

# Community Perspectives on **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence** in Eastern RDC

Report prepared by  
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health  
Center for Communication Programs

For  
International Medical Corps



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# Community Perspectives on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Eastern DRC

*September 2011*

**Suggested Citation:** Babalola Stella, John A Neetu & Cernigliaro Dana (2011) *Community perspectives on sexual and gender-based violence in Eastern DRC*. Report prepared for the International Medical Corps. Baltimore, MD: Center for Communication Programs

## **Acknowledgements**

Many people contributed to the implementation of the study reported in this document. The study was commissioned by International Medical Corps (IMC) with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs (CCP) took the lead in designing the study, training field workers, analyzing the data and preparing this report. Stella Babalola, Associate Professor at Johns Hopkins University and CCP Senior Research Advisor, was responsible for developing the protocol for the study and training field workers. She also led the data analysis and reporting process. Neetu John and Dana Cernigliaro, doctoral students at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, assisted with data analysis and reporting. We acknowledge Ma Umba Mabilia, Amrita Gill-Bailey and Guillaume Bakadi, CCP Senior Program Officers, who contributed to protocol development and helped to review initial versions of this report.

IMC was responsible for obtaining local Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, hiring field workers and data collection as well as transcription and translation. We acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the following IMC staff: Mathurin Dodo, Monitoring and Evaluation Director, led the IMC team on the study. He was responsible for obtaining IRB approval, liaising with local authorities, ensuring data integrity and quality, and reviewing the draft report. Alessia Radice, Behavior Change Communication (BCC) Program Manager, supervised the translation of focus group discussion and in-depth interview transcripts into English and reviewed the draft report. Cynthia Scarlett, then Chief of Party, was responsible for overall supervision of IMC staff working on the study. She reviewed the protocol and provided input into the development of the data collection tools. Tony Samamba, Database Manager, supervised field work and was responsible for ensuring data quality. Jessica Ramsel, Desk Officer, reviewed the translated transcripts. James Campbell, Country Director, provided the necessary support to facilitate a smooth and timely implementation of the study.

This study was funded by USAID through its Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It could not have been implemented without the Mission's financial support and technical guidance.

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

APAS	Association Paysane d'Auto-promotion Solidaire
ASM	Action Solidaire pour la Mutualité
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCC	Behavior change communication
CAMPS	Centre d'Appui Médical et Psychosocial
CBO	Community-based organization
CCP	Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DOCS	Doctor On Call Service
EFPS	Eveil des Femmes Pour la Paix et la Promotion Sociale
FBO	Faith-based organization
FDLR	Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda
FGD	Focus group discussion
GRAM-Kivu	Groupe de Recherche et d'Action contre la Marginalisation au Kivu
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IFEP	Initiatives des Femmes pour l'Encadrement des Paysans
IMC	International Medical Corps
IRB	Institutional review board
KII	Key informant interview
LADH	Ligue des Associations des Droits de l'Homme
MATU	Maman Tushirikiane
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SARCAF	Service d'Accompagnement et de Renforcement des Capacités d'Auto-promotion des Femmes
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
TGI	Tribunal de Grande Instance
TRIPAIX	Tribunal de Paix
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## Executive Summary

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has come to be known as the sexual violence capital of the world. Rape was widely used as a weapon of war in the protracted conflict that erupted in 1998 in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide. It is estimated that tens of thousands of women in the eastern part of the country have been subjected to sexual violence. The official end of the conflict in 2003 did not end violence and insecurity, particularly in Eastern DRC. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) continues to be a common occurrence in Eastern DRC.

Given the enormous consequences of SGBV and the particular situation in Eastern DRC, efforts are urgently needed to stem the incidence of SGBV in the region and mitigate its impact. The widespread stigma towards survivors of SGBV and their families, coupled with the general atmosphere of impunity and lawlessness, makes it difficult for survivors of SGBV to talk about their ordeal, seek redress and access care. Breaking the silence about SGBV and creating an atmosphere in which people feel safe to talk freely about SGBV is an essential first step towards eradicating this social problem. Efforts aimed at empowering communities to take a firm stand against SGBV and to take collective actions to prevent the crime and help the survivors are urgently needed.

With funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Medical Corps (IMC) is working with local and international partners to design and implement a behavior change communication (BCC) program to address the problem of SGBV in Eastern DRC. The study described in this document is an attempt to obtain relevant information that will serve as the evidence base for developing a strategy for the IMC BCC program.

The study examined community perspectives on SGBV in two provinces of DRC, North Kivu and South Kivu. We looked at perceptions about the causes and consequences of various forms of SGBV, perceptions about survivors and perpetrators, community understanding of legal provisions regarding SGBV, and community readiness and willingness to address the problem. We also examined perceptions about gender roles.

There is a wide range of behaviors that are perceived in Eastern DRC to fall under the definition of SGBV. These include forced sex, intergenerational sex or marriage, sex with a minor, early marriage, transactional sex, extramarital sex, forced marriage, domestic violence, gender inequality and even neglect of parental responsibility. While the study participants decried most forms of SGBV, domestic violence, forced sex with one's spouse and forcing a rape survivor to marry the rapist were seen as normative and tolerated.

There was no consensus about the typical profile of the perpetrator, mainly because people from all walks of life have been known to perpetrate SGBV; no particular group is immune to including perpetrators.

This study found that there are multiple layers of interrelated factors underlying SGBV in the study locations. These factors span structural, community, organizational,

relational and individual levels. One set of overarching issues affecting the occurrence of SGBV includes poverty, political instability and widespread corruption, particularly severe in the post-war climate. Another set of issues includes existing social and cultural norms.

The people do not see the government as trustworthy; corruption is rampant and well-known. Law-enforcement agents are known to accept bribes with impunity, which contributes to distrust of the government and the preference for settling conflicts without involving the authorities. Fear of stigma, lack of a sense of community efficacy to handle cases of sexual violence, and the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence make it even more preferable for families to handle cases of sexual violence outside of the legal system.

Women are seen as the center of the household, caregiver for the children and a reflection of the husband and family. They are also seen as subordinate to their husbands and very much bound to them. The repercussions of a wife's actions are seen to fall on the family and particularly to reflect on the husband. It is within this understanding that the situation of a wife who is a victim of rape or who is involved with any other situation considered negative reflects heavily and adversely on her husband and family.

There is a noticeable disparity between how the community perceives survivors of sexual violence and their perceptions about what constitutes justice for survivors and their families. In general, the participants have negative perceptions about survivors of SGBV. The image of a survivor that emerged from the discussions and the word-listing exercises conducted in this study is that of a person who should be pitied and is sick, suffering, abandoned and neglected, exposed to discrimination, and emotionally disturbed. In contrast to these negative perceptions, community members saw more accepting attitudes toward survivors of SGBV as an aspect of justice for survivors.

In light of the findings of the study, we proffer the following recommendations to address the problem of SGBV in Eastern DRC:

- 1. A comprehensive multi-level approach to address the multiple layers of interrelated factors affecting SGBV:** The factors affecting SGBV operate at the structural, community, organizational, relational and individual levels. Effective interventions to address these multiple layers of influence will, by necessity, be comprehensive and address multiple audience groups, including community members, community leaders, law enforcement agents, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations and government officials. Men, as the group most likely to perpetrate SGBV, should be addressed specifically. Stricter mechanisms and means of accountability should be imposed on law enforcement agents for accepting bribes and for the premature release of perpetrators. Additionally, there should be transparency in the legal process; justice should not only be done, it also should be seen to have been done. There should be a restructuring of the justice system that acknowledges that corruption occurs and addresses the issue decisively.

The capacity of community-based and faith-based organizations to address SGBV needs to be strengthened. Training for these organizations should focus on strengthening their capacity to leverage funds, identify cases of SGBV, understand the needs of survivors, encourage survivors to access the judicial system and assist them along the way, advocate the rule of law on issues of SGBV and mobilize the community to take collective action to prevent SGBV and to bring perpetrators to justice. Community members need to start to see that it is their responsibility to protect their friends and neighbors from becoming victims of SGBV. It is also important to strengthen community leadership to make it more transparent, responsive, responsible and accountable.

Community leaders and activists need training to enable them to act as advocates for the rule of law, lobby government agencies, help community members to access health and justice services and educate the community about the law of 2006, which defines what acts constitute illegal SGBV and what punishments should be imposed.

It is important to focus on community healing and generating community bonds through interactive processes that will help community members heal from the atrocities of the past and rally around to rebuild the community and protect the vulnerable from SGBV.

Opportunities should be provided in the community to foster discourse about SGBV. Efforts should also be geared towards breaking the general silence about sexual violence. Open discussion about the issues is a key step towards sustainable solutions. Via appropriate communication channels, individuals should be addressed with culturally appropriate messages that seek to increase knowledge about SGBV, improve understanding about the law of 2006, enhance familiarity with the process to follow after an attack occurs (e.g., hospital process, legal process, evidence that is needed for conviction) and that help community members develop appropriate skills for SGBV prevention.

A good guiding principle in developing and implementing this comprehensive multi-level strategy is to have a common theme running through all the various levels. For example, there should be consistent messages about SGBV across the various implementation levels and districts. Fractured or contradicting messages are not likely to achieve any positive results.

2. **Flipping around perceptions about survivors:** The gap between negative perceptions about survivors and community understanding of what would constitute justice for survivors should be bridged. There is need for culturally appropriate interventions to address negative community attitudes and create a supportive environment in which survivors of SGBV receive the support to move beyond their ordeal and can feel like useful members of society again.
3. **Domestic violence:** Domestic violence tends to be seen as an acceptable form of SGBV in the community. There is a clear need to specifically address this negative

community norm within the context of the general efforts targeting SGBV. Evidence from the literature on domestic violence and other forms of normative gender-based violence suggests that tackling the problem requires a multi-pronged approach. A potentially effective approach should be survivor-centered but should address the perpetrators as well. The community needs to be empowered to take action to prevent domestic violence and to assist the survivors of this harmful and dehumanizing practice. Community groups need to be trained to recognize and respond to domestic violence. The current spiral of silence about domestic violence needs to be addressed. Community discourse about the issue should be promoted. Men are a particularly powerful group in efforts to promote community dialogue and action around domestic violence. They are also among the more difficult groups to change. Nonetheless, emerging evidence from South Africa and other countries has shown that it is possible to mobilize men to change their behaviors and take action against domestic violence. Successful efforts have appealed to the sense of responsibility in men and portrayed domestic violence as a sign of weakness.

4. **Role of the media:** It important that the media continue to inform the population about SGBV. Journalists need appropriate training on how to report occurrences of SGBV. In reporting SGBV, journalists need to display journalistic excellence and present the facts in an informative, professional, in-depth, and non-partisan manner. It is important that the way crimes of sexual violence are presented in the media does not induce panic among the population, encourage stigma against the survivor or foster the culture of silence and impunity that surrounds the problem.

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## Background

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It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of women in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have been subjected to sexual violence since 1998. Women have been raped not only by soldiers and armed combatants but also, especially recently, by ordinary community members.

The conflict that erupted in 1998 in DRC in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide involved eight nations and has become known as Africa's world war; it is the deadliest conflict since World War II. The devastation, in terms of death toll and suffering, associated with this conflict has been well documented.

One unique feature of the protracted conflict is the scale at which rape was used as a weapon of war (Prunier, 2009). As the war progressed, various factions involved in the prolonged conflict systematically raped women. Perpetrators included government security forces, pro-government militia, and rebels. Conflict-related sexual violence in Eastern DRC (particularly in the provinces of North and South Kivu) has been described as a "war within a war" (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

The official end of the conflict in 2003 did not result in the end of violence and insecurity, particularly in Eastern DRC. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) continues to be a common occurrence in Eastern DRC (Wakabi, 2008). There continue to be reports of individuals and groups of soldiers raping women and girls in the fields, along lonely pathways, or even in their homes.

The exact prevalence of sexual violence in DRC is unknown, partly because survivors of sexual violence are reluctant to report their experience for fear of stigmatization and retaliation. Estimates vary widely. A survey in Shabunda, a town in South Kivu province, found that 70% of women reported having been sexually brutalized (Gentleman, 2007). A recent study estimated that about 40% of women and 30% of men had been exposed to sexual violence at least once in their lifetimes (Johnson et al., 2010). Other studies have produced lower estimates of SGBV, varying between 16% and 20% of women subjected to SGBV in their lifetimes (Vinck et al., 2008; Steiner et al., 2009). Farr (2009) provides an overview of estimates from various sources of the number of women and girls who are survivors of sexual violence in Eastern DRC. She estimates that over 100,000 women have been raped in South Kivu alone.

In addition to its unprecedented magnitude, SGBV in this region is unique in terms of the characteristics of survivors and perpetrators. Whereas most of the survivors

of SGBV in the region are women, there is an emerging trend in some parts of the region of men being sexually abused (Johnson et al., 2010). Female survivors of SGBV in the region are not limited to women of reproductive age but also include girls and old women. Moreover, although SGBV in Eastern DRC is largely militarized, there is evidence of increased civilian involvement in perpetrating the heinous crime (Bartels et al., 2010a). Perpetrators of SGBV are not only men; there is evidence of female involvement. According to the study by Johnson et al. (2010), women were the perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence in 41% of cases in which the survivor was female and 10% of cases in which the survivor was male.

The cost of SGBV to the survivors, their families and the community as a whole is enormous (Choquet et al., 1997; Yuan et al., 2006; Steiner et al., 2009; Bartels et al., 2010a; Bartels et al., 2010b). Survivors face multiple medical, psychological and social challenges. Medically, survivors of SGBV are exposed to increased risks of HIV, other sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy, genital mutilation, rape-related fistula and sterility. The medical problems arising from SGBV in DRC are particularly serious due to the extreme violence involved (Wakabi, 2008; Bartels et al., 2010b). The psychological problems that have been documented among survivors of SGBV include shame, fear, anxiety, insomnia, low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, internalized stigma, depression and eating disorders. Socially, survivors of SGBV face stigmatization, humiliation, ostracism, spousal abandonment and reduced likelihood of marriage or remarriage.

SGBV, particularly as a weapon of war, is a deliberate attempt, not just to terrorize and humiliate the direct survivors, but also to dominate and destroy the dignity of their communities and ethnic groups (Ward & Marsh, 2006). Men, as husbands and community leaders, see in SGBV a reflection of their failure to protect their women and fulfill their responsibilities towards their families. Moreover, particularly in Eastern DRC, the ubiquity of SGBV has led to the erosion and inefficacy of traditional and cultural resources to address trauma within the community.

One key reason that SGBV continues to occur in Eastern DRC is not the absence of relevant laws but rather the inadequate enforcement of existing laws. The enactment of the DRC Laws on Sexual Violence in August 2006 represents a significant landmark. The law covers a variety of SGBV including rape against men or women, sexual slavery, mutilation, forced prostitution and forced marriage (Rodriguez, 2007). It calls for stiff penalties for those convicted and renders unlawful settlement “*à l’amiable*” (that is, agreement between families outside the judicial system). Nonetheless, for a host of systemic and community reasons, very few people have ever been prosecuted under the law. The general atmosphere of impunity that prevails with respect to SGBV sends the message that perpetrators can do anything and get away with it.

Given the enormous consequences of SGBV and the peculiar situation in Eastern DRC, efforts are urgently needed to stem the incidence of SGBV and mitigate its impact. The widespread stigma towards survivors of SGBV and their families, coupled with the general atmosphere of impunity and lawlessness, makes it difficult for survivors of SGBV to talk about their ordeal, seek redress and access care. Breaking the silence surrounding SGBV and creating an atmosphere in which people feel safe to talk freely about SGBV is an essential first step. Efforts aimed at empowering communities to take a firm stand against SGBV and to take collective actions to prevent the crime and help the survivors are urgently needed.

With funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Medical Corps (IMC) is working with local and international partners to design and implement a behavior change communication (BCC) program to address the problem of SGBV in Eastern DRC.

Developing an effective communication strategy requires a sound evidence base. A few studies have attempted to shed light on the causes and consequences of SGBV, the circumstances surrounding the crime and the characteristics of survivors and perpetrators in Eastern Congo. Nonetheless, there is a dearth of reliable data on the incidence of SGBV; its effects on the survivors, their families and the community; coping strategies employed by survivors and their families; and community resources to address SGBV. The study described in this document seeks to address some of these data lacunae and yield information that will serve as the evidence base for the strategy for the IMC BCC program.

## Study Goal and Objectives

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The focus of this study is on SGBV, defined as physical, emotional or sexual abuse of a person especially on the basis of their sexual identity (The Population Council, 2008). Included in this definition are acts of **sexual violence** and **gender-based violence** perpetrated against women, men, boys and girls. The conventional definition of sexual violence is broad and includes “*any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic women’s sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work*” (Jewkes et al., 2002, p. 149; WHO, 2003, p. 6). Terms used interchangeably with sexual violence in the literature include “sexual assault” and “rape.” In this report, when we refer to rape, we mean sexual violence that involves vaginal or anal penetration without prior mutual consent. The term “gender-based violence” was initially used as a synonym for “violence against women.” The term has now evolved to include any form of violence against men, women, boys or girls that is based on gender norms (IGWG of USAID, 2006, cited in the Population Council, 2008).

This formative research builds on previous studies on SGBV conducted in Eastern DRC. Its goal is to provide input into the design of a strategy that will be implemented by IMC and its partners to address SGBV in Eastern DRC. In this regard, it is expected that the research will help to clarify the key focus and to identify the essential components of a potentially effective strategy. In addition, the formative research will help to define the content of a questionnaire to be used in a household survey to collect pertinent baseline data on the factors associated with SGBV in Eastern DRC.

The specific objectives of the formative research include the following:

1. Determine the socio-demographic and behavioral risk factors for perpetrating SGBV (including sexual and domestic violence);
2. Explore community understanding about SGBV, including its typologies, causes and consequences;
3. Assess attitudes towards women’s rights and gender-based violence;
4. Document attitudes towards survivors of SGBV and their families;
5. Clarify community perspectives on the legal and justice system, the law of 2006 and other policy provisions intended to combat SGBV;
6. Assess community resources for addressing SGBV and assisting survivors of SGBV and their families;

7. Identify credible and preferred sources of information and advice regarding SGBV;
8. Explore ways of promoting community discourse and collective action concerning SGBV.

## Methodology

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### Data collection methods

This study covered five locations in Eastern DRC: Bukavu, Bunyakiri, Chambucha, Kalonge and Walikale. Data collection methods were qualitative and included focus group discussions, key informant interviews and free-listing. Table 1 provides details of the various methods used to collect data in this study. We describe the methods below:

Method	Location					
	Bukavu	Bunyakiri	Chambucha	Kalonge	Walikale	Total
<b>Male focus groups</b>						
Adolescents	1	1	1	1	1	5
Adults	1	1	1	1	1	5
<b>Female focus groups</b>						
Adolescents	1	1	1	1	1	5
Adults	1	1	1	1	1	5
<b>Total FGDs per location</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Key informant interviews</b>	1	4	2	3	3	13
<b>Free-listing participants</b>	--	14	14	10	14	52

**Focus group discussion (FGD):** In each of the five study communities, we conducted four FGDs—one each among adult men, adult women, male adolescents and female adolescents. The FGDs explored community perspectives on SGBV based on the study objectives and using the FGD guide shown in Annex 1. Through the FGDs, we were able to identify the concepts and themes relevant to SGBV, attitudes towards the perpetrators and survivors, and community resources and readiness to address the problem. Each FGD was facilitated by a trained moderator, assisted by a note-taker. The discussions were recorded after obtaining permission from the participants to do so.

**Key informant interviews (KII):** The study team conducted key informant interviews with a total of 13 people. The persons interviewed included the following: community leaders (3), general support and care providers (5), representatives of non-governmental organizations working with survivors of SGBV (3), and government officials (2). These interviews complemented the FGDs and further explored the dynamics of SGBV while shedding more light on community perspectives and expectations regarding SGBV. We had intended to record the interviews with the permission of the interviewees;

however, none of the interviewees agreed to be taped. The research team took notes during the interviews, which were used for the analysis.

Characteristics	Number of participants
Gender	
Male	28
Female	24
Age category	
Adolescents (13-17)	15
Adult (18+)	37
Location	
Bunyakiri	14
Chambucha	14
Kalonge	10
Walikale	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>

**Free-listing interviews:** A total of 52 people were selected to participate in individual free-listing exercises using a structured questionnaire. Eligibility criteria for participation included residence in the study location, aged 13 years or more and ability to consent to participation. In the free-listing interviews, the aim was to define the cultural domain (defined as a set of items that belong together or share some similarities) relevant to community perspectives on SGBV and to map the structure of these domains. These interviews included direct questions used to generate a list of terms related to what and how the respondent thinks about the prevalence, causes,

consequences and prevention of SGBV in his/her community. For example, we asked the respondent to list all the words that came to mind when he/she thought of the prevalence of SGBV; or the way that survivors of SGBV are treated in the community; or the role of

Socio-demographic characteristic	Number of participants	Percent
Age group <sup>1</sup>		
<18 years	109	40.8
18-34 years	79	29.6
35+ years	79	29.6
Gender <sup>1</sup>		
Male	139	52.1
Female	128	47.9
Location		
Bukavu	49	19.9
Bunyakiri	60	21.9
Chambucha	58	21.2
Kalonge	51	18.6
Walikale	56	20.4
<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>274</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Age and gender were not recorded for some key informants.

community members in preventing SGBV. We also asked the respondent to list all the people or organizations in the community that a survivor of SGBV could go to for help. Subsequently, we asked the respondent to sort the items listed by telling us how they apply to different categories of people. For example, we asked the respondent to tell us which of the words they had listed to describe survivors of SGBV were most appropriate to describe a male survivor, a female survivor, a young survivor or an adult survivor. Participants in the free-listing interviews did not include those who

participated in the FGDs. The participants ranged in age from 15 to 68 years, with an average of 29.7 years. On average, the men (33.6 years) were older than the women (25.2 years). Other socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are also provided on Table 3.

## **Study participants**

### **Study locations**

Study participants were selected from five locations in Eastern DRC: Bukavu, Bunyakiri, Chambucha, Kalonge and Walikale. The study locations were selected after consultation with IMC and reflect current or future venues for program activities. Field workers worked with community leaders, health facilities and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to select eligible participants.

Bukavu is a health district and headquarters of South Kivu province; Bunyakiri, Kalonge and Walikale are health zones. Chambucha is a health sector within Walikale Territory. We describe each study location below.

**Bukavu:** With a population of about 245,000, Bukavu city is located on the southwestern bank of Lake Kivu. Between 1996 and 2004, Bukavu witnessed numerous war crimes, including rape, other sexual abuse and murders. Various armed groups were involved in the conflicts, including government-backed military forces from DRC, Rwanda and Uganda, forces loyal to Laurent Nkundabatware and Mutebusi, and various rebel militias (FDLR and Mai-Mai).

**Bunyakiri:** Located some 80 kilometers northwest of the city of Bukavu, Bunyakiri has an estimated population of about 130,000. This health zone is landlocked, with limited infrastructure. Due to the mountainous geography of the area, communication and access are difficult; mobile telephones do not work in any part of the health zone. Bunyakiri was one of the areas hardest hit by the conflicts in Eastern DRC. The health zone has one hospital and several small health centers. However, these health facilities lack essential medicines, electricity and running water.

**Chambucha:** Chambucha is a rural community in the Bukano Chiefdom of Walikale Territory in North Kivu. It is located some 121 kilometers northwest of Bukavu. Over the past decade Chambucha has witnessed an unprecedented degree of human rights abuses, including widespread rape, other sexual abuse, kidnapping, looting, forceful acquisition of property and arson, as a result of the presence of armed forces in the area. Regrettably, these problems did not end with the wars. Like Bunyakiri, Chambucha is not easily accessible and has limited communication infrastructure. Subsistence agriculture is the main economic activity for the local population.

Unfortunately, as a result of widespread insecurity, farming has become a risky activity in Chambucha.

**Kalonge:** Kalonge health zone is located in the northern part of South Kivu Province. It has a population of approximately 119,500 people, the majority of whom belong to the Barongeronge or Batembo ethnic groups. The health zone has one general referral hospital and 16 health centers. Farming, animal husbandry and petty trading are the predominant occupations among the residents.

**Walikale Town:** Walikale is the administrative headquarters of Walikale Territory, the largest territory in North Kivu. It is pertinent to note that Walikale Town, like Chambucha, has experienced a strong presence of armed groups (Mai-Mai, FDLR and others) over the past decade. These armed groups have committed serious abuses against the civilian population, including kidnapping, looting and destruction of property, extortion, rape and other forms of sexual violence against women. These abuses have resulted in a high number of internally displaced people, child abandonment, destruction of public infrastructure (schools, hospital, etc.), births of children conceived as a result of rape and erosion of social capital in the affected communities.

### **Participants**

The study addressed three main categories of respondents: (1) adolescents ages 13–17 years; (2) adult community members (men and women) ages 18–59 years; and (3) community leaders, health workers and NGO representatives. A total of 274 people participated in the study, including the 52 free-listing participants and 13 key informants. Regrettably, we do not have information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants other than their age, sex and place of residence. The available information is provided in Table 3. The participants consisted of slightly more males than females, partly because most of the key informants were men.

### **Data analysis**

**FGDs and KII:** Analysis of the FGDs and KII started in the field. At the end of each day of field work, the research teams met to debrief, update their notes and identify the salient findings from the interviews and FGDs. In addition, all audio recordings were transcribed and translated into English. It should be noted that the transcripts varied widely in terms of quality and completeness. Whereas some of the transcripts reflected verbatim transcription of the recorded FGDs, many were not as good, and some were hardly better than field notes.

Each transcript was read multiple times by the principal investigator and two research assistants. A coding scheme was developed based on the objectives of the study

and the relevant themes that emerged from the transcripts. Thematic coding was performed on all transcripts using the qualitative software Atlas.ti (Muhr, 2004) and NVivo (QSR, 2008). A collection of quotations that represented the common themes or particularly significant findings were selected from the transcripts for inclusion in this study report.

**Free-listing interviews:** Free-listing is a simple yet powerful method that can be used to identify the items and structure of a cognitive or cultural domain. Data from the free-list exercise serve as the basis for performing cultural domain and multidimensional analyses using the Anthropac software (Borgatti, 1996). Several interesting analyses are possible with free-list data. For example, while recognizing that the number of items listed in response to a question depends on the respondent's motivation and personality, it is reasonable to assume that this indicator reflects a person's level of familiarity with the domain (Gatewood, 1984). We used Stata to analyze the length of the free-lists and how they vary by key socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent, particularly place of residence and age group. Both the content of a respondent's free-list and the order in which the items are listed are important. Focusing on the content allows us to identify the items that participants mention most often. The order in which an item is listed can be used to generate the average rank of individual items. Naturally, the best known items will tend to be mentioned first. Thus, the more often an item is mentioned, the lower its rank. Both the frequency of an item and its average rank are used to compute the salience of the item. Using the Anthropac software, we identified the most salient terms used by the respondents to describe the various dimensions of SGBV.

In addition, the information on order of items on a list can be used to calculate the distance between items, an indicator that reflects the underlying structure of the cultural domain (Hough & Ferraris, 2010; Mengistu & Hager, 2008; Borgatti, 1999). The assumption is that people tend to mention closely together items that they perceive to be similar. For example, in most Western cultures, when asked to list all the domestic animals they know, most people are very likely to mention "cats" and "dogs" close together. The information on the distance between the rank-order of items can be used as a proxy for the perceived degree of similarity of the items. Like prior studies (e.g., Hough & Ferraris, 2010; Mengistu & Hager, 2008), we used information on the difference in rank order between pairs of items to compute a similarity matrix, which is then used to perform multidimensional scaling. Only items mentioned by at least two respondents were included in the similarity matrix since it is not possible to compute a distance with an item that was mentioned by only one person.

## **Protection of Human Subjects**

### **Informed consent**

Once eligibility for the study had been ascertained, the research team used a consent script to obtain verbal consent from each study participant prior to participation in the study. Verbal consent is standard practice and is widely acceptable in African countries where the literacy level is relatively low. Through the consent script, potential participants were informed about the goal and objectives of the survey, the sample selection process and the type of questions that they would be asked. Although we did not anticipate any risks associated with participation in the survey, it was reasonable to envisage that some people might experience emotional discomfort with some of the questions. The research team explained to potential study participants that, should they experience discomfort with any questions, they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time or to refuse to answer the questions. Participants were informed that the information collected from them through the study will not be individually linked back to them, would be kept in a locked facility and would be destroyed at the end of the study.

### **Ensuring participants' understanding and voluntary participation**

The study participants included individuals who did not speak French. To ensure their understanding, the data collection tools and the consent scripts were translated into Swahili. The interviews and FGDs were conducted in Swahili, except when the study participants indicated that they preferred to communicate in French. The consent script stressed that participation was voluntary, that participants did not have to answer questions that made them uncomfortable, that they could choose to discontinue the interview/discussion at any time, that all information would be kept confidential and that there was no direct personal benefit to them for their participation.

### **Local IRB approval**

This study was cleared with the Institut National de la Statistique in Bukavu prior to the start of field work.

## Findings

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### Community understanding of sexual and gender-based violence

#### Forms of violence

There is no single Swahili word or expression in current usage among the study population that directly translates into SGBV. The Swahili words and expressions used to describe these forms of violence are not necessarily graphic, but they do reflect the perceived force and lack of mutual consent involved as well as the deviance and unacceptability of the action. The words and expressions included “*ujeuri*” (violence or aggression), “*uhanga wa ubakaji*” (victim of rape; from the root word “baka,” meaning “spot” or “stain”), “*kushika mtu kwa nguvu*” (grab or hold a person by force) and “*kukamata mtu kwa nguvu*” (detain a person by force).

Community members identified several different forms of SGBV. Key forms that repeatedly came up in the discussions include the following:

- Forced sex
- Sex with a minor and/or inter-generational sex
- Early marriage/intergenerational marriage
- Transactional sex
- Extramarital sex
- Neglect of parental responsibility
- Forced marriage
- Domestic violence.

**Forced sex:** Several situations of forced/non-consensual sex came up in the different discussions and were described as forms of SGBV. Participants, young and old, regardless of gender, recognized forced sex as unethical and often referred to it as “rape.”

*Rape is to force a woman to have sex. Either for a woman or a child, all is called rape. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

In addition to discussions of forced sex in general, common types of specific instances of forced sex came up in the discussions. Participants discussed how soldiers were major perpetrators of forced sex and pressured women as well as men into engaging in sex with them, often at gunpoint.

*And this was the case of soldiers in Katataru Kasai. A soldier desired a lady to make sex with. Then he entered one house to look for a woman, Bad luck, he*

*met with a man. Then he attempted to rape that boy. But the soldier was arrested by his group of soldiers when they heard a boy crying for help.*  
**(Adult male, FGD participant, Chambucha)**

There was also some discussion and recognition, especially in the men's group, of forced sex within marriage. This was considered exploitative. Forcing wives to have sex against their wish was generally attributed to lack of understanding of women's rights among men.

*Men should be trained about women's rights. This for the merits of women because sometimes women are forced by the husbands to make sex while they are not ready for it.* **(Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)**

Men were not the only perceived culprits of forced sex within marriage. For example, adolescent groups discussed how wives could also force their husbands to engage in sex with them when they did not wish to.

*Yes, a woman can also rape her husband when she asks sex and the husband is tired and says that he will not afford (cannot), [but] the wife forces her husband to have sex.* **(Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)**

**Sex with a minor and/or inter-generational sex:** Sex with a minor was repeatedly described by FGD participants, regardless of age and across locations, as wrong and exploitative. They often explicitly stated that sex with someone under the age of 18, legally considered a minor, was "rape," indicating that such a sexual relationship could not be considered consensual, as a minor is not capable of giving informed consent. Interestingly, this viewpoint echoes the provisions of the 2006 sexual violence law. The law stipulates that sexual intercourse under the age of 18 is illegal even if it is consensual or between two minors.

*You may kidnap a minor and get her to your home. Then she becomes your wife. But people find this normal. But this is abnormal and rape if the girl is under 18.* **(Adolescent male, FGD participant, Chambucha)**

*Little boys of 15 are being invited by old women of 40. When the little boy is in the woman's home, he feels like it is a great happiness, although he has been trapped for rape.* **(Adult female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)**

Some also mentioned that an adult who indulges in sexual relations with someone younger than their own child is particularly guilty of "rape."

*You can find an old person loving an adolescent of 15. That is rape, too. An adult is not allowed to love a child whose age is lower than their [own child's].*  
**(Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)**

Intergenerational sex was not only viewed in the context of an adult man engaging in a sexual relationship with an adolescent girl. Adult men and women also spoke of how some older women were particularly attracted to adolescent boys and used various means to engage in sexual relations with them. They further described how some women exploited traditional norms of respect and obedience to elders to trick adolescent boys into engaging in sexual relations with them.

*I also remember a case of a woman in Walikale, who was selling beer, who had admired a young boy of 14. She called up the young boy in the house and asked him to go and get her something in her room, whereas she was haunted with the desire of having sex with the young boy. When the young boy got in her bedroom to get what she had asked him for, the woman rushed into the room and took off her clothes, approaching the little boy asking him to have sex with her. The little boy cried, and people came to rescue him and led the woman to the police. (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Some participants especially found it hard to understand why infants or young children were sexually violated, and they shared their anguish with the rest of the group.

*Imagine raping a child of 2 or 3 years old! What can send an adult man raping a child other than a criminal mind? (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Perceptions about what constitutes inter-generational sex go beyond sex with a minor. Some participants were of the opinion that sex between two individuals who greatly differ in age is wrong and could be seen as a form of SGBV. In the opinion of a few participants, a wide age difference between parties engaging in sexual relations is indicative of exploitation.

*In fact, an old man of 70 having sex with a young [woman] of 25 is rape. (Adult female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Not everyone agreed that sex with a minor is wrong, however. A few participants were of the opinion that, provided there is consent, sex with a teenager is not necessarily sexual violence. This point of view may reflect the contrast between the legal and the social definitions of rape. An individual may feel ready for sex, whereas they are not legally deemed ready. It appears that, for some of the participants, as long as the young person feels that he/she is ready for sex, there is no sexual violence.

*But in case of a young girl aged 13, you know girls became precocious in sex, especially when she has seen her periods. When we have agreed with her, being 12 or 13, since she can see her periods and we have agreed for sex, this is*

*not rape. But here this is called rape. (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

**Early marriage/intergenerational marriage:** In the eyes of study participants, marriage does not necessarily make intergenerational sex less wrong. Community members generally recognized early marriage as an act of SGBV and specifically spoke of inter-generational marriage involving an older man marrying a girl younger than 18 years of age as an act of violence. Some also added that such a marriage was unethical even if the girl gave her consent to the relationship.

*A mature man is supposed to get married, but if he gets married to a minor lady who is under 18 years old, what he does is violence even if he has wooed the lady and paid the bride price. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

They spoke of how poverty often forces families to accept such a marriage in exchange for the bride price.

*Sexual violence here is also due to poverty among parents. Children are being violated due to their parents' life standard. (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

**Transactional sex:** Transactional sex or sex in exchange for money repeatedly came up in the discussion as a common practice. There was discussion of how women in need of money often incite men into sexual relations with them when what they want is money.

*Yes, there are women who rape men. First are prostitutes. When they do not have money or do not have anything to eat, they call boys who are passing by, claiming that they have things to tell them, though they want only money. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

In addition, the groups also explicitly mentioned transactional sex and thought that adolescents were especially vulnerable, considering that they are not physically or emotionally mature enough for sexual relationships or intellectually able to understand the implications of their action. The participants deplored the fact that young people are tricked into transactional sex because of their need or desire for material goods, which older individuals exploit in exchange for sex.

*You can imagine an adult having sex with a little girl. An old man convinces the little girl to have sex in exchange for money. He cannot imagine that her intelligence is lower than his is. You use the little girl for what her age is not up to. (Adult female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

Community members thought that it was not only older men that were guilty of this act; women were, too.

*Others only want to have sex with men, and they offer the man \$20, for example, so that he accepts having sex with her. In case of a boy, who is not wise, he will accept, as he considers that this is much money for him, enough to pay for a pair of trousers. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Some discussants also noted the role of families in promoting this practice, especially poorer families that encourage their daughters to go out and bring back money in exchange for sex.

*The very clear [case] is the one that families send their young daughters to go and look for money. (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

**Extramarital sex:** Men discussed how engaging in sex with someone other than one's wife was "cheating" and a form of sexual violence.

*A man to have sex with a woman other than his wife and makes her pregnant—this is another kind of rape that we know here in Bunyakiri. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

**Neglect of parental responsibility:** Neglect of the responsibilities of a father or a husband, either due to extramarital sexual affairs or for other reasons, was considered SGBV. The reason adduced for this position was that such acts of irresponsibility have negative effects on the well-being of the wife and her children. For example, some adolescents lamented how often adult men in the community splurge to please women with whom they are having affairs and cause suffering to their wives and children.

*Some men, when they have got money, they go to their external friend, not assisting the children. I realize that he violates the life of his wife in the household. In September, when class starts, the father can't pay school fees for the child, he...even makes two months without paying school fees. Later he is sent away from school. (Adolescent female, FGD discussant, Bunyakiri)*

**Forced marriage:** Discussions on the prevalence of different forms of forced marriage and their unethical nature was a topic keenly debated in the various focus groups. Reference to forced marriage or marriage without the consent of the parties involved came up as an example of SGBV in the men's focus group discussions. Men specifically discussed how women are often forced by their families to marry men without their consent.

*Ladies are getting married without their consent; they are forced to be married. (Adult male, FGD participant, Chambucha)*

In addition, adult women and adolescents discussed how several community practices promote forced marriage. Many considered this to be a form of SGBV. For instance, there was discussion of the community practice of forcing girls to marry men who have sexually abused them as a means of amicably settling ensuing disputes between families.

*This young girl was raped, and they did not want to take the case to court, saying that they will not get anything from there. They accept that the rapist pay a fine and the bride price, then take the girl. Sometimes the girl did not love the boy at all, but because she thinks she will no longer have a husband and people will be mocking her, she agrees to go to the rapist's home. (Adult female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

Along similar lines, there was discussion of other cases of forced marriage such as the traditional practice of wife inheritance, where widowed women are married off to their brothers-in-law.

*A man who died, and his family obliges the young brother of the late husband to marry the widow—isn't that rape? This is also a matter of families that keep using old customs. Obliging a woman to marry her late husband's brother is rape, but people take it as normal. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

There was also discussion of how sometimes a pastor asserts that God has revealed to him that two specific people should be married. This so-called revelation often leads to marriages between two non-consenting individuals.

*False pastors' predictions that send a girl to be married with a church member whom she did not love, pretending that God decided that. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

**Domestic violence:** There was some discussion about domestic violence as a form of SGBV and a violation of the rights of the woman. It appears that domestic violence is often seen as the norm. The community fails to see it as a problem. Moreover, there appears to be a general lack of understanding in the community about how to deal with cases of domestic violence.

*Many people do not know that there is home violence because most of us don't know the family code, and this is a problem. Sometimes, a lady gets home violence but does not know where to report the problem.... This kind of*

*violence exists, but we don't know where to address the problem. (Adult female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Family elders may sometimes try to intervene in cases of domestic violence, but they are often powerless to prevent a recurrence. Oftentimes, the abusive husband, asserting his conjugal authority, resists attempts by family elders to provide advice and mediation in such matters.

*The elder of that family can approach the husband in trying to give him advice, but he sometimes is chased out with a terrifying voice, "Leave us alone! Leave me! It is my wife and nobody helped me to prize her for marriage. We are not approaching family members all the time." (Adult female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Domestic violence is considered an issue private to the conjugal family, and the wife is expected to keep quiet about the experience. Indeed, it appears that it is not socially acceptable in the community for the wife to speak about what occurs within the household or within marriage. A wife who discusses issues such as sexual violence with other members of the community is despised.

*She may report what people can see from outside, exterior issues, but interior issues cannot be reported. She can even dare say that to her mother-in-law, but the latter will tell her to never report it to people, and, if she reports how bad she has been treated by her husband, others will mock her and call her stupid and laugh at her a lot. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

### **Perceptions about prevalence and trends**

Information on the perceived prevalence of SGBV is derived from KIIs, FGDs and free-listing. There is substantial complementarity in the reports from these three sources.

Evidence from FGDs indicates that perceptions of the prevalence of SGBV vary widely. Some participants thought SGBV was decreasing, whereas others thought it was increasing. Furthermore, some discussed how cases of SGBV were decreasing in urban centers, whereas the situation remained the same in remote parts of the country.

*Rape has decreased here in Kalonge compared with the way it was five years ago. Cases of rape keep increasing in remote villages because they do not have any idea of what are the consequences of rape to the victim and the*

*perpetrators, but here they may rape but they know that it has consequences.*  
**(Adult female, FGD participant, Kalonge)**

*Yes, sexual violence and rape increased, and it is due to the war because it makes people migrate from one area to another.* **(Adult male, FGD participant, Chambucha)**

Some FGD participants thought that people's perception of an increase in SGBV is linked to the increased media attention given to the subject. Apparently, cases of SGBV are more likely to attract media attention currently than a few years ago, giving the impression that the problem is on the increase.

There were also differing opinions on trends in specific kinds of SGBV. For example, key informants especially saw declines in traditional practices such as early marriage and forced sex linked to war. They tended to attribute the decrease to the end of the war and to legal measures taken by the government.

*There is a decrease of cases of sexual violence in the community, unlike the period of the last five years, when FDLR massively raped women.* **(Health professional, key informant, Bunyakiri)**

Community members' perceptions about trends in SGBV appear to be a function of place of residence. Participants in Bunyakiri tended to perceive a decrease in SGBV, whereas in Chambucha the general perception was that the problem was on the increase. Those who perceived a decrease in the prevalence of SGBV attributed the trend to successes in curbing insurgence. In contrast, perceived increases in SGBV tended to be attributed to apparent lack of retribution and systemic failure in addressing the problem.

*I may say that sexual violence had decreased here in Bunyakiri as the FDLR have moved away in the forest. Violence was much reported here when those FDLR were close to the center. Now they are far, and violence has decreased.*  
**(Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)**

*I can confirm that cases of rape and sexual violence have increased.* **(Adult male, FGD participant, Chambucha)**

There was also discussion among participants about the changing profile of SGBV perpetrators. They spoke of how, earlier, sexual violence was associated only with armed combatants (government soldiers and rebels), but increasingly perpetrators are from the community. Some compared the situation to an epidemic because of the way it was spreading in the community.

*The problem of rape has increased. In the old days FDLRs were the only perpetrators of rape, but currently everybody is accused of rape. Old men are*

*raping, young boys are raping, women are raping, even girls. Rape has become like an epidemic, which has contaminated everyone in the community. (Adult female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

*Cases of rape are still common in Bunyakiri except that they are now civilians living in these communities who commit sexual violence and not the Congolese military. (Human rights activist, key informant)*

Data from the free-listing questionnaire provide further insight into community perceptions about the prevalence of SGBV. The free-listing questionnaire included questions that asked individuals to list all the words that came into their minds when they thought of the prevalence of sexual violence in their community. Specific questions allowed the informants to list words separately to describe the prevalence of sexual violence targeting women, men, girls and boys. We analyzed these data focusing on the frequency of each item and its salience. The findings reveal differences in the perceived prevalence of sexual violence depending on the target of such violence.

The word listing exercise on the prevalence of SV against women generated 75 different items. These items were recoded into 18 distinct items. The data indicate that perceptions about the level of sexual violence against women vary considerably across study locations; overall, no single word was used by more than one-quarter of the respondents. In contrast, in each location there was a clustering in the words used to describe the level of sexual violence. In Bunyakiri the general impression was that sexual violence was on the decline, although it was still very common and destructive. In Chambucha the most common perception was that the level was high and destructive. The data did not give any indication that community members perceived a reduction in the problem. In Kalonge the most salient view was that the prevalence of the problem is high, albeit decreasing. In Walikale there does not seem to be a consensus on the prevalence of sexual violence. Perceptions were rather nuanced, with the responses split between “low” and “very high.”

Regarding the prevalence of sexual violence against female adolescents, the 52 informants provided a total of 39 distinct terms to describe the level of this problem in their community. An analysis of these words reveals that perceptions about the prevalence of sexual violence against female adolescents do not constitute a cultural domain across locations or other socio-demographic characteristics. Instead, the perceptions vary among socio-demographic groups. For example, adult informants tended to describe the incidence as high and increasing. In contrast, none of the younger informants perceived the incidence as increasing. Instead, they tended to see it as high but decreasing. Almost all the informants from Walikale reported that the incidence was

high, whereas in the other study locations perceptions were generally mixed. Furthermore, women tended to perceive the incidence as high, whereas for men no consensus was noticeable.

Sexual violence against boys and male adolescents was generally believed to be nonexistent or, if it occurred, a rare event. There were no noticeable differences in this perceptions across socio-demographic groups. Similarly, sexual violence against men was perceived to be largely nonexistent or rare. It was mostly in Chambucha and Kalonge that people acknowledged that the problem existed, albeit at low prevalence.

### **Attitude towards forms of SGBV**

FGD participants categorized several forms of SGBV as normative. They noted that many practices in the community could be categorized as sexual violence but were traditionally practiced. In general, community members did not see these practices as wrong, because they were institutionalized in community norms. For instance, discussants spoke of early marriage as having been institutionalized, often due to poverty or the need for money.

*Early marriage—it is frequent here that parents marry their daughters off at age 17, yet she has not reached the age of being married. This is a kind of rape that people find like normal. They aim at money and try to legitimize some rubbish. (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Some participants also spoke of how forcing one's spouse to have sex is considered normative, although it might be a form of SGBV.

*One more kind is that I may come from the field with my wife, being very tired with field work, and I ask her to have sex. She may refuse but I force her to do it. I will insist because I am a man and she is a woman. If I do so, I may have raped her. (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Other forms of SGBV that are considered normative and that people do not tend to see as wrong include the practice of forcing a girl to marry a person with whom she has willingly or unwillingly engaged in sexual relations. These practices include instances in which a girl is forced to marry a man who has raped her. Whereas some community members lamented this practice, it was generally viewed as normative and a practical solution to an embarrassing problem. For families, forcing a rapist to marry his victim is convenient, considering that stigma and taboos traditionally make it hard to find a match for a girl who has been raped.

Normative SGBV associated with forced marriages also includes instances in which a kidnapped girl is forced to marry her captor or in which two people of the opposite sex who engage in premarital sex are forced to tie the knot. Again, in these instances marriage is seen as a practical solution to an unpleasant situation that may adversely affect the girl's chance ever to find a suitable husband.

*Kidnapping here is like normal. Even when an underage girl has been kidnapped, people say she has become a wife. There is no matter, and that's all. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Chambucha)*

*Me as a parent, when I know that my daughter has grown and that she seems to have been playing sex, when I know that she has been caught with a boy having sex, I will call up the boy and agree that he gives me the bride price, and I give him the girl as wife because they have loved each other. (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

## **Community perception of factors underlying SGBV**

It is reasonable to assume that the factors perceived to underlie SGBV would vary depending on the form of SGBV that the discussants had in mind, and this proved to be the case. There was heated debate among participants about the causes of SGBV. Two fundamental causes that most participants agreed upon were disruption due to war and poverty. A few also spoke about traditional practices that perpetuate SGBV, although many in the community saw these customs as normative and therefore not a problem. There was also discussion about the more proximal factors leading to SGBV. Key factors identified were failure of the government machinery, women's enticing behaviors, and sexual desire. Description of these factors is provided below.

### **Distal factors**

**War:** War and the disruption caused by it were among the most commonly identified factors underlying SGBV, particularly rape. Women spoke of how war not only directly fostered SGBV, with soldiers raping individuals, but also taught people that they could rape with impunity.

*As for me, I should say that it is due to the presence of bandits/rebels in the bush. You may come across him and he rapes you. He does not consider who is who. His problem is sex. He may rape you at any time, either at day time or evening. (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

*Here in Bunyakiri we did not know anything about rape. But since the war burst, FDLR came and taught the population about rape. The government should do the best to take the FDLR away, take them back to their country, and any others who would dare raping [should] be strongly punished. The victim should be assisted, be brought to hospital for treatment. (Adult female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Some lamented the fact that there was no way to avoid such atrocities, especially because in most cases brute force was used and people just had to comply.

*We just accept because we fear to be killed. What can you do in front of a man like this? (imitates pointing a gun) (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

**Poverty:** Community members saw poverty as a fundamental cause of some forms of SGBV, and many discussed how the cycle of poverty made individuals vulnerable to sexual violence. Several direct and indirect linkages of poverty to SGBV were debated and discussed in the various groups. Several study participants, especially women, mentioned how being poor makes women more vulnerable to being raped, as they inevitably have to go out into the fields to feed their families.

*We should know that poverty is the cause of hunger. People in the countryside have migrated into town. In order that the parent be capable of feeding their family, they need to cultivate, and when the woman goes to the field, she is exposed to FDLRs who are there and who consequently rape her. She cannot stay at home and not go to her field, where will she find food to feed her children. This means that rape keeps being done. (Adult female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Others linked poverty to increased exposure to SGBV through the lack of infrastructure. For instance, they described how children have to travel far to attend school and women often have to go fetch firewood because of the lack of electricity, thus exposing them to assault. Participants in all the study areas expressed views about how the lack of infrastructure and the needs of survival expose women and children to sexual violence.

*This [rape] is due to the lack of some of the things in our village, things like electricity. Women go to get firewood far away in the forest. Then they are raped there. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Chambucha)*

*Here at Kalonge the main activity is agriculture, and most of our fields are in the bush so far from homes. We all know that [on the way] to the fields in the*

*bush there are bandits, rapists. It is not easy to avoid going to the fields because we have no other source that can provide us the means to live. All the means of living are found in the bush. (Adult female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

The community also spoke of transactional sex in the context of poverty and discussed how girls are pushed into these situations because of their need or desire for goods.

*You will find a poor family, which is incapable of fulfilling the needs of the girl, and this will send the girl to look for someone to pay her for what she needs. This will send old men to have sex with young girls.... That is due to poverty. (Adult female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

Some linked migration to cities, poverty and transactional sex. They spoke of how people migrating to cities could not afford the luxuries that the town offered or had no means of earning an income, pushing them into transactional sex.

*Others migrated from the villages (country) to town, but they cannot afford the life in town due to poverty. Their daughter wants to live like those of rich men of town, although they are poor. This also makes them give themselves to sex trade so that they can get what they want, and finally they go to have sex with old men who are even ten times older than they are. This also is rape, but rape that has been caused by poverty. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

A few participants noted that the decision to engage in transactional sex is not always motivated by poverty but rather by discontent and the desire to conform to a group norm. Some participants also acknowledged the role of girls' rebellion against parental authority.

*Not all the children are raped due to poverty. Here in Kalonge there is a kind of civilization that is different from the one of before. Girls have become emancipated and lose control. They desire many luxury things that they are incapable of buying, and this sends them to be raped for money. They escape from their parents' control. There is a kind of competition among girls, women and men. Everyone wants to be like such, but with no means. Girls want to have nice clothes, and this sends them into prostitution, exchanging goods for sex. (Adult female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

A few women, in the context of poverty, spoke of male responsibility and described how men often fail to support their families, which puts the onus of supporting the family

on the women. To support their families, the women end up having to engage in transactional sex or go into the fields, where they are exposed to rapists.

*We always know that there are responsible and irresponsible men. These are two kinds of men. Some of them can be employed and earn from \$30 and above, or from \$100 downward. The two will act differently to take care of the family. Some can decide to spend all his salary with the prostitute or can spend all the money in the club drinking beers or even illicit drinks or forbidden traditional alcohol. This man doesn't know if the children have eaten at home, need to be taken to school, and to clothe them. According to the problem, you will see a woman struggling hard for his kids.... Sometimes she trades sex in order to get money. (Adult female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Practices such as forced marriage, including marriage to the perpetrator of rape, were also often linked to the family's financial constraints. For example, a man realizing that he could no longer meet the needs of his adolescent daughter might decide to marry her off to anyone who has the money to pay a bride price, including the person who raped the daughter. Community members recognized how the link between poverty and the practice of forced marriage contributes to the continuation of sexual violence in the community.

*But also, you will have a young girl whom you cannot support, a teenager. As you feel unable to support her due to poverty, you will risk giving her for marriage very early, or even give her to the rapist since he has raped her and has accepted to settle the issue amicably. (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

**Traditional practices and customs:** A few participants discussed the role of tradition and customary practices that are inconsistent with current reality. These practices help to perpetuate SGBV, particularly the forms that are considered normative in the community. Participants expressed the need to educate the community and move away from such practices.

*The first thing that we should do is to change behavior, because old customs here play a very important role in these situations of sexual violence. We should not put much importance on the culture, customs. (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Some discussants mentioned how the importance placed on marriage, especially for girls, often encourages young girls to lure men into having sex with them so that later they can claim they were “raped” and force the man to marry them. Threatened with the prospect of being dragged to court and possibly having to spend time in jail, the man tricked in this manner will have little choice but to agree to marry his “victim”. Whereas such an arrangement may have enormous negative implications for the quality of the ensuing marital relationship, it helps the girl to fulfill an important societal expectation. One adult female discussant from Walikale described the situation in Box 1

It also happens that a man, desiring to marry a woman not yielding to his advances, may coerce her into having sex with him, knowing that she will be forced by her family to marry him. In this way rape or accusation of rape are tools used to achieve the goal of marriage. As we will see later, because of the stigma and perceived reduced worth associated with being a survivor of rape, raping a woman may actually be seen as a cheaper and faster way to obtain a wife than courting her.

There was some discussion among a few participants about how certain customs help to lower the status of women and constitute structural barriers to women’s progress. Traditional practices such as the payment of bride price to the family of a woman, wife inheritance, pressure on women to marry and the normative expectations that a woman should always submit to her husband were among the practices cited. These customs are perceived to make women vulnerable, ultimately, to SGBV.

**Box 1**

*As we are here, if you are not married, people say that you are late for marriage. You have delayed being married. When the girl finds a boy that pleases her, she will do the best to bring herself to the boy in order that the boy marries her. It happens here that a girl, when she needs being married, she goes to the boy, tries to attract him, and when the boy is being touched by the girl, he is excited and finally he has sex with the girl. Although that is the aim of the girl, once the boy has had sex with her, she claims that the boy has raped her and won’t accept to go back to her parents. The marriage will start from there because the family of the girl will come and claim the dowry, and if the boy refuses to give something, the parents of the girl will go to court suing the boy that he has raped their daughter.*

*The ignorance on the man’s side because, as the man thinks he bought a woman by his bride price, he will exercise all kinds of power or do everything that he wants to his wife. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

Evidence from the free-list data supports the above findings from the FGDs and key informant interviews. In response to the free-list question, respondents

mentioned a total of 49 causes, more than half of which were mentioned by only one person, reflecting individual idiosyncrasies. The most salient causal factors mentioned by

the free-list respondents were war/conflict (65%) and poverty (46%). These two causes were consistently the most frequently cited in all locations except Kalonge, where insecurity and impunity were the causes cited most often.

### **Proximal causes**

**Failure of government machinery:** Participants adamantly highlighted the role of the government, not only in failing to prevent sexual violence, but also in tacitly encouraging it and benefiting from it through corruption. Repeatedly, participants spoke about the futility of turning to the legal system to address cases of sexual violence, as invariably the perpetrator would be out on bail even before the survivor was discharged from the hospital. Participants expressed great frustration at the situation. They perceived that the only way to hope for redress is to settle with the suspected rapist out of court. The corruption of government officials is a factor that is widely recognized as limiting the ability of the justice system to function effectively in cases of rape. The fear that corruption will not allow for justice discourages people from seeking a judicial settlement.

*In my opinion, I think rape will never end because they used to take the rapists to Goma for jail, and a few days later we can see them back. This has made people choose the amicable solution. They now are proceeding to amicable arrangements, as they find that there is no solution with justice. The police are not keeping the rapist even for a week. (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

*[O]ur territory leaders never react positively to the problem. You can bring them the case of rape, but they do not solve the matter properly as required by the law—this because they are very corrupt. In addition, if they arrest the rapist, they will put him in prison and later they ask for money or anything a rapist possesses at home, like a goat, or other valuable things. (Adult female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

In section *Perceptions about law enforcement* (p. 56), we will further discuss some of the problems perceived to be associated with the judicial process in cases of sexual violence.

**Provocative behaviors of women:** In several discussions some of women's behaviors came up as a major factor fostering SGBV. Both male and female study participants highlighted specific behaviors on the part of a woman that may incite a man to rape her. Such behaviors include wearing revealing clothing, manner of talking, provocative gestures or simply being unable to sexually satisfy her spouse. In these

discussions gender dynamics and its linkages with SGBV came out most explicitly, although participants did not identify it as such. In short, participants perceived that some women are raped because they provoke it.

*Another thing that makes it that rape cannot be stopped is the way women are dressed. When she passes close to men with inappropriate clothes, that show all the way her body is shaped, men are excited, and their minds send them to rape. Ladies are dressed in short skirts that show their thighs or pants that show the form of their sexual organs, and this sends men to rape them, especially young boys, even old men. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

*A disrespectful woman can meet with a man at a certain place and they start making bad jokes that will send the man to rape her. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Concerning what makes women susceptible to sexual violence, men had stronger opinions than women. In general, responses from the men highlighted gender stereotypes and dynamics. While some men thought that no woman could escape sexual violence, many men had very specific ideas about the profile of potential survivors and used such words as “adolescent,” “poor,” “beautiful” women, “badly behaving women” and “women in tight clothing” to describe the more vulnerable individuals.

*Beautiful women are targets of rape because they are desired by almost all men due to their beauty. Those that are the most targeted are those that are poor. They will be tempted and succumb because of their low living conditions. (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

*Women who are raped must be those who exaggerate in their makeup, apply a lot of things to their bodies, and use products that change their bodies. This kind of woman is most of the time raped at the river due to improper clothing. Greed may send a woman to go and look for soldiers in camps, look for young boys. Boys may desire her, though she is married, due to her bad way of dressing. She has no dignity, wearing short skirts like young girls, and this sends men to come to her. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

In contrast, women tended to believe that nothing about a woman necessarily predisposes her to rape. For them, rapists are not discriminating and take whoever happens to come their way, irrespective of age or physical appearance.

*In terms of rape there is no preference to the rapist. Most rapists are soldiers, and they do not have choice. They rape whoever they find. They rape even the teenagers, little girls. Such situations are very frequent here. (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Nonetheless, some female participants expressed the view that, through her behavior, a woman could drive her husband to perpetrate SGBV on other women. They spoke of how wives, by being “dirty” and not performing their “duties,” drove their husbands to seek other women.

*A woman who makes herself dirty most of the time can't attract her husband to be pleased with her, and this influences and allows the man to go out wooing different women. (Adult female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

**Sexual desire:** Here again, the blame falls mostly on women. There were abundant mentions of SGBV induced by aroused but unconsummated sexual desire. Men discussed how a woman might provoke sexual desire in a man and then refuse to consent to sex. This makes it hard for the man to refrain from raping her.

*[T]here is a young girl who can be seeing a boy passing very often and finally provokes him. She can call him and blame him for not talking to her. Then she starts telling him lots of things. Later, they start greeting each other and familiarizing, sitting together, and the girl gets to convince the boy. You, girl, are the one who started, and in this case it is the girl who has raped the boy. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

There was also discussion of how some individuals cannot control their sexual desire to the point of “sickness” and hence cannot avoid engaging in SGBV.

*Now, people are mentioning rape, men are raping women or girls, but you may find a young girl has been used to do sex, and this has become like a habit or even sickness: she always needs a man. The same for men. There are men who are sick with sex. They will find a little girl at home and takes her to have sex with her. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Chambucha)*

In the section *Perceptions about gender roles* (p. 68) we will further explore gender and gender dynamics and their association with SGBV.

## Perceptions about consequences for survivors of sexual violence

Community members had varied impressions regarding survivors of sexual violence and their families. There were heated debates over the consequences of sexual violence for the survivors and their families. Some also shared their perception of what constitutes a “typical” victim’s profile.

During the various FGDs, the discussion of the consequences of sexual violence for its survivors was in-depth, perhaps reflecting the high prevalence of sexual violence in these communities.

The FGD participants categorized the consequences of sexual violence in several domains, ranging from physical health consequences to the psychological/mental health consequences for the individual. They also spoke about socio-cultural and economic consequences and further categorized consequences based on the victim’s life stage—single or married. Also, there was discussion of attitudes of the immediate family and the community towards the survivor.

**Health consequences:** Discussants identified a wide spectrum of physical and psychological health consequences, both short- and long-term, that the survivors of SGBV often face. These consequences ranged from physical injury through pregnancy, shame, and suicidal thoughts to infection with HIV/AIDS. One recurrent theme was the marginalization, rejection and shame that the survivor has to endure. This situation may lead the survivor to take actions that put her life and that of others in jeopardy.

*Lots of consequences can occur, such as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Sometimes she is unwillingly pregnant. Her mind can even be disturbed. She can even be pregnant and does not have anybody to support her, and at delivery time she can throw the baby or even abort. Others can even kill themselves. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

A woman described how the survivor can become tormented and emotionally disturbed after the experience, to the point of committing suicide.

*That is why this causes even death. She contracts serious diseases after being raped and finally she dies. She may even die of thoughts, considering the way people are treating her, her husband rejects her, and at the end she can even commit suicide. (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

A male participant described how the shame that a survivor experiences can affect her physical health:

*It is normal that she feels cold before others as she is always ashamed. She may even suffer from high blood pressure. She needs being assisted; she needs being counseled. (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

The emotional trauma, coupled with the possibility of sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy and damage to sexual organs, makes sexual violence particularly disturbing and dehumanizing for the survivor.

*The consequences of these attacks are mainly fistulas, trauma, unwanted pregnancies, STI/AIDS...marginalization and rejection of the victims. (Human rights activist, key informant, Bunyakiri)*

**Relational consequences:** Some of the discussions addressed the inability of a survivor of sexual violence to have or keep a husband, since she is rejected by society, her family or other members of the community as not being of equal status. Shame is felt by the survivor as well as by his/her family.

*Bad luck if she is a married woman! It is a pity: The husband will hate her forever. The husband will be speaking to her every day, “You bitch, witch, prostitute, nonsense. You are scrap value, you expired, go away, leave me alone, foolish woman.” (Adult woman, FGD participant, Chambucha)*

As participants described it, married women are constantly taunted by their husbands and no longer command their respect and trust. In some cases the husband deserts them, increasing their emotional trauma as well as making it hard for them to make ends meet.

*When a woman is raped, her husband will never trust her. All the time he will be mocking her and insulting her with [hateful] words, and sometimes he chases her away—too much negligence and immoral words. (Adult female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

A woman described how married women often hide the fact they were raped because they fear that their husbands would not understand and might abandon them.

*The husband runs away. He says that he cannot live with a woman who has been raped. This is even one of the reasons that make a victim stay quiet and not report that she has been raped. Because she fears that, when the husband learns this, he will chase her. (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Another woman spoke about the consequences of becoming pregnant with the perpetrator's child.

*A serious problem with the husband is when she got a pregnancy of that rapist. Goodness, you will feel pity for her! The husband will be good bothered. She will never get peace, she will be sorry, and [emotionally disturbed] with too much thought. She can even kill herself. I am telling, it is terrible.... Better you hear but do not run into such a situation. You cannot bear it. (Adult female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

For the unmarried girl, sexual violence often means getting married to the perpetrator, often against her wish. Families often worry that the girl has lost her value and will not find a husband, so the family decides to settle the issue “amicably” with the perpetrator.

*Once a girl has been raped, she loses the chances of being married. Young boys start...[to] run away from her, and everywhere the girl is going, she is being pointed the finger. (Adult male, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Beyond that, the experience can affect not only the health of the rape survivor but also that of the child conceived from rape.

*Yes, a daughter who has been raped and made pregnant will lose her beauty, will live miserably. She loses her chance of getting a good and desired husband. She becomes sick all the time; her health is no longer good, nor is that of the baby she will give birth to. (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Other perceived social consequences for the survivor of sexual violence (rape in particular) include dropping out of school, poverty perpetuated from one generation to the next and her inability to properly raise a child whose father is unknown or absent. A woman spoke of this chain of consequences and referred to it as a violation of the rights of the woman and the child.

*Lots of girls are no longer studying due to rape. She might have been raped while going to school and got pregnant. After having gotten a child, her poor parents do not have means of feeding both her and her child and paying school fees. Finally, she abandons her studies. She could have become a minister, but due to rape, her life is spoilt. This is really against women’s rights, child rights, and girls’ rights. (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

**Socio-cultural and economic consequences:** As participants describe, survivors face complex socio-cultural and economic consequences. These consequences vary depending on whether the woman is single or married at the time of the assault. Female

participants were especially vocal about the consequences of sexual violence for married women.

According to participants, the way rape survivors are treated by their families and the community amounts to ostracism. While in a few cases the survivor receives support, study participants agreed that in the majority of cases the survivor was shunned by the community and often by her family, too.

*A girl can be raped and fail to tell her parents or members of her family, because she is ashamed and fearing to being chased from home. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

*They call them prostitutes, witch, bitch. The community is neglecting them very much; they are mocking them. They can decide whether to take you to hospital or not, because to them your wound is yours; they don't consider you of value. They are normally saying, "It is up to her, bitch nonsense. She lost her market, no one will approach her, no man will be wooing her.... Leave her alone. Let her suffer the consequences." (Adult female, FGD participant, Chambucha)*

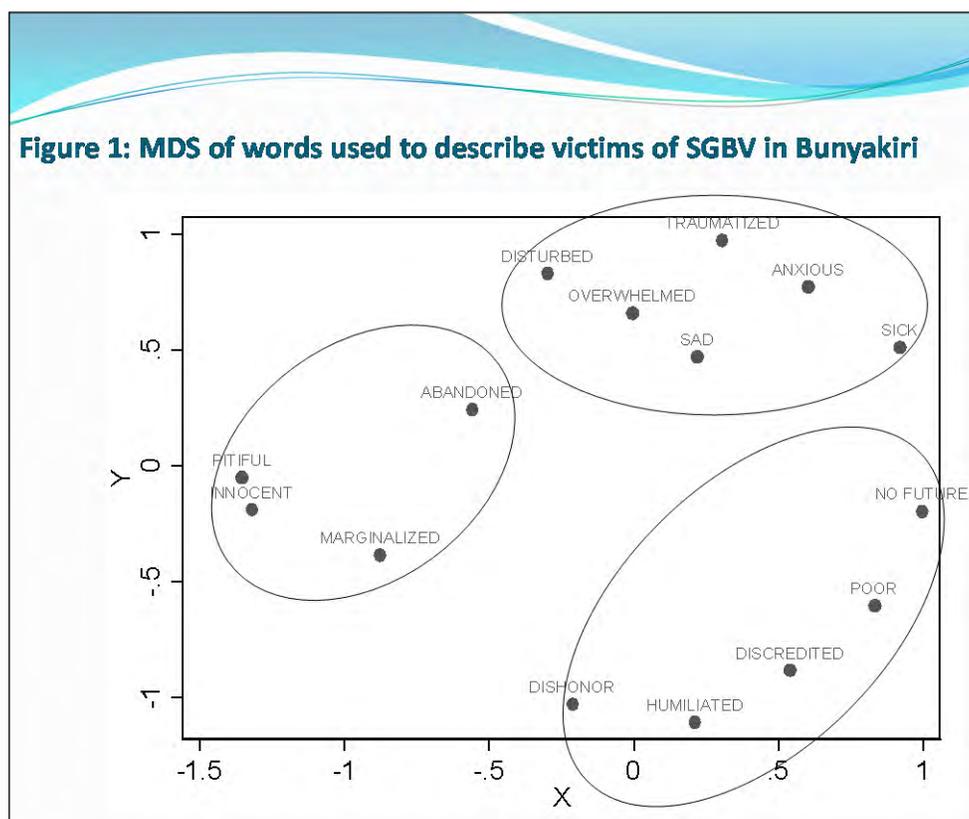
Some spoke of how the community makes the survivor feel that she has lost her dignity. Furthermore, some feared that she would help to spread HIV in the community. The assumption that the rape survivor is HIV-infected and the fear of catching the infection from her are key factors behind the community's attitude towards survivors.

*Some of them will say, "This woman has HIV/AIDS. She will spread it throughout all the area. Do not ever shake hands with her. She is a fucker girl; she does not deserve to live in our society. She is a snitch, witch, bitch, prostitute." She is much neglected by the family. (Adult male, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

Evidence from free-list data is consistent with findings from the FGDs and KIIs regarding the perceived consequences of sexual violence, particularly rape. The free-listing exercise generated a total of 65 terms to describe a woman who had experienced sexual violence. In general, the words evoke suffering, sickness, mental disorder, loss of value, discrimination and neglect. The number of items listed per person ranged from one to seven and varied by location. Specifically, the respondents in Walikale were less likely to provide a long list of words than their peers in Bunyakiri or Chambucha.

The most salient words differed by location, also. In Bunyakiri the most salient words reflect emotional suffering, for example, "sad" and "anxious." These two words were mentioned by 64% and 50% of the respondents, respectively. As the results of the

multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) show (see Figure 1), three themes emerged from the perceptions expressed by the respondents in Bunyakiri: emotional distress (as evidenced



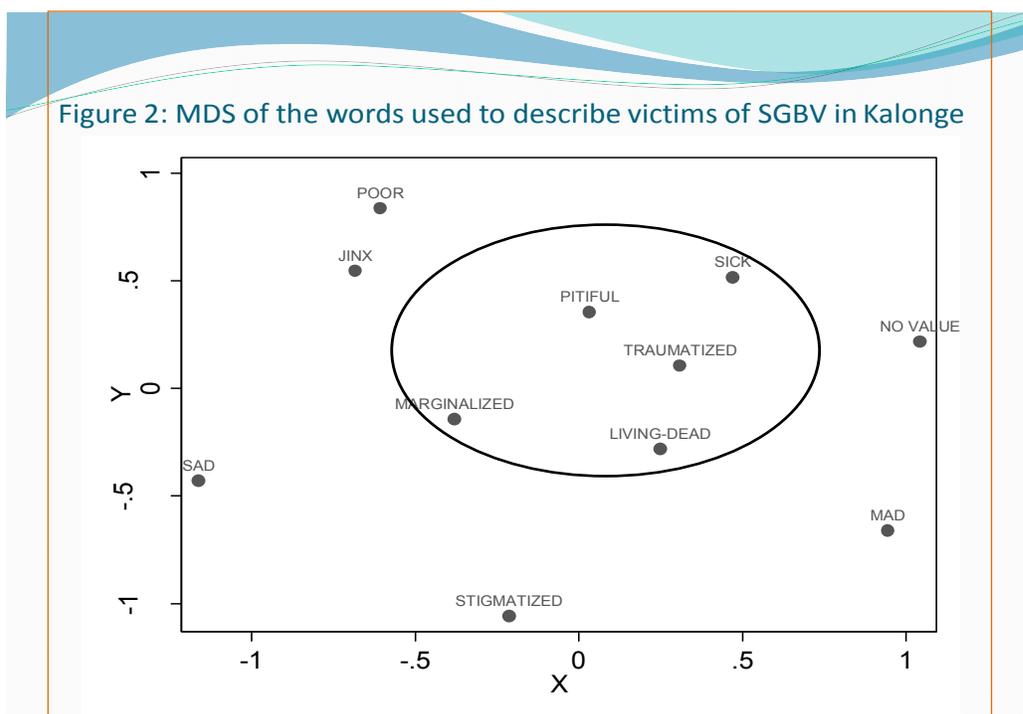
in the clustering of word such as “sad”, “overwhelmed”, “disturbed”, etc.), marginalization (as suggested by the way words such as “abandoned”, “marginalization” and “pitiful” cluster on the figure) and deprivation or loss of tangible and intangible value (as can be interpreted from the clustering of words such as “discredited”, “poor”, “humiliated” and “dishonor”).

The most salient terms in Chambucha were “sick” and “vulnerable,” words that evoke the perceived suffering and insecurity of the survivors. These words were mentioned by 43% and 37% of the respondents, respectively. No one term was mentioned by a majority of respondents. Indeed, most of the words used to describe the survivors of sexual violence in Chambucha reflect personal idiosyncrasies rather than a shared perception.

In Kalonge two words were the most salient: “sick” and “sad.” Some 90% and 50% mentioned these words. Multi-dimensional scaling shows that the two dimensions underlying perceptions in Kalonge about the survivors of sexual violence are the emotional dimension (from “sad” to “mad”) and the deprivation dimension (from “poor”

to “stigmatized”) (see Figure 2). The core items mentioned reflect these two dimensions: “sick,” “pitiful,” “traumatized,” “living-dead.”

The most salient items in Walikale were “sick” and “traumatized,” terms again evoking physical and emotional suffering. Some 43% and 36% of the respondents mentioned these terms. Many of the terms listed were idiosyncratic; nonetheless, the core



terms suggest that a victim of sexual violence is generally linked with morbidity, emotional suffering and relational and material deprivation.

### Perceptions about perpetrators

In the FGDs the discussions about perpetrators of sexual violence reflected the community’s perception that “profiling” of the perpetrators is very difficult because of the high prevalence of sexual violence in the community and because perpetrators come from all walks of life. This sentiment was reflected in the thoughts of one young girl, who felt that all men were potential perpetrators of sexual violence and lamented their lack of “morals.”

*I think it is the masculine sex in general. Because even young boys rape. And what I can add here is to say that it is seen that the masculine sex all in general these days, they don't have morals, because the person who is even seeing a woman who is naked, to the contrary he can see how to cover her,*

*but as there are no morals, this is pushing a person to misconduct like that.*  
**(Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bukavu)**

Nonetheless, some discussants made an attempt to categorize perpetrators or to describe the characteristics of individuals they thought were most often perpetrators of SGBV. For example, some participants differentiated between “powerful” perpetrators such as military personnel and a perpetrator who belongs to the community. In the case of the military perpetrator, the majority thought nothing could be done to resolve the issue or ensure justice; the community just had to face the consequences. The government was the only agency, they thought, that could intervene and bring peace. The community decried the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war by the FDLR and other armed forces.

*The FDLRs, with the aim of community sabotage and destabilization, are using sexual violence as a war weapon.* **(Adult male, FGD participant, Bukavu)**

In this context it is widely believed that the military lacks discipline and that soldiers see themselves as above the law. In the opinion of some community members, the government has failed to show that it is serious in enforcing discipline among military personnel.

*Our soldiers have no conscience, they have no discipline, and we need the government to seriously follow the law to punish all soldiers who engage in this violence.* **(Adult female, FGD participant, Chambucha)**

Some FGD discussants saw wealth as part of the profile of the perpetrator. In particular, rich men were widely seen as getting away with sexual violence; they would buy off the legal system or offer money to their survivors each time they were caught.

*Old men with money keep raping little girls and paying the fine either to the family of the girl or at the court...and they are released. This cannot be stopped. Families also accept that it be arranged amicably because they find that nothing will be done at the police, or, due to poverty, they accept that the rapist gives an amount of money as a fine.* **(Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)**

Some participants believed that rich women were equally guilty. The thinking in this regards is that rich women, lacking sexual satisfaction in their marital relationships, target male adolescents, who fall easy prey to these women with financial means.

*Others are young boys of 15 and 20 who are targeted by old women who have much money. These old women do like young boys because they are the most*

*sexually active and are found to be capable of sexually satisfying these old women. These boys are most targeted by women because these women think they can play sex a longer time possible than their husbands do in their homes. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Others describe perpetrators as prostitutes or as HIV-positive persons moved by the desire to spread the disease.

*And there is another man who can rape willing to contaminate a woman with a certain illness he has. He would envy a girl and decides to do the best to contaminate her. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

A few participants thought the perpetrators lacked self-control or were immature and therefore indulged in inappropriate actions.

*Men who frequently rape are those who cannot make decisions. When he looks at a girl wearing a short skirt, or is called by a woman to have sex for money, he is incapable of containing himself and abstaining. Finally, he succumbs to the temptation. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

The perpetrators were often seen as wicked people who would not show mercy to the survivors. These characteristics were often attributed to rebels and FDLR.

*They do not have pity on any individual.... If you are lucky, they rape you and release you alive. But you will soon suffer from many kinds of diseases. (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Beyond the perceived characteristics of the perpetrators, data from the free-list exercise enable us to appreciate what community members think of perpetrators and how they label the people who engage in acts of sexual violence. The question that asked informants to list the words to describe perpetrators of sexual violence yielded 52 distinct terms. In general, the informants had very strong words to describe the perpetrators, ranging from “murderer” to “gangster” and including “criminal,” “demon,” “devil,” “sorcerer,” “abnormal,” “destroyer” and “animal.” The words most frequently used were “murderer” (54%) and “gangster” (50%). The salience of these words differed across socio-demographic groups. For example, perceptions about the perpetrators of sexual violence varied by location. The most salient term in Bunyakiri, Chambucha and Kalonge was “murderer.” In Walikale “gangster” was the most salient word used to describe a perpetrator. Similarly, women were more likely than men to refer to perpetrators as murderers (71% compared with 39%) or sorcerers (38% compared with 18%). Indeed, for men, the most salient term was “gangster.”

Different words tended to be used to describe men and women who perpetrate acts of sexual violence. Male perpetrators of sexual violence were most commonly seen as murderers and gangsters. In contrast, female perpetrators were primarily perceived as sorcerers; more than two-thirds of the informants used this word. Moreover, those who cited “sorcerer” tended to mention the word first on their lists. Women were more likely than men to use the word “sorcerer” to describe female perpetrators—83% compared with 54%. In contrast, men were more likely to see female perpetrators as “gangsters” or “murderers.” Also, the word “sorcerer” was more commonly used to describe female perpetrators in Kalonge (100%) and Chambucha (86%) than elsewhere.

Other labels often associated with perpetrators in both the FGDs and the free-list exercise included “alcoholics,” “drug addicts,” “delinquents,” “sex-starved,” “consumed by sexual desire,” “without a wife,” “jealous,” “possessive,” “ignorant,” “have no love inside,” “stupid” and those who watch pornography. The quotation below illustrates some of these sentiments.

*Rapists are mostly drug addicts, and 85% to hemp. Cultivation was widespread among the FDLR. (Human rights activist, key informant, Bunyakiri)*

*The man feels like his wife has disappointed him when she refuses to have sex at the time the man wanted this. The refusals of the wife to have sex with her husband can send the husband to rape. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

## **Perceptions about law enforcement**

### **Access and efficiency of the legal process**

Almost all individuals who discussed the legal process for sexual violence cases felt that the process was inefficient and not properly implemented. Some described the legal process as “ineffective,” “incompetent,” “inefficient” and “not credible.” Many stated that, even though there are laws in place for sexual crimes, these laws are not implemented in a way that punishes the perpetrators nor is there attention to prevention of sexual violence. At best, law enforcement reacts to cases of rape rather than prevents them.

*It is as if those services are not available. They wait until the radios broadcast that there has been a case of rape somewhere, and then they go. They do not prevent. They don't sensitize the population at all the levels to prevent. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

A large number of individuals stated that the lack of firm and decisive actions on the part of law enforcement agents has led to an increase in the incidence of sexual violence. As noted earlier, discussants felt that the obvious lack of punishment for perpetrators emboldens perpetrators to act again and also disinhibits others from perpetrating sexual violence.

*One more thing is that there are no sanctions reserved to those who are committing sexual violence. If they were seriously sanctioned, sexual violence would have stopped because any other person who would think of doing the same would consider the way he sees the predecessor being punished.... A sexual violence perpetrator will violate such a woman, tomorrow one more, after tomorrow one more. The more he is not punished, the more he keeps raping, and the consequence is that he is spreading sexually transmitted diseases to women. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

The inability of the justice system to deliver transparent justice in cases of rape is perceived to send the message to the population that one can engage in sexual violence with impunity. For example, a few participants thought that the attitude of government officials, coupled with rampant corruption, was encouraging even ordinary people to indulge in SGBV because they think that they can get away without any punishment and so they have no fear of law enforcement.

*The other reason for rape is impunity. The police happen to arrest a rapist, but at night they set him free, and this tends to encourage other people in the villages to commit rape. Tomorrow somebody else will do the same because he is sure the police will not punish him or he will settle the problem amicably with the family of the victim, who will at the last not profit anything from this amicable solution. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

*The very problem that we face is that the rapists are not punished. He may be taken to jail, and after a few days he appears in the village, having been released. If they had been seriously punished, they could not repeat it again. As they say that a rapist has to be in jail for 26 years, but they are not doing so. Rape could have decreased if they were seriously punished and served as examples to others who would attempt to rape. (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Corruption in the legal process was frequently mentioned. Corruption was widely believed to play a role in the inefficacy of the legal process and helped explain why arrangements outside of the legal process were common. Corruption was discussed in two major ways. One way concerned paying someone in the court system for the release of

the perpetrator. Such corruption occurs either after the incident, to prevent the case from going to court, or after the perpetrator has been put in jail. Typically, the law enforcement agent demands money from the alleged rapist, who is only too willing to comply. Once money has changed hands, the law enforcement agent will do everything possible to dismiss the case and release the alleged rapist. The result is that the survivor finds herself becoming an object of ridicule, abandoned by family and friends and bearing the stigma associated with rape for many years. In contrast, the rapist is free to rape again. Indeed, many voiced frustrations at seeing perpetrators who had been convicted of sexual violence released from prison quickly and back on the street due to corruption.

*Firstly, when the case of rape is taken to court, here the prosecutor will laugh, he will put the rapist in jail, and, when the night comes, he will get him out and take him to his home. There he will talk to the rapist, "Listen, guy, give me \$400 and go away. As you are of Bukavu, I want you to take the way to Goma and do not show your face in Bukavu for a long time."* **(Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)**

Participants deplored the fact that the process of administering, or not administering, justice in cases of SGBV has become big business for law enforcement agents.

Another way that corruption operates to thwart the judicial process is when the alleged perpetrator knows someone in the court system who will release him or fail to prosecute him. This person does not have to receive any money but may feel obliged to "protect" the reputation of a family member or friend.

*Those who have been raped go to the court because the case cannot be tried in the absence of the two people involved. The boy may say he is not guilty, and they will be required to present results of the hospital test. This will prove that it was true or wrong, as the girl will be there. Once I have a friend in the court, I will make sure that I will be right... We do not trust in courts here.* **(Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)**

Corruption of law enforcement agents was not the only problem; other challenges exist to make obtaining justice through the legal system an illusion for most community members. The general perception was that, even if law enforcement agents were willing to and were seen to honestly address rape charges, multiple factors that make it difficult for the community to access the justice system and obtain redress. These problems make it preferable for survivors and their families to settle out of court. Indeed, due to the distance to the police station, lack of transportation and the fact that the onus for reporting fall on the survivor, families perceive that an “amicable” solution is an easier

option. The frustration associated with attempts to obtain justice from the legal system was articulated by a key informant from Bunyakiri in Box 2.

**Box 2**

*The law on sexual violence is there, but it raises enough problems. There is the lack of means of transport to convey the alleged perpetrator to the courts over 100 km from the place where the crime was committed. At times the perpetrator is apprehended and brought to the police station, but it still requires the victim's family to find money to pay transportation costs for the perpetrator, the officer and victim to go to Kavumu from Bunyakiri. The victim's family gets discouraged and abandons the case. This state of affairs is often the basis for out-of-court settlement because the victim's family prefers to receive any money from the offender since they are not sure to receive anything from the court. At times the victim's family manages to find money and pays the travel costs to Kavumu. But due to many cases of hearings that are cancelled without prior notice, they are forced to return to Bunyakiri. At times the bailiff fails to inform the family of the date of the next hearing. At the end, the accused is acquitted because the complainant is absent, and the case is closed.*

The law enforcement agents were not the only ones implicated in corruption in rape cases. Community leaders were also perceived to take bribes to frustrate the legal process. This situation is particularly unfortunate since community leaders are expected to offer support to survivors of SGBV.

*The role of community leaders is to assist the victim, but...they allow themselves to be corrupted by the rapist and they fail to send the message to the Court, and immediately they change their*

*position against the victim, after they have taken money from the rapist.*

**(Adult man, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)**

### **Attitudes about the government and government-backed military**

Almost all of those who mentioned the government mentioned their distrust of it. The government was described as “irresponsible.” Some participants mentioned that, due to corruption in the ranks of the government, they do not trust the government to protect them.

*However, today, there is no right; the government doesn't know its responsibility. The common word today is: "Wamutu mbele." This means, since you have a brother or a friend holding this or that post in the government, [you can] do whatever [and] no one will prevent you from doing it or from succeeding in any plan. (Adult female, FGD participant, Chambucha)*

In addition to prevalent corruption within the government, participants also recognized some broader factors that government officials face daily in the exercise of their duties. The problems mentioned included lack of appropriate and effective means of transportation for government officials. Moreover, the generally low salaries of government officials were perceived to be a motivation for yielding to corruption.

As for soldiers, many who mentioned them believed that they are perpetrators of sexual violence. One respondent mentioned that soldiers appear immune to the law; they are not prosecuted or stopped from committing acts of sexual violence. They are described as "callous" and having "no discipline" and "no conscience." The participants did not seem to see any difference between government soldiers and rebel forces regarding perpetration of SGBV. Both forces tended to be lumped together.

*If you refuse, he beats you. He can even kill you. Some of the rapists can rape you even more than five (times) and later they kill you. This has happened in our village. Those who do these acts are mostly soldiers and rebels, the FDLR. (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Some participants mentioned the complicity of military leadership in preventing erring soldiers from being brought to justice. The military appears to offer a safe haven for soldiers accused of sexual violence. Instead of handing the case over to law-enforcement officers for prosecution, it appears that the common practice is to transfer the accused soldiers to another location. This practice has contributed to eroding the confidence that the population might have had in the military.

*...perpetrators of these cases of rape are rarely punished, not only because they are not identified and are difficult to apprehend, but some fighters and Congolese soldiers identified as such—many of them are released or transferred elsewhere to lose the trail. (Male key informant, Bukavu)*

### **Alternatives to the legal process: settlement outside the courtroom**

The resolution of sexual violence crimes outside of the formal legal system was widely discussed. Almost all discussed these arrangements as both extremely common

and most times preferable for families to going through the court system. This out-of-court settlement takes various forms, such as payment from the perpetrator to the survivor's family, agreement to marry the survivor or other forms of compensation to the survivor's family. Payment in money or livestock was most commonly mentioned.

*In other cases the rapist may be a community member. The parents of the victim require that the rapist pay one to three goats as reparation of the damage and to reconcile the two families. (Adult male, FGD participant, Chambucha)*

In box 3 below, an adolescent female FGD participant from Bunyakiri describes how the settlement varies depending on the circumstances.

The reasons for preferring this form of resolution vary. The major reasons mentioned include a lack of trust in the police and courts, advice from church or territory/community leaders, fear of social stigma (either pressure to avoid bringing shame on the survivor and his/her family or fear of the survivor never getting married due to the violation) and to avoid conflict between families. Poverty is also mentioned as a reason that families may prefer monetary compensation over a course of legal action.

*There are some families that ask the rapist to build a house for them as reparation or ask the rapist to give a full bride price and the girl stays at her parent's. Or the rapist is asked to give the dowry and take the girl, because if she stays at her parents' people will be pointing fingers at her, and, as the girl,*

*I will accept that the rapist takes me to his home even if I do not love him, rather than being pointed fingers at in the village.*

**(Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)**

The process of these arrangements also varies. Most commonly, a chief, community leader or church leader will

**Box 3**

*The perpetrator ... if it is an FDLR, they cannot go look for him in the forest. But if he is from the neighborhood, they will try to find him and find out why/how he raped. They may ask the boy to give the bride price. Sometimes they take the boy and the girl to authorities first to reconcile the two people. They cannot kill the boy simply for raping. They decide what the rapist will pay the victim. If it is a wife who has been raped, her husband goes to report, and the rapist pays a kind of compensation, and the matter is resolved in that way. If the victim is a girl, her parents accept to be given the bride price and hand over the daughter to the boy in case the parents are nice. And if the parents are difficult, the boy pays the full bride price and he will not get the girl. The local authorities sometimes have had to intervene in such problems because some on the side of the girl come with machetes and say they will kill the family of the rapist because he spoilt their young girl. In such a situation the local authorities are required to transmit the case to the police or the court, where they will better decide how to proceed.*

bring the two families together to discuss compensation in an "amicable agreement." It

was mentioned that the survivor is often not included in these discussions; it is only the families who are involved in the decision. One participant mentioned that, if the case went to the court, the survivor would have a chance to speak about the incident, but not so in an “amicable arrangement” between families. After there is agreement between the families, the charges, if any have been filed, are dropped.

The process of amicable settlement does not necessarily have to involve third parties. For example, the participants discussed one form of settlement in which only the perpetrator and the survivor are aware of the incident. The perpetrator offers compensation to the survivor, who then accepts in exchange for the promise not to discuss the incident or else to lie that the two are friends should other people become aware of the incident. Girls are likely to be persuaded to keep quiet about their ordeal because of the shame associated with being a survivor of rape.

*A boy can rape a girl and, after the act, the girl attempts to cry so that people come to help; but the boy will calm the girl down by giving her money or some valuable thing, and he promises to pay her some more in addition so that people do not know what has happened. The boy says to the girl that, if she cries, people will come and she will be the one to be the most shamed. Then the girl accepts. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

*There exist arrangements of promise of marriage. They say, “As I have already raped you, keep quiet, don’t say anything. You are the one I will get married to. Don’t tell it to anybody.” (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

Some participants saw the possibility and acceptability of paying money as compensation for rape as a form of immunity for the perpetrators. But the injustice of this type of arrangement was apparent to a few participants. The participants believed that out-of-court settlement gives tacit encouragement to rich men to continue raping girls boldly and without remorse, since they know that they can always compensate the families of the survivors for the crime committed.

*Old men with money keep raping little girls and pay the fine either to the family of the girl or to the court or both to the court and the family of the girl, and they are released. (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

Although amicable settlement was very widely described as common, there was a minority opinion that people are starting to become aware of its illegality and careful about resorting to it publicly. This growing awareness appears to be limited to urban areas for now.

.....nowadays with these sensitizations that are broadcast on the radio, the chiefs have begun to fear amicable arrangements, because if there is amicable arrangement, it is you, the chief who has accepted it, who will be punished.  
(Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bukavu)

## Legal literacy

### The law of 2006

Among the participants who discussed the law of 2006, the level of understanding about the law varied. On the whole, knowledge about the law is weak, at best. A few participants mentioned that they had heard about the law, while the majority had not. Others had mixed understandings or knew that a law existed but did not know details.

*There is no law in favor of the victims. We have not heard of it yet.*  
(Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)

*We do not know much about the 2006 law on sexual violence.* (Male key informant, Chambucha)

It seems that some individuals have some information about specific provisions of the law, but the information is not always correct. A few participants in Bukavu knew that a person convicted of rape could be sentenced to up to 25 years imprisonment and that sex with a minor is a criminal offense even if there was consent. Much of what study participants said concerning the provisions of the law of 2006 centered on the length of the jail time associated with a conviction for rape. They mentioned jail times ranging from 5 to 25 years. On the whole, it appears that the participants in Bukavu were more knowledgeable about the law than those in the other study locations. In all the study locations, however, there was much misinformation about the provisions of the law.

*Me, I understand that the person who has raped must be jailed for 25 years, and he must pay, like, 10,000 CF. He must compensate first the family of that person [that] he raped.* (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bukavu)

*[A]s I heard, according to the law of 2001, if someone rapes a girl of less than 18 years old, he will be arrested and imprisoned for 25 years or 5 years.*  
(Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)

Among the male participants with some knowledge about the law, there was a feeling that the law specially favors women and discriminates against men. The argument in this context is that the law appears to assume that those who commit acts of sexual violence are invariably men.

*For me, really it is men who are sacrificed through that law. It can happen that the woman has raped, but she will be protected. Everything said about that law speaks on the behalf of the woman. It shows that the woman can't rape but can be raped. In reality, that law frightens the men. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

The law of 2006 may be familiar to human rights activists and other select few in DRC, but the general population generally lacks understanding about the provisions of the law. The lack of knowledge about the law among the general population and the failure of the justice system to enforce the law further reinforce the preference of community members to settle rape cases out of court.

*There is law, but in our village things are settled amicably. When my child has been raped and I go to the territorial court, I will find the rapist's friends, who will convince the parents with money, and the case ends there. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

### **Understanding of the steps to take after sexual violence**

People have limited understanding about the process to take after sexual violence has occurred. A few women in different locations stated that the survivor has to be taken to the hospital within 72 hours. Some say the survivor should seek treatment at a hospital first; others state that the survivor first reports to the police station and then receives medical treatment. In Kalonge the common answer was that survivors go to the police first. In Bunyakiri and Walikale a more common answer was to go to a hospital first and then to the police or courts.

*She is first taken for medical care, for instance in hospital, then they will be taking her from there to the court and back to hospital during the preparation of the case for filing. As far as the victims are concerned, some of them keep quiet, others ask that the rapist be charged to court, and others ask that the rapist not be pursued. Other parents do not follow the recommendations of the girl. They take their own decisions and later tell the girl what they have decided. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

As to the process of reporting crimes such as sexual violence in their own village specifically, adolescents in Chambucha (male and female) mentioned that these cases are reported to the police post. If appropriate action is not taken at that level, they take the case to the central prison in the territorial capital.

In general, knowledge appears to be very limited about which courts handle cases of sexual violence. Moreover, there is some confusion concerning formal legal processes versus alternative methods of justice or resolution of sexual violence cases.

## **Community resources and involvement in addressing sexual violence**

### **Community discussion of sexual violence**

Most participants stated that sexual violence is not openly discussed in their communities. However, one adolescent man in Bukavu mentioned that members of the community spoke "prudently" about sexual violence. Speaking about sex, particularly to younger people, was described several times as not socially acceptable. If sex or sexual violence is discussed, as one man mentioned, there is a fear that young people will be more inclined to engage in sexual behavior.

*Speaking about sexual violence is against every sense of decency in our community. You can discuss about the values and not anti-values. The question of sexual violence is not a question of debate between the children and the parents, especially as it is a question of sex. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

The focus group of adolescent girls in Bukavu discussed this issue in more detail. They mentioned that community members preferred to keep issues touching on sexual violence a secret. Discussions about sex, including sexual violence, rarely take place within families. Adolescents may discuss such issues with their peers but would be careful that an adult does not hear them. For adolescents, even discussing sexual violence with peers may not even take place due to the shame associated with the experience.

*They do speak about it but with much shame, because when I am with my friends I cannot start...saying that I have been sexually abused, or I went somewhere and found my boyfriend, who forced me to have sex. No, they do not say this because it is shameful. Even everywhere I may go, I cannot say that because it is shameful. They do not say that because it is shameful; they cannot dare say that. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

Adult participants, too, said that community discussion about sexual violence is lacking. Women may discuss the issue among themselves, while men may share their views on the issue with other men. Rarely would such discussion take place openly or in a loud voice.

Regarding what should be the attitude of a family with a member who has experienced sexual violence, responses were mixed. While some believed family members should discuss the incident publicly, others were of the opinion that the family should be silent about it but take it up with the perpetrator and his/her family.

*People should not hide. They just have to say that such a girl has been raped. And there are some others who keep it a secret to say that their daughter has been raped by such a boy, especially when both families are friends. They will not want the case to go to court. They will keep it a secret and arrange it amicably in secret. Some others can denounce the case of violence openly.*

**(Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bukavu)**

Community leaders contribute to the culture of silence about sexual violence. Some FGD participants reported that often, when there is a case of sexual violence, community elders would advise the family of the survivor not to bring the case out into the open but instead to be discreet and negotiate secretly with the perpetrator. In many instances community leaders help the families to broker a marriage agreement or other form of settlement. As discussed previously, this is a common response at the community level to incidents of sexual violence. As an adolescent girl from Kalonge describes,

*You see, when a boy has committed sexual violence and is caught, he corrupts that one who caught him with \$5 or \$10 and asks him not to tell the news to people. At the same time, they arrange and the case ends there. Or the family of the perpetrator arranges with the family of the victim, and they close the case. The boy will give a cow or some money. Then the case is concluded, and they decide that the boy will marry the girl. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

One of the main reasons for limited discussion of sexual violence in the community is that topics touching on sex are taboo; people who engage in such discussions may be viewed as prostitutes or given other pejorative labels. Moreover, for the sake of decency, topics dealing with sex are discussed using non-graphic and non-explicit expressions that may have the unintended consequence of belittling the gravity of the crime. For example, as we saw earlier, the expressions used in the community to describe sexual violence do not explicitly mention sex, although they do connote violence.

Another reason for not discussing sexual violence openly has to do with the stigma associated with being a survivor of sexual violence. Indeed, sexual violence discredits not only the survivor but also his or her family members as well. People would rather keep

quiet about the unpleasant experience and suffer in silence than risk being humiliated, mocked and ostracized by the community.

*They do not speak about this case openly, fearing their daughter will miss being married. They think that disclosing the news will cause their daughter to no longer find a man to marry. Besides, they think that bringing the case to court will generate conflicts between families, and according to our customs, this spoils the young girl's reputation, and it is a taboo. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

### **Community action on SGBV**

FGD participants discussed at length the actions that their community takes to prevent SGBV or to address cases of sexual violence. Contributions from various participants suggest that the community is not doing much to prevent SGBV. The community often takes some steps to assist the survivor, however, and to extract reparation from the alleged perpetrator. Community members may help to transport the survivor to a health facility. They may also help to apprehend the alleged perpetrator and hand him/her over to the police. More importantly, it appears that the community, through its elders, is active mostly in helping to broker an amicable resolution between the survivor and perpetrator.

*In respect of the victim, the community directs her to the hospital first and then to the support structures. [They] encourage the victim to claim reparation, even ... when the perpetrator is not identified. (Key informant, male, Walikale)*

*When that situation happens, if there are educated people in the neighborhood, first thing they take the victim to hospital. After there, the parents go to justice; that is, they go to the state to complain of the way they rape. Me, this is what I see in the neighborhood. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

Some participants acknowledged that the community does nothing to intervene in cases of sexual violence. This community inaction is attributed to the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence.

*They do nothing. The family of the victim is the one that struggles to carry the victim to hospital. The community remains quiet about going to court. They do not react. (Adult female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

*The community does absolutely nothing because victims are hidden and do not tell anyone. (Male key informant, Kalonge)*

Pervasive corruption among community leaders is another factor perceived to hinder effective community action. The fear that community leaders do not handle cases of sexual violence objectively and with fairness and transparency may make many survivors keep quiet about their experience and suffer in silence.

The role of the church in community response to sexual violence was repeatedly mentioned. The church provides not only advice but also financial and logistic assistance in dealing with incidents of sexual violence in the community. The church plays a significant role in fostering amicable resolution of cases of sexual violence outside of the legal system. However, some actions taken by the church may contribute to stigma against the survivor and further strengthen the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence.

*The church leaders invest in the matter in excommunicating both the perpetrator and the victim from the church. They judge the case and then they reconsider the two people. Once the perpetrator has given the dowry, they forgive both the perpetrator and the victim and welcome them in the church again. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

### **Community organizations involved in sexual violence assistance**

In addition to the little help rendered by community leaders and the church, there are a few organizations within each study location to which a survivor of sexual violence could go for health services and psychosocial support. The services and organizations generally mentioned were medical services, international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and local nonprofit organizations.

More specifically, participants in Bukavu mentioned the Centre d'Appui Médical et Psychosocial (CAMPS), the Psychosocial Centre of Panzi Hospital, Centre Olame and Amaldefea. Participants in Bukavu mentioned the Association of Women Lawyers of Congo, the Women's Association of Media Workers, the Tribunal de Paix (TRIPAIX), the Tribunal de Grande Instance (TGI), communal tribunals, legal clinics, peace court, Fondation Solidarité Femmes, World Food Program and UNICEF. In Bunyakiri the services and organizations mentioned included EFPS, IFEP, Service d'Accompagnement et de Renforcement des Capacités d'Auto-promotion des Femmes (SARCAF), Ligue des Associations des Droits de l'Homme (LADH), Fondation Pere Simon, MATU, and the police. In Kalonge a key informant mentioned that health services and hospitals, NGOs

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), International Medical Corps (IMC) and other associations (GRAM-Kivu, Action Solidaire pour la Mutualité (ASM)) aid with services. Participants in Walikale mentioned several organizations and services including Heal Africa, Solidarity for Community Development, and Doctor On Call Service (DOCS) C.

Data from free-listing provide further insight into the sources of assistance for survivors of sexual violence and their families. Several organizations were mentioned, including health facility, police, IMC, MSF, Heal Africa, the church and GRAM-Kivu. Overall, the most frequently mentioned source of assistance was the health facility. There were noticeable differences by location. In Bunyakiri "health facility" and "police" were the most frequently mentioned. In Kalonge, MSF was the most frequently mentioned. IMC was the most commonly cited source in Chambucha, while Heal Africa was the most salient in Walikale.

Some participants commented that the services available to survivors of sexual violence lacked coordination. Nonetheless, these services were generally perceived to be accessible to the population.

*Yes, they are accessible and they help a lot. One period I was doing a training and I saw that a girl, they raped her, or when she has a problem, she arrives there, they hear her, they give her advice, or they carry her to hospital*  
**LEMERA. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bukavu)**

Others lauded the presence of non-governmental entities that assist in cases of sexual violence, especially given the widespread frustration with the police and government.

## **Community perspectives on what would constitute justice for survivors**

Study participants had wide-ranging thoughts on what would constitute justice for survivors of SGBV and their families. The ideas ranged from measures to ensure that the perpetrators are appropriately punished to long-term systemic reforms that the government should undertake to prevent sexual violence. The ideas also included institutionalization of mechanisms that allow for immediate reaction to crisis, ensuring a victim's well-being by linking her or him to clinical and other much needed support services. Participants also discussed punishment that should be accorded to the perpetrators as well as the compensation to be offered to the survivors and their families to ensure "justice" and that perpetrators should suffer the consequences of their actions. Some also highlighted the importance of changing community attitudes towards the survivor, which, according to some, are currently hostile and unsupportive.

**Systemic government reforms:** Participants had strong views on the government's role in stopping conflict-related SGBV and ensuring peace in Congo. They voiced many clear suggestions including extraditing FDLR soldiers to their countries of origin and providing a safe environment for Congolese everywhere in the country.

*We need the government to intervene immediately to take back everyone to his/her place of living and make sure it provides us full but lasting security in our village and everywhere in the country. (Adult female, FGD discussant, Bunyakiri)*

Some spoke about the need for the government to discipline and punish soldiers, so that they correct their behavior.

*...we need the government to seriously apply the law to punish all soldiers who engage in this violence. (Adult female, FGD discussant, Chambucha)*

**Institutionalized emergency support:** Several discussants thought that having key institutional supports to survivors and their families was an important part of ensuring justice for them. On a similar note, some participants emphasized the need for basic assistance such as ensuring that money is available for taking the survivor to the hospital.

*I recommend...providing services to cover what she might have suffered. (Adult female, FGD discussant, Chambucha)*

There was also some discussion about the need for adequate security services, including police stations, in high-risk areas so that survivors can be rescued faster and provided access to support services.

*The government should establish different police stations nearest to the area of calamity for faster rescue, by providing people good services, and also to implement a training center where everyone is supposing to go and get trained. (Adult male, FGD discussant, Bunyakiri)*

**Retribution for perpetrators:** Participants passionately debated the punishment that perpetrators of sexual violence deserved for the crimes they have committed. The majority of the discussants agreed that the punishment meted out to perpetrators would serve dual purposes: (1) a just reward for their actions and (2) a means to dissuade others who might be tempted to engage in sexual violence themselves.

*The rapist should be seriously punished to serve as a lesson to anyone who would want to rape. Impunity is one of the main causes of continuation of rape here in Bunyakiri. (Adult female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

A girl expressed how, if she was a rape victim, she would want the perpetrator punished.

*He should be taken to jail so that I never see him again. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

Whereas there was a consensus that perpetrators should be severely punished, people differed on the severity of punishment required. Some thought sending the perpetrator to jail was enough; others specified the length of the jail sentence. An adolescent talked about the need to take the perpetrator to jail immediately after the crime has been committed.

*Justice asks that the rapist be driven to jail at the same time he has raped. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Chambucha)*

Some study participants cited the specific number of years a perpetrator should serve in jail. Sentences of 20 or more years were generally mentioned, although no participant expressed the view that the perpetrator should be sentenced to life imprisonment.

*The perpetrator of rape first should go to prison, 20 to 25 years. After that, the girl is compensated; people see what they can give her. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

One adolescent male described how the perpetrator should be beaten up before being taken to the jail, so that he never repeats his actions.

*As for me, the rapist should be beaten first and spend two weeks in hospital, then be taken to jail. He will realize that what he has done is bad and never repeat it again. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Chambucha)*

For some participants a death sentence was the only way to ensure that justice is done while preventing the perpetrator from ever committing his/her crime again.

*...this perpetrator should be killed. He should never live because he will keep doing the same. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Chambucha)*

**Survivor and family compensation:** For many participants, justice would not be complete if it stops with punishing the culprit. The belief in this regard was that compensation for the survivors and their families should be an integral part of a meaningful justice package. Some debated whether these “compensations” should be monetary or in terms of access to free health care and other social services.

For some, taking care of the survivor and punishing the perpetrator was the only way to ensure justice for survivors and their families.

*The family will be happy to see that their daughter has been well examined and treated for free and see that the rapist has been punished, that the victim has been well assisted in the hospital and given advice. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Some also spoke of how the perpetrator needed to compensate the survivor and the survivor's family by paying a bride price.

*The rapist needs to be severely punished, [then] the family is convinced that justice has been applied and feels comforted that the perpetrator of the rape has been taken to jail after paying compensation or reparations. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Although the practice of “compensation” is apparently widespread, some people had conflicting emotions about it. For instance, a young woman talked about how this so-called “compensation” is never going to make a survivor feel “normal” again.

*A young girl may feel happy when she has been raped and paid an amount of money as damages or be paid a dowry. But in case it is a child who has been raped, this money will not take her back to normal as she was before. They will pay this money, but she will not be happy. Even in case of a girl who has been raped at 15 years old, the rapist will pay the money, but she will keep being aggrieved. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Another just “compensation,” according to some people, was that the perpetrator marry the victim.

*As for me, I think that here in Bukavu what can make the victim satisfied is if maybe that perpetrator of rape accepts to get married to her. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

Again, this was debated, and some condemned the practice. A girl expressed her feelings on either being compensated with money or marriage and explained how neither would reduce her grief.

*As for me, even when I have been raped, I cannot accept that I go to the rapist's home just because I have been raped, because I do not know how he lives and he does not know how I live. Better that he simply pays that money. I don't know what God has foreseen for my studies. In my opinion, if I happen to be raped, I know that my parents will only ask that the rapist be arrested. They will decide that he pays and then be taken to jail so that they feel compensated of the fact that the rapist spoiled me. I will also feel like being*

*compensated but I will keep living with grief. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

**Community attitude and support:** There was some discussion on the importance of community attitude and support accorded to the survivor as part of ensuring justice. Some discussants emphasized how the community should be sensitive to the needs of the survivor and ensure that the survivor feels supported.

*As for me, since that boy dishonored me, and this against my will, I would like that he be taken to prison, be seriously punished and the community to consider that I am still useful for it. I mean that they should offer me full assistance. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

Some participants acknowledged that family members and the community have a key role to play in helping the survivor of sexual violence perceive that justice has been done. Substantively, the expectation was that the survivor's significant others and the community would not blame him/her but instead realize that he/she had been an innocent victim. The significant others should show sympathy and support and help the person to forget his/her ordeal, feel like a normal person and experience the least disruption possible to his/her daily life. Any attempts to discriminate against the survivor of sexual violence in their family or community would only reinforce the victim's impression that justice has been denied.

*To help me forget, my parents must approach me and consider that I was violated unwillingly. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

*I can say in the family, and the parents if the daughter is less than 20 years old, she comes back to school, she continues with her studies, she finishes, and then she is considered like other children. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

In the view of some study participants, an important aspect of justice for the survivor includes communities doing their best to shield the survivors from the taunting and discrimination to which they are often subjected. Providing the psychosocial support and counseling that survivors need to cope with the effects of their experience is another thing that participants believe should be the responsibility of the community.

*People need to assist the victim in providing her advice; they should ask her not to keep thinking of what has happened to her. She would need psychosocial counseling to help her not be traumatized due to the fact that other girls in the village mock her. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

A few participants also emphasized that justice for the survivor includes the community protecting the dignity of the survivors, making them feel like respected members of the community and helping to restore their damaged self-esteem.

*What we in the community can do is to show people who were raped that they, too, are still important in the society even if being raped. There [is a] lot of work they can work. We consider them to be like other people.*

**(Adolescent female, FDG participant, Bukavu)**

*The community must help the victim. They must give her esteem as a human being, and then give her advice, and she will feel well. They should try to sympathize with her, take her to hospital and give her medicine....*

**(Adolescent female, FDG participant, Kalonge)**

## **Perceptions about gender roles**

### **Perceived roles of a woman**

Across the five study locations, much of the discussion about the definition and roles of a woman surrounded her responsibilities towards her children, household and husband. It was mentioned that a woman is defined by the qualities she possesses. The roles perceived to be central to the woman include mother, cultivator of land and caretaker of the household.

In Bukavu men described women as the “center of the household life” and “the heart of the home.” Women were seen as having the responsibility, not only for giving life, but also for training the children and caring for household members. Thus, it was recognized that any injury to the woman has repercussions for other members of the household. For some participants, sexual violence against a woman is an insult to the men in her households.

*It is her duty to give life. The second role of the woman, indeed, is that the woman educates. She is at the center of household life, she is the manager of the household, she has an important role. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

*There is what we call, “omukazi yemurima omukazi.” It means the woman, the woman for us is the heart at home. It means, when we speak of a woman, it is the one who has the depth of responsibility.... The woman is the source of life in Africa. If she is injured because of that sexual violence, who is going to guide? The household will lose the future, and so I would like to go further,*

*saying that raping a woman is to insult all the men in her environment.*  
**(Adult male, FGD participant, Bukavu).**

Although the woman was perceived to be the core of her household, she was described as a person under the authority of her husband. Her duties include doing whatever the husband requires of her. She is expected to submit to the husband and perform her role as the husband's helper judiciously. A man is described as "the chief" or leader, someone independent; the woman is seen as dependent on her husband. She is not expected to outshine the man but instead to hide in the shadow of her husband.

*...since the woman came from the man's rib (as the Bible says), she must*

**Box 4**

*A woman is the one who doesn't have Western influences; that is to say, she doesn't put on pants, she doesn't leave the children alone at home so as to go to sell things at the market. I mean the one who is dedicated to the family, to the education of the children at home, the one who respects her husband; that is the one they call a woman, so a man can say that he got a good wife. Because she doesn't have Western influence, she can't wear pants or short skirts. She stays at home, she takes care of the children, she can't ask the husband to go to bed, she is submissive. Then you can call her a woman.*

*always come behind the man; she must always hide behind the man. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

The woman is also often perceived as an object of pleasure for the man. The fact that a man pays the bride price for a woman is seen as giving him the privilege to lord it over her and extract from her

everything he desires. A woman is appreciated when she does not engage in any actions that might jeopardize her primary responsibilities of childbearing, childrearing and homemaking. She is expected to be "well-behaved" and not exhibit any masculine traits such as wearing pants, initiating sex or being the primary breadwinner in her home.

*We talk openly because the woman was always regarded as an object of pleasure, a slave, a machine. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

The desired qualities of an ideal woman as perceived by many participants are well articulated by an adolescent FGD male discussant from Bukavu (Box 4). It is clear that an ideal woman should not dress like a man, usurp her husband's authority, neglect her domestic responsibility of home-maker or be gainfully employed outside the home. A woman who meets this qualities is considered a good wife and the pride of her husband.

While some female participants acknowledged the traditional role of the woman as the center of the household, there is a sense of frustration in some underlying inequity of these traditional roles. Women decried as unfair the fact that women do not have equal

opportunities for access to education and employment. As one 47-year-old woman in Bukavu mentioned:

*To be sent to school, you find that many don't go to school.... It will end in the kitchen. Inside you is the kitchen only, therefore when you marry these children of ours, although educated, you find he is a man; he says to me, "No, you will not go to work."...Even if she was a teacher, "You will not work. You will not work because me, I will say. As I brought you to my house, you are under my order. I don't want you to work."* (Adult female, FGD participant, Bukavu)

Other Bukavu women complained about the clear division of labor that relegates women to domestic roles, whereas men are expected to be gainfully employed outside the home.

In Bunyakiri the woman was similarly described as someone who looks after her family, husband and household, respects her dignity, is responsible for her children and serves as a helper to her husband. To the extent that women fulfill these roles, they should be cherished and respected. Domestic violence was seen as a sign of dysfunction in the family. A Bunyakiri woman describes the social and familial responsibilities of a woman as follows:

*Woman is the helper of a man. We should respect women, but due to the war women have no value. Despite the problem of war and rape still facing us at present, the respect of husband and his wife should still be there. A woman who hasn't a husband has no respect in the family. A well-behaved woman should please her husband in welcoming guests and give full respect. A responsible man who loves his wife and his family should not beat his wife.* (Adult female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)

Bunyakiri men perceived that, in the absence of her husband, responsibility for the welfare and needs of the family falls on the woman. These men describe qualities of a woman or wife as being respectful, not having problems in the village, not behaving badly, dressing appropriately and "not being a witch." They also mentioned that a woman is the "director of her own life." The woman is expected to take on light chores that do not require too much energy. Any attempt by the woman to cross the gender lines of authority and responsibility can lead to conflict. This notion is further described in this quotation from a Bunyakiri man:

*We may say that the woman is the director of her own life. She is the one in charge of the family and is supported by her husband. The wife is in charge of light chores like sweeping, washing, looking after children, cooking, but she*

*also is a technical counselor for her husband. Sometimes, a conflict can result from the fact that the wife does not segregate her work from that of her husband, when she knows that such work is the only work that she can do and the rest is for the husband. This brings up a dispute in the household.*  
**(Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)**

In Chambucha adolescent boys described a woman's work as washing, planting seeds in the field, cleaning the house and cooking. A woman is described as one who does not quarrel with others, who keeps her dignity in the family, provides good education for her children, and someone who knows how to entertain visitors. Adolescent girls in Chambucha described women's work as seeding the field, petty trading and pounding nuts.

In Kalonge participants offered a similar description of women as central to the household and children. Descriptions of a woman's role in the family or household were largely consistent. Most commonly, adolescent males in Kalonge described a woman as someone who must look after the children, stay home, cook, educate the children, cultivate crops to feed her children, stay with her husband and provide him with advice.

There was also the recognition that gender roles are changing in the community. Although a unique response, one adolescent described a shift in woman's work:

*In the old days women had to cultivate and look after children. It is now that we can see women working in NGOs, in the government. Now fathers have understood that they have to educate girls, too.* **(Adolescent male, FGD participant, Kalonge)**

The participants emphasized the need for the woman to be obedient and submit to her husband. Participants identified norms regarding the status of women as a factor underlying SGBV in their community.

*...the woman has to do what she has been asked to do; she must be obedient and under the man's order.* **(Adolescent male, FGD participant, Kalonge)**

*If there is sexual violence in some areas, it is due to old customs that consider a woman like something with no value, consider that a woman is always inferior to a man, has nothing to say and can be manipulated anyhow.*  
**(Adolescent male, FGD participant, Kalonge)**

Adolescent girls from Kalonge had a similar view that a woman's responsibility is giving birth, looking after her children and household, cultivating the field, and managing the family.

*A woman is one who brings happiness in her family, makes peace in her*

*family, puts her husband in decent conditions and listens to her husband's advice. This will make you be respected. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

In Walikale, women similarly described the work of a woman as farming and trading, helping their husbands, cooking, and looking after the children. A woman was described as someone who is respectful, who can hold together a household, a Christian, and one who respects her husband.

The definition of a woman also covers her gainful employment. Some jobs are reserved for men, while some are ideal only for women. Crossing the normative lines of sex segregation in the job market attracts sanctions for the woman.

*It is said that a man is the one who has to do some of the jobs. Nursing is only reserved to men, teaching is for women, business is for men. A business woman is considered a prostitute. If it happens that a woman goes to Bukavu to pay for commodities and spends three days, she will be blamed. A woman is condemned to stay at home, and the man will always find her at home with children. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Walikale)*

### **Perceived roles of a man**

In all the study locations the man is most often described as the head of the household, having more conjugal power than the woman, and financially able to support and protect his family. It is man's responsibility to guide his family, show them the way and provide for them.

*He is the head of the family .As the chief of the household, he takes the responsibilities, he supports the family; the man has the role to lead, to guide the family. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

*According to the customs of our village here in Chambucha, a man means the head and the supreme. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Chambucha)*

The man is the one who makes all the important decisions in the household and keeps his wife in subjection. A man is expected to demonstrate his authority over his household.

*In our culture the man is the one who is responsible. He is the one who decides, he is the one who builds and destroys. The woman is a "nyakashono" [that is, under order]. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

Adolescent girls in Bukavu mentioned that a man is someone who is responsible, who has been to school and has the means to take care of his family.

Money and material possession play a significant role in the definition of a man. A person without money is not considered a man, no matter how old he is.

*Me, I can say here in our city Bukavu the husband is the one who has got much money. If you don't have money, you won't be considered a human being. But if you have money, and you drive your car, when you pass by they say, "That is a man." (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

*...it is money that makes people call someone a man. If someone has money and has a car, all the people find in him a real man; the origin is money. Even in the family, if the younger son has wealth, the older has nothing, people will say that the older is not a man. The younger is considered to be a man because of his money. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

The role of the man was often described as that of a “problem-solver” and having the responsibility to manage difficulties and provide for his family. A man is expected to be sensitive to the needs of his family. He is also expected to take appropriate steps to prevent hardship to his family and mitigate the effects of unpleasant occurrences.

*Being a man is through the behavior. Also, he should be a man of progress, who is anxious—for example, if the father of the family sees that there is nothing at home, he creates an initiative. So, a man is the one who makes initiatives on behalf of his community. (Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

In Bunyakiri, in addition to the man being the head and provider for his household, participants emphasized dignity, respect, debt-free, good sense of responsibility, kindness, peaceful and hard worker as some of the qualities of a man. In Chambucha respondents mentioned similar attributes.

*The qualities of a man: He must be with dignity, respectful, not being with debts in disorder, not being a thief, not being problematic, being kind to people, with good history and responsible. (Adult male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Not only was the man described as the provider for his family, but he also was perceived to be the protector. A man is expected to give good advice, be articulate and capable of defending himself. The man is generally seen as the one who comes up with the money for household upkeep, while the woman administers these funds. He prepares the field for planting, while the wife sows the seeds.

*The task of a man is first to take responsibility for his family, and the wife should be to be model. The man can give some money to the wife, and she*

*does small trade. Then both the husband and his wife can save their money.*  
**(Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)**

*The man can have a field and cultivate it, and then the wife will sow or weed it. The man is the one who will protect his family against eventual danger. He has the task of developing his country.* **(Adolescent male, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)**

Furthermore, as described by some participants in Kalonge, a man is expected to keep his word, demonstrate unwavering responsibility for his household, be respectful and be gainfully employed. The man is also defined by his cognitive abilities; he is expected to be mentally stable.

At the same time, a man is also judged by the qualities of his wife. A good wife adds value to her husband.

In essence, in all the five study locations, a man is defined by his responsibility towards himself, his wife, his children and the entire community. Failure in any of these roles is generally considered to be failure as a man. Also, taking on a responsibility that is traditionally reserved for women makes a male less than a man.

### **Perceptions about gender inequality**

Participants discussed the existing traditional roles of men and women. Although not all study participants commented, there was general agreement about existing discrepancies in opportunities and expectations between boys and girls.

In Bukavu one man mentioned that these different roles and responsibilities do affect the lives of individual men and women, and these roles can either bring harmony or they can bring conflict. Another man from Bukavu, age 25, mentioned the changing roles of men and women and the customs that give more advantage to men:

*We will find some women taking the lead of the household when their husbands do not have anything. There is influence. There is also the practice of dehumanizing customs. There are customs that give privilege to men, and which make the man on top, and this...misleads the community, because in the past there were activities that a woman could not do like today.* **(Adult male, FGD participant, Bukavu)**

Some participants decried the unequal treatment of male and female children. The tradition of ascribing more value to sons than daughters was perceived as unfair. This unequal treatment, which starts at birth, continues throughout life.

*Here in our city Bukavu they find that the man is able to do everything. He is higher. They consider every day the men. For example, there are some families, if the woman gives birth to only girls, they shout at you that you don't give birth because the boy is the child. That shows that women are down and that only men have value. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

A few participants discussed the unequal access to education for boys and girls. Specifically, the participants lamented the fact that girls are not provided the same opportunity for schooling and education as boys. Girls are less likely to have attended school; when they are enrolled, they are more likely to be pulled out of school for financial reasons or for marriage. This 29-year-old woman in Bukavu articulates a common concern:

*Another that makes that sexual violence be extended is traditional problem (the tradition), because there are traditions that consider a man higher than the woman, as being more special than a woman, reason why you can meet there are girls and boys in the house but boys are more privileged than the girls especially on the side of education. [T]hey send the boys to school more than girls. The little girl, when she gets her state diploma, you tell her she stays home, she waits for marriage. [T]he boys,...we put them to university; they study medicine, but girls, they neglect them. (Adult female, FGD participant, Bukavu)*

Female adolescents in Bukavu mentioned a growing chance for equality and parity between genders, with one girl stating that in this “...modern society, there is no role for man and no role for women. That is, any work the man can do, the woman can do it.” Nonetheless, there was some concern that this incipient equality, if it spreads, may lead to the woman not respecting her husband.

Women in Kalonge did not see any justification for the unequal treatment of boys and girls, especially given the age in which we live. These women expressed a hope for gender equality while recognizing that this goal might not be easy to achieve.

*However, it is better that all of us here get trained to alleviate discriminations among men and women. All are equal and all can do the same job, same duties. All of us have a right to live, a right to food, right to vote, right to election and right to democracy. (Adult female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

Adolescents considered gender discrimination to be a form of violence. They decried the facts that women have no rights or decision-making powers regarding family

property even if they are the eldest of the children, that women are expected after a day in the field to still cook, fetch water without the help of her husband, as well as to have sex with her husband whether she wants to or not. For these adolescents, denying women equal rights to opportunities for education or inheritance is wrong. The practice of forced marriage, irrespective of the reason for it, was also unacceptable.

*...a problem with customs: People are still considering old customs. Like that of forcing someone to marry a young girl because he has raped her. That is not good. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

*We want things to change. My father must consider me with the same rights as my brother. If our parents decide to send my brother to school, they must also do the same for me, because in that case no one will neglect the other when we both study. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Kalonge)*

## **Sources of information and advice**

Services for survivors of sexual violence were previously described (see page 60). However, participants described sources of information and advice about sexual violence somewhat differently. A common source of information was the media, most commonly radio shows or news broadcasts. Only a few of the participants mentioned television as a source of information. Overwhelmingly, most study participants in all locations also mentioned schools, organizations/associations, churches and hospitals as sources for both information and advice. Several adolescent boys in Bukavu mentioned that one can get advice at centers that give voluntary tests (assumed to be HIV/AIDS tests), where they will explain how to protect oneself against sexual violence. Another adolescent boy from Bunyakiri mentioned that one hears about "human rights" at the police, from civil society organizations and through church leaders.

*We can go to school and be taught how to prevent ourselves from being raped. Even in the community someone who loves you can give you advice. For example, I may be walking in the street and find a woman who knows that I am moving with bad boys. She may call me and advise me not to become familiar with that boy. (Adolescent female, FGD participant, Bunyakiri)*

Adolescent boys in Chambucha mentioned that they get information relating to sexual violence only through IMC staff. In contrast, adolescent girls in Chambucha stated that they get information from Bukavu, through radio, different groups and the nearest health center or hospital. Women in Chambucha mentioned that IMC is the most popular training center in the area. In addition, they get their information from the

hospital, church, organizations and associations, school and the police center. Men in Chambucha mentioned more specific sources such as Radio Okapi, IMC, books on sexual violence and rape, Kasha Kumusogeza, BBC radio, brochures, journals and other sources. The key informant in Chambucha further mentioned organizations that are involved in sexual violence such as MSF and Mothers Union Chambucha (UMACHA).

Women in Chambucha mentioned a number of different ways that they get information, as well as advice, including through the IMC, radio and other sources. Participants in Kalonge also mentioned several sources of information, including health centers, hospitals, associations, groups, leaders, community health workers and psychosocial advisors.

Women in Walikale specifically mentioned a local radio program that discusses sexual violence, as well as students and teachers who have a community radio program that addresses these issues. The widespread insecurity in the area has made it difficult to organize community events. This situation underscores the need for creativity in the choice of channels to disseminate information on sexual violence.

## Summary and Discussion

This study examined community perspectives on SGBV in two provinces of DRC—North Kivu and South Kivu. We looked at perceptions of the causes and consequences of various forms of SGBV, perceptions about survivors and perpetrators, community understanding of legal provisions regarding SGBV, and community readiness and willingness to address the problem. We also examined perceptions of gender roles. The findings have significant implications for policy and programming concerning SGBV. In the following paragraphs we summarize and discuss the key findings.

There is a wide range of behaviors that are perceived to fall under the definition of SGBV. These include intergenerational sex, sex with a minor, early marriage, intergenerational marriage, forced sex, transactional sex, extramarital sex, forced marriage, domestic violence, gender inequality and even neglect of parental responsibility. In fact, all forms of coercive sex are considered violence.

While the study participants decried most of these forms of violence, domestic violence was seen as normative and nothing to be concerned about. Domestic violence is very common, and many women appear to suffer it in silence. The findings also indicate that there is a culture of silence about domestic violence: A woman is expected not to talk about such issues. Moreover, there appears to be a general lack of understanding in the community about how to deal with cases of domestic violence.

Other forms of SGBV that the community seems to tolerate include forcing one's spouse to have sex and forcing a rape survivor to marry the rapist. These practices are deeply entrenched in the culture of the people, and community members find it difficult to see anything wrong in these practices. It is easy to see how prevailing gender roles could encourage tolerance of these practices. Although a woman is perceived by some study participants as the core of the conjugal home, she is also considered an object of pleasure, whose multiple roles include meeting her husband's sexual needs. Moreover, the payment of bride-price by the bridegroom to the family of his future bride is seen as a symbol of the man's ascendance over his wife and a license for him to extract all due from her by whatever means, including violence. Other traditional practices such as wife inheritance and pressure on women to marry and the normative expectations that a woman should always submit to her husband are additional factors that could foster SGBV.

Perceptions about the prevalence of SGBV vary by study location and depend on the type of SGBV. The general perception was that the prevalence of SGBV (particularly rape) was high in the study locations. In general, participants believed that, whereas sexual violence perpetrated by armed combatants was decreasing, there has been an

increase in the number of civilians perpetrating the crime. A minority of participants thought that the idea that sexual violence is increasing is an illusion due to increased coverage of such crimes by the media.

The lack of a typical profile of the perpetrator of sexual violence reflects the fact that people from all walks of life have been found to perpetrate SGBV; no one is immune to being a perpetrator. Beyond the insurgents/rebels/soldiers often blamed, “rich” individuals were often identified as common perpetrators. This can be linked with the community perception that impunity and taking advantage of a failed government along with general poverty are the main reasons for the frequency of SGBV.

This study revealed that there are multiple layers of interrelated factors underlying SGBV in the study locations. These factors span structural, community, organizational, relational and individual levels. One set of overarching issues affecting the occurrences of SGBV includes poverty, political instability and widespread corruption, particularly in a post-war climate; another set of issues includes existing social and cultural norms.

The community recognized how the disruption and chaos caused by the war are still feeding into the general environment of violence, even though the conflict has ended. There was a perception that the war had taught people to rape, and the community feared its epidemic nature, as more and more community members and even government soldiers were seen to be either direct perpetrators or benefiting from the corruption that follows.

At a broader, structural level, lack of infrastructure appears to be an underlying factor in a number of ways. First, there seems to be rampant corruption in the government and within the rank and file of the police, including a lack of law enforcement concerning SGBV. Further, there is evidence that even government soldiers may be involved in perpetrating the violence. Even more damaging is the observation that, when government soldiers are accused of sexual violence, they are more likely to be transferred rather than charged and prosecuted. This practice only adds to the community’s distrust of the government and law-enforcement agents.

Participants noted that there is a lack of health centers, hospitals and police stations where a survivor of sexual violence may go for help. However, even when there are health centers, other barriers may exist, including lack of transportation or the cost of transportation to these centers. Although this may not be the only reason that individuals would rather opt for out-of-court settlements, the burden and cost of getting help may contribute to the problem.

Other structural issues include the relative poverty of people in the area. Poverty is mentioned as a reason that women need to farm in the fields to support their families,

which exposes them to rape and other forms of sexual violence. This pervasive poverty may also increase the preference, on the part of law-enforcement agents, for bribes in exchange for releasing perpetrators or, on the part of survivors and their families, for out-of-court settlements. Since the survivor's family will have to pay for transportation to a hospital or court if they go through the court system but will most likely *get* paid if they settle out of court, the latter seems a better option, particularly if the family is struggling financially. Furthermore, having money is central to the definition of a true man, and a person is revered for having wealth. Wealth, in this climate of corruption, gives those who have it an opportunity to escape repercussions for crimes such as SGBV. These issues do not exist in a vacuum; they interact with other environmental factors to make a difficult situation even more complex. For example, perceptions surrounding gender norms and of survivors of sexual violence also contribute substantially to these patterns.

As mentioned, the government is not considered trustworthy, and corruption is well known and rampant. Many see the lack of police enforcement and lack of accountability for accepting bribes as reasons for this distrust. In turn, distrust contributes to the preference for out-of-court settlements. Fear of stigma, lack of a sense of community efficacy to handle cases of sexual violence, and the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence make it even more preferable to handle cases of sexual violence out of the public eye. All these considerations underscore the need for a strategic approach based on an ecological model and designed to facilitate change at several levels.

Women are seen as the center of the household, caregiver of the children and a reflection of the husband and family. They are also seen as subordinate to their husbands and very much bound to them. The repercussions of a wife's actions are seen to fall on the family and particularly on the husband. It is within this understanding that a wife who is a victim of rape or who is involved with any other situation considered negative reflects adversely on the husband and family.

There is a culture of silence surrounding sex and sexual violence in the community. It is shameful to admit to being a victim of sexual violence. As described by many of the participants, admitting to the event may bring neglect and shame from the community and even one's own family. Violence between a husband and wife is expected to be kept a secret between them, and it reflects poorly on the wife if she discusses these issues outside of the household.

The findings also suggest that marriage is a common response to premarital sex or rape accusations, as it is considered proper to marry after such an incident. The fear is that the woman will not be able to marry if it is known that she was a victim of sexual

violence. Since marriage is seen to define being a proper woman, it is of great value in the culture to be married.

There is a noticeable disparity between how the community perceives survivors of sexual violence and their perceptions about what would constitute justice for survivors and their families. In general, the participants have negative perceptions about survivors of SGBV. The image of a survivor that emerged from the discussions and the word-listing is that of a person who should be pitied and who is sick, suffering, abandoned and neglected, exposed to discrimination and emotionally disturbed. In contrast to these negative perceptions, community members saw justice for survivors as including more accepting attitudes towards them (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Gap between community perceptions about survivors of SGBV and community perceptions of what constitutes justice

Perceptions of survivors of SGBV	Perceptions of what community attitude and support constitutes justice for survivors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sicknesses and diseases</li> <li>• Inability to marry</li> <li>• Trauma and emotional disturbance</li> <li>• Shame</li> <li>• Abandonment by husband and family members</li> <li>• Discrimination and neglect</li> <li>• Poor</li> <li>• Living-dead</li> <li>• Jinx</li> <li>• To be pitied</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive to needs of survivors</li> <li>• No blaming</li> <li>• Show empathy and support</li> <li>• Treat like a normal person</li> <li>• Make them forget</li> <li>• Help them get on with their lives</li> <li>• Realize that survivor is an “innocent victim”</li> <li>• No discrimination</li> <li>• Protect from taunting and labeling</li> <li>• Protect dignity</li> <li>• Respect</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

The findings of this study have important implications for programs, policy and further research. We provide below a few recommendations arising from the study. Some of these recommendations can be implemented by IMC and its partners; others will require collaboration with organizations that have the relevant mandate. Some of the recommendations can be implemented only by the government of DRC in conjunction with local organizations and with the support of the international funding community.

- 1. Adopt a comprehensive multi-level approach to address SGBV:** Patterns of SGBV in the study locations and the community's responses are affected by multiple layers of interrelated factors. These factors operate at the structural, community, organizational, relational and individual levels. Effective interventions to address these multiple layers of influence will, by necessity, be comprehensive and will address multiple audience groups, including community members, community leaders, law enforcement agents, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations and government officials. Men, as the group most likely to perpetrate SGBV in their communities, should be addressed specifically. We discuss some of the elements of this comprehensive strategy below:

*At the structural level:* The lack of enforcement of existing laws (ultimately leading to people's distrust in the government) appears to be a key contributor to people's preference for out-of-court settlements regarding sexual violence. This lack of enforcement also contributes to the recurrence of sexual violence. Lack of enforcement is due to corruption and poverty in the area, where money speaks louder than justice. Stricter mechanisms and means of accountability should be imposed on law enforcement agents for accepting bribes or for the premature release of perpetrators. Additionally, there should be transparency in the legal process; justice should not only be done, it should also be seen to have been done. If people see that perpetrators are imprisoned and staying imprisoned in accord with established law, their trust in the system may increase. Similarly, if people see that law enforcement agents are held accountable for corruption and bribes, they also may start believing in the system.

Relevant structural approaches would include allocating financial resources to infrastructure development, setting aside funds to help pay for transportation of SGBV survivors to health care services, providing additional police stations, and strengthening support services for those who experience SGBV.

At the organizational level: In the short term, a relevant intervention would be identification and training of champions within law enforcement agencies and government who will advocate the rule of law and appropriate disciplinary actions against those who accept bribes or engage in other corrupt practices. These champions should also advocate the strict application of the law against perpetrators of SGBV. Ultimately, there should be a restructuring of the justice system that acknowledges that corruption occurs and addresses the issue decisively. This process should be transparent, using the media as a vehicle to inform people of the changes being made and of the results being achieved.

There is also need for capacity building for security forces, employees of the justice system and other law enforcement agents on procedures, accountability and human rights as they concern SGBV. Furthermore, the training for law enforcement and other officials should include sections on the provisions of the law of 2006 and seek to increase understanding of the potential repercussions of corruption and bribery.

In addition, the capacity of community-based and faith-based organizations to address SGBV needs to be strengthened. The training for these organizations should focus on strengthening their capacity to leverage funds, understand the needs of survivors, encourage survivors to access the judicial system and assist them along the way, advocate the rule of law on SGBV issues and mobilize the community to take collective action to prevent SGBV and bring perpetrators to justice. Many good training manuals are available on the Worldwide Web that can be adapted for this purpose. For example, relevant manuals can be downloaded free of charge from the Gender-Based Violence Prevention Network's Web site (<http://www.preventgbvafrica.org/>), the UNICEF Web site ([www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)) and the OneResponse Web site (<http://onerresponse.info>).

At the community level: Community-level prevention mechanisms can be explored. Interventions in the short term may include, for example, working with communities to encourage and organize women to go into the fields in groups rather than alone. We recognize, however, that community farming schemes are not a sufficient solution to such a complex and deep-rooted problem as SGBV. There have to be more structural solutions for sustainable change to occur. At this time there is little evidence of organized community action to prevent SGBV. The community needs to be empowered to take collective action. For example, the community can organize to put in place communication networks that can quickly spread the news of raids on villages by military forces (which may signify impending attacks of SGBV) and mobilize community members to prevent the

attacks. Similarly, community members need to start to see that it is their responsibility to protect their families, neighbors and friends from SGBV. In this respect there are valuable lessons to be learned from the “Fataki” campaign in Tanzania (<http://www.pepfar.gov/press/119789.htm>) or the drunk driving prevention campaign (“Friends don’t let friends drive drunk”) in the USA (<http://www.adcouncil.org/default.aspx?id=137>). The power of the media can then be used to bring word of positive SGBV prevention at the local level to a much larger audience.

Empowering communities to ensure prompt access and use of physical and mental health services for survivors of SGBV should be a top priority. Creative solutions that address the logistical barriers that hamper access, such as transportation and other costs, should be considered. For instance, emergency reserve funds, under the control of the community, to be used in these situations might help to ensure greater and more timely access.

Also at the community level, it is important to strengthen community leadership, making it more transparent, responsive, responsible and accountable. Activities will need to be developed and implemented to strengthen community cohesion and sense of collective efficacy. Moreover, community leaders and activists need training to help them promote the rule of law, lobby government agencies, help community members to obtain health and justice services, and be knowledgeable about the law of 2006. Educating community groups (associations, CBOs, FBOs) about existing services and the law of 2006 also would be valuable.

It is important to focus on interactive processes that will help community members heal from the atrocities of the past and rally to rebuild the sense of community and to protect the vulnerable from SGBV. Opportunities should be provided in the community to foster discourse concerning SGBV. As the findings show, discourse on the role of community members in perpetrating sexual violence is sparse; study participants emphasized the role of “outsider” men—those who lay outside the purview of the community—such as the “rebels” or “soldiers.” Nonetheless, the recognition that the onus might lie at least partially within the community that allows the perpetuation of SGBV could be an important issue for debate and a spur to change.

Efforts should also be geared towards breaking the general silence about sexual violence. Open discussion about the issues is a key step towards sustainable solutions. Educating community leaders (including religious leaders and chiefs) about how to speak about SGBV issues in the community might aid in

disseminating information as well as beginning to change normative perceptions about sexual violence and the culture of silence about the problem. Social networks and community empowerment through the media and other information channels may also be a powerful means to start changing social norms surrounding SBGV, including the culture of silence.

The findings show that the community is upset about the occurrence of SBGV, even though they do not discuss it openly. This may be important to consider when building community empowerment concerning the issues. Since the larger structural factors are more difficult to change in the short term, community empowerment and education may be an added mechanism for putting pressure on the government to hold perpetrators accountable.

There could be short- and long-term social actions employed simultaneously. Short-term actions might include disseminating uniform information about SBGV, distributing lists of resources tailored for each area, developing transportation mechanisms and other structural aid for those who have been attacked, and coordinating organizations, churches, schools and media concerning messages about SBGV. Long-term, the goal would be to start the slow process of changing social norms about SBGV.

Whereas in this report we have intentionally shied away from proffering location-specific recommendations, it is important to stress that community-based interventions should be context-specific, taking into consideration the information and skill-development needs of the intended audience as well as existing community resources and the local culture. For illustrative purposes, we have presented in Annex 2 some key study findings organized by location.

CCP has developed a framework (Integrated Model of Communication for Social Change) that can be used to guide interventions at the community level (Figueroa et al., 2002). This framework is particularly useful, not only because it clearly articulates the process of community change, but also because it describes the community processes and structures that an intervention should address to achieve sustainable change.

*At the individual level:* There is need for strategic behavior change communication concerning SGBV. This communication should emphasize SGBV prevalence, prevention and the appropriate legal and medical process following an incident of SBGV. Also, individuals should be addressed through appropriate channels with culturally appropriate messages that seek to increase knowledge about SGBV,

improve understanding about the law of 2006, and help the audience develop appropriate skills for SGBV prevention.

The mass media would be an important vehicle for this individual-level communication intervention, as radio programs are a popular source of information. Great care should be taken in how SGBV-related information is presented. For example, the word “victim” can conjure up impressions of pity and weakness. Speaking about people who have experienced sexual violence as “survivors” or in other positive terms might help reduce the stigma associated with the experience. Care should be taken to use words in Swahili, French or other appropriate languages that are empowering and positive. It is important to portray a person who has experienced SGBV as innocent and guiltless, not as asking for pity. Attention should be paid to other vehicles for information, too, such as schools, churches and other organizations that were identified by participants.

A good guiding principle in developing and implementing this comprehensive multi-level strategy is to have a common theme running through the various levels. For example, there should be consistent messages concerning SGBV across the various implementation levels and districts. Fractured or contradictory messages are not likely to achieve positive results.

2. **Flipping around perceptions about survivors.** The gap between negative perceptions about survivors and community understanding of what would constitute justice for survivors should be bridged. There is need for culturally appropriate interventions to address negative community attitudes and to create a supportive environment in which survivors of SGBV receive support to move beyond their ordeal and feel like useful members of society again. An appropriate intervention in this regard may use an empathy appeal, encouraging community members to put themselves in the shoes of the survivor of SGBV. The use of media diaries that enable survivors of SGBV to chronicle and discuss their daily lives should be explored. A similar approach has been used successfully in HIV programming to encourage community discourse and reduce stigma against people living with HIV.
  
3. **Domestic violence:** The findings show that domestic violence tends to be seen in the community as an acceptable form of SGBV. There is a clear need to specifically address this negative community norm in the context of the general efforts addressing SGBV. Evidence from the literature on domestic violence and other

forms of normative gender-based violence suggests that tackling the problem requires a multi-pronged approach. A potentially effective approach should involve the community in developing and implementing strategies. It should be survivor-centered but should address the perpetrators as well. Survivors need to know where to go in case of domestic violence and to be encouraged to obtain available services; perpetrators need to be disciplined and rehabilitated.

Community dialogue about the prevention of domestic violence will be central to any effective approach. The community needs to be empowered to take action to prevent domestic violence and assist the survivors. Community groups need to be trained to recognize and respond to domestic violence.

Moreover, efforts are needed to change the community norms that support domestic violence. There is need to raise awareness about the unacceptability and negative consequences of domestic violence and to challenge attitudes that favor it. The community needs to understand that there are various forms of domestic violence; domestic violence can take the form of physical abuse, emotional trauma, isolation, economic abuse, denial of privileges and intimidation. All these forms are nefarious for the well-being of the survivor.

The current spiral of silence about domestic violence needs to be addressed. Community discourse should be promoted. Men are a particularly powerful group in efforts to promote community dialogue and action on domestic violence. The success of the Brothers for Life program (<http://www.brothersforlife.org/>) in South Africa is a case in point. When men speak up against domestic violence, their peers listen and take the cue.

Since perceptions that domestic violence is normal are linked to gender roles, changing this attitude should include efforts to change the underlying gender norms. For example, the image of the woman as an object of pleasure needs to change. Communication efforts should emphasize the woman as the center and essential building block of the family. Husbands need to understand that valuing and treating their wives with respect is a sign that they respect themselves, too. The traditional role of the bride-price, as a means of showing commitment and sealing a contract between two families, rather than as the purchase of the right to treat a woman as the husband pleases, needs to be emphasized. Culturally appropriate messages should be developed to clarify how maltreating a woman goes against what the bride-price symbolizes: commitment to the welfare of the woman and her kinsmen.

Central to developing effective strategies to address domestic violence is a good understanding of the nature and root causes of the problem. There is need for research to provide a better understanding of the problem and inform responses. The research should address not only women but also men in order to understand the problem from the perpetrators' or abusers' viewpoint.

4. **Role of the media:** It is good that the media have started to pay attention to issues of SGBV; it important that the media continue to inform the population about such issues. However, journalists need training on how to report occurrences of SGBV. In reporting SGBV, journalists need to display journalistic excellence and present the facts in a professional, non-partisan, informative, and in-depth manner. It is important that the way crimes of sexual violence are presented in the media does not induce panic among the population, encourage stigma against the survivor or foster the culture of silence and impunity surrounding the problem. Most journalists in DRC lack the required skills. Therefore, training of journalists from both the electronic and print media should be part of a comprehensive strategy to address SGBV in DRC.

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## Annex 1 : Focus Group Discussion Guide

### Recherche Formative Sur La Violence Sexuelle et Fondée Sur Le Genre à l'Est de la République Démocratique du Congo Guide Du Focus Group

Nom de Lieu: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

L'heure au début de la discussion: \_\_\_\_\_ L'heure à la fin de la discussion: \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre de participants: femmes/adolescentes: \_\_\_\_\_ OU hommes/adolescents: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1. Introduction du processus:

- L'animateur s'introduit et le rapporteur note-preneur
- Explique le but de la recherche
- Explique les règles de base: tout le monde devrait participer librement ; Il n'y a pas réponses vraies ou fausses; Il faut parler une personne à la fois ; Des réponses honnêtes sont hautement appréciés

#### 2. Introduction des participants:

- Demandez aux participants de préciser leur âge, état matrimonial, profession, niveau de scolarité, nombre d'années de séjour dans la communauté d'étude.

#### 3. Causes and conséquences de la VSFG

- Que pensez-vous de l'évolution de la violence sexuelle dans cette communauté au cours de cinq dernières années? (Essayer de savoir pourquoi ils pensent que les changements se sont produits)
- Quels sont les différentes sortes de violence sexuelle dans cette communauté ?
- Quelles sont les raisons qui font que la violence sexuelle est répandue dans cette communauté ? (SONDEZ : les facteurs culturels, des raisons économiques, des facteurs sociaux)
- Quelles sont les conséquences de la violence sexuelle pour la victime de violence sexuelle? (SONDEZ : les conséquences physiques, émotionnels et sociaux)
- Maintenant parlons des rôles et responsabilités accordées aux hommes et aux femmes dans la société. Quelles sont ces rôles et responsabilités au niveau de cette communauté. Comment ces rôles et responsabilités influencent la vie individuelle des hommes et des femmes ? Comment ces rôles et responsabilités influencent les relations entre les sexes ?
- Qu'est ce que ca veut dire être un homme dans votre culture ? Qu'est ce que ca veut dire être une femme ? (SONDEZ : les qualités/ définitions de masculinité et féminité),

#### 4. Profile des malfaiteurs et des victimes

- Qu'est-ce qui pousse un homme à commettre un acte de violence sexuelle contre une femme?
- Qui sont les femmes qui sont les plus susceptibles d'être victimes de violence sexuelle ?
- Y a-t-il quelque chose qu'une femme peut faire pour se protéger de la violence sexuelle?
- Connaissez-vous des femmes qui commettent la violence sexuelle? (SONDEZ : quel genre de femmes perpètrent des actes de violence sexuelle contre un homme?)
- Quels genres d'hommes sont les plus susceptibles d'être victimes d'un acte de violence sexuelle ? (SONDEZ : violence commise contre un homme par d'autres hommes)

#### **5. Attitudes envers les droits de la femme et la violence liée au genre**

- Pensez-vous que la violence sexuelle porte atteinte aux droits de la femme congolaise ? SONDEZ : quels droits?
- Est-ce qu'il y a des formes de violence sexuelle et fondée sur le genre qui peut être considérées comme normales? (SONDEZ : les formes de violence sexuelle et fondée sur le genre considérées normales et les raisons pourquoi ils les jugent normaux)

#### **6. Victimes de la VSFG**

- Comment les victimes de la violence sexuelle sont perçues dans la communauté?
- ?
- Comment les gens de cette communauté traitent les victimes de violences sexuelles ? (SONDEZ: la stigmatisation, la discrimination, la compassion)
- Comment les membres de cette communauté les perçoivent les victimes de la violence domestique?

#### **7. Perspectives sur le système juridique**

- Quand il y a un cas de viol dans cette communauté, que fait la communauté pour gérer la situation ? (SONDEZ : arrangement entre auteur et victimes, rôles des chefs coutumier, rôle des familles)
- Quel rôle joue la victime dans ce processus?
- A votre avis, qu'est-ce justice pour la victime ? C'est-à-dire, qu'est-ce qui doit avoir lieu pour que la victime soit convaincue qu'elle a eu justice ?
- Pour la famille de la victime, la justice serait quoi ?
- Que connaissez-vous de la Loi de 2006 sur la VSFG ?
- Quels services juridiques existent pour aider les survivants de violence sexuelle dans cette communauté? (SONDEZ : conseils légaux, la police, système juridique)
- Que pensez-vous de ces services? (SONDEZ : l'accessibilité, degré de confiance, utilisation par les survivants, raisons pour non-utilisation)

#### **8. Discours au sein de la communauté et les ressources communautaires pour répondre à la VSFG**

- Est-ce que les membres de cette communauté parlent ouvertement de la violence sexuelle ?
- Quelles sont les raisons pour lesquelles les membres de cette communauté parlent et ne parlent pas ouvertement de la violence sexuelle ? (SONDEZ : des raisons culturelles, de peur, de manque de connaissances, stigmatisation)

- Comment les membres de cette communauté réagissent-ils quand il y a un acte de violence sexuelle? (SONDEZ : le rôle de leaders communautaires, des dirigeants religieux)
- Pensons maintenant aux formes de violence sexuelle dont ont a parlé plus tôt (répéter certaines des formes qui ont été établies). Quels mécanismes de préventions y a-t-il maintenant dans votre communauté ? Quoi d'autre devrait être fait pour prévenir les formes de violence sexuelle dont vous avez parlé plus tôt?
- Quels changements doivent avoir lieu pour que la violence sexuelle s'arrête? (SONDEZ : attitudes, comportements, coutume, croyances)
- Que fait cette communauté pour aider les victimes de violence sexuelle?

#### **9. Sources d'informations et conseils**

- De quelles sources obtenez-vous habituellement des renseignements sur la santé ?
- Si vous voulez savoir davantage sur la façon de prévenir la violence sexuelle ou comment aider les victimes de violence sexuelle, où iriez-vous ? Si une personne a besoin de conseils sur la VSFG, où lui conseilleriez-vous d'aller ?

#### **10. Fin**

- Demandez aux participants s'ils ont des questions ou s'ils ont plus d'informations à partager.
- Remercier les participants pour leur temps.

## Annex 2: Summary of key findings by study location

Key issue	Bukavu	Bunyakiri	Chambucha	Kalonge	Walikale
<b>Community perceptions about prevalence of SGBV</b>	There were mixed perceptions of the prevalence of SGBV. Some participants thought it was on the rise where as others thought it was on the decline. A few suggested that increased media coverage gave the impression of increasing prevalence.	Participants perceived a decrease in SGBV. The majority of those who perceived a decrease attributed this trend to successes in curbing insurgence.  Participants acknowledged the involvement of ordinary community members in perpetrating SGBV.	Participants perceived an increase in SGBV. Often this was attributed to lack of retribution and systemic failure in addressing the problem.  Mixed reaction on the prevalence of SGBV against adolescent girls (free-listing).  Study participants acknowledged the existence of SGBV against adolescent males.	Participants perceived that prevalence is high but declining in urban areas while remaining stable in rural areas.  SGBV against adolescent males was acknowledged here.	There was no consensus on the prevalence of SGBV. The responses often ranged between “low” and “very high.”  Almost all the free-listing informants perceived that the incidence of SGBV against adolescent girls was high.
<b>Attitudes towards domestic violence</b>	Participants spoke of how women often feel ashamed to admit that they have been victims of domestic violence. There are no forums to openly speak about domestic violence. Family members often do not take a woman’s complaints seriously and, if she complains outside the family circle, she may lose the support of the family.	Participants spoke of the lack of community awareness of the issue		Participants described the culture of silence surrounding domestic violence, attributed to the stigma attached to discussing internal matters of the household in public.	

Key issue	Bukavu	Bunyakiri	Chambucha	Kalonge	Walikale
<b>Community perceptions about factors underlying SGBV</b>	Salient factors discussed were war/conflict, poverty and women's provocative dress. Adolescents also mentioned drunkenness among boys as a contributor to SGBV.	Salient causes according to discussants were war, poverty, impunity from punishment, women's provocative clothing and aroused sexual desire.	Salient causes were war and poverty. A few also mentioned lack of infrastructure such as electricity or neighborhood schools as potential contributors to SGBV.	Salient causes were poverty, war and impunity. A few also thought that lack of education/sensitization and regard for women's rights contributed to SGBV.	Salient causes mentioned were war, poverty, lack of security, women's clothing, aroused sexual desire, lack of information/sensitization and negative cultural norms that attribute lower value to women.
<b>Perceptions about perpetrators</b>	<p>Participants had difficulty providing a coherent description of perpetrators of SGBV. This reflected the general perception that SGBV is deep-rooted, widespread and common.</p> <p>In all study location except Walikale, the most salient word used to describe a male perpetrator was "murderer." In Walikale "gangster" was the word most often used.</p> <p>In Chambucha and Kalonge the word "sorcerer" was the word most often used to describe female perpetrators.</p>				
<b>Perceptions about consequences for survivors</b>	<p>In all study locations several layers of consequences for the survivor were discussed, ranging from physical to psycho-social, as well as consequences at the community level. There were some differences by location in the consequences identified, as presented below.</p>				
	<p>The community differentiated between the consequences most likely to occur to a married woman and those that a single woman is more likely to experience. Besides the personal trauma that survivors went through, they were often ostracized by their husbands as well as the community.</p>	<p>Participants discussed how the community does not provide any support services but instead mocks the survivor. Husbands are often also guilty of such behavior. A few participants also discussed the possible consequences for a child conceived as a result of sexual violence.</p> <p>The most salient free-listed words describing survivors reflect emotional suffering, ranging from "sad" to "anxious." Multi-dimensional</p>	<p>Survivors are often ostracized by their husbands as well as the community.</p> <p>The words most often used in connection with survivors were "sick" and "vulnerable," words that evoke the perceived suffering and insecurity of the survivors.</p>	<p>Participants spoke of how a survivor is sometimes driven to suicide because of the husband's attitudes and lack of support from family and community.</p> <p>The two most salient free-listed words were "sick" and "sad." Multi-dimensional scaling revealed two dimensions underlying these perceptions: the emotional dimension (from "sad" to "mad") and the deprivation dimension</p>	<p>Participants discussed the consequences for married and unmarried women. While married women are often abandoned by their husbands, the unmarried ones are often married off to the perpetrator, or the family may look for other forms of amicable settlement. There also was mention that it is often the family that must bear the burden of taking the victim to hospital and other support services.</p>

Key issue	Bukavu	Bunyakiri	Chambucha	Kalonge	Walikale
		scaling revealed three underlying dimensions: emotional distress, marginalization and deprivation or loss of value.		(from “poor” to “stigmatized”).	The most salient terms were “sick” and “traumatized,” words evoking physical and emotional suffering. Sexual violence is generally linked with morbidity, emotional suffering and relational and material deprivation.
<b>Perceptions about law enforcement</b>	There is a general lack of trust that law enforcement will deal with SGBV appropriately. This lack of trust, coupled with the stigma associated with the experience of SGBV, makes amicable arrangements a common option. These arrangements typically involve marital agreements or payments of some kind from the perpetrator’s family to the victim’s family. Perpetrators, if caught, are rarely locked up for long, especially if they have money. Family or other connections to people within the court system prevent justice from occurring, and the perpetrator could either be released or not convicted	There is little trust in the court system. If the perpetrator has connections in the court, he will get off. There was mention of corrupt court officials, who might get paid by the perpetrator to drop the case.  Amicable arrangements are normal, particularly if the perpetrator is a member of the community. Arrangements are usually payments of some kind. Negotiations are handled between families. Amicable arrangements are preferable to avoid conflict between families, for fear that the victim will not find a husband, and to shield the survivor’s reputation and avoid negative perceptions	There is no trust in soldiers; they are usually violent and are the perpetrators of SGBV, even government soldiers. There is little knowledge of where to report incidents of rape by government soldiers. There is no trust in government officials because the perpetrator can pay to get released from jail. Participants expressed the need to punish soldiers, who are a key problem because their officers defend them. Amicable arrangements are common. These consist of payments (livestock, money, goods) as compensation. Nothing	Corruption is evident, as payment is commonly used to drop court cases. Amicable arrangements are common since there is no trust in the police or legal system. Also, transportation has to be paid by both families, and the case still may not go to court due to corruption. Local chiefs support amicable agreements due to lack of confidence that informing the police will solve anything. There is consensus that the general lack of retribution in cases of SGBV is a key reason that the problem persists. The participants advised that	Soldiers and rebels are the ones who commit most of the crimes of sexual violence. There is no punishment for perpetrators, so sexual violence keeps happening. Amicable arrangements occur due to lack of trust in the police and the system. Government efforts are weak and ineffective; the national police are passive; available services are neither credible nor reliable.

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	due to these connections. Local chiefs would rather that people choose the amicable arrangement option.	about the family. Village and church leaders favor amicable arrangements.	is done to the perpetrator unless he lacks money to pay compensation. These familial agreements are common when the perpetrator is a community member. Furthermore, poverty makes amicable arrangement more appealing to the survivors and their families.	the government should be more involved with the matter.	
<b>Legal literacy</b>	Some are aware of the law; a few have some knowledge about what to do legally after reporting a case of sexual violence. A few respondents stated that women are protected under the law but not men, due to the possibility of false accusations. Some complained that, although the law exists, it is not applied due to corruption.	Knowledge of the law is inconsistent, with respondents stating different lengths of prison sentences, while others said they had never heard of the 2006 law.  The legal process causes problems: There is a lack of transportation to go to court, and corruption can thwart justice even if the family can pay for transportation.	Not many know about the law of 2006. There was mention of learning through the radio that there is a prison sentence attached to SGBV. ☐	There is some knowledge that the victim must report the incident to the police or local services, but most do not know much about the 2006 law.	There is some awareness that the victim must be tested and treated within 72 hours. It is generally understood that the family should take the victim to the hospital, then court. The 2006 law seems to be known by activists and NGO leaders but not by ordinary community members.

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<b><i>Community resources and involvement in addressing sexual violence</i></b>	Some state that the community is immediately involved in assisting the survivors. The community provides the needed support to help survivors obtain medical care and eventually reintegrate into society. Most stated that the community does not speak about SGBV because it is not culturally appropriate to discuss, and parents do not discuss sex or SGBV with their children. Others state that the community responds negatively to cases of SGBV: survivors of rape are considered ill and are neglected, marginalized, traumatized and stigmatized. One respondent stated that only activists address sexual violence openly; it is not culturally appropriate to discuss sex openly. There is a lack of coordination between community organizations, but they are present.	The community does not talk about sexual violence. It is sometimes kept a secret within families, and cases are settled amicably for fear of tarnishing a daughter's reputation and to avoid conflicts between families. Most people do not do anything when a woman is raped; some will pity her, others will mock her. Many times victims are ashamed and fear stigma. Community leaders get corrupted and help to protect the perpetrator if paid. The church can help through prayers and spiritual counseling. Community is working to educate the public about sexual violence.	Community members feel sad, angry and personally affected. All the same, the community appears to do little more than take the survivor to a health facility. Those who have experienced SGBV would be considered valueless, rejected by their families, marginalized in the community and disrespected. Families often reject and mock a survivor of SGBV, while husbands will hate their wives who have experienced SGBV by another man.	The community is described as sometimes helpful (helping the victim to obtain medical care, advising, sympathizing) but many times is neglectful. It is usually Christians and those who work in the voluntary associations who help. There is limited discussion in the community of issues related to SGBV. Survivors are described as discriminated against, having no value, less than a prostitute, sick (with AIDS), neglected, feared, and undesirable (for marriage). Husbands can leave their wives, accusing them of willingly engaging in sex with the perpetrators. Families might reject the survivors, even if they should sympathize. The church may excommunicate the perpetrator and victim until both parties reach an agreement.	SGBV is discussed in churches and on the radio. Responsibility for care for the survivor rests with her family; the community does nothing to help her. At best, community members may help to apprehend the perpetrator and to direct the victim to medical care.
<b><i>Community perspectives on</i></b>	In all study locations the suggestions ranged from perpetrators being appropriately punished to systemic reforms that the government should undertake to prevent sexual violence as well as to provide immediate support services and clinical care.				

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<i>justice for survivors</i>					
<b>Perceptions about gender roles</b>	<p>Women are the life of the family. The role of the woman is to give life, educate, manage the household and cultivate the land. A woman should be submissive to her husband and stay at home to care for her children and husband. A woman must dress appropriately, behave correctly and not try to take on a man's responsibilities. She must be behind the man. A woman is considered an object of pleasure.</p> <p>A man is head of the family, chief of the household, a leader and holder of the destiny of the family. Ideally, a man should have a job, a home and a wife.</p> <p>Traditionally, a man is considered to be of higher value than a woman, leading to lack of respect for women.</p> <p>Expectations about boys and girls differ. Boys are expected to be well-educated, while girls have to do the</p>	<p>A woman is expected to have children and be capable of looking after her husband, household and family. A woman respects her dignity by dressing and behaving appropriately. A woman is seen as the helper of man, and a woman without a husband is not respected. A well-behaved woman should please her husband, entertain guests and be respectful. Women do light work (sweeping, washing, cooking) and counsel the husband.</p> <p>If a husband helps his wife with housework, people will say that he has been tamed by his wife. Ideally, a man is respectful, dignified, responsible for his family, not in debt, not a thief and not a trouble-maker. He should not rape or beat his wife and should protect the family. A man contributes to the development of the country, does the hard physical work and provide for the needs of his family.</p>	<p>A woman's work is washing, planting seeds, cleaning, cooking. A woman does not quarrel; she keeps her dignity. She counsels and educates her children. She knows how to entertain guests. A woman seeds the fields, engages in petty trading and pounds nuts.</p> <p>Men's responsibilities include cultivating, building houses, paying for children's clothing and school-related costs, harvesting palm nuts. A man is expected to have sufficient financial means to care for his family. A man is also expected to maintain peace in his household, have good relationships with others, be able to provide good advice and to be articulate, capable of defending a cause, responsible and gainfully employed.</p>	<p>Traditional norms consider a woman of less value than a man. A woman is believed to be easy to manipulate. Women must be submissive to men. Women are expected to look after the children, take care of household chores and cultivate the field. An ideal woman is one who fosters the happiness of her family and respects her husband. A woman stays with her husband and family without dispute, has a home, has an independent source of income and is kind. There should be a clear division of labor between men and women. A woman can be a teacher, but, if she conducts business, she is thought of as a prostitute, especially if her trading activities require traveling.</p> <p>Men are responsible for the whole family. A man</p>	<p>Women farm and trade, cook, look after the children and do housework. A good woman should respect her husband and behave as expected of a Christian woman.</p> <p>Men are the pillars of the home. A good man brings in money to feed the children and should not be a drunk. Men must mentor their children and provide formal education for them. A man should provide shelter for his family, be the father of children, be educated and provide for his wife and is good.</p>

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	housework and wait for marriage.			<p>should be firm in his decisions, fulfill promises, and be responsible for the consequences of his actions. He is the decision-maker and should command the respect and submission of his wife.</p> <p>Participants recognized the existence of the norm of son preference. Girls do not make decisions about inheritance or decide on family property even if they are older than the boys in the family.</p>	
<b>Sources of information and advice</b>	Radio, television, newspapers, schools, organizations and hospitals were the sources of information most often mentioned.	Church leaders, school authorities, and community members were identified as good sources of advice on issues related to SGBV. Local associations, schools, and health facilities were identified as credible sources of information for SGBV survivors.	The radio, schools, health center, hospitals and women's associations were the preferred sources of information. International NGOs, including IMC, and MSF, were also recognized as good sources of information.	Health centers, IMC, district leaders, associations, churches, community health workers, hospitals, and psychosocial counselors were mentioned as good sources of information and advice.	Information on SGBV is obtained through community events, community radio (RCWA) and churches.