the country) and their positive behavior can be reinforced and their presence multiplied.

13) It is critical to target and include youth from the start. It is imperative to nourish a generation possibly less traumatized and more educated than their parents, and to provide opportunities for behavioral change among youth which supports a more peaceful future. Sustainable prevention absolutely requires a better educated population of both girls (who gain opportunity to become independent contributors) and boys (who need positive roles in society gained through making a living). If faith is placed in them, youth can be passionate leaders of change which inspires and comforts the generations of their parents. Lobbying to include gender in the new course in the national school curriculum entitled “Education for Life” might be a way to reach youth nationally and from a young age.

14) Conflict Analysis, Resolution and Transformation strategies should be included in community sensitization efforts. The SGBV epidemic in the eastern DRC arises from and is fed by a multi-directional violent armed conflict, the resolution of which is largely beyond the reach of the population enduring it in the Kivus. Understanding this context will help to support effective strategies aimed toward holding government institutions accountable. In addition practice in methods of conflict resolution can enormously support the development of new relationship norms between and among men and women, as often people are loathe to change familiar ways of relating without practice in new ones. As destruction of culture is one of the aims as well as consequences of the kind of war active in eastern DRC, offering opportunity for communities to develop structures and methods of resolving problems effectively and communicating non-violently is an antidote to this community splintering. In addition, conflict transformation and non-violent communication are vehicles for exploring universal human rights and needs, as an entry into exploring gender change.

The Raising Voices project cited above has adopted this strategy:

“A rights-based approach to preventing domestic violence is empowering to women and the community. It uses the broader framework of human rights to create a legitimate channel for discussing women's needs and priorities and holds the community accountable for treating women as valuable and equal human beings. It challenges community members to examine and assess their value system and empowers them to make meaningful and sustainable change. Without this foundation, projects tend to appeal to the goodwill or benevolence of others to keep women safe.”¹⁸

For example, in Goma, Heal Africa in conjunction with UNICEF has developed what they call Nehemie Committees in communities. One of the roles of these committees is to develop methods of Coexistence Pacifique (peaceful coexistence).

7. RISKS AND CHALLENGES:

- Exposing women to danger of reprisal or community rejection if they report intimate or neighborhood GBV or bring a case to court. To avoid this risk it is important to build systems of support (for example, men who volunteer to accompany women to court, local group of families who support families struggling with the shame they feel as the relatives of a survivor), and to discuss risks with women and plan for addressing them.
- Initiatives are most effective when men and women are both engaged from the start. However, this may result in “men’s negative backlash or reasserting control when they are involved.”¹⁹ To mitigate this risk, involving women in conceiving and planning the project, assigning roles of authority to women,

¹⁸ Raising Voices website, Guiding Principles.

¹⁹ Barker, G, Ricardo, C, and Nascimento, M, “Engaging Men and Boys in Changing Gender-Based Inequity in Health: Evidence from Program Interventions” WHO, 2007, p 23.

and using the project process dynamics themselves as a source of reflection and learning may be helpful.

- Initiating a community change process which collapses when outside resources diminish and depart. To mitigate this risk, it is key to build in from the start a sense of time limitation for the external resources, necessitating progressive local ownership of the problem, and the motivation for change (given appropriate time limited support).
- Precipitating aggressive backlash from men. To mitigate this risk, it is important to integrate new methods of encouraging rather than threatening men by making a clear case that they too benefit from gender change (e.g., more prosperous families, more intimate relationships, more respect from women).
- Appearing to impose outside values rather than inviting reflection about how all cultures adapt and change, and the tremendous advantages to those that do adapt to new global realities and possibilities. Imposed changes tend to weaken local culture which is already greatly endangered in eastern DRC.

ANNEX 1: CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS

- The Government of the DRC will demonstrate its political will and provide resources to advance security sector reform, addressing the root causes of the conflict by strengthening governance and making longer-term institutional changes to consolidate peace;
- GDRC will undertake a public relations effort to communicate with citizens about the 2006 law; and
- Multilateral and bilateral donors will continue to provide financial assistance for the management and implementation of the Comprehensive Strategy on SV.

ANNEX 2: BRIEF LIST OF REPRESENTATIVE BCC INTERVENTION SUGGESTIONS TO STIMULATE CREATIVE THINKING

(Some of these are already in use.)

MESSAGING TO AND ENGAGING MEN:

Radio or television spots:

- young men coming out of prison and describing the negative experience and its impact on their lives
- soldier who has raped women learns too late that his wife has been raped and he is infected

Slogans:

- Violating women violates our future
- When women work, the family prospers

Sensitization messages to men:

- If you reject your wife when she is raped, you lose twice: not able to protect her, and then you choose not to, which fails your cultural obligation; the rapist wins.

Examples of Models:

- Basima-Nkumwa Pierre: FARDC captain and chaplain who sensitizes within all levels of the army, and with officials in Kinshasa; use him and others like him to provide training to others within the military to extend the process of sensitization within its ranks; works with Search for Common Ground.
- Frank Issa and fellow artists in Bukavu, who have composed songs celebrating the survivors at Panzi Hospital, and who have recorded these and other songs for distribution.
- White Ribbon Campaign in Australia, where male allies wear small white ribbons to indicate their status. People in the Kivus took an interest in this, and one woman said she would feel more secure to see such men nearby.

POPULATION/COMMUNITY:

- Use education about the law as a basis for developing sensitization and action planning (i.e., this requires us to change some of our deepest habits, what does it say, why did it come about, how can we address these changes?)
- Traveling media (Search for Common Ground)
- Community radio live discussions and call in shows; organize groups for listening with discussions after
- Identify traditional practices and values to reframe for positive change. For example: Men protect women. What does protection mean, what do women need protection from? What behaviors are not protective?
- Purification rites used to be strong, as a means of resolving a shameful situation; they have weakened in recent years, in part due to the influence of the Catholic

church, and are losing their impact gradually; perhaps the concept could be revived, reformulated, and used with survivors but also with their spouses, families, and communities, all of which suffer shame in relation to sexual violence.

- Enable the community to identify a limited change which would benefit them (what would you like to see change, how could that happen?) What would that mean for women and men in your community? Analyze the problem, develop concrete indicators of a positive change, identify a solution, set a time frame, and work on it: visible beneficial short term impact which reinforces efficacy and agency and optimism; concrete indicators: rather than “increased equitable gender attitudes and beliefs” perhaps: “fewer women raped in process of fetching life necessities”; or “better arrangements for couples to be intimate without their children nearby (IDP camp).

MILITARY AND SECURITY SERVICES:

- Sensitization by military personnel such as the Captain mentioned above; “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”
- The law will prosecute; how can you protect your men from this future without hiding the truth and placing yourself at risk? Who benefits when you hide the truth? Who is hurt?
- Reframing what it means to be a strong man: How can you use your power differently? How do you fulfill your important leadership role? Invite their ideas; what are the biggest challenges you face? How do you meet them? What messages do you have to share with others from your experience?

CULTURE:

- At all levels, raise cultural patterns and values related to gender for examination, to determine which are destructive, which can be reframed to support positive change.
- Raise cultural patterns and values from the past which may be reframed to meet present and changing realities.
- Raise the notion of culture as an ever-lasting work-in-progress.

ANNEX 3: REFERENCES

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