

Engaging men in preventing sexual violence in South Sudan and the Central African Republic: a qualitative study

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Introduction and background

- ICRC has been working in southern and South Sudan since 1980 and in CAR since 1983
- Multidisciplinary approach to addressing sexual violence related to conflict and other situations of violence
- Qualitative study to explore perceptions of sexual violence from perspective of young men and their communities
- Focus on men should not mean a loss of support for survivors



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Methodology

- Qualitative study
 - Unity and Lakes states, South Sudan
 - Bangui, CAR
- 79 interviews and 16 focus group discussions
- Data collection in English, French, Sango, Dinka, Nuer and Arabic
- Approval from the ICRC ERB, Geneva; The Ministry of Health, Juba and The University of Juba

Limitations

- insecurity meant that the original fieldwork site for CAR could not be included: findings are specific to Bangui
- social desirability bias

Study population

Young men and women aged (15-33)

Parents/guardians of young men

Local community members: elders, traditional court members, teachers, ex-military, cattle herders, health-care workers

Key informants: experts in GBV/sexual violence, NGO workers, ICRC staff

Results 1: talking about sexual violence

- Sexual violence was an issue of concern for participants in all study sites
- Openness and willingness to discuss
- Interest in engaging in the prevention of sexual violence
- Definitions and understandings of sexual violence differed
- Sexual violence against men rarely mentioned:
 - Results focus on sexual violence against women



An interview being carried out in South Sudan

Results 2: Factors identified as increasing the risk of sexual violence

Perceived reasons for sexual violence	South Sudan	Central African Republic (Bangui)
Prolonged conflict and insecurity	X	X
Economic insecurity	X	X
Presence of guns	X	
Impunity and weak justice system	X	X
Poor road conditions and proximity of road to bush where perpetrators hide	X	
Alcohol/drugs	x (alcohol)	x (drugs)
Breakdown of traditional family structures	X	X

Results 3: Perceptions of why men may perpetrate

- Challenging for participants to reflect on why individual men perpetrate
- Individual reasons included
 - Unemployment and '*having nothing to do*'
 - Enjoyment of rape
 - Revenge or punishment
- Lack of punishment

When they see a woman in the bush, they will say they want to '*charge their phones.*' That means they want to rape the woman.

Young man, South Sudan

Results 4: Responsibility and accountability

- Lack of accountability or shame for male perpetrators
- Multiple people believed to be responsible:
 - Female survivors were often blamed (by men and women)
 - Parents blamed for not ‘controlling’ their children
- In South Sudan, fines often paid by the family, not the individual

“My father and cows will be asked to go to the court of justice, not me.”

Young male, South Sudan

Results 5: Thinking about prevention

- Agreement that communities should be involved in preventing sexual violence, but limited suggestions how
- Emphasis on governments, traditional authorities and NGOs to provide solutions
- Focus on reducing risk exposure for women, rather than working with potential perpetrators
- Support for increased sensitisation/awareness-raising sessions

Recommendations

- Enhance training of staff and partners around recognising and understanding sexual violence
- Focus on understanding responsibility for sexual violence
- Work within existing hierarchical systems of male elders, cattle-guarders and community leaders to strengthen engagement
- Use entry points such as talking about HIV or ongoing ICRC activities to engage men



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Conclusions

- Improving men's accountability and responsibility for sexual violence could also lead to de-stigmatisation of accessing services
- Using existing hierarchies and structures of influence is essential for engagement
- Dissemination and integration of findings into ICRC's ongoing activities in CAR and South Sudan
 - Training for South Sudan Red Cross volunteers

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