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SPECIAL REPORT

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About the Report

In the context of violent conflict, men have often been perceived through a singular lens as perpetrators of violence. This oversimplified approach fails to address the full gamut of men's experiences in conflict, including as witnesses, victims, survivors, and perpetrators. This report aims to complement and further the work of the women, peace, and security agenda through a discussion of the formation of male identities, drivers of conflict, and the effects of conflict on male identities. Understanding the varied perceptions and experiences of men and how they can positively contribute to peace and security efforts, this report recommends better inclusion of male issues and their experiences in the shaping of gender-sensitive peace and security policies.

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The Other Side of Gender

Men as Critical Agents of Change

Summary

- Understanding how the ascribed roles of men and women and masculine and feminine identities contribute to and can help mitigate violence in conflict and postconflict settings is an emerging field of enquiry in conflict management and gender and peacebuilding studies. This enquiry builds upon, complements, and significantly contributes to the work of the women, peace, and security agenda, especially as seen through UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- Men are usually perceived to be the primary perpetrators of violence in times of war. Research indicates, however, that men are not inherently violent. This shift in understanding is contributing to a recognition that men are also victims and witnesses of many forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. In expanding our perceptions about men's experiences, further studies indicate that this may help stop the cycle of violence. In this way, men can become critical agents of change to end these multiple forms of violence.
- Expanding knowledge of men's diverse experiences during war and the underlying causes and mechanisms that lead to violent behavior has important policy implications. Understanding the various paths to violence is particularly important when dealing with postconflict situations.
- Postconflict policies need to take account of these varied paths to violence and the notions of hyper-masculinity created by violent conflict. Policies also need to recognize that during conflict the roles of men and women often undergo radical change. Restoration to preconflict role models is often impossible. For example, in preconflict situations men derive much of their sense of identity from the fact that they are economic providers. In many postconflict situations, the economy is in shambles and most men will not be able to get jobs. As a result, in many postconflict settings, men and boys often experience a loss of identity leading to extreme emotional stress, substance abuse, and a continuous cycle of violent behavior, including sexual and gender-based violence.

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- Promising programs and interventions that focus on providing psychosocial support and developing healthier, nonviolent behaviors and male identities are providing lessons on how to address the challenges and obstacles to engaging men in sustainable peace and to prevent conflict and violence. Nevertheless, more research is needed on how men shape and are shaped by conflict, as well as men's gender-specific needs, perspectives, and realities.
- Policy responses in postconflict settings need to pay greater attention to the specific needs, perspectives, and realities of men and women. In this regard, policy advancements have recognized that women and girls are particularly vulnerable. This report also highlights the ways in which many men and boys are in need of programs and interventions that focus on providing psychosocial support and developing healthier, nonviolent behaviors and identities. Absent such programs, postconflict societies will perpetuate gender inequalities and sexual and gender-based violence.

Introduction

The women, peace, and security agenda has expanded since the 2000 passage of Security Council Resolution 1325, which called to "increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts."[1] It encompasses a wide range of activities, from economic development programs to political activism to psychological counseling. Practitioners, however, have noted that focusing on women to the exclusion of men can stymie their efforts and weaken the sustainability of their work. Thus, incorporating the perspectives of men has become an emerging part of the women, peace, and security agenda. On a conceptual level, this involves seeing men through a gender lens—that is, by understanding gender as socially constructed rather than biologically determined—and therefore changing and changeable rather than fixed—and by understanding gender as "convey[ing] that there are many socially constructed definitions for being a man and that these can change over time and from place to place."[2] On a more practical level, the move to incorporate men acknowledges them as a relatively untapped resource in promoting gender equality, peace, and stability. Tapping that resource, however, involves first, overturning some commonly held assumptions about the inherent differences between men and women, and second, exploring how social norms and structures shape men's propensity toward violence—and how they can change and help establish peace.

This report examines how male identities are affected by conflict and the problems men face after war, shares the experiences of promising programs and interventions engaging men in conflict and postconflict settings, and recommends how to engage men in constructive and lasting peacebuilding efforts by incorporating a gender perspective.[3]

Biology and Violence

A significant body of research examining the possible biological or genetic bases for violence among men has found only limited evidence that men are more inherently violent than women. Higher levels of testosterone have been linked to higher rates of aggression in men and boys, but the results are relatively inconclusive—and aggressive impulses do not always translate to violent behavior.[4] At most, testosterone may trigger aggressive tendencies. Stress, violence, and experiencing feelings of domination also cause testosterone levels to rise.

Brain research has also examined genetic differences in male and female styles of communication and reasoning, including traits that might be associated with aggression and

violence. The bulk of this research suggests that there are greater differences within each sex than there are aggregate differences between the sexes.[5] Most researchers conclude that even if there is a biological or genetic basis for aggression and violence in males, this propensity is mediated through the social environment and higher cognitive functions. Aggression may be biological, but the progression to violent behavior is not hardwired; it is the result of a more complicated interplay among biology and social context. Violence is ultimately learned and encouraged in the social environment—which suggests that it can also be unlearned.

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The body of research on male identity and conflict is vast; as all conflict is gendered and violence is often carried out by men and boys, all conflict literature has something to say about it. However, we know comparatively less about male identities as drivers of peace and the ways in which socialization may play a significant role in moving away from violence and toward more peaceful ways of solving differences. A more nuanced understanding of the roles and expectations of both men and women, however, can begin by recognizing that men and boys can be—often simultaneously—perpetrators of multiple forms of violence, witnesses to and victims of multiple forms of violence, and agents of change and peace. This recognition, in turn, can help us better understand why men become combatants and perpetrators of sexual and other forms of violence and how violent conflict—including sexual violence and abuse—affects men. We must examine what conflict and postconflict expectations are placed on men, how men's identities are shaped by norms and structures within their communities and societies, and how these may change during and after conflict.

Male Identities and the Drivers of Conflict

Men's sense of self-worth, derived from providing for and protecting their families, is often radically altered during conflict, as families are separated, livelihoods are lost, and trauma experienced. Thus, masculinities both shape and are shaped by conflict and postconflict life.

Many factors contribute to men engaging in violent conflict. Some of these factors are structural and contextual, and some are individual and psychosocial, and they overlap and interact in several ways. All of the factors that drive conflict, however, are part of men's lived experience and thus can be understood through the lens of male identities. Men's senses of accomplishment in living up to social mandates—or frustrations at not fulfilling them—in interaction with contextual and individual factors, can help explain why men become combatants—as well as which men fight and which do not.

As mentioned above, without falling into the trap of assuming violence is inherently a more male trait, it is important to understand conflict as mostly being violence perpetrated by men and boys against other men and boys. The World Health Organization estimates that men are three to six times more likely than women to commit homicide and that males of all ages represent 80 percent of homicide victims.[6] The 2011 Global Burden of Armed Violence report found an annual average between 2004 and 2009 of 55,000 direct conflict deaths—primarily of men—and 396,000 deaths by intentional homicide, of which an estimated 83 percent were men.[7]

The data also show that armed violence happens at far higher rates outside of war than during conflict, and in both cases, men are far more likely to be both the perpetrators and the victims. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in any setting increases the likelihood, when other factors are also present, that a conflict may turn deadly and makes it easier to mobilize large numbers of men and boys to commit violence, especially in weak states or states with repressive security sectors and historical grievances. It also makes it possible for younger boys, and armed movements with limited institutional support, to cause havoc.

The male face of conflict is taken for granted and therefore generally ignored. It thus masks the complex interaction of social, cultural, political, and economic factors that make it so. Economic frustration and early exposure can directly affect men. Those who become combatants in armed conflict may endure traumatic indoctrination into armed groups and further militarization. But even when all elements point toward large-scale violence, it is not inevitable. Many frustrated, disempowered young men who feel they have no options in life express that frustration not through violent conflict but through drug and alcohol abuse or other self-abusive behaviors. Still other young men cope with disempowerment through contributing to their communities and thus express frustration in more constructive ways.

Economic Frustration

Men who are unemployed, lacking in both income and social recognition and status, are more likely to be violent and participate in armed conflicts.

Economic independence and providing for one's family can be an integral part of masculine identity. Men who are unemployed, lacking in both income and social recognition and status, are more likely to be violent and participate in armed conflicts.[8] Large-scale unemployment can "create a large pool of idle young men with few prospects and little to lose" by joining armed groups.[9]

Before the civil war in 1989 in Liberia, young men's inability to accrue property or money, which were held almost exclusively by local chiefs, escalated feelings of disempowerment and resentment and culminated in the recruitment of young Liberian men into armed groups. Conflict there offered a pathway to socially recognized manhood that was no longer accessible in civilian life.[10] In Rwanda and South Sudan, young men frequently have been financially unable to purchase the commodities necessary to become socially regarded as men—that is, to marry, to start a homestead, or to achieve status within the community. In Rwanda in 2007, the rising cost of roof tiles, required to build a home and find a wife, resulted in boys dropping out of school in search of employment that either did not exist or required more education to obtain.[11] In South Sudan, where a bride's dowry is paid in cattle, cattle raiding has become a violent yet viable recourse for young men and a coming of age ritual in its own right.

Early Exposure to Violence

Adolescent boys and young men can be exposed, early and often, to violence in their homes, schools, and communities. Such early exposure is often associated—directly or indirectly—with later violence, including participation in gangs and other armed groups.[12]

In Jamaica, some local dons push drug use among schoolchildren to increase their involvement in gang activities. Young boys may be asked to keep watch and convey messages, gradually gaining trust and access to weapons. By their early teens, many have dropped out of school and are fully involved.[3] In some cases, these young boys find male role models, surrogate fathers, and substitute families in armed groups and gangs.

Traumatic Indoctrination

Many armed insurgencies in Africa have drawn on or tapped into the traditional socialization of boys and young men as warriors, using elements of these traditional rites in their own brutal indoctrination.[14]

Insurgency groups in northern Uganda, Liberia, and Sierra Leone recruited youngest sons and younger boys to their ranks—those who were more likely to feel powerless and be most susceptible, malleable, and traumatized by violent indoctrination. In northern Uganda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), initiation into armed groups was mostly traumatic, involving the forced use of violence against family members and threats of murder for noncompliance. The initiation rites for boys and girls abducted

into the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda involved killing their own community members, relatives, or parents.

If young men and boys could easily be induced to kill, or were willing to be violent of their own volition—that is, if violence were an inherent part of young men's temperaments—such indoctrination would be unnecessary. Even many countries that are not engaged in conflict and have standing armies condition young men and women to be willing to use violence through military training that incorporates isolation and abuse of military recruits as part of a systematic breaking down of their resistance to harm others. Grossman, writing on the challenge of teaching soldiers to kill in armed forces, highlights how difficult it is to encourage or obligate them to use lethal force.[15] Turning young men into lethal combatants is difficult, time-consuming, and resource-intense, highlighting the fact that for most men and women, violence does not come naturally.

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Militarization

In conflict states, militant groups, as well as other nonstate and even state actors, often recruit frustrated and vulnerable young men. Such militarization of youth takes many forms, sometimes concealed in systems of power and state institutions, in which undertones of nationalism and patriotism are ubiquitous.[16]

It is common for militant groups to use their ideologies to justify the violence they commit. This violence, in turn, may become a daily part of the lives of the men who are members and can remain so even if the group loses its ideological focus. Most Loyalist militia groups in Northern Ireland were founded for political reasons or for community defense and recruited members with similar motivations. Later on, especially after the peace process succeeded, many of the groups, along with some splinter Republican groups, turned to drug dealing and organized crime to sustain themselves.[17] In apartheid-era South Africa, the socialization of young men in some parts of the anti-apartheid movement referred specifically to using weapons to achieve freedom. In the African National Congress, the AK-47 became a visible symbol for the liberation movement.[18] With the end of apartheid and the realization that long-standing economic inequalities would not be remedied quickly, crime and violence rose, sometimes related to gangs—and as Xaba states, many accounts of this violence have discussed the "heroes of yesteryear who have become the villains and felons of today."[19]

Gangs and armed groups represent a form of militarized masculinity, defined as "a combination of traits and attitudes that are hyper-masculine, hegemonic, and are associated primarily with military soldiers." They offer a version of manhood that provides money, security, and access to women.[20] In many parts of the world, young men are taking more risks and dying earlier than young women, in part to prove they are part of this hyperviolent culture of "real men."[21] Governments can even play into these elements, using the media to glorify and exult the qualities associated with members of the armed forces. The Basij militia in Iran recruited "volunteers for martyrdom" during the Iraq-Iran war, with the promise from Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran, that sending children to their deaths would accelerate the coming of the twelfth imam, an Islamic messiah figure. More than one hundred thousand such martyrs, mostly boys between the ages of twelve and seventeen and men over forty-five, were killed.[22]

At the practical level, membership in an armed force and possession of a weapon can provide male combatants with a source of protection and income. Firearms can also be regarded as status symbols, as in the poor communities of Timor Leste, where acquiring guns requires adequate funds or criminal savvy.[23] Even as small arms and light weapons kill and wound millions of adults and children every day, "the attraction of many men to the ownership, display and misuse of small arms remains under-remarked and insufficiently addressed in arms control interventions."[24] The rapid embrace of the AK-47 by the Karamoja in Uganda shows the speed at and depth to which a culture

can develop in which owning a firearm is a symbol of masculinity.[25] According to International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) data, in Bosnia and Herzegovina,[26] almost every fifth man possesses a firearm.

Postconflict Masculinity: Visible and Invisible Wounds

Gender roles are not static: Masculine norms differ across cultures, change over time, and are affected by changes in social, political, economic, and security conditions. Crises and fragility can accelerate such changes. In crisis and postconflict settings, it can thus become increasingly difficult for many men—particularly young men—to fill their socially prescribed roles and functions. Problems that existed before conflict can be exacerbated by new ones that conflict and widespread trauma leave behind. Men may face loss of identity and difficulty in navigating shifting gender norms. Ex-combatants in particular may be dealing with problems associated with demobilization, internalization of violent norms, mental health issues, drug and alcohol abuse, and the fallout from sexual violence they experienced during conflict. All of these repercussions have enormous effects on families and communities, in particular on women, who often must absorb new and multiple roles as caregivers, head of households, and protectors of the more vulnerable—thus, inverting traditional societal gender roles.

Loss of Identity

Limited access to employment opportunities, the destruction of rural livelihoods, displacement, and other changes brought about by transition put men in uncharted terrain, where their skills are no longer valuable or their ability to earn a living is limited. In Kosovo, the unemployment rate for the overall population lies between 40 and 45 percent. Some Kosovo Liberation Army veterans believe the veteran unemployment rate to be as high as 80 percent, as many of these men are unable to join the labor market due to disability, war trauma, or war injury.[27] For many in the North Kivu province of the eastern DRC, the traditional identity of a man is one who earns his position through nonviolent leadership and the capacity to produce, provide, and protect. As the conflict takes away men's ability to fulfill these expectations, men face humiliation and loss of personal value.[28]

In DRC, the number of men who cannot fulfill societal expectations to provide for their families is extremely high, and 75 percent of men reported being ashamed to face their families because they could not provide for even their basic needs.

Data from IMAGES in DRC found that after twenty years of conflict, the number of men who cannot fulfill societal expectations to provide for their families is extremely high—nearly double the number before the conflict. More than half the population lives on less than one dollar per day, and 75 percent of men reported being ashamed to face their families because they could not provide for even their basic needs. This financial stress, compounded by men's inability to perform their perceived duties, may lead men to cope with their perceived loss of self through "alcohol abuse, irresponsible behavior towards one's family and peers, lack of productivity and violence."[29]

Shifted Gender Norms

Traditional gender roles may be altered after conflict, as women may have performed many traditionally masculine household tasks in the absence of a partner. Gender ratios also can be skewed due to higher male mortality.

Among Burundian refugees in a Tanzanian refugee camp, both men and women spoke of a breakdown in traditional norms, in which women did not "respect" their husbands and traditional gender relations were distorted in the forms of "old men marrying young girls and old women marrying young boys, people generally marrying too young, infidelity, polygamy and prostitution." These breakdowns were exacerbated by the poverty of the camps in which the UN High Commissioner for Refugees was seen as a "better husband" than Burundian men.[30]

Demobilization

As mentioned above, being a fighter and possessing a weapon offers male combatants not only a source of protection and income but also a symbol of manhood. After a war ends, giving up weapons and going through disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes can strip men of their identities, social and support networks, and means of guaranteeing security. Many low-income, young Burundian men in camps for internally displaced persons feel demoralized. For them, their sacrifices have not brought any benefits, and their displacement and poverty will never allow them to marry. These beliefs reflect and multiply their frustrations, despair, and shame.[31]

The inability to reintegrate socially can lead ex-combatants to re-form their groups, sometimes peacefully and sometimes not, to regain a collective sense of identity. In Nicaragua, male ex-combatants formed gangs in part to "recover the sense of self worth, importance and social value that [they] had experienced as soldiers but that they lost as a result of unemployment, poverty and disillusionment."[32] In Croatia and some other settings, they have organized mostly to call attention to their needs and demand social services and government benefits.

Internalization of Violent Norms

Many ex-combatants have internalized norms that condone violence or been traumatized into accepting lethal and brutal violence as normal. Armed insurgencies, other forms of semiorganized violence (e.g., gangs, vigilante groups), and conventional militaries have created generations of men whose manhood and profession revolve around violence, and the shift from a highly militarized identity toward a civilian identity can be difficult for many men, particularly if they were recruited at a young age and subjected to violent initiation rituals intended to break familial and communal bonds.

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In Guatemala, the ongoing extrajudicial violence—against women, members of street gangs, and members of civil society—is in large part based on the availability of men trained and brutalized to kill and intimidate during thirty-six years of civil war. The social construction of men as fighters is deeply entrenched in South Sudan's history and predates its recent independence; between 1955 and 2005, thirty-nine years were spent in conflict.[33] This militarized masculinity has infiltrated social, economic, and political transactions to create a society in which sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) remains prevalent and relatively unpunished. The U.S. Agency for International Development's gender assessment team found that "incidence of gender-based violence—including rape, forced early marriage, domestic violence, and trafficking—were serious problems throughout the conflict years and persist in peacetime."[34]

Similar issues have been seen in other militarized settings. The high rates of sexual assault in the U.S. military and high rates of domestic violence among returning members of United Kingdom (UK) armed forces indicate how men, trained and socialized to use violence, may use it in other contexts when they return from combat. A recent study of returning UK soldiers found that one in eight had used violence against someone since they returned, more than twice the rate among nonsoldiers. One-third of the victims of their violence were intimate partners.[35]

Mental Health Problems, Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Poor physical and mental health, associated with the experience of combat, is a key factor increasing the vulnerability of ex-combatants to violence. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and related mental illnesses are common, and the link between PTSD and aggressive behavior and domestic violence is increasingly well established.

Drug and alcohol abuse is also common among ex-combatants in diverse settings. Men who suffer chronic disabilities due to conflict are particularly prone to mental health issues, interpersonal violence, and self-harm. In Nepal, injured and disabled combatants were most aggressive and distrustful of their leadership and the state. They felt unvalued and discarded at the end of conflict.[36] In South Sudan, alcohol abuse, suicide, and antisocial behavior are pervasive among ex-combatants and contribute to insecurity within communities.[37] A solider on a military base in Goma, DRC, stated that "when we got injured, we became physical and mentally handicapped, and we only wait to be killed, silently."

The IMAGES study in Bosnia and Herzegovina found a strong correlation among men—both ex-combatants and noncombatants—between their overall war experiences and their poor mental health.[38] Men who reported participating as combatants or witnessing or experiencing violence in conflict were more likely to be depressed, experience suicidal thoughts, or commit violence against women, including their female partners.[39]

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Sexual Violence

In violent conflict, many adolescents and young men who are conscripted into armed groups are targeted for sexual violence.[40] Studies show that adolescents in postwar societies and those born of war rape suffer severe psychological and physical abuses. Adolescents born in war often maintain a sense of hostility and internalize their sentiments even after the war ends.[41] Adolescent survivors of sexual violence can experience a variety of psychological effects, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, inappropriate sexual behavior, cognitive difficulties, and substance abuse. Dolan's research on conflict in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa has highlighted the multiple, often uncounted, forms of sexual or sexualized violence that men and boys may experience in conflict, including blows to the genitals and perforation of the anus.[42] The trauma of sexual violence may even extend to the perpetrators, as leaders of armed groups order combatants to rape or witness rape; such experiences are traumatic, carried out against the combatants' will.

Engaging Men as Agents of Change

A number of promising programs and interventions are providing lessons on how to address the challenges and obstacles to engaging men in sustainable peace and what it means to include perspectives on masculinity in postconflict peacebuilding work. In the immediate aftermath of conflict, the need for psychosocial and other psychological support for male victims of trauma is high. Uganda's Refugee Law Project offers a wide range of psychosocial counseling as well as mental health, legal, and other services for refugees and asylum seekers. It is also a leading advocate for addressing the needs of male survivors of sexual violence in conflict.[43] VIVO has pioneered a trauma therapy program for ex-combatants and noncombatants that can be implemented with relatively little training. Across Lebanon, ABAAD provides psychosocial support, counseling, and referrals, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund, to Syrian refugee men and boys. The groups create a support network to address trauma from conflict and gender-based violence (GBV), loss of livelihoods, and tensions between the Syrians and the Lebanese in the host communities.

In Burundi and the DRC, Promundo, Women for Women International, and CARE are working with local partners on interventions that combine psychosocial support for men based on a group therapy model with education sessions on positive norms change and preventing SGBV. The wives of most of the male participants have experienced some form of GBV. Promundo is also working with HEAL Africa to develop group therapy for men whose wives were raped by members of armed groups. The groups are spaces for the men to talk about problems and trauma caused by war and conflict and support changes in behavior

toward nonviolent coping strategies. All three of the interventions seek to reduce the stigma against rape survivors and increase men's empathy for their partners. They also recognize the need for trauma counseling and therapy, in different forms, for men affected by conflict. An impact evaluation of the approach was under way as of 2013.

Other programs focus more on unlearning violence of all kinds; developing healthier, nonviolent behaviors and male identities; and changing community norms. These programs include the Abatangamuco network in Burundi, focusing on domestic violence. The program, supported by CARE, involves men acting as role models and informal voices for peace and nonviolence. Using household visits and community theatre, these peer promoters enjoin other men to stop using violence, reduce their drinking, contribute to household well-being, and promote nonviolent resolution of community and land disputes. MenCare and the Africa Fathers Initiative promote men's involvement as equitable, nonviolent fathers and caregivers—guidance that is especially valuable to men who grew up with either poor role models of fatherhood or none at all. These programs draw on the strengths that participants already possess and their desires to be positive figures in their families and communities. Sonke Gender Justice Network's One Man Can campaign has been implemented in both South Africa and Sudan among refugees, working with men to prevent GBV as well as HIV/AIDS by promoting positive versions of masculinity.[44]

Engaging men in building (or rebuilding) positive, nonviolent identities in refugee camps is another promising approach. In the Zaatari refugee camp in northern Jordan, Questscope has adapted mentoring and informal education activities implemented in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere in Jordan to the needs of the Syrian refugees who populate the camp. Adult men and women refugees serve as case managers, mentors, and education facilitators for younger refugees in the program. This provides not only education, guidance, and support for the mentee but livelihood, skill development, and productive activity for the mentor. In the process, both are supported to cope with the trauma of war and displacement.

A newer approach is to engage men to support women's economic empowerment initiatives in postconflict settings, whether as partners of the participants—as in the collaboration between CARE Rwanda and Promundo on Journeys of Transformation or the work done by ACCORD in numerous African countries—or as leaders of communities where women's economic activities are taking place, such as Women for Women International's Men's Leadership Program in Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, and the DRC. Engaging men in these programs can result in better economic outcomes for women, addressing men's needs for income generation and creating opportunities to improve couple relations.[45]

Many postconflict efforts have worked with young men to build a more sustainable peace and offset the lingering effects of conflict. Search for Common Ground engages young men and women in resolving conflict, developing tools for being agents of positive change, and creating platforms for healthy self-expression. CARE's Young Men Initiative (YMI) in the former Yugoslavia and YouthAction in Northern Ireland challenge gender inequalities and peer, homophobic, sectarian, and gender-based violence, providing a guide to young men by promoting healthy versions of masculinities and manhood. YMI combines a multisession curriculum, youth-led media campaigns, and structured gatherings that bring together youth from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Kosovo.

Recommendations for Policymakers

General approaches:

- Develop, implement, and evaluate interventions that address drivers of conflict through the lens of male identities and that engage men proactively in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Successful programs should be disseminated and adapted to other settings. There are

many promising program approaches to engaging men, as described above, but few have been subject to rigorous evaluation.

- Identify concrete ways that men can be allies in the women, peace, and security agenda by supporting women's leadership in peace negotiations and sensitizing them to gender equality agendas in the process of peace negotiations.
- Raise awareness and promote the exchange of lessons learned regarding the need to engage men as part of the peace and security agenda and the emerging research in this area.
- Conduct additional research on how hypermasculine identities and gender norms contribute to factors that drive violent conflict. This research should include both qualitative and quantitative approaches that explore men's multiple levels of participation during and after conflict—as perpetrators of violence, combatants, witnesses, victims, and agents of change. It must also address the multiple intersections between male identity and violent conflict, from individual behaviors and attitudes to national culture and policy.

In crisis and postconflict settings:

- Develop an emergency response system to quickly address sexual and gender-based violence in postconflict settings and ensure that it engages men both as active participants in the response and in prevention components.
- Provide psychosocial and mental health support to men affected by conflict as victims (both primary and secondary) and as witnesses. This should include development of positive coping mechanisms and treatment for alcohol and substance abuse where necessary. This process should focus on building the local capacity of mental health and trauma support specialists.
- Implement and evaluate programs that help men—both ex-combatants and civilians—construct healthy, nonviolent, and gender-equitable postconflict identities. In particular, explore how men can be engaged in identity-based campaigns and processes that use community activism and the media to promote nonviolent male identities and a sense of connection to new social networks based on nonviolence.
- Engage male partners in women's economic empowerment programs, including education for men on gender equality, sharing of caregiving and household tasks, gender-based violence prevention, and economic cooperation in the household. Where appropriate, implement economic development programs directed toward men that incorporate the same messages. Such programs could include job training or skill building classes or low-paying jobs that allow men to contribute financially to their families and communities.
- Promote men's involvement as mentors or equitable, nonviolent, and involved fathers and caregivers that will contribute to intergenerational transfer of positive norms.

Long-term peace and stability can only be achieved by understanding how militarized male identities are constructed and how they can be deconstructed.

Understanding men's lived experiences in conflict and seeing men as gendered beings whose lives are shaped by social norms, as women's are, in no way takes away from the women, peace, and security agenda; it enhances that agenda by engaging men as allies in achieving equality and empowerment for women, while at the same time addressing the gendered realities, traumas, and stresses that men and boys face in conflict. Long-term peace and stability can only be achieved by understanding how militarized male identities are constructed and how they can be deconstructed—for the benefit of women, men, and societies as a whole.

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