

# Men's Involvement in the Fight Against Gender-Based Violence



- Report of the Scientific Meeting,  
(Organized in Kinshasa, on March 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>, 2011)

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## Introduction

The scientific meeting held in Kinshasa, on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2011 by UNESCO, in collaboration with ISESCO and the Regional Centre of Research and Documentation on Women, Gender and the Construction of Peace in the Great Lakes Region, exists in continuation of the framework of UNESCO's actions seeking to fight acts of violence against women, et to reinforce women's rights. It should be noted that the Sector of Social and Human Sciences (SHS) is currently leading a research programme on gender-based violence, and in particular the socio-economic and socio-cultural causes of this violence, and the means of engaging mean in the fights against acts of violence. These research efforts should advise the framing of national and regional policies and strategies in this field.

This research programme aims at the elaboration of recommendations and political orientations to fight gender-based violence, and with regards to this meeting's focus, the involvement on men in the combat against violence against women. This initiative is based on the successful meeting held in Pretoria in August 2007 on the rights of women for peace and security in post-conflict democracies of sub-Saharan Africa, which established a basis for a productive dialogue between Ministers at the Forum of Ministers in charge of the affairs concerning women and gender in the region of the Great Lakes held in Mombasa in 2009, as well as a series of political documents and orientations memos, accessible on UNESCO's website. This meeting in Kinshasa is the second in this series of research meetings.

The local and foreign researchers, particularly in the Great Lakes region, specializing in gender-based violence were invited by UNESCO to present research work on these themes, which are framed in connection with UNESCO's action in favour of women living in post-conflict situations:

### **Men and violence against women**

- Men's perception of violence committed against women
- Why do men commit violent acts against women?
- Working with the perpetrators of violence
- Testimonies on men working on campaigns against sexist violence
- Reconfiguration of masculinity

Other participants at this scientific meeting:

- Congolese officials: Ministry of Gender, Family and Children, Ministry of Superior and University Education, the national Congolese police
- The Congolese civil society
- Agencies of the UN
- Women and men from the media
- Young academics
- Etc.

There were four highlights during this conference:

1. **The opening ceremony**, with a few appropriate words spoken turn by turn by UNESCO's representative, the Director General of the Regional Centre for Research and Documentation on Women, Gender and the Construction of Peace in the region of the Great Lakes, the representative of the Minister for Superior and University Education and the representative of Madame the Minister of Gender, Family et Children
2. **The presentation of scientific research** based on the theme "involving men in the fight against gender-based violence".
3. **The elaboration of recommendations** for the involvement of men in fighting against violence against women.
4. **The presentation and launch of the campaign "Call to Men"**, which aims at involving men, by all sorts of actions, in the fight against violence against women. The launch of this campaign was followed by a concert.

# Proceeding of the scientific conference

## **A. Day of March 29<sup>th</sup>**

### **a) Official launch of the conference**

#### **1. Remarks from the UNESCO representative (Mme Jane Freedman)**

The speaker began by thanking the participations and all that contributed to the initiative of creating the Regional Centre of Research and Documentation on Women, Gender, and the Construction of Peace in the Great Lakes region. This Centre is a major activity of UNESCO; and is at the heart of two global priorities of the organization: the promotion of gender equality, and actions for Africa. UNESCO works to promote the role of women in the reconstruction of countries in post-conflict situations and to fight against gender-based violence. This contributed to UNESCO's mandate in the diffusion of a culture of peace and non violence.

The speaker underlines that however there are challenges in the work to be accomplished in this field of promoting gender equality, women's rights, and the construction of peace, as there lacks research and reliable data on the situations of men and women, and data regarding gender equality.

The Regional Centre will thus contribute to the promotion and circulation of research on gender equality, on women's rights in conflict and post-conflicts periods, which will enable decision makers to take inspiration from this in order to determine policies and strategies that will promote women's rights and gender equality. This centre will accordingly be a resource for political decision makers, for international organizations and for civil society actors working in different areas of social life for an effective promotion of gender equality and peace.

#### **2. Remarks from the Director General of the Regional Centre for Research and Documentation on Women, Gender and the Construction of Peace in the Great Lakes region (Mme Monique Kande)**

The Director General welcomed participants by emphasizing the importance of a partnership with men to fight against gender-based violence. For the speaker, men and women are called to get involved in this combat against violence, underlining that this doesn't in any way contravene the mutual respect that can exist in spaces shared by men and women.

She called attention to the importance of the Regional Centre for Research and Documentation on Women, Gender and the Construction of Peace in the Great Lakes region. This is a category 2 UNESCO centre that must be:

- A space of research for change.
- A space where our history must be written to fight against oral tradition.
- A precious occasion to appreciate women in our region given how her role isn't sufficiently valued.
- A hub for Congolese society for research looking to fight against the exploitation of our resources to the detriment of Congolese women

The speaker expressed the wish that this research would be realized as a network in partnership with universities in order to elaborate the best policies and programmes for the promotion of men and women in the Great Lakes region.

She rejoiced in the partnership with UNESCO and UN Women that support the Centre in their work for the mobilization of resources, and their efforts for the coming installation of the Centre's Administration Board and its scientific committee.

She finished her speech with a thought: « don't worry if you are advancing slowly but worry if you stop ».

### **3. Speech from the representative of the Minister for Higher and University Education**

The representative of the Minister for Higher Education gave support and encouraged, in the name of the Minister who was detained elsewhere, the initiative of a programme for the involvement of men in the fight against gender-based violence; the Ministry being in charge of the supervision of academic institutions, which are the structures for the training of youth. She orally expressed the support of the Ministry for Higher Education to the Regional Centre for Research and the Documentation on Women, Gender and the Construction for Peace in the Great Lakes region.

### **4. Speech from the representative of Madam the Minister for Gender, Family and Children**

The representative of Madam the Minister for Gender, Family and Children spoke of violence against women which reflecting a vision of social links, of state practices promoting or not the fight against violence, public policies for gender and the combat against violence against women.

She insisted on the necessity of questioning ourselves on the social actors able of influence the social and political establishment in order to modify collective behaviour in the field of combating against sexual violence. This is an issue of great concern in the Great Lakes region.

She underlined that a number of mechanisms were put into motion to put an end to violence against women, in particular sexual violence; but this violence seems to amplify et gain ground with the underlying fundamental question, that of impunity. She added that perpetrators are both civilians and military, both in times of peace and of conflict.

The speaker believes that the causes for the weakness of the results of fighting against sexual violence could be explained by the low involvement of men: perpetrators of rape and the

majority of decision makers that however detain a power that could be wielded to help the fight against violence against women; accordingly it is important:

- To involve those who really hold political and social power
- To instigate a change in collective behaviour
- To refocus the issue of violence against women by involving influential social actors of the political sphere and social life.
- To specify the advantages of men's involvement in the fight against violence committed against women and the mechanisms of sustaining the actions to be taken.

The representative of the Minister for Gender ended her speech by emphasizing the commitment of the Minister in assisting the process of involving men in the fight against violence against women and by wishing that the observations of the conference might open up new lines of inquiry with a view to elaborate policies and programmes to combat violence against women.

### **b) Presentation of scientific research**

The second highlight of the conference was the presentation of the work of researchers coming from Congo-Brazzaville, Uganda, Burundi, the USA, Kenya, Cameroun, Sudan and the DRC.

#### **1. Henny Slegh, Psychotherapist, Rwanda: Masculinity and gender-based violence in Rwanda: Proposal for community-based interventions**

This is a study on masculinity and its link to gender-based violence. The goals of the study:

- Reveal the perception of masculinity by society, by men and by women;
- Seek out in society the aspects that aggravate or justify violence against women;
- Establish a strategy at the national level to fight against gender-based violence;
- Promote research in the Great Lakes region in partnership with entities of the United Nations system.

This study took place in Rwanda and Mozambique: 3600 interviews were carried out following a qualitative method. It lead to these results: 74% of all male respondents admitted having been sexually abused during their childhood; In schools, teachers psychologically and physically assaulted the students, a close link was established between the experience of living through violence during childhood and acts of violence committed as an adult in particular against women (33% of men admitted to this). The study additionally illustrated the role played by religion and laws in the justification of gender-based violence.

The experiences of the combat against gender-based violence lead in Rwanda and Mozambique were presented, that is to say: the psychosocial model tested in Mozambique, the good neighbouring and the installation of associations with a view to develop the dialogue between men and women.

His allocution ended with a few recommendations, namely the use of a multidisciplinary approach (historical, sociological and economic) as a strategy to combat gender-based violence.



## **2. Zoe Marks, Oxford University: Listening to perpetrators: connecting Wartime violence with post-conflict interventions**

This is a case study that was held in Sierra Leone for a year and a half. It consisted mainly in listening to perpetrators of violence during a period of conflict or war.

Her intervention focused on four points: a general survey, the historical foundation of violence, gender relations, experiences of post-conflict violence and the programme establishing the fight against violence committed during the war.

At first, men and women were sent to fight, but the women were dying in greater number than the men. Starting 1995, women were no longer under the obligation of following their husbands into combat but they were afraid of being assaulted by government troops. Marriages were no longer arranged, but based on love.

For the FODESA, rapes were committed despite their prohibition because of the military state of mind and the absence of girlfriends explained a veteran. While for the RUF, raping was programmed by the generals.

The crucial question was to know, why rape? They raped because they hadn't had girlfriends or to show their power. To fight against these violent acts, we recommended that soldiers marry women that would follow them into combat zones. However; this system was determined to be too costly and generals were required to encourage marriages between the military and civilians.

Regarding the perception of violence, some women confess loving their husbands despite the violent way they act towards them. The presentation ended by recommending involving simultaneously perpetrators, victims and the whole population as well in preventive measures and actions to promote women's rights.

## **3. Symphorien Pyana, University of Eastern Africa (Nairobi): Perceptions of men on violence against women: theoretical and empirical analysis in the case of Eastern DRC**

Mr. Pyana completed a theoretical and empirical analysis on the perception of men on violence against women in the East of DCR. The overarching question is as follows:

Why do men commit violent acts against women and how is this problem solved?

The study had as set goals to understand the causes of violence against women in the East, to evaluate the male perceptions by women and the ignorance of gender. 70 interviews were conducted, 250 women questioned and 12 focus groups organized.

The different perceptions revolve around:

- Masculinity: men and women differ on a behavioural level – femininity implies being calm, peace-loving, etc. The entirety of men and women's social behaviour is based on the nature of one and another, on a biological basis and on presuppositions. Men must be involved in the combat against violence against women in order to favour the emergence of a new perception of women.
- Power: inequality in power in the decision making process since it is naturally recognized that the man is strong.
- Socio-economic marginalization: women are known to be dependent of men.



#### **4. Estella Cimpaye, Ministry for Gender, Burundi: Men and violence against women, gender and sexist stereotypes in Burundi**

The presentation focuses on the following aspects:

- Socio-demographic characteristics of Burundi
- stereotypes
- a theoretical part based on the works on Chombart in 1997, of William and Best in 1982

Rape is primarily committed in the family sphere. The most frequent forms of violence happening in Burundi are sexual, psychological and physical acts of violence. Sexist stereotypes are sources of cultural, economic and political inequalities, among others.

Risk factors are found both on an individual and community level. Incidents of violence experienced during childhood predispose men to commit violence once they are adults.

Social norms favour violence against women by transmitting values tied to domination by men. Gender role theory had a proven impact on socialisation in Burundi society by attributing sociability to women and skills to men; this affected the social and environmental organisation of society in Burundi.

#### **5. Josephine Ahikire, Makerere University, Uganda, Towards a recreation of positive masculinities in post war Northern Uganda: Economic opportunities in post conflict Northern Uganda**

After the war, populations were confined to refugee camps. Men had no activities but women were forced to look for food in order for their families to survive. Men have found themselves humiliated by the government and the rebels.

The war exacerbated to conflict in men's personality in the North of Uganda by displaying a destructive, alcoholic and violent way of behaving after having lost the values upon which their masculinity was based.

Women were more active and played a predominant role in the economic field. A real crisis of masculinity was observed, which makes a call to men all the more pressing in the North so that men will break out of the vicious circle which renders them vulnerable and useless in society.

The proposed solutions are as follows:

- Generating knowledge on the situation in the field.
- Generating national and local level knowledge.
- Creating a mobilization focused on men so they can create a positive masculinity

#### **6. Luc Massoma, University of Maroua, Cameroun, Exploitation of MISIP in Cameroun: Hope of solutions to violence against refugee women or channel for enrichment?**

The speaker began by underlining that violence against women is a universal phenomenon which affects all countries in the world and that acts of sexual violence have been exacerbated by known historical wars.

He then presented the *Dispositif Minimum d'Urgence*, or Minimal Initial Service Package for reproductive health in crisis situations which had designated 5 goals: prevent sexual violence and assist the survivors, reduce the transmission of AIDS, prevent excess maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity and plan comprehensive SR services integrated into primary health care.

These goals are laudable but they have served as an alibi for the project initiators to defraud those who supported it, to whom they promised trips and employment at the end of the training. In the end, nobody travelled nor did anyone find new employment.

The presentation concluded with a question: that of knowing if the initiator of the project had as a goal to train agents in the combat against violence or if his objective was self-enrichment? Perhaps there is commodification of the question of violence against women.

## **7. Amna Rahama, Afhad University for Women, Sudan**

This presentation was focused on the overarching question of sexual mutilation in Sudan: its origins, its manifestations, its consequences on sexual behaviour of women. These mutilations are practiced in the family circle and are justified by Islam.

The human rights approach was used in this study, and a case study focused on the involvement of students as agents of raising awareness against violence against women.

These following activities were carried out:

- Raising awareness in the community
- Creating special programmes on gender, peace and human rights
- Creating an association of students to fight against violence against girls, etc.

## **8. Catherine Odimba, University of Kanshasa, DRC, Issues of the involvement of men in the fight against violence against women in the Congolese context: the case of sexual violence**

The speaker first set the scene of sexual violence in DRC and gave a broad overview of preventive measures of violent acts which were handicapped by the culture of impunity. Accordingly, it is necessary to involve all decision makers in all levels to reap positive results. With statistics at hand, Mrs. Odimba demonstrated that men are a majority in the decision making entities: from the House of Representatives to the Senate, as well as provincial assemblies and the magistrate. The number of women remains insignificant hence the importance of involving these leaders in the combat against gender-based violence.

### **Debate questions in the first day:**

- The methodological limits of research work lead by sociologists and psychologists?
- The roles played by the media in the socialization of violence.
- The question of positive masculinity and positive femininity.
- The actions lead to help veterans regain their dignity.
- Dowry and violence against women.
- Alcohol in violence against women.
- Violence committed in areas of exploitation of precious materials
- The introduction of gender modules in programmes
- Rethinking the perception of masculinity and femininity in our region by defining the role of men and of women.

## **B. Day of March 30<sup>th</sup>**

### **a) Following presentations**

#### **1. Clémentine Sangana, University of Kinshasa, DRC, The combat against violence towards women: which approach?**

The speaker discussed the socio-cultural approach in the fight against domestic violence in Kasai. According to this study, men and women consider domestic violence as not being violence since social norms favour the legitimisation of domestic violence. Women live through these acts of violence as a good wife and mother to the children.

To impulse a change in behaviour we must use the traditional culture of Kasai and find within it positive values that promote women upon which to connect strategies of fighting against violence towards women.

#### **2. Joséphine Cishala, University of Kinshasa, DRC: resocialization of youth by education**

In her presentation, Ms. Joséphine emphasized the necessity of leaning on the youth because of their social power, mobility, and social position by considering them as a link between generations, helping foster change in social behaviour.

However, young people are exposed to a culture of violence that jeopardizes the future and the development of this country. What can be done to change this situation?

The means to achieve this remains acting on channels of transmission of social values, that is family, school, university, church and spaces of social life. The presentation ended with a few recommendations, including the identification of different categories of youth, the elaboration of resocialization strategies, and creating of networks between different generations to fight against gender-based violence.

#### **3. Scholastique Dianzinga, Marien Ngouabi University, Brazzaville : Expériences d'implications des hommes dans les luttes contre les violences faites aux femmes au Congo<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Experiences in involving men in the fights against violence towards women in Congo

Mrs. Scholastique mostly discussed sexual harassment at Marien Ngouabi University in Brazzaville.

Among the factors that fosters this situation, the speaker mentioned:

- the abusive use of authority between professors and female students;
- the exchange of favours and power of faculty and staff, physical exhibition of the girls and provocative manners of dress;
- poverty of female students that hope to meet their material needs through their relations with professors.

Moreover, she mentioned that sexual harassment results in grave consequences on three levels:

- The victims experience a psychological disturbance leading to a decrease in concentrating on their studies; some will abandon their studies or change schools, there are unwanted pregnancies.
- The faculty and staff lose authority with students.
- The level of training suffers when skills are no longer required to succeed.

A few solutions were brought forward by the speaker;

- Organizing awareness campaigns;
- Creating counselling units;
- Putting a telephone at the disposal of female students to denounce situations of sexual harassment they are suffering from;
- Fighting against impunity;
- Raising awareness by all of the existence of this phenomenon;
- Taking care of female students that become victims of this violence;
- Mainstreaming courses in morality et civic education;
- Melioration of women's representation in positions of responsibility to serve as a model for girls.

The presentation ended by an aspiration to learn how to live together and ensure that the university be a place of excellence and the acquisition of skills.

## **b) General debate**

At the close of these different presentations, a few questions were raised:

- Details on the origin of violence towards women in Kasai.
- The obstacles for victims to report violence, especially young women.
- The attitudes regarding rapes committed in residential neighbourhoods.

The participants contributed thusly:

- Amna of Sudan wished that Ms. Scholastique incorporate the human rights aspect into her study and that helplines be created within the university as it was done in Sudan.
- Kayembe Roland advised Ms. Joséphine to use the clever trick of introducing a few chapters on violence towards women in courses on citizenship education, morality,

anthropology or sociology instead of going through official channels which would be too time consuming.

- The delegate from UNESCO / Paris entrusted advice to the representatives of Universities and other for them to embody responsible behaviour in the exercise of their functions in order to adequately train competent and responsible managers.
- Mrs. Monique Kande presented a contribution on the conception of marriage in Africa and DRC; marriage is not only based on love but is sometimes a contract between families. Women must submit to this whether they wish to or not.
- Stella Cimpaye had hoped that training modules would be drafted and incorporated into university programmes and for the creation within the Centre of a statistical data bank to motivate programmes and policies in the Great Lakes region.

### **c) Launch of the campaign on “Call to Men, Which Future for your Daughters”**

This project was presented by Mrs. Monique Kande and the national project coordinator of “Call to Men, Which Future for your Daughters”. They took turns explaining the goals of the project, the projected actions and expected results. An amending debate followed the presentation of the project. As a related activity to the project, there is a research programme on gender-based violence and political decision makers, and conferences with chiefs in all DCR.

The approach will be based on exchanges, training, and the popularization of acts to commit to these issues, and the distribution of key messages determined during meetings with a view to raise awareness and changes in behaviour.

With regards to the conference with traditional chiefs, the purpose will be to educate the guardians of tradition on the necessity of involving men in the fight against gender-based violence.

This project has the following aims:

- to promote a change in mentality among traditional chiefs
- to eradicate domestic violence
- to train the ideological officials of political parties
- to establish training material

As a target population, this project is addressed both to young people (12-18, 19-25 years old) and adults.

The campaign “involving men in the fight against gender-based violence” is a movement that is addressed to all since the fulfilment of women contributed to be well being of all, concluded Mrs. Monique Kanda, President of the Regional Centre for Research and Documentation on Women, Gender, and the Construction of Peace in the Great Lakes region.

### **d) Recommendations**

The conference ended with multiple recommendations drawn on three levels: raising awareness, training and research.

### **1. In the field of raising awareness**

- Raise awareness in the army and police force on gender-based violence.
- Establish specific messages depending on the areas of social life and the categories of targeted actors.
- Take advantage of the opportunities different meetings to incorporate a message of non-violence.
- Incorporate in awareness the aspect relating the violence towards women by women and by men.
- Increase awareness in men, political and institutional actors on gender and gender equality.
- Develop a cultural approach for different measures to combat violence towards women.
- Raise awareness in men and women about gender in different aspects of social life.
- Undertake actions to reach a better understanding of gender equality.

### **2. In the field of training:**

- Training on gender: how to apply gender analyses to the social problems of violence.
- Create a study cell linked to the Regional Centre to produce specific messages targeted for different population categories.
- Training of peer educators on non-violence.
- Training for social actors capable of influencing the social body in the categories of youth and traditional authorities in order to impulse change of behaviour on gender and violence towards women.
- Training for faculty to incorporate the fight against sexual violence in their teachings (primary, secondary and university courses).
- Training alongside raising awareness for the army and the police on gender and gender-based violence.
- Establishment of training modules on non-violence.
- Popularization of legal and legislative texts on violence against women.

### **3. In the field of research:**

- Create a study cell on the nature of violence, perceptions and manifestations grounded in context. An emphasis will be placed on the consequences of these violent acts towards women.
- Gather reliable statistical data.
- Conduct research on masculinity, on how men commit violent acts and how to help men that have been victims of violence, and the consequences of violence on mental health.
- Research on the construction of masculinities et on violent masculinities in society: which factors are a basis for this construction and how to eradicate them.

- Research of programmes in schools, academic and general training incorporating a dimension relative to the fight against sexual violence and the construction of sexist stereotypes in school books and training.
- Research on the consequences of violence on physical and mental health et how this can perpetuate violence in the lives of men.
- Multidisciplinary College attached to the Centre to produce training and information support.

#### **4. Approaches: strategic level**

- Create a think-tank focusing on this question for each age group.
- Identify places where violence occurs, presumed perpetrators and appropriate methodologies to involve everyone in fighting against violence towards women.
- Create and support health services, in particular mental health to integrate victims of violence into their services and help these victims survive the trauma to avoid that this violence continues or renews.
- Create mixed neighbourhood groups to reflect together on the ways to live together without violence.