

Engaging Men in Ending Gender-Based Violence in Liberia

*Case Study and Promising Practices:
Male Involvement Project - Year One*

DRAFT

In development for
International Rescue Committee Liberia

By Men's Resources International





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Executive Summary

In order to develop gender-based violence (GBV) programs that included prevention, as well as survivor services, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) saw a clear need and opportunity to engage men as active allies and partners. After reviewing male involvement programs in other contexts and the existing literature on male involvement, the IRC, through its GBV program in Liberia, and with support from Irish Aid, partnered with Men's Resources International (MRI) to launch a pilot project called Male Involvement: Part of the Solution (MIP).

IRC-Liberia, with MRI training and technical assistance, has quickly developed the vision for this project into a unique and exciting initiative that is already producing dramatic effects and spreading throughout the country.

- Men's Action Groups (MAGs) have now formed in nine communities throughout Liberia, in collaboration with the Women's Action Groups (WAGs) that IRC had already been supporting.
- Women and men from all nine communities are reporting significant changes in men's attitudes and behaviors, and increased engagement in collaborative actions and initiatives.
- Leaders from the men's and women's groups worked together on a community awareness campaign, which launched June 25-29, 2007 in Lofa, Nimba and Montserrado counties. The campaign drew participation from over 4,000 people around the country.
- In July, IRC-Liberia hosted a regional exchange visit of IRC/GBV Staff from Sierra Leone & Ivory Coast to see the Male Involvement Project activities and to adapt the strategies for their respective programs.
- GBV staff are now conducting monitoring exercises in each of the 9 communities, and overseeing additional community-based projects to promote gender equity, healthy families and violence-free communities.

With the vision, leadership and staff support of IRC, the men and women involved in this project are developing their awareness, skills and collaborative power to influence the norms and behaviors in a country that is emerging from a devastating history of violence.

This document will explore IRC's efforts to positively engage men in gender-based violence (GBV) mobilization and prevention efforts, chronicling the program's development, activities, preliminary outcomes, and lessons learned. Additionally, this document will seek to identify effective strategies, concepts, and practices that can be adapted for future projects with a shared vision.

Case Study: IRC Liberia's Male Involvement Project

IRC's Global Approach to Addressing GBV

The IRC implements emergency and post-conflict GBV programs in 13 countries worldwide.¹ IRC recognizes violence against women and girls as a global human rights and public health issue that cuts across socio-economic classes and cultures. IRC understands that gender power differentials are at the root of the violence plaguing women and girls from around the world. Women and girls are at risk if they remain at home, during flight from conflict and in refugee or internally displaced settings. During post-conflict rehabilitation women and girls continue to be subjected to violence, as they were prior to the conflict, and the problem is compounded by the fact that their equal reintegration into society is often hindered by reconstruction and development programs that fail to address women's rights and needs.

The IRC's Global Strategy to Address Gender Based Violence provides a framework for addressing violence against women and girls in conflict and post –conflict settings at three different levels of intervention including at the national, systemic and community levels. This framework is based on the premise that violence against women and girls can only be addressed challenging gender inequality, promoting women's rights and creating social, political and economic environments in which they are empowered to enjoy those rights.

IRC programs aim to meet the safety, health, psychosocial, and justice needs of survivors of GBV. A cornerstone of the programs is empowering communities to challenge beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate or condone any type of violence against women. Through partnerships with communities and institutions the programs work to promote and protect women's and girl's human rights and to empower them to enjoy those rights.

GBV in Liberia

For over 15 years, Liberia was at the center of a number of interrelated civil wars in West Africa that resulted in 270,000 deaths and the displacement of millions across the region.² These numbers are still more staggering when juxtaposed with the tiny Liberian population of just over three million, a population whose ancestors already suffered through a century of graft and exclusion.

Women and girls are particularly vulnerable during armed conflict when rape is used by fighting forces to terrorize, destroy and humiliate communities. Women may be

¹ Current programs include Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Azerbaijan, Sudan, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Uganda, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Thailand, Central African Republic and Tanzania. For more information, visit www.theirc.org.

² Republic of Liberia. *Breaking with the Past: From Conflict to Development—Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy*. Republic of Liberia: 2006, p. 2.

forced to exchange sex for their very survival. And when war forces them to flee their homes, the risk of rape follows them and the threat of domestic violence grows.

Gender-based violence (GBV) was a rampant during the 15 years of conflict in Liberia, and was suffered by the majority of women and girls. A 2005 World Health Study³ found that:

- 90% of women suffered physical or sexual violence
- 3 out of 4 were sexually violated or raped
- Large numbers of women were abducted and turned into sex slaves, gang-raped, or forced into survival sex.

Although a peace accord was signed in 2003, hundreds of thousands of Liberians have yet to return to their homes. A legacy of violence, poverty, and social disorder has persisted post-war and continues to contribute to culture of impunity and fear.

A 2005-2006 study at a Monrovia hospital of 658 rape survivors revealed that:

- 85% were under 18 years of age
- 48% were between 5 and 12 years of age
- Most perpetrators were known to their victims before the attack
- 1 in 5 survivors above the age of 13 were gang-raped
- 15 boys and men reported sexual violence⁴

IRC's GBV Program in Liberia

IRC's Gender Based Violence (GBV) program in Liberia began in 2000 a number of refugee camps in Liberia and Sierra Leon. The initial focus of the program was responding to the medical and psychosocial needs of survivors. That initial focus has since evolved to include an emphasis on prevention through interventions at the community, county and national levels.

From its beginning in 2000, the IRC Liberia GBV program worked with community leaders and women's groups in efforts to mobilize women in the community. Historically, women's groups have served as important entry points for survivors seeking support and are a means of ensuring sustainable community-owned efforts to address GBV. IRC-supported women's groups are founded on the belief that women have the power to change their own lives when given access to the proper support, information and tools.

IRC staff and community peer educators work to educate members on topics such as the consequences of violence against women and human rights, and train groups in basic helping skills to support survivors. These groups have in turn supported thousands of survivors. With guidance from IRC social workers and Behavior Change Communication (BCC) materials, these groups have engaged in numerous awareness

³ World Health Organization. *WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women: Initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses*. WHO, 2005. Available at: <http://www.who.int>.

⁴ Mendy Marsh, Christian Children's Fund, Panel Discussion: "Addressing Sexual Violence in Liberia" December 6, 2006 – United Nations Secretariat, New York

raising campaigns, dramas, discussions and grassroots efforts to assert their right to live free from violence and fear — in their communities and in their homes.

On the county and national levels, IRC is involved in the National GBV Taskforce in Monrovia and co-chairs coordination meetings in Nimba and Lofa counties. IRC program staff also collaborate with partner agencies to organize advocacy efforts focused on influencing judicial change towards a more survivor-friendly and accountable justice system.

IRC Rationale for Male Involvement

There are a number of reasons why mobilizing men to engage in efforts to stop violence against women is important.⁵ Until gender-based violence is recognized as a community-wide issue, it remains marginalized and ignored as a women's issue and a domestic issue. Since men commit the overwhelming majority of violent acts against women and girls, change efforts focusing only on women will not succeed.

No matter how successful the Women's Action Groups may be, they can only address part of the problem. Without intending to, many GBV programs place the responsibility for stopping violence squarely on the shoulders of the women survivors — instead of focusing on the behavior of perpetrators. At the community level, Liberian women's groups have consistently said they alone cannot stop GBV and have called for men to be part of the solution.

Additionally, IRC has found that when men are not involved with the program, they can be suspicious. They misunderstand the program and believe it encourages women to disobey or even divorce their husbands. These perceptions can result in backlash against individual women and staff, and thwart any advancement toward social change.

GBV programs in refugee and displaced settings sometimes inadvertently send the message that all men are perpetrators. It is important to recognize that there are men who are ready and willing to use their influence to encourage women's equality. They recognize the damage violence against women and girls has on the entire community and they want to do something about it.

Notably, the Liberian Ministry of Gender and Development and the National-Level GBV Taskforce officially recognized the need for male involvement in GBV work and outlined it as a priority in their National Plan of Action on GBV in 2006.⁶

Envisioning the Male Involvement Project

IRC's GBV field staff, responding to women's requests to involve men, encouraged men to work alongside the women's groups in a few cases. However, it quickly

⁵ Also see Appendix – The Case for Male Involvement

⁶ Ministry of Gender and Development. *Gender Based Violence Interagency Taskforce National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Management of Gender Based Violence in Liberia*. MGD: Monrovia, November 2006.

became apparent that engaging men was not as simple as having them join the women or even forming groups of their own.

What IRC learned in its male involvement project in Thailand and elsewhere, as well as the principles that emerged from available literature and research on male engagement, is that simply adding men to a women's program is not effective. It is not enough to just incorporate them into regular program activities on an issue that has been historically viewed as a "women's issue."

Men often felt it was either their responsibility or right to run discussions or activities meant to address violence against women. Men, who are generally socialized to lead, were dominating discussions, and women found their voices silenced.

After researching several successful male involvement programs worldwide including Engender Health's Men as Partners (MAP) in South Africa⁷, Men Against Violence in Nicaragua⁸, and Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) in the United States⁹, IRC staff realized that it was first necessary to ensure that men understood the root causes of violence from a gender specific lens, and their own role in maintaining gender norms and inequality, before developing their engagement in prevention.

With those factors in mind, the IRC GBV program in Liberia, with support from Irish Aid began to develop the Male Involvement: Part of the Solution project, with a new approach to the community mobilization of men: in order to effectively engage men in GBV prevention, they need to be able to reflect on the role of masculinity, socialization, power and control *in their own lives*.

Collaboration with Men's Resources International (MRI)

The IRC recognized that despite its years of experience and demonstrated expertise working with women and women's groups, a different expertise was needed to successfully and safely engage men. In order to ensure the program had the proper technical support and guidance, IRC contacted Men's Resources International (MRI)¹⁰, whose 25 years of experience in working with men on violence prevention and positive masculinity included relevant collaborations with groups in Zambia, Nigeria and Rwanda.

IRC contracted with MRI in the fall of 2006 to provide training, consulting and technical support for the launching and development of their Male Involvement Project through three in-country visits, materials development, and telephone and email contact. This collaboration effectively combined the staff resources and community connections of IRC with the expertise and resources of MRI, providing a foundation for rapid and effective project development and monitoring.

⁷ Peacock, D., (2004) *Men as Partners: South African Men Respond to Violence Against Women and HIV/AIDS*.

⁸ Solórzano, I. and Montoya, O. *Men Against Marital Violence: A Nicaraguan campaign*. Managua, 2001. Available at: <http://www.id21.org/static/insights35art5.shtml>, 8 January.

⁹ Katz, Jackson. *Mentors in Violence Prevention*.

¹⁰ For more information about MRI, visit <http://www.mensresourcesinternational.org>

Implementing the Male Involvement Project

Building Support and Investment from Key Constituencies

In October 2006, Men's Resources International sent executive director, Dr. Steven Botkin, to Liberia for the first consultation with the International Rescue Committee. The purpose of this visit was to identify the needs and concerns of existing stakeholders, build support for the Male Involvement Project (MIP) among these key constituencies, advise IRC staff on program development strategies, and provide materials and coaching to newly hired MIP staff. During this visit presentations and discussions about engaging men took place with the GBV leadership team, the GBV staff, a focus group of male IRC staff, the Deputy Minister of Gender and Development, a community-based women's action group, and the National GBV Task Force.

One of the first objectives was to develop understanding, acceptance and investment of GBV staff (almost all women) in the Male Involvement Project. Separate focus group meetings with female and male IRC staff allowed questions and concerns to be expressed and validated, and cross-gender dialogue skills to be introduced. A full GBV staff meeting then provided the opportunity for staff as a group to identify and discuss concerns and fears about what a male involvement project would mean for them and for the program overall. Some of the questions raised included:

- How would involving men fit with their survivor centered approach to addressing GBV?
- How would we ensure that men's increased participation did not result in a decrease in women's participation?
- Would the time and energy spent on this detract from their ability to support survivors?
- Would men's involvement take attention and resources from women?
- How would accountability for male perpetrators be handled by the male involvement project?

Strategies for addressing and monitoring these concerns were then identified and discussed, and staff became increasingly invested in the project.

Group Formation and Leadership Training

In the following months, using strategies and materials from the MRI consultation, MIP staff began to recruit men to form men's action groups (MAGs) in the nine communities where IRC had already established women's action groups (WAGs). In addition, a street survey of men's views about women and other men was conducted in three counties.

In February 2007, Dr. Botkin and MRI associate director James Arana returned for the second MRI consultation to provide training of trainers for male and female IRC staff who would be responsible for implementing the MIP project. The training consisted of three stages: classroom training, the practicum, and follow-up coaching.

In the three-day classroom training participants learned about:

- male socialization and the relationship between trauma and violence;
- how to teach men to listen to women and to break the silence about the violence they have experienced, witnessed and perpetrated; and

- how to help men and women become allies in ending violence in their families and communities.

In the practicum, the MIP staff led two-day trainings for men's and women's action groups in several different rural and urban communities. The training curriculum made use of skills and activities learned in the classroom. MRI staff supervised the practicum trainings, stepping in when appropriate and ensuring that content and safety guidelines were followed. After completing the practicum trainings, MIP staff participated in follow-up coaching sessions with MRI to continue refining their training and facilitation skills, and strengthen their support system with each other.

During this second visit, IRC continued to support community partners, by making MRI consultants available to conduct several workshops for community leaders, the National GBV Task Force, and the Ministry of Gender and Development, and to provide consultation on the development of a coordinated national awareness campaign.

In the following weeks, MIP/GBV staff continued to conduct trainings and follow-up meetings with men's and women's action groups in all nine communities.

Awareness Campaign: Men As Partners to End Violence Against Women (MAPEVAW)

In April IRC brought together leaders from all of the action groups for a two-day planning session to develop a coordinated awareness campaign. Men and women leaders worked together to develop the campaign name and messages, creating a collective investment and coordinated plan.

The MAPEVAW (Men As Partners to End Violence Against Women) campaign was conducted in June 2007, with action in each community that included street parades, performances, sports programs and speeches. BCC materials were developed that included t-shirts, hats and posters reflecting themes of positive masculinity and men as partners. The Lonestar (cell phone corporation) sent a text message about the campaign to 150,000 Liberian subscribers, which demonstrates the potential for corporate partnerships. In total, more than 4,000 people participated in the MAPEVAW campaign activities in nine communities throughout Liberia, including marches, speakers, skits, songs, and football games.

Impact Assessment, Follow-up Training and Monitoring

In July 2007, MRI returned for a third visit to assess the impacts of the Male Involvement Project, provide follow-up training and support to MIP/GBV staff, help IRC develop monitoring tools, and discuss strategies for continuing to develop the project. A two-day staff training focused on building a strong team, identifying program successes and challenges, increasing capacity to present MIP curriculum, improving facilitation and cross-gender dialogue skills, and designing recommendations for program development. Several monitoring and evaluation tools were created and field tested, and interviews with IRC staff, members of women's and men's action groups, and community leaders were conducted. An inter-agency workshop on "Male Involvement Strategy" for key stakeholders was conducted, and strategic planning consultations were provided to the GBV coordinator and other key IRC staff.

Since then, men's and women's action groups, with IRC support, continue to create collaborative community initiatives. MIP trainers from IRC, with support from MRI,

have provided staff training in strategies and skills for male involvement to other NGOs in Liberia that have been inspired to launch similar projects. Meetings with community partners to develop county plans of action have been organized.

Vision for the Future

Continue to support leadership and sustainability for community development initiatives generated by the women's and men's groups.

IRC GBV staff members have a vision that women's groups will gain skills to take on increasing levels of case management in the communities, conducting peer counselling and accompaniment of survivors through the referral system to assure their needs are met. Men's groups as well will continue to work with women's groups on coordinated awareness raising and prevention campaigns. Some strong groups and staff discuss plans for community groups to evolve into local NGOs, with the ability to seek their own funding beyond their current revolving funds.

"Don't just sit there; we should do something for our country!"

— *Motto of Ganta Concerned Women's Group*

Early Results: Significant Positive Impact

While long-term and quantifiable evidence has yet to be collected and analyzed, observations and interviews indicate that the IRC Liberia Male Involvement Project (MIP) is having a significant positive impact on Liberian women and men, their families and their communities.

Testimonies from members of the Women's Action Groups (WAG) and Men's Action Groups (MAG) from five different communities (in Montserrado and Nimba Counties), as well as reports from IRC staff (both male and female) identified consistent themes of positive impact.

Men are changing.

Both women and men are saying, "Men are changing." Staff and community members of both genders are expressing surprise and hopefulness at the willingness of men to engage in this project, and at the changes in attitudes and behaviors already being demonstrated.

Women say men are encouraging them to speak and then listening to their ideas. They are sharing domestic responsibilities, helping to wash, cook, serve and clean-up. They are supporting women's participation in the Women's Action Groups. They say that there is less beating, yelling and fighting. They describe how men are talking to other men about GBV and positive masculinity, referring GBV cases to social workers, appropriately challenging other men's abusive behavior, supporting women's groups' initiatives, and working with women to create new community norms. They also say that the Men's Action Groups are having a ripple effect on other men in the community — increasing awareness and dialogue, and reducing violence.

Community leaders (almost always men) have attended MIP programs and become involved, establishing community rules and regulations about violence against women, and holding men accountable. They report that more cases of GBV are being

Their own words...

— *Female members of the Women's Action Group in Karnplay, Ganta and Saclapea*

"The men who are in the program are changed. Not only have they changed their own thoughts and actions, but now they go to talk with other men who do those things. It makes me feel good."

"Men helped us build the women's center. And they still help out when they can."

"Before the training, women did not have a voice. Now, the men in the program listen to us."

"The men have stopped beating their wives."

"The men work with the women and talk with other men. Even when there is no transportation, they walk a long time to talk with men who need to hear."

"People used to cover up rape. Now victims can get help and feel less shame. Men are talking with other men about how rape is wrong and needs to stop."

"Before, men made all the decisions. Now, women have rights. We are planning activities together."

"Men are cooking and serving the women!"

"Some men would not allow their wives to attend the WAG meetings. Now these husbands are part of the program. Both husband and wife attend meetings. It is so much better now."

brought to them, and they are better able to provide information and guidance. As one leader said, "It's a changed community."

Members of the Men's Action Groups embrace their role in supporting the Women's Action Groups. They say the MIP training broadened their awareness and understanding, and often spoke about how their own experiences with violence from a young age left them confused about how to be a man. As one MAG group leader said "We are moving from a history of violence to living with non-violence...This is the answer to my prayers."

Even though they are occasionally taunted by other men (e.g. called "chick man"), they say they are "determined" to work to end violence against women and to promote gender equality. They agree that other men in their communities have grasped the basic concept that women are equally important and deserving of respect as men. Many MAG members are youth who express an appreciation for the support and guidance of the group, and how they are changing.

Violence against women and children is decreasing.

In every MIP community, both women and men report a reduction in men's violence, and an increased awareness of women's rights. Women say they are seeing and experiencing less blaming, verbal assaults, sexual assaults, and whipping/beating since the Men's Action Group formation. IRC social workers report a reduction in women's complaints about men's violence, and an increase in information from men about cases of GBV.

Men acknowledge that abuse and beating on women and children has been common, and a number of men from different communities openly spoke about their past violent behavior — both verbal and physical. However, they now say that because of the Male Involvement Project, men's violent attitudes and behaviors are decreasing.

Both men and women told many stories about successful community interventions helping men to stop abusive behavior and to increase respect and support for the women and children in their lives. As a result of these interventions, men stopped beating their wives, boys stopped "hitting on" girls, a father did not disown his daughter, a father stopped hitting his children, a father was arrested for sexually abusing his daughter, children stopped being used for heavy labor, girls remained in school, and families were able to stay together.

Men speak up...

— *Male members of the Men's Action Group in Karnplay, Ganta and Saclapea*

"Men and women are meeting on Sundays to talk. The men help out with the cooking even though we get called names like 'Woman-Man.' We are helping with dramas, planning workshops at the market — I am even helping to draw water and wash my children's clothes."

"I used to walk to the fields with my wife. She carried a child under her arm and a heavy load on her head. I carried nothing but my machete. When we returned, she would put down her load, and go out to fetch water for me to bathe. I saw nothing wrong with this. Now, my eyes are open and I can no longer let my wife bear this work alone. Now when we walk, we each carry the child and the load. I get water for both of us. I help in the kitchen and in the home."

Women feel safer and more empowered.

Women report feeling safer in their relationships, in their homes, and in their communities. Both at the personal and community-wide level, they say they are safer due to the presence of men in their communities who are taking a stand on this issue. Referrals of women to IRC social workers for support and resources have increased from male community members, community leaders and public officials. More survivors are speaking out and seeking help.

Women on the IRC staff and in the Women's Action Groups say they are more confident in speaking to men about GBV. They now have skills to approach men as potential agents of change. They tell stories of how they have been able to compassionately challenge men's violent attitudes and behaviors. Knowing that men are joining with women in community outreach also helps the women feel safer and more empowered.

Women and men are sharing roles and responsibilities.

Women and men describe how good it feels to see changes and communication taking place within their own families. Men are taking on housework, sharing information about finances and responsibility for discipline of children, telling their wives where they are going, and communicating as partners with women.

Women's and men's groups are working together.

Women's Action Groups (WAG) and Men's Action Groups (MAG) are meeting together, learning to share leadership, and developing collaborative activities and projects. Joint WAG/MAG discussions about cases of GBV are leading to shared problem-solving and collective actions. MAG members in several communities are providing training, volunteer labor and donated materials for the construction of women's centers and other women's initiatives, such as a restaurant, market farming, soap making, tie-dyeing and t-shirt printing businesses.

An awareness campaign mobilized thousands from diverse communities.

The Men as Partners to End Violence Against Women (MAPEVAW) campaign built on successful experiences of organizing men as allies with women. In total, more than 4,000 people participated in the MAPEVAW campaign activities in nine communities throughout Liberia, including marches, speakers, skits, songs, and football games. There is excitement among the IRC staff and the WAG/MAG groups about how many people participated in the campaign, its effectiveness in getting public attention, and how many other men expressed an interest in getting involved.

MIP is having impact beyond the targeted communities.

The MIP was highlighted at two regional meetings of IRC GBV programs and a Regional Interagency Meeting on GBV, where appreciation and interest was expressed in the strategies and skills being implemented. The consultation weblogs on the Men's Resources International website have been viewed by hundreds of people around the world. Both women and men are proud that there are now men that can represent this program to people and organizations in other countries.

Promising Practices: Effective Approach to Male Involvement

Foundational Beliefs and Values

- 1. Validate men's caring nature and desire for positive masculinity.**
A belief in men's capacity for love and compassion — for women, children and other men — is an essential foundation for effectively engaging men. Although this compassion is often buried under layers of mistrust and fear and protected by male privilege, we know that with support, safety and encouragement men can reclaim their ability to be open and connected. Affirming this belief creates an environment where this aspect of men's nature is validated, encouraged and reinforced.
- 2. Include male socialization in a social analysis of gender-based violence.**
The socialization of males into rigid, stereotypical, dehumanizing and violent forms of masculinity is one root cause of men's violence against women. This belief encourages critical thinking about men's experiences, and support for men's awareness-raising.
- 3. Recognize that violence has traumatic effects on males, especially boy children.**
Recognizing that males are victimized by violence, especially as children, encourages a healing process for men, and reveals that men are natural allies with women in preventing violence.
- 4. Understand how men's violence is caused both by male privilege and men's feelings of powerlessness.**
Understanding men's dual nature, as both privileged and damaged, validates the full reality of men's experience, and is central to developing effective engagement strategies.
- 5. Affirm the critical role men can play as partners with women and agents of social change.**
Women have led the way in exposing and challenging gender-based violence and gender inequality. Men have an important part to play in challenging rigid gender roles and dominating forms of masculinity, and becoming positive male role models. Building ally relationships between men and women is necessary to create a strong movement for social change. Many men are eager to learn how to join with women in ending violence, and waiting for an invitation.

Educational Methodologies and Activities

- 6. Use a participatory, experiential approach**
Actively engage men and women in dialogue and reflection about their own experiences. By creating a safe environment where personal experiences,

feelings and perceptions can be shared, the realities of gender roles and violence are made visible, and consciousness is raised about how this has affected everyone in society. The dialogue and interactions within the group itself is used as opportunities to witness gender dynamics and practice gender relations skills. From these shared connections men and women are mobilized and inspired to work for a collective empowerment. Often called “popular education,” this approach emphasizes the experience, wisdom and leadership of community members.

7. **Teach and model compassionate and respectful communication.**

Help all participants feel welcomed, valued, and safe. Encourage respectful listening and dialogue. Acknowledge awkwardness, challenges, and mistakes as they occur as opportunities for learning. Express personal vulnerability and connection to issues. Validate different experiences and perspectives.

8. **Help men recognize the full range of violent behavior.**

Identify relevant examples of violence representing subtle to extreme forms. Explore how violence can be physical, emotional, financial, systemic, etc. Develop a working definition of violence such as, “When one person or a group of people impose their will on another person or group.”

9. **Help men to recognize and take responsibility for their own hurtful behavior.**

Examine how the social and psychological dimensions of masculinity have affected men personally and created the conditions for violence and abuse. Share and support each other's efforts to change these patterns, individually and culturally. By joining as allies with women in challenging cultural and institutional systems of domination and control, men can offer each other and society models of recovery, safety, empowerment and hope.

**Community Tip:
24 hour membership**

“We must convince ourselves and work on our own way of thinking and our actions before we carry the message out [to other people] because people will be listening to what we say and checking our character to see if we really practice it.”

—*Chicken Soup Factory Community
MAPEVAW group member,
Montserrado County*

10. **Teach men to listen to women.**

Give men explicit instruction on how to listen with attention and compassion but *without* judgment, advice, or interruptions. Identify appropriate verbal and non-verbal ways of expressing comprehension, engagement, connection, and support. Create opportunities for men and women to practice listening and being listened to.

11. **Teach men to break the silence about their own experiences with violence.**

A code of silence often surrounds violent experiences, and we have learned to be afraid to speak out. One of the most powerful things we can do is create an environment that supports men talking together about our own experiences, confronting others about their attitudes and behaviors, and taking a stand publicly in our communities.

12. Provide specific actions for men to take toward ending violence against women.

Explore what types of actions we should — and shouldn't — take in order to start making a difference in our families, communities, countries, and in the world. Appropriate actions can be broken down into three categories: personal actions that change our own attitudes and behaviors, interpersonal actions to change the attitudes and behaviors of other individuals, and group actions that involve groups of people working together to change attitudes and behaviors of a community or society.

13. Be open to feedback and change.

Seek feedback about how our actions affect others, especially those who have experienced violence and oppression. We need to be willing to acknowledge missteps and adjust our attitude, strategies, and actions in order to become better allies for social justice and peace.

14. Present a vision of hope as a source of inspiration.

Stress our belief in the inherent caring nature of men, offer of examples of men's humanity and capacity for change, highlight progress that is being made in the community, society, and around the world, and share a vision of how men, women and children can rise to their full potential.

Strategic Program Development

15. Engage the help of an experienced consultant in the early stages of planning.

The process of engaging men in existing programs or creating male involvement projects has many challenges. Even organizations with years of experience and demonstrated expertise working with women and women's groups, need additional skills and resources to successfully and safely engage men.

16. Engage women from the beginning as advisors, participants, and monitors for the male involvement initiative.

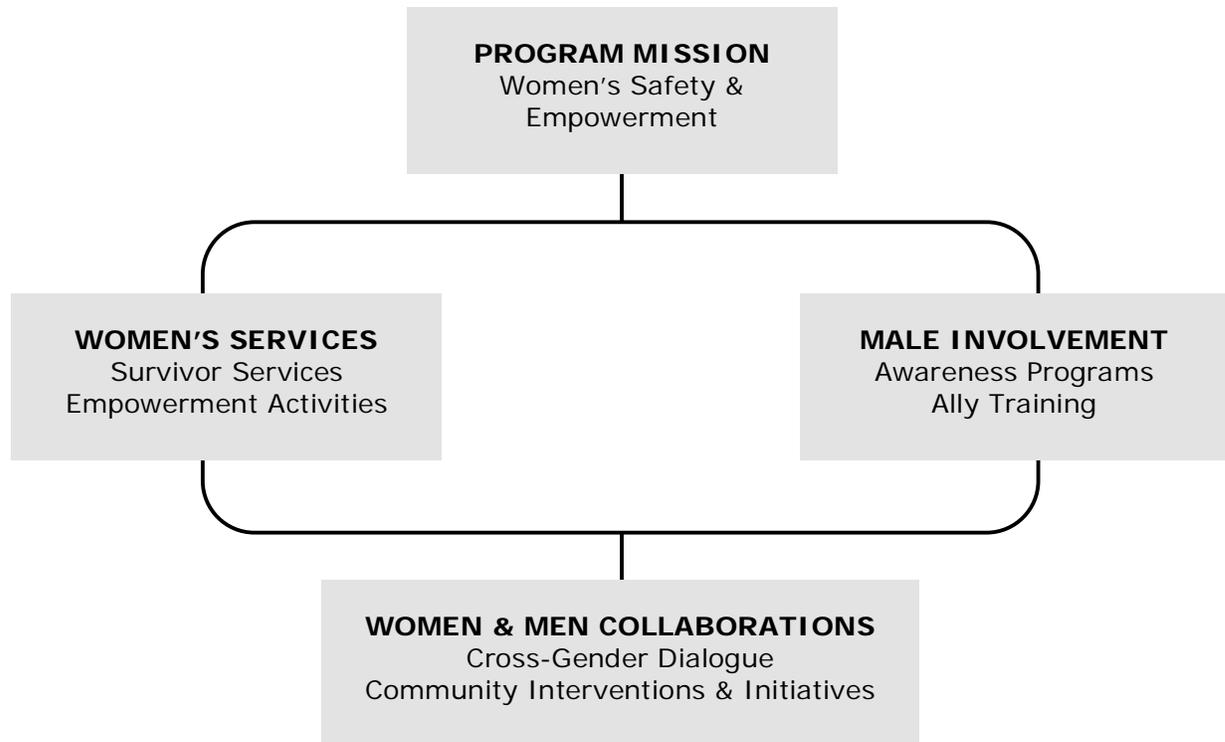
The creation of the Male Involvement Project has practical and psychological impacts on existing GBV program staff and participants, who are often mostly women. Because of their key roles in program leadership, community connections, and service delivery, it is vital to have their understanding, acceptance and investment in any initiative for engaging men. Deliberately cultivating trust and accountability with women staff and community members must be a priority throughout the project.

17. Engage community leaders to establish a strong foundation for a male involvement initiative.

Begin a dialogue with community leaders about the need for male engagement as soon as possible. Solicit their ideas and perceptions. Invite them as guests of honor to give their blessing for any significant activity (project launch, training, etc.).

18. **Provide a model for how male involvement is integrated into existing GBV and other women's programs.**

The overall program mission (women's safety and empowerment), and the programs for women (survivor services and empowerment activities) remain the same. The male involvement initiative adds programs for men (awareness programs and ally training), and programs for women and men together (cross-gender dialogue, community interventions and initiatives, collaborative campaigns). The mixed gender programs will require both men and women to learn skills for communicating and working together.



19. **Develop men's engagement initiatives in communities where women's groups are already strong.**

Community-based women's groups can provide feedback and advice, assistance in outreach to men, an opportunity for men to practice the skills of listening to women and supporting women's leadership, and a basis for powerful collective actions.

20. **Form community-based men's action groups.**

Men's action groups provide an effective structure for awareness-raising and community mobilization. The group setting provides a support system for changes in attitudes and behaviors, a focal point for recruitment of other men, a vehicle for leadership development, and a collective resource for collaboration with women.

21. **Provide ongoing training, supervision and technical assistance for a core group of community-based men and women.**

Because male involvement is a long-term social change process, skills and leadership of men and women from the community must be cultivated and

supported. Ideally, joint training is conducted for men's and women's action groups in male socialization, cross-gender dialogue, and working together for gender equality. Women's and men's groups are supporting in meeting both separately and together.

22. Plan collective actions

The true power of this process is revealed when women and men are able to take action together. Actions can range from responding to individuals and supporting families in the community to organizing country-wide awareness and advocacy campaigns.

23. Develop awareness and campaign materials that reflect images of positive masculinity and men's engagement as partners with women.

Be sensitive to the level of awareness and literacy of the target audience. Use group input to create messaging that is culturally relevant, peer-to-peer, and offers positive choices rather than accusations.

24. Establish monitoring and evaluation systems.

Regular interviews and surveys with the women's groups, men's groups and community leaders provide feedback about the male involvement initiative. Documentation of activities and testimonials of community members give evidence of program impacts.

Staff Tip: The Role of Men in GBV Work:

"Men's role is in prevention activities--to talk with their friends, to talk with perpetrators, to raise awareness and be role models. They mold themselves, having been through trainings, meetings, sensitization activities, etc. That's how we want to see men's action group behavior. Their role is prevention, as well as involving [themselves] in the advocacy work. The men should be role models in decision making as well, having discussion with their wives and involving women in decision making. The men will foster the women in decision making, not only at a political level but even in the home."

–Bockarie Ngamoh, Lofa County Program Manager

In their Own Words: Personal Impact

"I have been married for 15 years. I did not know the consequences of rape or domestic violence. Me and my wife used to make palaver [fight]. Since I joined this GBV program, I have gotten to know how to treat our wives. Especially demanding sex from my wife in the night is very bad. I have gotten to know the consequences of rape. In our youth days, we could force the girl. Now we know the bad results of it."

-Ganta MAPEVAW men's group member

Common Challenges

Women’s misgivings about the process of engaging men

Understandably, women may feel defensive and mistrustful about involving men in what has traditionally been considered a women’s issue. Fear about men taking over or competing with women for attention and resources can generate resistance.

Balancing support and challenge to men

While cultivating compassion, understanding and empowerment for men around their own experiences of violence, it is also necessary to hold men accountable for their behavior and help them recognize their unfair status of power and privilege.

Members of men’s action groups are likely to reveal their own patterns of violence and abuse as they become more aware and learn to break the silence. Balancing support and accountability within the group, and establishing guidelines for group member behavior is an ongoing challenge.

Re-playing traditional gender roles in meetings of women and men

Despite significant changes and good intentions, patterns of gender inequality, power and control will continue to influence program participants, both in interpersonal dynamics and group attitudes and behaviors.

Dealing with perpetrators

Groups will have to balance values of accountability and compassion, while negotiating safety issues, legal systems, and the impulse for a strong and immediate intervention. This is often made more difficult by the lack of social consequences for perpetrators of gender-based violence.

Maintaining and sustaining motivation and engagement

International NGOs frequently assume that community members will naturally want to be involved in projects that seek to improve the community at large, yet have no real economic gains for participants.

In impoverished communities, men may want or expect a stipend or other material benefits for their participation. While this is understandable, it is important that men recognize the imbalance of financial opportunities for men vs. women as a legitimate reason that women’s groups may take priority for funding.

One way IRC has addressed this challenge is by finding and fostering local male activists who have an understanding of the issue and are passionate about spreading the message. Local male role models have worked best to ensure other men remain engaged and active.

Staff Tip: Economic Empowerment for Women

“The biggest challenge—since the war and even before—is that women have less income than men. To be frank, their economic potential is low. So they come out first with requests for material support. You know that if she does not get help, she is prone to violence against her. Due to economic need, she may not even be active in the group. You can encourage people with words, but after one or two years, the words stop having meaning. People need to get their basic needs met before they can worry about others.”
— *Nimba GBV Staff*

Appendix

The Case for Male Involvement

There is a demonstrated need for male involvement in gender-based violence prevention, gender equality, family health and other community development initiatives.

Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of international law established in the United Nations Charter. The role of men and boys in promoting and realizing gender equality has gained significant attention over the past decade.

- The Programme of Action of the World Summit on Social Development's 2000 review addressed the role of men with regard to sharing family, household and employment responsibilities with women.¹¹
- The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) restated the principle of shared power and responsibility, and argued that women's concerns could only be addressed "in partnership with men."¹²
- The twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS in 2001 stressed the need for active involvement of men and boys.¹³
- In 2004, a summit on men and boys organized by the Ms. Foundation highlighted the need to "create a critical mass of men trained to do this work in their communities."
- The 48th Session of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (2004)¹⁴ called on governments, UN entities and other stakeholders to:
 - Encourage the active involvement of men and boys in eliminating gender stereotypes.
 - Design and implement programs to enable men to adopt safe and responsible sexual and reproductive behavior.
 - Support men and boys to take an active part in the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence.
 - Strengthen networking among different organizations working with men.

Men are concerned about domestic and sexual violence, and respond positively to invitations to be involved.

Over the last 30 years women's activism has inspired men around the world to examine the effects of masculinity and patriarchy on their lives, and explore their role in promoting gender equality and ending violence. In some communities these

¹¹ See paragraphs 7, 47 and 56 of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, and paragraphs 15, 49, 56 and 80 of the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly on Further Initiatives for Social Development.

¹² See paragraphs 1, 3, 40, 72, 83b, 107c, 108e, 120 and 179 of the Beijing Platform for Action.

¹³ See paragraph 47 of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS: "Global Crisis – Global Action".

¹⁴ Report of the Expert Group Meeting on "The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality", Brasilia, Brazil, 21-24 October 2003, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/men-boys2003/reports/Finalreport.pdf>

men have joined together to support each other in this exploration, and to experiment with strategies for engaging other men and working with women to challenge sexism and end violence.

Pioneering organizations such as Men Can Stop Rape, Men's Resources International, and Men Stopping Violence (USA), Sonke Gender Justice Network and Men As Partners (South Africa), and Promundo (Rio de Janeiro) have formed from these initiatives, creating awareness campaigns and educational programs on issues of men and violence.

Research by Sonke Gender Justice Network showed that many men and boys are concerned about widespread domestic and sexual violence and want it to stop. They worry about the safety of women and girls—their partners, sisters, mothers, girlfriends, wives, coworkers, neighbors, classmates, and fellow congregants—and want to play a role in creating a safer and more just world.

In 1991 the launch of White Ribbon Campaign in Canada drew over 100,000 male participants, and has since spread to over 50 countries,

Male involvement initiatives can change attitudes and behaviors among men and boys.

A growing body of evidence suggests that programs that work with men and boys can have a significant impact on increasing men's support for gender equality and in reducing a range of health problems.

- A Medical Research Council evaluation of the Stepping Stones initiative implemented in South Africa showed significant changes in men's attitudes and practices. After two years, men who participated in the intervention reported fewer partners, higher condom use, less transactional sex, less substance abuse and less perpetration of intimate partner violence.
- Instituto Promundo's intervention with young men in Brazil on promoting healthy relationships and HIV/STI prevention, showed significant shifts in gender norms at six months and twelve months.
- In the United States, the organization, Men Can Stop Rape, has developed a campaign called My Strength Is Not For Hurting and engaged local sports figures to speak out against violence toward women. Impact evaluation found that young men who participated in the program reported a greater willingness to question or act on incidents of gender-based violence that they witnessed.
- The World Health Organization recently identified 57 interventions with men and boys in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, GBV, and fatherhood. Overall, 53% of the programs were assessed as either promising or effective. Programs that took an approach of addressing gender norms – within messages, staff training, educational sessions and campaigns with men and boys – were even more likely to impact attitudes and behavior.

Key Terms and Definitions

Gender-based violence is defined in this document as physical, mental, or sexual abuse, including acts, attempted or threatened, committed with force, manipulation, or coercion and without the informed consent of the survivor – directed against a

person because of his or her gender in a society or culture. For the purpose of IRC programming and this document GBV is used interchangeably with violence against women.

Gender-based violence in simple Liberian English is any harm or bad bad thing done to somebody that can make that person to suffer. The main people that suffer more from GBV are women and girls. So we say GBV is any harm or suffering for women and girls, like raping or beating the woman. And this suffering may cause that person to worry, get sick, get hurt, get cripple, get crazy or die. Whether it is happening in the bed room or outside for everyone to see, it is GBV.

Community mobilization as it relates to Gender Based Violence programming is the process of energizing all levels of a community to change the value system that perpetuates violence against women. It moves beyond service delivery and training—towards awareness-raising and activism for social change.

Positive masculinity as conceived by Men’s Resources International is a way of being a man that focuses on compassionate, healthy and responsible attitudes and behaviors in all relationships. It is a male social identity that is based on the inherent human instinct to be loving, caring, and sensitive. It offers a healthy alternative to the traditions of male privilege, violence, domination and isolation.

A **Promising Practice** is defined by IRC as an intervention that shows significant potential and positive anecdotal results, but has yet to be formally evaluated.

Acronyms

BCC	Behavior Change Communication
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IEC	Information, Education and Communication materials (learning materials)
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MAPEVAW	Men as Partners in Ending Violence against Women (men’s groups)
MGD	Ministry of Gender and Development
MIP	Male Involvement Project
MOHS	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MAG	Men’s Action Group
MRI	Men’s Resources International
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia (Peacekeeping Mission)
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WAG	Women’s Action Group
WHO	World Health Organization



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